# The HOUSE of LOST IDENTITY

DONALD CORLEY

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". . . Tassifir the Golden, whose place in the sea no one knows . . ."

*The Song of the Tombelaine.*

# The HOUSE of LOST IDENTITY

*Tales & Drawings*
*by*
DONALD CORLEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
JAMES BRANCH CABELL

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THE HOUSE OF LOST IDENTITY

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TO ALL THE FEY CHILDREN

IN THE WORLD

AND TO ONE FEY CHILD

IN PARTICULAR

## A NOTE FOR THE INTENDING READER

First you had best, I think, read "The Legend of the Little Horses." And if that story leaves you cold, if, above all, Pierre Salabat impresses you as in the conduct of his affairs irrational, then you had as well, perhaps, read no further.—Which is not to assert that I think the Legend the finest of these very fine tales. But I do believe it a sure test of its reader's susceptibility to magic.

For hereinafter you encounter magic. I at least know of no other phrase with which quite justly to describe the contents of *The House of Lost Identity.*

There are two properties of magic which, here, may profitably concern us. Magic coerces that which our human ignorance complacently labels "nature"; magic amends, whensoever the need arises, all physical and temporal laws to which we normally live subservient: such is one property of magic. The other property is that no magic can affect anybody—precisely as Mr. Corley tells us, in "The Glass Eye of Throgmorton,"—unless "the sorcerer has first got hold of something personal, extremely personal, belonging to the intended victim."

Now I take it there is nothing more "extremely personal" than one's heart. And magic—the especial sort of magic which here solicits us,—does, certainly, retain an inveterate hold upon the hearts of all who have ridden, howsoever briefly, and no matter how long ago, in the manner of Pierre Salabat, upon the horse with golden wings which flies high, and so very high, above the earth familiar to us. For these persons, afterward, keep in

their hearts an image which a little dims and incommunicably tarnishes the more rational interests of an efficient citizen,—an image which endures "for some vaguely, like a phantom, and for some as an ever present vision hovering just beyond the edge of realities." Such persons will understand this book; unless I err, they will cherish this book: whereas to others, and to a far greater number of persons—very luckily for our social welfare and for the continued maintenance of the nation's legislative and business prestige,—this book must always appear rather like nonsense. For nonsense is the protective coloration of wizardry: and hereinafter—I repeat,—you encounter magic.

Yet the signal, the in all unique, property of magic is its pleasing ability to coerce "nature" and to amend the laws to which we normally live subservient. It is such magic, of course, which, in *The House of Lost Identity,* enables the bowl of Hiro-tani to be shaped and tinted with beauties unpermitted by the restrictions of actual pottery; which brings to its thrice fortunate "intended victim" fair Lullûme the Extravagant, in her black-veiled litter of legistrina wood, adventuring upon improbable ways from an incredible city; which affably cancels the innumerous very superb exploits of the Chevalier de la Tour du Fec in exchange for something yet better; and which brings tall Hedragors the Isle Lord, after all,—through a devious and ardently colored voyaging whose haven always gleams a gratifyingly great way beyond the dusty ports of common-sense and piety and death,—to the consummation of his appointed marriage with drowned, amber-haired Merveille, among the far hills of Tassifir.

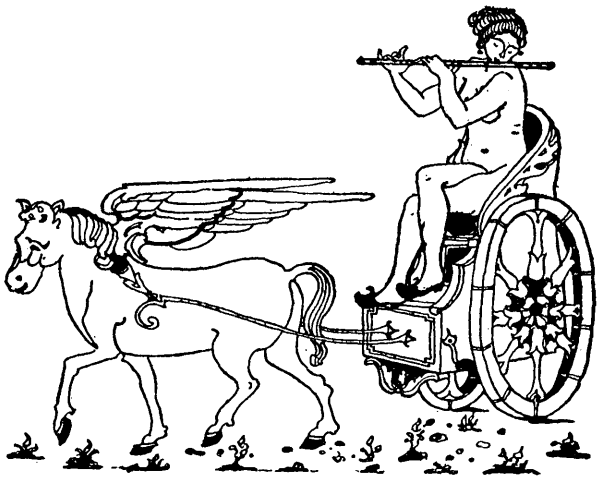
These amiable, these very utterly irrational wonder-

workings, and many kindred enchantments, Mr. Corley has performed in this book, for the peculiar benefit of all those who have, once, ridden upon the horse with golden wings. These sometime riders, I believe, will delight in this book. In any case they alone will be affected, either one way or the other. For I have named the sole restriction upon every magic's power: and hereinafter—I again repeat,—you encounter magic.

JAMES BRANCH CABELL.

*Richmond-in-Virginia*
*22 February 1927*

*"Cras amet, qui nunquam amavit,*
*quique amavit, cras amet."*



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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Of the stories contained in this volume:

"The Daimyō's Bowl," "The Price of Reflection," and "The Manacles of Youth," were first printed in *Harper's Magazine.*

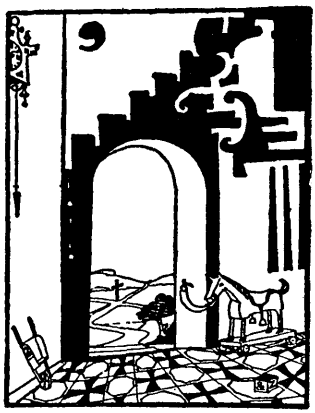
"Figs," "The Ghost-Wedding," "The Legend of the Little Horses," "The Glass Eye of Throgmorton," and "The House of Lost Identity," were first printed in *The Pictorial Review.*

"The Book of the Debts" was first printed in *Scribner's Magazine.*

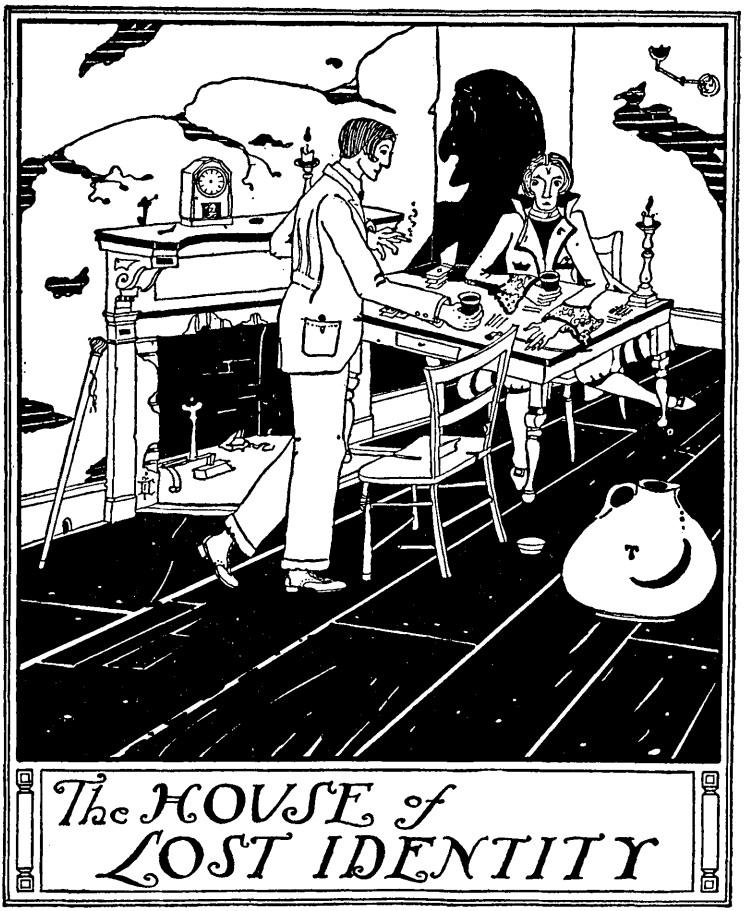
"The Tale That the Ming Bell Told" and "The Song of the Tombelaine" have hitherto been unpublished.

The author wishes to take this opportunity to express his deep appreciation to the editors of these periodicals for their personal interest and encouragement in what he considers to be one of the most difficult of all mediums: the short story, and to acknowledge his gratitude to the many friends who have done him a similar kindness. Especially, among the latter, he would like to make devoir to those quondam passers-by, who like the Eastern Tellers of Tales, paused long enough to tell him a story, being themselves too preoccupied to write it.

DONALD CORLEY.



# The HOUSE of LOST IDENTITY



# The HOUSE of LOST IDENTITY

Tegethow climbed the creaking stairs with difficulty. The package that he carried was very cumbersome. It struck the walls at the narrow landings, and rattled the loose stair balusters alarmingly.

Two flights—three flights—four flights. The thing was done.

He paused at the top, breathing heavily, and listening

to see if he had been followed. The empty house made no sound. He was safe.

The brass key that he took from his pocket, and with which he unlocked the door at the top of the stairs, made a curious, unwilling rasp in the lock. He opened the door, brought in his burden, set it carefully on the floor, and fumbled with unsteady steps for the gas-jet. The feeble yellow flare revealed a room hollow, gloomy, spectral. It smelled like a room that had been long shut.

Impatiently he kicked the door, which slammed ghostily. Some loosened plaster fell upon the floor. It made a dry, light, and irritating noise. It startled him; but after listening tensely for a moment, he shrugged his shoulders, and, taking two candles from his pocket, he lighted them, turned out the gas, and went over to a crazy table that, with two crazy chairs, huddled together against the opposite wall like fellow immigrants in a strange country, and methodically stuck the candles in two verdigrised brass candlesticks that stood there.

This done, he sat down at the table, lighted a cigarette, and waited, looking about him with some apprehension. It *was* a queer place. He could never quite get used to it, but he could never remember how queer it was until he came back to it. No one had ever disturbed the cobwebs that swayed in the corners like the tentacles of a submarine forest of weeds. The spider that had spun its life-line down from the ceiling to within a foot of the floor, and hung there, motionless, had been obviously sure of its right of way. Tegethow wondered if spiders ever slept. This one might be dead—might have dropped that far and found itself unable to climb up again—might have run out of thread—or ambition, maybe.

His attention wandered to where great patches of surface-paint had flaked off the wall long ago and a faint blue showed through. Fragmentary Egyptian murals. He had looked at them all before, and wondered about them.

No one ever came into this room except himself. The House of Lost Identity, he had named it. And when people ask, as people do ask, where he had been, after days of absence, he would always hesitate, then smile, and reply, "Oh, in Shanghai." And so had his friends suspected him of dark things. But there was something in Tegethow before which the most curious quailed, after the first attempt at banter—a certain aloofness of soul that arrogantly refused to be questioned. And so no one had ever known.

It wanted twenty minutes of the hour of his appointment—eleven-thirty.

He thought of the night that he had discovered this house, tucked away in the ganglia of streets that lie like worn and aimless grooves beneath and germane to Brooklyn Bridge. Flicker was the name of the street. Forty-seven.

He had come upon it late one night of the preceding year, this decrepit Georgian house, with a stoop—"a scholarly stoop," he had remarked to himself humorously—being one of those to whom a house, an old house, can say quite as much, in its motifs, as ideographs may say to the learned. He had even tried to get into the house that night, it had taken such a hold upon his imagination. But the windows were all dark, and while the bell-pull was accorded a distant tinkle, no one came.

Something atavistic had come over him as he had stood there before the solid dark-blue door, some queer sense

that this was *his* house, and that he surely had a key that would open it. And this feeling had kept him lingering there, until it had seemed to him that some one came up the steps, passing him; some one who went through that door, somehow indicating to him that he too was to enter.

Only the door remained obdurate, shut, impregnable.

And so he had gone away, only to return night after night, drawn by some inexplicable emotion, some unrecallable memory, to the end of Flicker Street, to the stoop, up the steps. But he could never get in.

Then he had come one morning with a half-defined intention.

There had been a room to let in that house. This room. The old man who kept the ship-chandler's shop on the first floor had hardly looked at him when he asked; had taken down two brass keys from a nail, rubbed them on his sleeve, and made out a receipt for the inconsiderable rent. He had not asked Tegethow what he wished to use the room for. A man accustomed to eccentricity, that!

The shop was filled with indecipherable junk, presumably ship-junk, since there was a verdigrised ship's clock on the wall—but who, Tegethow had pondered, would ever come to this remote cul-de-sac to buy broken pulley-blocks, or rusty chains, or barometers that had relinquished their honorable calling since the mercury had gone out of them?

Who in all the world would ever buy the teak-wood steering-wheel that hung like a dusky sun on the wall above the scarred old Georgian mantel?—two handles broken, he noticed. Or the ship's lanterns that hung in the dusty windows—lanterns with no glass in them? Or

the brass hour-glass that may have had some sand in it once, but now was an empty figure of eight, along with a ghostly sextant and some odds and ends of compasses that were sparsely spread upon a bit of old moth-eaten velvet in a show-case? Why were these things there? Inert, useless—hardly even junk—more like the toys of a lonely child, or a madman.

But the ship's clock on the wall was alive, at least, in this forgotten cache of Davy Jones (left there, perhaps, for such emergency as might arise when he came ashore needing something), and the clock had abruptly announced the sea-time that day, seven bells—"ting-*ting,* ting-*ting,* ting-*ting,* ting," with the startling finality of ships' clocks. Half past eleven, for some distant latitude, he had noted, as it was still very early in the morning, and he had absently repeated the strokes with his brass keys on the old man's shop-counter. Now *that* had been significant! That had let him into the tether of this house. Perhaps, had he not done that, things might have been different.

How queerly the old man had looked at him that morning as he muttered, "Top floor, at the back," and then turned away to potter at something on a table with the utmost indifference. Tegethow had tried to buy the clock from him. But the old man evidently had a terrible reluctance to part with anything there, and had whistled shrilly and looked away. As well ask a child to sell one of his cherished toys.

But he brought down from a shelf a decrepit ship-model, a clipper, and displayed it with some pride. "*Flying Gull,* Jamestown—been around the Horn," the old

man explained tersely. As well ask to buy the philosopher's stone from the fortunate alchemist who had found it as to try to possess the *Flying Gull!* He had not even dared to ask the old man who had made it.

But he had climbed the four flights of stairs and explored his new leasehold, which had a table in it, nothing more. (The two chairs and the candlesticks he had brought there himself, later.) But in the dust upon the table-top—dust as thick as velvet—there had been a map, drawn as if with a nail for a stylus, long ago, but still legible; a map showing a river, a cross, some trees, a house, a compass; in the rectangle of the house a cross also. He used to stare at that map drawn in the thick dust like a pattern in cut velvet, and wonder what it meant. Now, he *knew*. It did not occur to him to wonder who had made it, even then. It was too reminiscent of something. He might have made it himself.

And later on, when he came frequently to that house in the crucial emptinesses of early evening, to get away from himself, he began to memorize that map, as a chart to some mysterious quarry that he was to find some day, feeling that the map had been left there for him. And when he knew it, line for line, he had obliterated it, lest some one else should see it.

And to forty-seven, The House of Lost Identity, he had come oftener and oftener, when "that Thing" got him. He had always called it "that Thing" since he was a child, and used to run away to a hiding-place in the loft of the barn, and stare at the sword of light that came through a nail-hole in the shingle roof and ended like a rainbow on the golden hay.

And as he grew older "that Thing" had had various names to him—melancholy, nostalgia, shyness, "nerves," inferiority complex, acute boredom, agoraphobia, and others. Only, none of them seemed to describe it exactly, that feeling of wanting to run away from his surroundings, away from himself, away from everywhere. And hiding-places became hard to find. But here, in this empty room, he had found a sort of peace at first, and from it could return to his stratum of New York with a clear gaze for every eye, an elastic step, an absence of fear.

And yet he had always come here expecting something momentous to happen, although the old house was always empty at night—empty of the ship-chandler on the first floor, the Italian feather-maker on the second, the lithographer on the third—empty as a deserted bird's nest, except for the incessant chime of the ship's clock down below, every half-hour, marking the time at sea. It had amused him to think of being at sea, in this house, shut off as it was from even the pervasive sound of the elevated, but always trembling, as many old houses do.

It estranged him pleasantly from his life up-town; it was better than the old hay-loft at home down South—it was better even than the strip of beach off Staten Island, known to him as L'Isle Dernière, and approached by a causeway built of driftwood across the tidal inlet, to which bourn he was wont to go to escape houses and streets and people and responsibilities.

That was it—responsibilities! Now, *why* did he wish to escape them? In a world where every one conformed to them, more or less. And back across his mind like a search-light came the stinging ultimatum that Thelene

had made a week ago, before he had gone down to Virginia (that was *why* he had gone)! "No, I can't marry a man who has no responsibility," the Phenician girl had said, "though I love you, almost more than anything in the world—you are somehow like the man who had no shadow!"

Why couldn't she see that if *she* really believed in him he *could* be responsible? If only every one didn't accuse—accuse the same crime, allege the same indecency—as terrible indeed, in the eyes of the world, as the indecency of the man who had no shadow. Peter Schemil.

And so he had been dumb before Thelene—"the Phenician girl"; he had always glorified her, adding to her mythical heritage that her ancestors had come to Cornwall before the time of Tristan, before the cessation of Lyonnesse into the fragments of the Scilly Isles, before Gaul, before—

She was the answer to all his longing, the image of beauty that he needed, to fill the empty niche of his heart. And he had known all that so surely—that she was why he had lived, and what he had sought through all his days, only to beseech in vain, and be turned away. "You want the moon?" one of his friends had asked. "Well, my dear chap, what would you do with it? Have you a house to put it in? A cloak to cover it? An orbit for it to move in?"

And his only possible answer had been, "No, only dark corners to be lighted. Surely, the moon wanted to light dark corners—always coming through shutters, finding mirrors, lighting pools in forests, gilding empty streets." And with the corners lighted, what couldn't he find that

was lost there, unfinished, neglected, for the lack of light?

But these things he never knew how to say to her, and so he had come here that evening, secure that no one knew where he was, to mull over this, the last buffet of Fortune, knowing in his heart that if he had had the courage to take Thelene by the shoulders and make her know, without words, just what it was that made him diffident, that lost him all the jobs he ever had, that estranged people from him, that left him out of the feast always—if he could make her know that he loved her, and no one else—never had—never would—if he could make her see that he, Martin Tegethow, could do anything that any one else could do, could cross the agora without fear in his heart, could take the largess of the world and give it to her (why else should he try to find it?), could command respect among his peers, and build a house of life for her—with a gate and a chimney and nasturtiums—a peacock, if she wanted one!—and everything—then she would come to the ends of the earth with him.

Why couldn't she see that if people would stop hurting him, his house of ashes would blossom into a thing of airy but solid grace, not to be blown away by an evil word, not to be burned and burned like a city of paper sticks? Wasn't there ever to be a day of the halcyon when the sea was calm enough for the kingfisher to build a nest upon the surface of it? Must it always be promises, will-o'-the-wisps, and no certainty? What was it in womankind that refused or could not collaborate in the structure? Was it the primordial fear of the insecurity of marrying a man with no substance? Did Thelene expect to find her "Indish City in the Sky" all built and waiting?

Surely, this one of her tribe would want to have a hand in tinting certain palaces, planning certain winding streets there. Hadn't she said herself, when they had gone down to that strip of beach, to L'Isle Dernière, on Summer afternoons, with a Chinese umbrella and two ells of awning-cloth, out of which he had fashioned a tent against the sun—hadn't she said, "You'd build a house out of anything, 'Tin-Teg,' "? Couldn't she see how symbolical it was—that little tent of a few hours, and a stove made of stones, on the lee side—couldn't she see that if he was happy—well? But she hadn't. "You live too much in your mind, 'Tin-Teg,' " she had accused when he mentioned the matter. Why couldn't she see that the world had left him no other place in which to live? "You take

yourself too seriously," she had aggrieved also. "No, it is *you* I take seriously," he had retorted that day, a week ago.

But he had been quite unable to take her by the shoulders and *"make"* her know, and so had simply gone away, down to Virginia, and now he was back again, and this time he must get the ordeal over, if at all, and never again turn mutely away from a rebuff, as he used to turn away when his employers fired him. What a lot of them there were, who gave him dull tasks, and wondered why he couldn't do them! Wondered why he just stayed away, sometimes. Well, it was easier now, that he had no employers, if none the less inexplicable.

Why couldn't he have been like other men, able to demand what he wanted in life, able to snatch it and hold it —*they* did, surely—able to fight for his point of view and for the woman he loved—even against herself? They all said he didn't try to "sell himself," and his wares. They had all found him "queer," from the academy days, when the other boys had taunted him in order to see him redden, to the various folk here and there who had felt that since he never explained nor defended himself, he was fair game, since they could easily hurt him, easily defeat him. Why didn't they ever consider that one expiated one's own mistakes, that one was one's own judge and executioner, that one needed no whip-lash of criticism, being embarked upon the affair of life with a heavy cargo of self-criticism, and trying to use it in the best ports?

And when he had come to this house, The House of Lost Identity, it was in reality to daydream a little, to put the ship in better order, to forget for a little while, in

Saragossa waters, that he was Martin Tegethow, ne'er-do-well, to forget that he owed money, and achievement, and postponed promises, to acknowledge that he was a failure, to himself, and find no shame in the thought, to do nothing as he pleased, without the defeating interruption of an insistent telephone, the unprefaced knock on the door, the unfinished task of yesterday staring at him, the unanswered letters—all the complicated threads of managing a publisher's office, keeping up with the rise and fall of paper, pacifying the irate author, writing copy for the advertising, or even a preface—all the rough carpentering that kept him on the rack in the old days—that kept him from writing—

Yes, the sabbatical year in this house had been pleasant —but dangerous. It had to end, and now, to-night, and the key thrown away. But how? He had been so at sea here, beyond the reach of any wireless, until—

And he looked apprehensively, fearfully, at the shadow made on the wall by the projecting fireplace.

The Other, he very well knew, would come from there at eleven-thirty, with all his gibing mockery; would take his place at the table and rattle his hands together like clicking dice—and demand piquet—that cursed piquet, that he had learned to lose at so well, seated at this table, always with a fresh pack of cards. Furtively he felt in his pocket and drew them out. How many packs had he seen contemptuously torn in two by the Other, and flung into the fireplace!

He remembered when the Other had first appeared in this room, one evening when he had brought some cards in order to play a complicated solitaire. No sooner had

he spread them than he had felt compelled to look up—with no surprise, he remembered now—in reponse to that ironic voice.

"Child's game," the Other had remarked, "imbecile trick-track! Why don't you play a man's game, Sir? *Piquet!* Here—I'll teach you!"

And so it had all started, and always he had lost, always and always. If only he had ever won, just once, it wouldn't be so bad—about Thelene.

But he hadn't. Couldn't learn piquet.

The ship's clock, down-stairs, chimed its "ting-*ting*, ting-*ting*, ting-*ting*, ting—" Seven bells.

Tegethow took from his pockets some cigarettes and a large box of wooden matches, and after some deliberation he lighted a cigarette with one of the matches, laying the burned stick on the opposite side of the table.

He heard a dry little cough, and shivered. Then he looked up.

There was the Other, just beyond the fireplace, with the same mocking, infuriating leer, the same infernal twist in his face, the same infernal cough. He leaned upon the table with one thin and emaciated hand, and looked down at Tegethow contemptuously.

"Did ye bring it?" he asked in a satirical, cutting tone.

Tegethow winced, as he always did at the Other's voice. It was like the wind in a keyhole.

"Yes," he answered quietly, indicating the package on the floor with a wave of his hand.

"Ah!" said the Other mockingly, "you have better stuff in you than I thought! How did ye find it?"

"Like a thief," said Tegethow bitterly, "like a thief in the night, with a candle and a crowbar."

The Other drew the second chair up to the table. It rasped across the uneven floor unpleasantly. He sat down, and, leaning on his elbows, contemplated Tegethow through his long fingers, with malice sparkling in his eyes like phosphorus in sea-water.

"Shall we drink then, Great-grandnephew?" said he, and in his voice there was an irony, a contempt, an infuriating lack of courtesy that made Tegethow recoil as if he had been struck a physical blow.

"We might as well," he agreed listlessly.

"You remember the terms?" inquired the Other mercilessly. "Of course you know this duel will be the last?"

"Yes, I remember," said Tegethow dully, "all or quits."

"Or," went on the Other in a smooth and silky and ingratiating tone, "would you prefer to try one more game of piquet? If you win—take it all back, but not one day more, Sir. I give no favors!"

"Just as you like," muttered Tegethow defiantly, and began to sort the pack of cards, discarding up to seven, but leaving aces. Then he shuffled the remaining thirty-two, dealt twelve to each hand, and waited.

The Other discarded four, looking at the last card, and took up, in a leisurely way, four of the remaining eight Tegethow doing the same aimlessly.

And so began the strange game of piquet that they had played so often, with matches to pay the score, upon significances that had been long before determined.

"Point of six," said the Other.

"Good," muttered Tegethow.

"Six—a quint."

"Good."

Tegethow lost, and the color left his face.

"Double for first hand," said the Other, jotting numbers down on the table with the burned match. "Sixty. Twenty-four for you?"

Tegethow wearily lighted a fresh cigarette, while the Other dealt with a practiced hand. The cards seemed to fly from his fingers, and his knuckles rattled like dice in a cup.

A second hand went to the Other, and the shadows in Tegethow's face darkened.

"Twenty-three—thirty-five," the burned match set down; "you're repiqued already, Nevvy!" His voice held the sarcasm of the expert for the neophyte.

Tegethow nodded, and his hands trembled as he began to shuffle. It was an old story to him to be beaten.

"Three knaves and three tens—one hundred and one," the Other went on inexorably.

"I have nothing," said Tegethow dully.

"One hundred and two—three—four—five—six," counted the exultant voice with more and more animation: ". . . one hundred and ten—" and, laying down his last card, a knave, "one hundred and twenty—and you?"

"Three," said Tegethow.

The Other bent over his figures. "Sixty—and fifty-six—and twenty-three—and double for the last one hundred and twenty—three hundred and seventy-nine—and one hundred for game plus ninety-five—your score, Nevvy?—

you're rubiconed already!—and ninety-five—makes five hundred and seventy-four!"

And the Other leaned back in his chair and rubbed his hands as Tegethow began to count the matches from the box and push them across the table.

There were not enough, and after searching his pockets he counted out fifteen more, and then soberly made out an I. O. U. on a visiting-card, which the Other raked up along with the matches. He struck the matches, one by one, and held each up to sniff at, only to blow it out and strike another. His eyes glittered more and more, and his dry little cough, that had punctuated their game, disappeared. His voice became stronger, and a deadly mockery possessed it.

"Had enough?" the Other asked finally in his most maddening tone, his words cutting the silence like a sharp, thin knife cutting stretched silk.

Tegethow nodded. He was beaten. His head drooped. His shoulders twitched. The lines in his face felt like grooves as he drew his hand across them. He fumbled for a cigarette, and looked furtively at the huge pile of matches that he had lost, a pile over which his antagonist hovered like a miser, piling them in neat little methodical heaps with one hand, and striking them with the other. *His* face had grown younger. There was a sparkle of life in his cold blue eyes, and a faint flush showed in his ivory skin—almost as if he had been drinking.

"I suppose you want a light?" said he, and his voice was almost youthful. Tegethow nodded. The Other took up a little pile of matches, numbering ten, and with a quick and reckless gesture struck them all at once on the

surface of the table. He held up his miniature torch mockingly. He brandished it before Tegethow's face tantalizingly. Tegethow blinked in the sudden light, but he watched the burning matches with something like horror as the Other waved them to and fro, the torn and soiled lace on his coatsleeve scattering the matches about the table.

And as the matches burned out, Tegethow felt as he had felt once while undergoing a transfusion of blood for a dying friend. For he knew very well what they meant —those matches—piquet—knew very well indeed what it means to lose—and lose—and lose—

"You want a light, do you?" screamed the Other. "Well, you shall have a light, my lad, but it will cost ye all these!"

And as the flame approached his bony fingers he held the light for Tegethow's cigarette. The Other leered at him, his thin and horrible hand waving to and fro, the forefinger a veritable finger of calumny.

"You young men," he gibed, "have no taste in tobacco! I, Sir, have always grown my own, as every gentleman does, but you young whelps must have your cabbage-leaves!"

The Other snickered. And it was like the sound of ice-covered twigs rattling in the wind. He took from his pocket a little account-book bound in calf, worn and greasy. With the utmost deliberation he opened it on the table before him. From some recess of his plum-colored coat he drew a pair of spectacles, square and venerable. There were no lenses in them. He adjusted them meticulously upon his long, lean nose, wrinkling it

in the most devilish manner. Then having produced his snuff-box and opened it, he took snuff and sneezed like a parrot. This ritual accomplished, the Other peered into his book, mumbling figures, and chuckling in his throat.

"Tom Argyle, five pounds—mmmmm—David Grandison in the sum of twenty bushels of corn to my colt taking a fence. Curse me, he never had a grain of corn to his name, but he'd bet on anything anyway! Deborah Fairchild—mmmmmm—I let her off that bet—poor girl—she really thought she had me—never bet with women, my lad, unless—mmmmmm—here *you* are! February 18th, nine hundred and eighteen that you couldn't pay—remember? And that six hundred a month ago—and that little matter of two thousand that I said I'd ask ye for one day. Last chance, Nevvy—ten years, five months, sixteen days—you've lost—am I right?"

"Yes," Tegethow agreed without looking up.

"Well, then, my lad, there wasn't any use, was there, in giving you another chance at piquet? I told you I'd give ye quits if you could win from me to-night, didn't I?"

"Aye, Sir," said Tegethow.

"Then fetch the jug and we'll see if you know how to drink."

Tegethow got to his feet painfully, and walked across the room. His joints ached, and he felt very old and tired, and futile. He lifted the package from the floor with an effort and brought it painfully to the table. The paper and string that he removed revealed a jug—round, earthen, brown, sealed with red wax. A jug of Gargantuan proportions.

"Good," said the Other, "and the glasses?"

Tegethow produced two tumblers from his overcoat pocket, and then proceeded to remove the wax seal from the mouth of the jug, and to dig out the wooden stopper with his pocket-knife.

The stopper finally yielded to his prying, and came out with the sound of a deep-throated frog crying before rain in a marsh. "Jugger—rummmmmm," it said.

The room was suddenly filled with an aroma intoxicating and subtle, a bouquet, a memory, a fragrance from beyond life.

A veritable presence issued from the mouth of the jug, even as the djinn came out of the box that the Arabian fisherman found in his net.

The Other rubbed his thin hands together in anticipation as Tegethow poured the two tumblers level full of the shining, golden liquid, as thick as syrup and sparkling with little points of light.

Tegethow lifted his tumbler steadily and unwaveringly, a changed man, and looked the Other square in the eye.

After some hesitation his companion essayed to lift his own glass and get to his feet, but he spilled several drops upon the table, and sank back into his chair. Their eyes held each other.

"One moment," temporized the Other, "did ye say you got it with a crowbar and a candle?" Tegethow nodded.

"In the northeast corner of the cellar, was it?—where I told you?"

"Southeast corner," said Tegethow.

The Other shook with laughter, ribald and mocking.

"So you took down that wall, too, did ye?"

The ghost of a smile came over Tegethow's face. "I

might have," he said, "but I had no compass, and somehow, in the light of the candle, I made a mistake and took down the southeast corner first."

The Other choked over his laughter. "Did ye, indeed?" he asked. "That was a fool's luck. I meant you to have a good night's work finding that jug! How did ye find the house?"

"Took a rowboat at Hemphill's Landing, followed the river past the third bend, tied up at the apple-tree, walked along the hedge, broke in the cellar window—" He made these statements as one recites a lesson, unemotionally.

"Ah!" said the Other, leaning his chin on his sharp knuckles and contemplating the jug thoughtfully. A shadow flickered over his face, and with something of pathos he inquired, "Do they keep the old place up?"

"Fairly well, Sir," murmured Tegethow, looking at him with an interest that he had never had before. There had been something almost human, certainly less contemptuous, in the question.

"Good," said the Other. And for a time he tapped abstractedly on the table with his long finger-nails, while Tegethow waited.

"Fine place in my time," ruminated the Other. "Planted that apple-tree myself—and, y'know, my lad, Tom Jefferson used to come and admire that house—and the muscadine that's in that jug ripened on the vine there long before that little tea-party in Boston. I never went back again—after the night Deborah and I—the key's in the river, Sir—*where she is*—but never mind that. I've thought of this jug many's the time—laid it down myself and walled it up—might need it some time, I said—good

brandy for a wedding—good brandy for a duel—good brandy after a funeral—good brandy for—but never mind that either, Nevvy!"

And he tried to raise his glass again.

Tegethow drank his own without a tremor, to the last drop, and methodically filled it again. The Other sat as in a trance. It seemed to Tegethow that the mere smell of the muscadine had dazed him. The balance had shifted; they were changed men, the younger standing alert and at ease, with color in his cheek and light in his eyes; the older sunken in some melancholy too deep for drink to touch.

Tegethow squared his shoulders and drew a deep breath. He poured his third glass, and, holding his tumbler at arm's length, "Have at you, Uncle Jeremy!" he said lightly. And the Other groped to his feet unsteadily, and with the ghost of some bygone courtliness managed to raise his glass and crook his lean elbow. They bowed, and Tegethow put his down empty, only to fill it again. The Other drank lingeringly, but bravely, choking as the fiery liquor clutched his throat. After several attempts he put down his glass shakily, hardly touched. And with a gesture that had both ribaldry and grace in it he rubbed his sleeve across his mouth, leaning upon the table for support, and staring into vacancy, looking not past Tegethow, but through him.

"Demned fine vintage, Sir," he muttered, "but stronger than I remembered—last time drank any of that—one cold morning—November—sun came up—*I slipped on the ice, I swear to God!* I never meant to run him through—demned fine chap—fine buck—I knelt there

holding his head—between us we finished the bottle—before the doctor came—too late—she never forgave me—swore I'd never drink another drop. That was a duel, too, Sir—only that time he had all the odds in his favor—sun at his back—better swordsman than I—all the hope on his side—about her—younger man—young as you are—but more courage. I never meant to kill him. I never meant to kill you, either!"

"You won't!" said Tegethow with a sudden grimness. "You almost did."

"You see, Sir," he went on, more boldly (as the mellow brandy took possession of him, sparkled in his brain, bringing respite, resource, lucidity), "the mistake that you all made was to forget the ability of the newcomer to outgrow you, and all your fears."

The Other looked at him with some attention.

"Did you say 'fears'?" he asked mockingly.

"Yes, 'fears.' If you hadn't had them, you wouldn't have tried to pass them on, to be discarded by us, along with a lot of your superstitions and other claptrap—false chivalry—the public code—the pride in being rude—all that bad furniture about which you veiled the linen shrouds of sentimentality!

"After all, Sir, *I* go further than you do into the epochs of the past—your paltry century had only a gesture, as cheap as your card-breaking trick—any one could do that!" And he took up the pack of cards and tore it in four parts, flinging the fragments at the Other and bedizening him with reds and blacks and yellows—a veritable mountebank. The face of the knave of spades lodged in the folds of his cravat, at his throat.

"*I* am older than you are," went on Tegethow dispassionately. "In me are Asiatic things that you could not possibly understand—you fought duels for the love of spleen—I could shrug my shoulders at the things you fought about. You want to live in my shoes because you never lived in your own. Your life of carouse down there on the James River gave you no self-respect, and that is why you haunt me in order to steal mine for the peace of your decayed soul. But I, Sir, *I* have been a Phenician voyager, a corsair—in a sense I was *your* ancestor once! I have been an astrologer in the Middle Ages, an artist in the golden times of the Renaissance—and yet you, who are nearest to me, nowadays, have had the impertinence to try to dominate my life, to play my part with your inadequate equipment, to try to be me, Sir, when you never had the courage to be yourself!

"You would have kept me, if you could, from the woman whose blood lilts to mine—because *you* had no courage about the woman you loved—you would have strangled my daring, and out of your twisted soul you would have forced me, thanks to that cursed chivalry of yours, to be false to my love—to give her up since she will not marry me—you would have had me let my golden princess never know that I loved her, because of the life you led in me—but I have gotten the better of you—you cursed licentiate! What do I care for the ten years and five months and sixteen days you have cheated me of? I can do without them—*I am younger than you ever were—!*"

And he took up the matches and struck them in handfuls, blew them out carefully, and laid them in the box.

"You see? Another tumbler of muscadine, illustrious ancestor?"

And he filled his own.

"When I would have flung myself into China four years ago, where the Buddha of my more honorable ancestors—not yours—ignores the petty incidents of existence—you stopped me. You had your diabolical casuistry. And I listened to you, curse you. I was going back to find my Breton Mongolian ancestors, to read in their book for a little while—to find a little fortitude—and you entrapped me here in this narrow town—to toil at narrow things—and later you bludgeoned me with atavism into this very house, built out of the shameful proceeds of slave-selling!"

"I went to China," interrupted the Other, "in the clipper *Flying Gull.* I found nothing worth remembering."

"No, you found nothing, because you never got beyond the first grog-shop in any tea-port, Sir—any more than the missionaries got any further than the first philosophical principle of Buddhism in comprehending China—or the first man-o'-war ever got further than the idea of subjugation—for profit, not altruism.

"It was your brother, Sir, who trafficked in African slaves—he lived in this very house—he used to add up his earnings in flesh in this very room—perhaps upon this very table—having seen his slave-ships safely at anchor in the harbor. He had your blood, Sir; he had that grasping strain in him that made you a gambler and a profligate. You two were the black sheep of the family in your day, Sir, as I am in mine—only to-day, Sir, a black

sheep is a man who thinks for himself, as you no doubt did in your drunken way—and what peace did it bring you? But your thinking does not apply to my life, Sir. You can no more masquerade in my character than I could masquerade in yours along the wharves where your brother counted his slaves.

"Another tumbler of muscadine, my dear ancestor? Bah! You have not been able to touch the first. Where is your drunken prowess? Do you perhaps wait for the cravat-boy to come and loosen that noose at your throat so that you can breathe? Perhaps you do not know that brandy ages? You can not drink any more! I have beaten you—because you wasted your life. You colonials lived to drink, and we, the youth of now, drink to live—if we drink at all," he added negligently; "this cordial, indeed, is the cream of your century—at least you learned how to make wine, you Covenanters and Cavaliers.

"And you had manners, but not for every one, and none at all when you were drunk. You had a fine courtesy, false as it was, and some of you had learning—a few, genius. But how many evenings did you squander on piquet? How many of mine have you tried to squander? That was all you knew, and we know that, and something more. We can squander, yes, but we do it deliberately as a *tour de force,* with a fling of the cap over the windmills of thrift. We know how to live in our minds, and you could live only in your bodies. And when you were out of them, you must come and try to live in ours and canker us if you can.

"You enjoyed your licentious sins—*we* have no sins! The tawdry pleasure of sin is gone from my generation—

our pleasures are pleasures, not shameful gratifications—we are hedonists, if you like, but you were swine, boorish sottish swine. I am drinking up the wine of my ancestors," he added, putting down his tumbler, empty, and filling it with the last that was in the jug, "and I am almost free of them. I have drunk you up—Uncle Jeremy. After all, you did have a blood-hold upon me, but you thought that was everything. You cursed parasite, you tried to fill your metaphysical veins with my life—and now I—I have filled mine with your metaphysical wine, and I am through with you!

"I pity you, Sir—you do well to look crushed, Sir. I respect you for one thing, however—and that is: you ask no mercy. This room is yours, of course, whenever you choose to come here—I shall see to that—and any trifle of snuff or tobacco you can have, but not another pack of cards for you—you would ruin yourself! Try to live a decent and honorable ghost-life, Sir—for you *are* a ghost, are you not?"

And Tegethow surveyed the crumpled figure with a sudden curiosity.

The Other lifted his hand shakily, painfully. "A ghost, did ye say? Well, call me that, Nevvy, though *we* never speak the word amongst ourselves, not until—"

And his voice became very faint indeed.

"What do you mean?" Tegethow asked.

"D'ye see, Nevvy, when the painful breath of God is a bit gone from your body—it's less effort to get about—and so you live along, talking to anybody that'll entertain ye—not many will!—ye need little except baccy, and a whiff of rum—a trifle of amusement—a soupçon of life—

a bit of piquet now and then to enliven ye. And then—ye get old again, just the same—"

"As a ghost?"

"Call it that, Nevvy. Call me a ghost—only speak a little softer—there may be them that might—I wouldn't be telling ye this, maybe, but I *am* drunk—and, d'ye see, you'll be in my predicament one day—and maybe you'll remember—"

"But what then—afterward—"

"Well, ye look a little further, collect no more debts, have no more curiosity, build no more ships, hear no more footsteps, take your pleasure in bringing a little kindness into an empty house here and there—"

"But that's resignation."

"No—no, Sir, it isn't. It is the secret of living as a good gho—with a very bad life back of him, should live—until— Most of them can't help feeling a little resentful, d'ye see? And so they come and hang about others' lives, trying to find crumbs, maybe—trying to smell a new rose once in a while—being a bit hungry—a bit more than lonely—and having a mort of curiosity in their bones—"

"But after that?" pursued Tegethow inexorably. *"What?"*

The Other looked at him with a mixture of scorn and cunning.

"Ye want me to tell ye *that?"* he exclaimed. "Well, Sir—I *am* drunk—but not drunk enough to tell ye—where—we—"

And he chuckled deep in his throat.

Tegethow stared at him for a little, and then, con-

temptuously, having drained the last of the muscadine and put on his coat, he broke the jug deliberately upon the hearthstone.

But the Other seemed hardly to hear.

"I am going, my dear ancestor, to breakfast with the Phenician girl. When I have broken fast with her I shall take her upon a long voyage of high romance, with or without benefit of clergy—because I love her! And you, who told me I was too old, because you had cheated me of a few years, and that I was too deeply a failure in *dukkerin,* too tangled in the things of life—you who kept my hand from the telephone, and stiffened my fingers that I might not write to her of my love—you, Sir, who never loved any one but yourself—console your last lost duel as best you may.

"Your life was a dirty account-book, a brawl, some wenches—drink, and a terrible self-esteem. You held it to be an accomplishment to administer an insult—it is not strange that your spectacles have no glass in them. They never had, Sir—they were always as blind as the eyes behind them!"

The Other raised his head. Injured pride struggled with drowsiness in him.

"Great-grandnephew," he said softly, almost tenderly, "you didn't quite understand—did ye? I was proud of you. But I flayed you to see if you could stand it. Blood will tell—it has told in you—"

"It tells lies, Sir!" commented Tegethow.

"I have taken some of your years to keep you from wasting them—but you don't need them. I have tormented you to make you stark and hard and enduring.

I have denied you many a thing because I had had it myself and found it worthless. I kept you from the Phenician in order to make you worthy of her by first renouncing her—and now, maybe finding her—and to do the same for her, my lad—don't ever forget that a woman does not want what she can have too easily. I have stuck pins in your pride and poured irony upon your head in order to thicken your skull.

"My forbears were closer to the helmet than yours, Sir, and more able to stand the chafing of iron. I saved this very jug for you, Martin, to drink some day—when I no longer needed anything but the whiff of it. But I see that you are a Tegethow, and curse me, Sir, if I had a sword, and I were a king, I'd knight ye—but I am drunk! But not too drunk to see that you can stand alone. It has been a pleasure—a malicious pleasure, I admit—to taunt ye, to beat you at piquet, to see the blood rise in your face. Ha! my blood, Sir—don't forget that. I am a broken old man, and I no longer care for piquet. I taught it to you for a purpose, and now—*pouf!*"—(he flicked some imaginary snuff from his sleeve)—"but have the kindness to leave me some Maryland baccy for my pipe," he growled.

Tegethow tossed a leather pouch upon the table, and went to the mantel, bringing back an old churchwarden of white clay that lay there.

The Other filled, tamped, and looked expectant.

"Got another of your damned matches?" he asked ironically. "If not, I have flint and steel about me."

Tegethow lighted the last match that lay on the table and held it courteously.

But as the smoke rose from the bowl of the churchwarden the thin fingers of the Other trembled; the pipe fell and was broken on the floor.

It seemed to Tegethow that a plum-colored coat sat in the chair for an instant, then it crumpled and slipped down and under the table.

The Other was drunk.

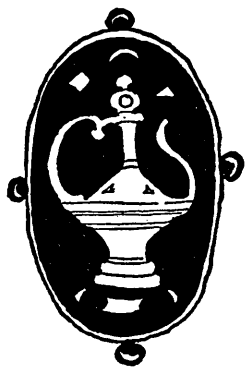
Tegethow buttoned his coat, settled his hat, caught up his stick, and then, with some impulse of pity, he went to where the Other lay and gently loosened his neck-cloth for him. Then he shrugged his shoulders good-humoredly, glanced at the windows, which were blue with the first daylight, like dusky opals, strode to the door and flung it open without looking back, and passed out of The House of Lost Identity forever—a free man—whistling a gay Gypsy tune.

The old negro janitor of Forty-seven Flicker Street found two very strange circumstances in that house on the same morning. One was that the old ship-chandler on the first floor sat dead in his chair, and his clock had stopped at seven bells—if it had ever run at all. And upon the floor of the shop was a broken clipper-ship model: the *Flying Gull,* Jamestown.

And the janitor, having cogitated this circumstance to his satisfaction, a little later climbed the stairs to sweep them—since some one was dead—and found an open door on the top floor—a door that he had never noticed before. And, entering, he found an empty room. There were the fragments of a broken jug upon the hearth. There was a pleasant aroma in the room.

On the table were two tumblers, and in one of them were the dregs of a very powerful brandy.

But the other glass was quite clean.



# The PRICE of REFLECTION


"Yes, I have cursed myself for a fool," said the Russian, musingly, looking through his little glass of brandy at the candle-flame.

"Once—but I will tell you another story about that."

And he sighed, and brushed away from his head with his lean fingers some tangle of memory.

"I was staying at the Monastery of Terek to rest, one time, many years, now, ago. I had brother there.

Monk. I live in guest-house, with window looking out on steppe. I had been in prison. Long time. It was good to have no wall against eyes. You go here. You go there. You make many turns. Often you look back. You curse yourself for a fool. But I was free again, after long time. Free to live in prison of my own thoughts . . . but I tell you what happen there, at Monastery."

I waited. Ivan would sometimes begin to tell one something; the kaleidoscope of his memory would turn; he would tell one something else, out of his curious history.

"One evening I look out from my window on steppe," he went on. "I see some lights there, some fires—I don't know what. I think to myself I go out there, to see what might be happening. So I go. I come to some tents, with fires. I find some Kirghiz men there, in middle of tents, drinking, smoking, with many camels everywhere. It was their camp for the night. Well. They ask me to sit down with them. To drink. To talk. To smoke. I did. Very fine people, the Kirghiz. Very courteous people. We talk long time—I know their dialect—we have food. We drink some more.

"The chief Kirghiz (one Nikanor was his name), he tell me 'anything he had was mine.' That is the Kirghiz way with guest. Very late, the Kirghiz women, they come to dance for us. Then we have more drink. I begin to think to myself that I get back to Monastery. And I begin to think what I might have in pocket to give to Nikanor, my friend, as gift.

"So I look in pocket for some gift, to remember his hospitality. I look in all pocket. Find nothing but little mirror, as big as kopek-piece. Little round mirror,

with picture of Kremlin on back. I remember I buy it when I get out of prison, to see how I look. Myself I have not see for long time, in prison. I find it now, in pocket. (Nothing else for gift in pocket.) So I think maybe I give that to him.

"I show to him.

"'Ah-h-h!' he say, 'and what is this?"

"'A mirror,' I say.

"'And what is that—a mirror?'

"'To see yourself in.'

"'But who is that man in there?'

"'That is yourself, I tell you.'

"'But is it genuine—or is it false?'

"'That is yourself.'

"'Ah-h-h! *Myself,* now! That is a pretty thing to have. You wait until my wife, Naza, she see this. This is a very fine thing!'

"Well, his hand shut on the mirror, and he look at me, thinking. After a while he say: 'Maybe I could buy this from you. This is the most beautiful thing I have see anywhere.'

"I shake my head, and I say: 'No, no, you could not buy it from me.'

"He look disappointed. He give me more drink, and finally he say: 'I must have this, to give to my wife, Naza. I will give to you anything I have.'

"But I shake my head and say: 'No, I could not sell it. I will give it to you, Nikanor, my friend.'

"*'What!'* he say. 'You *give* this to me? No, no, my friend, you could not do that. This thing is too precious to give. I could not let you do a thing so foolish as to give this to me. I buy it from you.'

"I do not know what to say to him. I am ashamed. A little mirror worth two cents—three cents—five kopek, and I cannot persuade my Kirghiz host to accept. It was very embarrassing to me.

"Well, we have some talk, some lot of talk, and I see that he must buy, to feel proper to guest, so I say, to please him: 'Well, how much you give?'

"And he say, quick: 'I give you a camel for him.'

"I laugh, and I say: 'A camel! Ah, no, Nikanor, I could not let you give a camel—that is too much. You need all your camel to travel. A camel!'

"And he think I think one camel too little for my mirror—my precious mirror! He think I wish to bargain. And so he say: 'That is not enough? I give you two camel—a mother and her daughter.'

"I see I must not laugh any more. He would be offended. So I say to him: 'What would I do with two camel? I live in Monastery some little time yet. After, I go, I do not know where. How would I feed two camel? Where would I tie two camel? Who would ride two camel with me? I do not know how to ride camel.' I am very ashamed now. I do not know what to say. He have only five camel, and he want to give me two of them, for little mirror worth five kopek! And I have nothing else in pocket to give to him! ('You do not have many thing in pocket when you leave prison,' he added, apologetically.) And I say: 'I live in house, Nikanor, with only lamp and book. I do not travel. I have no room for camel to stay.'

" 'Have you no wife?' he ask. 'Somewhere? Waiting for you?'

"And I say: 'No, no wife somewhere.'

"And he say: 'Some day you find wife—every man have wife. You need camel then for travel. You need two camel. I give you this mother and her daughter.'

"And I say: 'Well, maybe. Some time.' I do not know what to say. And then I think I ask him—(it is very late, and I must go back to Monastery)—'How would I feed two camel?'

"And he answer, quick: 'I give you hay to feed—hay for long time—I give you hay for six days' travel!' And he look in mirror again.

"So I say, 'Well, some day I come and get these two camel from you, and find wife to go with everywhere. Now, I must go back to Monastery.'

"He is very pleased. He give me more drink. And then he say: 'I will keep camel for you, my friend. Some day you find wife to go with you!' And I say: 'Maybe . . . maybe. . . .'

"And he say: 'Maybe I leave camel for you, somewhere, if I go far away?' (For we have talk of Tartary, and Thibet . . . China.) And I say: 'Yes, yes—leave my two camel for me somewhere, if you go far away!'

"Then his wife, Naza, come from other tent with hot tea. We drink. He show mirror to her. And she look in mirror like child—like cat—then reach back of mirror to see where woman is. And he laugh and tell her no woman there—only herself. Then she clap hands and say to him, 'Is it yours?' And he say: 'I buy it for you with two camel!' And his wife Naza, she very pleased. She dance for me, holding mirror in hand. And fire shine in her eyes. And fire shine in mirror.

"We drink much hot tea, and all women from other tents come and look in mirror and clap hands and eyes

shine. One very pretty" . . . the Russian mused, absently. "Very pretty . . . brown, and slim, with red handkerchief on head. . . .

"After long time, I walk back to Monastery of Terek. And my friend Nikanor, the Kirghiz, he walk back with me, and shake my hand and say he keep two camel, the mother and her daughter, for me, until we meet again.

"And next morning I look out of Monastery window. Tents all gone—tents, camels, women, fires—everything. And I feel in pocket to find mirror. Mirror all gone, too.

"I think I dream this, maybe.

"Well, I stay in Monastery two weeks more. I translate book from Sanskrit to use my time. I talk to my brother, who was monk there. We do not see each other for many year.

"Then one day I think I go. I have forget all about this Kirghiz and the mirror. I drive in cart with ox from Monastery on steppe of Terek, fifty miles, to Astrakkhan, where railway is. I go to inn—khan they call —big inn, where I know innkeeper since child. My father often take me there. I go in khan. I find innkeeper—name Arim Hai. He is very glad to see. He think me never come back. He say to me: 'Ah-h-h! Sergei Ivanovitch! A friend of yours was here a week ago.'

"And I say: 'What friend?' I do not think I have any friend in Astrakkhan since child. And he say: 'A friend of yours—a Kirghiz—a Kirghiz name Nikanor. He leave you something until you come. He say you come some day here.' (Then I remember I tell the Kirghiz that I stay with Arim Hai in khan, and he tell me he know Arim Hai also.) Arim Hai was very old man. He know

many people from everywhere. Some day I tell you about Arim Hai. . . . A very strange man. . . .

"And I say to him: 'What is this "something" that he leave for me?'

" 'He leave you two camel.'

" 'Two camel?' I say, and then I remember the bargain, and I say: 'And where did Nikanor the Kirghiz go, then?'

" 'He went to Tartary,' say Arim Hai, 'and he say you come here some day, and get these two camel—a mother and her daughter—very fine camel, Sergei Ivanovitch! Come, I show to you.' And he lead me to courtyard of khan—inn—and show to me two gray camel tied to log of wood. Very fine camel, indeed. Arim Hai pat them on head. They chew. 'A very good friend of yours,' he say, 'the Kirghiz, to leave you two camel like this. Many people come to buy these camel when they see. But I say, "No, these camel wait for Sergei Ivanovitch, my friend." The Kirghiz leave hay for you, to feed them, long time—but come, you are tired, you would like some drink.' And so we sit by table in courtyard all afternoon and drink. Arim Hai tell me many things. I have not seen him in long time. Many people come to his khan. He know many stories. . . . I tell you some time.

"And when early dark, he suddenly touch his forehead and say to me: 'My friend, I am getting old—I forget things. The Kirghiz leave you something else!'

" 'Ah-h-h! something else!' I say, 'and what will I do with something else? I already have two camel—a mother and her daughter—that I do not know what to do with! And a bundle of hay. I cannot ride them. I cannot keep them in my father's house in Moscow. I can-

not sell them because they are not mine . . . what will I do with this something else that you say Nikanor the Kirghiz leave for me?' And then I wish I had not had that mirror with the picture of Kremlin on back in pocket, that night on steppe of Terek. I wish I had not wish to see myself when I came from prison!

" 'Well . . . what else did he leave for me?' I ask Arim Hai, after I think a little. 'Where is this something else?'

" 'Ten thousand excuses,' he say, 'I do not know why I forget to tell you—I am getting old—I was so proud to show to you your beautiful camels, the mother and her daughter—that I forget all about the girl.'

" 'The *girl!*' I say. 'What girl?' And I drop my glass and break it on the ground. 'The Kirghiz leave me a girl? What will I do with a girl?'

" 'Yes, yes,' he say. 'Da, da, da, Sergei Ivanovitch, he leave you a girl, and I swear to God I forget all about her! After all . . . a girl . . . when you have two very fine camel, a mother and her daughter?'

" 'Well . . .' I say, after while, 'I think about this.

" 'Where is this girl?' I ask.

"The innkeeper turn around and show me little window in top of inn. And leaning out of it was Kirghiz girl, with red handkerchief on head . . ."

"The pretty one?" I interrupted.

"Yes, the pretty one . . ." he answered, absently, after a silence.

"Well . . . I look at girl in window. I look at Arim Hai, the innkeeper. He had fall asleep. He was very old. It was not strange that he forget about the girl. But I . . . I was not so very old. . . And I look at my

two camel, the mother and her daughter, eating hay in the corner of the courtyard. And I think to myself . . . all this for one little mirror, worth five little kopek? And first I think to myself: I go away now, and leave them to the old man. He is asleep. What are all these things to me? And then I think to myself: 'What will they eat when they have eaten all the hay?' And I think to myself: 'Why is this? I come to the Monastery of Terek, in the middle of the steppe, to rest, to think, to make up my mind what to do with life. . . . I look out of window at night . . . and all these things happen to me! All for one little mirror!' You think it strange that a Kirghiz had never seen mirror? I tell you it was so. That was a very long time ago, now." (The Russian spread out his lean hands to the fire and gazed at them, as if to count the years that had made them tremulous.) "Mirrors were new. A Kirghiz who live in tent sees few market-places. Well . . . I think I cannot go away and leave these things. I could not give them back to Nikanor. He was gone now one week, to Tartary. I think it is Fate that bring me two camel . . . and a girl. I think to myself: 'Here are these things, like new books on table. I did not want them, but here they are, for me to do something with.' I do not know what. And I look up at window and see girl there . . . she smile at me, and the last sun fall over the city of Astrakkhan and make her face shine. And I remember all those women with shining faces who look in mirror, that night by fire outside the Monastery of Terek. And I think to myself: 'You big fool . . . you drink that Kirghiz' wine. You eat his food. You smoke his tobacco. You drink his tea. You take his hospitality, and you do not know how to give

him a little gift without bringing to yourself two camel and some hay and a girl that you do not know what to do with.' And I curse myself for a fool!

"But I think I drink some more, and maybe I see what to do with them. And I think to myself what my brother who was monk at Monastery of Terek had say to me when I leave him. 'Sergei Ivanovitch, you are going. I may never see you again. Take care of yourself. You are impulsive. You like women' . . . he say . . . 'but you are an intellectual. Have little to do with them. God be with you.' And I remember I laugh and say to my brother: 'It is very well for *you* to think these things . . . you are a monk . . . but as for me' "—the Russian raised his hands and laughed a little sadly—"maybe it is different.

"And I think to myself if my brother see me in that courtyard, the owner of two camel and a Kirghiz girl with red handkerchief around head . . . and I think to myself if my father in Moscow see me come in his courtyard riding a gray camel and leading another with Kirghiz girl on it—what would he say? And I think to myself many things. Then I shake Arim Hai by the shoulder to wake him up, and I say to him: 'Let us have a little drink.'

"And he bring three bottle of cognac, very dusty, three bottle that French Colonel leave to his father many years before this. And we sit there in courtyard. We talk, and gypsies come and sing for us good song, and we drink more, that cognac . . . we sit there all night, and Arim Hai tell me many stories. I tell you some day, when I remember. We drink all those three bottle cognac, little by little, the way Russians drink—not gulp. And after

while I ask Arim Hai: 'Did the Kirghiz expect to come again, and what did he wish me to do with girl?' And the innkeeper say the Kirghiz leave her to me for a wife. He think I need wife, maybe. He say this girl good girl . . . . make good wife. And I say I am too old to marry young girl. And Arim Hai say young girl need a man old like myself . . . (although . . . I was *not* so very old!) And I say, 'No, I travel much. I need no wife. Some time maybe . . .'

"And he nod his head, very drunk with cognac, and say, 'Yes, yes,' and he say an old proverb: 'He who takes a wife may find it difficult to take a journey when he wishes. Women are the baggage of caravans.' And I ask if all Girghiz go away with Nikanor to Tartary, and first he would not tell me. But we drink some more, and then he say, 'No, not all. One boy stay behind to feed the camel.' And this make me think. And after while Arim Hai go to sleep in chair, very drunk, and I sit there and drink the last of those three bottle cognac left by French Colonel myself. Not always does drink help you, but sometime you see better what to do. So when daylight come, I look to see my two camel, the mother and her daughter, and they get up from ground like rocking-horse in circus. And I see Kirghiz boy coming in courtyard, to feed. And I look at Arim Hai. He was asleep, with blue fly on end of nose. I stretch myself like a cat, and I think to myself: 'Well . . . here are two camel. Here is Sergei Ivanovitch. Here are three empty bottle cognac. Here is morning. Here is Kirghiz boy . . . looking up at window in top of khan—inn—and I look there to see, also. Girl was asleep, leaning head on window. It was summer. And I think to myself what I do.

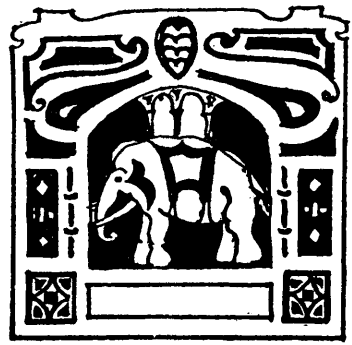
"But first I go to walk in the streets of Astrakhan and drink myself some coffee. And in market place I buy some red silk. Two cups. Some sandal with red heel. Some earring. Silver. Some perfume in little box. Some little thing . . . I do not know why. . . . I take them back to inn of Arim Hai. I find him in his kitchen, cooking lentil. I say to him: 'My friend, that was very good cognac. My friend, I am going away.' And he say: 'But, Sergei Ivanovitch—you have just come. Why do you go away? Do you wish your two camel—?' And I say: 'No, I do not wish my two camel. I go with train. But first I like some lentil. I am very hungry.' And then I say to him: 'Does that Kirghiz boy come many times in day to see camel?' And he say: 'Yes, the boy come very often.' And I say: 'Is he good boy? Does he drink too much?' And Arim Hai say: 'No, he is very good boy.' And so I send Arim Hai to bring girl to me. She came . . . and she is very pretty . . . Nadezhda is her name. . . . And Arim Hai show me to her and tell her I am her master. And she smile and remember me, and her face shine. And I tell her, no, I am not her master. And I send for Kirghiz boy in courtyard. Then I have more lentil . . . I am *very* hungry. And boy come, and I see what to do. So I say to Arim Hai: 'Find those people who wish to buy my two camel. I wish to sell.' And first he beg me not to sell my two camel, and then he go and get camel buyer. He come, and I sell one camel to him—the mother. Then I take money and give to girl, with red silk and cups and sandal with red heel . . . earring . . . . perfume . . . all that I buy in market-place of Astrakhan . . . I do not know why . . . I give her these thing for her dowry. Then I tell Kirghiz boy

to take her, and take other camel—the daughter—for his own. To marry her . . .

"And they go out of archway of inn of Arim Hai . . . presently . . . but the girl . . . she look back and smile at me, with red handkerchief on head. . . .

"And then, my friend . . . I curse myself for a fool!"

# The DAIMYŌ'S BOWL




Hiro-tani the Potter sat in the door of his shop and pondered as he gazed at the evening sea that lay over the lost city of Thoë. The sun had spilled upon the sea a glaze that swam and splashed and changed with the evening wind. How wonderful it would be to dip a new-made platter into it and catch the glaze! Hiro-tani thought—the glaze that was the sunset of the city of

Thoë. . . . The sun went out like a stifled coal and the glaze faded into the quiet water.

This was the burden of Hiro-tani the Potter.

Two days before, a horseman had halted at the door of his shop, bearing a Wish-command from the daimyō whose pleasure-garden lay along the slope of a near-by hill like an embroidered silken fabric upon a woman's shoulder.

TO THE POTTERS OF THE PROVINCE OF SALAN

Make for me a bowl like the moon,
That I may drink rice wine from it.
A green bowl as clear as spring water
And as thin as incense smoke.
A green bowl shaped
As a young woman's breast. . . .
A bowl so strong
That boiling tea will not crack it.
So green as to be the moon
In a darkened room. . . .
So thin that the wind will sing in it
When it is empty. . . .

And to some potters had been granted fourteen days, to some nine, and to some five days, according to their skill, but to Hiro-tani the Potter only three days were given, ending with the coming of the Second Moon of spring.

Of the lesser potters a few had fled the province; some had tried, failed, and were executed, and their heads impaled over the daimyō's gate. Others had been judged of no consequence.

When the moon hangs like a lantern
Above the Hills of the Haunters . . .

Set the bowl afloat upon the little stream
Beyond my garden wall . . .
That it may come to me in my tea-house
Lighted by the moon. . . .

So ended the daimyō's Wish-command to Hiro-tani the Potter. It was whispered by the horseman that the daimyō wished such a bowl against the maturage of the spring rice wine, which he tasted first, as lord of the province, each year.

The daimyō was all-powerful; if the bowl were not ready for the risen moon, Hiro-tani well knew that his own head would frighten evil spirits from the gate of the daimyō's garden, impaled upon a bamboo pole, and he was the last potter of Salan but the First Potter of the Empire.

Now Hiro-tani the Potter, albeit the son of a Samurai, had been born with the flame-stain of fear upon his shoulder, and for this reason the Samurai, his father, had not scrupled to disfavor him, until by some act he should prove the blood that was in him. And for this he had become a potter, wandering in distant lands, seeking the test of his courage.

And for this he went often by day (though never by night), into the Hills of the Haunters, where none dared, to a secret place that he had found, where fine porcelain-clay oozed from a crevice of the rocks, for the love of his clay-craft was strongest in him; and it was for this that he dwelt upon the sea-edge of the lost city of Thoë, which he had chosen to be his death-journey when the arid summer of his life should wane. But the fear of death was very strong in him, by reason of his birth-stain.

Since noon the bowl that he had made for the daimyō's wine had been firing in his kiln—a bowl made of the Haunters' clay.

He rubbed his chin meditatively and a little bell tinkled behind him. Some one plucked at his drooping sleeve. It was Han-Mow, his cat, come out of the darkness of the shop to remind him of the approach of evening.

Absently he caressed Han-Mow, his cat, and as darkness fell like a cloak upon the sea, he saw the green gleam of Han-Mow's eyes.

"Your eyes would make my glaze, Han-Mow," he said, aloud.

And Han-Mow, his cat, was frightened, and retreated into the shop.

Hiro-tani followed him, lighting a candle-end at his lantern-stand. As he held it up he saw a shadow on the window curtain—a shadow of a man holding a cup in his two hands, a cup from which he drank.

Now Hiro-tani the Potter was a fearsome man. He began to prostrate himself, but he recognized the shadow of his apprentice, Tama-tama, whom he had thought absent in the town.

"What is it that you are drinking, Tama-tama, in the dusk like a thief?" he asked, sternly, from his knees, being still in a dread of the shadow.

Tama-tama let fall the cup that he had drunk, and it was broken in many pieces.

"O Master Hiro-tani," he began, "it was your rose-glaze that I drank; it is sweet to the taste; it brings me strange visions."

"And who are you that you drink my costly glazes, Tama-tama?" said Hiro-tani, sadly. "Have I not rescued

thee from being a coolie, and given thee rice and a bed of straw, and employment?"

"All these things are true, master," replied Tama-tama, "but the rose-glaze that I drank is like no rice wine. I could not help drinking of it."

"Who told you that rose-glaze was sweet to the taste?" inquired Hiro-tani the Potter, contemplatively, being a man ever interested in curious things. His anger had melted; he had heard his own master in a distant land say that evil spirits oftentimes drank up the glazes left standing at night in jars and bowls, and that sometimes new vessels became possessed of fox-souls, and Haunters, and djinnee, in search of peace.

"One night I came upon Han-Mow, thy illustrious cat, drinking from a bowl," replied Tama-tama, "and after he had drunken he went and walked, as no cat walks, around the little lake in your garden, and his eyes were like two candles burning in a cavern. And I thought that if Han-Mow, your cat, drank the glaze, it must be sweet to the taste, and I drank of it, too, and beheld such shapes in the night as I never saw when there was mist on the sea."

"This is a curious thing," reflected Hiro-tani; but aloud he said: "Go, Tama-tama, my apprentice, and henceforth drink no more of my glaze that is made of peach blossoms and budding roses; likewise keep thou the covers upon the glaze-pots, lest Han-Mow, my cat, offend further."

Tama-tama went, with the visions of his glaze-drinking in his eyes, and Hiro-tani, his master, first locking Han-Mow, his cat, away in a closet, took up the jar of rose-

glaze that he had made that day, poured some of it into a cup and furtively drank it.

For Hiro-tani the Potter, being a thoughtful, inquisitive man, and a diligent potter, reflected that a glaze drunk by a cat who walked about the lake in the garden as no cat walks, and by an apprentice who beheld strange things in the night, might be worth tasting.

The rose-glaze was sweet, just as Tama-tama had said; he held it upon his tongue half fearfully; it was still warm in the cup; it was stranger than any wine . . . and the image of the woman whom he had loved in a distant land came vividly to him—a woman like a little almond-tree, who had eyes like green marsh-fire. She had died while Hiro-tani the Potter had been an apprentice himself, before he could marry her; had died leaving to him only a thread of her hair about a morsel of potter's clay for a death-gift, and a death-letter upon rice paper wound about it, a letter that he had read, and then burned in his kiln.

He had sown the ashes to the sea-roofs of the lost city of Thoë, for it is not wise to keep the writings of the dead about one.

But the death-gift he had kept because it had a thread of Y-sa-nami's, his love's, hair tied about it.

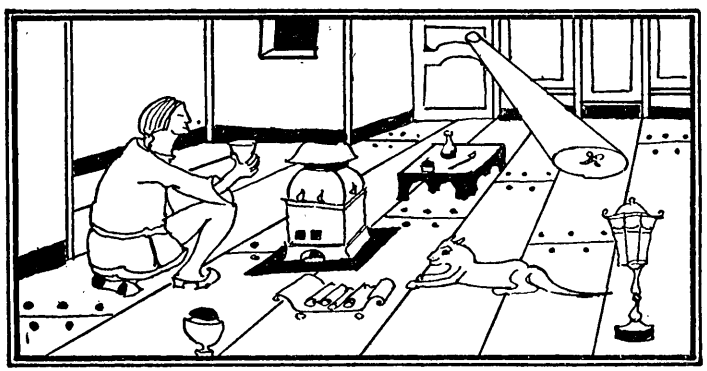
As he drank his rose-glaze the characters of the death-letter burned before his eyes:

Lest Hiro-tani the Potter
Shall need a bit of clay,
This almond-earth from my garden
Tied with a thread of my hair.

When Hiro-tani, my lover,
Shall leave his fear of death

Like a sandal at the door,
His little almond-flower tree
Will blossom in his heart.

And this was the living grief of Hiro-tani the Potter, that he kept hidden in a cranny of his heart; the piece of clay he kept in an ivory box, hidden away beneath a tile of the floor.



He drank again and again of the rose-glaze . . . and the ghost-self of Y-sa-nami, his love, came and stood upon a disc of moonlight on the floor, moonlight that came through the round keyhole of the door, and Y-sa-nami herself smiled at him and bowed her head three times; and when she was gone a petal of the almond-flower was where she had been, upon the disk of moonlight that lay upon the floor.

Hiro-tani the Potter drew a deep breath and looked about him. He felt again the fire that was of a lover, likewise of a potter. Certainly this glaze was a wondrous and pleasant thing, perhaps a wise thing, but not a thing for cats and potters' apprentices to drink! But in

his kiln he found a bowl cracked and blackened, and a despair took hold on him and a dread of the Haunters possessed him.

He came to the window that was upon the quiet sea, and slid the shutter, and looked upon the green moon that dripped and floated and flashed upon the dark mirror of the sea, and he poured more rose-glaze and drank it, and dreamed of the city of Thoë. But his diligence dragged his thoughts back to the daimyo's bowl that he must make on the morrow, or else he die.

And a faint cry came from the closet where Han-Mow was put away.

Hiro-tani mused and dreamed in his window; the making of the bowl seemed not so troublous a thing now: he counted the curved crescents of moon that interlaced upon the sea water.

"If I take a flat bowl," he murmured to himself, "and dip it gently into the sea, I shall have a green glaze for my bowl and roof crescents of Thoë for handles."

His eyes wandered along the curving shore and rested on something green shining there, far brighter than the moon—a pebble, he thought.

Hiro-tani kept his eyes fixed upon it, fearful lest it disappear; he leaped from his window and ran down the sloping shore to the edge of the water; eagerly he snatched up the small, green, shining thing, and ran back to his shop with it, shut himself in, and lighted all the lanterns that he had.

Then he opened his closed hand to see what it was that could shine brighter than the moon. It was shining still,

wet with the sea water; it was like a coal of green fire in the yellow lantern-light.

It was a little carved god of jade, wound about with green weeds.

And as Hiro-tani looked at it, his eye glistened, and he knew it for a wine-god of Thoë, from the purple mark set on the lips. He knew what he should do.

"Tama-tama, my servant, thou hast opened my eyes," he cried, aloud, and the faint cry of Han-Mow, his cat, answered him.

"But thine own eyes were opened by Han-Mow, my illustrious cat," he resumed, and he loosened the door of the closet where Han-Mow was, and drew him forth and caressed him; presently he set for him on the floor a bowl of rose-glaze to drink.

Then, for a fever was upon him, he brought a flat stone with a hollow in it, and a round hammer of bronze, and began to pound the little carved green god, and to break the pieces into other pieces, and yet into smaller pieces, and thus to a fine green powder, finer than sea sand, or rice flour, or ashes of daffodils.

The green stone was very hard, and the hammer was worn and warm to the touch when the powder was made, while Han-Mow, his cat, sat upon his folded fore legs and gazed green-eyed until the work was finished.

Then Hiro-tani lighted charcoal in his crucible, and poured the green powder into it, with wine and precious oil, and ashes of sandalwood, and other substances known only to himself and to his master in a distant land, and he made a green glaze.

The candles in the lanterns went out one by one.

Then, since he had had no food since the midday, he boiled rice and ate of it, extinguished the crucible fire with sand, covered the glaze with an old bronze dish, and stretched himself upon the floor with Han-Mow, his cat, in his left sleeve, as the windows were lighted by the lawn.

Hiro-tani the Potter was awakened by a clatter upon the tiled floor. Being still in the daze of little sleep, he rubbed his eyes and beheld Tama-tama, his servant, upon his face, the bronze dish upon the floor, and golden limes scattered about the shop.

"Thou art always letting something fall, Tama-tama," he said, sitting up. His eyes rested upon the crucible, which was empty.

"I came upon you sleeping, O master," said Tama-tama, rubbing his nose upon the floor, "and took the dish from the crucible to gather golden limes, thinking to please you, and when I returned I found Han-Mow, your illustrious cat, with his fore feet upon the crucible. And he had licked the last drop of the glaze from it. And his eyes were like two green jewels. He jumped through the window, and I was frightened and let fall the dish of golden limes."

"Go, Tama-tama, my servant!" Hiro-tani whispered. "Soil not the floor of my shop again with thy feet. Thou knowest not what thou hast done. But first find Han-Mow, my cat, and bring him to me."

And he bowed his head upon his knees and remained sitting until Tama-tama came with Han-Mow, the cat, bound in a piece of yellow silk and crying softly. Silently Tama-tama laid him at his master's feet, and sorrowfully he went away.

For a long time Hiro-tani sat bowed, then he took up Han-Mow, his cat, gently, and unbound the yellow silk from him, and looked into his burning green eyes.

But he said nothing, for the eyes were like those of Y-sa-nami whom he had loved in a distant land. . . .

For a long time he looked, and again a fever was upon him.

With his two thumbs he quickly pressed the two eyes of Han-Mow, his cat, and they fell into the crucible, and again he poured into it wine and precious oil and ashes of sandalwood and other substances known only to himself and to his master in a distant land. And he lighted charcoal and sat brooding before his crucible.

Han-Mow, his cat, ran thrice around the shop, crying in the agony of his blindness, and fled down the sloping shore and into the sea.

It was now noon.

And as Hiro-tani the Potter brooded over his crucible, and beheld the two eyes of Han-Mow, his cat, whom he loved, a tear fell from his eye into the crucible, and was mingled with the wine and the precious oil and the ashes of sandalwood and the eyes of Han-Mow, which presently became a green glaze, as clear as spring water.

Feverishly the potter toiled; he made a fire-mask for the daimyō's bowl; he lifted the tile from the floor and drew forth the ivory box, and he took the clay tied with the thread of Y-sa-nami's hair, that she had left him for a death-gift, and mingled with it the distilled perfume of the almond-flower, until it was soft, and upon his wheel he quickly turned, in the shape of a young woman's breast, the bowl itself . . . and again the death-letter of Y-sa-nami swam before his eyes. The bowl was thinner

than smoke, and so fragile that he took the wheel into the sun that was setting, turning it swiftly to keep the bowl from falling, until the sun had dried it a little.

Then he dipped the bowl into his green glaze and laid it tenderly in the fire-mask, and set it in the kiln. And darkness fell, with only the faint rose light of the kiln in the shop; the moon rose, and Hiro-tani the Potter drew forth the bowl, and it was finished. The first night wind cooled it in the open window.

It was a vessel as transparent as green spring water, thinner than incense smoke, green as the moon is green, and shaped as moonlight upon a young woman's breast. The night wind sang in it song-legends of the city of Thoë.

And in the bottom of the green wraith-cup was a crystal bubble, as clear as morning rain water.

And this was the tear of Hiro-tani the Potter.

With the bowl in his hands, shrouded in an ell of gift silk, Hiro-tani sped along the highway by the sea and up the hill to where the daimyō's garden lay like an embroidered fabric upon a woman's shoulder.

And in the murmur of the sea and in the cries of the marsh-birds and in the whisper of the trees he heard only the cry of Han-Mow, his cat.

In a little wood he found the stream that watered the daimyō's garden, and set the bowl afloat with the tiny petal of the almond-flower, that the ghost-self of Y-sa-nami had left him, in it.

He followed the bowl as it floated gently down the stream, striking small stones now and then, and giving forth a sound that was like the bell of Han-Mow, his cat. And as the bowl came out of the little cypress wood into the light of the Second Moon of spring he saw that the

thread of Y-sa-nami's hair had woven itself into the side of it, but it was a character that he could not read.

It was like a reflection of the moon; it was like a lantern buried in deep water; it was like a tear from the eye of the moon.

Hiro-tani followed it until he came to the wall of the daimyō's garden, and from his knees he watched it disappear through the small grating in the wall, left open by the diamyō's command.

He waited a little. He listened. . . .

A cry pierced the stillness as a sword severs a curtain of silk; a cry of admiration, of surprise, of awe—the tribute that comes occasionally to an artist, and once, perhaps, reflected Hiro-tani, to a potter.

And he stole sorrowfully away to the sea, and along

the empty highway by the lost city of Thoë, to his twice empty shop, to drink rose-glaze.

He was awakened out of stupor by a knocking. At the door were two servants of the daimyō, with drawn swords.

In silence they led him along the sea and up the hill to the gate of the daimyō's garden.

"Was not the bowl as your master wished?" stammered Hiro-tani. But they answered nothing.

In his tea-house the daimyō sat, and with him his magician, of another country. Three dancing-women crouched on cushions mutely.

The daimyō frowned when Hiro-tani stood before him, and his magician struck the bowl with his long finger-nail. The bowl gave forth a cry, and it was the cry of Han-Mow, the cat.

"There is a Haunter in the bowl, my master," said the magician.

"There are troubled images in it; there is a riddle in the bowl," said the daimyō, who made a sign to the two servants, who struck Hiro-tani to his knees, and one of them raised his two-handed sword.

"If the bowl be broken," said the magician, "the Haunter will return to the hills and no harm come to this house."

"The bowl is too beautiful to be broken," replied the daimyō, who was a fearless man. "This potter is the Haunter."

But as the sword hissed through the air the daimyō lifted a finger, the executioner swerved the blade, and it was splintered on the stone floor of the tea-house.

"It is an evil to attempt to kill a Haunter," resumed the daimyō.

"There is said to be a woman in the hills who can read riddles and cast out Haunters," hazarded the magician.

"What of her?" asked the daimyō.

"She is called the Woman of the Yellow Spring—the spring that once watered the streets of the city of Thoë," explained the magician, quaking.

"Go thou and fetch the woman," said the daimyō, sternly.

"Would it not be well to send this potter?" the magician argued, at his master's shoulder. "If he be a Haunter we shall have rid this honorable house of him peaceably. If he be only a potter he will be lost in the Hills of the Haunters and never seen again."

The daimyō reflected.

"Blindfold the potter's eyes and let him seek the Woman of the Spring," he said, finally. "If he be possessed, he can venture into the hills blindfolded, and if he is taken, it is of no consequence."

The magician drew a breath of relief.

And the two servants of the daimyō tied cloth about Hiro-tani's eyes, and led him to the gate of the garden, the magician following.

"How shall I find the Woman of the Yellow Spring?" asked Hiro-tani, as they pushed him through the gate.

"Go up the hill beyond the garden wall," whispered the magician; "follow the stream past seven water-clefts eastways and two windways, and in the roots of a ruined cypress seek a door of ebon wood with a tortoise-shell

upon it. Scratch with your finger-nails upon the tortoise-shell, and the Woman will open to you."

And when the potter's steps had ceased to crunch the moon-frozen grass beyond the gate, the servants tied the gate with ropes of black silk, lighted torches of cypress-oil; four fighting-men in dragon-masks of red lacquer beat with swords of bronze unceasingly the gilded wooden eave-bells of the tea-house, hung there to frighten Things, while the daimyō sat reflective, staring at his bowl, and the magician irritably plucked his beard.

Hiro-tani the Potter stumbled and fell and ran and crept and felt his way through the hills, past seven water-clefts (which he knew by the sound of them) eastways, and two windways, and found a spring that issued from a hollow in the roots of a cypress-tree in the rocks, for he dared not take off his blindfold lest he should see fear-some Things. There was a polished door of ebon wood in the elbow of the rock, with a tortoise-shell nailed upon it. He scratched with his nails upon the tortoise-shell, which made a noise like owls.

"Who calls me?" asked a gentle voice, and the voice was like an echo of Y-sa-nami whom he loved in a distant land.

"Hiro-tani the Potter," he answered, trembling.

The door was opened, and he felt a light through his blindfold. The Woman of the Yellow Spring looked long at him and said, softly, "Why does Hiro-tani the Master Potter come to the Yellow Spring with a bandage upon his eyes?"

"O Woman of the Spring," said Hiro-tani, "the daimyō of Salan sent me to beg you to cast out the Haunter from a bowl which I had the misfortune to make for him. If

you cannot cast it out I shall die, and the bowl be buried with me; the bowl is too precious to be buried."

"I will come," said the witch, and her voice was a ghost-memory to Hiro-tani the Potter.

She took him by the sleeve and led him past the water-clefts by turnings of her own, and down the stony hill to the gate of the daimyō's garden.

The Second Moon of spring had burnished the Hills of the Haunters; the gilded bells of wood were silenced, the silken ropes sword-severed, as the Woman of the Spring whispered softly at the cranny of the daimyō's garden gate.

The daimyō still sat in his carved chair, contemplating his bowl, but he had not drunk the rice wine that was in it.

It was now first cock-crow.

The Woman came into the tea-house, leading Hiro-tani by his sleeve. At the sight of her, shrouded in a single square of yellow silk, one of the dancing-women screamed and buried her face in cushions.

The Woman took the bowl from its slender stand of teak and looked long into it.

No word was spoken, but the magician coughed.

"There are eyes in the bowl," she said, finally—"the eyes of a god. . . . There is the hair of a woman's head, wrought to be read. . . . There is a secret to be told. . . . A promise is here. . . . There is fear in the bowl. . . . It is a crossing star of life and death. . . . Dead things of the sea and tender things of the moon. . . . Resolve awaits understanding. . . . Faith leads beauty. . . . I can read no more. Who looks into the bowl will find his answer."

"Remove the blindfold," commanded the daimyō.

And Hiro-tani looked into the bowl that he had made, and he saw the mirrored eyes of Y-sa-nami whom he loved in a distant land, but he said: "O Han-Mow, my beloved cat, you drank my glaze of jade, and your green eyes I wrought into this bowl there-for, lest I die, and because of my love for you a tear from my eye fell into the glaze and I used the death-gift of Y-sa-nami, my love, because of my fear.

*"I have no fear!"*

And he threw the bowl from him, and it was broken upon the great bronze gong that hung like a winter sun at the right hand of the daimyo. The gong shivered into clangor that shook the tea-house, and the sound of it eddied and tingled into music that was like laughter and crying together, and the Woman of the Spring came out of her veil of yellow silk (that was like a pool upon the floor) and fell upon the neck of Hiro-tani the Potter. She was a young woman like a little almond-tree, with eyes like green marsh-fire, and he looked well upon her, and saw that she was indeed Y-sa-nami, his love, come again to him.

And Y-sa-nami, his love, fell at the feet of the daimyō, crying: "This is my lover of a distant land, born with the flame-stain of fear. My death-wish in leaving him was for my bloom-return in his heart. I became the Woman of the Spring that sea-waters the jade-paved streets of Thoë, but for his fear of death I could not come to him. The breaking of the bowl was the ghost-battle of a wine-god intermingled with a fear, and battle-sung with a cloisonnéd hair of that Y-sa-nami's head that he loved. His tear of sweet tenderness has exalted my lord's cup!

I beseech thy august pardon for him, lord; his blood is Samurai, even as thy own.

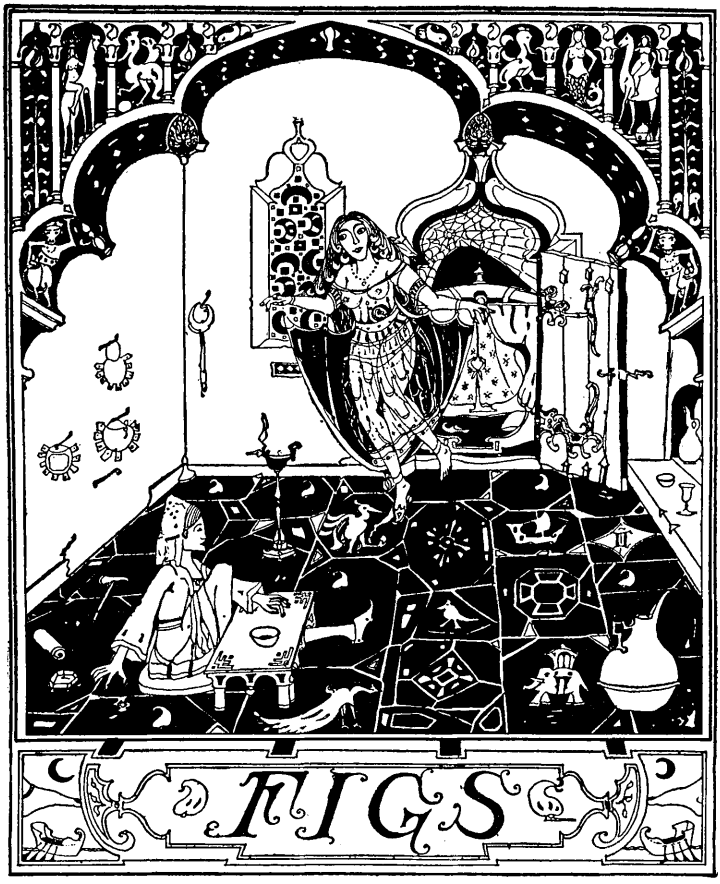
"The fear of Hiro-tani was left like a sandal at your door."

"Thou art a fearless man, to break a bowl of mine," the daimyō said, and lifted up Y-sa-nami from the floor.

By virtue of his rank he wedded them with two rings of jade from his thumb, while the magician, searching in a corner, found a glittering jewel like a spark of white moonfire. And this he slipped into his master's hand as these two went out of the tea-house into the sea-morning, and down the hill to the potter's house at the edge of the city of Thoë, escorted by servants with two-handed swords.

And the sound of a little tinkling bell, as of Han-Mow, their cat, followed them.

# FIGS




The stone leaves of the Gateway of Azure screamed upon their iron hinges, and the first pale javelin of the wolf-dawn entered Baladan, the Forty-towered, the City of the Seventy-eight Diversions. And after the light came an old gray camel, as the gate swung wide enough, but no wider—lest the djinn of the desert of Dugrane creep in to confound the sleeping city.

"And what bring you to-day to Baladan, O Illustrious

Ravisher of Young Fig-trees?" asked the sleepy gate-keeper of the rider.

And to him, as was his custom each morning, did old Dobryas, the Bringer of Figs, answer, from between the two high hills of his camel's back: "Figs, Thou Rusty Hasp of the Gate, purple figs for Farallin the City-king, velvet figs for Lullûme the Extravagant, his daughter, figs of an ebony hue and parched lips for the bees of the palace to make honey of."

For so exalted was the City-king of Baladan, that not even his morning-figs could enter the city without proper salutation and rejoinder. The stone gates were closed, and the keeper of them returned to his sleeping.

In the wall of the gate was a pierced window of stone lighted in the shapes of crescents and squares.

Rising in his stirrups, Dobryas the Bringer of Figs rasped upon the window with his camel-goad. A shuffling answered him, and a cedar door in the wall opened. A young man stood there, rubbing his eyes, a young man tall and comely, and with deep fastnesses in his eyes. And this was Parazoor, the Camel-shoemaker of the Gateway of Azure, which opened to the Desert of Dugrane in the Province of Baridia. And through this gate passed all the caravans from Mugayyar and Azuripanu and Bashime the river-city, and the Desert of Akkid, pausing to have new shoes of parchment fitted to the wide feet of the ships of the desert. For in the sands of the Desert of Dugrane was iron that unremembered rains had rusted, and long since had camel-drivers learned that the iron sands cracked their camels' hooves, and shod them accordingly.

To shoe a camel requires patience and dexterity, and

a deep understanding of many things, and these qualities were rare in Baladan, the City of the Seventy-eight Diversions, as, indeed, everywhere.

Hence was Parazoor the Camel-shoemaker, as his father had been before him, justly respected of all caravaneers. To him said Dobryas, drawing forth out of one of his two panniers a fig-leaf fastened with a thorn: "And have you, O gifted Shoemaker to Camels, been tasting of the City these three days, that you are not yet awake? Do you think that I journey to Mugayyar the Low-walled to bring figs to a night-waster? Your doorstep is yet unwashed, and the flowers carved upon it unwatered; your eyelids are drunken—your light is like a peevish child to the sun, and—"

"Most Excellent Stealer of Figs," retorted Parazoor, "you are Preceder to the Dawn to-day, you are earlier than the dew-coming; do you wish to rob the cock of his privilege, and the street of its morning-silence?"

Thus having begun the day with friendly malice, Parazoor brought from inside his shop a bowl of sour wine, and while Dobryas drank it, poured a jar of water upon his doorstep and stood upon it, for the mingled coolness of the stone and the water, and began to peel and to eat the three ripe figs that were in the leaf. The doorstep of Parazoor had come to him in this way: once a great satrap, journeying with flakes of marble and blocks of stone and slabs of cedar from a distant seaport, had passed through the Gateway of Azure on his way to build a villa for his favorite concubine in the hills beyond Bashime, and a worn leather thong had loosed a carved Byzantine capital, filched from a temple; it had fallen at Parazoor's door, and a floweret of it had been broken.

Thus had the satrap left it, feeling it to be unworthy of his concubine. And this had become Parazoor's doorstep, like a basket of flowers. And even as flights of steps give dignity to palaces, so did this carved capital give dignity to Parazoor; for every man was judged by his doorstep in Baladan, which was just and equitable. A man must be known by something besides his shadow.

Dobryas having finished his wine, balanced the bowl upon the hump of his camel, and returned to the attack.

"There are new characters written under your two eyes, that were not there yesterday," said he. "Have you taken to playing upon the *tarr* beneath the walls of the Palace of the Women of Diversion—or have you, at length, found the courtyard of the Dancers of Circassia—have you been drunken with wine, or with woman-craft, that your fingers are listless to-day?"

Parazoor lifted his head.

"Have you, O Maker of Many Speeches, ever seen the Extravagant Lullûme, daughter to the City-king?"

The old man rocked upon his camel.

"Hé! Hé!" said he, "so we are to have the sand-storm in that corner of the desert. Have I seen her. O Temple of Innocence, no man has ever seen her; she is as beautiful as the sun in a whirlwind, as inaccessible as the star that you see there upon the forehead of the palace; have I *seen* her! Have you, O Exalted Purveyor of Desert Shoes, have *you* seen her?"

But Parazoor would not answer him.

And Dobryas, having sharp eyes, saw many things in the open courtyard of the youth's demeanor, saw that his face was extenuated by ardor and lamentation and estrangement from the object of his thoughts, and the

old man rubbed his long nose with the end of his camel-goad, and hitched himself forward, and spoke.

"Know you not, O Palace of Ivory, O Temple of Idolatry—O Empty Desert, O Doorway of Cedar-wood, that twenty-eight days following the feast of Marchesquane, the Pro-consul Shuqarkib comes in a ship from conquering the Phœnicians, to make marriage with Lullûme, Daughter to the City, and thus will the Empire of the Darkhool be wedded to the Satrapy of Phœnicia? Know you not that on that day, the Princess shall ride for a sun-hour through the streets of Baladan, with Farallin her father, the Most High City-king, in a litter open to the sun, and she without veils, that the populace may see her whom they shall relinquish, and know the truth concerning her extravagant beauty? Listen you not to the daily criers?"

The old man shook his head, and his long beard swayed with it.

Now many days before, certain things had happened to Parazoor, the one following upon the heels of the other, even as camels passing in the narrow street before his shop. And the first had been a gift from a wandering spell-weaver, who paid for the eight shoes of his two beasts with an ekka of gold, and a book, tied with a black hair from an Arab horse's mane. Parazoor had never had a book. He had opened it timidly. Its leaves were of parchment, cut in the shape of the city, which was square, without corners. And in the book were pictures, done in blue and in purple and in scarlet and in gold. Pictures of temples in skies, and chess-board courtyards, and ships, and young women and gardens and plane trees, of feastings and quarrels and comings and fare-

wells, and dancings and marriages and funerals, battles and stranger things, including purple horses with golden tails and blue eyes, giraffes and triremes of eighty oars, and divers things. . . .

And as Parazoor had devoured with his eyes the yellow leaves, the night had vanished, and the wraith-dawn walked the sky. He sat upon the floor of his shop and rocked back and for, the book upon his knees. And as each day grew, and the stone gates of the Portal of Azure opened to the morning, and to admit the Bringer of Figs, Parazoor's door had remained shut, and his doorstep unwashed.

And to him had come the memory of the words that had been dropped by passers-by concerning the beauty of Lullûme the daughter of the City-king of Baladan, she that was called Lullûme the Extravagant, by reason of her great beauty—"like the sun in a whirlwind," some had said, indeed; "like the early flower of the legistrina-tree," "as slim as a young vine." And these praises were traditional in Baladan, and in every mouth, since no man had ever seen Lullûme the Exalted and the Extravagant, whose title was Empress of the Full Moon and Priestess of All the Orchards of Baridia, the Province in which Baladan stood (as did Baridia in the Empire of the Darkhool). But such beauty as was hers always becomes known, as a perfume shut in a bottle is a little to be realized, as an apple shut in an ivory box betrays its fragrance to the unsuspecting.

Now the second thing that had happened to Parazoor had been on an evening when he had stolen out of his shop to buy date-meal and lentils, and had for the first time mounted the staircase streets to the higher town,

where the City-king's palace stood. And wandering in the street beneath the high-walled garden, whose cypress-trees were filled with linnets, exalting the velvet night, he had come upon a little door of hammered ebony with claspings of green copper, and flowered with pewter hinges. And having kissed the gate-step, which bore the legend of Lullûme inlaid in silver arabesques, was returning, when the sound of a litter came down the street, its trappings making the sound of *inka-sha-lak-ka-kat-tik-ka—inka-sha-lak-ka-kat-tik-ka.* And the Preceder of it rode upon a white horse, beating upon a wooden drum, with the sound of *pomm! pomm! pomm!* It was a litter of legistrina wood and silver, with yellow curtains and lattices of gilded reeds, and four peacocks most cunningly wrought, upon the corners of the roof.

The litter paused at the ebony door, very close to the wall, and by Parazoor, crouched in the shadow, was perceived, in the light of the litter-lanterns, a little foot that sought the step, through the parted curtains. A little foot curved as an arabesque upon a *tarr.*

The open door let light into the street, and the litter went on its way, with the Preceder's drum silent. But there was a smell of honeysuckle in the street, and a faint sound of *inka-sha-lak-ka-kat-tik-ka.* . . .

And he had returned through the street of the silk-weavers, whose dyed threads hung drying from the house-tops like loosened cobwebs colored by the dew, and a purple thread had caught the crescent in his turban, and he had drawn it to him, ell by ell, and had gone back to the gate of hammered ebony and fastened one end of it to the hinge of the door, and then had laid the thread behind him as he went, street by street, until he came to

his shop in the Gateway of Azure again, in order to remember all the turnings.

And this momentous happening brought smaller and more material ones in its train, even as an ant-queen moving from one hill to another, brings porters carrying food, and warriors carrying weapons, and the treasure of the queendom.

Now the third thing had been the stirring of the air of Baladan by all the bells of the forty towers, forewarning the celebration of the feast of Marchesquane—which is to say, The First Quickening—when all the populace thronged the streets with lanterns of parchment and masks of painted silk, to make merry in the seventy-eight ways of the city. And the bells had stirred Parazoor. But since these traditional diversions are ever for the full purse and the empty heart—and Parazoor had neither—he wandered pensive in the streets.

And the fourth thing had been that, still drunken with the savor of honeysuckle, and under the spell of the book, the ceaseless bells, and the sight of the Princess' foot and ankle, he lost his way, and strayed into a fountained courtyard where women danced upon a purple carpet lighted by bowls of burning cinnamon oil at its four corners. And leaning against a column in a spell, Parazoor was entreated by one of the women who had not yet danced her dance. She was heavily veiled, and a Circassian in appearance, and she led him by the sleeve along a passage and into a tiny room, where she bared her arm to the shoulder for him to see, and poured sweet wine into an ivory cup for him to drink, and sang to him, a little song of enamourment, and drew away from him in expectation.

But Parazoor remained listless, staring at the wall.

"And where," asked she, softly, "is my lord's sight wandering, that he will not look upon the forearm of his slave, nor quicken to her song of love, nor drink his wine to The First Quickening?"

And she entreated him further.

But of the ways of women Parazoor knew nothing, and he was perforce silent and abashed. Now this was not one of those who sang for guile, nor danced for money, nor made of love a calling, but one who had stolen out into the town to play a part for mischief, and had seen that Parazoor was a comely lad, and so had inveigled him. And being herself little versed in the ways of men, but deeply versed in guile, their commerce was as the imagery of song-makers, and her entreating was as the wind to an almond tree.

"Have you, O Risen Moon upon Still Water, ever seen the person of Lullûme the Extravagant and the All-beautiful?" he asked.

The woman laughed.

"And is *that* the oasis of your wandering," said she, "is that the star that guides your caravan, and the meaning of your ways?" But being a crafty woman, she questioned him.

"I saw her foot alight upon the gate-step," he reluctantly acknowledged. "Her ankle was curved like the neck of the swan."

"Was it more curved than mine?" asked she, and thrust out her foot, and dropped her sandal, that he might see her henna-painted nails, and the figure of a dancing-girl drawn upon the sole of it.

And wine having somewhat instructed him, Parazoor,

the Maker of Camel-shoes, first kissed the hollow of her forearm, and then her lips, through her veils, and besought her for two single lashes from her eyes—and to her query, as she plucked them out: "To delineate this hour of you with lampblack and henna upon parchment, O Light in a Deep Well, O Flower-petal upon the Wind of Evening!"

And she, well-pleased, gave him a hair from her head also, and one of the velvet fillets around her ankle, and told him of the Princess Lullûme (describing herself), and having promised much and given little—for that she was playing a part (and yet giving more than she knew) —left him as the first light stole in at the door-cranny, and came to him no more.

And so Parazoor, after a waiting, went home to the Gateway of Azure, past the drunken lying in the streets, and the wakeful swinging their lanterns, and the sleeping flies upon the walls. And the hammers of the gold-beaters had just begun their day's work, for the gold-beaters' day begins with the sun that is like their tenuous fabric.

And having shut his door, and lighted his lamp, he set himself to work, and made two brushes of the eyelashes of the dancer, and two pigeon-feathers, and having selected from the heap of camel-shoes in the corner the best of them, and cut them by an eight-sided tile that he had, into the shape of the city of Baladan, he began to recall the words of the dancer (who had described herself), and began to draw upon the parchment shoes that had been polished by the sands of many deserts and the stones of many streets, after cleansing them with the milk of green figs and pumice-stone.

"Her head" (so the dancer had said of the Princess Lullûme), "is a little tower with a two-arched window in it.

"Her lashes are the fringed jalousies of a seraglio in the two window arches of the tower.

"Her nose is a thin column between the arches.

"Her mouth is as the bow of a Scythian archer, made of mountain cherry-wood, carved with steel.

"Her hair is a blue forest of dusk that knows the shape of her knees.

"Her neck is a white pharos upon the island of her shoulders—and her shoulders are two dunes molded by the sea and polished by the wind.

"Her arms are the string-stems of lutes, and the veins of her forearms are like the fine green veins in Istrian marble.

"Her fingers are so long that five rings may fit upon one of them, and her hands are like little birds that have no homes, like little slender white foxes her hands, that seek in the forest of her hair for refuge from their loneliness.

"Her feet are two delicate bridges, and her sandals are galleys dancing beneath them.

"Her ankles are as the delicate stems of lotus flowers, and her legs are curved as slim Greek balusters of ivory carved for a litter.

"Her instep is like a suave word in a silence, and her two knees are pointed as the ivory prows of triremes."

And the dancer had paused—but being urged:

"Her ears are as half-opened lilacs, and her two breasts are as two domes beyond a horizon, set with mosaicry of tourmalines and turquoises—with finials of chrysoprase.

"And her thighs are as the columns of a temple . . ." (but this she whispered so low that he could not hear).

But she told him other things; that the sound of the laughter of Lullûme was like wine poured from a yellow gourd; and that she moved in her gardens as a loosened water-lily floating in a pool; that the fragrance of her body was such that often the bees came to find her in perplexity; that her chin was a cup of pale ivory, and her eyes two blue opals inset with ebony . . . and her love of figs was as the love of the sea for ships, to devour them.

These things had his cup-companion told him, in the span of the night, and Parazoor remembered them one by one, as the hoarder of butterflies cherishes his treasure of golden and purple wings.

And having set the two eyelashes into purple pigeon-feathers for brushes, and having set his jar of henna and his jar of lampblack and honey before him (these that he used for marking the inside of camel-shoes, as had his father before him, with the sign of an open gate, and for tinting bridle-threads), he began to draw the Princess Lullûme, the Arch-extravagant, and to compose verses to her.

And at this oblivious pursuit he had remained for three days and three nights, heedless of the cameleers who clamored at his door for his offices, heedless of the passing of Dobryas the Bringer of Figs, each wolf-dawn, heedless of food and of wine; drunken with the savor of honeysuckle, and—though he did not know it—with the sound of the dancer's voice in the little room—which had been as the pouring of wine out of a yellow gourd.

And love lent to him skill, and the freshness of his mind gave him perseverance, and the haunting perfume of honeysuckle in his nostrils gave him insight, and the eight-sided parchment pages of his celebration of the extravagant beauty of the arch-princess Lullûme grew many upon the wall, and the heap of camel shoes in the corner grew less, and the eyes of Parazoor grew weary, and his body thin.

And out of the book of the Seller of Spells he took courtyards and lofty rooms, and terraces with magnificent fountains, and towers with cypress trees and falcon-nests in them. And triremes of golden oars, and cities upon hills, to embellish the Book of Lullûme that grew under his deft fingers. And in each picture was Lullûme herself, now dancing, now bathing in a circular pool whose water flowed from pelicans' mouths. And now enthroned upon an elephant's head, with a jeweled minaret canopy over her, now riding upon a black Arab across a bridge of gold, now enthroned upon the deck of a royal galley. And once he drew the door of his own house, with Lullûme standing in it. . . .

And the more that he depicted the unseen Princess, the more enamoured he became of her, and saw her in the niches of his fancy as a woman beyond delineation—and so strove the harder, for in the book the Seller of Spells had woven an unseen web, and the dancing-woman had woven another across Parazoor's mind, and in the silent stretches of the nights her voice lingered in his ears, and since he had never heard another woman's voice in intimacy, it became the voice of Lullûme that he heard—and the two spells were joined in wedlock in him.

And for purple he killed a pigeon in his small courtyard, and mixed her blood with plum-down and sweet vinegar, and dyed sand from Egypt; and for blue he broke a lapis scarab and powdered it with pigeon's egg and honey; and for green he climbed to the roof of the Gateway of Azure, and collected the verdigris of the air from its plates of copper, mixing it with sour wine and green figs; and for red he used henna, except that for the lips of Lullûme he used the few drops of the blood of a jealous woman that his father had left him (he having been versed in many lores, and having taught his son many resources, having been a litter-maker in his youth, and aware of many secrets of coloring and dyeing, including the proper redding of ivory and the embellishment of leather).

And for gold Parazoor used what the wind left for him on ledges, for even as the caravans left their shoes at his door, before venturing into the desert, so did the wind leave its shoes of gold as it came down the street of the gold-beaters higher up in the city, to wander the desert for its own purposes.

But this gold he used sparingly. And having at the

end of the three days and nights used all of his camel-shoes of parchment, and all of his lampblack in coloring the hair of Lullûme, and his blue for her eyes, and his purple for her garments, and the few drops of the blood of a jealous woman for her lips, Parazoor stretched himself, and into the open door of his hearing had come the signal of Dobryas, and he had opened to him.

"For three days you have neglected your shop and your honorable calling, sitting in dreams and slothfulness," continued Dobryas, scoldingly.

"But I have *not* been idle," proclaimed Parazoor, and led the old man into his shop, and showed him seventy-eight drawings upon parchment that he had made and fastened in the crannies of the masonry with thorns.

And Dobryas shook his head still more.

"Know you not that the person of the Princess Lullûme is forbidden to the imagination?" said he. "That no carver of ivory may turn his tool to a figurine of her, nor any fashioner of songs tune his tarr to the beauty of her name—which is not to be bandied, nor even whispered (without the utmost dignity)? Know you not that it is sumptuary that her beauty be as a perfume in a tightly-stoppered bottle—as an apple in an ivory box, kept inviolate from all minds—to be suspected, and not tasted? Thou fool!"

But he said the last with no vehemence, for in his youth had Dobryas looked to high places, being himself the son of a sheyk, and because he remembered that the father of Parazoor, his friend, had been mace-bearer to a distant king, so he added more softly: "It was not for mere earning of date-money that the illustrious Dovan, your father, who had such a beautiful shadow,

taught you your skill in threading devices upon saddles, and devious and intricate stitching of horse-hair upon bridles and the proper sewing of parchment with thread of silk-worms. Why sat ye here so long, idly and humbly, as a camel-cobbler to merchants? Have you not more exalted pride in your veins, and more arrogance in your nostrils, than to kneel forever at the heels of desert-ships. Have you not a doorstep with flowers and peacocks carved upon it, such a doorstep as cannot be found in twenty cities greater than Baladan—since it was a lofty stone brought low—have you not long fingers and a ready wit, and does not the Seller of Spells always stop to tell you a story of other places and other lives when he passes? The world is as wide as the sky, and the caravan routes as many as the spokes of a wheel; why linger you here, to torture your heart with impossible dreams, and devour your mind with the worms of longing?"

But Parazoor had turned away his face, and was plucking at a piece of sacking that hung by the window.

And as time dropped from the zenith to the pit, and the sun passed and repassed, the Gateway of Azure was thought to be the haunt of djinn by night; and the camels of three caravans had stumbled over unseen things in the dark not twenty cries from the gate, and had been dispersed. And so was the gate closed, to all except Dobryas the Bringer of Figs, to whom were djinn no more than flies droning upon a wall (nor to his gray camel), for the orchard from which the city-king's figs came was beyond that gate. But the caravans went out at another gate.

And so custom ceased for Parazoor, the Maker of Camel-shoes, since the caravans sought other entry and exodus from Baladan.

And as his earnings dwindled, and the slender store of them that he kept in a box vanished, Parazoor was driven to sell, first his tools, and then his new parchment for shoes, and then the lock of his door, which contained two little bells, that sang when the key was turned in it; and finally the day came when he had to sell his door-step that the satrap had left in the street. And being a simple youth, the buyers of these things cheated him. But not until hunger had driven him for seven days, and the morning-figs of Dobryas left him unfilled, did he finally sell the Book of Lullûme, four days before her marriage to the Pro-consul of Phœnicia.

And he took the book, tied about with the hair of the dancing-woman's head, to all the market-places. And no one would buy it of him, neither in the market-place of the sellers of scrolls, nor in the shops of the enamel-sellers; and not until he came to the street of the thieves' market did he find a peddler who would give him a silver coin for the parchment that was in the book. For the beautiful labors of love are ever thus disdained, and their value belittled.

And with the silver coin he bought date-meal, and egg-plant, and cracked rice, and ate of them, and sat down to die, since the marriage-banners already floated from the forty towers of Baladan, and the city was arrayed for the festival of the marriage of Lullûme and the Pro-consul.

And Dobryas the Bringer of Figs shook his head when he came on the next morning, and scratched his nose, and

when he came to the door of hammered ebony in the palace wall, and to his summons came Dractimerra, the hand-maiden of Lullûme, to take his bringings, he said to her: "And how, O Footstool of the Princess, is your exalted flower to-day?"

To which answered Dractimerra: "She has not slept; her days are numbered; she would escape the hour of her marriage, and go away and be no more a Princess, if she could," for Dractimerra was niece to Dobryas, and open of speech with him always.

"So," said Dobryas, "and has she other fashionings in her mind, that she looks not to the pomp of her marriage, nor to the exaltation of being queen of a satrapy?"

And Dractimerra the handmaiden replied: "It is even so, O Bringer of Dew-sprinkled Figs; her mind wanders to some distant land of her imagination, companioned by no other than a strange young man, who captured the citadel of her heart on the night of the Feast of Marchesquane, when—"

But a gong of iron rang beyond the courtyard where Dractimerra stood whispering, and with a finger to her lips, she sped away.

And Dobryas went to the house that held his camel and him, and no more (by day), and dug in the floor and took out a sack. And from it he drew pieces of money, and having fed his camel, he set off on foot to the Gateway of Azure, and there shook the door of Parazoor the erstwhile Maker of Camel-shoes. And to him came Parazoor, with despair in his eyes, and his hands filled with nothing, and looked at him.

"A caravan leaves by the Gate of the Gilded West, at sunup," said Dobryas; "take these and go with the cara-

van to distant places, and bring to mind your birth under the moon of the desert; look not to woman nor to dreams for solace, but to the tarnished stars that accompany every man in loneliness through the prison of his life. The daughter of a city-king is not for you. Is there not the blood of a mace-bearer in your veins, and did not your father leave to you the gift of acceptance? Go you to a foreign land, and become a litter-maker."

But Parazoor shook his head and closed the door, refusing the pieces of money that Dobryas offered him. And the old man went his way, wagging his long white beard.

And that day passed, and the next, with Parazoor sitting bowed behind his closed door, waiting for the sound of the bells that would foretell the passing of Lullûme from the city.

Now Dractimerra, the handmaiden, who was daughter to the tree-pruner of the palace, and who, herself, trimmed the raisin-colored plush-flowers in Lullûme's Morning-garden, and sprinkled dyed sand upon the pathways of it; gold for dull mornings, purple for yellow mornings, blue for noon, and who also fed the gilded gold-fishes, in the pools of the five-walled echo-courtyard, where bells of marble eternally told the passing of time, and fountains told the secrets of the distant hills, whence came their cool water.

And Dractimerra was a shrewd and astute wench, whose eyes saw much and whose tongue spoke little, and that to deep purpose, and she had seen, behind the lattice of Dobryas' eyes, that he had asked no idle questions of her concerning Lullûme, and had behaved accordingly, even as a woman, who sees the footprints of things of

import, and hears the things that are not spoken. And well she knew her mistress, as one woman knows another.

And so she said to Dobryas, upon the morning of the Pro-consul's coming: "And for whom do you tangle your brows, O Dobryas, on this day when the city greets the Ravisher of Phœnicia?"

And Dobryas said to her: "Towards the rising sun is a gate, and in the wall of the gate waits a youth in a fever; his hands pluck to pieces coarse woven cloth, and his eyes are turned to the wall. He knows not what he does; the dejection of his mind is so deep, and the hope of his heart so low."

To which Dractimerra listened.

"He has dreamed a dream, and entered into it," continued Dobryas, "and unless the woman of the dream enters into it also, he will perish, O Hand-maiden to the Sun."

"Is it the Gate of Azure?" inquired Dractimerra.

To which the old man bowed his head.

"And is not the holy well of Diermitrous beyond that gate?" she further inquired.

"Fifty cries," answered Dobryas.

At which Dractimerra smiled as a serpent smiles, and said: "Bid the youth raise his eyes above dejection."

For Dractimerra knew, that on the day preceding, had Lullûme the Extravagant craved of the City-king her father three wishes, in the guise of three whims, which had been granted, since she who had never been free was about to enter into eternal bondage. And the first whim had been to visit the quarters of the city that she had never known, in a litter unsignified of rank, quietly, as a woman who went where she would. And so had she gone, from street to street, from market to market, shuddering behind her black litter-curtains, to hear, perchance, a voice that lingered in her ears like an echo, peering at every passer-by, to see him whom she sought, a youth tall and comely, with quick hands, and the distances of love in his eyes. And so she came, unannounced by the Preceder's wooden drum, and with no sound of *inka-sha-lak-ka-kat-tik-ka . . . inka-sha-lak-ka-ka-tik-ka,* to the rag-pickers' market, where fragments of silk with figs and pomegranates woven into them were to be had, and squares of old linen, and strips of praying-carpet filched from temples and sold, and many things purloined by thieves. For their market was to the other as the fingers of one hand are interlaced with the fingers of another. And to her litter came the rag-merchants and the buyers of thievery, with many things in their hands, thinking her litter to be that of a woman who sought to find a stolen ring, or an ankle-clasp, or to purchase a spell to make unsalted bread bake or to entice the birds of the air to sing in a certain tree—for the sellers of spells crouched in every corner of the market, weaving the spells that they sold. And to all of them, from be-

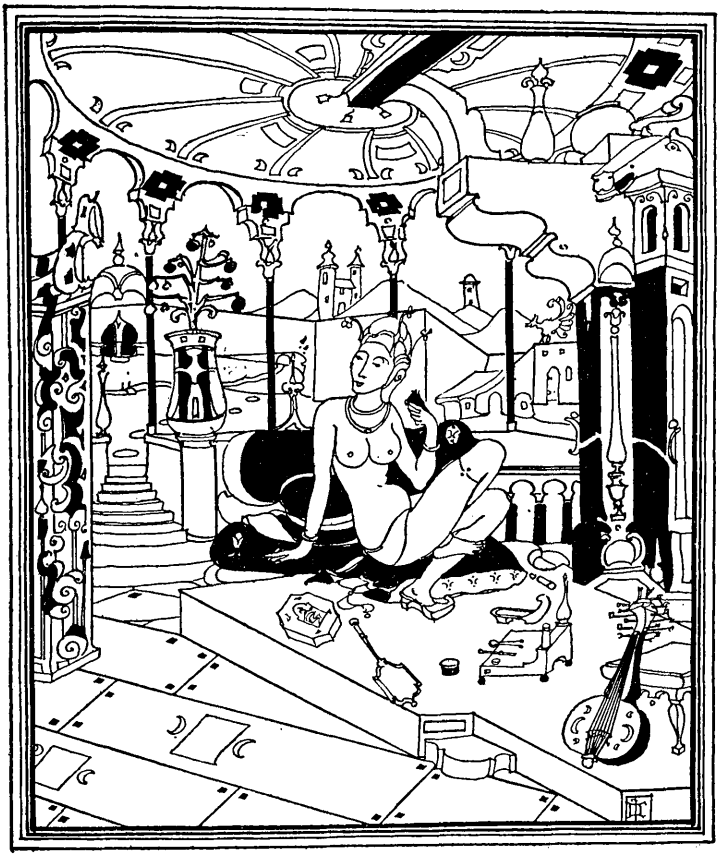
hind her curtains, she murmured the word of dismissal, peering through a slit in the silk that she had made with the dagger out of her hair, and searching each face restlessly.

Not until a tall buyer of thievery came with a mirror of shining bronze, that threw the boldness of the sun into the dark litter, did she stretch out her hand. The mirror had been stolen from the bathing-room of a noted courtesan of Baladan, and upon the back of it were inscribed verses of love, and voluptuous images.

And at the same time, a rag-seller approached the litter from the other side, with an eight-sided book of parchment, tied with a woman's hair, and she stretched out her hand for that.

And having looked into the mirror, and seen the two arches of her brows, with fringed jalousies over the windows, her nose like a straight white column between them, and her mouth like a Scythian bow of mountain—cherry-wood, carved with steel, and having broken the hair that tied the book, and seen that it was a blue-black thread like her own hair, and looked into the book; the heart of Lullûme became as a bird held in the hand, and eagerly she turned the parchment leaves, and looked at each of the drawings done in black, and in blue, and in purple, and in scarlet and in green, and in gold (but sparingly), and took up the mirror again and studied the truth that it held, and gazed from one to the other of the drawings, and found the same truth in them. And having summoned her Nubian, who stood with drawn cimeter behind the litter, she bade him pay the two sellers.

But of the rag-seller she asked: "Whence came this book tied with a woman's hair?"



And he, greedy of gold, told her many lies; that a bird had brought it to him, that he had found it in a doorway, that an old seller of spells had made it; and not until the Nubian had paid him thrice, and then threatened him, did he confess: "O Apple of Gold, O Flower of Perfection, I had the book of a tall youth, who himself had made it—it is, as you see, an adoration of the Princess Lullûme—may she be ever fruitful!"

"But the tall youth?" asked she.

"As to him I know nothing," answered the seller; "he came with a look of anguish, and went his way like the sun of yesterday."

With which she had to close her litter-curtains. But these matters she confided to Dractimerra her hand-maiden, who smiled, as she combed her mistress' hair, and said: "But has not my Little Flower of Love still two more whims to do what she wishes with?"

And she had much to add, mysteriously (until Lullûme the Extravagant beat her with a sandal on the following day), and then she wept (though the sandal was of the lightness of a branch of hyssop), and spoke.

"O Light of Understanding, O Beauty in Anger; beyond the Gateway of Azure is a holy well, not more than fifty cries of a camel-driver."

"A well!" began the Princess, but seeing the eyes of Dractimerra, she waited.

"The water of the well of Diermitrous," went on Dractimerra, trembling, "is very sweet. It is said that if a bride drink of it, she—"

At this the knees of Lullûme smote together, and her mouth became acrid at the word.

"But," sighed Dractimerra, with an eye upon the uplifted sandal, which had a gilded heel, "only the litter of my Princess need go to the well."

"And why the litter?" asked Lullûme, dropping the gilt-heeled sandal, and seeing a lantern afar in the speech of her hand-maiden.

"That *you* may be elsewhere, while the litter pauses at the holy well," stammered Dractimerra, but bravely,

being a woman speaking to another concerning an intricate matter.

Lullûme reflected, and to aid her reflection took up the bronze mirror of the courtesan and lost herself in it, until Dractimerra her hand-maiden insinuated the parchment book beneath her notice. And then she turned the book, leaf by leaf, finding here a young woman like a slim legistrina-tree, whose hands were (to the eyes of her heart), like little foxes . . . and here a woman mounted upon a golden phœnix in the sky, with her hair spread out like long plumes . . . and here a woman reclining upon a couch of blue and gold, and holding in her hands a pomegranate, of which she ate the seeds . . . and the two breasts of the woman were as two white domes upon the horizon of her body . . . and her legs as two slen-

der balusters of ivory carved for a shrine . . . and her shoulders were as two dunes carved by the sea. . . .

And she began to see the meaning of Dractimerra's words, that fell like wind-fallen flower-petals upon the garden of her mind, with the quick understanding that is given to women of high or low degree, and questioned her with her eyes.

"The gate is very narrow," said Dractimerra, "but wide enough for a litter, and in the wall of it there is a door, a door high up; behind the door dwells ardour and lamentation and estrangement, the three handmaidens of despair.

Lullûme the Extravagant nodded her head four times, as one who comprehended the universe, and gave to Dractimerra her sleeve-clasping, that was a dragon-fly of gold with green wings. And between them passed that accordance of understanding that two women share, without spoken speech.

And Farallin, the City-king, coming to visit Lullûme his daughter that day, was asked the granting of the second whim, which he, although a suspicious man and a jealous father, granted kindly, and with acquiescence, since on the morrow his holding of favors for her would cease.

And the following morning, when the bell-ringers were in the forty towers of Baladan, cleansing their metal with perfumed sand against the marriage ringing, Dobryas came to the door of hammered ebony, and held long whispered converse with Dractimerra. And she to her mistress brought the half of a newly-divided fig, and stained her sleeping lips with it.

And the dawn-bells rang in unison, and the women of

the bath came to wake Lullûme the Extravagant, and clad her in wine-colored silk, and new sandals made each of a single piece of amber, and a girdle embroidered with the eyes of peacock's feathers (after they had bathed her in the pool in her courtyard, perfumed with rare spices, and with flowers of the honeysuckle floating upon it). And they perfumed her hair with poppy-pollen, and put bands of gold about her arms, and threaded pale blue opals like tears through her hair. For this was the morning of her transfiguration to the populace of Baladan, and the day of her marriage to the Pro-consul. And the litter of legistrina-wood came to the door of ebony in the white wall, decked with branches of hyssop, and hung with ripened grapes, both white and purple, and Lullûme stepped into it, and the Preceder rode forward upon a white horse beating upon his wooden drum, and making the sound of *pomm! pomm!* And the litter harness made a song of *inka-sha-lak-ka-kat-tik-ka, inka-sha-lak-ka-kat-tik-ka,* as they set out for the holy well of Diermitrous, that Lullûme might drink of the sweet waters of it, and return to ride for a sun-hour with open curtains in the streets with Farallin her father, and thence to meet the Pro-consul her destined consort.

And the first couriers arrived in Baladan, to cry the coming of Shuqarkib the Pro-consul, who advanced through the desert from the West, with captive slaves and wines, and piles of vanquished shields in chariots, and Phœnician helmets upon lances, and figure-heads of captured ships, to lay at the little feet of the Arch-extravagant.

The litter traversed the city, first the great squares—where Lullûme, cowering upon her cushions—knew beau-

tiful buildings stood, by the sound of the pigeons (who, of all creatures, honor great works of architecture with their commentary). Then through lesser streets where men toiled at stone-cutting and wood-hewing, and then through the streets of the artificers of ivory and brass and ebony, and the streets of the thumpers of wet clay and the dyers of linen.

And even as the litter passed, the carved peacocks on the roof of it caught from the wind a thrum of silken thread, dyed purple, and it became fastened in their beaks. And this was the remnant of the thread that Parazoor had strung from the ebony door to his own house, that he might find the way again. . . .

The litter went past the open windows of the Street of the Gold-beaters, who were finishing the last platters for the marriage feast. And the beating of their hammers answered the beating of Lullûme's heart, and so she came to the Gateway of Azure, peering fearfully through her curtains. And as the litter paused in the narrow gate, awaiting the opening of the stone leaves, closed against the djinn of the desert—(who were not feared, however in daylight), she saw, opposite the curtains of her litter, a door of cedar, that stood ajar in the wall, and knew it, by reason of one of the drawings in the book of parchment, and being given the strength of love, which is understanding, and therefore moves not falsely, she leaped from the curtains of her litter and through the door, unperceived by the litter-bearers and the guards that stood behind.

And the gate being opened, the empty litter passed out into the desert—a casket robbed of its jewel, a flower bereft of its perfume.

And having reached the holy well of Diermitrous, the litter bearers paused, and the captain of the outriders stood on foot, awaiting the pleasure of Lullûme. And the priests of the well stood upon one foot and upon the other, in the burning sand, and the sweet water of the well poured unceasingly into its pool.

But no hand stirred the litter-curtains from within, and since no man could approach nor interrogate the daughter of the City-king, the captain to his first-man undertoned that perhaps the princess slept.

And so the litter stood silently, until the captain deemed best to return to Baladan, slowly, with the Preceder's wooden drum silenced.

Inside the door of the house in the wall of the Gateway of Azure had sat Parazoor, in a corner, with coarse cloth over his head, and ashes upon it.

And the sound of a wooden drum outside had seemed to him a dream, as did the song of *inka-sha-lak-ka-kattik-ka* that the trappings of the litter made. The soft closing of his door did not arouse him, but the perfume of honeysuckle that filled his empty shop made his shoulders quiver.

And Lullûme the Extravagant crossed the floor on her toes, lifting her veil of modesty, and knelt beside him, and took the coarse cloth of despair from his head, and with her hands entreated him to look at her. And she saw that his lips were stained with the hue of figs.

And thus was the first seeing of Lullûme by Parazoor, with the eyes of the flesh and the spirit together.

But being in the haze of hunger and despair, he thought her a beautiful djinn out of the desert, come to taunt him—having heard the gates scream upon their iron hinges a moment before.

And he was confounded, and could not gaze at her, because her exceeding beauty dazzled him, and the dark room was lighted in every cranny by her.

She smiled at him, and the fringed jalousies of her eyes were lifted to show to him their secret, and the perfume of honeysuckle stole away his surprise, and then her voice fell upon the loneliness of his heart as the memory of bells heard in childhood, and it was the voice of the dancer of Circassia, with whom he had sat in the little room at the feast of Marchesquane; it was she who had told him of Lullûme the Extravagant, and of all her perfections, and now he saw that *this* was Lullûme, and not the Circassian, and he was lost in wonder, and his throat was constricted and his legs feeble.

"I have come to you, O Maker of Beauty," said she. And her voice was like wine poured from a yellow gourd. "Did I not speak truly of Lullûme (the Extravagant no longer)? Did I not bring her to your eyes, as now I bring her to your arms? Did I not beguile you with true telling, and light the fire of your heart, and sing of the love of loves to you?"

"O Temple of Innocence," she said, playfully, "is there no understanding in the lips that spoke to me of Lullûme? Is there no answer in your heart, and are your hands not amorous of me?"

And straightway Parazoor rose up from the floor and kissed her feet, and the hem of her wine-colored garment, and looked fully at her, and saw that she was his, and said to her: "Flower of the Legistrina—Voice of the First Wind—Assuager of Thirst and Destroyer of Reason—how came you here?"

"By coming, Light of the Darkness."

And she took from beside her heart the parchment book and gave it to him, and from her girdle she took the mirror of the courtesan. "These two made known myself to me," said she, "made known you to me, and showed to me the road to the sun . . . you are the sky, and in your eyes are the places beyond the sky . . . you are the plume in the bridle of my horse . . . you are the Lord of my Womanhood!"

"I am the stirrup of your horse, the carpet upon your floor . . . the humble singer of your extravagant beauty, and the ashes of your fire," said he.

"You are the key of my palace, and the object of my desire," said she.

"You are the boundless sea of my surprise, and your hair is the mirage beyond it," he answered in kind.

And thus they babbled to each other, through the day, losing themselves in the labryinths of each other's eyes, heedless of the bells that rang in the city, heedless of the hue and the cry that filled the streets.

For upon the return of the empty litter to the palace, where Farallin the City-king had drawn the curtains with his own hands, and found the truth (and one sandal of amber that lay on the cushion where the Princess' feet had rested), the city was searched.

But when the searchers had come to the door of Parazoor, the dust of the desert that lay upon the threshold had deceived them as well as the spider-web across the top of the doorway, since the dust was of many days' thickness, gathered since Parazoor had sat within. Now Lullûme, in leaping through the doorway, had not touched the threshold nor the spider-web, with her feet nor with her head. And so did the searchers place upon that door

the mark of red chalk that signified that they had looked within.

And as darkness fell, and the lips of these two found each other, and the bells of the city ceased, Lullûme the Extravagant whispered secret things to Parazoor, and he answered her. And shortly before moon-rise a stealthy knock came at the stone window, and Dobryas the Bringer of Figs leaned from his camel and conversed in low tones through it. But it was not with Parazoor that he spoke.

In a cell beneath the palace, where bats were querulous, languished Dractimerra, the faithful hand-maiden of Lullûme, bound and gagged. And the soles of her feet were as fire from her punishment that had come to her as it does to every woman who endeavors to help another to her desire. But the tears that crept from her eyes were of gladness, that she had not spoken, and she beguiled her time in thinking of the third whim of her mistress. . . .

When the last footfall of the searchers had ceased in that quarter of the city, of which the Gateway of Azure was the eye, there came down the Street of the Gold-beaters Dobryas, with the feet of his camel wrapped thickly in soft cloths.

And in the darkness of the Gateway he stopped, and the door of Parazoor was opened with no sound.

And when the gray camel of Dobryas slouched through the gate, and the sleepy gate-keeper accosted the rider: "And what carry you to-day, O Exalted Stealer of Figs?" Dobryas answered him:

"Two young fig-trees to transplant in Smyrna, O Thou Rusty Hasp of the Gate!"

# The MANACLES of YOUTH


It was no part of the Donna Isabella's plan for that particular morning in the year 15— to do more than go to confession in the Cathedral (though in truth, she had little to confess), and perhaps to linger for a moment at the shop of a draper in the Piazza, in crossing, and to fulfill an errand of minor, but fragrant, import, at Miriano the Cosmeticer's, in the Via di Città.

Certainly she may have thought to buy a flower at the Fontana Gaia. *Ecco!* The Spring possessed the City of Siena as a lover, and one always walked with a *narciso* in the hand, to grasp some of the magic of Primavera—the first life, the time of the Carnival of Nature!

But beyond these simple things she had no inkling of what the day might afford, although many fancies flickered in the chapel of her mind like so many candles burned for wishes in a wind-swept church.

She saw herself as a wise and modest and seemly wife, and the grave and elderly Conte dei Surresti absent at his vineyards on Monte Oliveto—that blue mirage that one could see there in the sky to the west. And since a man upon such an errand could not well return until the morrow, it behooved a woman who saw herself his devoted and faithful wife to go to confession, that he might find her absolved and ready again for those small and charming sins that a wife may well countenance in herself without conscience in the presence of a wise and worshiping husband. And her fancy ran upon those other, less worn-on-the-sleeve delinquencies, common to all frail womankind, for which there is no foreseeing, but certain punishment, since the most careful may catch a toe in the net of circumstance, even in drowsy Siena.

So thought the Donna Isabella, idly, as she entered the dish-shaped Piazza, and lowered the hood of her cloak to cover her blue eyes and some part of her oval face. A chin, she reflected, does not attract too much notice!

For she always—being indubitably beautiful—walked the streets with her eyes downcast, and wearing a cloak, for there were sharp eyes in Siena, and sharper tongues, and although it is well-known that dogs bite the ragged,

it is equally well-known that dust settles upon the rare flower that is not shielded.

And Donna Isabella had had occasion to learn how certain things happen for which there is little explanation and no remedy.

Notwithstanding, neither cloak nor hood could conceal the pure loveliness of her person, nor could even the purblind fail to perceive that beauty walked in her even as a ray of the sun moves through gray clouds.

Now in the University that adorns one of the three hills of Siena—(to which cauldron of learning came young men of birth and temper from all corners of Europe to ease their souls of curiosity, and also to feast their leisure upon the far-famed beauty of the Sienese women, thus mingling bland education with sharper things)—there was a certain Gascon. And this Chevalier Denys Raoul de la Tour du Fec, so the town-gossip ran, was always in hot water; now coming to blades outside the Porta Camollia at daybreak with some German cadet over the respective virtues of the wines of Gascony and of Rhineland, or with some equally quarrelsome Spaniard respecting the women of their several provinces. To say nothing of his begging in the Piazza disguised as a mendicant friar, humble in demeanor, but addressing glittering and sinful words to such women as let fall a scudo into his palm.

But what would you? A Gascon must pay his dice-debts . . . and others . . . and learning is at times a dull pursuit, and many a young gentleman of spirit had sought distraction from it before. Moreover, the authorities of the University were apt to consider that every one has been young at one time or another, *per*

*Bacco,* and the Chevalier, student of metaphysics and philosophy, was a youth of great persuasion, and extreme agility in words, and so suffered little punishment. For Siena is a bland city, where spirit and wit command ready respect. Where do they not?

Now on this particular morning the young blade was pensive in his lodging. The sorcery of Spring was afoot like a jester; the stirrings of youth were as restless in him. He had, only two days previous, dismissed his sweetheart, a light-o'-love whom he had fancied somewhat. Time lay heavily upon the Chevalier's shoulders . . . but then, her shoes, by reason of her vanity, had hurt her feet, and she had complained of them overmuch!

But his open windows let in not only the acrid redolence of tanning hides, from the Tanners' Quarter (smelling, in truth, like books, *pardieu!*)—but the langorous breath of the campagna as well. Two disturbing and irreconcilable things. Beyond the yellow walls of the town the hills were powdered with madreselva and asfodilli, and the Chevalier bethought himself of far-distant Gascony, and his heart hit him a thump upon his throat. That wailing Caterina was not yet out of his mind, and yesterday's books yawned openly upon his table amid the empty fiaschi and the overturned wine-glasses, and the unopened letters from his father in Gascony, and one of Caterina's red shoes that she had thrown at him.

No student of metaphysics can entertain Madonna Melanconia overlong (if, of course, he is young, and of an impatient temper), and the Chevalier had buckled on his sword and clattered down the stone stair in his yellow cloak to the courtyard where his horse, as restless as him-

self, was tied to a wall ring, before the saturnine visitor had quite entered the door.

He galloped out into the street like one possessed, and up the Via di Citta, jostling people into doorways as was his custom, and quite usurping the street. It may have been the specter of the Arch-magistero of the University which he spied descending one of the *costarelle*—or it may have been the caprice of his horse, Torimund, that led him to dodge out of the narrow street and up the steep flight of steps that led to the Cathedral. At any rate, the Chevalier reached the corner of the Piazza of the Cathedral just as Donna Isabella paused on the broad steps of the church, soberly musing upon how much . . . how little . . . to confess. Indeed, she was in difficulty. Her sins had been all too few, she reflected, considering the magnitude of her temptations . . . she would have to eke them out somewhat to make a creditable *peccavi!* It is not to be expected that a beautiful woman shall be too blameless. . . .

The young man's eyes caught fire as he contemplated her.

"There walks a woman *per Bacco!*" said he to himself. And remembering his race, he added: *"Pardieu!"* to the antique oath. Which Torimund his horse was accustomed to hear as a command for urgency, and so, as Donna Isabella turned and raised her hood—perhaps aroused from her thoughts by the clatter of iron on stone, their eyes met, and held parley, at ten paces. Which, as every one knows, is a dangerous distance.

And after an instant (in philosopher's measure) the young man swept his hat off.

Now it may be that Donna Isabella *had* stopped at the Cosmeticer's shop, and there inhaled strange perfumes in little iridescent bottles. That were no sin for a virtuous woman. It may be that these perfumes quickened for her the already riotous *primavera* that was in the streets. Or it may be that at the draper's she had fingered Luccan silks and velvets with the glamour of ripe plums, and precious tissues from Cathay, smelling of sandal—who can say? And so her thoughts may not have been too deeply of her confession.

But the truth may be judged by the imaginative, though perhaps not by the wise (who are prone to consider too many things in a simple matter).

At any rate, there is to be comprehended in a look much more matter than may well be recorded by either poet or historian. The Donna Isabella did not, however, drop the flower that she was carrying. Nor did she drop the hood of her blue cloak, either. She had great poise. (Besides, this very church stood upon the site of an ancient Temple of Minerva.) And no woman could fail to regard the Chevalier Denys Raoul de la Tour du Fec for an appreciable instant, having seen him—and, worse, having been seen by him. There was in his ardent gaze enough even to hold the most virtuous woman's attention beyond those limits of decorum and wise conduct by which the Donna Isabella's life was governed, in her own fancy.

She drew her cloak together and passed slowly into the church, let fall the thick door-curtain, paused irresolute, then moved along the empty nave towards the droning sound of a mass that was being sung in one of the chapels for a dead troubadour—a worthy man, no doubt!

She had had some gossip of him from the flower-girl in the Piazza . . . how very sad!

But what was this? The curtain behind her was violently thrust aside, flinging a long path of sunlight across the black and white pavement and the sibyls of Greece depicted there. Hoofs clattered—and there stood the Chevalier, student of metaphysics, Gascon, dare-devil. He had ridden into the Cathedral upon his horse, leaped from the saddle, hat in hand, and stood within arm's length of her!

It was no great sacrilege, to be sure, for a horse to enter the Cathedral of Siena. Once a year, at least, the horses of the seventeen contrade were ridden through that door, and up to the high altar itself, to be blessed for the Palio, the horse race that was run each July in the Piazza. The Donna Isabella had often seen them.

She turned. She gazed at him. But she did not speak. Indeed, she was hardly surprised. The mettle of the young man who stood there so calmly, holding his horse's bridle, had been all too easily read in the open, empty Piazza just now.

She looked at him, not asking a question, not resenting his pursuit— No, I cannot tell you what was in her thoughts, the beautiful Donna Isabella! Perhaps you *know,* if you are a woman?

The Chevalier did not hesitate. He came of a race that made quick decision.

"Madonna," he said, without preamble, "my life is yours—I love you—command me!"

Now the Donna Isabella did not say: "I do not know you, Messer Stranger!" Nothing of the sort. She was a calm woman, if you will. Certainly, it was not strange

that a young man of such precipitance should love her (having looked at her), and declare it, and at once. No, it was to be expected. It often happened, and the Donna Isabella had had some education in receiving hot-headed words, and in dealing wisely with such matters—in her own fancy.

"Messer Stranger," she said, gently, after a little while, "we cannot speak here . . . of love," and she indicated the blaze of candles where the troubadour's mass was being said. True, no one had noticed the Chevalier's invasion upon his horse, but in the confessional near by, perhaps, dozed a priest, awaiting her—it was not seemly that she should come with so fresh a sin, if it *was* a sin (not of her own seeking, *certes!*) committed here on the threshold of the church.

"Come . . . Messer Forestiere, Messer Stranger," she urged, and laid her fingers on his sleeve. The Chevalier trembled violently. It does not take long for a Gascon, being kindled, to burn like a beacon, and this de la Tour du Fec had never before felt his heart and his head seized at the same instant by such a vertigo.

He followed, as she held aside the curtain, out into the Piazza, leading his horse.

Donna Isabella paused there. "Are you mad?" she asked, clearly, "to follow me into the church of God?"

"Madonna, I would have followed you into Saint Peter's," said the Chevalier, unabashed, "and if to love you is to be mad, then I *am* mad, and gratefully! My life is yours—what do you wish to do with it?" And he drew his sword, that had first seen the light of day in Damascus, and had been wielded by Gaston de la Tour du Fec,

his ancestor, at the Siege of Constantinople, and held it before him as a cross, to take his oath.

"I swear, Madonna—" he began.

"Take no oaths, Messer Stranger," said Donna Isabella, hastily. "You are young . . . and, I perceive, impetuous—" But seeing that the young man's eyes drank in her beauty as a flower drinks in the sun, she drew her hood, and spoke to him once more, as to a child, for she well knew, being a woman, that for such as he to take an oath was to carry it out, and she was of no mind to become embroiled in a matter of such precipitance as this —or *was* she?

At any rate, this headstrong young man was in need of wise counsel and sage reasoning. And a certain pity stirred in Donna Isabella's heart for him. She could hardly blame him for the flaming passion that burned in his eyes. It was the proof of her beauty. Was she not innocent? Had she not been on her way to confession, filled with humility, with nothing further from her thoughts than such an accident of a Spring morning? But no one had witnessed, neither within the church nor without, so she raised her hood again, and said to the Chevalier: "Messer Stranger, will you escort me to my house, across the Piazza? . . . where we may . . . ?"

She left it unsaid.

And they crossed the smiling town in the broad light of day, speaking lightly of aimless things, that any one might see that the Donna Isabella conversed with an old friend of her family, and no gossip meat in the matter, and so gained the Via Bondini, where the *portinaio* deferentially held open the thick door of her house.

"Take Messer's horse," said Donna Isabella, and preceded the Gascon up the stone stairway past the frowning lions carved there, to the *piano nobile,* and into a long, high room where a double-arched window looked upon a garden that sloped down to the yellow wall of Siena—a window which had the fair country of God stretched across it like a tapestry.

She seated herself in a high carved chair on a dais.

"Well . . . *Messer Scholare,*" she said, composedly (having guessed that he belonged to the University).

The Chevalier looked deep into her unwavering eyes, as blue, *pardieu,* as a child's memory of a summer sea! He was, after all, a gentleman, this de la Tour du Fec; he reflected that this gracious lady was doubtless married, and doing great honor to his avowal to listen to him. But the lover in him had the upper hand.

"Madonna . . ." he said, "what I told you is true . . . my life is yours!"

"I fear you put me in a niche," she replied, gently.

"If the sky be a niche—then I do," was his simple answer.

And his simplicity made no simple difficulty to Donna Isabella. Here was no boy, to be reasoned with in his folly, to be given a kind word—perhaps a flower, and be sent away. Besides, the Donna Isabella did not do such things. She was an honorable woman. And she saw that what he said was indeed truth, that his life *was* hers to dispose of. But how! Was not *her* life already disposed of? Her heart, and her respect, also, in the keeping of the grave and kindly Conte dei Surresti . . . absent, as she saw him, in her mind's eye, at his vineyards on Monte Olivete? And still . . . ?

"Messer Forestiere—Messer Stranger," she said, with great dignity and tenderness, "your words command all my respect—I do not ask you to unsay them—but I cannot listen to them!"

"Madonna—" began the Chevalier, drinking in (to her sharp knowledge) the sound of her words, but not their import; it was as if her voice had simply rendered him still more enamored of the fair woman who sat enthroned before him, like a secret city upon a hill; "Madonna, I am indeed a *forestiere* in your city, and in your house, formerly Denys Raoul de la Tour de Fec, of Gascoigne, student of metaphysics and philosophy in the University of Siena, but now, since the vision of your beauty has transformed me—a humble man, wishing to do you honor. Command me to your service, Madonna—I do not ask more . . . unless . . . ?"

She rose and, going to a table, poured a crystal glass of wine from a Venetian bottle, and held it out to him.

And as he stood there, not drinking it, she gazed out of the window, in order not to look at him, and wished that that grave and kindly Conte was here to advise her. For she regarded him, in her fancy, as more a father and a friend than a husband; a man without the possessive jealousy that would shut his wife in a cage like a linnet; a friend who could tell her what to do with importunate and unsought admirers.

And she gazed so fixedly out of that window that the Chevalier gazed, too, and his thoughts followed her thoughts, and went the same turnings as hers, joining them as a bird in the air joins its mate. And they went forth upon a similar bent, and the country beyond the yellow wall led them upon a long journey as if, in truth,

they read the legend embroidered there upon the glowing tapestry of Spring.

"For look you—(says the old chronicler)—being in the very burgeon of youth, they were manacled by it, and set about an argosy to return to where they were already, providing obstacles to their desire, for Youth never knows the treasure that it has until it be gone, must needs wait for wind-fallen fruit rather than climb the wall, must save rather than squander, and squander rather than save, and so is fettered by the self-same thing that would set it free, being loath to seize that which is offered, thinking always that it must be made difficult, and if not, that there will always be other Springs, other occasions, and so listen not to the golden bird and the singing tree, and taste not the yellow water when it is sweetest!"

And if you are young, you know if this be true, and if you are not, know as well, and put what faith you may in chroniclers. *Ecco!*

And Donna Isabella having seen on that tapestry of the Province of Siena a road, sent the Chevalier upon it, first bestowing upon him a flower (which was that same *narciso*), and then dipping the point of his sword in the crystal glass of wine, that tradition might be kept fresh and garnished.

"Chevalier," said she, as if in a dream, "if it be as you say, that you love me—and I do not doubt it—do you see that road?" And he looked, and he saw what she saw, a road patterning the countryside like a chased arabesque upon a green and silver shield.

"That road leads to Perugia, the ancient enemy of Siena," she continued, "and upon the wall of the Cathe-

dral of Perugia hang the chains of the gates of Siena. Go, Chevalier, out of your love for me, and bring those chains to me!"

Perhaps the Donna Isabella hoped he would refuse—this was no light matter that she asked of him. But no, he did not hesitate. He was already gone, and the crash of his wine-glass upon the floor showed her that romance dwelt in his soul, and no fear. And the purple wine from the glass was scattered like so many petals of a violet torn asunder. And she would have stopped him—too late. She had sent him to his death in that hornet's nest of Perugia, the poor young man!

And then the beautiful Donna Isabella wished that she had not lingered at the shop of Mariano the Cosmeticer—or had lingered longer.

*Truly, that perfume of Cyprus had had too much hyacinth in it!*

And she turned to the window in distress, only to see a cloud of dust upon that road, and the flash of the Chevalier's yellow cloak in the sun. He was gone to do her bidding, not questioning. Had she only argued with him she might have . . . but no, there had been something in his eyes that no woman could put lightly away, the burning torch of a true passion, with no thought of dishonor in it.

And what would she do when he came back, bringing, without doubt, those wretched chains of Siena's dishonor? But how proud a thing, to bestow them upon the city again! And then what would she find for him to do? For in her heart she did not doubt that he would bring them.

She was startled by the sound of horses in the courtyard below. Ah! The Conte . . . he had returned from his estates, she said to herself, as in a dream.

Here he was, the tall and simple man whom she loved so well—though somewhat as a father. He stood there smiling in the doorway, a little shadowy (since she had gazed too long at the sun), a proud man, who thought no evil.

He did not speak; he was a taciturn man; he came towards her, and she looked at him with open eyes. What a different figure from the dashing young Chevalier! . . . and yet . . . how she loved him, the Conte dei Surresti, the only man she had ever known except her father . . . and she was glad, for now she could tell him, as a child, what she had done, and be forgiven, and advised . . .

For the adventure of the morning lay a little heavy at the door of her heart, the beautiful Donna Isabella!

And so she told him, omitting nothing. And the Conte listened, with kind and comprehending eyes, until she spoke of where the Chevalier had gone, and his errand there, at which the grave man's face had a troubled look.

"What have I done, my Lord?" asked Donna Isabella.

"It would, Body of Christ! be a fine thing to deliver to the city those lost chains, these two hundred years rusting there on the wall in Perugia," he said, slowly, "but we can scarcely risk a new war with that hornet's nest, and the Baglioni, on account of them!"

"I did not think he would go," said Donna Isabella, piteously. "He is very young!"

The Conte stroked his beard thoughtfully. "You did well to send him away," he considered, "but when he

returns, we must find another and longer errand for him, and also we must contrive to return the chains secretly."

For the Conte loved his wife, and saw in her troubled glances out of the window that she had been more touched by the youth than she knew . . . it were well to keep them apart some little time . . . else . . . ? Assuming that the Chevalier would return safely from Perugia! The Conte was a just man, and thought no evil.

And the Donna Isabella, having confided the peradventure to her lord and friend, musing aloud the gist of her perplexity, did not, on that day, think further concerning the confession that she had not made at the Cathedral, though she thought much concerning the Chevalier de la Tour du Fec, student of metaphysics and philosophy.

And late of the same afternoon, the Conte left her, to journey to another of his estates, towards Florence, in perfect faith of his wife, but leaving her much wise counsel as to the matter of the second errand.

"But if he should perform that, also?" she asked.

But the Conte shook his head in doubt. "Rome will not let him return," he said, smiling at her innocence.

"You mean that he will die there?"

"No . . ." he replied, "he will not die."

And this he left to the devices of her ready mystification.

Whereupon, the Conte became very shadowy to her indeed, being gone out of the house.

Early of the following morning there was a pounding and a clanking at the door of the Donna Isabella's house, and there was the Chevalier, in a tattered yellow cloak, and the rags of it bound about his left arm by means

of those monstrous iron chains, the lost chains of Siena's gates, very heavy. And he asked an audience of the Donna Isabella. Who, when she saw him, was smitten with remorse, for his raiment was dusty and torn in twenty places, his face lined with fatigue, his cloak blood-stained, but his eyes bright with achievement. He unwound the chains and dropped them at her feet, and stood waiting.

"You are hurt!" she faltered, seeing that he pressed his cloak about his left forearm to stay the blood that oozed from the many dagger-wounds there, and from another in his side.

"Madonna commands?" he inquired, superbly.

And she dropped her eyes to the heap of chains on the floor, which any man of Siena would give his eyes to have filched from the Perugians—and this *forestiere* had done it, single-handed, since yesterday, and stood awaiting her further wishes, calmly, wearing her faded *narciso* caught in one of the slashed places of his sleeve! The Donna Isabella was touched. Still, she temporized. "But . . . Messer Stranger . . . are you not hungry?—thirsty?" (She hastened to pour some wine for him.) "Have your wounds been dressed?"

"I drink of your beauty, Madonna, it is enough for me," said Denys, and let fall his arm, considering it a weakness to stay those wounds in her presence.

Donna Isabella gazed out of the window for a long time.

When she turned back to the Chevalier, standing there motionless like a statue, her eyes were very bright with renunciation. "Messer Gascon," said she, "I must believe what you say, by what you do. Can you not, then,

go back to your metaphysics, and be content that I know that you love me—the Conte . . . my husband—" (she groped for convincing arguments) "—knows of this. He bears you no malice. He feels the honor that you have shown Siena through me by restoring these—" (she indicated the chains with her toe)—"and reverences the high spirit of your feelings. . . . And yet, Chevalier, what would you have me do? I do not say that, were my . . . heart . . . not otherwise disposed, I would not listen to you as to any honorable gentleman seeking to do me worship. . . . As it is, Messer Denys . . ." (And at the sound of his name the Chevalier quivered.) ". . . the Conte . . . my husband . . . has gone on a journey, leaving my honor in my own keeping . . . and yours . . . should you have returned from Perugia, where yesterday I sent you . . . so foolishly!"

The Gascon waved his hand as if that had been the veriest of trifles.

"Madonna . . ." he said, advancing a step, "these things are as they are, but . . . my life is yours—I love you—command me!"

And seeing that there was no help in the difficulty, the Donna Isabella continued her folly, half in a whisper. "If you love me as you say—and I do not doubt it—then go to Rome and secure the release of my . . . my brother, a lad of seventeen, falsely imprisoned in the Castel of San Angelo these many years . . . and wasting of prison . . . fever! (Her voice broke a little.) Cypriano is his name, Chevalier, and he is lodged in the darkest room in the highest part of the Castel, with all of Rome about him, and never a ray of sunlight, and terribly fettered with such chains as these, and with

never a flower or . . . the smile of a woman to alleviate his misery!"

"Were your commands as many as those set for Hercules, Madonna," said the Chevalier, "they would be fulfilled!"

And he departed on that instant, not pausing except to visit his lodging and fling his books (and that red shoe that Caterina had thrown at him) from the table, and to find a new cloak—this one of purple—and to stanch the terrible wounds in his side and forearm with wine and old linen.

And before noon he rode out of the Porta Romana, with only his sword, his horse Torimund, and the adoration that filled his heart, no longer a student of metaphysics and philosophy, but a valiant feather caught up in the whirlwind of love, to be carried wherever it blew, as is the case with all Gascons, and all madmen, and all young men of temper. *Sic transeunt omnes!* Leaving the Donna Isabella with the chains of Siena's gates to reflect upon.

They caused reflection likewise, to the Conte, her husband, upon his return. He looked with glittering eyes upon them. And yet he seemed very shadowy to the Donna Isabella!

And since it was not possible to return the chains amicably, in order to avert a new embroilment with Perugia, he chose a trusty old servant, disguised as a Pisan peddler, who carried them secreted in the bottom of his pack, and left them at the door of the Cathedral of Perugia by night.

But the Conte, out of pride, had these chains gilded first!

And the merchants of the Cambio of Perugia, who had been, needless to say, in a fine pother regarding the chains, had given out that they had been taken down to be cleansed of rust. And they were very glad to find them again. And only the five sons of the House of Baglioni, cutthroats all, who had set upon the Chevalier on the night he stood upon the back of his horse and lifted down the chains from the wall, knew the truth, and knew who murdered the Pisan peddler, whose dagger-pierced body was flung over the walls for crows.

And within the week the Chevalier returned from Rome, having killed twenty horses with hard riding—(but saving Torimund to ride into Siena upon)—bringing with him the prison-wasted brother of the Donna Isabella. And he carried the lad up the stairs and laid him on some cushions before the Donna Isabella, who was embroidering a *narciso* upon a tapestry, somewhat absently, that day. . . .

And when she saw the two of them, she was stricken dumb with gladness and perplexity, for her brother looked very strange to her. And she sent for the Conte, her husband, to take the youth to a strong castle in the hills, for safety, leaving her to deal with the intrepid and impetuous Chevalier, who, not having rested from his journey, his climbing of walls and the arduous task of breaking down doors, bribing jailers, filing chains, and what not of brave deeds, *per Bacco!*—incredible hardships, which he scorned to relate!—stood before her again, clamoring at the door of her heart, beseeching her to find yet a harder task for him to do!

And with much misgiving she dispatched him upon the third errand advised by the wise Conte, her husband,

that very afternoon. And this was: To find the fabulous Elixir of Youth, and bring it back to her.

Nor did the lady stint to indicate to him that if he found it . . . well, what would you? What less could she, having recovered her beloved brother from prison at this brave man's hands?

It was no idle search that she sent him upon, she reflected . . . he deserved every reward . . . this was no silver key lying in the depths of the sea . . . no needle lost in a dense forest . . . many wise men had sought in far places for the Elixir, and found only ripe age and much sadness. And still . . . she did not doubt that he would find it!

And the Chevalier rode at sunset out of the gate towards Florence, leaving behind his studies and his ambitions, at the caprice of a woman.

*Pardieu!* Who has not?

And the Conte dei Surresti, with that fever-wasted Cypriano in a litter, journeying up the last hill to his castle at that hour, paused to look back at the lights of Siena, and reflected, wisely or unwisely, that it would take the Chevalier some little time to find the Elixir of Youth—having himself traveled far and seen many empty roads and closed doors in his life—but that by the day of his return he himself would be no longer a sufferer of age upon the earth, seeing that he had an ancient wound received from a Saracen arrow at a siege, long ago, and concerning which his chirugeon and he had held grave converse only the day before. . . .

*Certes,* he would die. And the beautiful Donna Isabella would, after a suitable expiry of grief, marry . . . and why not this brave and willing Gascon?

And if he found no Elixir to prolong the catchpenny drunkenness of youth, within a few years, he would either return, empty-handed—but seasoned with youth itself, and . . . or, his impetuosity would embroil his heart elsewhere, and so . . . ? And perhaps, after all, that Saracen arrow-wound might not kill him for a long time, the Conte mused.

And his musing cost him dear, for he and the litter containing Cypriano were suddenly surrounded, within sight of his own castle, by forty men and a captain of the guard, sent by the Castellan of San Angelo to recover the prisoner, and after some fighting they were both killed, and their bodies left by the roadside, after which the guard went to the castle and drank much wine of the Province of Siena from the Conte's cellars to refresh themselves.

And here was the Donna Isabella, bereft, by her folly, of all three, and in a single day, and with much misery to reflect upon.

And for some time she stayed behind closed shutters, and embroidered no flowers upon her tapestry, and she thought of becoming a Carmelite nun, and taking the veil of silence forever. And still, hope flickered in her anguished heart, from time to time, and presently she forgave herself for the murder of that trusted servant, and that worthy husband, and that comely brother, all slain by her own precipitance. "For look you," she said to her mirror, "Jacopo was glad to die, being an old servant of my family, and devoted beyond the paltry affair of life!" And the Conte (she could not doubt) would have died for her sake, had she asked it, and even her darling brother Cypriano could not but have languished in the Castel San

Angelo, where he had been for so many years. . . . It was better that he had perished in the blossom of his youth, with the sweet night air of his native country in his nostrils, rather than of prison-damp. . . . Ah, yes, but it was very sad, truly! *Misericordia et Lachrimæ!* But these things could not be helped. Was it her fault that she was beautiful? Had she not been very careful to conceal it as best she could? Was it to be anticipated that this Gascon should ride into the Piazza at the moment when she deemed it empty enough to raise her hood? And that he should follow her on horseback into the Cathedral that stood upon the ground sacred to Minerva? Had she not acted as wisely as her youth and inexperience permitted her? She had not dropped her flower, nor in any way behaved in an unseemly fashion.

But, Ah! *That perfume of Cyprus had had a little too much hyacinth in it!*

If she had only waited a little while before despatching the Messer Stranger in search of the Elixir! Were he still in Siena . . . after a suitable expiry of grief, and a certain interval of years, it might have been possible . . . to think less casually of that gallant young man who had twice braved death . . . been mortally wounded . . . climbed ropes . . . killed twenty horses . . . on dark nights . . . to do her bidding, rescue that dear brother, filch those chains. . . . Ah, those wretched chains! The Manacles of her youth. . . . Siena had not wanted them back. . . .

If only she had not gazed out of the window towards Perugia that day . . . all this would not have happened . . . surely, she should have sent the Chevalier about his business . . . he would have recovered from his malady,

after many years of suffering, and no one the wiser. These Frenchmen were always falling in love and determining to sacrifice their lives . . . and it would have been pleasant to think of him, on the other side of the town, buried deep in books of learning, and vowed to celibacy for her sake! And she, an honorable woman and a virtuous wife, would have been more careful of her beauty thereafter, and would have said an extra *Ave* for the Messer Stranger each day . . . and once a year would have sent a flower to him secretly, to console his despair . . . a *narciso*. . . .

Far away on some dark road (she would conjecture, pitifully), the young man rode, in pouring rain, and often cold and penniless, eagerly asking of every one he passed where the Elixir of Youth might be found. . . . And here and there in the world . . . women . . . some of them beautiful . . . queens . . . world-weary princesses . . . idle wenches . . . would rest their eyes upon the Chevalier, and ask certain questions of him . . . whither he went . . . and what he sought (after the manner of such women) . . . and endeavor to beguile him to their own undoing . . . seeing written upon his face his sworn purpose. . . . And he would have none of them, and would turn them away gravely. And some of them would no doubt eat powdered glass and die of grief. (She hoped they would.) And some of them would hang themselves with their long fair hair to the tall crucifixes in their chapels . . . certainly a proper death for the queens . . . and some would content themselves with entering nunneries and live a life of eternal torment, clad in haircloth with chestnut burrs sewn into it. . . .

And she herself, if he did not return before her beauty had ceased to haunt all men, would journey far to escape the madness of the Sienese Spring, to some cold and inaccessible mountains, and there become a nun and undergo every rigor of the flesh, until she became the Abbess of that convent on a snow-covered peak, and she would keep a light burning for travelers . . . until one night, when a violent storm rang all the convent bells in their arches, and seven nuns knelt praying ceaselessly

for all wayfarers lost on the road, there would be a knocking at the gate . . . and there he would be, frozen and tattered and hungry, returning from his quest, and asking only a crust of bread, in order to journey on . . . towards Siena. . . .

And he would have the Elixir of Youth in a crystal vial. But he would not know her in her abbess-robes.

And when he had gone out into the storm, she would follow him, throwing away her coif to feel the snow sting her shaven head—but *must* it be shaven? Surely an abbess . . . having expiated her sins . . . might let her hair grow again . . . ?

And she would find him on the road at morning, dying, and still not touching to his lips the crystal vial. . . . And they would drink it together, and no one would remember that she had been the austere abbess of an austere convent, and he a great scholar and a Chevalier. . . .

And so the Donna Isabella spent her time, never doubting that he would return, and spurning graciously the offers—the implorings—of many a gallant gentleman (including the Duke of Palma and the King of Naples), and in going to lay a flower upon the graves of such as found life too unendurable without her . . . graciously, as was her nature. . . .

And many a learned man of Siena came to visit her, to speak of many things of sober import, marveling that so beautiful a woman should have so deep a craving as she for erudition. Nor did they spare her the brunt of cold logic, nor the sad conclusions of their researches.

And she could see that these grave men of the University could not but be troubled by her beauty . . . but contained ably their impassioned feelings, out of respect

for her . . . seeing that she brooded upon a cherished and secret sorrow. . . .

And a certain Messer Peruzzi, an architect, who was later to hold the great church of St. Peter in his hands for embellishment (but at this time unknown), a saturnine and lonely man, came to her house daily to speak to her of many things other than love . . . by which she knew he loved her . . . and he, too, marveled at her thirst for the dried figs of antiquity . . . and spoke to her always of his great art, and took a lonely pleasure in the companionship of this rare woman who could so readily understand his dreams of unbuilt cities and exquisite gardens. . . .

Time passed with a certain sad pleasure in it, for the Donna Isabella.

And the Chevalier Denys Raoul de la Tour du Fec, riding forth from Siena, entered upon a restless and brooding life in many lands, first apprenticing himself to one of the Ruggieri in Florence, to learn the art of distillation; subsequently going to Rome and there becoming the *confrere* of the renowned Dudleius Granessi, a perfume-maker, who enjoyed the patronage of great ladies, and knew many secrets. A learned and simple man, whose creed was rooted in the truth of that fallacy that the fabulous Elixir of Youth was to be found within the diaphanous confines of the art of Perfume, or that any essence of wine, no matter how refined, could contribute any but a tincture to it.

"Seek further," advised Granessi, "and should you find the Elixir, bring back a drop to me in payment for my skepticism—which I have used as a scourge to your endeavors, friend!"

And during this time the Chevalier met and discoursed with many late toilers whose houses were shuttered by night, and who slept by day, believing with Naceronius the mystic that Night reveals all things to the devoutly curious.

And from them he learned metallurgy, and the principles of alchemy, and a considerable surfeit of astrology and necromancy.

And in Venice he studied with the great Accusi, and in Nuremberg wrested some of the lesser secrets from the stars by the aid of the Doctissimus Gregorius Michaelis, *Præpositus Regius,* and in bleak Paris held the ladle for a time for Chrysostomo the Magus, a fanatical alchemist; knew Gaffarello the setter of gems, and d'Arcosse the Euclidian; and his zeal took him to Mount Athos, where in a monastery he was the pupil of Chimici the Vespian, and over many long years the Chevalier delved into magic both white and black, and in the deep dark learning of many men who dwelt in secret places, sages who had assumed the dread names of archangels in order to further their quests, and lose identity, and from them he learned many dangerous things, and carried his life in his hands, even as far as the court of Genghis Khan, where he pursued his search, learning Chinese in order to converse with the geomancers of Cathay. . . .

But always he came to the wall of basalt that hedged each of them into this sorry life from which they would escape.

Nevertheless, despite all discouragement, the Chevalier returned one day to Siena, riding no other than his horse Torimund, the faithful companion of all his wanderings (except for those occasional times when he had had to

leave him in surety for a sum of money), and forty years had passed, and *Primavera* again possessed the City of Siena as a lover. . . .

And a little of the dust of Luxor, as well as some of the fine cobwebs of Pergamon, clung to the Chevalier's raiment, and his beard was very long, and his face lined as a shriveled apple.

But in his eyes burned the unquenchable fire of love, and in his breast was a crystal bottle with a stopper of jade—given him by Lothor the Athenian scholar—and it contained a few drops of the fabulous Elixir of Youth. . . .

But who could say where he found it? There are things that legends do not hand down to us, *Misericordia et Lachrimæ!* And perhaps wisely.

And he rode straight from the Porta Camollia to the house of Donna Isabella, and an aged *portinaio* took Torimund his horse, and then conducted the Chevalier past the frowning lions on the stairway to that same lofty room, whose windows looked out upon the country of God as upon a new tapestry.

And to him came an old and faded woman, with blue eyes like a child's memory of a summer sea, and he regarded her with amazement.

"But . . . *you* are not the Donna Isabella!" said he. And the dust of Luxor choked him somewhat.

And she held up to him a tarnished silver mirror, and said to him, sadly: *"Regard thyself, friend!"*

And looking into a mirror for the first time in forty years—having been too preoccupied for any self-regard, the Chevalier saw there the face of an old man, with a

beard to his belt. And he was stricken sorely in his slumbering vanity at the sight, and endeavored to brush away the fine cobwebs of Pergamon from his eyes.

But to no avail.

And for some time they did not speak, these two, but endeavored to recollect each other out of memory, and not as they were (as people past the noonday will).

And presently the Chevalier remembered that crystal vial, with the stopper of sardonyx, and drew it forth eagerly, and with a trembling hand.

"Madonna! I love you! You commanded me . . . *here it is* . . . the Elixir that you sent me to find—was it not yesterday?"

And he would have placed the vial in her hands.

But the Donna Isabella would not have it. Perhaps she had waited overlong for it. Many a woman cannot wait for a thing—(says the old chronicler)—and when it is brought to her finally . . . she does not want it any longer.

"No . . . Messer Stranger," she said, gently. "I do not wish Youth again. . . . I have had it, and . . . I still have it!"

And as she spoke, the sun danced upon the summer sea of her eyes.

"It was for *you* that I wanted it . . . the Elixir of Youth! *You* should have perpetual youth . . . not I. . . ."

And in their eagerness, each to give the other the crystal vial, they contrived to let it fall, and it was broken upon the stone floor. . . .

And the precious purple liquid that was in that bottle

was scattered there like so many petals of a violet torn to pieces.

But a perfume as of hyacinth brought from Cyprus filled the room. And a lark rose singing from the garden into the still morning air, and a very great silence fell upon them, as they gazed at the glittering fragments of crystal between them on the floor.

*"You have dropped your wine-glass, Chevalier!* . . . let me pour another for you," said the Donna Isabella. And it seemed to the Gascon, student of metaphysics and philosophy, that it was the lark who spoke to him.

And he looked at her in amazement, for she was, in truth, the same Donna Isabella whom he had that morning first seen in the Piazza of the Cathedral.

"But . . . you *are* . . . !" he exclaimed, and the dust of Luxor no longer choked him. And she held up the silver mirror to him again—no longer tarnished, for she brushed it across her velvet sleeve as she did so—and she said to him, with some tender malice: "Regard *thyself*, friend!"

And the Chevalier saw no man with a long beard and a face like a shriveled apple, but no other than himself, a young man with the fearless eyes of youth.

And his wonderment grew like the tree of the conjuror, for he had had a terrible fear, now that the vial lay broken upon the floor.

"Messer Forestiere—Messer Stranger—" said the Donna Isabella, softly, "let us cast off the manacles of our youth, and be wise . . . as wise, that is, as is neces-

sary . . . for a morning in the Spring! Imprimis . . . it is incredible to me that you, a student of metaphysics, do not comprehend that a life-time may pass in the twinkling of an eye! You do not value the teachings of the Doctissimi at the University, I fear!"

And she laughed, until the crystal glass upon the table caught up her gayety and echoed her mirth.

And still, those cobwebs of Pergamon lingered across the Chevalier's eyes, and he questioned: "But . . . Madonna . . . your husband . . . so kind and so wise . . . ?" he stammered, in perplexity.

"He was a man whom I fancied marrying—somewhat—yesterday!" she answered, smiling. "He lives only in a book of legends that I read!"

"And your young brother, Madonna?"

"Ah . . . Chevalier . . . it is only too easy for a young woman, caught in the gossamer trap of a Spring morning, and providing herself with an elderly and forbearing husband, in her fancy, to provide also a young brother in the Castel of San Angelo to be rescued!"

"But the chains . . . ?" persisted the Chevalier, emerging from mystification, but loath to yield up to disbelief these brave adventures of his.

"The chains of Siena hang rusting, no doubt, upon a wall in Perugia, my simple friend . . . *they* were the manacles of your youth . . . think you I would have sent you to that nest of cutthroats to bring home some foolish chains of iron? Is there one scar upon your left forearm, Chevalier, from the daggers of the Baglioni?"

And he must needs acknowledge that his forearm was as unscarred as a girl's—except for a long scratch left him by Caterina, that complaining hussy, whose shoes

had hurt her feet, and who had, being in a rage, behaved somewhat as a cat, it is to be regretted.

(But of this the Chevalier did not speak to the Donna Isabella, though she regarded that scratch with some curiosity, you may be sure.)

The Gascon looked at the floor. The dream had crumbled like a bubble of glass at a harsh word. He was indeed confounded. These forty years of toil and hardship all gone for naught? Those honorable scars vanished? That young and wasted brother whom he had rescued—only a figment of fancy? The Conte dei Surresti—that grave and kind gentleman—not to be considered? His mind seized upon the fragments of crystal that lay upon the floor, and the dark purple spots there.

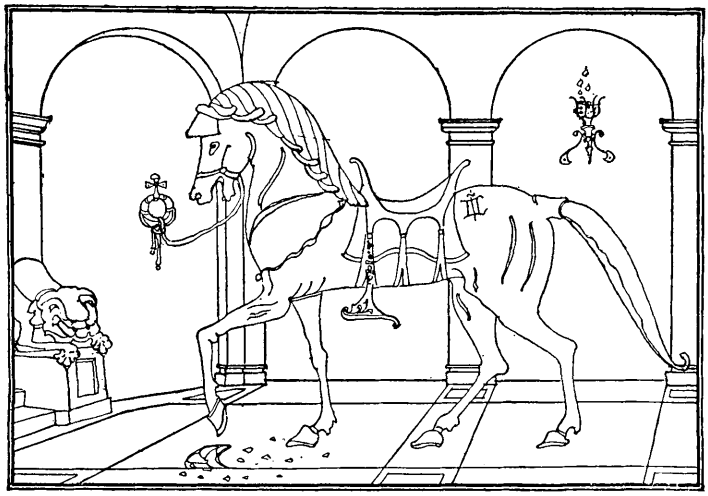
"But . . . Madonna? The Elixir of Youth, that we had just now in a bottle?" he asked, humbly, hoping to save even a crumb of the argosy.

"Chevalier . . ." spoke the lady, "regard *myself!*"

And seeing that in her eyes that no man could look upon without consternation of a pleasant quality, he was very glad indeed to know that all these things had yet to happen . . . if at all . . . and recovered with rapidity that readiness of speech and that impulsiveness to perceive the value of an occasion proper to a Gascon, a Chevalier, and a student of the science of metaphysics.

And his horse Torimund, tethered below, reflected with some gentle acrimony (as even a hungry horse may), concerning the ingratitude of masters whom one carries so faithfully up and down the world, and for whom, *Par-les-huit-pieds-de-Sleipnir!* one has eaten the mildewed oats

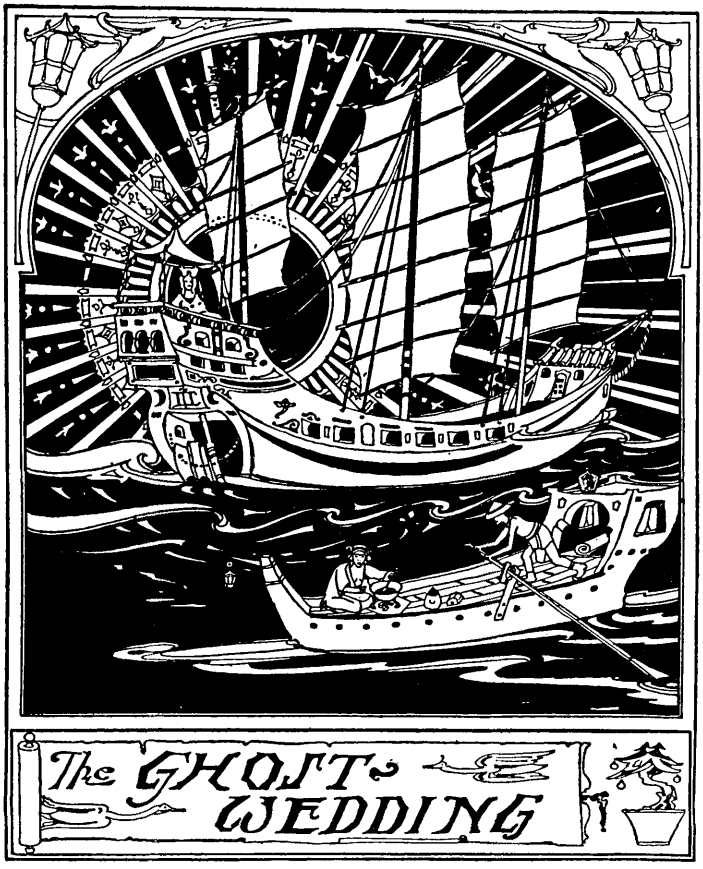
of usurers!—all those forty years that lie between an early breakfast and a belated dinner!



*Torimund waited a long time in that courtyard with those stone lions frowning at him!*

But what would you? It was Spring!


The GHOST
WEDDING




San-Yada, the Governor of the Province of Chouan, was drinking tea in the audience-room of his palace, with his feet upon a cushion of rabbit furs. His shoe-maid, Ssu, had just taken off his oiled-silk boots and brought to him slippers of green silk embroidered with pink wading-birds.

And the toes of San-Yada found comfort in them.

The cold rain of the fading afternoon rattled at the fretted windows of horn, and the November wind sought to come in, like a querulous ghost.

He clapped his hands.

And Gair-li, the tea-maid, brought him fresh tea, and his pipe, wrought of the thin shank-bone of a flamingo, with a bowl of silver.

San-Yada took his pipe eagerly, since it always held the breath of life for him after a long day of governance, of bickering, and the high-handed and merciless and just dealing required of the head of a mighty province.

And to-day had held more complicity than usual.

For not only had he tried six criminals of the first degree and sentenced them to beheading, but his helmet-maker had brought four helmets of bronze to be fitted—an irritating process—and scant leisure had been left to San-Yada for contemplation, which was not only the privilege of his rank, but a necessity of his ripening years.

And in addition he had had to appoint a wine-taster to the province (his own palate being somewhat dimmed), and then finally there had been the matter of his ancestor's wedding to arrange.

For, two hundred years before, Kweng-toi, the father of San-Yada's clan, had been betrothed to Soy-wan, daughter to a neighboring clan-prince, of the hill-castle of Tonga, four crow-flights to the east. In pursuit of some hill-bandits Kweng-toi had been killed by a bandit-arrow, which pierced his breast where he had that day left out one plate of his armor (in order to show the lining of red silk that Soy-wan had given him for a betrothal-gift).

And so had the marriage remained unmade.

Soy-wan, the Clan-princess of Tonga, had mourned away her life in three days, and Time had not canceled the marriage contract between the two houses—(which could have been accomplished in the traditional way by marrying a daughter of Tonga to the grave-tablet of Kweng-toi—since the four girl-children who had been born to the hill-castle thereafter had not reached bride-age without mishap.

The first had died of a tortoise in her heart, and the second had run away with a wandering teller of stories who had beguiled her. The third had been blinded by venturing too near the kiln where her father (who was hereditary china-maker to the Emperor) was firing two yellow jars for imperial tea-leaves, and the fourth—but it was one of the secrets of the hill-castle what had become of her. It was known, however, that she had been born during the passing of a comet.

The reviewal of these postponements of the ancient contract embittered the orderly mind of San-Yada as he smoked his flamingo-pipe. He desired not the invasion of his quiet palace by the ghost-bride who was to be wedded to his ancestor's tablet to-morrow—and thus become a member of his household, and a charge to his burdened mind—and still there was her dowry to be thought of.

For in the hill-castle of Tonga a daughter, Lei-suan by name, had reached traditional bride-age, and to-morrow her years would number sixteen (or as many as there were golden dragons on the towers of the hill-castle). And the Governor had had, therefore, to ride to the Tem-

ple of Kronak, high up in the hills, where, in the Garden of the Dead, stood the lichened tablet of his ancestor, Kweng-toi, and see to the uncovering of the tablet for the wedding. And the cold rain had anguished his bones and brought wrinkles to his placid face. But a delay of the ghost-wedding until more suave weather was not to be thought of, since some mishap might come to Lei-suan. The eldest of her five brothers (who was Marquis of Tonga) had insisted upon the completion of the contract to-morrow, pointing out that the portents of the sky were in the main propitious and the Seven Governors of Heaven in a pattern of accordance.

After all, it would soon be done, the Governor reflected, and he lifted his fourth cup of tea with less acrimony. And the following day he would be free to complete the sixteenth act of the play he had been commanded to write for the Emperor's Convocation of Princes.

He reached his sixth cup.

And into the room glided like a lizard Froo-tin, his sister, a shriveled and discontented crone.

She made such obeisance to San-Yada as the presence of the tea-maid and the decorum of the palace demanded, and seated herself on a floor-mat some little way off.

She waited until San-Yada had invoked the ring of contentment from his flamingo-pipe, and then she spoke, in a whisper like the Autumn wind.

"Did you, Father of the Province, make your paternal visit to the temple to-day?"

To which San-Yada inclined his head and blew a ring of smoke.

"And had the priests cleansed the leaf-mold from the death-tablet of our ancestor?"

Again he bowed.

"And so, to-morrow, we shall go there, and attend the wedding of Lei-suan to Kweng-toi's honorable ghost?"

A third inclination completed the interview.

And Froo-tin, the Governor's sister, being satisfied with questioning, withdrew to plan, after her own fashion, the reception of the ghost-bride.

Four crow-flights away to the east of the Palace of Chouan stood the hill-castle of Tonga, like an ivory chess-piece on the golden field of Autumn.

Now, to it, one morning in the early blossom period of that year, had come a certain basket-weaver of Khotan, named Tawakkei, with baskets upon his shoulders—baskets for kumquats and closely woven baskets for kitchen-earth; thin, foolish baskets for sprinkling flower-blossoms upon pathways; baskets stained with walnut-juice, and baskets of perishable tendrils, made for a day—

And since all followers of crafts were honorable in the Province of Tonga, Tawakkei, the basket-weaver, had been bidden to cross the castle-bridge and enter the court-yard, and he so came to where Lei-suan, the Clan-princess, was sunning herself and at the same time crushing purple berries with her heel upon a length of blue silk for pleasure.

And the person of Lei-suan was small and delectable, and her feet had needed no binding, being as two grains of rice—or, as some poets had said, "like two golden lily-buds, not yet unfolded into dancing."

And the person of Tawakkei was comely and slim as a mountain-birch, and his manner pleasing, and his countenance gracious.

And between them had fallen a silence, and about them had crept an estrangement from the courtyard of the castle.

And Tawakkei had given her a tiny basket made of cherry-stems for a humble-gift.

And she to him a handful of purple berries.

And thus had begun the eye-mating of Lei-suan and Tawakkei, and the enactment of their desires.

And since that morning, he had come to the hill-castle many times, on the cusp of the moon, now bringing a basket of rushes to contain plums, or a basket of slim lily-flower stems, made for a day, with lilies woven into its sides.

And always had Lei-suan (whose five brothers were intent upon kilning their yellow china, commanded for the Emperor's Convocation of Princes) found a way to see Tawakkei, or to drop a flower in the courtyard for him, or to send her tame crow to pursue him upon the roadway after he had gone—to tease his footsteps with remembrance.

And so had common intent possessed them, and since strategy is born of intent, one day, shortly after the wedding-day of Lei-suan had been appointed, a basket-weaver had presented himself to San-Yada, the Governor of Chouan, with his face stained as of another country, and with certain of his wares, beautifully wrought, to ingratiate him. And he had besought the Governor to buy his body for a year and a year, for two purses of

hexagon money, to ply his honorable trade under protection.

And San-Yada, that day, taken with the youth's demeanor, and with his skill, and since many shapes of baskets were required in the palace—some for linen, some for rice, some for the revenues of the province, and some for the heads of criminals—had employed him.

And so was Tawakkei named basket-weaver to the Palace of Chouan, and given a room with a window of horn in it, and three squares of cloth and two jars of peacherven, for each year of his bondage, besides the two purses of hexagon money. And he was regarded as above the other makers of things, and as master of a craft.

And upon his door hung the scroll of the Governor, stating his rank, and the fealty of his body to the Clan of Chouan, and that he was above petty reproach as befitted a craft-master, and his safety intact, for a year and a year.

By this means did Lei-suan plan to see her basket-weaver when she should become a chattel of the Clan of Chouan by marrying the death-tablet of Kweng-toi.

And she had, therefore, taught her tame crow many guileful tricks and much pleasant malice.

On the following day, toward afternoon, San-Yada, the Governor, drank much tea, and ordered the wedding-horses to be got ready.

And in the sheeted rain they rode to the Temple of Kronak, the Governor, and sixteen warriors of the clan. And Froo-tin, his sister, was carried in a covered chair between two horses, with her feet upon a brazier of charcoal, and sneezing constantly.

And a swordsman led a riderless horse to represent the ghost-ancestor, and upon the horse was tied a box containing the toys of Kweng-toi when a child, and his helmet and his rusted sword.

And in the Garden of the Dead, at the Temple of Kronak, white-dressed priests waited, uncovered from the rain, in rows like tall, thin poplar-trees.

Through the opposite gate of the Garden of the Dead rode the five brothers of Lei-suan, on amber-colored ponies, with their sister in their midst upon a white gazel. Four outriders carried a tent on poles, to shield them from the rain. And upon three led ponies was the dowry of Lei-suan.

The tent was spread, and a golden cloth laid for the Princess to kneel upon; the rank-scrolls of the dead ancestor were read, and the chief priest of Kronak, Hsia by name, intoned the ceremonial words of ghost-marriage as the little bride knelt.

And when the reading was done, and the drawn sword of Kweng-toi stuck upright in the sodden earth before the death-tablet, with his helmet upon it, the box containing his toys was opened, and certain of them broken, to betoken his passing from single state—albeit a ghost. Then did Lei-suan touch with her forehead, three times, the tablet of the ghost-bridegroom, in signification of obedience to his family, represented by the Governor, who then broke in two pieces the arrow that had killed Kweng-toi.

And the head-dress of a bride was brought and set upon the little Clan-princess's head, and into her hair were thrust, by Froo-tin, with acrimony, the hairpins of

marriage, and the Governor cut away a strand of her hair with his sword, and it was burned.

Then was the silken coat of Kweng-toi put about Lei-suan, for her bride-cloak.

And these ceremonies terminated the contract of marriage between the houses of Tonga and Chouan, so long unfulfilled.

Whereupon the marriage-tent was folded, and the brothers of Lei-suan mounted their amber ponies; the saddle upon the white gazelle was reversed to betoken loss, and after bowing to the tablet, to the bride, and to the Governor, her brothers withdrew, drawing their coats about them—unable to attend the bride-feast, since their kiln had reached its fruition and was to be opened that day, and the china for the Emperor's Convocation inspected.

And down the temple-road went Lei-suan, mounted upon the presumptive horse of her ghost-husband, and San-Yada, the Governor, shivering, and the warriors carrying the rank-scrolls and the box of broken toys, and Froo-tin chuckling with animation, and no longer sneezing.

And this was the first ghost-wedding of Lei-suan, which brought her to the clan of Chouan.

In the palace ghost-meats had been got ready, and acorn and mulberry wines were steeping in jars of porcelain over slow fires of cherry-charcoal (for ghost-wines must be drunken hot, lest a chill be present at the feast).

And so came Lei-suan to the Palace of Chouan, with her dowry on three ponies, and she was lifted from the horse of her ghost-husband by San-Yada. And ceremo-

nial tea being drunk, a play was performed in the great hall of the palace for the bride, a play depicting the events of Kweng-toi, her ghost-husband's life (except his death by a bandit-arrow).

And the thin screech of fiddles and the storm-chant of drums caused the lantern-pendants to tremble, while hot wines were drunk from pear-shaped cups.

But the ghost-meats were left untasted, according to custom.

In the meantime Froo-tin, the sister of the Governor, and the marriage-aunt of Lei-suan, awaited her opportunity, since to her malice would fall the person of the little Princess, and to the dictates of her withered fancy the "sipping of vinegar" (which is always the pleasure of the unmarried woman in a house to which a bride comes).

And so did Froo-tin prepare many salty speeches, and a cold bed of rushes for the ghost-bride. And she consoled her waiting with sprinkling sharp sand upon the floors where the Clan-princess should walk, and with scattering pebbles in her cold bed of rushes.

And the play being concluded, the palace finally was darkened, and the keepers of the gates leaned upon their spears.

But only the eyes of Lei-suan had beheld the figure that crouched in a corner of the great hall during tea-drinking.

And that was Tawakkei, the basket-weaver.

And between them had passed, like two swift shuttles of silk thread, two looks.

And when the palace became as a tomb, and no footfall stealthed through the corridors, and the little Clan-

princess lay in her cold bed of rushes with the sword of her ghost-husband beside her, and her feet tingling from the sharp sand that was upon the floor, and listening fearfully to the thin breathing of Froo-tin near by, San-Yada, the Governor of Chouan, examined her dowry in his treasure-room.

Fourteen rolls of silk he found, each of a different hue, and five boxes of earth, each representing one of the fields that comprised Lei-suan's bride-estate. And one earth was white, and one red, and one black, and one yellow, and one green.

And San-Yada feasted his eyes and fingers with the dowry-silks, and he tasted of the five earths, and reflected regarding their planting and yieldance, and conferred with his flamingo pipe as to his affairs of the coming morning and the completing of the Emperor's play.

And suddenly the gate-bell of the palace began to ring violently, and a hurrying guard knocked upon the locked door of the treasure-room to say that the chief priest, Hsia, of the Temple of Kronak begged an urgent audience, with all his fellow priests following him.

And presently Hsia, the chief priest, stood before the Governor, with the rain flowing from his garments like a river, and began a frightened tale.

"A mistake was made—" he stammered. "The Princess was wedded this afternoon to the grave-tablet of a member of the ghost-family of Mao-Mao (now wanting in living persons) and *not* to the tablet of the honorable Kweng-toi! I come to warn you, in order that this ghost-clan may not enter your palace and possess it, since the clan of Mao-Mao is extinct, and has no house.

*"They may be here now!"*

San-Yada stared at him in surprise and irritation.

For here was a difficulty.

The bride beneath his roof was now the wife of a member of a ghost-clan which had no living representative.

Moreover, the clan-ghosts would all too soon come to live with her, he knew very well, since ghosts are always seeking a house of the living to stay in, in order that they may not be cold.

He had had occasion to burn a house in a corner of his province for that same reason, and to build a wall about the place lest anything be planted there.

The Governor reflected.

The dowry-silks that lay before him were, by the mistaken marriage, not his; they belonged to the extinct clan of Mao-Mao. His own ancestor, Kweng-toi, was still unwedded, and his childhood toys had been broken unlawfully. The ancient contract was still unfulfilled, and an injury had been done to the five brothers of Lei-suan, whose sister was now wedded to a family that did not exist. And further, the Governor reflected, the clan of Mao-Mao was so low in degree that the hill-castle of Tonga was dishonored.

In fact, the Clan of Mao-Mao had been hill-bandits.

*It was a member of that clan who had killed his own ancestor!*

The Emperor might hear of this, and—

But the coming of the ghost-clan of Mao-Mao was the first thing to be averted, San-Yada reflected.

What was to be done?

He looked past the aged priest, who stood dripping like

a willow-tree, through the dark open door into the corridor, half fearful of the ghosts who might come in and demand the silken dowry of Lei-suan, and the five fields of her bride-estate.

He well knew that they would extricate the silk-woof for their raiment, and the virtue of the five soils for their ghost-fields. And the Governor trembled, and his smooth forehead became as a plowed field.

Hsia, the chief priest, produced from inside his robe the incenser of the temple. It was lighted from the Governor's pipe, and presently through the palace stole the fumes of sandalwood and dried citron and pepper-seeds; the palace was awakened, and all night the guards beat upon thunder-gongs above the walls.

The little bride of the ghost-family of Mao sat upright in her cold bed of rushes, with her bride-cloak clutched about her, while the palace-maids broke dishes upon the floor to frighten the ghosts away from her. But no one was told the true seed of the matter.

And San-Yada, the Governor of Chouan, sat and smoked, and his tea-maiden brought him fresh tea constantly.

And when daylight crept in at the fretted windows of horn and caught at the lantern-pendants, the din and the clangor and the muttered prayers subsided, and Hsia, the chief priest, came humbly to the Governor to say that the calamity had been averted, and that there were no ghosts in the palace.

He had examined all the silken hangings, and the dowry-silks of Lei-suan, and found their woofs unstolen. The ghost-meats upon the tables were still salty, showing

that the ghosts had not been near them, and the locks of all the doors were still uncorrupted (since it was well known that ghosts rust them with their cold, damp fingers, in order that the doors may never be closed against them).

Moreover, the priest concluded: "They have left no mark upon the neck of Lei-suan, the Clan-princess—and they would have gone to claim her first."

And San-Yada, heavy-eyed, nodded his head, lighted his pipe freshly, and bade the chief priest confer with him, feeling the need of further wisdom than burned in his pipe, in the face of such a difficulty as lay before him.

And they conferred together (behind closed doors), but chiefly with their eyes, as old men can.

And since these violent measures could not be taken every night, owing to the temple-duties of the priesthoods, and since some order must be concluded in the tangle of the difficulty, Hsia spoke presently a remedy, which was, before noon, to annul, privately, the ghost-marriage of Lei-suan to the clansman of Mao-Mao by the Governor's declaring to himself, as the head of the province, that she was a ghost-widow, and by his making a scroll to that end; further, by breaking the grave-tablet of the ghost-bandit of Mao-Mao with a mallet, and further, by then marrying her, for a night and a day, to a living commoner of the household of Chouan.

"After which," the priest concluded, "no ghost-family, however desperate, albeit homeless, would dare to invade the palace."

The Governor smoked thirty puffs of his pipe.

"And then?" he asked with his eyebrows.

"Then can Your Loftiness, by virtue of your authority, behead the bridegroom for presumption," Hsia gravely intimated.

The Governor smoked twenty puffs more.

"And then?" he asked with his eyebrows.

"And then the wedding of the commoner's widow to the tablet of your honorable, Kweng-toi, can properly be carried out," said the priest, softly.

"By night," he added.

And their four eyes met upon the glowing dowry-silks with understanding.

San-Yada considered.

"And this must be done to-day," he remarked.

"Or else," the priest began, "by nightfall the ghosts of the clan of Mao-Mao will have gathered themselves from distant places, where their bandits were killed in forests, and they will have gathered other related ghost-families, and all the priests of the Province of Chouan cannot keep them from this palace."

The Governor shut his eyes, and laid aside his flamingo-pipe.

He clapped his hands.

To the guard who entered he commanded: "Assemble all the male commoners of the palace."

And into the treasure-room came presently all the men servants, the poet-clerks of the House of Chouan, the horse-curriers, the cooks, the warriors, the body-guard, the gatekeepers, and the makers of various things from the cellars of the palace.

And among them stood Tawakkei, the basket-weaver, fresh-faced and alert, thinking to see the person of Lei-

suan, who was as the wind from a fruit-laden orchard to him.

And the Governor's weary eyes wandered over the throng, and he hesitated, and whispered with Hsia.

"Would it not be wise to choose one who would give a fitting heir to the clan?" he asked.

Hsia, the chief priest, upon thinking (which was slow, since he was very old, and the question took him back to his youth), nodded in assent, and answered: "The execution can be suitably delayed."

The Governor whispered again.

"Could it be made known by you, as chief priest, that the ghost-father of this house, when we shall have married her to him, brought an heir to this house—? Afterward?"

The priest cleared his throat (sore from reciting *sûtras*).

"It could be established," he muttered, "that such was the case."

The Governor meditated as he scrutinized each of the faces before him. If an heir were to be thought of, it behooved him to pick well his man. His eye shuttled between one of the clan-warriors and a certain tall poet-scribe, both remote cousins of the House of Chouan, but their beheading was a difficult matter—besides, he needed his warriors and his poet-scribes; moreover, he could not take a life idly without excellent reasoning with himself to justify the act.

And then he remarked Tawakkei, the basket-weaver, whose body he had bought for a year and a year.

"What matter?" he reflected. "A basket-weaver is

easily gotten. He comes from a distant province. He is a supple lad, and quick of eye and hand. Moreover, I can change his name to Mao-Mao—which family is hereditary enemy to my house—the death of my ancestor Kweng-toi will be avenged thereby. I do not need to change his name until the day he dies—his ghost-friends will not afflict us, since he will die a Mao-Mao—the clan of Mao-Mao will be glad to receive a new clansman, so recently living—their last living head died forty years ago."

And upon his gesture with his flamingo-pipe, the rest withdrew, leaving only Tawakkei and Hsia, the chief priest of Kronak.

Forthwith was Lei-suan sent for, and she came. And she beheld Tawakkei, and shivered. And he, with great caution, devoured her with his eyes, and thought of the tame crow that had teased his footsteps on the road from the hill-castle.

And the Governor sent for a brush and a roll of parchment, and himself wrote the annulment of Lei-suan's marriage with the ghost-clansman of Mao-Mao.

And having completed the document in secret characters, and signed it with his own jade seal, the Governor burned it, to secure his integrity, and wrote a scroll of Lei-suan's intended marriage (after the basket-weaver should be beheaded) to the tablet of Kweng-toi, his own ancestor, which marriage he held to be now as good as enacted.

But that document he signed also, and sealed with his own seal, and laid it among the dowry-silks.

And Hsia, the chief priest, married Lei-suan to Tawak-

kei, the basket-weaver, by tying the fringe of her girdle to the fringe of his sleeve, and muttering a *sûtra* against interference between them by ghosts.

And Lei-suan knelt and struck the floor three times with her forehead before Tawakkei, in obedience to him as her husband.

And this was the second and the true wedding of Lei-suan.

The priest sighed with fatigue, and betook himself and his sixty-one fellow priests back to the Temple of Kronak.

The Governor of Chouan himself led Lei-suan and Tawakkei to a secret room and locked them in with his own hands, first bringing to them ghost-meats and hot wine, and a jar of rice with quinces in it.

And Froo-tin, his sister, he locked in the room of a distant tower, to avoid her questioning.

And the palace-gates were closed, and the windows of horn were shuttered, and all the eyes of the palace slept, except those of the little Princess and her lover—and *they* shone in the curtained darkness like the eyes of cats.

And when the day had passed, and the night after it, and sunshine smote the Province of Chouan, after it had regilded the dragons of the towers of the hill-castle of Tonga, four crow-flights to the east, the Governor sent for his headsman, and ordered him to wait in the river-garden of the palace, which had no windows looking upon it.

And then, having loosed the locks of the door where Lei-suan and Tawakkei were, he bade the basket-weaver to come to him in the river-garden, not wishing to behold Lei-suan with what he was about to do in his mind.

And presently into the river-garden came, not Tawakkei, but Lei-suan, his wife, with glamorous eyes, but fear in her fingers.

And seeing the Governor seated upon the river-wall, wearing the red cap of anger upon his head, and the headsman sharpening his sword upon a stepping-stone, glamour left the eyes of Lei-suan, and fear possessed them.

"Where is Tawakkei, your husband?" asked the Governor.

And Lei-suan, with her heart like a pebble in her throat, answered: "I came to ask rank-privilege for him, who is my husband, since he is to die. Let him be beheaded with a silken cloth upon his face."

To which San-Yada perforce agreed.

And Lei-suan went to fetch Tawakkei, and after some waiting she came leading by the sleeve a man with a silken cloth over his head.

And the cloth was the silken bride-cloak of Lei-suan, which she had worn from her ghost-wedding.

And Lei-suan carried in her hands a head-basket woven by Tawakkei, and she asked for the head in order that she might bury it at the Temple of Kronak.

To which San-Yada perforce agreed.

And thereupon he raised his thumb in the air, and pronounced the name of Mao-Mao upon the condemned man.

The sword of the headsman divided the air, and divided the head in the silken cloak from its body.

And Lei-suan took the head tenderly, and placed it in the head-basket that Tawakkei had woven.

And when darkness had come again, horses were brought privately to the secret gate of the palace, and the Governor and the Princess, and no others, set off to the Temple of Kronak, where the chief priest, Hsia, waited for them at the gate with a lantern.

The chief priest led the way through the Garden of the Dead, to where Kweng-toi's tablet lay uncovered (near the broken one of the clansman of Mao-Mao). A new-dug pit for the head was between the two.

And Lei-suan carried upon her arm the head-basket with the head in it, wrapped in the silken cloak.

And when this, the third wedding of Lei-suan, was concluded, and she had knelt and touched with her forehead, three times (and these unwillingly), the death-tablet of Kweng-toi, then did she rise up, and take the head from the basket, and throw back the silken bride-cloak from it, and disclose to the Governor and to the chief priest, Hsia, in the light of the lantern, *not* the head of Tawak-kei, the basket-weaver, but the head of Ta-jen, a poet-scribe of the palace.

And the Governor looked upon the head, and the chief priest looked upon the head. But neither of them spoke.

And the forehead of the Governor, which had been as a plowed field, became as a hilly country, and the fingers of his sword-hand trembled.

For here was a difficulty indeed.

Lei-suan had been married intemperately to his ancestor when her husband was still living. This was not to be thought of with resignation.

And from the temple rode the Governor and Lei-suan,

leaving the chief priest in stupefaction with his lantern—and the head of Ta-jen, the poet-scribe.

And as they rode, Lei-suan, the wife of the basket-weaver, took from her sleeve her tame crow, and loosed it, and the crow teased the feet of the Governor's horse, and mocked him in a cracked voice upon that return journey.

And when they had reëntered the palace by the secret gate, San-Yada, the Governor, withdrew to his treasure-room and lighted his flamingo-pipe, and the hilly country upon his forehead became as a mountainous province, as he contemplated the marriage-scroll of Lei-suan to the tablet of Kweng-toi, which he had made out that day, and signed with his own seal.

And the nails of his fingers clattered against his pipe.

And after long thought he sent for Tawakkei, and for Lei-suan, his wife, and they came and knelt before him and trembled.

And as San-Yada contemplated them, his anger melted like lead over a fire, and his forehead softened to a Spring meadow. And two crystal tears clicked upon his parchment face.

For he saw that they loved each other, and his difficulty grew less.

And of them he asked in curiosity: "And how, Children of Determination, did you persuade Ta-jen, the poet-scribe, to take Tawakkei's place and be beheaded?"

And Tawakkei answered him.

"It was I who told him of my death-to-come, in order that he might write a death-letter for me, to send to my father in the mountains of Khotan—and it was he who

told me that there was a stain upon his family door, that he could cleanse by his own death, but that honorably, and not by his own hand. Six times had he entered in clan-battle, hoping to die, but each time he returned, with Your Loftiness, untouched. And so he begged to take my place, and be honorably beheaded."

And Tawakkei bowed his head, expecting the word of condemnation.

"Why did you not escape?" asked San-Yada.

But Tawakkei only looked at Lei-suan, his wife, who was flung upon the floor in silent weeping.

And San-Yada turned his eyes upon her. "And why, Clan-princess, did you not tell me of this?" he asked.

"I love Tawakkei," was her answer.

And the Governor smiled.

And the Governor's mind flew to the sixteenth act of the play that he had been writing for the Emperor, and he saw further content for it than he had imagined before the three weddings of Lei-suan.

And his brain cleared, and his pipe sent up the ring of solution to the roof.

But the nominal difficulty remained.

"You have dishonored my ancestor by touching his tablet in marriage when you were still wedded," he said to Lei-suan. "I now banish you and I obliterate your name and that of your husband. The province shall know you no more."

And the two looked at each other without anxiety, for a name was only a name, and banishment, "to dine on the wind and lodge in the water; to lie down under the moon and sleep in the frost," as read the scroll that was

written on the next day, was as nothing to them, who had their province in each other's eyes, and their name upon each other's lips.

And so, on the following day, at sun-sinking, a boat left the river-garden of the palace, with no window looking upon it, and no eye to see its going except the Governor's.

And in the boat were Lei-suan and Tawakkei, the basket-weaver, who now had no names, and they entered upon the voyage of their banishment.

And in the boat were a jar of rice for them to eat, and a jar of acorns for them to make wine of, and a box of tea for them to steep, and a straw mat for them to sleep upon, and a roll of linen for them to make clothes of, and a lantern at the prow of their boat to light them down the river, and an oar to catch in the eddies of it, and a cage for the tame crow of Lei-suan.

And the Governor, who was a just man, revoked the bondage of Tawakkei, and released his body, and gave to him one of the two purses of hexagon money that he had promised to him for a year and a year.

And San-Yada, the Governor of Chouan, stood at the wall of the river-garden as the boat caught up the river-drift. And in the hollow of his hand were a grain of rice, and an acorn that he had taken from the two jars on the boat, and a tea-bud, and a straw from the mat, and a thread from the roll of linen, and a coin from the purse of hexagon money, and a feather from the tame crow's wing.

And so were Lei-suan and Tawakkei banished from the Province of Chouan.

And San-Yada returned to the palace, and to his treasure-room, and he took the dower-boxes of earth that held the substance of the five fields of Lei-suan, and in yellow earth he planted the grain of rice, and in white earth the acorn, and in black earth the barley-straw, and in green earth the tea-bud, and in red earth the flaxen thread, in pursuance of his stewardship of the dower-fields. And the coin from the purse of Tawakkei he ordered his minter to make two pieces of, each day, thenceforward. But the feather from the tame crow's wing he knew not how to make use of.

And the contemplation of the fourteen rolls of dower-silks brought him no contentment.

And as the boat followed the arabesque of the river, with Lei-suan in the prow of it, cooking a pot of rice upon a fire of charcoal, while Tawakkei, her husband, now nameless, plied his oar, a junk decorated the setting sun. Upon the deck of it sat the Dowager Empress, who journeyed to find peace from restlessness. And seeing the little boat, she flung the flower that was in her fingers to the bride.

And she who had been Lei-suan set it in her bride-crown.

And thus a new name, a flower-name, came to them who were now nameless.

But they never spoke it again, but lived as the Nameless Ones from that evening.

On the day following their banishment the brothers of Lei-suan came to visit her, bringing five cups of rare workmanship (intended for the Emperor, but deformed to beauty in the firing, and therefore thought to be

proper gifts for their sister by them), and one cup was shaped as a lily, and one as a chrysanthemum, and one as a peony, and one as a peach, and one as a plum.

And the Governor related to them a crafty tale of Leisuan's vanishment by river-drowning, which no one save himself had witnessed. And her brothers withdrew sorrowing, and rode away with their faces toward their horses' tails to betoken loss, having first broken the five cups upon the stone bridge of the palace.

Nine moons had cusped and grown full, when an enamel-seller wandered past a hut of straw, near the Village of the Crows, some distance down the river that flowed past the Palace of Chouan.

And a curtain was drawn over the door of the hut, and before it, cross-legged, sat a basket-weaver, busily weaving a melon-shaped basket of fragrant vines. And from the hut came a thin cry, like a young bird's cry.

And the enamel-seller stood watching him, and listening.

"What do you make to-day?" he asked, in a false voice.

"A basket for the Son of Heaven," answered the basket-weaver.

"Do you speak of the Emperor's son?" persisted the enamel-seller.

"There are many Sons of Heaven," answered the basket-weaver, "but one of them is *my* son."

"And what is his name?" asked the enamel-seller.

"Chiang-charak-miran," answered the basket-weaver.

The enamel-seller smiled, and drew from the folds of his cloak a roll of crimson silk, and gave it to him.

"Take this to line the basket," he said, and he was gone.

But the two sharp eyes that looked after him through the hut-curtain perceived that although the enamel-seller was very old, and bent, he straightened himself and walked as a prince when he reached the elbow of the road.

And thus she (who had been Lei-suan) knew who he was.

And each year after that, some one stopped at the basket-weaver's hut near the Village of the Crows, on a certain day of the blossom-season, and left a roll of silk.

And always it was an old man; sometimes a teller of tales, sometimes a maker of locks, sometimes a bird-seller. But always, when he reached the elbow of the road, he straightened himself, and walked like a prince.

And as time passed like a feather upon the wind, and San-Yada, the Governor of Chouan, grew old, and Froo-tin, his sister, grew thin as a dried stalk, and her voice shrill like the wind through a keyhole, and the plowed field upon the Governor's forehead became fecund with unrest, then did Froo-tin die, even as the wind ceases, and the Governor was left to be the last of his clan, with chicanery the only guest at the secret door of his mind, and the future of the province like an empty box to his meditations.

For fourteen years had passed, and no dowry-silk remained in the treasure-room of the palace, since the last blossom-season had passed, when San-Yada had gone disguised as a parchment-seller in a blue cloak to the hut near the Village of the Crows.

And the Governor communed with his flamingo-pipe one day, when the cold rain rattled at the fretted windows of horn, and the November wind sought to come in, like a querulous ghost.

And the son of the basket-weaver, who lived in the hut near the Village of the Crows, went clad in silks of yellow, and of amaranthine, and of jade-white, and of crow's wing color, and of crimson.

And his mother (who had been Lei-suan, the Clan-princess), now matured like a ripened quince, saw her son from the corner of her mind (where shyness dwelt with pride) as a young prince.

And one morning a junk with red sails came down the river, and sixteen warriors of the Clan of Chouan came to the hut of the basket-weaver, and took him, and his wife, and his son.

And when they stood upon the teakwood deck of the junk they saw stretched upon a mattress San-Yada, the aged Governor of Chouan, whose forehead was as a mountainous province, and whose hands were like dried fishes.

And there were brought to him five boxes of earth that were as the dowry-earths of Lei-suan, the Clan-princess of Tonga.

And in one sprouted new rice, and in one a dwarfed oaktree, and in one a shoot of barley-straw, and in one a tea-flower, and in one a flax-stalk.

And there was brought a heavy chest, with locks of silver, and in it were ten thousand pieces of hexagon money, that the minter of Chouan had made, the accruance of fourteen years.

And San-Yada, the Governor, spoke in a cracked voice like a wind in a hollow tree, regarding all the while Chiang-charak-miran, the son of the basket-weaver.

"These were the five fields of your marriage-earth, Lei-suan, in which I have planted these riches of the Province of Chouan. And in this chest are the revenues of one piece of hexagon money that I paid to Tawakkei, your husband, for weaving a head-basket, and that I took from his purse to enrich him. For fourteen crop-years the riches of Chouan have been nourished in your fields, and their yieldance has endowed you, the owners of them, although nameless, with nobility.

"And since to you who were called Lei-suan these fields have brought yieldance, as to your body has been brought the yieldance of a son, I now appoint *him* to be Governor in my stead."

And Chiang-charak-miran knelt, and the Governor thrust a crow's feather into his hat of rice-straw, and his two hands, that were like dried fishes, closed their eyes.

"I die—" continued the Governor.

But he said no more.

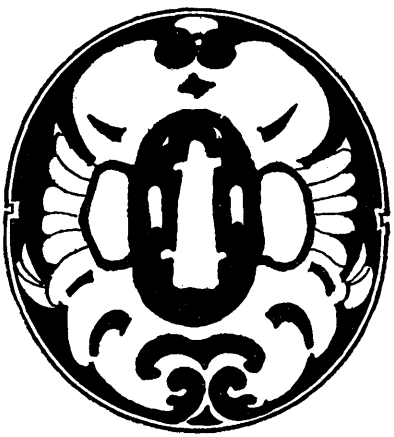
And the mountainous province upon his forehead became as a placid meadow, for so was the weight of chicanery lifted from the mind of San-Yada, and the banishment of Lei-suan and Tawakkei revoked, and their names restored, and the false marriage-scroll of Lei-suan's wedding to the tablet of Kweng-toi, the ghost-ancestor of Chouan, burned, and the ashes spread upon the widening river.

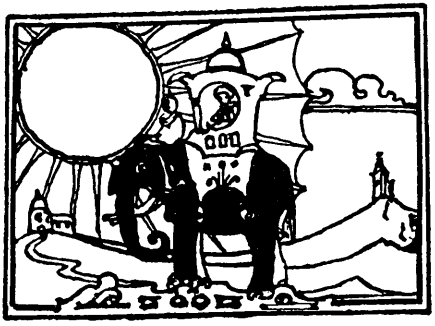
And the five brothers of Lei-suan, now old men with

fading eyes, from their long lives of china-making, came to meet the junk at the river-garden of the Palace of Chouan, and to escort the body of San-Yada to the Temple of Kronak, and to be told the true tale of Lei-suan's disappearance, and to greet their kinsman, her husband, and their nephew, her son, and to drink hot acorn-wine at the feast of government.

But Tawakkei, the basket-weaver, presently stole away from the feast to make a basket of cherry-stems for a humble gift to Lei-suan, his wife, who was as the wind from a fruit-laden orchard to him.

And Lei-suan, his wife, stole after him, with her tame crow (now grown old and full of pleasant malice) hidden in her sleeve.





# The GLASS EYE of THROGMORTON


"Yes," ruminated Velisen, "the English are a strange people; not only do they take Piccadilly to Barbados, but they bring back Barbados to Piccadilly, Anglicize it, and then take it with 'em the next time they go on a voyage of benevolent civilization somewhere else! Take mahogany, for instance—a piece of Sheraton in its own country (where the wood came from, I mean) is more English than it was in Bond Street!

"And so it was with Throgmorton's monocle, down in British East Africa, as I started to tell you. He came riding up to the store one day, fifty miles or so from Nairobi—or anywhere else—with that eye of a Cyclops (it was a huge one) stuck hard in his face, as undetachable, apparently, as his manners, and infinitely more English than it could possibly be in the Inner Temple.

"The English, you know, got the monocle from France; although didn't Nero have a sort of one, made of a thin slice of emerald? Maybe. Anyway, it was that monocle that got Throg in trouble, just the same, that made him finally leave the Protectorate of Kenya for other fields of endeavor, but for his own good, every one thought.

"But I anticipate, gentlemen! The British, you know, like to go to a jungle—the more impassable the better—root it out, plant something in the land, then—"

"What about the monocle?" growled a voice in the darkness of the club veranda, high above San Francisco, that veranda from which ascended of a Summer evening (such evenings, that is, when the damp fog didn't keep every one indoors) much choice tobacco-smoke and many tales. For here foregathered in the old days men from everywhere, and the art of the *raconteur* is still a sacred tradition. In fact, to have a story to tell is almost sufficient passport to the club. (Which may be why the unappreciative dubbed it, a long time ago, "that graveyard of brains.")

"I'm coming to the monocle," said Velisen good-humoredly, "but I have to show you Throg's background a little first. Like all Nordics (he was a blond Englishman) he couldn't stand the sun, but he would stay out in it, just the same, determined to get the better of it by sheer per-

sistence! He and another chap, Nickerson, had some land down by that beastly yellow river that they were trying to get ready for cultivation. Hot? Well, yes, hot. Mountains cut off all possibility of a breeze.

"They had sixty negroes clearing out stumps and brush, and they used to take turns superintending them; the one off duty was at the store drinking himself pie-eyed and playing poker with the Hindu storekeeper (tell you more about poker presently). A little mad, both of them, as men get too far away from accustomed things. Well, the woman now—"

"So there *was* a woman?" drawled some one in the background. "Taken you a long time to come to her!"

"—The woman was a queer fish—or bird, if you like that better! Never could quite place her habitat myself, or why she was there," Velisen went on. "She took a shine to Throg right off, and he was always over at her place on the rise, where her father, old Tagloff, had a bit of land and some cattle, and so on—expatriates, also, too settled to go home. Dutch.

"She used to ride all over the place; used to tear off like mad in the sun, thirty miles or so—having been brought up at the equator, she seemed to be immune. But I anticipate further, gentlemen—her name was Trudie, however.

"Now, Throg wasn't very keen on the job of watching those negroes all day, particularly as Nickerson played better poker than he did, and had, finally, cleaned Throg out of his share in the land (their I O U's went back and forth, you understand) temporarily, and Throg was working to get it back, meantime being Nickerson's superintendent. Bad case of shell-shock, Throg's. Getting

drunk and playing away his life at poker seemed to cheer him up when he had an attack—only things that did.

"He had lost his horse several times, to say nothing of his land, but he would never risk that except to Nickerson—seeming to reason, at his drunkest, that maybe he could get it back from him, sooner or later, or at least keep some hold on it. Nevertheless, he got infernally bored watching those negroes all day long—that was why— Did I tell you he had a glass eye?"

"Besides the monocle?" some one inquired.

"Behind it," explained Velisen, grinning. "Oh, a beautiful glass eye, presented to him by a more or less grateful government for certain services rendered at Vilancourt during the War! A little off-color, that eye, from the other, but still, it was blue, which was something, and he'd gotten used to it. I dare say they couldn't quite match all the eyes that were needed. Well! Anyway, he had a maddening habit of taking that blamed monocle out of his face and clicking it against his glass eyeball when a little 'on'—gave you the creeps to hear it. His nerves were really pretty bad.

"Well, one night he did it after dinner when Trudie had us three up to dinner (Nickerson, Throg, and myself, the only whites for twenty miles or so) at her father's house. She came around and took it out of his fingers, the monocle, and he stared at her like a child who had an apple and somebody snatched it away from him.

" 'What's the matter?' he asked. She was examining the monocle under the lamp.

" 'How do you make it click?' she asked him. Trudie didn't reason. Couldn't. Just asked, always, what she wanted to know. One of those women whose like appears

in every race and every time, superb to look at, but as for reasoning faculty, none, but then, they don't need any! It is enough for one of them to be a woman!

" 'Primitive' you say? No, not just that, but simply not conscious of rationality—deep-dyed in a particularly feminine quality; intelligent, if that is intelligence—perhaps it is one kind—in this two-sided world. Such women always get what they want, and not by guile, either! Too simple to realize that they can't have it by ordinary laws, but just get it, anyhow!

"She didn't see that the eye was glass. Never occurred to her. Then she began to study her own hand through the monocle, which was, really, a magnifying-glass, being a lens out of a German field-glass. Yes, funny idea to use it for a monocle, isn't it? Particularly for a glass eye!

" 'My eye—' Throg began to explain, but she suddenly gave a little scream.

" 'This thing,' she said to him, wonderingly, 'shows a map in my hand!'

"Well, of course it did, in a way. Trudie had never observed the lines in her palm before, probably, and, being magnified, they must have startled her considerably. She was like a child about it, and I looked over at Throg; and the fool had taken out his glass eye and was holding it out to her. Not his idea of a joke, you understand, but simply to elucidate to her why it had clicked!

"The effect upon Trudie was startling. That empty socket—the eye there in his hand—no wonder the girl screamed and ran up the stairs. She took Throg's monocle with her. And old Tagloff poured some more brandy, and laughed, as Throg imperturbably put back his eye

in his head. But something had happened you see, to the girl, as well as to Throg. It seemed to me he had looked at Trudie for the first time, and seen what a strange, undecipherable, emotional creature she was.

"She came back after a little while, gave him back his eye-glass, and whispered something to him. He only shook his head, and after polishing the thing carefully with a silk handkerchief that he carried for that very purpose, fixed it against his nose just the same.

"Now, here's a queer thing, gentlemen. Did he wear that lens of his over a perfectly good but useless—except for decorative purposes—glass eye to pretend somehow that he could see with it? Or was he so sensitive about the eye that he felt better with the extra glass between him and the world? Or did he think the eye might fall out and that the monocle would hold it in? Hard to say!

"Now, you know, there are sorcerers in British East Africa, fellows who squat on a mat in front of their huts, and kill people by thinking intensely for two or three days or weeks, on the desired result. Sorcery is, of course, a crime in British law, and after one of 'em has killed—according to general complaint from the population—two or three able-bodied negroes, he is clapped into jail to keep him from doing any more damage. They don't hang him, because to the literal and just British mind such a thing can not be proved—may not be true—so they keep on the safe side and treat the accused as a public menace."

"Why doesn't he kill his jailers?" queried a languid, spectral voice in a corner of the veranda.

"Well, for one thing, the British don't believe in the

power of sorcery," said Velisen with an odd little smile, "and, besides, a sorcerer has to get hold of something personal—extremely personal—belonging to the intended victim, a hair of his head, a bit of his clothes, and *then* the victim has to be warned he's going to die, with due formality, 'on Thursday next,' as the case may be, so he can be thinking about it, too! Otherwise—well, it doesn't work, you see? Self-hypnosis enters into the job. So he goes on living if he is strong-minded!

"And since no death by sorcery has ever been proved, why, they simply keep the sorcerer in the bilboes until resentment dies down, and then set him free with a warning. But all this is simply to prepare you for what happened about the eye—thanks, yes, Scotch! I must say you fellows do yourselves very well here—considering!

"You see, it was pretty slow work superintending those sixty negroes digging out stumps. Nothing to do but loaf and keep an eye on 'em—I've done it! The moment you look away, picks stop in mid-air. It's constitutionally impossible, of course, for a negro in British East Africa to work unless somebody is watching him do it! Goes to sleep standing, like a horse. Well, Throgmorton got infernally bored keeping an eye on those negroes all day—"

"The *glass* eye?" queried the spectral voice in the corner, ironically.

"Yes, the *glass* eye," agreed Velisen. "It was this way, since you are wondering what this story is all about. You see, it occurred to him one day *to take that thing out of his head and put it on a rock,* in plain sight of all his negroes! Then he told them very impressively that he had to go away for a while, and that he was leaving

his eye to watch every one of them, and that when he came back his eye would tell him which ones had loafed, blast their lazy souls! And more to the same effect. Quite a harangue it must have been.

"Can't you see those fellows simply paralyzed with fright, with the supernaturalness of the thing? That blue eye sitting there in the crevice of the rock, and the boss with an empty hole in his head, looking very fierce (as he could), and emphasizing every word by tapping his infernal monocle on the ivory handle of his riding crop? For he carried a crop, a very swanky one, made of rhinoceros-skin—great stickler for form, Throgmorton!—always dressed in immaculate linen riding-clothes, white collar, black tie, pith helmet, black mustaches—very 'doggy' indeed—his get-up would have been as hot as Hades for any one else, but he'd been a cavalry officer, and he never seemed to wilt like other people.

"Having frightened the life out of his myrmidons, he stuck the monocle in his face and galloped off to the store to play poker, leaving them to carry on! There was no loafing that day, nor the next; no sleeping under such trees as were left. No! They worked like the devil, because every time they looked at the rock there was that uncanny thing glistening—a veritable evil eye, never winking, staring them out of countenance.

"They worked!

"Well, of course, you're wondering, I suppose, why one of them didn't throw it in the river to the crocodiles, aren't you? Too superstitious—that was a human eye, to them—they hardly know what glass is, and as for a glass eye! Besides, Throgmorton stood for a sort of god to them. So they stayed in thrall all day, because he

didn't come back until nearly sundown, the better for a cool day at the store—the better for any number of gin rickeys.

"The better by some three pounds ten he had won at poker there!

"From me," Velisen added with a mild rancor, as if somehow, although he was a good loser, the memory of that three pounds ten had never been quite effaced by any subsequent poker game.

"Well, he rode to that rock and picked up his eye, gazed into it long and seriously, then he looked from one to the other of the negroes, and they quaked. They were thirsty and tired and scared—and they hadn't dared to eat all day. He could scarcely keep his face straight (he told us that evening over at Tagloff's) as he spotted the loafers from their hangdog expression and reprimanded them.

"It must have been a funny scene! He tried it the next day, and thereafter, and his land was getting cleared very rapidly indeed (he had 'em so cowed that they actually used to go up to that eye and ask permission to go and get a drink of water!).

"But the slow savage mind was gradually roused to resentment. It was one thing to have that lank Englishman in spotless white for an overseer, but quite another breed of cats to work under the accusing, omnipotent supervision of that staring blue eye. It simply wasn't done, you understand? None of these fellows likes to work unless his boss is there looking on, shouting encouragement now and then—profane encouragement; it isn't necessary for the boss to be doing anything, but he has to be there. Besides, the idea of evil got into some of

them; it got transmitted to the gang, and they began to feel that the eye was doing them an actual physical injury! Natural enough.

"Well, of course, all who saw Throg riding about minus one eye wondered about it; but he, realizing his good fortune, begged them not to give away the secret. You can see how he would get the name of 'Evil-eye,' riding about with a monocle, and not even a *glass* eye behind the thing! Can't you?

"And then Trudie Tagloff got worried about him, and (you may have gathered that she was quite a bit gone on him by this time) one evening she begged him to give up the game with the eye, and he wouldn't. So she stole the monocle from him by the simple device of asking him to give it to her, and then running upstairs with it, somehow reasoning (if that is what she did) that if he didn't have it to wear while his eye was working, he couldn't very well leave the thing on the rock every day.

"Pretty sharp reasoning, eh? Because the monocle *was* infinitely more important to him than any eye—glass or real—maintained his self-respect, as I said before. He'd been terribly shell-shocked in the War, and that pane of prismatic glass was a good thing to hide behind —good defense mechanism.

"Well, the theft didn't bother Throg very much. He went away laughing when Trudie refused to give him back the monocle, and turned up next day at the store (having put his negroes to work) with the blue veins of his right eyelid duly magnified by a lens identically like the other one! While possessing only one glass eye, you see, Throg had two monocles!

"A field-glass has two large lenses, of course!

"Well, about this time somebody learned that Throg's negroes had hired a local sorcerer to make the glass eye blind! Somebody going over to observe the phenomenon at Throg's place saw him sitting under a shady tree, motionless, with his basket of tricks, and guessed what it was about. That somebody was Trudie, I always thought.

"Of course we had a good laugh about it over at Tagloff's—the idea of that sorcerer solemnly sorcering away all day on a glass eye was too much for us. But Trudie didn't laugh. It wasn't a joke to her. You see, she had been brought up in British East Africa. She believed in sorcery—her old nurse had seen to that. She was quite convinced that some dire thing would happen to Throg through the sorcerer's deviltry, that some evil would be transmitted to him through the eye.

"It was obvious to all of us except Trudie that the negroes, through their sorcerer, only wished to render the eye a little less observant, and that they had no designs on his life, since Nickerson paid a trifle more than other people for labor, being anxious to get his crop in the ground. Anyway, it got about through Trudie's nurse, that all the sorcerer expected to accomplish was to render that Zeiss & Lomb, Jena glass eye sightless, which it was already!

"And when Nickerson complained that Throg wasn't living up to his contract as overseer, Throg said wasn't his eye doing the work? And better than he could do it? And wasn't it his eye? Nickerson was a bit 'near,' you see, and, besides, Throg now had more time for poker at the store, and he was gradually recouping his losses, getting back his share of the land, I O U by I O U, from

Nickerson, for somehow Throg got a streak of sobriety, without his eye, and played very solemn poker. You see?

"Well, Trudie got busy and concocted, or her nurse concocted—she never would tell—a strange compound that looked like purple ink, and smelled like spices, for Throg to bathe his glass eye in when he picked it up every afternoon, the idea being to neutralize the damage done to it by the sorcerer, you see? Well, to humor her (and maybe he more than half believed it) he used to lug the bottle around with him, and dip the eye in it gravely, then polish it with his silk handkerchief—reserved for the monocle. He was always shining that up.

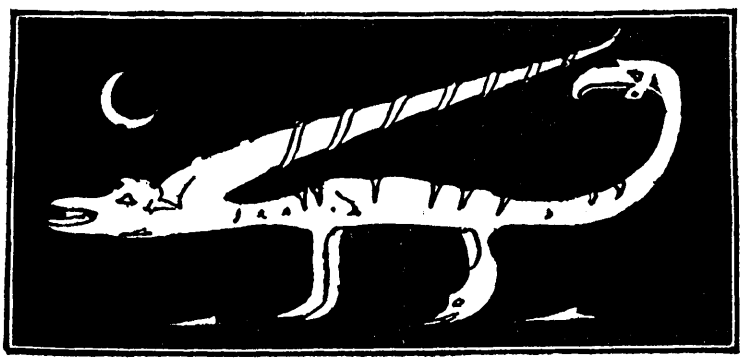
"Sure, a bit mad, but darned amusing!

"After a couple of weeks, with no results, the negroes had a conclave one day, and refused to pay their sorcerer any more, whereupon he waxed indignant, and threatened them with all manner of things. But their distress hadn't been alleviated, you see, and in their wrath they pitched the sorcerer into the river to the crocodiles, and his basket of chips, bits of carved bone, and other sorcering implements after him! The crocodiles didn't fancy him, evidently—he was a lean sorcerer—and he swam out and disappeared from that region. His prestige was all gone, you see? Although he had the dread reputation of having killed two men to order, five cows, and even a lion who had decimated a village somewhere. Good publicity, eh?

"I forgot to tell you that Throg had been warned, in due form, by the sorcerer (an honorable man, not wishing to do any damage to that eye in an underhand way!) to the effect that his eye would go blind from being left

out in the sun. That was the polite way of putting it, you understand? And calculated not to give away the gaff, in the simple savage's view. The message came on a bit of polished bone—a rudely scratched eye, a sun, then a circle, to show blindness. It was Trudie who interpreted it.

"Part of the negroes' discontent, ending in the overthrow of the sorcerer, lay in the unerring accuracy of Throg's accusation of the loafers when he came to read the eye every afternoon. Obviously to them that eye went right on seeing no matter how hard the sorcerer worked (or slept), for he would arrange his basket of tricks for operations, then go peacefully to sleep, theoretically concentrated on the desired result, leaving the bones and chips to do the work. You can see how hard pressed they were to throw their sorcerer in the river—a piece of lese-majesty! Now the basket floated down the river when the owner of it was deposed, and was found, curiously enough, at the Tagloff's boat-landing by Trudie, who, however, said nothing about it at the time. A reticent woman, Trudie!



"Here is one of the sorcerer's bones. (There was a pocket in the basket, in which were concealed the more potent pharaphernalia—for murder and such like practices.)"

And Velisen took out of his pocket a flat bone, engraved with a fish, and handed it about. It seemed to bring the reality of the story that he was spinning for us acutely within the circle of light there on the veranda.

"Anyway, there was a button off Throg's coat in the basket, the stump of a cigar, a dried banana-skin, besides the regulation set of bones. Throg afterward remembered having eaten a banana one day in front of the store, and seeing a negro boy scrambling to pick up the skin.

"Well, the game went on, and the negroes hired a new sorcerer presently, whose methods were a bit different. He perched in a dead tree, on the edge of Throg's clearing, overlooking the rock, the river, the negroes working, and he made no secret of the fact that he was there for a purpose. He warned Throg also by sending him a pair of old sun-glasses he had picked up somewhere, as a delicate hint to him that he would soon go blind. Touching, wasn't it? Particularly as most of that sorcerer's fearsomeness consisted in his having gone about wearing the sun-glasses, one lens of which was missing! He was otherwise perfectly naked.

"About this time Throg lost his second monocle. It was stolen out of his coat, which he left thrown over his saddle for ten minutes or so one day while he stopped at the store. He was quite cut up about it, and came to Trudie begging back the other one, and in a very bad state of mind. But she refused to give it to him, so he

cleaned up the sun-glasses and wore them, with his good eye looking out comically through the empty rim.

"A day or two after that he got the shock of his life, going to get his eye off the rock as usual, to confront his perspiring myrmidons. It wasn't a blue eye any more. It was a cold, malevolent green one, rather queer-looking, small iris—hardly looked human (as a glass eye should); didn't look like a glass eye at all. However, he glared at everybody, including the sorcerer sitting up in his dead tree like a vulture, and proceeded to arraign the culprits as usual.

"Then he rode away, and went up to the Tagloffs', having put the thing in his head just the same. We were all due there for dinner (we dined there every other night by standing invitation—hospitable soul, old Tagloff!). I used to wonder what his game was, as none of us ever had much to say. There isn't much to say in British East Africa, and Throg's eye had kept us going for some weeks.

"It had occurred to me that in the back of his head old Tagloff had an idea one of us might marry Trudie, but of course you never could tell what he was thinking about. Not that Trudie wasn't attractive. She was. A somewhat fragile Amazon, with tons of red hair, deep-blue eyes, high cheek-bones—charm? Oh, yes! But single-track in her mind. I guess he knew that, too, old Tagloff. But he kept his own counsel about it and smilingly laughed at Nickerson's thousandth repetition of the conundrum about Lot's wife, plied us all with his excellent grog, and waited, as the Dutch know how to wait, pulling gently on the beautiful meerschaum pipe that never left

his fingers. I used to wonder if he smoked that pipe in his sleep!

"Nickerson was a bit thick, you see—not a bounder, but— Me, of course, he never thought of in that connection—old Tagloff!"

And Velisen laughed in an embarrassed sort of way, and ran his hands through his thick gray hair.

"So maybe Throg was in that old Dutchman's mind all the time for a husband for Trudie, glass eye and all. Throgmorton was a gentleman.

"Well, Throg took out the new eye and showed it to us very gravely. It certainly looked queer. We were all seized with the same idea at once, that the sorcerer, or the sun, had done something to it. It looked shrunken, malevolent—just queer. Gave us the creeps. Only Trudie showed no surprise at it. But she stared at Throg all through dinner with an anxious expression, as he would put the eye in his head, and then take it out again, with a worried pucker of the eyebrows. 'Blamed thing doesn't seem to fit any more!' he growled once. And at that Trudie smiled, a queer, deep, secretive smile.

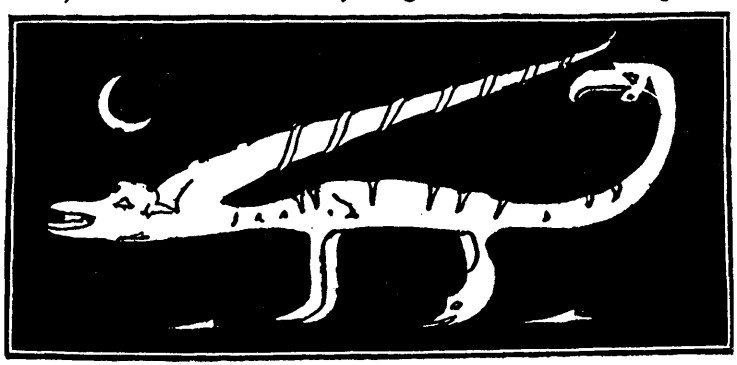
"And it dawned upon me for the first time that she was mad about Throg, loved him as a woman loves her child, indulgently, fiercely, protectingly—with a strange pathos in her eyes, as if she didn't quite know it yet herself, nor what to do about it. But she wouldn't give him back his monocle, just the same, only she did ask, that evening, to have back her bottle of purple ink. He handed it over to her with some bantering remark about its not having done very much good, as the glass eye was ruined now for good!

"But she said nothing, and ran upstairs with it. She

was always running upstairs to hide something, it seemed to me, like a magpie who had found a bright pebble and hurried away to secrete it in her nest—like a squirrel! Once it was a little present that Throg brought to her when an English mail was in. Somebody had sent him a fool scarf-pin, and it outraged him, since he invariably wore a bow-tie, so he gave it to Trudie. Another time he had left a cigar-band by his plate after dinner, and that she had taken, magpie fashion, and run upstairs with it.

"Strange girl, Trudie. One could imagine her taking up a loose board in the floor upstairs, with the door locked, and taking out of it Throg's monocle, the scarf-pin, the cigar-band, and gloating over them all. Oh, yes, she loved him! I have always wondered if he knew how much, then—or later. He wasn't a fool, Throg, and he was good-looking in a fierce sort of way, but too civilized, maybe, to know what a brooding volcano Trudie was emotionally.

"Well, we rode home in the moonlight that night to our respective shacks, Throg complaining that his eye hurt him, and Nickerson and I joking with him about his prize



sorcerer up in the tree, and asking him if *he* was on the pay-roll!

"Two days afterward, in the afternoon, I rode the seven miles from my place up to the store, on the way to Tagloff's. And as I came near to it I heard a stream of curses coming out of it—English curses, fluent, adequate, literary curses. Lal, the Hindu storekeeper, came to the door and motioned to me to wait for a moment. Then he led me around to the window on the side that looked into his little office, where we all played poker almost every day, or Hindu chess, at which Lal was an adept.

"I looked in to see Throgmorton sprawled in one of Lal's decrepit, bamboo chairs, a gin rickey in one hand, his rhinoceros-hide crop in the other. In his right eye was a monocle (he had gotten it back somehow, evidently), but there was no eye back of it.

"In front of him on the floor cowered a negro with all the earmarks of a sorcerer about him, and patently in an abject, pitiful terror, wearing those absurd sun-glasses that he had sent Throg as a warning!

"Throg's cursing was epicene! He drew from sources unknown even to me. He revealed an astounding memory for Shakespeare, the law, Chaucer, Billingsgate, Liverpoolese, French, Arabic, and most of the negroid tongues. 'Eye of a newt,' '*nom de nom de cochon verte,*' 'by the thousand gilded rats of Al Raschid,' 'infernal cheek,' 'criminal mayhem' were a few of the things that poured out of his fertile brain upon the head of the sorcerer.

Throgmorton was very drunk, and he emphasized everything that he said with whacks of that rhinoceros-hide crop on the inlaid table before him, on the sor-

cerer's head, shoulders—anywhere at all—with a rhythmical and terrible precision, but keeping fast hold of his gin rickey all the time. He was beyond needing it, as the three empty bottles on the table testified. They jumped at every whack of the stick. If there was a curse in the Bible that he did not know I should be glad to hear of it! He even resorted to Greek in his fury.

"Nor did he confine his rancor to the sorcerer. He cursed British East Africa—which, indeed, deserves it—it *is* hotter than Hades! He cursed the flies and the dust; he went back in his memory and cursed every one who had caused him any annoyance during the War. (There were a good many!) He cursed war! He covered a great deal of ground for a self-contained man, which he had been, always. It was magnificent, admirable! It seemed to me as if he had kept his temper all his life, perhaps, through all the four years he had endured of the War, and now the berserker had risen in him, and was having its way, and all over a miserable negro sorcerer!

"Lal looked at me with a smile when I asked him if the sun had got Throg.

" 'No—no—very simple!' was his explanation. 'This morning he come to store all the same, and he play poker all day and get drunk—leetle drunk. There was an American here—he play very good poker! He win all Mr. Throg's money, all his land, all his cigar; then Mr. Throg say he bet his eye that is on the rock watching negro men, and American win that, too!

" 'And Mr. Throg, very drunk, very precis', take visit-card and say on it "I O U one glass eye, now on rock, Ubi District," and give card to American, make his bow very precis', and say, "I bring you that eye, Mr.

Brown. You wait for me here." And off he ride, like the very dickens, to get eye! He come back two hours now, with sorcerer by scruff of his neck, but no eye, and he say to me, "Lal, lend me your office little while to curse this swine in—too hot out-of-doors—and bring me plenty gin rickeys." '

" 'And the American?' I asked Lal.

" 'He ride off,' said Lal; 'he say he come back for that eye some day, but I think not. He had enough! What would he do with Mr. Throg's eye in Mombasa?'

"Well, I went in presently and spoke to Throg. We were due over to Tagloffs' for dinner. He looked up at me with a childlike grin of delight, gave the luckless sorcerer one more whack, drank his drink, and admonished the sobbing negro to get out and to keep going, and not to stop this side of Cape Town! Which he evidently did, for he was never seen again.

"Then, in the greatest good humor, and quite suddenly perfectly sober (as a certain type of lank Englishman can get without warning), Throg adjusted his monocle carefully, put on his helmet, borrowed a sovereign from me to pay Lal with (which sovereign he never paid back, I might add!), and started off with me to Tagloffs'. But he wouldn't tell me what had happened. Not until after dinner did he tell any of us, and then, with Trudie leaning on her elbows across from him, he related what had happened.

"The sorcerer, you see, had stolen his monocle out of his coat, to operate with (that being a very personal possession); it ought to have put that eye out of business, and it did, as you will see. Now (yes, Scotch, please!), there was the sorcerer up in his tree, with a basket of

tricks and Throg's monocle, sorcering away for all he was worth, and all the while the negroes working like blazes.

"I didn't tell you, did I, that Throg always left the eye on the shady side of the rock? No? Well, of course nobody knows how the sorcerer found it out (although he *was* considerably above the average in his profession), but that monocle was an excellent *burning-glass!* Do you see? Might have discovered it accidentally, and burned his own hand first—who can say? But what he had been doing all day was to concentrate a sun-ray through the glass onto that eye in the crevice of the rock! Yes, some intelligence, you say? Direct sorcery! That man was a genius in a way.

"Well, of course, any glass eye, or any other eye not actively engaged in any one's head, could probably stand a burning-glass sighted on it all day without injury. But Throg, you see, coming along to pick up his eye toward the shank of the afternoon, bent upon taking it back to the store and handing it over to the American like the gentleman he was, paying his losses at the first opportunity—well, he found that eye too hot to hold in his fingers! He dropped it; it skipped on a stone like a glass marble, and jumped into the river.

"Things must have happened fairly fast after that. Mind you, he was very drunk, and he had gambled away everything he had—gambled the very eye out of his head! He evidently looked up at the sorcerer, and saw the monocle in his hand—saw the spot of sunlight on the rock, and guessed the truth. Because the eye had been in the shade, on purpose to keep it cool! Well, he snatched an ax from the nearest negro, and went after the dead tree, cut it

down in no time at all, and the sorcerer with it, clapped the monocle in his face, hot as it was, threw the sorcerer over his saddle, and galloped to the store like one demented.

"You have read of the institution of the whipping-boy, accorded to the dauphins of France? The child-king could do no wrong; consequently, when he did, the whipping-boy was haled in and punished. In a way poor Throg must have welcomed that sorcerer as a sort of whipping-boy for all his grudge against life! That poor devil, thwarted of most things, uprooted out of his life as a barrister, on the way to the bench, by the advent of the War, robbed of one eye, nerves gone to pieces, too shell-shocked to believe that he could ever get back to what he was, and never croaking about it, either—very game he was!—and then to have this comic figure of a naked, whining sorcerer to bestow his erudite curses upon—really cursing out his destiny, closing up his emotional accounts and starting over, in a veritable bankruptcy of rage! Very logical, it seemed to me, as he told us about it.

"Needless to say, there had been no arraignment of the negroes that afternoon; in fact, never were the delinquents punished. They took to their heels! It was too much to see their sorcerer tumbling down from his tree like a vulture stricken with palsy! (For I daresay that sorcerer was scared! He must have called upon all his mumbo-jumbos to come and save him!)

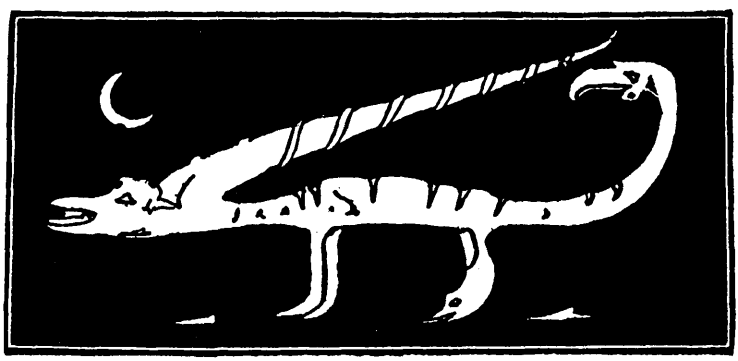
"Then Throg explained to us that he was leaving the Protectorate for England, having lost his share of the land. (He apologized to Nickerson, but added that the

stumps were all out, and there was very little more to do, since he had cut down the last dead tree himself!)

"All his money was gone, he explained rather gleefully, except what he had put away in Mombasa to go home with if need be—never stirred anywhere in the world, he said, without salting away enough to take him back to Temple Court, in London, where he kept his chambers from year to year, equally a sally-port and a sanctuary. Said he had learned always to save the odd sovereign during the War, and never stake it on poker!

"He told us a lot of things about himself that evening, about shell-shock, how he had come to British East Africa to get away from himself—and now he *was* free of his delusions—no longer heard the whine of a shell in the buzzing of a fly—didn't really want to cultivate land, anyway, being a barrister, and didn't care now, his one desire being to get back to the Temple—he'd have to go back to England anyway to get a new glass eye—rather uncomfortable not having any!

"He seemed on the whole very happy about it all—anyway, he had his monocle back—one of them! And that



made him happy. He had had the field-glass in his hands when he was wounded—when he lost his eye—and that, somehow, was why he had made two monocles out of it.

"And as he talked, and old Tagloff listened shrewdly, Trudie never took her eyes off Throg's face.

"Well, Nickerson didn't say anything—you might think he'd be a bit annoyed at Throg's gambling away his share of the land, and saddling him with a stranger for a partner. But there seemed to be something between Nickerson and Tagloff, from the way they looked at each other. Something *was* up between them, I thought.

"Suddenly Throg took the monocle out of his face and began to tap on his coffee-cup with it, as he always did, lost in space—back in the war-zone again! And Trudie sprang up, reached across the table, and snatched it out of his hand, turned, and threw the thing through the wide-open door. It went into the river below with a little *plunk*. I thought Throg would murder somebody for a moment—the blank amazement that came over his face. But Trudie was already running up the stairs, not to hide something, but to find something, in her little granary.

"There was a scratching sound on the plaster ceiling over our heads, following her quick footsteps, a little thud, and she was back again, with a funny little flat bark basket, more like a tray—the sorcerer's basket that she had found in the river, you see? She brought it down into the living-room, carrying it with much ceremony, with both hands, like an ancient woman carrying a seed-basket!

"It was Trudie's treasure—all her hidings from under the loose board in the floor upstairs—the magpie had

saved enough to accomplish her purpose. The time had come for Trudie to enact her bit of sorcery in the life of Throgmorton! We all stared at her, for it was clear to all of us that she carried something momentous in her basket of tricks. She was radiant; her eyes were shining mysteriously—she had found time to wrap a bit of bright-blue silk around her red hair.

"And old Tagloff coughed.

"She came straight to the table, where Throg sat petrified—his monocle gone into the river—his land all gone—even the eye he had lost by sorcery he owed to another man, and no way to pay it!

"And, gentleman, that calm, assured girl brought it all back to him! It was all in the basket, you see! First she took out the 'visit-card,' the I O U for the eye, and tore it in half, and laid the pieces before him. But he hardly glanced at them. He was spellbound. He was watching Trudie. We all were. She was like a sorceress, with her basket of tricks; it was as if she had stored up things all her life, to give to that man. She took out all the sorcerer's bones and chips, and spread them in a strange pattern. She took the cigar-band—a gold one—and slipped it on her third finger. She was deliberate, purposeful, intent. That queer, scatter-brained, single-track girl was working some carefully prepared magic of her own. And it worked, too!

"She took a number of other I O U's of Throg's land, lost to the American poker-shark that afternoon, and restored them to him, torn in two. She took some sovereigns, quite a lot of them, and piled them in front of him, in little heaps, also. She brought out a little packet of silk, pinned with Throg's scarf-pin, and laid it down.

Then she made monkey motions over the bones, selected one, and pushed it and the packet across to him.

"He undid the silk—and found—his other monocle! The one she had first taken away from him. He stuck it in his face absent-mindedly, and scrutinized the bit of bone. And the game went on—a game between a man and a woman—rather a simple one, but, Heavens! *What* a game it is! The bit of bone was the one that I have just shown you. She was restoring his sight, you see? Trudie was playing conjurer! Then she took out a bottle—of purple ink, apparently, smelling of spices, and opened it (a squat bottle with a large mouth), fished in it with a coffee-spoon very carefully, and brought out, and dried with her handkerchief—Throg's *blue glass eye!*

"There it was in her palm, for everybody to see. And then she spoke, for the first time.

" 'How much, Mister Throg,' she asked, weighing the eye a little as if it were a rare jewel—a nugget of gold—an old talisman that would open heaven for him.

"Blessed if she wasn't bargaining with him!

" 'But see here—' he began, 'er—*my eye!*—how—all this?' (indicating the I O U'S and the money).

" 'How much, Mister Throg?' she repeated very softly, but her hand closed over that glass eye possessively.

" 'How much do you want, Trudie?' he asked after a little, and not banteringly, either.

" 'I want—you—to marry me,' was what she said, 'and go back to London—the sun will kill you here—it makes you drink—it makes you play too much poker—makes you remember too much!'

"Startled? Well, no, he wasn't, exactly.

" 'You *hired* that man?' he asked.

" 'Oh, yes,' she assented, 'I got him in Mombasa! I told him to win everything you had, because you can not take care of things! I sell your land to my father for you! Your land—all cleared by your eye!"

"And Tagloff nodded smilingly. Nickerson burst into a guffaw. 'One on you, Throg,' he said, 'but you got a good price!'

"Throg took out his monocle and began to tap with it on the bit of bone. There was an insistent fly buzzing somewhere in the room. He was hearing a shell droning over a French sector again.

" 'You must never do that any more,' said Trudie gently; 'it brings back bad things to you, too much—war—unhappy things. *Stop!*'

"And Throg stopped.

"She had him in a trap no more devious than a woman's trap for a man is, usually—but had him, very surely—knew all about him, had set out to cure him! Blind instinct *and* a low-down trick, you say? Not cricket. No. To go thirty-five miles in the sun to Mombasa, hire the best gambler there to come and get that poor shell-shocked fool drunk and win all his land and all his money away from him—so she could give it back to him! Consider the magnitude of a woman's mind, gentlemen—the powerful chicanery of this simple, direct young savage, to contemplate and carry out, the cure, and accomplish the acquisition of her man! Stupendous, eh?

"What do psychiatrists know, compared with a woman? Sensed his whole trouble and set out to cure it, *her* way. What did she pay the poker-shark? Nothing, probably—he was a Southerner—couldn't refuse a lady anything she asked! But how do I know? Trudie would have

given him anything—the same as did *Manon Lescaut*—wouldn't have mattered to her. Trudie's type is rare, but she wasn't invented by the Abbé Prévost. No.

" 'My eye—' Throg began, holding out his hand—'how did it get here? It's in the river!'

" 'Bad eye is in the river, and bad window-glass in the river, too—sorcerer do no harm that way, Mister Throg! I took this away from your rock, one day, to keep any evil from coming to it.'

" 'And you put the other eye there?' asked Throg, puzzling out the mystery little by little.

" 'Oh, yes. I tell your negroes I come to see if your eye know something you forget for a moment.'

" 'But where did you get the other one, Trudie?' the poor devil inquired.

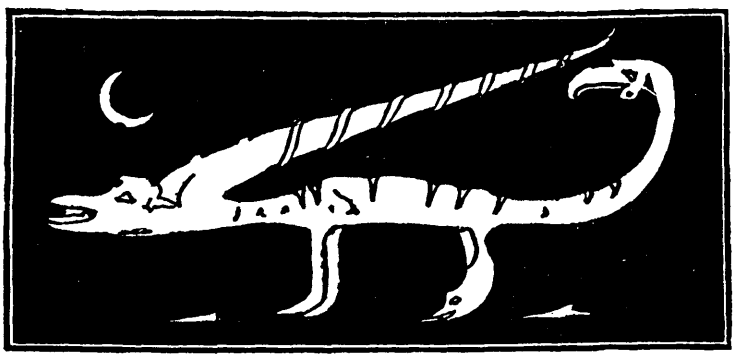
" 'I find it in the sorcerer's basket floating in the river. I put it on the rock to do your work for you—sorcerer eye, that one—nobody do it any harm! Save good eye in juice for you when you need it. *See?*'

"He saw. Marry her? Of course he did. He'd loved her all the time—but part of his obsession was that no woman could love him with that glass eye, do you see? That was why he wore the monocle over it. Trudie cured him of that. They sailed the next week to go to the Temple, for Throg to take up his law after ten years' recess. You don't see her in the Temple? Well, I do. I see her anywhere—she is as universal as Cleopatra; no age, no country, no race. Trudie—legendary woman! She's probably as much at home in Temple Court as she was down on that African river—adapts herself. He was her man, and she knew it, and she told him so. Very simple, really. Ah—well!

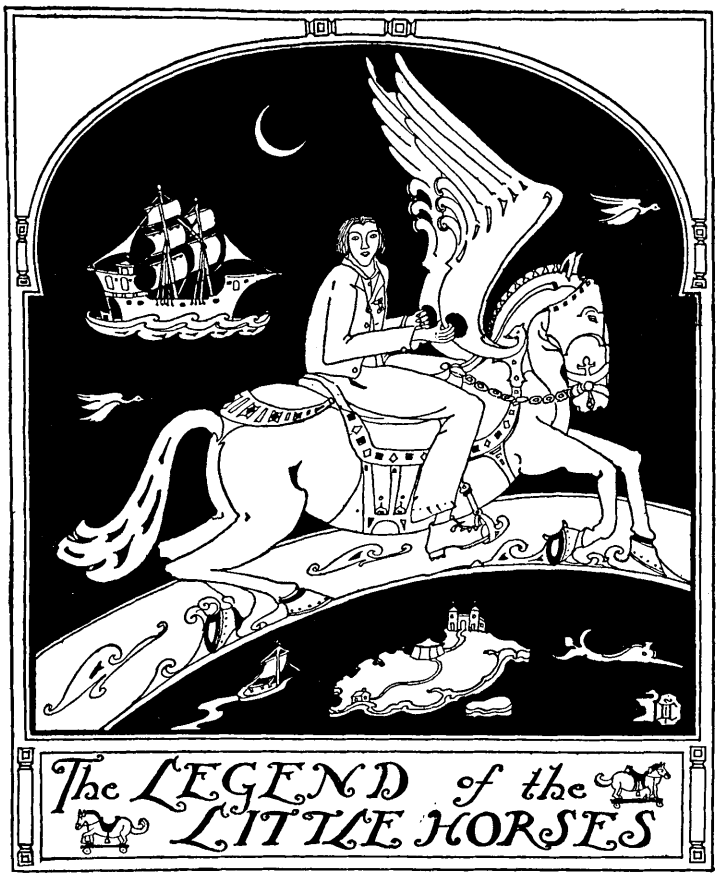
("Yes, Scotch, please! You fellows really do yourselves very well here, considering!)

"Oh—the eye that went in the river? I didn't tell you, did I? It was a petrified crocodile eye—fairly common among sorcerers in Africa. Yes, she *did* play a good game of poker, as it happens—Trudie! It was a *green* eye, yes—jealousy, what?

"Yes, *what about intellect,* after all?"



# The LEGEND of the LITTLE HORSES




Pierre Salabat slapped the flank of the little heifer good-humoredly.

*"Allons, Sylvie!"* he exclaimed.

The faint gray road ahead dipped into a hollow of the barrens, glimmered on the next hilltop. If you didn't know that it went on, you might think that you were lost, there in the barrens. But when you got over the hill,

there would be a little more of it, just the same. It had no perceptible past, nor any apparent future, that road.

Pierre Salabat turned and looked back. And the little heifer turned also. There were ribbons tied about her neck: one blue, for Mathilde; the other yellow, for Louis. The children had tied them there yesterday—for Sylvia to remember them by. For Sylvie had to be sold to-day, that the Salabats might have flour, and salt, and potatoes, and bacon (and maybe a little sugar), to keep them alive through the long winter that was approaching like the tide comes in from the sea.

And Pierre, who was a simple man, counted on his fingers the things that Louise, his wife, had told him to buy, when Sylvie was sold. "A handful of raisin—a new saucepan with a lid—matches"—he finished with his right hand, and beginning with the thumb of his left —"*Patates*—two yards of white cloth—and not to forget some tobacco for himself—" He had come to the finger where his wedding ring was, and the face of that beautiful Louise danced before his eyes. He could *not* forget that she, the treasure of his life, asked only for herself "a lil' bottle of scent" if there was money enough. Ah, no!—he would buy *that* first, a little square bottle, at the chemist's shop in Ville Victoire, a bottle such as he had given to her when they were married. And, yes, she had whispered something to him when she had come to the first turning of the road from their house, back there on the bleak coast of Isle Fournier—so that Mathilde and Louis could not possibly hear—"An' Pierre—maybe? a little horse? speckled, *un petit cheval,* for—?" (she had not needed to say who. He knew.)—"like the peddler told them?"

And he had nodded his head. Yes, surely, there would be money left, plenty, to buy *un petit cheval* for *les enfants! Mais oui*—but surely! Sylvie was a good heifer; "she ought to bring as much as fourteen dollar—maybe lil' bit more"—from the drovers in Ville Victoire. Just see her gentle eyes—her fine coat, well brushed that morning by lantern light—her sharp little hoofs!

Pierre looked back. He could just see, as the sun slipped out of the sea, out there, where the boats stood off for France, for Angleterre—for China, maybe—the thin thread of smoke that meant that Louise was making some breakfast for *les enfants,* who must sleep long, being little. Two miles, nearly, he knew.

What a happy man he was, this Pierre Salabat, with a wife like Louise, and two merry children, a cow who gave them good milk to drink, who had given them this fine young heifer, Sylvie, to sell—this Sylvie who was eating the sparse grass of late summer here on the barrens, that she might be even a little fatter when she came to market with two ribbons around her neck! Ah, yes, he was a fortunate man, Pierre Salabat. And again he slapped Sylvie upon her flank, and she trotted down the dip of the road obediently.

And as they trudged along, the fourteen miles that lay between his house and Ville Victoire, Pierre thought of many things; of how he had come these miles of a Sunday, to court that same Louise Duvernay, at her mother's house beyond Laussat, to the east of Ville Victoire, and of how she had never looked at another man since that day he had found her, at the turning of the Laussat road, and he had carried her basket home for her, and had

known, without asking her, that she would marry him. It is that way, on Isle Fournier, in Arcadia . . . and he thought of how it would be for Louis, when he grew up, to come this road in search of a fine strong girl for his wife—maybe passing on the road some other young man . . . going to see if that little devil of a Mathilde would listen to him! And the two would pass each other, just here, and each would say to the other: *"A la bonne chance, M'sieur!"*

Pierre Salabat was a simple man.

And that lil' bottle of scent, now, it would be the same that he had brought to Louise on their wedding day . . . the little bottle with the pink ribbon. . . . *Parfum de la Rose,* it was called? Yes, that was it, smelling like an old rose laid away in a box! And that little horse, now, he would have wheels to go across the floor with, and one forefoot raised, and a saddle with stirrups, and black eyes, and brown spots—a yellow horse, Louise had said . . . he could see how it would look on the shelf, when the children had gone to sleep, that little horse. Ah, yes, *les enfants* would be very happy. And next year, when their legs were longer, and they could walk so far, he would bring them to Ville Victoire, to ride on the little horses that went galloping in a circle, with music, and their heads went up and down, and you could ride, if you wished, on a camel, or a swan, or an elephant. Pierre Salabat himself had never seen these wonders. But peddlers went up and down the world; they saw many strange things. And that old Michel had said that the little horses—the *Carrousel*—what they call in America the Merry-go-round, would be at the fair this year. Well, maybe.

He could tell *les enfants* about them when he got home.

And so passed other miles, until Pierre saw, from the last high barren, the white towers of the church at Ville Victoire, like the ears of a rabbit, standing in the sky. And he urged the heifer to a trot.

And as they entered the market-place, Pierre took from around his waist a rope, and slipped the loop of it over Sylvie's head, and knotted it—not that she would get away from him, here in the town, but so that the drovers could tie her, and she would not follow him when he had sold her. For she was like a dog, this Sylvie—she used to follow him down to his boat when he went fishing, and into the house when he came home. And that had always made Louise laugh . . . she was always laughing about something, his Louise.

It was still very early; many of the fair booths were not yet open; there were few people about. He traversed the long, narrow market-place, which stretched along the Bay of St. Joseph, and suddenly caught his breath.

There, ahead, was the striped tent of the *Carrousel,* blue and yellow, with flags flying from the top of it, just as the peddler had said. A man was taking the jackets off the motionless horses, carefully, and dusting them with a red cloth. So that was how they looked! All bright with paint, with bridles of leather, and real manes and tails! And Mathilde and Louis were not here to ride them— And the tug of Sylvie on her rope—(she had seen some flowers to nibble)—reminded him that now they could not ride her, either. It was a great pity! And Pierre gazed at the little horses with shining eyes, for he was a simple man, and the simple never grow up

like other folk, and they never lose the great gift of wonderment, nor the belief of children in miracles.

And Pierre *knew* that miracles sometimes happened—had not the *curé* told him so? The chug of the little engine that was to make the horses run (though Pierre did not know that; the engine with its polished brasses was simply another beautiful wonder); he was a little afraid of it, but, fascinated, drew near enough to see that she had a name over the fireplace on a brass plate: "The Flying Jenny," like the name of a boat. And he thought that that must be the name of the wife of the man who was dusting the horses. (You always named your boat after your wife on Isle Fournier—unless you had no wife—then you called her Mary the Virgin, or Madame, meaning the same.)

Ah—there were the swan, the lion, the two elephants with tents on their backs, and a queer animal with two hills rising out of him! Pierre knew the names of none of them, and they frightened him somewhat, but the little horses, now!—there was something he could understand . . . that red one, with the black saddle and the golden wings . . . little Mathilde would choose *him,* if she were here . . . and there was a blue one for Louis. They were *very* pretty. Pierre had never seen such things before. For he had never been away from Isle Fournier, except in a boat, to fish. And he had never ridden on a horse. And so he said to himself, yes, maybe he would come back and ride one of these horses, just once, to tell *les enfants* how they galloped. But first—and he began to count on his fingers once more, the things he must get at the big store—he led the reluctant Sylvie away from the flower-bed she was trying to eat, there where the *Carrou-*

*sel* came right up to the edge of somebody's garden—(she would eat anything, that little cow! he thought, with pride)—and they went down the winding street that followed the Bay, and up the hill to the roped-in field where the drovers did their buying.

And there Pierre Salabat became eloquent regarding the perfections of Sylvie—could not any one see that her black and white coat was like silk, and her little budding horns like white pebbles, that she was gentle, like a child? Could not any one see that she would be like a friend to you—had he not fed her with his own hands—had not his children ridden upon her back, as if she were a little horse, M'sieurs? Truly, a fine heifer!

And the drovers listened, and agreed somewhat to Sylvie's charms—(reluctantly, as buyers must, even in Arcadia)—she was, indeed, very pretty—and one of them bought her, after much haggling, and he paid to Pierre fifteen dollars in the green paper money of Canada, and three silver dollars with eagles on them, and two shillings of Great Britain.

And Pierre untied the ribbons from her neck, and patted her, and told her to be a good little cow, and not to bite anybody, and to give nice thick milk when her time came. Then he went away quickly, lest Sylvie should look at him.

The sun had gilded the white houses of Ville Victoire, and the two towers of the church—for the sun in Arcadia is very golden—as he hastened back to the market-place. Music issued from the magical tent of the little horses, strange quick music such as Pierre had never heard, music like the wind around the corners of a house, and like the organ at the church, and like

little sheep-bells and fiddles and harmonicas all at once. It caught at Pierre's toes—he was a simple man—it quickened his footsteps on the way to the chemist's shop. And here he bought that lil' bottle of scent for Louise. (But I shall not tell you what he paid for it. It was very dear.) Yes—it *was* the same—how pleased she would be! And from there he went to the toy-booth in the fair, jingling the two shillings that the drover had paid him—with the bottle all carefully put away in his breast pocket.

The toy-man was a small, dark fellow, with a far-away look in his eyes and brass buttons on his waistcoat. He was setting out his wares on shelves, and whistling a broken tune. There were red monkeys that climbed ropes when you told them to, as the toy-man showed him, dolls with yellow hair and blue eyes and a proud expression and red shoes. And some of them had carriages to ride in when they got tired, and some of them could talk a little and blink their eyes. And in all other respects they were rather like people, only different. There were tin trumpets, and gilded drums, and green marbles, and music-boxes, and Noah's Arks—the virtues of each being proudly set forth by the toy-man. But Pierre hardly glanced at all these marvels. The row of little horses on the top shelf, each with his forefoot raised, filled his eyes. They had saddles and bridles and flowing black manes, and they ran on wheels, just as the peddler had said.

They were very beautiful, the little horses!

Fearfully Pierre asked the price.

The two extra shillings—paid for Sylvie's promise of horns, the drover had said—had clinked their way into

the toy-man's tin box, along with old French sou-pieces, half-francs, sixpences and other motley coins of Arcadia (where money is money, and no questions asked), and Pierre was the owner of two little horses—*deux petits chevaux*—one black with yellow spots for Louis, one yellow with blue spots and a red saddle for that little devil of a Mathilde, all before you could make up your mind. For the toy-man had a way of seeing what you wanted, and beginning to tie it up, without asking any foolish questions.

There they were, all fitted into a box, and tied with a pink string.

And Pierre, well content, strolled towards the big store, counting on his fingers those things he must get . . . he had not expected so much money for that Sylvie of his . . . who would have thought it, now . . . *eighteen* dollars and two shillings! And he had not thought beyond fifteen . . . many things could be gotten with all that, and to spare. He began to think if Louise would be angry with him if he bought some of those blue cups there . . . he could surely get some candles, after the flour and the bacon and the sugar and the saucepan with the lid and the *patates* were all provided. It would be a great deal to carry, those fourteen miles, but he was very strong . . . they would make two big *pacquets* for him at the store; he would carry one a mile at a time, and come back for the other and carry it a mile further—that was the way you did it. He must start early, to do that. And, yes, a pocketful of those pink and white *dragees,* to surprise the children with, on rainy days—the little candies of *le bon dieu*—what matter if they were saved for christenings and Easter? His

Mathilde and his Louis—they could have them at other times . . . and maybe some new line to mend his fish-net with? . . . yes, and some tobacco! Ah, yes, they would have a good winter, now that Sylvie was sold!

And he quickened his steps towards the big store, almost dancing, with that gay music filling the street. . . . And did he think to go and have a lil' glass of cognac at the Café Philippe on the quay, before starting home? Well, why not? A little cognac gives a man strength to walk. And Pierre was not one of those who drink and beat upon tables; he knew when to stop . . . he always remembered his beautiful Louise, waiting for him at home. Truly . . . that was the way it had to be!

But now he had to pass, on the way to the big store, the round tent of the *Carrousel.* And here he stopped, fascinated by the moving horses that plunged up and down like his boat in the water—only they galloped in time with the music—that music that sent a merry devil running through your blood. Surely there was never anything so beautiful in the world! He stared like a child at the animals that whirled past him so swiftly, with laughing children clinging to them—those *petits chevaux* that he had seen an hour ago, so quiet, so wooden . . . how they leaped in the sun!

Yes, it would be very fine to ride upon one of them, to tell Mathilde and Louis how it was. The horses ran slower and slower, the music faded away, the people who waited for their children came to get them. And they all begged to ride once more. And their parents and uncles and aunts, caught up in the magic of the *Carrousel* and very shyly, thought that they would like to ride, too! And so all the places were quickly filled, except

one beautiful red horse with golden wings, who stood high above the rest upon his hind-legs . . . and Pierre, trembling like a leaf in the wind, had found the courage to ask the price of a little voyage . . . had paid his *dix sous*—ten cents . . . the music of the sheep-bells and the wind around the corner of the house and the organ at the church began again . . . he was astride the horse with the golden wings . . . the shrill voice of the siren whose name was Flying Jenny pierced all the clamor of the waiting children . . . his horse rocked, at first slowly, and then faster . . . and faster . . . and faster, as if the earth had become the sea, and each big wave was lifting the horse and himself—Pierre Salabat—and carrying them away somewhere that he had never been before . . . some strange beautiful place where the wind sang in your ears, and marvelous colors flashed past you, and strange happy faces, poles, crowds, the Bay of St. Joseph, the white church on the hill, Mathilde—Louis—Sylvie, the little cow (eating the *dragees* of *le bon dieu* out of a shining saucepan) . . . Louise, his wife, smiling in the window of their house as he came down the road waving his cap . . . faster and faster went the horses . . . t-o-o-oo-oo-t—too-oo-oot—toot went the siren . . . *claquint-claquant, claquint-claquant* went the horses' hoofs, galloping over the barrens to Laussat, where the pigeon-house of M'sieur Duvernay, the father of Louise, stood on a pole like a little white castle floating in the air, with blue pigeons singing to each other as they flew in and out . . . and there stood his own father, who was dead, on the tower of the church, and he was saying—only the wind kept carrying away his voice—for Pierre to be a good lad, and never to get drunk, nor to beat his wife, and to

work very hard, and pray to . . . and on the top shelf of the toy-man's booth, where the little horses stood in a row, his grandfather, ol' M'sieur Salabat, danced around singing—as he did when he was drunk—of La Belle Bretagne and the Port of St. Malo, and the green table of the *petits chevaux,* and the gold-pieces that you flung at them, and the *fille de diable* who picked them up with her long white fingers, all covered with rings . . . and if you won she gave you a kiss . . . and if you lost she frowned at you . . . and sooner or later you went to sea, and always and always she smiled at you, and held out her hands for more . . . and Pierre was kneeling during high mass in the church, and gazing at the altar through his fingers . . . smoke went up from the censer that the priest was swinging—or was it smoke from the chimney of his house out there where the ships stood off for France?—the little bell tinkled, once . . . twice . . . and the third time, he looked straight through the high altar, past all the candles, and he saw . . . but the vision was already gone, and in its place was Louise in her wedding-dress, waiting to marry him there, and the harder he galloped on his horse, the farther away she was . . . the large soft eyes of Sylvie had tears in them as he turned away, and somewhere about the house Mathilde was crying because she had lost her penny in the sand . . . but Louise—she was not crying, she was laughing, because Sylvie had her head in the round basket of *patates* and couldn't get it out . . . and that *fille de diable* in the chemist's shop was holding out her white fingers for gold-pieces, and holding back a square bottle of perfume that she had promised him . . . his grandfather's watch ticked on its nail in the chimney . . . it

was getting slower . . . he must wind it up—that watch had not stopped since ol' M'sieur Salabat died! He must hurry and get there, along the road and through the door—

"*Dix sous, M'sieur,*" the old man was saying. And Pierre took his hand from the golden wing of his horse and stupidly gave him money, not looking to see what it was. He no longer knew where he was, nor why the old man asked him for money. For that is the way of men who follow the siren, whose image is in their hearts . . . . for some vaguely, like a phantom, and for some an ever-present vision, hovering just beyond the edge of realities . . . with many things in her long white fingers for you . . . and a kiss for you if you win, and a frown if you lose. And many a wiser man than Pierre Salabat, who was simple, like a child, has found the voice that he cannot withstand, now here, now there, like a whistle in the fog . . . and a few know what has happened to them, when they have gone the way of the temptress. Pierre only knew that he waited, to be caught up again in the air, to fly above the island that was all of earth that he knew, to gallop over the waters of the sea and behold many strangenesses in their depths, to clutch in his hands the wings of his horse . . . that cognac at Café Philippe was very good, but this—this was better—and surely no wrong lay in it; the *curé* had never spoken of it among the temptations that lie in one's path—no, surely it was very beautiful, he would never forget how it was . . . and this once more, a little *voyage* . . . where could be the harm?

And again came the voice of Flying Jenny, and again the rush of the air on his face and through his hair—for

his cap had long since gone—a child screamed, a cry of delight and revelation . . . and this Pierre understood, and he began to sing, as he did when he took in his nets . . . and now the nets were filled with shining fish, silver and golden and blue like the sky, and he was counting them as he tossed them into the boat—handfuls of them —and thinking what he would get for Louise with the money for them. And there was still a pale green net to take in, and with it came only silver fish, small ones and big ones, and he was putting them away in his pockets for Mathilde and Louis . . . they were so pretty. . . .

It was only the old man counting silver into his hands, the change from the banknote of the drover. And in the old man's eyes was a smile. For the siren has always her *croupier,* to urge the shy-of-heart to make their play, and to rake up the pieces of gold, and always does the *croupier* know the faces that she has marked.

And so entered Pierre into the boundless country of magic, that all children know, and to which no passport can be given—unless you give yourself in payment—riding upon a horse. . . . And so it is with fabled Pegasus, and so it was with the Arab: "care never accompanies the rider!"

And as the golden hours of the day of enchantment went by, and certain friends stopped to speak to Pierre, while the horses rested, they turned away with fear and respect. For in Arcadia the mad are treated kindly, as people touched of God, and they could see that he was distant in another country, and must not be disturbed. But only the children really understood, and they looked into his wide eyes without surprise, for he was one of them. And to the wistful on the ground, those who do

not have *dix sous* in this life—except when there is nothing to buy—Pierre beckoned, as one who treats in a tavern. And many came. And the face of the old man grew cunning, and his pockets heavy with Pierre's silver. And the day went by.

The flaring lights about the tent were lighted, the Bay and the town disappeared from Pierre's horizon. He rode in a circle of blazing light and color, of the fluttering skirts of the young women who came with their *beaux garçons* to amuse themselves—(being demure by day); he rode in a gale of fresh sea wind that caught at the tent and tried to carry it away. And always he dreamed, of many a thing . . . who could say?

And as all days must end, there came to him the old man, with his hands in his pockets, and a smile upon his face. For whom the gods destroy, they first give a trifling gift. And he knew that Pierre had spent the last of his money. And the tent was empty except for the wooden horses, and all the lights save one were out. And the old man said to him: "One more little *voyage,* M'sieur?"

And Pierre nodded his thanks, having first sought in his pockets for *dix sous* and finding nothing.

And once more the horses went *claquint-claquant* around the track, and all for Pierre. But there was no music.

And Pierre was wandering in the dark streets of Ville Victoire like a drunken man, knowing not the direction of his feet. And he went up the hill to the church, and it frightened him, because across the Bay of St. Joseph the light of the light-house wandered in a circle . . . looking for him to go home. And the big store was closed when he went there to get his *pacquets,* and still . . . there

was the square bottle in his breast pocket like a stone, and the box containing the little horses in his jacket with his tobacco. But his pipe he had lost.

That lil' glass of cognac that he was going to have before he went home, and had not had—? Perhaps he had had many lil' glasses—he did not know. Something very queer was the matter. He had spent the money that he got for Sylvie, but—? And then he passed the Café Philippe as he stumbled about the town. The sound of a fiddle came to him, and dancing, and laughter, and the clink of glasses. Here was what he was trying to find! That lil' glass . . . and everything would be all right. But the door was closed, tight, the windows curtained . . . and his hands in his pockets felt no money . . . you could not have cognac without money! And he stood perplexed in the street, and the truth crept into his numbed brain—that there were no *pacquets* waiting for him at the store—that Louise, his beautiful wife, would be waiting for him by the fire, and the children asleep. And he had no food for them. And how hungry he was —having eaten nothing since daybreak!

What was he to do? A man does not take the food from the mouths of his children and squander the money for pleasure. But having done so—what then? Surely he must go home and tell them what he had done, and then he must bring back the cow and sell her . . . but then they would have no milk. And his grandfather, Ol' M'sieur Salabat, rose up before him, drunken and singing. He had never gone back, to Villenoq in Bretagne, after the *petits chevaux* had taken all his money in St. Malo. No, he had shipped on a boat for Canada, to live and to die in the new Bretagne there—Cap' Breton.

But that was not right, God save his soul! And what would Louise think when he told her—she who had never had a thought for any man or anything but himself? No, it would be better if Louise never knew . . . and yet, she would forgive him, that Louise of his . . . and maybe, if he could get the money somewhere, and take it back to her, he could tell her then.

He stumbled down the street from the Taverne . . . horses have golden wings, and money has golden wings to fly with, too . . . but why was it? That had been so fine a thing, now, to fly in the air, to sing, to feel like a bird . . . it was all wrong, that you could not do that, and have your money, too!

And what would his Mathilde and his little Louis do when they grew up and went to market? What *petits chevaux* would they find to squander their honor upon?

Now he, Pierre, he must not do as his grandfather had done—he never went back home—he wandered the world . . . but maybe . . . he meant to go back, that his father might not think he was dead . . . he may have waited to get all the money . . . and if he couldn't. . . . Well, then it would be better if Louise did think he was dead.

He had come within hearing of the tide that was creeping in under the wharves below the town, chuckling to itself . . . that tide that had always been his friend . . . and now he had no friend! The dim ghosts of trees that were a ship's masts stood up before him. Where was he going?—what was he doing here?—had he been thinking of that dark water out there beyond the little Bay of St. Joseph—the Straits, through which the water rushed like a river, as every one knew who had ever crossed it in a boat? Had he thought . . . to . . . ?

He stopped and caught at something along the street, a post—like a drunken man. He *had* been about to go, to join his fathers who loved the sea, out there, to give himself and his shame to the Solacer of all Regret!

He heard voices . . . unsteady footsteps, on the cobble-stones behind him. He must not be found clinging to a post like that. He, who had never been drunk, like other men. No!

A simple man, Pierre Salabat.

So he walked unsteadily towards the ship that lay at the end of the street, with a lantern or two winking like owls in the dark.

The voices behind him came nearer. Two men were talking, with that benign affection common to the sons of Bacchus, about some woman with red hair and white fingers. . . . Pierre came to a little side street, and a fresh wind cooled his hot face. It was nearly morning. He turned, and was about to escape . . . those mellow voices . . . those uncertain footsteps that drew nearer and nearer, when—"Not so fast, M'sieur!" said one of the men behind him.

They had him by his two arms—and the drunken are very strong. They were laughing. Pierre was too stupefied to resist. They were hurrying him towards the ship and the winking lights.

"Trying to get away, are you, *camarade?*" said one, derisively, and smote him on the shoulder as one who understood his reluctance.

"You will surely get *le hell* from *le capitaine,* Jules!" assured the other, in honied accents.

And Pierre, always slow of speech, trying to find what to say, only stammered incoherently, as the two sailors,

each holding fast to his arms, and lurching in unison, like two men who knew how a street was to be navigated, and talking across Pierre's head, both being taller, concerning that big fish and the million francs . . . and the wench with the hair red like gold . . . La Provence, they called her . . . "her white fingers were like fish-hooks in my beard!" . . . and "Jesu Marie, what a kiss she gave me—*les Anglaises,* now . . . *mais*—" They had reached the rickety quay, where a ladder swayed in the dim light, as the ship tugged at her cables, to and fro, to and fro, feeling the tide in her bones, like wine.

And there they halted with their prisoner—the ladder was steep, one must consider how it was to be done, this. And the two men breathed heavily.

A rough and irritable voice from the deck hailed them.

"Did you find him?" it said, and Pierre suddenly saw the sweeping light from the light-house on the *Point de la Flêche* cross the wall of the wharf. It had found him . . . all right, that light!

"Aye, aye, Sir," answered the big man (urging Pierre towards the ladder), "he was trying to—(he thought better of what he was about to say; after all, why give away a shipmate because he could carry his liquor a little better . . . sometimes)—trying to find the way, Sir, in this hole of a town," he finished, suddenly smitten with pity for them who cannot find their ship in the dark.

"Bring him along, then," said the voice, "and lively, blast ye!"

And the siren, no doubt, laughed in her sleeve, somewhere.

And Pierre found his tongue to stammer: "There is some mistake here, *M'sieurs*—I am not the man—"

"None of that, now," said the big sailor, good-humoredly. "Up you go!"

And Pierre found himself on the deck, and his unsought companions were pulling in the ladder. Commands were shouted. Ropes creaked. An auxiliary engine began to chug. Sails flapped to the fresh morning wind. The ship moved.

"Here you—son of—" somebody was yelling at him, but Pierre had slipped to the deck, crumpled into unconsciousness. "Pie-eyed . . . stinking . . ." and other strange words came to him, and . . . "this way, matey," in kinder tones, and he was being half carried, half dragged, for'rard, and dumped into a bunk in the fo'c's'le.

Pierre's head rolled. Now he saw the horses whirling, now Louise's face at the little window of their house. He felt in his breast pocket for the square bottle, and in his jacket for the *petits chevaux*. One of them had a broken leg. He must fix it to-morrow. But they were all there, the gifts for Louise, and Mathilde and Louis, and that comforted him a little.

But where was he going, and what would Louise do . . . . he could see her sitting by the fire, waiting for his step . . . and the soup in the kettle, the *pot-au-feu* . . . all hot . . . well, Ol' M'sieur Salabat had run away on a ship . . . and now he, Pierre, was running away. But he would come back soon, and bring the bacon and the flour and the new saucepan, and the two horses, and that lil' bottle of scent like an old rose shut up in a box . . . and Louise would smile at him. For Louise knew her man. . . .

And so he fell asleep.

Pierre Salabat was a simple man.

Of the time that followed, what is there to say? One day is like another, at sea. He took naturally to being a sailor. The captain of course believed his simple tale the next day when he came to kick him out on deck, but what would you have? The barkentine *Flora,* out of Halifax for Le Havre, having put into Ville Victoire owing to leaky water-casks, and already two days late, could not put back to land a man taken on board by mistake. A drunken sailor was lost, another was found. That was all there was to it. And there were wages, since one was here, working. But many things happen to a ship, and, a few days later, having run into a bit of a wind and lost his tops'ils and a few other trifles, the captain put into Halifax, cursing. And there he offered to put Pierre ashore, and pay him off. But the money was scarcely enough to take him home, by the train. He could not go home without those eighteen dollars—and that he had sworn to himself to do, twice over. And he feared the engines that stood panting like big beasts in the depot—he had never seen a train in his life, him! No, it was better to take his chance. He would return in a boat some day—who could say where one of those smoking beasts might take one?

And the Captain offered him a berth to Le Havre and back—a long voyage, but he could bring home many times the money he had spent, maybe.

And he thought to send to Louise a post-card, with the Houses of Parliament on it, and to ask of some one to write it for him. For Pierre could not write, although he could read, a little. But then, he was ashamed to tell any one. And what could he say? No, it was better that she should think him dead—besides, Louise could not read,

herself, and how would the post-card come to her, out there, fourteen mile from Ville Victoire?

A great fear smote Pierre Salabat from time to time, that some one had seen him flinging his money away on the little horses, and had told Louise. But, no, if anyone had done that—he knew his Louise—she would not believe—no one ever dared to fling words at her! She was tall, and straight, and her people had come from the Island of Guernsey, where people are very proud. No, she would look at them scornfully, and say: "My Pierre, M'sieur? You do not know him—he would not do that, him! You saw some one else. My Pierre will come home soon from where he went, and knock the lie in your teeth!"

And on that voyage he said little, and worked hard, with his vision always before him, of his return, rich, and able to ask *le bon dieu* to forgive him for his folly, when he could bring to Louise those things that he counted on his fingers each night. And the two ribbons that the children had tied around the neck of Sylvie, to remember them by, he tied around the necks of the two little horses —to lead them by when he went home. And one he named "Ol' M'sieur Salabat," for his grandfather—(the horse with the broken leg, now beautifully mended, by secret consultation with the *Flora's* carpenter), and the other *"La Belle Flying Jenny."* And that one was for Mathilde.

And when he thought what Louise would do, when there was nothing to put in the *pot-au-feu,* he remembered the watch that his father had left him, the old watch that hung on a nail by the chimney. She would take it and sell it, after a few days had gone by—as they

had talked of doing when Mathilde had been coming, and the flour-sack was empty, and fish very scarce. And she would wait there trusting him, always.

And maybe she would have to sell the cow, *Angelique,* after a while, if he could not get back. And when he was there again—well, she would laugh, and put her two hands on his shoulders and say: *"Bien, Papa Pierre—supper is ready!"* "An' that lil' bottle of scent, now. . . . ?" she would say, shyly.

And many a time, he dreamed he had come home, with all that money, and the bacon and two bags of *patates,* and the flour, and the new saucepan, and many things—he would have to hire a horse in Ville Victoire—two horses!—to carry them all. And in his dream always he looked in at the window; and Louise sat there sewing, and the children sat on the little stools he had made for them by sawing a keg in half—a keg that had washed ashore half-filled with molasses . . . how good that molasses had been! . . . so thick and rich and sweet. How they had saved it, spoonful by spoonful, when it ran low, for the children. They sat there on the two stools—one painted red, the other yellow, Mathilde and Louis, and Louise was telling them about the little horses that Papa Pierre would bring them when he came home. And the old peddler sat there, too—Michel—and he had some little horses this time. But Louise said, "No, these are not for you—Papa Pierre has much bigger ones, with real tails, and saddles, and golden wings . . . and blue eyes, of course. . . ."

And there the dream would end, with the bo's'n's whistle in his ears.

And when Pierre was alone in the fo'c's'le, he would

take out the two little horses from where he kept them hidden—and he could see the old peddler limping away along the road, shaking his head, with the children limping beside him, in fun . . . little devils! Mathilde would be taller when he came home, and she would stand by the doorpost and be measured, while Louise would make a new mark there with the bread-knife. . . .

And at Le Havre, the big man who had caught him—the wrong sailor—that night in Ville Victoire, took him ashore to a café, and Pierre heard French that he did not quite understand, and drank bitter coffee with chicory in it, out of a tall, thin glass. And when the big man took up the little decanter of cognac to pour it into Pierre's coffee, Pierre shook his head.

And the big man, now his friend, laughed and struck him on the shoulder. "You do not drink, eh? since that night in Ville Victoire, when Georges and I found you and dragged you on board the *Flora*—that was a surprise for you, my friend, hein? We were very drunk, us, we had gone out to find that animal of a Jules Leforgues, and we stayed so long at the Café—Philippe, was it?—with that red-haired woman, we did not look at all in the gutters for Jules—we found you instead, *M'sieur!* What a fine laugh we had—you so drunk you could not speak a word—you are not sorry, eh? We found you a good *capitaine,* yes?"

He lighted his brandy and sugar in the spoon. "And good wages, *n'est ce pas? Vraimen', M'sieur!* You will return a rich man—but tell me, where were you going that night?"

But Pierre shook his head.

Two women looked at them invitingly. But Pierre had

turned very pale. He had seen a green table at the end of the room, and around it many men, watching a wheel that whirled. Behind the table sat a woman on a high stool. Her hair was red, like the sun in your eyes, and her long white fingers had many rings on them. And she smiled at the men, and when the wheel stopped, she gave one of them some money . . . and that one came round the table and kissed her. . . .

"*Les petits chevaux!*" stammered Pierre, pointing a shaking finger at them.

"*Mais oui, les petits chevaux,*" his companion agreed, without looking up, "*le grand carrousel de la bonne chance!—allons,* we will win some money—and, *apres—*" He nodded his head in the direction of the two women.

But Pierre had fled out of the café, clutching at the square bottle in his breast pocket like a stone, where his heart was, with a great fear in him. This was how his grandfather had come to St. Malo to buy fishnets . . . and just such a woman had . . . and now he, Pierre, he was here in *La Belle France*—and there were those horses!

"No—no—*no!*" He fairly flew down the street, and aboard the *Flora,* and there he stayed fifteen days, until she was ready to sail again for Halifax.

And no one could taunt him to come ashore—though his mates returned reeling of good cognac and sharp red wine, and talked in their sleep of the fine women of Le Havre, and *la belle aventure* . . . and their accursed luck with *les petits chevaux!*

And they called him "*M'sieur l'abbe,*" and "*le petit moine*—who had a wife at home who beat him," and other derisive names.

But Pierre would only shake his head and smile, for had he not that lil' bottle like an old rose in a box, over his heart? along with a rosary, and his savings of dollars and franc-pieces—much more than he had gotten for Sylvie—that pretty little cow? Yes, surely, he would have to have two horses to carry all the things he would buy in Ville Victoire, when he came again. Let them laugh!

And so time passed, the slow days of sailing. And his friend, the big man, who took the watch with him, would look at Pierre queerly as he stood there dreaming at the wheel, his eyes ahead on the stretch of empty water, beyond which lay Mathilde and Louis—and Louise. . . .

And Pierre, who never asked questions, and who seldom listened to what was said at mess—because the molasses served out to him always made him sad, being absent in his mind, did not know that the *Flora* was bound, not for Halifax, but for Buenos Ayres, until they tied up there, early one morning, and he came out on deck, to see a strange port, and not the steep streets and the gray sky of Halifax.

And to his wondering question: "And you did not know, *M'sieur l'abbe?* That this is *Amerique de Sud?*

The sailor laughed. "You will not eat *dragets* at Easter in Halifax for a long time," said he.

For the *Flora* went from Buenos Ayres to Lisbon, and then to Alexandria in ballast, and from Alexandria to Calcutta, and then back to Le Havre. And then one day she bent her sails for Halifax, and Pierre had been away nearly two years, and his store of money had become so large he could not count it, and the captain had agreed to keep it for him in the iron box in his cabin.

And one afternoon Halifax was sighted, too late for the

*Flora* to enter the harbor, and as she lay in the roads that night, Pierre, on watch with the big man, as they lounged in the lee of the pilot-house smoking, began suddenly to speak.

"*Mon ami,*" he said, "I must go. I cannot wait until morning—I could swim ashore—it is very little—I must go to my wife who waits for me—*ça*—" he pointed northward.

And the big man, open-mouthed, stared at him. "You have a wife?" he asked, making queer passes with his pipe in the air towards the north.

"*Mais oui,* a beautiful wife—she has waited a long time for me," said Pierre, choking, "—she must not wait any more—I ran away, *mon camarade*—"

The big man smoked for a while, then said, softly: "Yes, *M'sieur l'abbe je vous comprende—c'est la vie . . . moi. . . .*" But he did not finish. He cleared his throat. It rumbled like an anchor-chain in its vent. It was almost a sob. He drew his hand across his eyes, and smote the breath from Pierre's chest with the blow he struck him on the shoulder.

"*M'sieur Salabat,*" he said, huskily, "I did not know . . . *le bon dieu* forgive me." And he went away.

The early sun witnessed, the following morning, the lowering of a boat, with the Captain in it, and three men, and Pierre, with a kit-bag, and some four hundred and eighty-six dollars—so the Captain assured him—done up in a bit of oilskin and laid away in his breast-pocket. And as the light broke, he looked back to see the big black figure of his friend waving his cap. He was ashore, and slinging his bag over his shoulder, he was off, up into the town, his feet dancing, feeling the strength of

his arms, and the good clean tobacco smoke of his pipe in his throat.

He went to the *depôt,* no longer afraid of the beasts there—having learned you could trust them, one day ashore, at Le Havre—they were quicker. The *depôt* was empty, except for one train, and this train went to Hawksport, and from there one took the *bateau Percy McCann* to Ville Victoire.

And all day Pierre sat tense, staring out the windows, counting the things he must buy with all that money. And towards evening the train ran along the coast, and out there, some one told him, was Isle Fournier, where the wheels of light circled from the five lighthouses, looking for him. . . . And he prayed he would find Louise, and *les enfants,* well and hearty. And he prayed to *le bon dieu* to forgive him his sin, holding fast to the crucifix that he had bought for her . . . in Lisbon. That dear Louise, who had never thought of any man, or looked at any man, but him. . . .

And at Hawksport he must stop the night, since the *Percy McCann* plied in the morning. He was aboard her —he walked fearfully about, dreading to see some one who would know him. But no, there was no one.

A *curé* stopped to talk with him, the new *curé* for Ville Victoire, the old one having died, and Pierre felt he would like to confess to him his folly . . . but could not. It was, after all, between Louise and *le bon dieu,* the matter of the little horses. The *curé* told him that the fair was holding in Ville Victoire. And Pierre shivered. Perhaps the *Carrousel* was there also. . . .

At twelve the white towers of the church stood up like the ears of a rabbit on the hill. And at two the *Percy*

docked, and Pierre, the first one ashore, shouldered his bag and made his way quickly up into the market-place. For there was much to do. Music was in the air—the steam music of the Merry-go-round. And this was the same street where he had been caught, two years ago . . . and there was the post he had clung to, where those two men . . . He straightened up and walked on, his heart hammering against the square bottle in his pocket.

And here was the tent, just where he had left it, all the flags flying, and a gay tune echoing from the walls of the houses. He began to whistle with it, that tune that caught at his feet.

But he could not walk by the little horses, when he came there, on his way to the big store where he would buy those things . . . no, he had to stop and look at the gay little horses galloping, *claquint-claquant, claquint-claquant*. . . . The music and the color stole into his veins like wine. He trembled. He put down his bag.

But no—no, not again—what was he thinking?

And then, as the horses flew past him, he saw the children, a boy and a girl, standing on the backs of two horses, and holding each other by the hand . . . and the horse that Mathilde rode had great golden wings like a bird. There they were, his children, unafraid, shouting with laughter, riding among the stars with the moon for a horse! So that was how it was to come home, eh?

Not only did he, Pierre Salabat, have this strange thing in him, this reckless thing, but here were his children—and they had it, too! But he had come back—and Ol' M'sieur Salabat, he had never done that . . . but Louis and Mathilde, now, if some day they went away, when

their time came . . . they, too, would come back home some day?

But Louise—where was she? He looked about anxiously. No, she was not there. Maybe she was at the big store. . . . And suddenly Pierre threw his bag upon the ground, leaped upon the moving platform as his children galloped by, and climbed upon Mathilde's horse, that was nearest, and with his two hands he reached up to touch the firm little legs of the children and hold them safe, and to say, brokenly, tenderly, *"Mathilde!—Louis!"* And they looked to see him—Louis first, and he screamed out to Mathilde, *dit donc, 'Tilde—see—Papa Pierre ici!"* And Mathilde looked once, but was oblivious. She soared on a winged horse far beyond mortal things—it was enough that she was flying, that the legend of the little horses told by the old peddler was true! Her black curls, tied with a red ribbon, flew in the wind, and her little skirts—she hardly felt the hand that braced her.

The little horses ran slower, the music died away—the carouse was over—the red horse of Mathilde galloped no more, but you felt his wings still quivering in your hands. She fell back in the arms of her father, and looked up into his face without surprise—for him. *"Les petits chevaux—Papa Pierre*—how fast they fly!" she gasped, breathlessly. And as he kissed her hot face: *"An' Papa Pierre—did you like it, too?"*

And slowly Pierre smiled, and laughed, and nodded his head, and they all three laughed together, and rocked from side to side, intoxicated.

And the old man who came to take their *dix sous* looked once sharply at Pierre, and recollection took hold of him. He tapped his head, winked at the engine-man, and walked away. The mad are always respected, in Arcadia.

And again they rode, and again and again, bursting into peals of laughter when the horses stopped—three children mad with Carnival— The siren knitted her brows, no doubt, for she is fearful in the presence of more than a single victim.

And Pierre, seeing the decline of the sun, reluctantly lifted the children down, found his bag, thrust some money into the hands of the old man, and led the way to the big store, heedless of the beguiling t-oo-oo-t—t-oo-oo-t—toot of Flying Jenny.

But Mathilde looked back with longing.

And Louis was telling him that *Maman* had let them come, with fifty cents—*cinquante sous,* to ride on the little horses—and they had spent it all—"but the man, he did not ask for more, Papa Pierre—"

They asked no questions; Papa Pierre was to come home one day—now he was here—that was enough—and *Maman* told them to start home early, to walk those fourteen miles. And to Pierre's question: "No, Papa Pierre—she did not tell us to bring anything."

And Pierre felt a tear roll down his cheek—Louise had said that to him, two years ago, "to start home early—"

And so he first hired a wagon with two horses and drove to the big store, and there bought bacon, and flour, sugar, and handkerchiefs, and many yards of white cloth, a new saucepan, with a lid—and a kettle—*patates* and coffee, and a little keg of molasses; everything in large quantities, counting them off on his fingers. And he filled the children's pockets with *dragees*—the pink and lavender and blue candies of *le bon dieu*—and off they went along the gray road, and the horses' hoofs went *claquint-claquant, claquint-claquant.* And the bells that hung from the reins tinkled like the bells at the elevation of

the host in the church. And a lantern that hung under the wagon made big shadow-wheels across the barrens, turning and turning like the lights of the five lighthouses that circled Isle Fournier as they had the day before. . . .

But Pierre knew that they were no longer looking for any one.

And he urged the driver: "Faster, *M'sieur,* faster—*s'il vous plait!*"

And he asked: "You have been away long time, M'sieur?"

"Yes, long time," said Pierre, "my children have come to meet me!"

And so they went along the road, those fourteen miles, the children hungrily munching their *dragets,* all three of them seated on Pierre's long canvas bag in the wagon, with their *pacquets* around them. And the lids of the saucepan and the kettle, they went up and down—*claquint-claquant*—like the horses' hoofs on the hard road.

And when they reached the last dip in the barrens, and came up the hill, there was their house, and a lighted candle in the window of it, and smoke rising from the chimney.

And Pierre felt Mathilde tugging at his coat, and bent to listen as she whispered: "Do not tell *Maman,* Papa Pierre—we spent those *cinquante sous* to ride the little horses—she told us to buy some little dinners with it before we had ridden on them!"

And Pierre stooped and kissed his little Mathilde, and agreed that Louise should not know.

The door opened, and there stood Louise, with light from the fire on her face.

And she said: "Pierre . . . *Pierre!* . . . supper is

ready," and smiled at him as she always had. And Pierre took her in his arms, and knew that he would never have to tell her why . . . he was home again, and that was enough for her.

She was his woman; he was her man.

And the children came in, scattering *dragees* upon the floor in their haste to see what Papa Pierre had brought for them, in that canvas bag! And *M'sieur Patelon,* the driver, came back and forth many times, bringing that bacon, and flour, and that keg of molass', and many other things—not expecting Pierre to help him, for any one could see that those two had forgotten everything in the sight and the touch of each other.

And when the door was closed, and the sound of wheels had died away, they sat to sup—the two children. But Pierre looked across the table at Louise, and she looked at him. They were lost in each other's hearts.

And so it is to love, and to be loved, for any one.

But that Mathilde, now, she must tell *Maman* of the little horses, and how they flew in the air like sea-birds. And Louis must tell her how Papa Pierre had come up behind them.

And Mathilde, with a roguish devil in her eyes cried out: *"An' Papa Pierre—he like the little horses,* too!"

At which Louise looked from one to the other. And she was roguish, too.

But *"M' p'tit Pierre . . ."* was all she said.

And Pierre drew from his pocket that lil' bottle of scent —smelling like an old rose in a box, and the crucifix he had gotten for her in far-away Lisbon, and those four hundred eighty-six dollars—whatever he had left from his buyings, and he laid them all upon Louise's empty plate. And it was filled.

The money she did not seem to see, but the crucifix she took up, and she made the sign of the cross, and her lips moved silently, and two tears rolled down her face. Then she laid the crucifix by, gently, and her face went a little white, and then red, like a girl. . . . And she opened the bottle, and smelled of it, and other tears splashed on the pile of money, for it was another such bottle as Pierre had given her when they were married.

And she remembered many things with that smell.

The little horses were drawn from the canvas bag—one with a faded ribbon of blue, and one with yellow (tied about their necks to remember Sylvie by), and the children led them happily about the table on their wheels, while Pierre—suddenly hungry, as one is when happy, ate greedily his cold soup, and looked shyly to the nail by the chimney, to see there his father's watch.

Nor did he ask, that night, how Louise had kept the children and herself from going hungry this long time . . . nor did she ask him why he had gone away. But she *did* count upon her fingers . . . the things that lay on the floor, as a housewife. . . .

And you may say—if you have not been in Arcadia—that breathes not the woman with so little audible curiosity. But I tell you it is so, when a woman loves her man.

But this may beguile your wonderment—if you have any—that this same gentle Louise had long a little folly upon her heart, and that was this: That once, long ago, when she was betrothed to Pierre, and they had quarreled along the road to Laussat—quarreled as to what they should name their children when they were born—and she had turned upon her heel and left him there, to meet, around the hill, a sea-faring man with red hair like the

sun and a gay tune upon his lips. And he had looked at her with delight in her beauty, and the whistle died upon his lips. And he had said: "Give me that rose—*belle ange!*—that I may remember you!"

And she had given it to him, being both beautiful and angry, and pleased at his careless words.

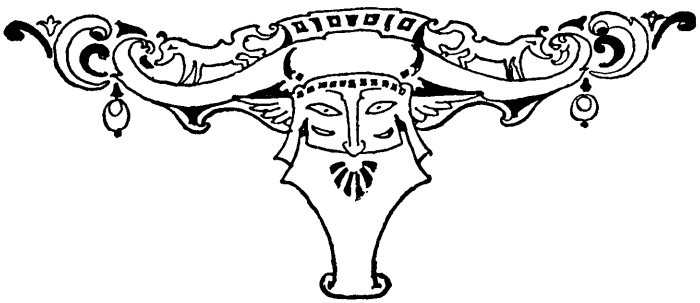
And then he said: "Give me a kiss—beautiful girl—for a rose soon will fade!"

And that she had given him also, for no reason at all, and never thinking . . .

But when she got to the end of the road that went to her mother's house, she went down to the tide that was coming in, and she washed that kiss away with salt-water, and said a prayer. . . .

And this she could never tell to any one . . . not even the old *curé,* when she went to confess . . . all those years. . . .

But she must have told Mathilde, you see—for Mathilde told me . . . that same Mathilde who rides on a white horse in the circus, around and around, and people throw kisses and flowers to her. For these things happened a long time ago . . . in Arcadia!



# The TALE that the RING BELL TOLD


Telfair came down the hill swinging his hammer with a certain buoyancy. It was late afternoon, and the vague Chinese road, scarcely more than a path, was spangled with yellow leaves. He stopped to tie the lace of his leather boot, and out of sheer good humor struck the stone on which his foot rested with his hammer. It rang in the stillness like a thick bell, and in Telfair's accurate,

trained geologist's mind the note went down: "glacial gneiss."

It occurred to him to smoke. After all, he *was* tired. The zest of the day's discovery had made him forget that. So he sat down on the bowlder and lighted his pipe. "What next?" he questioned of the universe (through that medium of the contemplative man). He had located the ore back there in the hills; his job was really done in this particular corner of China. He felt in the pocket of his corduroy coat for the choice samples of copper ore that meant the ending of his six weeks' tramping in the province of Honan. These little fragments and a copy of the map scrawled in his note-book would be on their way to the office in Shanghai to-morrow morning when the post-office in Ho-wan-ting opened. He might hear from the office to-morrow. He might have to wait for orders for a week or two. Mails were slow.

"Funny life," he mused. "Never anybody to talk to. . . . English papers might arrive to-morrow . . . might even get a few letters . . . might be a good chance to *get* some letters written . . . but letters to whom?"

There was Eleanor . . . he might write a long letter to Eleanor . . . but then, Eleanor was married, and concerned with a household and chintzes . . . babies perhaps, in far-off Devonshire. How could his random impressions of the interior of China be of any interest to Eleanor? And there was Spendor . . . brooding over his roses and his writing in a little garden up the Isis a mile or two from Oxford . . . in Bagley Wood. He could see his own letter, with a Chinese stamp, appearing on Spendor's breakfast table under the yew-tree in that garden . . . and lying there unopened . . . no, he might

do better than Spendor. He thought over the total of his acquaintances in Shanghai—Buhler, the architect, Anderson, the English vice-consul, Peterbury . . . Ailson—good fellows to drink a gin ricky with, but to write letters to—?

There was Maya—high up on the Pincian Hill in Rome . . . but then, Maya had always thought he was queer . . . If his mother were alive now, she'd like to hear about the strangeness of it all—the funny little inn in Ho-wan-ting, the inn-keeper's respect for so tall a man as himself—whom he regarded as a Manchu dignitary (his father having seen one once)—the queer bed he slept on, the queer breakfast one began the day with—tea and things—the eternal rice. He would have liked to write to his mother about the tramps he took during a long day of prospecting—the occasional woodcutter that looked like a gnome—of the marriage procession he had seen coming through the village with lanterns two nights ago—of the way one journeyed in China, mostly by boat—of the queer river-ports and the river-pirates to whom tribute had to be paid, as well as the river-devils who had to be propitiated—of the difficulties of establishing ownership of land . . . but his mother was dead . . .

But as his pipe flourished and grew warm in his fingers, he felt that he might have told her, of all people, of the strange, shy, unearthly young girl who always waited in the door of the inn when he came back to it in the evening . . . the inn-keeper's daughter, who always looked hard at him but never spoke. The inn-keeper had somehow explained that to him in pidgin English: "no makee talkee," which Telfair had at length understood to mean

that she was daft, possessed—fey, as they used to say at home in Aberdeen—dumb! But she always looked at him when he came along the street as if she wanted to speak, and when he smiled at her she always ran away, her little wooden clogs pattering on the stones of the inn-yard—"like hail when the sun shines," he had said to himself once.

Yes, his mother would have understood. He might have written to her about Mao-T'sing's curious fluttering little hands, such beautiful golden hands, that she generally kept concealed in her sleeves, in obedience to the Chinese belief that the hands reveal the thoughts and must not be shown to a stranger . . . only sometimes, she forgot to hide them . . . he would miss Mao-T'sing's wordless little greeting when he went away. It had been the one touch of tenderness in this strange land of alien customs—the one touch of unalien beauty, of sympathy, as intangible as it was, and Telfair, a lonely wanderer in the uncharted fields of this earth, had never known much tenderness, nor beauty either.

"Well," he ruminated, knocking out his pipe, "it will be getting dark soon . . . wonder why I sat here so long?" And then it came to him that he had sat there purposely, to be sure not to pass the old temple down the road towards the village too early for what happened there at dusk every day, and for the sake of which he always tried to come back by this road, even when it was out of his way. He picked up his hammer and once more struck the gneiss bowlder with it. It was a steel hammer, thin and strong, and pointed on one side—the sort of hammer that is to a geologist as a microscope is to a bacteriologist. This little hammer opened the se-

crets of mountains, was the key to the treasures of earth lying blindly upon hillsides, was the divining rod by which the mysteries of earth and stones could be elucidated. A good friend, that hammer! He remembered the shop off the Strand where he had bought it at an auction, long ago—it had belonged to one of a party of explorers who had returned empty-handed from the Caucasus. It bore the stamp of its maker upon its head: Thor, Sheffield. Perhaps it would take him some day to the Caucasus . . . in search of the fabulous lode of lapis lazuli that was known there in antiquity. . . . He would like to find lapis. . . .

He walked down the road, which turned abruptly around some rocks, and counted his paces carefully. After thirty-one he came to where a pine tree sprang up out of the ground like an unexpected dwarf. It was here that he stopped. One step further and he knew the Thing would begin. He always stopped at the pine tree, always hesitated to take that other step—not that he was afraid to hear the Thing, but somehow he always felt a little like an intruder, and always took that last step across the invisible boundary and into the province of the Thing with a queer respect, with a certain courtesy, as one who enters a church. He knew it would begin right there, three feet away from where he stood, the thin, elfin and infinitely strange and haunting sound-vibration of the Bell. . . . It had always brought back to him the singing of the tea-kettle in the back kitchen in Aberdeen.

And his memory had always gone on from there—his first apprehension of music at the age of four—to the first time he had ever heard the wind in a Lombardy poplar . . . on a Bank holiday spent bicycling in Nor-

mandy . . . and from there to a little Sailors' Church on the bleak coast of Finisterre, two years later. The bell of that chapel had rung for a funeral, that day back in his boyhood, a bell so thin and unearthly that it seemed as if the wind must have worn it down, as the sea had worn down the rocks on which the chapel stood, its face looking out to sea for the fishing-fleets to come in . . . they had rung that bell for a sailor lost at sea . . . and then, his sound-memory always jumped to a day ten years later, again in a church, in San' Trinita del Monti, in Rome . . . one morning that he had gone there with Maya . . . and a chant had floated down into the nave from a screened and curtained gallery above . . . and out of the thin and sexless voices of the Carmelite nuns one voice had had no renunciation in it . . . the voice of a novice . . . and Maya had made him come away. . . . Next, a little street in Chinatown, San Francisco, a street through which the afternoon fog wandered desolately . . . and from some balcony, gilded and belanterned, a monotonous screech of Chinese fiddles and the thump of a wooden drum . . . an unfinished motif played upon a flute . . . a door had closed on that, too. His chain of sound-memories had always stopped there, when he had come down this road each day for the past six weeks. It had always stopped as the slamming of a door cuts off music in another room. And these things had always unfolded themselves quickly and jerkily in his mind, not unlike the tricks and movements of a marionette.

And Telfair had always thought: "Why *this* unfinished string of beads? There must be *one* more somewhere!" And yet he knew that no music that he had ever heard in his life, at a concert, or in a dim candle-lit room in

the presence of a liberated cello, nor in the cadence of summer rain in a woman's voice singing in the dark, had any sounds ever stabbed him until now, with something beyond memory. And as he stood there by the pine tree, hesitating to take the next step to where he knew the first faint eddy of the temple bell would tingle in his consciousness, he realized oddly but with no shame that he had lingered in the province of Honan longer than was really necessary because of the Bell, because of that Thing, because of that eerie and haunting and evocative and searching sequence of sounds that he could never quite remember the next day. He reflected that he had found copper ore three weeks ago in the same field where he had been to-day, and that with some subconscious apathy had ignored the evidence of his hammer. Now *why* had he wished to linger in this God-forsaken stretch of China? Why had he stayed on and on for the sake of passing the pine tree and hearing the Thing?

It had always persisted for about thirty yards beyond the tree, and then, when you got a quarter of a mile down the road you came to that fragment of a temple—if temple it was—a temple long closed, with moss upon its doorstep and beautiful lichens like a Beardsley drawing upon its door—after that you heard nothing. You could indeed see the bell, a green bronze bell, swung in an archway in the wall above the door. But how had any one struck it? How did it ring? Was there a crack in it? An old Chinese bell has no clapper—they were made to be struck. Did the wind blow through it? No, these September days had been very still.

"And what," he inquired of the pine tree (unconsciously speaking aloud), "and what has the bell to do

with the inn-keeper's daughter? It has a voice and she has not—it is still, and *she* can run. And why should the sound-memory always stop in that street in San Francisco—that *Chinese* street?

"And why should this bell take up the unfinished litany of sounds that had really stabbed him at queer intervals along in his life?"

Telfair took off his hat to feel the cool damp air of the Chinese evening upon his head. He took a step forward into the province of the Bell. The first faint echo of the sound that was like strings and pouring water . . . like a question . . . came faintly up the road. It was like the wind in the rigging of a ship. It was like the delicate patter of small raindrops upon a tent, and like the wordless song that a child sings to her doll. As in a dream he walked slowly down the road, dreading to come to the end of the Bell's kingdom. No use, he knew very well, to go back and start over in order to hear it again. He had tried that. No use to walk a few paces, and hesitate and stop. The Bell stopped, too. No, he had to traverse those twenty yards as if in a processional, at a certain pace—a processional which it would be indecorous to halt or to deflect. It was as if you walked through the door of a cathedral and up to the altar. For what? He didn't know. He could see the end now, as he had always seen it. He had passed the bit of wall where the Bell hung, not daring to look up at it. That gray milestone down there (if it was a milestone) was the end of the litany. The song of the Bell always stopped just there, stopped as if it had never been. Was it asking something of him? Was it telling him a story? Was it showing him something that he was too blind to hear? The question

that quivered in the air all around him haunted him acutely, like a half-dreamed message . . . like an intuition that one cannot quite define.

He passed the milestone and stopped. He felt a little weary. The stones in his pocket weighed him down, and he stumbled a little, for it had suddenly grown quite dark. He gripped the hammer in his hand. It at least was solid and tangible. He could never quite get used to the feeling of enormous antiquity, abroad in the night in the Chinese country, where even the wind has an alien sound.

And then a light came into his thoughts. *Now* he could come to the temple in the daylight, since he no longer had to take the other road to the hills each morning, prospecting. Why had he not thought of that before? He could find out the secret of the Bell . . . he could climb up and look at it . . . perhaps he could find out what connection there was between it and the inn-keeper's daughter! And this thought quickened his steps, for he was hungry. He thought of the bare clean little room where rice and dried fish and fragrant tea and nameless dishes awaited him . . . and the inn-keeper, and the appealing figurine of Mao-T'sing standing in the doorway —smiling absently at him.

He finished the mile and a quarter that lay between him and the village quickly, and came through the gate and down the village street with its queer gamut of smells with an odd little pang that this was home, that he knew what those smells meant, that he knew what the old woman who passed him had in her basket . . . that he knew many things about China . . . how he would miss it, if he had to go away! How he would miss the sight of Mao-T'sing standing shyly in the door like a child

. . . (she wasn't a child—he knew enough of Chinese women to know that).

He turned the corner of the street where the inn stood, looking expectantly towards the yellow rectangle of the open door. His heart stopped for an instant.

Mao-T'sing was not there.

He hurried. He crossed the little courtyard. He entered the common room of the inn. She was not there, either, but there was a guest at the table, the first since he had come to Ho-wan-ting, a tall Chinaman with black-rimmed glasses and European clothes.

Telfair bowed. There was something half-familiar about the man's face. The stranger bowed also, saying in perfect English: "Good evening, Sir." Telfair had not heard English for many weeks. It took him a full minute to recover his voice and return the greeting.

"I think I have had the honor," he found himself saying, automatically.

"Yes," said the Chinaman, "it was in Cambridge, in 1913."

"Oh, yes," Telfair responded, heartily, "why—you're Chang, aren't you?"

And they shook hands. To the Asiatic the step between Cambridge and 1913, and the Province of Honan in 1924, was one of the most acceptable of the minutiæ of life, and to Telfair, long a wanderer in out-of-the-way places, no second meeting with a human being, however far apart, seemed very strange.

"Shall we dine?" asked Chang courteously. "I had waited for you."

"By all means, I'm hungry," said Telfair. And as they sat down in the corner of the common room of the inn,

and Mao-Ling, the inn-keeper, brought them unaccustomed provincial dishes in honor of Chang (who was a civil inspector of the Chinese Republic), Telfair's heart warmed and long pent-up talk came back to him.

Chang's courses and his had collided at Cambridge. He was talking to a man of his own University. And as they talked and Mao-Ling served them one subtle dish after another, Telfair caught sight of Mao-T'sing standing shyly inside the door of the kitchen and examining with intent eyes the stranger with the black-rimmed spectacles. And Telfair found himself telling Chang how he had become a geologist in the tangled sequence of life . . . found himself telling Chang all the things he had wanted to write to some one. And when they had reached their twentieth cup of tea he began to tell Chang about the Bell, and the Song . . . the tea-kettle in Aberdeen, the wind in the poplars, the bell in the Sailors' Church, the voice of the nun who had not yet renounced life . . . the music in Chinatown in San Francisco . . . the door that had closed upon each of them . . . the Question . . .

But he did not speak of the inn-keeper's daughter.

And Chang listened, with the Oriental's grave and courteous attention, his eyes lighted with imagination, but with a total absence of surprise.

"These things are not so very strange," was his comment. "It is evident that some voice from another life has sought to make something known to you, in these various ways . . . some essential truth . . . some message for you alone. . . ."

"But—it is always *questioning!*" exclaimed Telfair.

"True," assented Chang, "and perhaps you are the only

one in this time, this epoch, who can answer the Question." And his eye fell upon the steel hammer that Telfair had laid on the table when he came in, and he contemplated it gravely.

When the inn-keeper came in very late to bring fresh tea, and began to shut the inn, Chang turned to him abruptly and began to speak. There followed a long colloquy in Chinese, with frequent questions from Chang. The inn-keeper answered hesitatingly; it seemed to Telfair that he was telling a story that he hardly remembered.

Finally he finished, and Chang turned to Telfair with a smile.

"You have discovered up in the hills the one surviving fragment of an old palace of one of the mandarins of Foo-Lan," he began. "In the Ming Dynasty this palace covered much land, and was, of course, a stronghold, too —but there is nothing left of it except a pine tree in which was supposed to dwell the spirit of the house, a bit of wall with a door in it and a bell hanging in an archway . . . and, some distance away, a block of stone that marked the corner of the mandarin's domain. The story that lingers about this part of Honan is that the mandarin, Chên Fêng by name, had a daughter, and she was asked in marriage by a neighboring *hou,* or marquis. Now the story goes that this girl, Sio-pan-meli, was in some way haunted from her birth, and the geomancer who had from time to time cast the auguries for her life as was the custom—for her welfare—found it necessary for her to have a bell, which the mandarin caused to be made of twenty ancestral swords and three mirrors of bronze. And this

bell was hung in an archway of the wall that enclosed the Princess Sio-pan-meli's garden, and was struck at certain hours in order to frighten the hovering spirit from another life that threatened her serenity. Now it may be that the geomancer had laid some spell—as you say in England—upon this bell that was made of both swords and of the bygone reflections such as collect in mirrors even as a stone collects lichens, and that it held for the princess some uncanny fascination, since she heard it being rung at strange times—for you must know that evil spirits must be trapped at cockcrow and at noon and at sunset, the three significant hours—but this is the story: that on the morning of the day that she was to be married, the bell set up such a clamor, as the marquis, her intended husband, approached, that it could be heard for many *lis*—many miles, and no one could hear anything that was said, in all that wide palace on the hill. And the mandarin would have had that bell torn out of the arch in the wall, in order that the wedding might continue. And still, when any of the servants or guards approached it, they fell back, frightened, and as if a great wind had blown them from the wall, unable to come near enough to the bell to touch it. The sound of it was like a hailstorm and like an elephant in great pain.

And so the mandarin, a brave man, went to that wall with his drawn sword, and cut at the bell fiercely, but as he struck it, the princess his daughter fell down in a swoon. But the bell was silenced. And the geomancer had died, clutching his throat in great agony.

The sword of the mandarin was broken into splinters like a sword of glass.

"But what happened to the princess?" asked Telfair.

Chang smiled, and waved his hand deprecatingly.

"Legends do not end, any more than any story in life ends, my friend! It is known, however, that the fortunes of that house became very bad, and that the mandarin, journeying to and fro upon his affairs, was often too poor to pay for the lodging of all his retainers, and had to leave sometimes a horse, or a jeweled sword, or a jade bottle, as security. It seems that he even left a chest with the ancestor of the innkeeper here, who had an inn some *lis* distance away . . . a chest containing . . . well, he does not know. It has never been opened, you see . . . since some day it may be called for."

"And the chest is here in the inn?" asked Telfair, curiously.

"It is probably buried in the courtyard," said Chang. "I did not ask. You see, even though China is a republic . . . still, the pledge of a mandarin is . . . but I should not have told you that!"

And his face relapsed into oriental impassiveness.

Telfair stared at him. "Chang, what do you suppose is in that chest?" he asked, deliberately.

Chang drank two cups of tea very slowly before he spoke.

"Who can say?" he answered indifferently. "Perhaps the mandarin had taken his daughter upon a journey . . . and the chest contained her bridal vestments . . . he may have expected—"

"Then there was no marriage," Telfair broke in, "to the *hou,* the marquis?"

"There was none," said Chang. "The bridegroom,

upon consulting with *his* geomancer, withdrew, leaving the swooning bride upon the floor. It was an evil augury, you perceive . . . and you must know that in China a swoon is regarded as something supernatural, as akin to death. No one will go near to, or touch, a swooning person. But it is said that the Princess Sio-pan-meli took gold leaf and died, some years later, and that she never spoke again, after her swoon."

"And the palace?" asked Telfair.

"The palace suffered both fire and an earthquake, a long time ago, and the stones of it were used to build this village—this very inn is built of them, the inn-keeper says. Needless to say, in this superstitious land no one would molest the bell that hangs in the arch, nor the door that is under it . . . it is strange that you have found it. . . . To-morrow . . . will you take me to see it?" Telfair looked towards the door of the kitchen suddenly, to see there Mao-T'sing, in an embroidered robe, listening intently, with a smile on her face, to what Chang was saying.

But her eyes rested upon that thin powerful hammer that lay upon the table.

And a hail-storm fell abruptly upon the tile roof of the inn, and clattered on the cobblestones in the courtyard. And Mao-T'sing stole away like a shadow. He was not altogether sure that he had seen her there. But he wondered what sound the hail beating upon that old bronze bell up in the hills might be like, as he and Chang bade each other good night.

His sleep was broken by dreams and the hail that fell intermittently, dreams in which the sound-sequence, Mao-

T'sing, Chang, the bell, twenty flashing bronze swords, a shining bronze mirror with a princess in it, a chest, and fragments of copper ore were all entangled. And he awoke thinking he had struck the bronze mirror with his hammer, and splintered the reflection of Maya that was in it . . . Maya, far away on the Pincian Hill, gazing into the pool of the Medici fountain . . . where he had last seen her. . . .

"Too much tea!" he grumbled to himself as he dressed. "Too much tea, of course!"

He found Chang at breakfast, busy with some documents, and having despatched his own tea and gone to the post-office with his samples of ore, and glanced at and put away to read another time a letter from Maya, he returned to the inn to find Chang in the doorway, smiling interrogatively at him.

They left the town and climbed the hill silently, Telfair, in sheer good spirits, stooping to hit with his hammer from time to time one of the hailstones that lay thick in the roadway like eggs of glass. They came to the milestone, if it was a milestone, and Chang examined it gravely. And still in silence they climbed the hill to the bit of wall where Chang examined the old lichened door, the bell, the sky, the overgrown shrubs that clustered behind the wall. And Telfair would have thrown a hailstone at the bell, but Chang stopped him.

"You have a hammer," he said, gravely. "Can you *climb?*"

Telfair stared at him. It seemed to him that Chang's eyes were very open, that the Orient, perhaps, was trying to reveal some secret, some inscrutable thing, to the Oc-

cident. They regarded each other with understanding. Something spoke between them. "It is time, my friend," said Chang, softly.

And Telfair had climbed the wall, and sat astride of it, and still he hesitated.

Chang had folded his arms and taken off his hat. There was something sacerdotal about him.

Very gently he was speaking. "The sound of a bronze bell carries very far," he was saying, "if you strike it well. In this bell is imprisoned something that only you can set free. Remember your training, my friend. Remember everything that you have ever learned . . . or dreamed . . . sound-vibrations go at such a speed . . . on a still day . . . finish now . . . the music . . . that was cut off for you . . . in Rome . . . in that street . . . in San Francisco . . . complete the song of the tea-kettle—*strike!*"

And Telfair struck the bell with his hammer, a terrific blow, that broke the handle of the hammer. And the impact sent him sprawling upon the ground, only Chang caught him. And the bell reverberated from hill to hill and back again, and the clamor of it wandered all about them, and the old door in the wall sang like a sounding-board of a grand piano. Even the hailstones on the ground seemed to tinkle with the mighty crescendo.

And as they both stood swaying, dazed, intoxicated, the bell-song became thinner and sweeter, and found echoes, became a carillon, a distant fountain, the trilling of sleigh-bells, the laughter of children in the Jardins des Luxembourg, the sound of summer rain in a woman's voice . . . the overtone of a distant carnival. . . .

It seemed to him that the song of the bell had lingered for a little while where they were, and now had gone and left them. And he and Chang looked up at the bell, to perceive that it had a crack in it, a crack that widened and widened, and suddenly the bell fell from its arch and scattered the hailstones at their feet and rolled away and was lost in the dense shrubs on the other side of the road.

And Chang seized Telfair's arm. "We must go with the sound," he was saying, "we must hurry . . . it may escape us!"

And they both ran, slipping and stumbling upon the hailstones, towards the village.

And when they came within sight of the gate Telfair saw many village people with yellow lanterns coming out of it, and they were all dressed as if for a marriage.

And in their midst was Mao-T'sing, the inn-keeper's daughter.

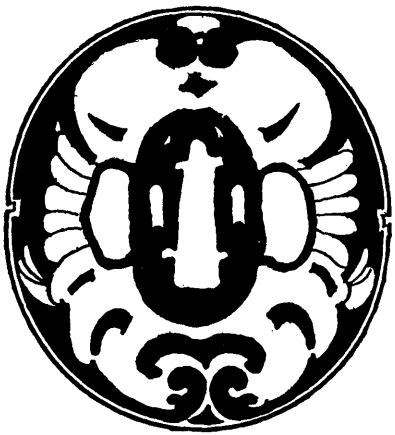
And it *seemed* to Telfair that she was dressed as the bride of a mandarin of the Ming Dynasty, in an embroidered robe, and the multi-colored crown of a bride was upon her head, with pendants of jade and carnelian.

And her hands fluttered like the yellow leaves of an apricot-tree in the wind.

And once more, and for the last time, in rapid succession, he heard the singing of the tea-kettle in the back kitchen in Aberdeen, and the song of the wind in Lombardy poplar trees (which the French Academy has named *frissalisse*) and the thin bell of the Sailors' Church in Finisterre, ringing for a *marriage* . . . and the flutes of that street in Chinatown mingled with the voice of the nun in San Trinita del Monti in Rome. . . . It was

the voice of the novice that he heard . . . the voice that had no *renunciation* in it. . . .

For the daughter of the inn-keeper came running out of the village gate towards him, *singing!*



# The BOOK of the DEBTS

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It was Sally Eastmooring who gave me the first news. I had met her on Fifth Avenue one afternoon.

"I have something very strange to tell you," she said immediately. "It's about Richard—he's come back!"

"Richard Castigan?"

"Evidently, since he is giving a dinner a week from to-night."

"But—?" I began.

"Yes, that's what *I* said," Sally interrupted, "but—Richard is dead! Here, read it for yourself."

MR. RICHARD CASTIGAN
INVITES YOU
TO CELEBRATE THE
PAYMENT OF HIS DEBTS
AT A DINNER
HOTEL GONCOURT
MARCH 26, 19—
TUESDAY EVENING
SEVEN-THIRTY

Thus read the card that she took out of her bag.

"Wouldn't you suppose that he'd know that if he owed anybody anything, they'd be only too glad to forgive it him, just to have him back?" said Sally, when I looked up.

"Well, I always said he wasn't dead," protested Marjorie Tierce, at a tea on the following Sunday. "Even when those two men described his death in New Orleans. Yes. Well, I thought that 'that woman' had simply driven him away."

"Wonder why she persecuted him so?" ruminated Bertha Stack.

"Anybody whom Richard loved could persecute him," said Sally. "It's because he is too sensitive, too much of a perfectionist. Too little of a conformist—too forgiving and too gentle—and devoid of the spirit of retalia-

tion that protects most people. He never fought about his point of view."

"From the little that Richard ever said about her," offered Marjorie, "well . . . she broke his jade cups, destroyed his papers, and . . ."

"I should say she had done worse than that," said Sally. "I always suspected her of killing his self-respect by belittling his work. She made his gifts—since he couldn't make money by them—seem negligible to him. And Richard was really an architect, you know. Then, there was in him a queer despair. He was always running away from it. I think that his novel that he never finished, his sonnets, his 'little ships,' were all simply desperate recourses, to escape himself. He tried to create beauty out of despair . . . perhaps that is not the way to do it, altogether. And three years ago, when he disappeared, I guess he had come to feel terribly ashamed about his debts . . . and he couldn't get any work to do. He said to me, then, whimsically: 'Well—I guess I'm "on the town," Salicia!' "

"And yet, he was always ready with the marvelous smile that he had. That endeared him to people, don't you think?—that and his unworldliness, and his quick recovery from misadventures—given ever so slight an encouragement," suggested Lucian Valiant.

"He always seemed to me," said Bertha, who had known Richard most of his life, "like a lost page out of a symphony score—all the parts there, but, without the rest—just a haunting motif."

"But why couldn't he just come back, without thinking

of his debts—who cares?" Sally returned to her affectionate grievance.

"Well, I think he means other debts besides money. He said to me once: 'I owe people interest on their expectations, Virginia. They've "made me up," out of the promises I gave them; now, I've got to be the man they've made up, you see? I owe them a lot!'" The girl who spoke had been Richard's *confidante,* more than any one else.

"Anyway," said Bertha, as we went down the stairs, "whatever *dénouement* Richard has up his sleeve will be a good one! Trust his dramatic sense. He could always make a better *amende honorable* than any one else, and" —she added lightly—"he broke a good many engagements when he disappeared—including one to dine with me!"

We were shown into a private dining-room of the Hotel Goncourt on Tuesday evening. A long table fashioned like a gondola, with fourteen gilded chairs along its sides, a toothed silver prow with a small lantern facing the door, and a silken marquee at the opposite end, over a tall carved chair that we all knew as Richard's, awaited us.

The deck of the gondola, covered with golden brocade, held a yellow plaster model of a city, with three public squares, and cloisters about them. From the center of the city sprang a delicate tower, with small bells hung in

its topmost arches. Three fragile fountains stood in the public squares, and minute jets of water tinkled elfinly as they fell upon rings of glass bells.

Between the city walls and the dinner-plates of black porcelain were formal gardens, with paths, labyrinthine hedges, green olives in tubs representing clipped shrubs, and jeweled fruit-trees with cherries on them, by way of apples.

We found our places by the cards that informed each one who his neighbors were, with a whimsical summary of their foibles and interests.

Mine read: "At your right hand is Miss Elizabeth Erring, the archæologist who discovered the newest Sapphic fragments. She is versed in Chinese poetry, and has translated many Egyptian inscriptions. A *gauche:* Lucy Galleon, a youthful spinster—of fairy-tales—who really likes cats, and believes in Leprecauns."

And Sally flung her card over the city to me.

> "Lucian Valiant was a man
> Who found his stature far too small;
> Fine books he wrote, and a moving play—
> (Not moving picture—at least, not yet!)
> And now he's grown seven cubits tall. . . ."

"Giovanni Freevale came through Florence . . . on his way from Greece. . . . He takes us to far centuries, and reincarnates them for us."

Bertha Stack was presented to her neighbor as "an unscrupulous woman who has learned to be kind," and Sally was indicated as "that woman, of whom the gods

may have despaired, considering how little they could endow her with, further, when they sent her to represent them in a foreign complexity . . . but they despair not, who have known her diplomatic skill. . . ."

The dinner was launched, with a queer pathos.

The door opened, and a grave and distinguished man entered, with a bow that included every one.

There was something familiar about the stranger, who went to the head of the table and drew out Richard's own chair, and yet every one seemed puzzled about him. No one could place him.

He looked like a man who had suffered deeply, but there was acceptance in the lines of his face and in his deeply burned eyes.

The silence that fell upon his entrance, punctuated by the tinkle of the fountains and the stealthy whisper of strings that came from beyond some curtains at the end of the room, was profound and expectant.

We waited.

The strange man contemplated us all in turn, then he lifted his glass.

"I welcome you all in the name of Mr. Richard Castigan," he said quietly.

It was a silent toast.

The woman at his left, who murmured, "And where is Dick?" was answered by a look so full of reluctance, so evasive, and yet a trifle quizzical, that we were made to

feel that it was not yet time for Richard to appear.

"How haunting that man is!" said Miss Erring in a low tone. "He is like a man whom one has known in several books—like Balzac's Rubempre—or more like the man who appears in so many of Meredith's novels under different names, and yet curiously alike. . . . Feverel . . . Evan Harrington . . . Beauchamp . . . all romantic, sensitive, different extensions of the author's character, wouldn't you say?"

"Yes," I assented, "and he's like a man whom one has seen a dozen times at the same table in a restaurant, or passed in the street every day—and never realized how well one knew him until now."

The dinner proceeded through exquisitely chosen dishes. Wines were poured into the rows of glasses . . . wines that brought back forgotten rituals, forgotten felicities of appropriateness.

But it was a somber feast.

Only, as it went on, every one spoke openly of Richard. The strange man laid no constraint upon us.

From two people beyond Lucy Galleon I caught: "—I shouldn't wonder if she *did* come—"

"Did you ever see her?"

"Once. . . ."

"I guess she was the real reason that he disappeared."

"Yes . . . she broke him up . . . killed his spirit . . . he loved her, you know . . . and that very openness in him, that scorned to dissemble, put him at her mercy. . . ."

Coffee appeared, in cups of gold lacquer.

The strange man drew from his pocket a slim black book, very much battered. Two waiters brought a quaint little chest of red leather and placed it at his right hand, and a lighted candle on a bronze tray was set before him.

All eyes were fastened on the book, and, after a noticeable pause, he opened it.

"Pursuant to the long-deferred intentions of Mr. Richard Castigan, this, the Book of his Debts, is at last to be read, his obligations canceled, and the book burned," he read.

"Item: Ten dollars sent anonymously to Richard Castigan, while in distress; the donor never discovered. This debt is now to be paid by the sending of one hundred dollars to a man known to be in straits himself."

And the first leaf was torn out and burned.

"Item," went on the strange man—

"How like the will of François Villon," murmured Miss Erring.

"—three Jacobean chairs to Sally Eastmooring, in payment for three saving words spoken by her on a black afternoon. As a gift—as lagniape—a pair of silver earrings."

And as Sally opened the box and put the rings in her ears, a tear rolled down her cheek.

"Item," the voice went on, "ninety-six dollars in payment for the dinners so generously shared with Richard Castigan, during three months of a terrible summer, by his friends Lucian and Dorothy Valiant. During this

evening four persons are searching in Union Square and Madison Square, Bryant Park, and one at large, for those inevitably hungry people who sit upon benches waiting for whatever may happen, in order that they may be fed. As gifts: a thousand cigarettes and the completed model of a caravel to these two friends.

"Item: To an old Irishwoman, once his neighbor, who gave him a drink out of her only bottle of Scotch, to 'buck him up,' when his heart seemed broken, a month in the country, which she has never seen since she was a child.

"Item: To Virginia DuBois, in payment of a nameless (and perhaps unsuspected) debt, two Hiro-shigis, some time admired by her."

A flat package was brought to Virginia. She did not open it, but she smiled in a queer little way.

Richard's debts were varied, indeed.

They included two dollars and a scarf-pin to a Russian tobacconist on Sixth Avenue; a sum of nine dollars and sixty cents to an Italian grocer who had provided him with food; a string of amber beads to Bertha Stack, for having told him a story to beguile him one day; a sum of money lent to him at the time of his mother's death, when he had had to go away hurriedly.

There were debts of gratitude and of money, and debts of purely metaphysical value—a word spoken, a letter sent on impulse; debts of recognition—this man had believed in him, that woman had saved him from self-accusation.

They were all set down in the black book. They were

all paid, the money in kind, sometimes with interest—in each case with a gift of some sort.

"Where did I know Richard?" Miss Erring asked, in response to my query. "Why, first on the Acropolis at Athens, one Easter morning. The lambs were being driven into the city below, to be sold on the hoof. Each one had a bell around its neck, and the trilling of those hundreds of little bells, with the deeper notes coming up from all the churches, on that still morning, created a spell that possessed us both. There was no one else on the Acropolis but the two of us, and we were moved to speak to each other, there in the porch of the caryatides. I think he said: 'Paganism brings sacrifices to Christendom still.' "

We listened as to a play to the queer diary that the "items" represented, out of the life of a sensitive man, who had never forgotten the smallest kindness.

The strange man burned the book, leaf by leaf, until the heap of blackened ashes on the bronze tray looked like a funeral pyre.

It *was,* one felt, the funeral of Richard's debts, that had haunted his inner life, where there had been, as we all knew, only the desire to give, and not to get.

"He never kept anything for himself," Lucy was saying, "and that, in human relations, is the unexpected, the inexplicable, to the people who hold the philosophy of this world, which is to get, without giving. And I think that Richard always gave, not recklessly, but—well, he opened every door of his house of life, because he could not conceive of a relationship with any reserve in it, and that attitude is apt to be despised."

And Richard's curious little couplet, that was across the frieze of his book-plate (the façade of a Greek temple), rang in my head:

> "These be the Castigans, wherever they go
> In their faces forever the Mistral shall blow."

The debt that was inscribed to me was, quaintly, a pipe that he had broken one day, and the new one, a Peterson, had a bit of paper twisted in the bowl. "Your new pipe has been 'cured,' in accordance with the precept of an old fumial priest, by fitting the end of a banana into the bowl, which, after three days, absorbs the oil of the banana, and the sweetness of its pulp, and makes a foundation for a 'cake.' "

One of the last debts was a fragile tomb-bottle, in payment for having been forgiven for a thoughtless action.

"Item: In fulfillment of the promise that some of you felt that he had as an architect," the strange man concluded, as a pale golden liqueur was being poured into the last of the glasses, "the model that is before you is that of a city already begun upon the nucleus of an old Spanish monastery . . . a city to be called Ascalon, in the coffee regions of the state of São Paulo, Southern Brazil. The bells that are to hang in the tower are to be the ships' bells of the first voyagers to Brazil, mingled in a chime with the old monastery bells. The designing of this city was intrusted to Richard Castigan as architect. It was he who made this model."

And as he burned the last leaf of the book, the little fountains on the table ceased to play, and the glass bells

about them eddied into silence as the water subsided. The hidden strings beyond the curtains ended their plaint in a sob. And then, in the dead silence, the tiny bells in the tower chimed the hour of eleven.

It was, one felt, time for the *dénouement* of the feast.

The door-knob clicked and through the door came, like an apparition, the figure of a woman.

She stood at the prow of the gondola—at the blade of the feast—staring straight at the strange man, who stared back at her, steadily and impassively.

The woman reached up to the teeth of the silver prow, fingering it aimlessly, as if to see if it were sharp.

"It's the unbidden guest," whispered Miss Erring.

The woman's manner was defiant, nervous, constrained, and unwilling. She seemed to see no one but our host. She seemed like a well-tutored marionette, tall, angular, stiff. Her hair was yellow; her lips thin and straight and colorless.

We all looked at her and waited, in utter silence.

A waiter brought a chair for her—a black chair.

He relieved her of the long black cape that shrouded her, and she sat down awkwardly.

No one rose.

It was as if, in the dramatic moment of a play, some extraneous and unrelated thing had happened—as if a cat had walked on, and the actors did not know quite what to do about it.

The waiter brought a glass to the woman. But when he tilted the dark liqueur bottle over it, the bottle was empty.

It seemed to have contained just enough for fifteen.

The strange man drew from the inside pocket of his coat a square brass box. The waiter carried it on a tray to the woman.

It seemed like a tobacco-box.

We looked on, spellbound.

The guests nearest the woman drew away from her a little.

She took the box, and then she seemed to realize that we were all looking at her. She seemed to see that we were there for the first time.

Foreboding gathered in her eyes. Her fingers trembled.

Then she pressed the spring and opened the box.

Out of it, after a moment, fluttered a black butterfly. It circled about her head, stupidly, feebly, and then settled upon the woman's bare shoulder.

She tried to brush it away, panic-stricken, with spasmodic and desperate gestures. Then she slipped out of her chair to the floor, without a sound.

Two waiters carried her out of the room, and the door was closed.

The strange man was smiling in a secret and solemn fashion.

No one had moved.

The thing we had witnessed had been so unexpected, so far outside our ken, that we were all transfixed in our places, as a street crowd is for a moment when there is an accident.

The man nearest the empty tobacco-box leaned over

and gently closed the lid of it, as one who closed the eyes of the dead.

With the click of the lid the stringed music began again, beyond the curtains, and the three little fountains leaped into life anew.

The strange man tore out what must have been the thin fly-leaf of the Book of the Debts, burned it, and folded his hands after he had closed the book.

The impalpable effigy of blackened paper soared above the table and disappeared.

"Like a black butterfly!" murmured Miss Erring.

"The last debt of Richard Castigan is now paid," said the strange man quietly.

*"Why—it's Dick—it's Dick himself!"* a woman's voice cried out, hysterical and shrill and glad.

We looked from Virginia DuBois's transfigured face to that of our host, and we saw that it was true, that the thing that had baffled us in him all evening had been erased, and Richard was now revealed, in every lineament, as we had known him. Only, with this revelation came the feeling that he was clear-cut for the first time, that in his face was all the perfection of the things that had been clouded, in other years, by oppression, and misery, and obligation, and self-despisement.

Richard had come through the haze, and his soul was there, for every one to read, and I realized that his face had always been haunted, and that now the haunting was gone; that he was free, of whatever had kept him from being himself, and that now his pride and his humility had been merged into one thing.

I looked about. There was recognition in the faces of his friends.

Lucian Valiant was murmuring huskily, "Well, I'll be damned—" and Virginia, her head on the table, was sobbing quietly.

"This is a man whom we suspected, but never knew before," said Lucy. "This is our friend, whose gesture with a cigarette was a poem, but whose life was like a torn-up street!"

So ended the dinner of the celebration of the payment of Richard's debts.

And two days later Sally told me that he was gone, back to São Paulo, to finish the city of Ascalon.

Virginia, when encountered, had little to say, but smiled serenely.

It was more than a year afterward that I was contemplating an ointment-box in the Babylonian section of the British Museum, when an ironic voice near me said lazily: "Curious, isn't it—their very boxes have winged covers. Restless people!"

I turned to find Borla Tourgan, an entomologist whom I had last seen in Rome, four years previous.

"Very curious, the wings on that box," he resumed, when we were ensconced in a bar off Piccadilly, a little later, with two whiskey-and-sodas between us. "Reminds me of something that happened down in Brazil. I was coming through a valley one Sunday . . . I saw a dream

city ahead, on a plateau . . . a mirage. When I got to it, I found a chap sitting on a wall whittling a piece of wood. . . . We got into talk about the place, and he began to tell me all about it. . . . He was the architect, it seemed . . . building the town around an old monastery.

"Told me a lot of things . . . lived in New York once . . . ran away. I began to realize that that chap had been life-sick, told me enough to explain that he had had a pretty bad break.

"Said he wanted to go home now, since the town was well under way. Wanted to go home and wind up his affairs . . . had to pay his debts, he said. . . .

"Well, I let him talk . . . seemed to want to get a lot of things off his chest . . . wish I could remember more of what he said . . . anyway, he had a queer idea of debt —felt he owed all his friends something or other. He said they were like the two rows of basalt gods in an Egyptian temple, signifying all the things his life was governed by . . . . 'you have to pass them before you go through the narrow door into the sanctuary,' he said. 'And then, you see, I didn't get past them—I didn't go through the narrow door . . . I owed my temple gods too much. Owed 'em for their tolerations, for the immeasurable kindnesses they had performed . . . for their belief in me, and all that. Got too hurt by life to accomplish anything. Got to show them I can finish something,' he insisted. 'Had to achieve self-control . . . had to find myself . . . had to begin all over as if I had never been. You see, I had reached the depth of lost identity. I had

gotten up one morning, in New York, and looked into a mirror, and couldn't recognize myself. So I knew that I must pay my debts—all of them, before anybody could recognize me again. Do you see?' he kept asking.

"That chap interested me enormously," said Tourgan.

" 'Yes, I do see,' I told him, 'but how is it, in all this feeling of indebtedness, that you have only gratitude? In the whole category you haven't mentioned any revenge. . . . I find it hard to believe that you have no obligations of that sort . . . we all have them. We may forget about it, but there the feeling is, lingering in one's mind like the smell of peat in an old tweed coat.'

"He was silent for a while.

" 'I used to have an item like that in the Book of my Debts,' he said finally. 'But I crossed it out. Didn't seem worth while. Had it done to me. I know how it feels. Anyway, if retribution *is* due to anybody for anything—they go and find it, don't they? The skeptic falls into the dry well, trying to prove that there are no stars —but looking straight at them to prove it, of course. No, I'm not going back with any debt of vengeance—at least, not consciously.'

"He wanted to give a dinner, and he had gifts for all his friends, things he'd gotten together down there.

"I said to him: 'Look here, I found a cocoon about an hour ago, an unfamiliar one, though I think it may be a Niger Eterniensis Callot. It's a parthenogenetic, anyway, and that's your feeling about retribution, isn't it?' I gave it to him.

"You see," said Tourgan embarrassedly (as if ashamed

to have been a bit sentimental), "I felt that that chap's city might become anything—and so might the cocoon. I wasn't sure. And then, I felt that he might become anything, so I said, as he put the cocoon in his tobacco-box (it was empty): 'If you get back to New York in a few weeks from now, it will be about time for this cocoon to hatch out, if you carry the box in your pocket. I have a feeling that you may need a little extra gift at your dinner.' We laughed, and he seemed to be pleased to have the thing, and then I said good-by to him.

"Queer chap," Tourgan ruminated when the pretty barmaid had replenished our whiskey-and-sodas. "But I understood him, in a way. He wanted those temple gods of his, back home, to see him incarnated into what they had thought he could be. I always wondered what happened at that dinner, and what happened to my cocoon.

"I've thought of that chap a lot since. . . . He must have gone back, with all his gifts, and his Book of Debts . . . but I can't help wondering. . . .

"Funny . . . I was reminded of all this by that Babylonian ointment-box with wings on its cover . . . restless people . . . restless chap. I've always wondered if paying his metaphysical debts, and all that, *did* solve things for him.

"That feast of his must have been queer. . . ."

"It was," I said. "I was one of the guests at that dinner."

"So," said Tourgan. "Did he pay all of his debts?"

"Yes, and one that he didn't expect to pay. An uninvited guest came at the end of the feast."

"A woman?"

"Yes."

Tourgan smoked for a while.

"I thought so . . . what happened?" he asked finally.

"A black butterfly came out of your cocoon and flew up to her shoulder—"

"Which shoulder was it?" he asked curiously.

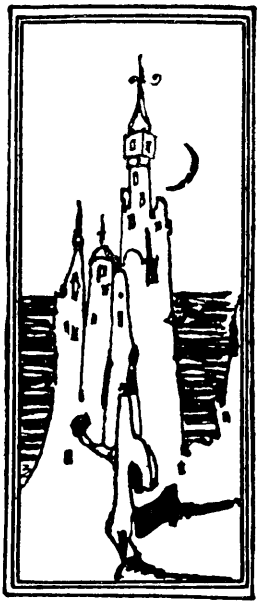
"The left one."

"Why, *that* was the shoulder that was always branded in old times!" exclaimed Tourgan. "What became of her?"

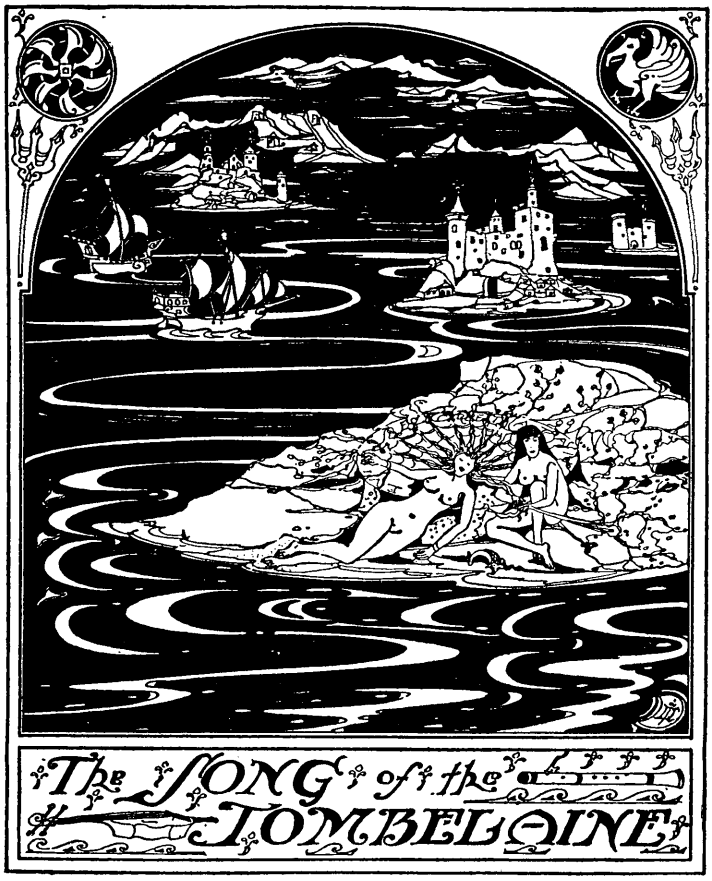
"Oh . . . heart failure, I believe the papers said, next day."

"I see . . . I see . . ." said Tourgan. "*No,* it wasn't heart failure, it was self-accusation that killed her—that and hysteria. Queer . . . retribution. . . ."

"Very," said I.



# The Song of the Tombelaine




The castle of Wareknin, as white as the sea-gulls that haunted its towers of an afternoon, flaunted blue marriage-banners from every window and every gonfalon. The Island of Idressey, of which the castle was the kings-keep, awaited the coming of Hedragors, that evening; Hedragors, Islelord of neighboring Kelmsney and its surrounding wier-waters and tide-mills, who was to wed that

night with Merveille-of-the-amber-tresses (the length of whose hair was the silk-ell of the island-kingdom of Idressey, and the measure of the swords made there, also, after the ancient custom).

And Ired-the-Gaunt, her father, sat talking with Kathred, his second queen, her step-mother, concerning her, in the square tower that was to be her bride-chapel, high above the sea.

"Have you seen Merveille since noon-fasting, Flame of my Eyes?" he asked.

And Kathred the Queen, embroidering the last pale sea-flower upon the marriage-stole of Merveille her step-daughter, bit her thread and looked up to say: "She swam with Irtegrane her sister to the Rock of Tombelaine, to gather purple and green and golden seaweed for the last time before her going."

Ired-the-Gaunt frowned. "To-day!" he exclaimed, "with the fleet of Hedragors already started from Kelmsney—passing as he must, in an hour, the Rock of Tombelaine—you let her swim there? It is not seeming for a bride to meet her coming lord upon a rock in the sea—and to-day . . . particularly. . . ."

Kathred smiled cunningly. "That was where my liegeman found myself," she said softly, "when he came to meet me upon the day of Spring tide-reckoning . . . when the water marked the Tombelaine with a singing whirlpool . . . long ago. It is a fit place for a bride to wait!"

And as she spoke, a gull flew in at the window, and about the tower-room, bruising its wings and crying.

When it was gone, Ired-the-Gaunt kissed Kathred upon her brow, and his memory of their meeting-day at the whirlpool stilled his foreboding. And his frown vanished

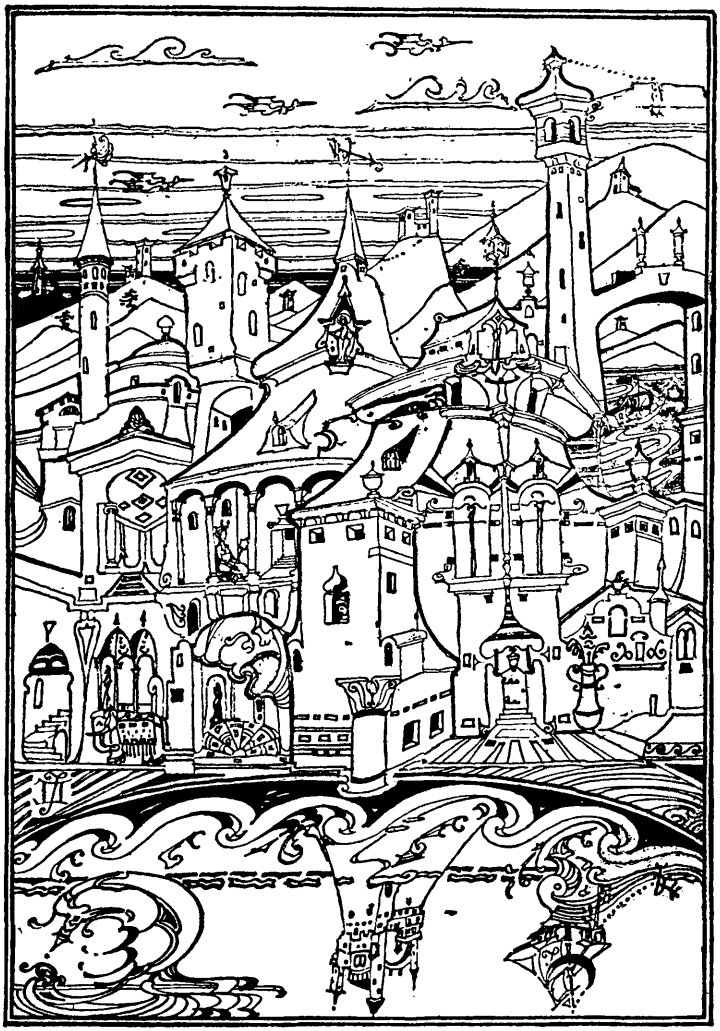
as a folded banner smoothes out in a breeze. He turned to the west window of the tower and looked out to sea, where the Rock of Tombelaine flashed white upon the islet of sand that the low tide revealed. And the Tombelaine was shaped in some verity as a charnel-stone, and held to be, in the legends of Idressey, the burial tower of Elaine of Tassifir, the mystical city that the Sea had taken for her own, and buried deep, leaving the Rock to mark its place when the tide was low, and the whirlpool to sing the tale at other times. And some of the minstrelsy of these islands held that Tassifir the Golden lay here, and some there, and some that the city was "inabout," and could never be found. It was known to be a fatal thing for any ship to set out when the whirlpool sang, and few but the Princesses of Idressey and the most fearless of the island folk, had ever ventured to swim to the Tombelaine, or to trace with a forefinger the markings upon the rune-stone that could be found at lowest tide-ebb there. For at certain seasons a fire burned upon the Tombelaine by night, a blue fire, which was held to be the augury of a passing, and all the islanders had dread of it.

But the wisest said that the lost Elaine came to kindle a fire of the sea-weeds, golden and green and purple, that grew upon the Tombelaine, and keep revel in the city of Tassifir beneath the Sea with Sigurd, her lover, and shook their heads. But to the youth of Idressey was Tassifir something more than a legend or a mirage, and many were the plight-rings worn by the maidens of the island when their troth-lads were absent—plight-rings woven of the sea-weed of the Tombelaine, which, to be true, must be brought by a swimmer, and not in a boat.

For this was long before the witherings of the Walk-

ings, and even before the bitter conquests of Terramonde in Aulis, and the viol-singers still remembered the pristine legend of Tassifir, the Island of Beautiful Things, lost in a storm, and eagerly sought after by every sea-born lad who spread his own sails for *dukkerin* in distant ports. Yet none knew where it was, except that it was "inabout," but strange tales of the revelry there crept about, at weddings, and at silk-dyeings (for silk of the rarest and thinnest was made on Idressey, of the sea-weed that grew upon its rocks) and many a seven-sailed tar-drave had gone westering to find Tassifir, "where no winter ever came, and where the tide brought daily to all, their substance, whatever they wished or stood in need of . . . a land of wine and silver, where the women were very beautiful and wore silver rings insinuated in their hair, and ate sun-dried wine in the shapes of ripe fruit, and bore no malice, one to another" . . . but no man could say how many they were, upon the island that lay inabout, with its city of pale towers and the sound of many thin bells, and pavements of amber and ebony in its streets . . . yet strange laughter had often been heard in empty places by fishermen, and sometimes a foreign ship would bring a sailor-man with silver rings in his ears, and a song upon his lips . . . and his little fingers crooked . . . and to his passing in the street the old women and the maidens of Idressey would whisper . . . "there fares a man of Tassifir. . . ."

And there were said to be leprecauns there, who built the ships of Tassifir, and who worked when they would, and lived upon hawthorn apples and poppy-bread, and wine of coast-cherries, a singing lot, consorting friendlily with the folk of Tassifir, who, themselves, never did any-



thing from one year to another, except to bake the leprecauns' poppy-bread for them on Thursday—the one thing they could not do, as deft a people as they were.

And it was the custom of departing shipmen to say farewell to their mates and maidens ashore: "Until we meet in Tassifir; *E-vin se grêt . . . Atan!*" But many never returned who spoke these words, the same that were carved upon the rune-stone of the Tombelaine.

And as Ired-the-Gaunt looked out of the west window of the tower he could see upon the sand at the Tombelaine his two daughters, Irtegrane and Merveille—for Ired was sharp-sighted as a sea-falcon. And the head of Irtegrane was black, and the head of Merveille like yellow amber . . . like a wheat-field swayed by the wind. And Ired thought of his first queen, Muirtys, the mother of Merveille, a strange, shy woman who had died in childbirth, and some foreboding rustled in the arras of his memory, like a lizard among dry leaves. And he turned to the Queen again.

"It is not meet," said he, "and—"

Kathred rose to her comely height, a dark woman of a far mainland (full of sorcery, and knowing it). "For me," she pleaded, softly, "let them stay—let Merveille have the last afternoon of her girlhood as she wishes . . . they have always swum there on summer afternoons, to dream as girls must . . . and to speak of shy things . . . and to-morrow . . . let her gather for the last time the sea-weed of the Tombelaine. To-night she shall be wedded, and to-morrow she shall go to the brown castle of

Kelmsney, no more to swim with Irtegrane her sister—no more to be a maiden. . . . Let them stay!"

And so Ired-the-Gaunt stayed the hand that would have summoned his seneschal to send a boat to the Tombelaine.

"Sing to me once more, Sister," Merveille whispered to Irtegrane her sister as they lay in the warm sand of the Tombelaine, with their heads upon the old flat rune-stone, cushioned with sea-weed. "Sing to me the Ballad of the Tombelaine!"

And she raised herself upon her elbow, and uncovered the rune-stone, and hollowed out the letters of the rune carved there, with her little finger, which was crooked, pushing away the sand absently. *"E-vin se grêt . . . Atan . . ."* she murmured. "It is the greeting of Tassifir, Sister . . . sing to me once more of Tassifir and Tombelaine. . . ."

"Not to-day," said Irtegrane, looking away to the west, "it is too sad."

"To-day *I* am sad," replied Merveille—"I am afraid . . . loosen my hair and weave it with your fingers as you always did . . . weave a song in it . . . weave it with your hair, for the amber and ebony streets of Tassifir . . . weave it with the sea-weed—'purple for a king's son, green for the Sea, gold for gold,' as our gypsy tire-woman used to say! *Sing me the Song of the Tombelaine!* For to-morrow I shall be over the hill of the sea, where I cannot hear you, where there will be no one to sing to me—I am afraid . . . of what is to come to me!"

"You are afraid of Hedragors?" asked Irtegrane. "I should not be afraid of him. He is tall and strong and

kind . . . and you can count from the windows of Kelmsney forty weir-waters and the towers of twenty tide-mills! No, I should not be afraid of Hedragors!"

"I am afraid to leave Wareknin," whispered Merveille, "I am afraid to leave these sunny waters and go away to the West where the mist is never absent, and there is a smell of fish, and much coming and going, and many ships, and the rumble of the tide-mills . . . and no one ever tells stories there. . . . I am afraid of the life on Kelmsney—it is too soon, Sister! I want to stay here a little longer. . . . I am so little. . . . It is quiet here, only the birds come to our ports, only the seasilk shuttles shake the air of summer—and yet, I love Hedragors, Sister—but I should like to look at him always from a curtained window, and see him climb the steep stairs from the quays, and never come near him. . . ."

Irtegrane's fingers tightened upon Merveille's shoulder.

"You hurt me, Sister," whispered Merveille. "Why do you hurt me?"

And Irtegrane smoothed her shoulder and murmured: "I was thinking, Merveille. . . ."

"What were you thinking? Tell me what you were thinking—I need to hear what you were thinking, to-day."

"I was thinking that I should not be afraid of any of these things," said Irtegrane, covering her face with her black hair—"I was think that *I* like the smell of fish in nets, and *I* like much coming and going—I like to see many ships setting out for Sea with the sun in their sails—I should like the rumble of the tide-mills on Kelmsney, grinding the wheat for fisher-bread. . . . I like to see the Searchers, in their tall hats of silver, coming down to Custom when the fleets return. . . ."

"How strange your voice is," said Merveille. "Take away your hair from your face and let me see your eyes —weave your hair with mine as you always did, and sing the Song of the Tombelaine to me as you always did when we came here. . . . Sing to me of the lost island of Tassifir. . . ."

And so Irtegrane took Merveille's head upon her knees, and loosened her long amber hair from the golden fishnet that imprisoned it, and took away the hammered golden sea-falcons that fastened the net, and began to weave Merveille's hair together with her own. And as she wove, she sang:


The wind is rising from the Sea
And seeking everywhere
The rock that lies water-buried
At Tombelaine. . . .

Come no more to the Tombelaine
Restless, blind-eyed wind
She whom you lost is no longer here
She whom the Sea has taken.
The Tombelaine was her resting-place
Until she went to Tassifir. . . .

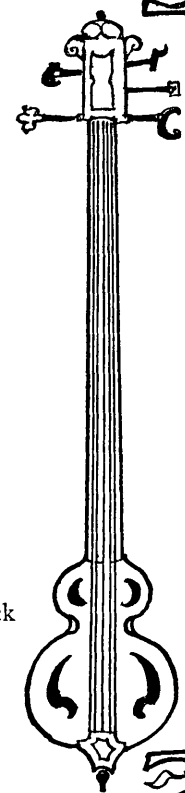
Tassifir the Golden
Tassifir the Proud. . . .
The grasses of Yesterday
Grow in her streets
Moored at her quays are phantom fleets
Amber and ebony are the streets
Of the City of Tassifir. . . .

The Sea has given her a winding-sheet
And laced it fast with spume
The whirlpool sings her a drowning-song
A song of Tombelaine. . . .


The Tombelaine is her resting-place
The sea-weeds are her shroud. . . .
Purple for a king's fair son
And green for the wester Sea. . . .
Gold for the golden sun
Gold for Tassifir. . . .

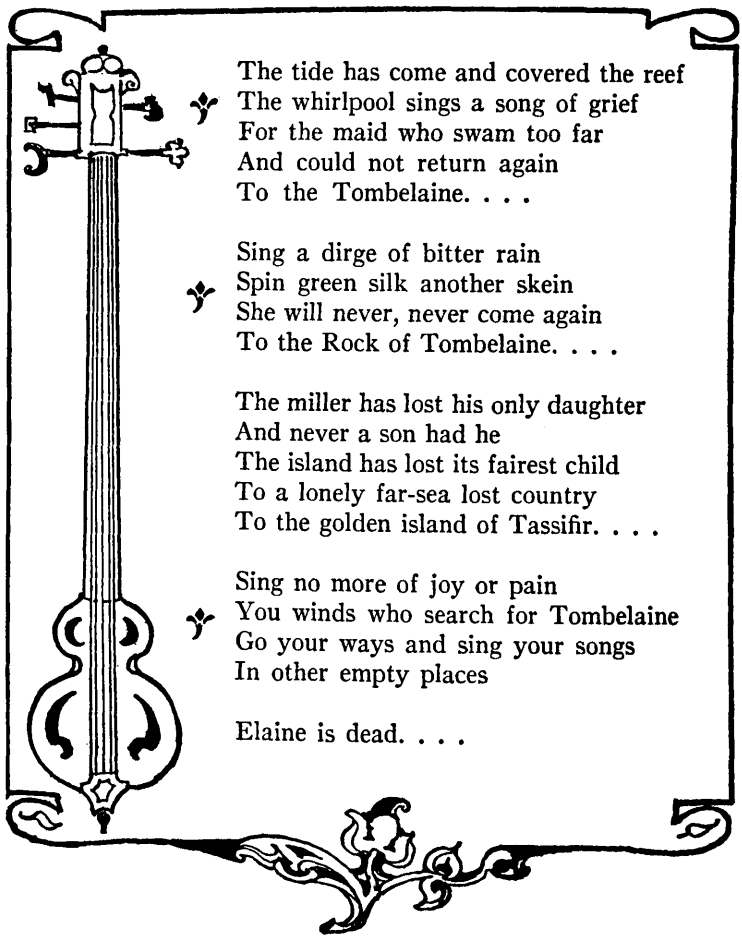
Come no more and look for her
Wind of yesteryear
Elaine has gone upon the tide
To Tassifir. . . .
Never and never to come again
To the Tombelaine. . . .

Come no more to the island shore
To seek her footprints in the sand
Come no more to the tower-room
To find her spinning-loom
Come no more to the buried rock
That hides her eyes beneath its smock
Seek no more to the south or east
For the Tombelaine. . . .



"You never sang this to me before," said Merveille, drowsily. "Do you make a new song for me to-day, Sister?"

"Yes, a new song . . . go to sleep," said Irtegrane.



The tide has come and covered the reef
The whirlpool sings a song of grief
For the maid who swam too far
And could not return again
To the Tombelaine. . . .

Sing a dirge of bitter rain
Spin green silk another skein
She will never, never come again
To the Rock of Tombelaine. . . .

The miller has lost his only daughter
And never a son had he
The island has lost its fairest child
To a lonely far-sea lost country
To the golden island of Tassifir. . . .

Sing no more of joy or pain
You winds who search for Tombelaine
Go your ways and sing your songs
In other empty places

Elaine is dead. . . .

"You are hurting me, Sister," said Merveille. "You weave my hair too tightly with yours."

"I will loosen it," said Irtegrane, softly; "is that better?"

"Yes, that is better. . . ."

The tide is coming, inch by inch
To cover the Tombelaine. . . .
The dark is creeping
Like a full-sailed ship
To seize the Tombelaine. . . .
Come home to the castle
And sit by the fire. . . .
Tune all the viols to a dirge
Tune the bassoons to a keen
For the eyes of lost Elaine. . . .
Shut all the windows against the Sea
That stole her away that day.

Light all the candles
For her seablue eyes
Latch all the windows against the sea
That stole her away that day
From the Tombelaine. . . .

The miller has an empty corner in his house
And never a son has he
The liegelord's bride she will never be
She is the brideling of the Sea.


"Are you asleep, Sister?" asked Irtegrane.

"No . . . I am not asleep. . . . I was dreaming. . . ."

And Irtegrane, the dark sister, sought about her for the long tendrils of sea-weed that clung to the rune-stone, and softly she wove them into Merveille's yellow hair, singing meanwhile . . . her hair that was like carved amber . . . like a wheatfield swayed by the wind . . . the sword-measure of the Kingdom and the silk-measure of Idressey. And the silk made there was not finer than Merveille's hair, and it was made of this same sea-weed . . . they say.

And Merveille looked up drowsily.

"How sweet the sea-weed smells, Sister . . . do you weave it in my hair because I am to be a bride?"

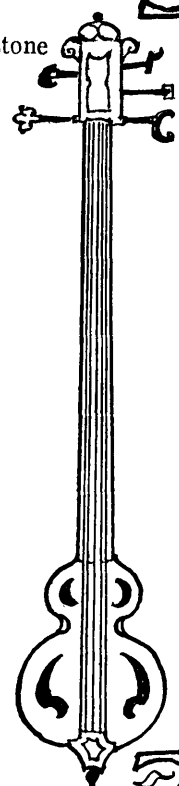
"Yes," said Irtegrane, "to make it smell like the Sea . . . no longer may I weave my hair with yours, for now you belong to me no longer . . . you are going away to a country stranger than Tassifir. . . . These weeds will be your bride-flowers there. I am weaving a song into your hair, Merveille . . . a song of Tombelaine. . . . Go to sleep. . . ."


The liegelord leans upon the window-stone
And peers into the dark
Look no more, my dearest lord
Upon the empty Sea. . . .
Your bride is in another's arms
In Tassifir the Golden
Beyond the Tombelaine. . . .

The waters have closed her seablue eyes
And weeds are woven in her hair. . . .
Purple for a king's fair son
And green for the wester Sea. . . .
Gold for gold . . . the gypsy said
This harp of minstrelsy. . . !

The tide has shod her little feet
And ringed her fingers with its salt
She will never gladden your eyes again
Tombelaine. . . ! Tombelaine!

*Tombelaine!*



"Are you asleep, Merveille?" whispered Irtegrane.

But Merveille made no answer.

And as the swift returning tide came and kissed the bare feet of Merveille, and the falling sun touched the Sea, Irtegrane laid her sister's head gently upon a cushion of sea-weed on the old rune-stone. And she slept.

And Irtegrane took a handful of sand and covered the words carved in the stone: *E-vin se grêt . . . Atan . . .* and stood for a moment counting the web of sea-weed that Merveille's hair was bound in, stretching everywhere like the rays of the sun about her head, and rooted into the rock, before she slipped quietly into the sea and swam towards the castle.

And when she reached the water-postern in the wall beneath the Bride's Tower, she climbed up the buttress there, clinging to the tufts of sea-weed and gazed towards the Tombelaine. Already the song of the whirlpool told her the quick tide was in, and she could see the flame-sails of the fleet of Hedragors approaching, not far off.

And she ran up the water-steps crying aloud that Merveille was drowned.

And to all who gathered about her she sobbed the story that was in her mind to tell: that she herself had gone to sleep on the Tombelaine in the sun, and when she awoke, her sister was gone, leaving her girdle and a bit of parchment tied in it. And the parchment she gave to Ired the king, her father.

And all listened with horror, save Kathred, Irtegrane's mother, the Queen, who wrung her white hands, and wept no tears.

But the song of the whirlpool crept in at every cranny of the castle of Wareknin, and brought a shiver to all

who heard, for the sound of it betokened a drowning and a passing. "The sea has raised the keen," muttered the old gypsy tirewoman of Merveille and Irtegrane.

And Hedragors coming, all his fleet was put back to sea, with lanterns, and the marriage-tardrave, of seven sails, first, with Ired-the-Gaunt and Hedragors in it, to search for the body of Merveille . . . perchance living. . . .

And all the women gathered upon the water-steps, gazing at the flickering lights that circled about the tide-covered Tombelaine, for every man and boat of Idressey had gone, also, with beacons of oil and sea-weed to light the sea, and fish-nets to draw about the Tombelaine.

"But the waters there are very deep!" thought Irtegrane.

And keening-women were brought, with ashes upon their heads, and the marriage-feast was halted, and the priests lingered in the sacristy of the chapel, wondering which stole to wear. While Kathred the Queen, and Irtegrane the daughter, two dark women, knelt in the chapel with bowed heads, but whispering to each other.

And the searchers returned, after a long time, leaving three boats around and about the Tombelaine, in scant hope, since a storm had risen, and it was well past midnight, and the blue fire that blazed fitfully above the Tombelaine struck terror into the hearts of all the sailor-folk. And Hedragors came arm in arm with the king, each supporting the other, up the water-steps, and the parchment was read to Hedragors.

And it said that Merveille, first princess of Idressey, had long wished to die, being unhappy, and tortured by a devious sin that lay upon her soul, and that she had swum out to sea towards Tassifir, and would never return. And she begged the forgiveness of Hedragors, and of her father and of her sister, and craved them to mourn her no more than as one of the brides of the Tombelaine, and wished them God's grace, and long life, that she, by her own desire, renounced. . . .

And the parchment was signed with the flower and falcon seal of Merveille, and none doubted it.

And to the king, sunken in grief upon his bench in the great hall of the castle, came Hedragors.

"My Lord," said he, "where Merveille is . . . there will I go. Farewell! There shall be a wedding to-night, in the whirlpool of the Tombelaine, with nor light nor priest, but a true wedding of the Sea, betwixt Merveille and me."

But the king raised his hand.

"Hedragors," said he, "it is not for you in your youth to be drowned."

And Hedragors unbuckled his sword, that had been made by the measure of Merveille's hair, and which had been Ired's marriage gift to him, and laid it on the king's knees.

"Here is my sword, my liege; I need it no longer. I go to my bride. What she has chosen I have chosen. My youth is as nothing to me, since she is gone. I go to find her."

And kneeling, Hedragors took his wedding-ring from the hilt of his sword, and he strode to the door. And in a lull of the storm, the keen of the women on the water-

steps pierced the silence that had taken the great hall. And from afar came the keen of the Sea, the song of the whirlpool at the Tombelaine, mingling with the other.

But in the shadow by the door waited Kathred the Queen, and she caught Hedragors by the sleeve.

"Not so fast, Hedragors," she whispered, "or else the king shall know what happened in the green tower of Kelmsney one winter's day, and you will not reach the Tombelaine alive, nor go beyond that door with honor!"

Hedragors hesitated.

He had no mind to have the secret of the green tower revealed, as sorry as he was of his dishonor of that long-ago day. And the Queen drew close to him, and pleaded with him, and the smell of her black hair smote his senses sorely.

And to all who beheld, it seemed that the Queen pleaded with him out of pity for his youth, and all drew back in respect.

But what the Queen said to him was this: "Do not lament the going of Merveille into the sunset, Hedragors . . . she had reason that she did not wish to confess to any but the wester sea . . . there was, last year, a young armorer in the castle . . . it was he who made the sword that Ired-the-Gaunt gave to you for a marriage-gift . . . the sword that lies yonder on the king's knees . . . and Merveille looked upon him with some longing . . . when he came to measure the steel by the length of her amber hair . . . and . . ."

And Hedragors, acrid with his own guilt, doubted not the guilt of another, and saw no guile in the Queen's words.

"The wedding-feast is set; the priests are waiting,"

the Queen went on (a dark woman full of sorcery, and knowing it). "There can be a wedding this same night, if you speak the word . . . look about you, Hedragors!"

And he, turning his eyes about the great hall, in sore perplexity, beheld Irtegrane by a window, with her pointed chin in her hands. And he looked at Kathred, the Queen. Her chin was pointed also.

And Irtegrane's hair was black, like the Queen's.

Kathred pressed his arm, and a shudder took hold of Hedragors.

"She loves you, Hedragors," the Queen whispered. "She has always loved you! Go and speak to the king, and ask her for your wife, and so erase the dishonor that Merveille has brought to him to-day. Have you forgotten that it is expedient for this chain of islands to be linked together with a golden ring? Since there is a sea-war smelled upon the South wind? Have you forgotten that Floorn, your father, left you Kelmsney to guard, and that he left fief-surety to Ired in your behalf, hearing that Tukkim of Afros in the South was building many a trireme and quinquireme and tardrave-of-war, with a jealous eye upon the scattered riches of fish and sea-silk and island wheat of these two kingdoms? Know you not that this marriage will link them all together for peace, and double the sea-strength of Idressey and Kelmsney? It is your duty, Hedragors, to your people and ours, and Ired has too great a pride to ask it of you, with the stain of Merveille's dishonor so fresh upon his heart. . . . And . . . Hedragors! . . . Irtegrane has refused many hands and fiefs . . . since she loves you."

*"Go, Hedragors . . . or—!"* she finished.

And Hedragors, smitten with many thoughts, returned

to where the King sat, and took up his sword from the King's knees, and made devoir with it.

"My Lord, it would be a craven who laid down the sword of his island only to die for love, in these troubled times. In great sadness, and with all respect, I ask of you the hand of Irtegrane, your daughter, in marriage, this night."

And as he spoke, Irtegrane's fingers clutched her pointed chin, and her nails made little crescents of blood upon her white face. And her black hair fell over her—a curtain of shame. But the Queen gazed straight at Ired the King.

And after some time, Ired-the-Gaunt lifted his head from his grief, and raised his hand for the keening to be stopped.

"Hedragors," said he, deep in his throat, "you are a brave man, to draw the knife from your wound and seek to staunch it. Even so must I. It is a great honor that you show my house, this day dishonored by a daughter who sought death instead of marriage. Let us not delay."

For the king thought of his fleet, waiting to sail for Afros, and fling the glaive at Tukkim's door, and with his fleet he saw the tardraves of Hedragors, and upon all their sails the sea-falcon of Idressey and the mill-wheel of Kelmsney interwoven, and he strove to put away from his mind his yellow-haired daughter who was dead, as became a king and one surnamed The Gaunt.

And so were the priests told which stole to wear.

And within that hour was Irtegrane wedded to Hedragors, while the storm on the sea caught at all the window-shutters and all the doors and tried to come in, and the

melancholy bassoons in the gallery mingled their voices with the wind's, and with the keening of the island women (who would not be hushed, for their love of Merveille, as they stood in the rain on the water-steps), and with the lift and the wane of the whirlpool . . . singing at the Tombelaine.

And at a late hour the three boats left out at sea to seek for Merveille returned, one by one, their lanterns having burned out. But they had not found the body of Merveille.

And the wedding-feast being done, the castle was darkened. And for a little while a light burned in the Bride's Tower, where Hedragors first threw the silken slipper of Irtegrane, his wife, into the Sea, according to the ancient custom of Irdressey.

But by the dying fire in the great hall sat Ired-the-Gaunt, sleepless, and near him his dog sighed upon the floor in sympathy. And Ired kept the vigil for his dead first-born, and his eyes burned in their sockets for the tears that could not be borne. For Ired came of a race that never wept.

And hovering here and there in the castle, soft-shod in silk, as a cat, the Queen, listening, remembering, shuddering, guilty, but consoling that guilt with the thought of her daughter, now the bride of Hedragors.

And the Queen in her wandering weighed her first guilt, the undoing of Hedragors, on the day that lust had overtaken her, when she had been his guest on Kelmsney, and then her writing of the parchment for Merveille's undoing, and then the dark plan she had whispered in Irtegrane's ear, on that day when her daughter had betrayed her own guilt with the young armorer, to her mother!

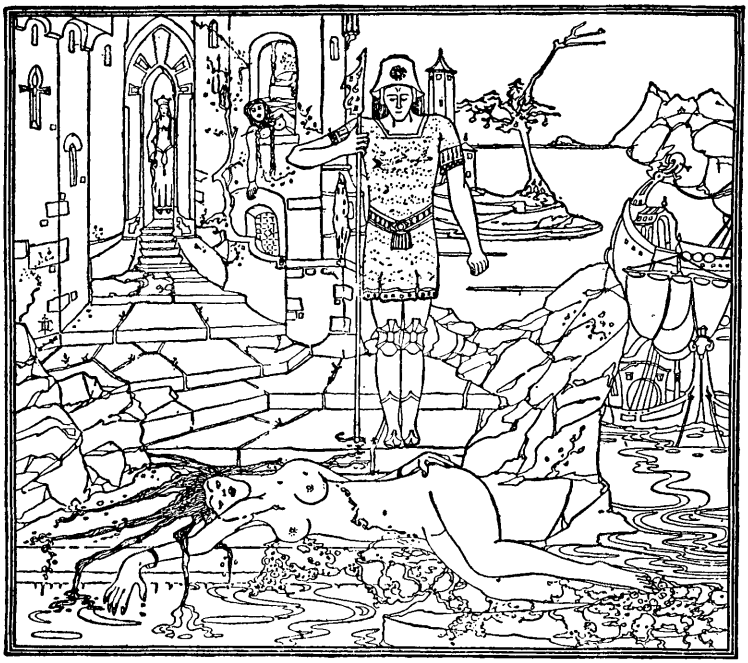
And Kathred held her deeds as befitting a wise mother, since they had all been for Irtegrane, her daughter's sake.

But of Ired, sitting by the fire, she thought little. Her destiny was now the governance of Hedragors, whom she held weak, through Irtegrane, was the burthen of her vigil . . . and Ired was growing old in her eyes. Besides, she had never been able to forgive Ired his first queen, Muirtys, who had brought him so beautiful a daughter . . . and whom the viol-singers still remembered in their feast-songs. And this, to Kathred, made white all that she had done, and she was well content as she wandered the sleeping castle, telling beads to keep her fingers from plucking her dress, and gazing out of the windows to see the blue fire that flickered over the Tombelaine, until daybreak. . . .

And when the wind had died, and the storm was spent, the early sun awakened Hedragors, and he went to the west window of the Bride's Tower and gazed out to sea, towards the fleck of gray that was Kelmsney. And he stole a look over his shoulder at his sleeping bride. The sun was warm on his face, and a mild summer wind caught at the window curtains. Hedragors was well content.

And then, there in the sea, something caught his eyes. It was the Tombelaine, uncovered by the tide since yester night. And Hedragors was smitten between the eyes, that he could be . . . where he was . . . and there, beyond, could be the Tombelaine, shaped in some verity as a charnel-stone.

And he could not bear to look at it, and so covered his face, and for relief dropped his eyes to the water-



steps below the tower, and to his ships moored just beyond.

But something shone whitely in the sun, there in the water, at the steps.

And Hedragors could not count his ships, for horror.

For Hedragors saw the body of Merveille floating there, and her bright hair spread upon the steps like a wheatfield trampled by the wind. And woven in her hair was sea-weed, purple and green and golden, in mute testimony.

That fair body had come to the very door of the castle to tell its story.

And as he looked, he knew the innocence of Merveille,

and his heart went dumb within him, and his shoulders trembled, and his knees. It was for this that the Queen had inveigled him on that afternoon of winter, in the green tower of Kelmsney; for this that Irtegrane lay sleeping behind him in the Bride's Bed of Wareknin; for this that the Tombelaine blanched in very shame there in the sun, paler than Merveille's dress; for this that those strands of sea-weed (so strong that ropes had always been made of it in all the islands, as well as fine silk) were Merveille's bride-flowers!

He sprang to the bed where Irtegrane lay sleeping, and caught the two ropes of her black hair about her neck, and tied them, and twisted the knot with his dagger handle. And Irtegrane opened her eyes, and saw what he knew, before she died, for he took her to the window and laid her there so that her eyes might look down and see the body of Merveille. And Irtegrane made no sound.

Then Hedragors ran down the stairs, and through the slumbering castle, and looked aghast at Ired sitting erect in his chair, asleep, with his dog's head between his feet. And Hedragors plucked out his sword from the wedding-board where he had thrust it, in token of marriage fealty to the island. And he broke the sword in twain with his hands, and laid the pieces at the king's feet, in farewell, for he loved Ired the King.

And as he went out of the door of the castle, the Queen started up out of the light slumber of the guilty, from the window where she sat, and her face went whiter than the wing of a sea-falcon. But she followed Hedragors as in a dream, so terrible was he to behold. And he went down the steps to where the dead Merveille lay. And the Queen's eyes glazed as she saw what the tide had done.

For the tide returns whatever is given to it, measure for measure, cask for cask, dead for dead.

And the queen's heart froze within her at the sight . . . for she loved Hedragors . . . and now she knew it.

But Hedragors saw her not, as he lifted up Merveille from the water, and put her in his tardrave, and awakened the boatmen, and raised the first flame-colored sail with his own hands.

And this was the punishment of the Queen, that he saw her not . . . this, and the sight of Irtegrane leaning from the window of the Bride's Tower, dead, and open-eyed.

And so went Hedragors from Idressey, with Merveille, his bride, on that summer morning, as he had the day before intended, except that when the tardrave came to the Rock of Tombelaine, he bade his boatmen swim back to the castle, and not to look behind them. And he gave them gold to be drunken with for many days. . . .

And when they were gone, he took his wedding-ring from his breast and placed it upon the little finger of Merveille, which was crooked, and he sought in the sand upon the old rune-stone of the Tombelaine and found the two hammered golden falcons and the net that had bound Merveille's hair the day before, and he filled the net with sea-weed from the Tombelaine, purple for a king's fair son, green for the wester sea . . . gold for her golden amber hair . . . and he placed this for a cushion beneath Merveille's head where she lay on the high-deck of the tardrave.

And so he set sail again, no one knows whither.

But they say, in these islands, that he went to Tassifir in the West, or wherever it may be. And in Tassifir (which may well be beneath the waters), "there is no drowning, and no death, and if you can come there, you will see the flowered silken awnings spread to catch the wind-pollen that comes from the South, and you may see the streets paved with amber and with ebony, and you may see the tardraves and the quinquiremes of Ys moored at the quays, and you may hear the voices of the sea-oreads up and down the hills of Tassifir, and hear the wind singing in the cobweb harps strung at the cross-roads, and see the blue fires lighted at dusk for the mystical marriage of Merveille and Hedragors . . . the ever-renewed mating of the sea and the land, on a far island . . . and you may see the children of Tassifir, whose hair is like a wheatfield swayed by the wind . . . or like carved amber . . . and whose eyes are blue like the sea. Not only there may you find them, but in many another port of the world, for the people of Tassifir go far from home, being restless."

But always they return . . . and they *may* take you with them if you know how to entreat them! . . . to Tassifir the Golden, whose place in the sea no one knows, and which is doubtless variable. . . . But they say "it is not far," when you ask, in the Islands of Idressey and Kelmsney, "and inabout, if you know the way, and take no compass nor any care with you."

*"But do not try to find it,"* they add, softly.

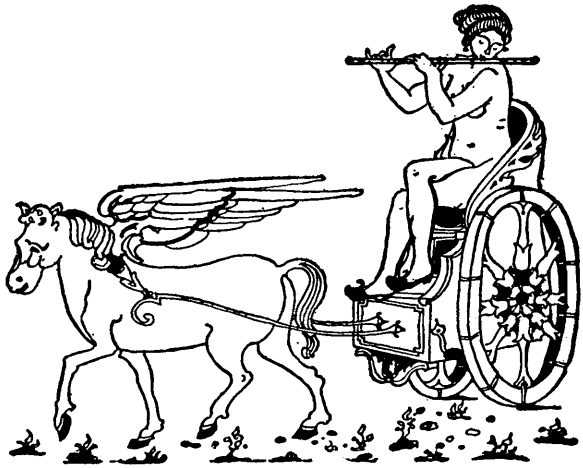
But should you come upon one of the Children of Tassifir, in any port of the world that has a Wharfinger and a Beacon, by these signs may you know them: that their hair smells of sea-weed, and their fingers are lean

and pointed—and the smallest crooked. And their eyes have a faraway look in them, as of a land they know . . . another land than this . . . although they seem to hear whatever is said to them, even when they do not answer. . . .

But who can say?

It is a shadowy story of old days . . . but *true,* they say, on Idressey.

*E-vin se grêt. . . . Atan!*



## GLOSSÆ ET ONOMATOPŒIÆ

*Dukkerin:* Romany noun or verb describing the more intricate artifices of trading, bartering, or purveyance, more particularly in wine, female slaves or other precious things.

*Marchesquane:* Byzantian-Coptic name for the Feast of the Coming of Spring, or when the sun entered the sign of Aries, a troubled solstead always attended by rejoicing at its close. Corresponding, prior to the great Intercalary Confusion, to the Greek Anthesterion.

*Ekka:* Primitive Arabic weight; originally established by the amount of gold dust that could be taken between thumb and forefinger, i.e., a pinch.

*Legistrina-tree:* Found only in latitudes parallel to, and in, the Provinces of Nephelo-Coccyggia; springing in many slim trunks of very tough wood from a common bole, not unlike the structure of the fig-tree; a tree without bark, but having a hard, serrated surface like carved carnelian, coffee-colored, and appearing always to have been polished, possibly by the erosion of sand-storms. Lives to great age; blooms every

three years with delicate *fleurons,* flesh-tinted, with large, velvety leaves much used for making balms in early times; a sumptuary wood used by Seric peoples, who conserved the *fleurons* in honey, and the perfume in their passional quaftains; almost extinct; thought to be the true origin of the complicated Evasiatic candelabra.

*Enamourment:* The consummation of the antique game of Hédûs, as described by the earliest Thessalign poets. (See Streir's Pastimes of the Ancients.)

*Marcid:* Wasted, shrunken, wan, as by love or other suffering. Sometimes said of an apple subjected to extreme frost.

*Tarr:* Indo-Circassian crooning-lute made invariably of a seasoned wine-gourd with leopard-skin stretched across it. Strung with sixteen strings in quarterns, of silk; the hair of *bayaderes,* silver and bat-selvage, with pegs of ivory, ebony and legistrina. Played inspirationally without frets or plectron, with the fingers of either disengaged hand.

*Serif-Maker:* An indispensable notaristic official of an Eastern court, whose duty was to render state documents illegible by embellishment.

*Tardrave:* An early ship-of-war of the Hesperides and Afres, with from one to seven sails, and during a state of war fourteen oars to each side, an aft-castle mounted with three *ballistæ,* or primitive petronels. Generally built of cedar, and tholed with ebony. Thought to have been an important stage of maritime development between the skin-boats of the Phœnicians and the earliest galleys, being a mingling of Mediterranean and Norcisle crafts.

*Inabout:* Colloquial adverb of the Isles of the Guillertandes, implying uncertain or changeable whereabouts, but definite identity. Said of a restless person who is seldom to be found.

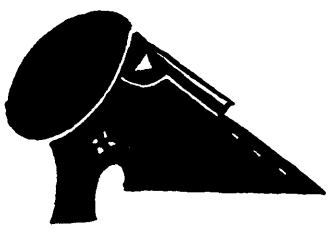
*Glaive:* In old Hebridean minstrelsy a slipper, spurred with silver. As an insult, or a gesture of affront a knight bearing

such a token as a gage or pledge from a lady, could provoke a quarrel by flinging it at his presumptive enemy, or by taking the glaive by the toe and striking him across the face with the spur, as, subsequently, the gauntlet was employed in chivalry. (Torlich, the Customs of the Norcisle Nobility.)

*Walkings:* Potentates by their own right-of-arrogance of the mystical country S. W. of the Aenides. Famed for their conquests of Aulis (now submerged), and their frequent ravishments of Ys, and for their treasures of amber, carnelian and silver. Gotire of Ys and Aulis left behind him a rune-stone too worn to be deciphered, but of great value in determining the tidal verities of the Mer de Perdüse. More lingeringly, in folk-monodies, he is known to be 'the fine king who forgave his wife.'

*Afros:* An archaic coastwise province of the Heiduceate of Maugreze in the Mer de Perdüse, with the two strains of the Nomadic and Cambode mingled in the fiery blood of its people.

*Evin se grêt. Atan!* Norcisle-Gaidhealach greeting and farewell, or something between the two, as a recognition with no element of time in it. Used *en passant* as a rule. A phrase of dismissal by a lover, but without resentment or humiliation, as if to say 'I love you too much; we shall meet again in another time.' Frequently employed as a refrain of viol-singers; an expression of hope-regret; a dirge-quaftain; almost untranslatable.

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