

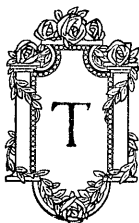
THE TAPESTRY OF TIME

ISABELL C. CRAWFORD

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BY

ISABELL C. CRAWFORD



THE Tapestry of Time" is *fiction* or *fact* according to the manner in which the reader regards the theory of re-incarnation. Certainly, most of the characters are very much alive to-day, and, with one exception, recognize their portraits. Whether that exception does recognize himself when he reads the book,—remains to be seen. At least, all will agree that Belden is a character whom any person might be proud to claim.

The author has always been vitally interested in Greece and Atlantis, because early in life she developed a deep love for the study of history, and it seemed quite natural that she should use her two favorites to convey the theme of the Great Pageant of Civilizations, a theme that she believes should engage our thoughts at the present day more than it does.

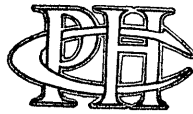
Weighing the history of the past, we cannot be insensible of the fact that nations struggle to an apex of achievement, where for a fraction of time they hang poised, ere they gradually return to the oblivion whence they sprang.

The author handles her subject with amazing lucidity and power, and holds the readers interest from the first page to the last.

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ISABELL C. CRAWFORD



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**"BUT AT THE FALLING OF THE TIDE,
THE GOLDEN BIRDS STILL SING AND GLEAM,
THE ATLANTEANS HAVE NOT DIED
IMMORTAL THINGS STILL GIVE US DREAM."**

(JOHN MASEFIELD.)

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FOREWORD

Weighing the history of the past, we cannot be insensible of the fact that nations struggle to an apex of achievement, where for a fraction of time they hang poised, ere they gradually return to the oblivion whence they sprang. It is as though the All-Wise Father rested His eye on each land in turn, that all quarters of the globe, and all races of people should share in the process of lifting humanity nearer the Godhead. And since each succeeding civilization profits by the knowledge of its predecessors,—*whence came the "Glory that was Greece?" How came the Incas by the knowledge that enabled them to build cities whose ruins give Earth food for thought? Whence came their ritual of Sun Worship? What happened to Atlantis?* Only the Book of Time can answer such questions.

Yet, today as yesterday, Love is the master-key of Life; the one infallible talisman which guides us through Life,—and beyond. And Life today is but yesterday's story couched in a different language. No less vital is the romance of those, whose lives, even as ours, were drawn together by the silver cord of Love,—*a thousand years ago, and more!* It is their splendid courage in the face of untold dangers; their strong ambitions in spite of discouragement and doubt; their indomitable purpose in keeping the torch of Truth alight, that have resulted in the civilization of which we of today are so proud. And their lives are written for us in undimmed scarlet and gold on *THE TAPESTRY OF TIME!*

THE TAPESTRY OF TIME

CHAPTER I.

ASTRELLON, MAN OF KNOWLEDGE

"In some green island of the sea
Where now the feathery coral grows,
In pride, and pomp, and empery,
The Courts of old Atlantis rose."

Masefield.

The noonday sun wrapped the city in a cloak of such glittering intensity that the sapphire ocean lapsing the outer walls dulled in comparison. The drooping sails of countless ships in the wide, bell-mouthed harbor, reflected strange lights upon the sleeping sailors sprawled across the decks. The stone quays with the low sea-walls rising behind them circled the bay, and terminated on the eastern extremity in a massive tower. Behind the quays rose the still more massive city walls, whereon the pacing sentries passed and repassed. High on the central Watch-Tower, the flash of armour marked the Captain's languid movements as he bent to watch the slaves toiling ceaselessly on the hot wharf, loading and unloading ships of commerce. An endless chain, bent under staggering burdens, they filed in and out the vast bronze outer gates of the city.

The feathery fronds of palms caressed the marble buildings of that most beautiful of cities. Minaret and tower rose gracefully slender above broad and lofty dwellings. Street upon street, circle upon circle, the city curved, nestled, streamed out like the silver veil of some goddess cast artfully on the earth to enchant, and to whisper of yet greater beauties hidden from the casual eye.

From the Western Gate, a road stretched through an avenue of royal palms toward the distant inland.

From the Eastern Gate a white paved highway swung along the sea coast. On the north, a formidable hill sheered from the city's wall, densely wooded save where, far up the height, a clearing surrounded a slender tower-like structure of white and black marble, patterned boldly in seven-point stars. A white ribbon of a path climbed from the Gate of the North to that strange building visible from every part of Medelos. Great trees waved about it. Before it a garden flamed in crimsons, pinks and golds against the mountain's darker breast. Yet withal the place manifested an air of aloofness and mystery, an atmosphere well borne out by the figure of a man who stood in the lofty doorway and swept the city below him with his glance.

Tall and rugged was he, his silvered hair no indication of his age, his brawny sinews no mark of his chosen occupation in life. Aquiline his visage,—yet his keen dark eyes had in their depths pure purposes maintained by a kind yet indomitable will, as if Astrellon, Watcher of the Stars and Man of Knowledge, had from long vigils gained from the stars themselves some of their remote peace and austerity.

"So still, so peaceful!" he muttered, "Yet methinks the slumberous peace of a volcano! Come hither, Estrella."

At the sound of his deep and pleasant voice a maiden came from the rose-garden at the rear of the tower, a crimson blossom tucked in the locks above her ear. Astrellon sighed.

"An ill omen, my daughter, in a time of ill omens. Still dost thou yearn for the red rose of love? Hast thou not learned that for thee the white rose of peace alone is suitable? Nay, reproach me not with thy meek eyes, my Child. I would shield thee from every adverse breath, for to me thou art as the rose of the whole world. And lo! Love lasteth but one sunlit day whence perchance thou slippest into the shadows of uncertainty. For thy soul's salvation, Estrella, let not the vision tempt thee. Forget not that knowledge is power—knowledge is power. Doth not knowledge endure while dreams pass onward? Yet, keep thy

dreams, maiden," he continued in a milder tone, caressing the soft hair from which he had plucked the offending flower. "Mayhap we shall have need of all the dreams we may store when we fall upon the sleep man calleth Death. I know not. What lieth beyond even I cannot discover," He sighed again deeply.

"My father, forgive thy daughter, who, not comprehending the reasons thou dost deem sufficient, nevertheless obeyeth thy will in this as in all things. Forgive if in this one matter I set my poor opinions 'gainst thine. Knowledge thou hast; power also—to what extent these possessions are thine none save thyself hath reckoning. Albeit, my father, sometimes thou dost love thine Estrella more dearly than thy knowledge or thy high position. Thou dost love her and hold her dear as thou didst hold before the daughter, the wife. Thinkest thou truly we shall not again meet that lost dear one, or clasp her to our hearts when the fullness of events be complete? Such is thy hope as it is mine also. I tell thee, my father, *love*, not knowledge is the greatest power of all."

"Peace, Child, peace. Thou pratest of what is beyond thy understanding. If I but knew one secret, the secret that should forever hold at bay the sleep called Death, mayhap I might yet—ah!—how my mind runneth like a hunted fox in search of shelter when shelter there is none! Shall I blaspheme the Deity with aspirations that touch His sovereign power? Astrellon, hast thou indeed fallen so low?"

"But not for thyself, my father. Thou seekest only protection for Atlantis, and these thy beloved people," said Estrella comfortingly.

"Yea, Maiden, yea," Astrellon answered, stretching his hands heavenwards. "O Deity, stay Thy hand! Spare this continent and this people, though they be less thine or mine, now, than Egypt's! If but the one catastrophe be averted; if but the omens of the stars be wrong, or if I for once be astray in my calculations, I shall yet forestall disaster, I shall stay the Egyptian at the very moment of his triumph!"

"My father, beware!" said Estrella glancing hurriedly about her. "Traitors lurk—"

"Yea, the traitors compass me on every side—and Lumnos seeketh my life!" exclaimed Astrellon, sitting heavily on the stone door-sill. "That he cannot take away, Estrella. Fear not, for 'tis written in the stars that we shall have many years of life together elsewhere. But I would save him, yea, even Lumnos, whose footsteps I did guide to conquest."

"Why dost thou absent thyself from the House of Power? Lately so strange have the rumblings been, I have feared for thy safety. Canst thou not delay the danger which threateneth Medelos, O great Watcher of the Stars, than whom earth hath no greater man?"

"Thy father feareth destruction!" said a deep voice haltingly, as a tall man in his early thirties drew near. Fair of hair was he, and comely of countenance, with grave dark eyes that gave sweetness to an otherwise too-powerful face. In Medelos, where of late Astrellon had all-too-many enemies, 'twas maliciously whispered that the fair-haired giant who spoke such a strange gibberish, was a fiend whom Astrellon had conjured from the bowels of the earth to help him in his magic-making. But Rollo—as the Atlanteans had dubbed this man found wandering on the shores of the sea ere the King gave him to Astrellon as slave,—cared little for their jeers. No slave was he, but friend, associate, and self-constituted protector of the Man of Knowledge, and, save Estrella, he alone of all Medelos, shared the life and secrets of the sage.

"Yea, destruction!" echoed Astrellon. "Destruction of this fair land and of the wilful people herein dwelling. Ah, I would save ye all but ye will not listen, ye will not listen! From King to slave, Egypt holdeth ye in thrall!"

Estrella and Rollo exchanged glances of dismay to Astrellon's amusement. He smiled reassuringly.

"Fear not, Children, our destiny lieth elsewhere. Fear not. Fear cometh from ignorance. Ye have

knowledge, and knowledge is power. We shall go hence, my Daughter, thou and I, for so I have made provision. For myself, I fear not to fall upon sleep, but I would not that the Secret perish ere I establish a new kingdom to the glory of the great eternal Verity, the Sun. Else had I cast in my lot to sink with thee, my country!—Let us refresh ourselves, for I must go hence to the King. He who forbade my hand upon the helm in the House of Power, hath, perchance, other commands for me.” He turned abruptly, and preceded them into the interior of the tower.

A small ante-chamber led into a large circular room which occupied the major portion of the first floor, and three smaller chambers were built on as an ell at the rear. These served as kitchen, and dining room, and in the third, Rollo had been wont to sleep until recent developments in Medelos had convinced him of the necessity of constant watchfulness. He now slept in the ante-chamber, though he fondly hoped that neither Astrellon nor Estrella knew this. It was however known to both and they were grateful to Rollo for this added proof of his devotion. A steep stair wound out of that central apartment to the upper floors of the tower, the first being given over to Estrella’s use. The second served as a laboratory for Astrellon. There he conducted his strange experiments, and there he slept beside his treasures. Above all was the flat uncovered roof, bare save for a table and those instruments which the Watcher of the Stars used in making his mathematical calculations.

Everywhere the furniture was of the simplest, but beautifully carved from a red wood resembling unpolished mahogany. An ascetic meagerness characterised the home of Astrellon in direct contrast to the voluptuous luxury abounding in the city. It was as typical of his life with its purity of aspect, its ideals of the dignity of all honest work as Estrella was typical of the hidden beauties of his soul, and heart. And as with Astrellon, the sweetness of his smile took away the piercing directness of his glance, so the fine linens

embroidered by Estrella's fingers, and the sparkling crystal made the abode pleasant.

They seated themselves at a long table and partook of salad, bread, fresh fruit and clear water from their own mountain spring; and the meal was enlivened by Rollo's jests, for he was determined that he would drive away the dread apparitions of disaster as long as possible. When the meal was concluded, Astrellon flung about him a cloak of azure cloth, thin yet strong, and twisted one end about his head to afford him protection from the heat of the sun. From one corner he took a slender silver staff tipped with a star made of mother-of-pearl, and kissing Estrella tenderly, stepped out of the tower as one who goes to battle in a righteous cause. Estrella watched them as they made their way down the hillside, until the steepness of the decline hid them from her view, and then as she turned to her household tasks, she kept the thought of them and their peril in her mind, with a silent petition to the Sun-God to preserve them.

Where the woods receded and the level of Medelos was reached, Rollo stepped back to follow in the Sage's rear as became not only the slave, but the body-guard. It suited his purpose well to feign ignorance of the Atlantean language beyond the few words necessary for transacting the business entrusted to him by the Man of Knowledge. Let them believe him a stupid lout, so that they heeded not their words as he passed! And while these thoughts crossed his mind, as ever the matchless grandeur of the city smote him.

Like some glowing jewel of white and green Medelos lay cradled within its towered and fortified walls. Each gigantic metal portal stood open from dawn to sunset, and no less a person than Astrellon had devised the leverage system which locked the city against intruders. After sundown, chance travellers must be content to shelter in one of the several inns without the ramparts, such the law enacted in the days when Medelos had reason to fear the invader.

The Man of Knowledge smiled grimly as they approached the Gate of the North on a road less trav-

elled than either the eastern or the western, since it led to a part of the country sparsely settled because of the swampy nature of its soil, a portion moreover, devoted to the prison camps for the political prisoners of which Atlantis had all-too-many. Astrellon stepped back with Rollo, and pointing to sentry and masonry, he said:

"Bah—they think themselves impregnable within these ramparts once the gates are shut, but I tell thee, Rollo, that I, Astrellon who did devise these very gates, could likewise devise means of their instant destruction, did I so dare to use the power granted me as a sacred trust. So goeth the way of life. For every poison, there is an antidote; for every injury, some redress; for every fortification a manner of destruction. Even Atlantis itself—What would ye? The Deity is just, and giveth all equal chance to glory."

Rollo made no immediate reply, but he gave an indignant glance to a passer-by whose supercilious expression conveyed a lazy contempt for the sage. Passing through the portal, the two men turned their steps in a south-westerly direction till they had crossed the Thoroughfare of the The Shops, and had entered a quiet byway.

The streets were thronged with vehicles at this hour of the day, and here and there a car-litter bore some fair Atlantean to the Bazaars. A multitude of citizens paced leisurely about their business, proud of themselves, proud of their city, and serene with the confidence that comes from a knowledge of superiority.

"O favored citizens of Medelos!" ran Astrellon's thoughts as he strode along. "O favored Atlantis! Thy ships reach lands that know thee not and bring thee thence treasure, and yet more treasure for thy adornment. The soil yieldeth fruit too easily to thy hands, and thou hast become careless, O Atlantis."

But the citizens he apostrophized had they known his thoughts, would have laughed in the carefree way they had acquired. Was not life made for man rather than man for life? They swung their rich vari-colored

robes clear of the clean black and white pavement, and feasted their eyes on the many fine buildings they truthfully believed they had constructed. Astrellon looked at them impatiently.

"Faugh!" he exclaimed in an undertone to Rollo as they entered a secluded avenue. "A full stomach maketh an empty head. They wrap their heads in a cloud of conceit, and see not that the thing which to-day is, to-morrow is not. There is no such thing as security,—no such phantasm as rest. For if we rest from our labors, the insidious worm of self-conceit doth eat at our very vitals. To labor is to achieve; to refrain from labor is to stagnate. Yea—draw aside your mantles lest they touch mine," he added, in a tone of pathos, as a group of dandies deftly drew themselves from contact. "Time cometh when ye shall remember the warnings of Astrellon with sorrow. Mark me, Rollo, when bendeth the finger of the dial to the appointed hour, they will cry for me, these ingrates. Knowledge is power, Rollo. Knowledge of the past that doth teach man to walk steadfastly in the way of light; knowledge of the future which forewarneth him. But in this day shall such fact be weighed in the balance against pleasure?"

"Forgive them and thou wilt Astrellon, to me their attainments avail little since they have rejected thee."

"Not I alone, my son, but One dearer than life itself to me—The Great Spirit of the Universe, the Sun God and Life-Giver!"

By this time they had arrived at the city's heart, where, ringed by great walls of purest marble, stood the palace of the King, that palace whose equal earth has never seen. A hundred acres of ground surrounded the palace, wherein strange trees spread leafy fans to soften the sun's rays, and myriad fountains sent showers of jeweled spray into the air. Roses red, pink, white and yellow wreathed colonnade and portico; the scarlet poppy and the purple fearne alike drooped in the heat. And the bijou Temple of Isis lately erected in the grounds by the King, and still

bare of the enveloping flora that transformed all Atlantean buildings, dazzled the eye.

The central portion of the palace was octagonal in shape, and from it great wings spread in either direction. A double colonnade of marble circled it from east to west, leaving the northern side a huge paved terrace, sacred to the King's bodyguard. A company of these were on duty and seeking what shelter they could find from the burning sun in the indifferent shade of their own quarters which lined the sides of the terrace and barred casual entrance to the palace; and a number of others not on duty at that hour, sprawled on the cool pavement of the portico, or lounged on the stone benches placed at intervals. Like all Atlanteans, they were somewhat light of build, but with a muscular development remarkable in more lusty types. They regarded Astrellon and his companion with looks as yet more respectful and speculating than aggressive, for the army knew the true value of Astrellon's assistance. From within came the faint tinkle of musical instruments that betokened the King's presence in his Central Court.

Astellon saluted the Captain of the Guard, and was ordered to proceed. So, leaving Rollo to rest on a bench beneath a giant acacia, he passed through various outer apartments and came at length to the threshold of the one wherein the King made revel. As he waited the signal to enter and be received, his glance frowned about that opulent interior.

An expanse of marble floor cunningly patterned in geometrical designs; a flight of stone steps surmounted by a marble throne carved to a lace-like delicacy of intricate ornament; hangings of crimson velvet that made barbaric splashes of color on the white walls. Fifty Nubian Slaves—a wedding gift from the Pharaoh—waved fans of crimson plumes in time to the musical tinkle of citherns played by a band of exquisitely-formed girls. And on the throne, silently dominating the whole scene, the plump form of Lumnos, King of Atlantis, sagged, his crimson robe trailing over one arm of the seat, as he showered jasmine petals

on the upturned faces of the musicians where they sat along the steps of the throne itself. At his side, though slightly lowered, stood a smaller marble throne and on the cushions of it sat the wondrous Lotus Lily whose like there was not to be found on the earth, 'twas said.

Small was she to the point of fragility, slender-boned and delicately rounded. Her proud head rose from her warmly-flushed golden breast, and her tiny feet swung listlessly. Enormous emeralds decked her arms and neck, and a circlet of them rested upon her luxuriant black tresses. Astrellon gazed compassionately, if distrustfully upon her. He knew too well that she had been but a pawn in the great game of empires, and he respected the agility of her brain. As if some spark of his pity found its way to her, she turned her languid homesick eyes indifferently from the King to the new-comer. With a sudden venomous flash of hatred she sat up very straight and addressed the King in a voice that no amount of anger could render unmusical.

"My Lord Lumnos, behold the Man of Knowledge," she said mockingly.

The King straightened in his turn, dropped the spray of jasmine that he still held with a gesture that savored of shame-facedness, and assumed the haughtiest of miens. The watching courtiers roused themselves from their languor, and became interested; the musicians laid aside their instruments and a hush such as precedes a storm fell upon the hall. Only the slaves continued to wave their plumes in rhythm.

Astellon noted the signs, and sighed as he obeyed the imperious gesture and strode to the foot of the throne to make obeisance, for he, too, loved his King, and sought earnestly to serve him.

CHAPTER II.

THE KING'S MANDATE

Astellon straightened his tall form, and awaited his sovereign's pleasure.

"Well?" queried the monarch at length, as, having settled his robes and assumed a kingly air, he bent a tolerant if aggrieved look upon the Watcher of the Stars. "Well!" His voice always stentorian, rang out like a clarion call on the hushed stillness of that audience chamber. The very roses at the window ceased swaying in the breeze: the Nubians rolled their eyes toward the King not daring to otherwise change their fixed posture; the Lotus Lily grasped the curved ends of her throne with her two small hands and surveyed the sage from beneath half-closed eyelids; the whole assembly without exception, waited, visibly palpitating beneath their outward calm.

"What say thine oracles to-day, Watcher of the Stars? Perchance they hint of new conquests. If thou bringest such augury, thou'rt indeed welcome. Yea, sometimes my soul longeth for the days of old when sailed we whither fancy led us—A man's life Astrellon!"

"Live forever, O King! May thy glory equal that of the sun at noon-day, and partake in some measure of the qualities the Deity doth display."

The King nodded carelessly, and the court, recognizing that Astrellon refused to be the aggressor, surged a little nearer.

"What of the stars?" Lumnos repeated impatiently. "These also thou dost reverence and worship."

"Aye, it is true that I worship the silent beauty of the night and the cool purity of the stars only less than the Sun. Nevertheless, loved I ever the open ways where sunlit spaces were warmed by the rays of the Deity—spaces wherein no foe wormeth secretly."

The King flushed darkly, and his eyes kindled. Only too well did he understand the allusion to the dark priest-brother of the Lotus Lily—Memhota, known to the Atlanteans as the Fox. Many an exiled noble had reason to curse the Fox whose devious dealings through the Queen had brought loss of name and estate. Only too well did Lumnos comprehend the covert warning, the lofty contempt couched in Astrellon's words. He had at one time distrusted Memhota himself, but security and flattery had done their work well. Lumnos drew himself up. His hand was firm enough to keep the wily Fox in check, if check be needed. His bitter anger at the demand made by the Council of Wise Men that Astrellon be reinstated and the Fox returned to Egypt flamed forth anew. True, he had taken steps to curtail the further liberty of speech in that direction. Who were these to dictate to the monarch of the finest continent in the world?

"Thou speakest in riddles, O Watcher of the Stars," he said meaningly. "I pray thee turn thy attention to the stars, and leave alone that which concerneth younger heads than thine. Come, what say they of my merchant fleet? What new treasures bring they hither to enrich this greatest city of all times and all peoples? Never was, never will be so great and grand a city as Medelos. Lo! All the gold and jewels of earth are insufficient for its adornment." He glanced about him complacently to observe the effect of his words. The nobles preserved an immobile expression, and with a vague unrest, Lumnos turned to the Queen, who returned the look with one of malicious resentment. Summer lightnings flashed in those dark eyes whose depths he had never quite fathomed. He recoiled slightly, and looked once more at Astrellon, who stood gazing at his sovereign with majestic sorrow in every line of his countenance.

"My King, my King, speak not thus boastfully!" the sage cried. "Great is Medelos. Yea, and would that Medelos could become greater still. But O my King! The Voice that speaketh to me ever, the Voice within, that low sweet Voice whose warning I must

ever heed, doth say to me: "Time cometh when Medelos shall return to the sea whence it sprung. Great, and yet greater people shall arise, and upon all the face of earth the name of Atlantis be forgotten!" O my King! Many years have I served thee faithfully and well. Did I not teach thee those arts which established thy prestige in all lands of the earth? For thee did I build palaces such as earth ne'er saw before; aye, stone by stone, and pillar by pillar raised I this palace from the ruins of thy Father's. Thy ships went forth to war propelled by powers given through my hand for the benefit of mankind. And when thou didst walk in the midst of danger, was I not by thy side? Consider these things, Lumnos, and ask thyself why I have assisted thee all the days of my life. Thine own heart will answer thee, 'Because he loved me!'

"Yea, if thou wilt come with me ere it be too late, I shall build for thee another fairer, larger city in some far western stronghold. I will preserve thee to posterity in all thy present grandeur. O my King, my King! In all the years since I first traced upon parchment scroll the wisdom of the stars, ne'er have I beheld so ominous a configuration. Never I saw such threatening aspects. Grave danger—"

"Peace on thy maudlin ravings!" shouted the King, cutting short the impassioned plea. "Age maketh thee fearful as the babe new-born! Dost think thou'rt the sole possessor of knowledge. Poor fool—behold how another doth successfully employ the power thou didst deem thine own. Aye, another shall harness the Atom to bring me yet broader conquest and glory!" and, kicking aside his long robe, Lumnos strode from the throne—dais to a wide embrasure that commanded a view of the harbor. With uplifted arm he pointed to the House of Power across the bay and adjacent to the outer Tower. "Look well, Astrellon, and learn thou'rt not as thou hadst fondly hoped, invincible. Within yon House of Power, labor those who comprehend the working of the Atom as well as thou hast ever done. Aye, better, for they have conceived new enterprises to display the supremacy by

land as by sea. An thou livest, O Watcher of the Stars, thou wilt behold all earth bow knee to me as master of the world, to me, Lumnos—King of Atlantis! Such then, the cunning of the Fox which hath aroused thy jealousy. *He* layeth foundation for a world-empire, while *thou* pratest of destruction. Folly of age. Fool, I tell thee thou'rt in thy dotage else thou had scarce dreamed of danger to impregnable Atlantis!"

The insufferable arrogance of the King's attitude was unmistakable to all. Consternation, anger, sadness and fear in quick succession shook the composure of the Man of Knowledge. Fear, not for himself, but for a careless populace and a deluded King.

"Ah—thou dost not find joy in thy retrogression!" exclaimed the King, with evident pleasure in the situation. Astrellon made no reply, but gazed deeply and sorrowfully into the angry monarch's eyes till Lumnos changed color and shifted restlessly. There was no longer anger in Astrellon's heart, only a vast pity that so manly a King, so kingly a man should have fallen from the honesty and chivalry he had once adopted as his motto. And as he pitied silently, once more within the prophetic voice spoke in clarion accents the doom of a kingdom founded upon deceit, luxury and vainglory.

"How now, old Man? Art then confounded utterly? Tell us what foe in all the world dare set its puny force against my might. Thou knowest our ships travel more rapidly than the wind; thou knowest also the dread guardian of our ports. Further, thou'rt aware that by mine alliance with the fairest Lily of the Land of the Golden Lotus I have secured peace in that direction. Surely thou'rt mad. Still, for favors past, I forgive thee the outburst. Turn thy attention to more suitable task—Seek the secret of eternal life if thou wouldst once more assume importance. I would fain not fall upon sleep; the world is too pleasant." He sighed and furtively fingered a small Egyptian amulet which hung from his throat by a chain of glittering emeralds.

Astellon followed the movement and frowned. "Danger from within, O Lumnos, when the King turneth aside to worship after strange images, and hath forgotten the ancient Deity."

"I tell thee once more, Astrellon, that our primeval creed lacketh dignity and breadth. Well enough for the slave, perchance, but a cumbersome vehicle at best. Small wonder that so thoughtful a people grasp at that which promiseth new life beyond the long sleep—a life of luxury and more excellent living. In that matter, our religion of the Sun doth leave much to be desired." The King spoke in a tone he endeavored to be conciliatory and complacent at the same time, as he once more sought ease among the cushions of the royal throne. The Lotus Lily gave him a brilliant smile as he passed and nodded her head approvingly.

"Seek ye the stars and learn of them. Aye, forever turneth the wheel of life. Man liveth and progresseth—a little. The flowers wither, yet in the springtime bloom forth anew. Doth not our creed teach that the souls of them who sleep shall be in His keeping? Shall not man then be as springtime blossoms?"

"Thinkest thou so, O Astrellon?" the King leaned forward eagerly. "Tell me more,—what lieth beyond the tomb? Thinkest thou I shall live again and rule—greater than now?"

"I know not," answered Astrellon. "Of all other riddles have I found the key, yet shall I blaspheme the All Powerful Ruler of the Universe with god-like ambitions? Nay, such knowledge shall be ours in His good time. Turn thy attention to present danger, I beseech thee, O Lumnos. Let them beware how they store and use the power. Thus saith the Voice within."

For the first time the Lotus Lily spoke, the silver accents of her voice falling on the troubled air with suspicious sweetness.

"What danger, O Watcher of the Stars?"

"Destruction!" replied Astrellon. That one brief word uttered in solemn tone caused all faces to blanch and all hearts to beat faster, for after all the Man of Knowledge was correct in his forecasts.

"Lumnos, let them beware of the Atom!" he went on earnestly, addressing himself to the King. "Bid them be most discreet in its use, for though great good hath been accomplished by its manipulation, grave danger lieth therein as well. If he who wields the power—helm be ignorant or unscrupulous, the stars alone shall read the end."

"Enough!" cried the King. "Art thou sole possessor of power that thou dost arrogate to thyself limitless knowledge? Thou didst well in thy day and according to thy lights, and for that I am not ungrateful. But thy day is done. Still, as I am not unmindful of past services, I am tolerant knowing the tale of thy years. But presume not upon a mighty monarch's patience. I sent for thee that from mine own lips thou shouldst receive dismissal from labors grown too arduous for thy brain—and a commission."

"Loved I thee less, I had long since desisted from warnings and abandoned thee to thy fate. Yet shall I still save thee against thy will. But thou, O fair Blossom, alas shalt perish!" The Lotus Lily's bosom rose and fell till the emeralds winked with malevolent agitation.

"Hence, dotard!" thundered the King. "I weary of thy croakings. How false thy prophecy, how well thy successful rival wieldeth the sceptre soon shalt thou discover. Go from me, nor come to me again save I send for thee. And if in three moons thou hast not found the secret of perpetual life—perchance thou shalt find the secret of perpetual sleep." He looked for and received approval from the Lotus Lily, but the nobles shifted uneasily in their places. Planned and discussed for the months, the actual denouement left them divided between shame and fear.

Astellon alone retained his composure. He made a low obeisance.

"Live forever, O King. Great be thy name, and Delos, Lord of the Upper World be thy sole advisor. Farewell, O Lumnos whom I have loved with a love passing the love of women. A long farewell. We meet no more in this life, yet perchance elsewhere. May thy dreams be untroubled in that long sleep which thou shalt surely encounter, sooner or later. I tell thee, my King, sad trials await thee ere that day. Low shall that kingly head be bowed, for thou shalt eat the bread of barbarians and drink the salt tears of bitterness. Thou shalt lose all that thou holdest dear, and in that loss, regain thy soul. Aye, thou shalt call for aid not knowing which way to turn, and thou shalt find it where thou hast disdained to seek. But for thee, O Fairest Blossom, a long and dreamless sleep. For the last time, Lumnos, let them beware of the Atom, and be thou also warned. Farewell, King of my Heart!" With that word still on his lips, he turned and moved down the hall with so splendid a presence that all involuntarily paid homage to the passing of the Man of Knowledge.

When he had gone, the Court sighed with relief and relaxed. Only the King remained sunk moodily in his chair, once more the prey of agonizing doubts and conflicting ambitions. And presently the Queen arose and, approaching him with her graceful, swaying gait, smiled upon him with rare graciousness, while her hand smothered away the furrows on his brow.

"Trouble not thyself, Lord, with disgruntled ravings of one whom age hath robbed of reason. Thou knowest how splendid the augury the Priest this morn did give thee. Thou who art great and invincible—shalt thou be threatened with nameless danger? Nay, Lord, not while Memhota, and the Lotus Lily live to guard thy interest. Moreover, the Man of Knowledge doth doubtless feel the long sleep is at hand. Did he not of his own free will bid thee farewell? Doubtless he is troubled by this event which spelleth to him, disaster. Be cheered, Lord." She planted one swift unaccustomed kiss upon his forehead and the light once more shone on the King's face. He sprang up

with new energy, exclaiming, "Let us wander by the Pool of Dreams, and talk of the morrow's momentuous event!" Well pleased with the result of her flattery, the Lotus Lily permitted him to lead her by the hand toward that secluded and lovely spot where the cares of state were soon forgotten and harassed nerves soothed.

In the outer courtyard Astrellon summoned Rollo, and together they left the grounds by a portal in the Western wall, emerging on the broad Street of the Nobles. As they went Astrellon looked and commented sadly on each familiar nook and cranny, as one who would stamp a dearly loved picture on the remembrance. A half hour of sharp walking brought them to a villa on the western edge of the city, and after pulling the cord that hung from outer gateway, to announce their presence, they were admitted by the Keeper of the Gate to an inner courtyard of perfect proportion flagged in square blocks of green and white. Here Rollo remained, while Astrellon entered the hall of the mansion, and was conducted by a smiling slave to the rear garden where the family was grouped on the velvet grass beneath a huge cypress tree.

With an exclamation of pleasure, the father put down the roll of verse from which he had been reading, and advanced to meet the Man of Knowledge. Tall and bronzed was he, with eyes of startling blue, an aristocrat to his finger-tips, but kindly and thoughtful in appearance.

"Greetings to thee, O Man of Knowledge," he said, falling on one knee while Astrellon lightly touched the bent head in token of his love. "I told Pensera when I arose this morning the day would bring us joy. Come, sit in the shade, and refresh thyself, for thou'rt weary and sad. Then when thou hast rested thyself, I will send these hence that thou shalt have privacy to discuss the things which trouble thee."

"My friend Mascallon, perchance I bring thee not joy but sorrow," said Astrellon as, placing his hand upon Mascallon's arm they went toward the expectant group beneath the tree. There were two wives

—for the Atlantean nobles were permitted five if their tastes and means so inclined. And so joyous the timbre of the Atlantean disposition, that little friction arose. These two, Pensera, and Mordena, though from different cities, were enough alike to have been sisters. Indeed, a sisterly affection prevailed between them. Both bent the knee to Astrellon,—Pensera, with her sweetly-grave mouth and olive skin, Mordena, slighter of build and fairer in complexion. Astrellon greeted each in turn, caressed each child, and seated himself gratefully in the shade to refresh himself in the atmosphere of love and trust that cheered him more than the fruit and wine set before him. Closed in from the city by high walls the beautiful villa seemed a haven of rest in the afternoon sunlight.

With an effort, Astrellon roused himself, and obeying the signal in Mascallon's eyes, the women withdrew to pace leisurely the long colonnade as they watched their children at play by the pool.

"Yea, I am sick and troubled."

"Then still the stars are ominous?"

"More threatening than ever. Look ye, Mascallon, I would have warned the King."

"But as usual, the King is surrounded by women and false flatterers! By times my reason smiteth me with doubt that so soft a voluptuary e'er sailed the seas, or made the good fight."

"Not so soft to his ancient servant—for counselled by one that thou knowest, he hath set me task impossible, which if I accomplish not in due season, shall e'en prove my passport to the Land of Sleep."

"Ah, say not so!" cried Mascallon. "Weakling that he is, even he departed not so far from his reason that he maketh sacrifice of thee. Let the lesser lights be extinguished if he so wills—but Thou! Thou wert his guide, his counsellor, his builder, yea—his defender!"

"All that thou sayest and more, have I been. Nevertheless this alone troubleth me less than that he hath given the Fox the secret of the Atom. A secret that his own hand did seal in iron casket that future

generations having need of it, might be so instructed. For this hath he excluded from the House of Power not alone myself but all the College. The Deity alone knoweth what nefarious schemes the Fox doth concoct therein. Yet only half the Secret hath he, since I, warned by the Voice, did inscribe but half the formula upon the scroll.

"Think not, my friend, that I seek to retain the knowledge for mine own use. Such were unworthy the high trust I bear to bestow this gift upon mankind for its progress. The Secret is but lent to me from the heart of the universe to which it doth belong. But, Mascallon, too well I know the danger of the Atom. Methinks, like fire, it tendeth to rise up and consume the originator. I fear for the safety of the world if he doth not destroy himself ere he do damage, for mark me, my friend, the stored heat doth fret at its prison walls and doth grumble ceaselessly for more room."

"Thou fearest?"

"Destruction by the very power which hath built the empire. Till this day I have feared fire, and water. But now I know, and the Voice within doth whisper unceasingly 'Atlantis is lost!' I dare not match my power against the Fox, lest greater evils befall."

"Astrellon, thou knowest as I know, the Fox seeketh not the glory of Lumnos, but his own advancement. I fear he doth plot with the Queen to gain new slaves for Egypt!"

"Hush, rash one. The walls have ears, and the Fox hath his spies everywhere. I would not have thee forfeit thy life in so poor a cause."

"True! To die for Atlantis were joy, but to pass out through a renegade priest of Egypt, shame! Then, O Man of Knowledge, the hour of our departure is at hand?"

"Yea! Westward lieth a vast land, not so fair perchance as Atlantis, albeit, safe. Thither would I have led the King also, an he would go. When shifts the constellation in the heavens, I fear me that Atlantis will be no more. That much I know. Therefore as

thou hast made preparation, draw together thy goods, and chattels, thy family, thy slaves and freedmen. Make ample provision for the long journey, and the season of forced idleness ere we may sow and reap in that alien land wherein we shall establish all that is best of this, our homeland. And there shall I build thee a city as fair as Medelos. Upon the time-worn rocks of the ages I shall rear a temple to our ancient faith that posterity may carry on the worship of the Deity in fitting manner—Fain would I have taken more Atlanteans than those faithful few friends, but thou knowest they will not come, turning contemptuously from plea and warning. So be it. It is doubtless as the Deity wills.”

“Thy will my desire, O Man of Knowledge. Have I not gathered to my country place great stores for our provisioning? In the harbor of that sequestered spot, five of my finest galleys wait thy command. I will set my house in order and repair thither secretly with certain of my treasures, and my greatest treasure—my family!—at dawning. So it hath come at last, the order of exile so long anticipated!” As he spoke, Mascallon half-sighed and gazed about him.

“Yea, and even I who knew the bolt should fall saw not the direction whence it would come. My heart as thine, is heavy. Yet such were unworthy the respite granted us by the Sovereign Lord of Life. We must do His bidding.”

“Thou wilt take with thee thy loyal Rollo?”

“Nay. It grieveth me to part from him, but it is well for him to return to his native land. He who came as pupil, perchance in hope of ultimate conquest, hath been loving associate. I know no other so fitted to carry Eastward the culture and teachings of Atlantis. Shoulder higher than his fellows in thought as well as in physique, destiny hath chosen him to play a strange and wondrous part in life.

“His charge to save the King, and a few of his still loyal old nobility. Behold this week, rideth at anchor in the harbor a galley of Creta which hath little cargo. Last eve it sailed beyond the harbor bar but

turning in the darkness, found shelter in that weird hidden bay known as the Bay of Alligators. There doth "The Falcon" wait till the eleventh hour for the coming of Rollo, its master. And thither shall he convey the King in the hour of his great need.

"One matter more doth cause me regret. I must e'en part my Estrella from him she holdeth dear. Thou knowest it is so written—Her destiny lieth Westward, his Eastward. It is best, and though to-day they grieve, to-morrow perchance they will be comforted. Thus have I sought to teach my beloved child, but her heart yearneth, and it doth not please me to wound that gentle one."

"Thou wouldst not have her remain unwed?"

"Nay. Yet believe me, Mascallon, her fate leadeth toward the Land of the Setting Sun. Behold, how the shadows lengthen! I must be on my way. Do thou as we have planned — but secretly, mark ye, secretly, as a Fox!"

"So secretly that another Fox shall not discover my tracks!" said Mascallon grimly. "I will send thee to the Gate in a litter. Would that I could take my beautiful home with me," he added as they went toward it.

"Thou shalt take with thee all that is best within it; the walls we can rebuild, the fires rekindle. Yet I do not chide thee for thy thoughts become the home-lover thou hast ever been."

The family came to bid the Man of Knowledge good even, and Pensera pressed into his hand a basket of dainties for Estrella. Astrellon entered the litter, followed by Rollo, and with a final significant gesture of farewell, was borne swiftly northward, reaching the Gate just ere it was barred for the night.

"Look, Rollo," said Astrellon, pointing backward to the closing portal, and the doubled guard upon the parapet,—*"Behold! The people of Medelos fear no foe—yet shut the gate at first stride of darkness! Yet how shall they defend themselves against foe invisible? Are we not all alike? We face with some show of forti-*

tude the armed invader, but shiver with cowardice at the approach of crawling reptile."

"O Astrellon, great Watcher of the Stars—thou who hast seen the light in the darkness of mid-day—knowest thou not what he planneth? The Fox—"

"Seeketh my life," answered Astrellon calmly. "So be it. I am prepared."

Rollo laid a warning arm on Astrellon's as a twig snapped in the semi-darkness of the wood. Thereafter they climbed the long ascent in unbroken silence, Astrellon as actively as though his years were but half their actual sum, Rollo with the dignity of a prince, his ears nevertheless alert for the slightest sound which might mean pursuit.

CHAPTER III

TERESTES, ERSTWHILE ROLLO

As they reached the tower level, the hangings were drawn back from the windows and light streamed across the deepening dusk with welcome cheer. Estrella flung the door wide, and drew her father into the dwelling, gently loosening his cloak, and smoothing his head with her usual tender solicitude.

"Hast taken good care of my father, Rollo?" she asked with a long look which the barbarian met fairly, till Estrella was fain to withdraw her own gaze, and turn to her father once more. "And, good my father how didst thou succeed with thine experiments for the King? Hath he reinstated thee, and did Estrella send thee all that thou didst require?"

"What meanest thou, my child?" exclaimed Astrellon, holding her back that he might look into her eyes. "Never again shall I make magic for the King. Nor did I so this day. Speak, Estrella, and tell us what hath befallen in our absence."

"But Father, thou hadst been gone but a little space, when came two gentlemen of the House Royal—for upon their vestments they bore the insignia of the King. These with fair words and courteous demeanour did tell me that thou hadst despatched them for thy book with the iron clasps, saying that the King had need of certain knowledge therein enclosed. Great praise had they for thy wisdom, and for thy vigor. Nor would they suffer me to carry such heavy burden, for they came also and bore from thy chamber a book iron-clasped certainly, yet not so heavy as they seemed to expect. Still, seeing none other they were content. And they did pass jesting remark about the sparseness of our furnishings. 'My father,' I did say, 'loveth the simple, the open, the true.' They questioned me

moreover as to thy habits, and enquired the day thou'rt wont to visit with Mascallon. Then, having circled the tower and walked in the rose-garden, they did depart with profuse thanks. They were of the House Royal, as I have said, therefore I did obey that which I believed to be thy behest. Have I unwittingly done thee harm?" she asked anxiously, as she looked from dismayed face to dismayed face. "What strange secrets hadst thou in the book?"

"My Child," answered Astrellon gravely, "Let us give thanks to Rollo whose wit suspected such an attempt and frustrated it. Marry! I thought not the Fox had the courage to make so bold a stroke! The book which they sought doth contain certain records of the storage of heat—Fear not, Estrella, that which doubtless even now he studieth, was but a collection of mathematical calculations which he cannot use."

"This Fox—he hath his spies everywhere!" said Estrella, pleading the hem of her father's robe in her fingers. "Is it by such devious dealings that Egypt hath maintained her supremacy?"

"He saith his gods whisper counsel into his ears," Astrellon frowned. "If such were indeed so—if any Deity could care so little for mankind that he could sacrifice the good of the masses for the advancement of one individual—how shall he fare when his Deity turneth to the cause of new devotees, since being of such uncertain virtues the god must e'en do in due season."

"How well the Fox hath made perfect his plan, counselled by his gods or not, thou mayest judge," Rollo replied. "All hath been arranged beyond a shadow of failure—he thinketh!—and thy downfall and his triumph assured. Secretly hath he sown the seed of sedition amongst the people, and hath damned thee in many quarters by a half-truth which is, as thou'rt aware more dangerous than foulest lie that e'er passed human lips."

"Little doth he think how disaster turneth his triumph to defeat. Unhappy man! Those energies loosed upon worthy object had made thee great and

grand. What evil haste—call it god or devil an ye will, 'tis still evil!—hasteneth thy avaricious grasp, I know not. Yet verily I know that good must ultimately prevail. Doth not the Deity in all his workings through nature show plainly the need for frost, or drought? Aye, though the individual be destroyed—it is but that the race shall go on to greater progress.”

“Lord,” said Rollo, sinking on a low stool before the sage in his high carved chair, “I would acquaint thee with what mine ears discovered in the King’s courtyard. Well that they knew not that I could speak their tongue, else they had been more careful. By all the fiends of fire, I could scarce refrain from thrusting their evil words between their teeth had not my fears for thy safety stayed my arm! Know ye, then, that the cunning Fox deviseth thy destruction, since he hateth thee only one degree less than he feareth thee. He hath caused it to be told all about Medelos, that he, also, doth control the Atom, which he doth purpose to use for labor-saving devices, among other things. Thou knowest how lazy the Atlanteans are become. Therefore, to prove his power, he hath boasted that he will demonstrate on the morrow. The folk of Medelos think he will sink ship at sea; the youth Hemora hath divulged that no such plan will the Fox carry out. Nay. He will demolish this tower by accident as it shall seem; and if the folk cry aloud, he will point out that ye are both absent on visit to Mascallon and he will promise to restore the tower when thou art present that thou mayest behold the prowess of the Egyptian. For, lo, the people of Medelos, seek not thy life as yet; nevertheless, they who have gone astray after strange gods, grow restless for new wonders. Therefore they listen to the Fox and smile to think that thou who hast preached against destruction, cannot prevent even such minor catastrophes. Thou knowest that the Fox planneth our deaths, since we but clutter the way for the swift progress of his chariot wheels. At the second hour past the mid-day siesta he will stake his reputation to prove his boast. If he fail—”

"He faileth, yet succeedeth," answered Astrellon, stroking his long beard thoughtfully. "He hath indeed, the secret of destruction but he cannot rebuild. For that reason sought he my Book of Magic. He can ne'er rebuild. That secret liveth in my brain alone."

"How came he by that secret—the secret which is thine alone?" cried Estrella indignantly.

Her father shook his head at her reprovingly. "Less mine than the world's, yet given through my hand for the world."

The girl appealed to Rollo. "But the King, surely he will not permit this monstrous injustice!"

"Doth not thy heart tell thee, maiden? Whose voice forbade thy father's activity in the House of Power? Whose the hand that guarded the sealed iron casket which contained the formula against time of need?"

"No, no!" she whispered, putting up her hands as if to ward off a blow. "I cannot believe it, I will not believe it. I will not believe the King delivereth thee to treachery. Little as I love or trust him, nevertheless I cannot think he smiteth one who was father, counsellor and friend. Father—say that it is not true, that he hath not forsaken thee for hated Egypt's cause?"

Astellon bowed his head. "Alas, my child, 'tis but too true. This day hath he set me task impossible, and though I knew the hour was at hand, mine anguish was none the less for that. Yea, Lumnos seeketh my death because, forsooth I am to him symbol of his own guilty conscience. His fearful mind doth make him cowardly. Therefore when first he doth learn that I have perished—unexpectedly!—amid the ruins of this tower, he shall feel free. But later as he treadeth the way of sorrow, he shall grieve exceedingly, and long for my return." He sighed deeply as he seated himself at the table for the light repast Estrella had prepared against their coming.

"Thinkest thou then, that the Fox doth truly intend to slay thee here?"

"As truly I do believe he will later seek to send his poor dupe young Hemora, to the Long Sleep. As surely as the Queen would herself slay Lumnos, were such possible. My daughter, thou hast no knowledge of such men, and I pray thou wilt ne'er meet with such deceit and cunning."

"But thou, Rollo, wilt thou sit calmly by while my father's death is accomplished? An thou'rt afraid, I will go myself to the King! I will call the Fox's foul plot from the streets of the city! The people will protect thee, as thou hast protected them times without number. I will go now!" She whirled toward the door, but Astrellon caught her with a firm hand as he smiled at Rollo's dismayed face over her shoulder.

"Peace, child, peace. All that man can do hath Rollo done, and more. There spoke thy rash Cretan blood. See—thou hast given our faithful friend reason for anger, were he less kindly. Sit down, my Estrella, and I will tell thee our plans, for thou art forgetting thy usual wisdom, and casting discretion to the winds. For thy love of thy father, I thank thee, but Estrella, hast thou indeed so little confidence in him that thou thinkest he hath no plans of his own? Know then, my child, it doth suit me to fall in with the Fox's intrigue. If the Fox—and the King, believe me to be passed to sleep, they cannot prevent my departure from Atlantis. One more sunrise in Medelos, and we shall be outward bound to the Land of the Setting Sun, there to establish the ancient faith."

"So. Thou knowest best, my father." As with all Estrella's small tempers, this one was past as quickly as it had come, and she turned toward Rollo with a smile of apology. "Forgive this hasty Estrella, but the fear for my father's safety swept all reasonable thought from my mind."

"My fear is as thine, Lady, yet thy father hath matched his brain 'gainst greater than the Fox. I trust to him—and will gladly give my life for him, or at his behest."

"Such depth of devotion were not required at thy hands, my friend, thy life were more valuable to me

as to our cause. And now, let us retire. I am aweary, and with dawn we must e'en make preparations for flight. Grieve not, my child. Harm shall pass thee by, O rose of my heart. To-night let no spectre of fear haunt thy couch." He sighed once more, and drew him with her towards the stairs.

Rollo watched them climb till Estrella's down-dropped smile caressed and gladdened him. Then he went quietly out into the garden, and with eyes and ears alert, circled the tower several times before he slipped into the woods beyond. At last came the call for which he waited, the call of a bird thrice repeated. He moved further into the shadow of the woods, uttering the same soft note as he went. Beside a tinkling waterfall whose music muffled human voice, he found the man he sought—a man whose height and breadth apparent in the darkness were equal to his own.

"Ho, Althus,—what news?" he said in that language of sounds so harsh that the liquid-tongued Atlanteans dubbed it "gibberish."

"Terestes, Princeling of Creta, hail! Dark the day that led thee far from thy native land. Glad the morn that once more beareth thee thither. I have thy message, and have obeyed thy behests to the letter. The Falcon lieth beneath the over-hung tree-branches in the Bay of Alligators. We will bear thee in triumph to Creta, and die for thee if need be—but Lord, send us not forth alone again."

"Nay, Althus, I come with ye, and perchance several of my—friends. Do thou be most discreet. I have taken precaution, yet verily this land is riddled with spies."

"Thy followers guard the approaches, that we may speak in peace. Yet who in this country speaketh the tongue of Creta? Yea, almost I believe this accursed land hath enthralled thee. Let us away!"

"In good time, Althus, thou shalt have all the matters which perplex thee explained to thy satisfaction. Now—I thirst for news of Creta. My uncle, then is dead, and my cousin, Taledes ruleth in my stead."

"Yea, Terestes. Yet though thy cousin reign in thy stead, though thou'rt deemed cold in death, thy faithful few remember thee. What hast thou found in Atlantis to recompense thee for loss of thy throne?"

"Peace, Helmsman, this country doth still maintain supremacy of its seas. Save thy questions till we be beyond the reach of the dread guardian—I did but jest. Nor is thy overlord alone in bondage, but the country also. The King is slave to his lusts and to the Lotus Lily who is in turn slave to the Fox's overweening ambition. Slaves are the people to their avaricious desires—I have been thrall, here, yea—here where I would have reigned. But my thralldom hath led me to the very threshold of the stars. I am content."

"Thou hast found the secret which thou didst seek, Lord of the Seas?"

"Yea, and nay. Mark me, Helmsman, this also have I learned. Great as the fame which hath gone abroad concerning Astrellon's power, the one-half hath not been recounted. He standeth mountain-high above the earth in wisdom and understanding. And of his mercy desireth their salvation who would compass his passing. Much fear have I experienced of late lest evil befall his body."

"How then, Terestes, doth he sail with us?"

"Nay—he saileth westward to the Land of the Setting Sun ere our Falcon wingeth its homing flight . . . Fain would I go also, yet duty bids my return to those I blithely and blindly trusted to a kinsman's faith. I would teach that warlike race a more enduring creed. I would teach them kindness. Yet thou sayest that Taledes ruleth well?"

"Alas my Prince, he ruleth well. Nevertheless thou'rt the King. I will raise for thee the standard, and thy subjects shall flock to own thee rightful King."

"Perchance. Taledes and I were ever friends in the days of the past—and now, tarry no longer. Thou hast concealed the galley well beneath the overhanging willows of the swampy river's mouth?"

"Yea, Lord—yet none seek that foul spot save ourselves."

"Take the precautions I instructed thee to take lest any of the oarsmen be overcome with the fumes. Be most discreet, Althus, the Fox hath his envoys everywhere. Wait thou for me. I will surely come thither no later than the even of the second day thence. Perchance I bring also friends. Do thou be in readiness against our coming that we may cast off without delay. Till that hour, my grace to thee, and farewell."

The Helmsman touched Rollo's hand to his forehead, and slipped away into the darkness as swiftly and as silently as he had come. Rollo waited a few moments and again satisfied himself that there was no intruder within the precincts of the tower. Then, seating himself on a rustic bench in the rose-garden, he watched till the first faint flush of dawn crept over the sea.

Ere the first beam of light had touched the horizon, Astrellon and Estrella were upon the house-top their faces turned reverently toward the rising sun. As the first pale mote of sunlight fell on the parapet, Astrellon lifted both hands above his head and chanted in a clear voice:

"O Giver of Life and Light, once more we salute Thy coming!

Send Thy broad beams to caress the earth that it may blossom,

Bring forth fruit, and bless Thy name!

O Great Matchless Majesty who endureth from the beginning,

Teach these, Thy servants, to walk steadfastly in the appointed way.

Open our eyes to the darkness that doth surround us.

From Thee we come, and to Thee we shall return

To renew soul and body in Thy never-failing flame.

O Great and Glorious Diety, who ruleth earth and sky,

Be Thou adored wherever mankind draweth breath!

And in life, and in the Long Sleep

Still shall we worship Thy glory and Thy majesty,
For there is none like Thee, at whose command
The stars revolve in their courses.
Behold, we reverence and adore Thee!"

For some minutes this invocation was followed by deep and reverent silence, as father and daughter stretched imploring arms sun-ward. Then, when the golden ball rested lightly on the ocean's crest, Astrellon turned to Estrella with a gentle embrace.

"Child of my heart, thy path be as bright as yon golden light upon the water! Go, gather together such possessions as thou deemest necessary to thy comfort, that these may be in readiness for a sudden move—I would be alone a space this last morn. Never again shalt thou behold the sun rise above Medelos! Never again our invocation greet the Deity's first beam! Never again shalt thou brush the dew from thy rose petals in this garden. O Medelos—thou who hast turned thy face toward Egypt, thine ancient and despised Overlord shall veil his countenance from thee in the day thou callest on him for aid."

Too well he knew how few the worshippers in the vast and well-nigh deserted Sun Temple; too well he estimated the scant score of house tops whence the invocation had that morning been poured forth as incense to the Deity. The King had led the way to an easier religion—a religion whose gods uttered oracular prophecies in the Temple of Isis from time to time. The Sun, they said, was very far off. What cared that ball of fire for puny folk of earth? And they bowed to the nearer, speaking idols of Isis, where flower-decked sacrifices and much pompous ritual flattered their sensuous souls. If the priesthood mingled with laity in revel, so much the better. Away with the austerity of the old cult!

Forgotten were those dark chapters of Atlantean history where life was a wresting of livelihood from a forbidding soil. When poverty, sickness, war, and death stalked the nation's footsteps the people were simple and unafraid.

"Thou has forgotten thy first great hero, Atlantis!" he mused. "He who dared the mighty deep to bring food for thy starving little ones. Or if thou dost remember 'tis but with regret as thou dost think of the period of discipline hateful to the body, but strengthening to the soul as thou didst rise steadily in the scale of human progress."

So many years of plenty in between ere the coming of this greatest of all the Men of Knowledge, to build for Atlantis city after city by the power he wielded. All that made for their comfort, their safety and their splendor he had devised, and from content, the Atlanteans had progressed to luxury and power. Slaves had they, spoils taken in conquest of island or African village. No longer were they simple folk, for they had attained . . . and after, surfeit, growing unrest, discontent!

"Was not my heart heavy within me when first I saw ye disdaining honest toil? Ye would that I gave ye all free use of the mightiest power the world hath ever known, that ye might e'en be rid of your few light tasks. Art indeed fallen so low, my people?"

His thoughts were no mere figment of the imagination, for on every side they murmured against his niggardly retention of the Atom. A plague on Astrellon for keeping to himself knowledge which the populace required. A plague on the Watcher of the Stars for a killer of joy, and a gloomy prognosticator of destruction! Here he was on the verge of senility bidding them repent and beware. Let him look to his own laurels, and allow the wise folk of Medelos to manage their own affairs without his counsel. A resentment gradually grew against one whom all had delighted to honor, and this feeling, strengthened by the King's attitude, the Fox carefully nurtured into poisonous growth, well calculated to bear noxious fruit in due season.

Like a panorama the past unrolled before the sage's vision, till the warmth of the sun's rays bade him consider the present. He veiled his eyes with one hand, and with lingering, loving look, viewed that

magnificent city for the last time. Then, resolutely gathering his possessions from the stone table, he made his own way down to the central court, where Estrella waited for him, pale but composed.

Astellon looked about the apartment which seemed more bare than usual. "Rollo hath removed the needful things to a place of safety, lest the Fox surprise us with a return visit."

"Take not the furniture—we shall need it no more. But he is wise, this Rollo, for though I think not he will risk so bold a step, I will leave divers out-grown tools lest searchers return."

"Like thee, O great Watcher of the Stars, I think not that the Fox dare risk such action. He hath set the stage for a drama, wherein he doth play the part of the god. Methinks 'twill best suit his plans to appear innocent and ignorant of all our movements, lest the public sentiment swing in thy favor. Yet I beseech thee, tarry not. Thy danger groweth greater with every passing hour."

Astellon smiled sweetly at him as he put one arm about Rollo's shoulders. "Yea, Son. Nevertheless, let us break fast together, as we have done these many mornings, glad in joyous belief that each new day is a gift from the Deity. And when that is accomplished, thou wilt go as usual to the city and bring hither certain articles of which I have need. Moreover . . . let it be known that I go to Mascallon this day, that being the truth, for we do join him ere the midnight hour. So shall we seem to work hand in glove with the Fox, that our escape, and thy opportunities for rescue be not retarded by fear of our survival."

When the silent breakfast was ended, the three passed through the tower to the rose-garden in the rear, and following Rollo, to the spot where he had held tryst the previous night, they crossed the brook on flat stepping stones. A sharp little bend brought them to a large bush which Rollo pushed aside displaying to their astonished eyes a cave, large, airy and dry. Moreover, though the protecting bush amply

hid evidence of the cave's existence, the refugees could see not only the tower level, but also a vast portion of the city, with the House of Power as a focal point.

"Thou couldst not have done better hadst thou created it for the purpose!" exclaimed Astrellon. "Here may I behold the machinations of the Fox yet be far from his aiming tube."

Several times they returned to the tower, and when all that they wished to bring had been stored in the cave, Estrella still lingered in the rose-garden sorrowfully, till her father was fain to draw her away to concealment.

Then Rollo descended to Medelos and father and daughter talked earnestly in his absence, the tender confidence that existed between them comforting both in the hour of trial.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE STAR TOWER

When the rays of the sun fell straight from the zenith of the heaven upon the city, Rollo toiled slowly up the hill, and passing with ostentatious care through the tower, he still paused to ascertain that no hostile eye covered his movements ere he sought the anxious pair in the cavern beyond the water-fall. Outwardly calm, father and daughter hung upon his approach.

"Doth all proceed as the Fox hath decreed?"

"All proceedeth as planned, O Man of Knowledge. In spite of the heat, which is oppressive, the city doth array itself as for a feast-day. All Medelos, and the country beyond, hath congregated to witness the Fox's triumph or defeat. Each man hath a new and debasing use for the mighty Atom—to serve his own purposes, be sure. No man taketh thought for his neighbor's need! All regard me with curiosity and much speculation. Some did ask where thou wert, and why thou hadst not turned thy vaunted power to human requirements. But I only repeated 'With Mascallon, with Mascallon!' when they would have questioned me."

"Thinkest thou Rollo, that these citizens of Medelos for whom my father hath slaved and suffered wish his death?"

"Nay, Lady, they do not plot murder, these foolish ones, for they are far too busy dreaming selfish dreams. Moreover it doth not suit the Fox's plan to give the people insight into his innermost thought lest haply some unwary tongue spread the ill tidings, and his fame be turned into ill-repute. The fancy of a crowd is a fickle thing. Nevertheless——"

"Nevertheless they will none the less covertly rejoice if I be removed," said Astrellon, with sad sweet

smile. "I bear them no malice. Not their's the fault nor their's the perfidy, for they are become as children who think not for themselves, but blindly follow the command of the most appealing voice. Ease, luxury, arrogance, decay!"

"Fools, they stumble on their blind way, missing the path of light."

"Yet if the Fox should search for thee at Mascallon's, my father, and not find thee?" whispered Estrella.

"They will not seek." There was a definite decision in Rollo's voice. "For even the Fox doth not strike openly at Mascallon, so is the great lord powerful. Moreover to-day, he hath been credibly informed that ye have not left the tower. And shouldst thou attempt to enter the city, thou wilt be accosted ere thou hast reached the eye of the sentinel at the gate, and returned to the tower—forcibly if need be!"

A slight silence fell upon the three, each musing according to his inclination. Rollo's mind ever alive to the danger of the situation sought to discover all possible coups of the enemy, and foil them ere they were launched; Estrella's heart was hot within her, and she longed to thrust the King, the Fox, the citizens—anybody!—with her own small hands. But Astrellon, began to muse aloud as he was wont to do in those days of anxiety.

"My King, my King! Lumnos—How I have loved thee and guarded thee! But thou art surrounded by deceit and flattery, and thou must go alone down the way of oblivion and repentance. Aye, thou shalt eat the bread of humiliation and learn the code of the humble, so thou shalt perchance emerge once more a man, yet no longer a King. To-day—yea, this very day thy rule doth end, and the foot of the Egyptian be pressed upon thy neck. Would that I might suffer for thee, or that I could have spared ye this, Atlantis! But it is written in the Stars, and I who am the Watcher of the Stars cannot change thy fate one iota. Yet my love doth follow thee to enfold thee, and in the days

to come thou shalt be less lonely because of it. Nevertheless, I would that I might suffer in thy stead."

"Perish the thought—he is unworthy thy care!" cried Estrella angrily. "If that which I hear be true he is but an effeminate mountebank—a plaything of women—a juggler of vices."

"My daughter—such unkind and angry thoughts ill become thy nature. Judge not, for how shalt thou weigh the temptations of a King whose days are an even tenor of love and duty? As we sow, we reap in due season. Not that the Deity be alert or anxious to punish for the faults we commit through lack of understanding. His name is Love. We are enmeshed by the consequences of our own rash acts, and must e'en ourselves pay the amount of the bill. Forgive, my daughter, and let thy name be as it is ever—Estrella, child of the Stars." He kissed her gently.

"Nevertheless, O Man of Knowledge, I also believe with thy daughter, and with her, resent thy indignities. In my country, men are men!"

"As thou'rt indeed a man, but cruel as thou hast never been . . . So cruel, these countrymen of thine, thy heart revolted at their cruel practices ere thou wert grown to man's estate. Therefore thou didst delve into the Temple records at Cnossus that thou shouldst have knowledge of truer forms of worship and of justice. For such camest thou hither. Hast thou then, learned of me so little?"

A hot flush of shame mantled Rollo's fair brow. "My Master, forgive. Thou speakest truly. Yea, did I not dream of conquest—once? Yet ever I sought first knowledge that should lead a fierce and war-like people into safer, saner paths. My cousin ruleth in my stead, wisely the Helmsman saith. Shall I, therefore, dare to bring bloodshed that peace may be progressive?"

"Nay . . . Nevertheless, thou must return to thine own country, whate'er await thee in that land. Dost thou not know, Rollo, that we may not run from our appointed tasks? Not so do we escape the consequences of our acts, however good our motive in the

action. Not so do we form new environments and new conditions, for we may e'en change the environment, but sooner or later we must meet and fight the very conditions we would evade. Thou wilt return to thy land, and Son, thy better nature shall prevail o'er thy ambition . . . And when thy better nature hath prevailed, behold greatness shall seek thee out, and thou shalt found a new country, and a new line of—kings!"

"That decision I reached many moons since. 'When again my faithful Althus cometh, I will go according to promise,' I said to my laggard will. Would that I might take thee with me—such need have these fierce ones of thee!—but I know thy heart is set upon far western land. Thou knowest best. And little may I have to offer thee, should I bear thee hence to that small beauteous island whose people hover on the edge of might. For my hastiness, I crave thy forgiveness."

"Rollo, naught is there to forgive thee—rather I have need of *thy* forgiveness in the one matter I may not grant thee. Concerning that, thou hast had the reason made plain to thee, and thou knowest that I cannot compass change there." Astrellon's mournful look rested upon Estrella, who poised at the cave's entrance, gazed through the trees toward Medelos with a dreamy expectation of disaster. "'Twas written in the stars that thy path should cross mine, even as thy ultimate attainment hath been plainly chanted by the Voice within. In this thou shalt conquer. Thou shalt bear Lumnos to a distant land, where he, the King must behold thee raise an Empire from the dust. Think not I wish upon him revenge, for I would spare him could I stay the hand of fate. But it is written that man shall by his own hand inscribe his punishment or reward. That which we plot for others oft returneth to crush our own hopes. The hatred we cherish for foes shall some day lie in ambush for us. So turneth the wheel of life. No man liveth to himself alone, but draweth to him the lesser minds, even as he in his turn shall imbibe wisdom from the fountain-head. Wheresoever thou goest, Rollo, trace thy

steps with such care that he who follows after thee be not led astray."

"I have endeavored to engrave upon my mind thy wise sayings that they may be counsel for me when I am far from the sound of thy voice."

"Yet never beyond the force of my love. Be not content with my teachings, but ever lift thine eyes toward the Deity and learn of that Mighty Spirit of Love, for thou shalt find evidences of His presence in all the earth around thee, the sky above thee, and the waters that circle the globe . . . Let us partake of food, for the appointed hour approacheth, and it is my desire to behold the Fox's triumph."

"If triumph it be, his petty deceit and trickery," said Rollo.

"Let him destroy, an he will. Alas, therein lieth also the destruction of Atlantis. I dare not attempt to stay his hand lest greater catastrophe ensue. Perchance not all will be blotted out; some small fragment may remain to rebuild, and yet, I fear greatly. I know not how vast the volume of heat he hath stored, but the ceaseless rumblings bode no good to his plans."

"Aye, my father, the ground doth tremble like a leaf, and the strange lights that play above the House of Power fill me with fear," said Estrella, leaving her post by the mouth of the cave, and setting food before them.

"An over-charged battery, just such phenomena as thou dost behold with thunder-storms. Be not alarmed, my child. How camest thou to discover so fair a cave? I knew not of its existence," he added, to Rollo, as if by dismissing the all-important subject he would similarly dispose of Estrella's alarm, and his own as well.

Taking a cue of cheerfulness from the sage, Rollo answered: "Once, when I was a stripling, I spent many moons with the vassal village of Athros. There did I learn much useful woodcraft, so that mine eyes are alert to discern that which casual traveller passeth by. I pray that the Lion and the Fox shall not find the Eagle's eyrie."

"They shall not do so, my son. That I know—and many other things also. Fear not, for the Deity guardeth thee in this hour. Let us move closer, for I would see all."

"Then shall we not station ourselves behind this bush, that doth spread so generous a foliage one might e'en declare it had been placed there for this very purpose." As he spoke, Rollo drew aside the veil of creepers and ferns that screened the cavern's mouth and indicated a roomy and slightly-hollowed niche twixt rocky wall and leafy shrub. Placing Estrella between them, they made themselves as comfortable as possible in the hiding-place and waited.

"How the light flasheth from the House of Power! Thou wert right, my child, it is e'en awesome. We pygmies of nature, place chain and shackle upon the great forces of life—and say that we have conquered them. And if we violate not the governing principles, that force we seek to make our own, lendeth itself to our schemes, and we preen ourselves on our accomplishments. Yet there doth come a day when we twist that agency to unnatural channels—thou canst not make the stream run up hill . . . Its waters returning blot out the foolish experimenter. It is written that man shall not seek to usurp the privileges of the Deity. Less than the dust are we, yet blessed dust that leapeth to the kiss of the ruler of earth and sky! O charmed soil that may bring forth fruit after its own kind."

"After its own kind," repeated Rollo, musingly.

"The Fox, and the Serpent, the Lion and the Eagle. Which shall be the victor?"

"The Ruler of the earth and sky—His alone the victory!"

"Would that I could pierce the atmosphere that lieth between and see what transpireth in the House of Power," said Estrella.

Though the others shared her wish, they made no answering comment for the thoughts of all three were fraught with anxiety.

Scarcely less anxious was Memhota, below in the strongly-built walls, as with ill-concealed impatience

he awaited the appointed time. For if he had planned with such care that no hand seemingly could wreak disaster upon his intrigue, he, too, feared the power of the hated Man of Knowledge and his colleagues. Tall, lean, brown was Memhota, as lithe in movement as the wily animal for which he had been named. His head was shaven, except for a tuft at the very crown. His cold green eyes forever screened that which lay in his colder heart, his thin lips were forever drawn back in a sneer. A single garment of white twisted about his bony frame served as a background for the emeralds that adorned him. In his hand he bore a sceptre, serpent-tipped, and on his breast-ornament a smaller snake of gold sent forth unholy gleams of light.

As he waited the King's tardy appearance, he gazed complacently at the satellites who revolved about him as lesser planets about the sun. Well might he be complacent, for that assembly constituted the flower of Atlantean nobility and commerce. Memhota mentally counted the absent notables with a resolve to punish them at the first opportunity. He moved a little apart from the concourse and signalled a handsome young Atlantean to approach.

"Thou'rt certain they are within the tower?"

"Yea, lord. They have not left the tower to-day—save the barbarian who came to the city for supplies. Lest we be seen, and questioned, we ventured not from the path-side, yet we kept careful watch. Moreover the slave Tgana remaineth with instruction to turn back any who seek to leave or to approach the tower. 'Tis a pity the maid should perish also."

"Many fairer maids there be in Atlantis, O Hemora, and thou shalt have thy pick of the golden Blooms within the Lotus Land, if these please thee not. When thou dost destroy a hornet's nest, dost thou leave one insect to follow and perchance sting thee to death? Nay, thou dost kill it! The maid is prudish, I have heard, and moreover dippeth deeply in her father's knowledge. Perchance she might discover thy part in this matter, and destroy thee unprotected as thou art! Or even enlist that Mascallon the Mighty in her

behalf. Be comforted. Better for thee, better for me, that this hornet's nest be wiped out. By Horus, he knoweth too much this old Eagle!"

"But now thou hast possession of his vaunted knowledge."

"Yea, part of it. More I shall presently discover when I have had time to con over the book of the iron clasps. Thou hast shared my confidence, and thou shalt sail eastward with me to the Land of the Lotus. Be content, thou shalt have ample opportunity to test my prowess—later! See that the slave is also silenced forever, and when the tower doth fall, make outcry, and proclaim that the tube hath slipped in my grasp. Until the hour strikes, the King must be kept in ignorance. Dost thou comprehend?"

"Yea lord, and obey." Hemora flushed with pleasure. Once a kindly, open youth, the Fox had wrought a strange spell upon him. Hemora no longer walked in his father's way, for his father was one of the few nobles still faithful to the King. Day and night Hemora hung upon the Fox's favor, and hastened his steps to carry out the Fox's most trivial errand. "O lord, this hour exalteth thy humble Hemora. Thou and I! Yet much of thee I know."

"Yea, too much!" muttered the Fox moving forward to prostrate himself before the King's litter which had just swept up to the door. "Too much. Soon shall I have need to silence thy prating tongue. Still, thou hast done me certain service . . . Great King, and mighty monarch, live forever!" The end of his speech was delivered in a tone so humble as to be ludicrous,—as ludicrous as the haughty Fox bent low in mock reverence before the man he plotted to dethrone.

Something of this seemed to strike the King as never before, and Astrellon's many warnings rising up unbidden to confront him, Lumnos regarded his brother-in-law with an uneasy eye.

"Certain art thou that thou canst wield this power rightly?"

"Either thou dost doubt me, or else thou dost doubt the integrity of he who placed the record within the bronze casket!"

"Question not his integrity, for save in this one matter, he hath ever served me well. I owe him much, Memhota."

A long look passed between brother and sister. The Fox's heart was bursting with suppressed rage. "Aye, I also owe him much—but for him I had already had thy golden crown, O toothless Lion," he thought. But with all the guile that Nature had bestowed upon him, and he himself had cultivated, he smiled obsequiously, and answered gently.

"Thou dost impute strange designs to me, Lumnos. I shall not damage that which is dear to thee. And if thou wilt now permit me to withdraw I shall straightway prove to thee, yea beyond shadow of a doubt, the manner in which I wield the power thou hast given into my keeping for thy glory. Moreover, I have chosen a target thou wilt approve." So saying, he bowed himself from the royal presence, and hurried to interior of the House of Power, leaving the King and his courtiers comfortably ensconced in the shade, and beyond the range of the power-tube.

"This sudden anxiety for Astrellon annoyeth thee beyond measure!" he mumbled to Hemora. "Come! Let us do the deed at once, ere the Lion's conscience provide him with a fresh set of teeth for our rending. Ha! haughty Eagle! Cometh my day of vengeance, mine, yea, mine! No longer shalt thou soar above me to spy out my plans. Thy knowledge is mine at last! Thy power to harm me passeth as thou soon shalt pass. Vengeance! Vengeance! Go to thy station and carry out my instructions!" He waited till Hemora was in the spot chosen for him, ere he pressed the spring of the Power-Room's secret door, and stepped inside that chamber of destruction.

"Now Isis and Osiris guide my hand aright!" he muttered, as he seized the lever that swung the revolving tower on its base till the section of sheathing slid back, and the designated mark—an ancient vessel

riding in the harbor, stood revealed. He approached another mechanism of a complicated pattern, and turning a master-wheel set the machine in motion. At once strange lights began to play across the room, and the whole turret to tremble ominously. Once more the Fox tugged at a lever, and the shining steel tube which projected from the machine, rose slowly till it hid the vessel from view. The Fox with steady hand launched the bolt of light, and the ship was blotted from the waters of the bay as though it had not been riding easily there a scant second before.

A vast tumult of acclaim arose in the city, and ere it had died down, the Fox had swung the turret's opening till it faced due north and disclosed the Tower on the hillside. He put up a silent prayer for aid, and—once more set free the terrific force which, speeding across the city as swiftly as thought itself, found its mark. One moment the Tower of the Stars stood revealed whitely slender against the dark foliage; the next, a heap of crumpled ruins only, marked that spot.

For a long moment of silence the startled city and the courtiers below were dumb with fear and astonishment, and Hemora's voice could be heard distinctly, enlarging upon the "Mistake." With a sigh of satisfaction the Fox replaced the instrument of destruction, shut off the power, slid the sheathing section into its accustomed position, and rejoined the King.

There was both fear and anger in the King's greeting.

"How now, Priest? Was it not enough for thy glory that thou shouldst hit the mark assigned to thee? By what ill chance hast thou demolished the Tower of the Stars? Almost I could suspect thee of having planned thus to remove—"

"Ever art thou unjust to thy brother and suspicious of his actions. Couldst thou do better thyself?" broke in the Lotus Lily, hotly.

A warning glance from her brother caused her to change her tone and she went on more smoothly. "Moreover, if Memhota hath demolished the Tower—he is he not able to rebuild it by the same means that the

old man employed for such purposes! Tush! What is a tower more or less to thee, who hath all the world at his feet?"

"But how thinkest thou Astrellon — Hast thou killed him?"

"If such had happened, dost thou indeed love him so dearly that thou wouldst have him brought back to life?" enquired the Lotus Lily.

"Peace, Sister!" frowned the Fox. "This very morn I did talk with the sage's barbarian slave. Seeing him in the Street of the Merchants, I spoke to him, bidding him request his master watch this afternoon whilst I demonstrated my prowess, and he answered me uncivilly enough, that all were bidden to Mascal-lon's country place for noon. Thou knowest the friendship between them."

The King's brow darkened once more. "So thou dost arrogate to thyself my dictorial powers? Well— did they depart?"

Memhota contented himself with bowing, not trusting himself to reply as custom demanded.

At this moment an old courtier spoke up. "It is true, O King. I did myself meet the barbarian Rollo in the city this morning, and he said to me as to Memhota, that this noon-tide they were going with Mascal-lon to the country."

The shouts of the populace grew louder as the crowds swarmed toward the House of Power, every tongue chanting the praise of the Fox. With a wry little smile of premonition, Lumnos arose and clapped the Fox on the shoulder.

"So thou keepest thy word. Well done, my Brother. New enterprises launched by thee shall make my kingdom yet greater, and, perchance, link thy name with mine in the annals of history. Come, restore the Tower, and we shall go hence to feast."

"Nay, Lumnos, the power must e'en be generated again ere I accomplish that more difficult task," answered the Fox suavely. "We will go hence now, an it please thee, and ere darkness I will restore the Tower!"

"Well of a surety, if Astrellon hath watched thy success from afar, he can no longer claim superiority for himself alone. So thou hast vindicated me also. Yea, it is well to let it lie thus for an hour. We will indeed go hence and feast us royally and restore the Tower—later."

He allowed the Lotus Lily to draw him gently towards the waiting car but though the retinue returned triumphantly to the Palace, the King scarcely heard the plaudits of the crowd. Showers of roses fell about them, but the King at last realized that these were for one who had become more popular with the people than himself. A new menace threatened—from within. Meeting the Lotus Lily's eye, he brushed aside such thoughts impatiently, and, relying on his own ability to hold the Fox in check, entered boisterously into the ensuing feast, drinking wine, and yet more wine till past, present and future dissolved before him in one roseate hue.

CHAPTER V.

THE WHITE ROSE OF ATLANTIS

From the recess behind the waterfall, the three had watched the demolition of their home in sorrowful silence. Tears flowed down the girl's quivering face, and she groped blindly for her father's hand.

"O my father, my father! the beautiful garden and the roses that were to me as children. Blotted out in a second for a wicked man's joy. I cannot bear it!"

"Alas, alas, my child, so passeth all the glory of this world." He replied, stroking her soft hair. "To-day, fair and beloved, to-morrow a forgotten desert. Shall nations which as yet sleep in the heart of time know aught of Atlantis, or shall the Present wipe out all trace of existence, so that the future generations may never know how we lived? I know not . . . Only this I know, a sorrow long anticipated smiteth none the less keenly when cometh the moment of realization."

"Yea," said Rollo. "I thought myself prepared, yet was I like to die of grief and fear—for I do acknowledge fear of this terrific power called the Atom!"

"Such thought were worthy a true man. Only the fool and the liar are ashamed to acknowledge fear, my son. That great Sun which ruleth earth and heaven is but the symbol of some hidden greater power whose glory we are unworthy to behold. He that seeketh the wisdom of the stars shall find this written in the vault of the air:

"I am. I am the Spirit, the Unseen Power which ruleth time and eternity. Behold, the stars in their courses hearken unto my Voice. The Sun and the Moon go forth at my behest. Seek me and find me, O Child of the Earth. Be drawn closer to my bosom.

Learn of me wherever thou art, on plain, or hill, or sea.'” Astrellon lifted his serene face toward the skies of turquoise, already commencing to flush with saffron. So they remained a little while in silence.

“Come hither, my child,” he said at length, breaking a painful reverie. “Gaze no longer upon the ruins, dear though they are to thee and to me. Let us re-enter the cave where we may talk more freely, for soon shall night be upon us and we must depart forever. Or, if thou wilt remain, I will go alone, for I fain would rest.”

Estrella cautiously parted the bushes a little, and gazed at her garden as if in that one glance she must imprint final picture of that scene, ere she followed her father and Rollo into the cavern. While her father rested, and gave Rollo many instructions for his future guidance, the girl mechanically set out a repast. From time to time she drew Rollo's glance to her, and met it with a shy pleading one of her own.

As they sat at the bench that served them as table, Astrellon once more outlined every detail of the King's rescue, and gave him a chart of the stars.

“Would that I could give thee more, Son,” he said. “Thou knowest I would not withhold from thee e'en my one priceless treasure were there no blood-barrier between. He looked toward Estrella as she stood once more in the doorway, since she scarcely knew how to restrain her feeling. “But take with thee an old man's blessing and his gratitude for thy loyalty and help. I shall not forget thee, but in my far-off eyrie, shall follow thy course in life upon the star-chart with attention. And though such thou now deemest impossible, happiness shalt thou also gain—yet not through union with Estrella in this life.”

“Then shall I pray that I be made worthy to be joined with her in another.” breathed Rollo.

“Not lack of worth, but the blood-tie, of which thou'rt cognizant, interveneth.” He pressed the younger man's hand in sympathy, and presently Rollo passed out into the garden where the shadows were already deepening. He hunted zealously amid the tumbled mass

of ruins, and after a time, came back with one perfect white rose which he tendered to the girl.

"I bring thee, Lady, the last sweet rose of thy garden—the last rose of Atlantis."

Estrella took it from his outstretched hand. "A white rose," she faltered,—“Not a red one?”

"A white rose," he repeated firmly, turning his eyes resolutely away from the pleading ones upraised to his. "The purest, whitest rose in all the world. Thou wilt bear it with thee, whither thou goest, and with it thou shalt bear all that was purest and highest in a wandering Cretan who dared not raise his eyes to thee."

"Yet the whole world rocketh," exclaimed Estrella. "Wilt thou not come westward also,—or—"

"Nay, Lady, duty calleth me to that fierce people I once cast aside. I must e'en return to pick up the scattered threads, if that be permitted me."

"Thou wilt go alone?"

"Lady, perchance the King cometh also in my galley. Think thou of thy father; thou must fare westward with him to gladden his heart. Much sorrow hath he had, Lady, and thou'rt his greatest joy. Let that thought comfort thee when all about is strange. Perchance thou wilt find happiness in that distant land. At least thou wilt have peace and safety in thy father's care."

Estrella's last faint hope died, but pride rose swiftly in its place. He should not know that she, Estrella, had hoped to journey in his company through life!

"So be it!" she replied, in a cold tone, and turning away began to gather the few treasures she had saved.

With tropical swiftness the night fell, and before the moon rose, Rollo carried a chest of treasured linens and garments and bestowed it secretly far down the western slope of the hill there to be transferred to the car-litter which Mascallon would send. Rollo wished to see for himself whether spies still lurked in the woods, but he need not have feared, for secure in his belief that Astrellon was dead, the Fox had withdrawn

his guards, and revelled with the city at large in the celebration of a new era of power.

By the time he had reached the tower-level again, the moon had risen in silvery splendor that made the clearing light and sent soft shafts of radiance to cheer their downward path. Astrellon circled the ruins in silence ere he shouldered the precious book he would entrust to no other hands and followed in the wake of Estrella and Rollo. It was cool and pleasant in the leafy woods, where, to avoid the sentinels on the parapet, they struck in a westerly direction through the open timber on a disused road. Half-way along this road, the Headman, or Captain of Mascallon's retinue met them, and, while two of the slaves went on for the chest Rollo had hidden, Estrella and Astrellon went forward more slowly to the Grotto outside the Western Gate, where car-litters awaited their arrival.

Estrella conversed softly, yet almost gaily with Beldenis, the Captain, in decided contrast to the aloofness of her attitude on the way down the hill.

At Astrellon's request, Rollo rode with them a little way. But where the road curved sharply to the right, the cavalcade halted and Rollo said his farewells.

"Thou wilt not delay in Atlantis—" warned Astrellon. "Stay not beyond to-morrow's sunset for thy ship moveth less swiftly than the Atlantean galleys."

"I will obey thy instructions in every detail. Yet if the King refuseth to be saved?"

"Success will attend thy efforts, for by this hour to-morrow, Lumnos shall fear exceedingly for his life. Remember, Rollo, though the Lion be caged still is he the king of beasts, and not to be preyed upon by foxes. Moreover, when the Lion roareth—as roar he will—have patience. 'Tis but the growing pains of a new set of teeth. He will be arrogant; then be thou arrogant also. Yet ever be sincere and if thou wilt forgive his faults, thou shalt learn to love him for the virtues and kindness he doth possess!"

"Perchance the Deity may bring us once more together."

"Thou hopest for the impossible, Rollo. I grieve to part from thee, but thou hast chosen wisely. What mountain-peak I build upon, I know not yet, but thy name will be remembered there in love. 'Tis graven on my heart in lines of imperishable affection. If I have taught thee any small thing it is thine to use as thou wilt. Skill in itself is not enough. Therefore scale the heavens and scan the stars. Thou wilt find there knowledge more abundant. I believe thou dost comprehend the danger of the Atom too well to wish for its use. It is better thou shouldst not know it, lest thou shouldst be tempted beyond endurance to employ it as an agent of death. May the great Ruler whose symbol is the Sun keep thee from the ways of darkness that thou mayest walk steadfastly in the light of reason. Farewell!" Astrellon embraced Rollo, touched his forehead in benison with the tip of the star-wand, and turned to the chariot. "Farewell son," he said softly as he motioned his driver to go on a little way.

Estrella remained standing, and a little behind her, Beldenis. All the haughtiness and coldness had melted at this hour of parting and in spite of her heavy heart, Estrella smiled with her usual sweetness.

"One rose from all the roses of the world. O fair White Rose of Atlantis—thy image shall live forever in my heart. I shall behold thine eyes in the tender mystery of twilight, thy smile in the golden sunshine. And I shall hear thy voice in the murmur of waters.

"Think not harshly of me that I may not take thee eastward with me, for it is written that we must part though I go hence more sorrowful than thou. Think not that I have not learned the true meaning of love that so I leave thee, for love hath taught me that there is no greater power in all life. Love is stronger than death. Thy place none shall fill—it is a corner of my heart sacred to thy worship only. I pray that whither thou goest thou wilt forgive the sorrow I have caused thee, and learn to love as truly as thou shalt be loved. I know it! In this life we shall meet no more, Estrella,

yet perchance beyond that dread portal we may take up the song of love, and make it a hymn of joy."

"When all that was Atlantis be crushed in the dust whence it sprang perchance the barrier shall be swept aside and we be permitted some happiness. Think sometimes of Estrella whose heart yearneth for thee, and when thou dost touch this, remember once it listened to the song of Estrella's heart—and be comforted." She took an ivory pendant on a thin golden chain from her own neck and put it on Rollo's at the same time pressing her lips to his forehead. "This be thy token, and in this amulet be strong, O King of my Heart. I—I would have gone with thee, but thy will is mine. I pray for thy happiness."

"Farewell, O gentle Teacher, whose patience taught my clumsy tongue the liquid accents of Atlantis. When the Sun sinketh to its nightly rest, beholding, I shall know that it gave thee the messages I put in its keeping as the Gates of the Morning unclosed . . . Thou shalt be far at sea when day breaketh—safe in thy father's love. He hath promised me that he will reveal to thee what barrier loometh twixt thee and me, and when thou hast learned that, thy love shall become the love which existeth in a happy family as of a sister for a dear and remembered brother. I pray that love shall come to thee one day soon in more joyous guise."

"I shall never love as now," whispered Estrella.

Rollo turned away to hide the anguish, and the temptation that assailed him.

"The Deity keep thee, my White Rose of Atlantis, until we meet again. Farewell!"

"Farewell!" echoed Estrella, her voice tremulous with tears. As she moved towards the chariot, Belden, quietly stepped to her side and half-guided, half-lifted, the weeping girl to her place. With a mute gesture of inexpressible sadness, Estrella waved one hand to Rollo. Then the cavalcade moved on silently, and Rollo watched till the last flutter of robe had disappeared.

The moon was still gloriously bright in the heavens as he retraced his steps slowly to the garden on the hillside, but all the brightness had departed from Rollo's heart. He wandered aimlessly about the paths and when at last he sank upon a bench it was not to sleep, but to dream a large part of the night away, as his thought winged from Atlantis to the far island where he had been born.

Strange cruel memories of that land rose to smite his peace, so that he found once more excuse for the hot-headed boy who had sought "something better than human sacrifice."

The Lotus Land whither he had first turned for aid, he saw as in a golden haze of sand and brazen sky; its frowning temples, and massive walls; its silence and barbaric clamour. In that city of Egypt to which his oldest and most dearly-loved sister had been sent as a bride, he had first heard tales of a magical country far to the west, where life was incessant joy, and wealth abundant. These folk—so the tales ran—were kinged by a valorous giant named Lumnos, who had sworn friendship to Egypt and cemented his word in an alliance with the Lotus Lily.

But the name of the Man of Knowledge had been whispered with bated breath. He was the mighty magician who built fairy palaces with a wave of his wand, and likewise kept his foes at bay, for he knew all wisdom.

"How my mind was fired by these stirring tales," he thought. And the sting of his uncle's contempt at his desire for suitable escort, that he might travel to Atlantis as fitted a Prince of Creta, still brought a hot flush to his cheeks. How sure the uncle had been of his own glory and scornful of the boy's desire for knowledge! "Go if thou'rt so big a fool, and take the consequences of thy rashness. But—thou shalt go alone, save for thine own galley and its faithful crew."

Under that ultimatum, Rollo had restively sought to better the lot of his people handicapped by lack of experience and knowledge. But at last his decision was made,—he would go to the wonder-worker and

demand assistance. Perchance he might e'en conquer Atlantis! Rollo smiled grimly as he recalled this vain idea. Atlantis *was* impregnable!

Looking back, he was able to see how his uncle's wily counsel so eagerly accepted by one unskilled in the finesse of villainy, had been the initial step in placing Taledes on the throne of Creta. For, trading on his nephew's ambition, the uncle counselled that Rollo be set ashore on the coast secretly, and begin his conquest from within, hoping doubtless that he would be torn limb from limb, or enslaved.

In the darkness of his resting place, Rollo smiled faintly as he recalled the kindness of the Atlanteans who had found him, and taken him to the King. And then Astrellon, and Estrella. How could the Deity have been more geneous to him?

Back and forth flew the shuttle of his mind, weaving a pattern of strange events, with the scarlet thread of his love for Estrella woven in steadily increasing brightness. Estrella—blessed be the path of the White Rose of Atlantis to whom he had given pain through his love.

He lay down to rest for a little, but when day broke, he gathered his clothing, and the parchment rolls Astrellon had given him, and went down the eastern slope of the hill leaving his bundle at an agreed spot for the Helmsman to retrieve. Then he entered the Eastern Gate, winding his grey robe about his head and partially concealing his face after the manner of the Atlanteans.

There was an ominous darkness hanging over the city. No sun shone on the horizon, and vaporous steams arose from the vicinity of the House of Power. Even the sea churned its waters wildly against the shore and tossed the ships about like paper shells. It was a day of forboding.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TOOTHLESS LION

The King moved restlessly about the portion of the palace roof that constituted his sleeping-chamber in excessive heat. Awnings of crimson and gold shaded the flat surface from the brilliance of a tropical moon. Tumbled silken covers thrown heedlessly across the embossed end of the great canopied bed spoke eloquently of troubled dreams. The King's once keen eyes were still hazy with the fumes of the previous night's feast. Round and round the constricted space moved that great body — round and round in still more constricted space went the morose thoughts. And always as his feet paused that his eyes might view yet again the spectacle of the ruined tower on the hillside, one thought recurrently overbalanced shame, anger, and remorse—What revenge would Astrellon take for this outrage?

He could bear it no longer, but sharply clapped his hands, and bade the slave who answered command the Fox's immediate attendance. Not that Astrellon was wholly right, nor the Fox wholly wrong. Both must be made to realize that he, Lumnos, was King of Atlantis, beneath whose sovereign will all lesser wills must bend! He awaited the crafty one's tardy appearance in a fever of impatience.

"How now!" he enquired, with a frown that would have daunted braver hearts — "Did I not send for thee? Have a care, Priest—I am the King—Thou but a dependent on my gracious bounty."

The Fox burned with fierce resentment, but he concealed it in his low salutation, suavely adding that he had been conducting service in the palace temple, and dared not slight Isis for even this greatest of earthly kings.

The King's brow cleared a little, but he still fixed an angry eye upon the offender.

"Methought thou wert to rebuild yon tower, last night ere sunset," he scowled, gesturing toward the ruins. "Was thy brain too fuddled with wine to remember the secret? Why didst thou so leave it?"

"At thy express command, O King—who didst say to me—'Let the Eagle wait for once on the Lion's pleasure.' Dost thou not remember?" The Fox watched the King narrowly from green basilisk eyes. "And thou didst say in the hearing of the guests—'Let us be merry. The Eagle shall raise it himself if he hath need of it.' Is it not so, Lumnos?"

The King passed his hand across his brow. He did *not* remember—but all the feast was an indistinct dream—and he dared not let the Fox know how little he did remember.

"That was yestereven. To-day—I weary of jest. Rebuild the tower!"

"Presently O King, when more power hath been generated—"

"Rebuild the tower."

"Perchance the eagle doth not require his eyrie rebuilt—" said the Fox, and something in his tone caused the King to turn pale.

"If thou hast injured one hair of Astrellon's head, thou wilt pay the penalty. Go thou this instant to the House of Power. Rebuild the tower."

"Lord, if thou wilt but leave it a time. There is no sun. How shall I generate power?" said the Fox, fighting for time.

"By Isis, I believe thou knowest only half the secret—" thundered the King, and seizing the unlucky Fox by the shoulders he shook him till his teeth rattled, and flung him contemptuously against the the parapet.

"Rebuild the tower. And if thou shouldst fail—thou wilt have ample time to consider thy mistakes, as thou liest in the grave. Be gone!" While the King summoned slaves to search for Astrellon and bring him hither, the Fox picked up his bruised and bleeding body and hastily called his chariot.

"As well to-day as tomorrow—" he muttered as he urged his horses onward. Towards the outskirts of the city he beheld the young Atlantean, Hemora, and reining in his horses, summoned him imperiously.

"My friend, what aileth thee? Thou'rt in pain—and anger. How shall I serve thee?" exclaimed Hemora.

In a brief statement, the Fox enlisted the sympathy of Hemora. "Surely thou wilt not let this brag-gart prevail o'er thee—O great Memhota?"

"Nay. Thou canst serve me if thou wilt. Go thou to the great temple of Isis. Call for the priest Sek. Give him this amulet and say to him—'Memhota's name! The hour hath struck!' He knoweth what he must do. As for thee—I shall meet thee an hour hence in the arbor athwart the southern colonnade of my palace. There will I reward thee according to thy deserts." He bent upon the flushed youth a smile that was vaguely more horrible than the frown so lately beclouding his brow. Hemora sped on his errand, and the Fox drove furiously to the gate of the House of Power, deserted save for the guards whose present duty was mainly to prevent the entry of Astrellon or any member of the College of Wise Men. A strange vibration caused the ground to tremble unpleasantly, but the Fox paid no attention to the phenomenon. He crossed the courtyard with firm tread, dismissed the trio of soldiers that kept watch before the secret door—and with trembling fingers pressed the spring. A panel of bronze slid back, disclosing the Room of Achievement. The Fox stepped across the threshold, and closed the door after him. Alone with his revenge, the shivering of the building at last attracted his attention.

"Strange these rumblings!" he muttered. "Passing strange. Can Astrellon be right? What danger lurketh beneath my feet? Do I trifle with mine own destruction? Nay, Memhota, cease these gloomy forebodings! The auguries are favourable. The hour hath struck and Atlantis—fair Atlantis is thine! Only thine! Thine to rule, thine to subdue—thine, thine!"

His voice rose in a shriek of vehemence and of furious joy. "O day for which I have waited and toiled. O end for which I have endured contempt and calumny! O sweet revenge for my country bent low to thy will, petticoat tyrant of Medelos! Ha—how I will gloat o'er thee!

"Osiris and Ra, their's the credit—mayhap a little to myself. Well have I been called the Fox—and behold the Fox shall snare the Lion." With a cruel sneer on his thin lips, he turned the lever, and revolved the tower till the opening disclosed the lofty temple of Isis. In patience he waited, till from one tall column's head fluttered a long green pennant. His trembling hands once more shifted the tower till the King's Palace stood in view. There was no hesitation in his movements, as he aimed the tube and pressed the dial.

Forth once more shot the ray of power—downward from the little hill whereon the House of Power stood—across a startled city carrying away as it went certain intervening minarets, and finding its objective in the wall of the palace, crumbling it as paper, laying waste the entire front of the structure. The Fox laughed with glee, and replacing the tower in its original position, had passed the courtyard and driven off before the bewildered soldiers realized what had happened.

The city was full of surprised confusion, but they rallied around the Fox's chariot, acclaiming him, and begging him to save them from Astrellon's revenge—for such they deemed the levelling of the palace walls. The Fox soothed them, promising to deliver Astrellon dead or alive to the people—and drove on to meet the motley array of men who had made the Fox's cause their own. They advanced triumphantly toward the palace, where the King's guards were induced to join their ranks. Then leaving the Priest Sek to form the oddly assorted revolutionists into orderly guard, Memhota went at once to the King's apartments, with a lively expectancy of the scene that had been enacted there, by his hasty direction.

For scarcely had Memhota left the courtyard on his errand of revenge, when the Lotus Lily, laying her custom aside, climbed the stairs from the King's apartments and emerged on the roof. The delighted King left off his pacing, and drew her beside him on the cushioned parapet. With honeyed words he praised her beauty, and fondled her—and if the Lotus Lily shivered, she did not flinch. Exerting every art of which she was mistress, she charmed the King till he forgot his fears, forgot his anger, forgot even Astrellon. But the shouts of the terrified people, the confusion in street and courtyard, broke rudely upon his idyll. Lumnos leapt to his feet and gazed at the shambles of his walls in horror. With a groan, he sprang for the stairway,—but the Lotus Lily was there first. In sheer astonishment, the King paused, then he recovered himself and attempted to brush her aside, but wiry and strong the Lotus Lily braced herself against the closed door, and still smiling bade him beware.

“The dagger’s point is poisoned, Lumnos. Advance if thou wilt—an hour of fearful agony shalt thou know ere thou goest to the long sleep. Bah—O toothless lion, thou’rt conquered! Today am I Queen of Atlantis—thou the carrion without the walls! Today rule I in thy place, and with me ruleth my brother Memhota, well-named the Fox—whose crafty cunning hath delivered me from thy hand, O Beast of Medelos. For every moment of suffering thou hast given me—thou shalt agonize an hour. For every insult thou hast offered Egypt in me—thou shalt be rewarded tenfold. Bah—” she spat upon the King with relish.

The bewildered, cornered Lumnos stepped back a pace—“So! Thinkest thou Atlantis submitteth tamely to thee, and thy kindred—Beware—thy moment of triumph is brief—the chastisement for thy preposterous ambition shall be long and painful. Stand aside, Egyptian, and let me pass!”

“I will not let thee pass—Thinkest thou not we have well reckoned the cost unto ourselves? Thinkest thou not our every plan hath been laid beyond shadow

of misadventure? Knowest thou not the Fox holdeth the Key of Power. If thou hast doubt—behold thy ruined walls, and fear, O toothless Lion. Braver hearts than thine quail before such obliteration.”

“Canst *thou* see me defeated—my Lotus Lily?” asked the King with a heart-rending look. “Hast thou not loved me?”

“Yea—and nay. Thy defeat meaneth my freedom. Thou didst trample me in the dust of thy lusts. Love thee—thee? Surely thou jestest, O Lord!” her silvery laugh pealed forth mockingly. But there was a deeper, sadder note to it, which Lumnos recognized.

“Did I not load thee with gold and precious gems—deck thee in fine raiment, make thee Queen of Atlantis—”

A shade fell across those beautiful eyes, and the Queen’s voice was sad and low.

“Jewels—can they kindle love on the altar of a starved heart? Gold—can it wash out the stain of shame in a slavery which is still slavery though it be dignified by name of Queen? Love—Nay, a father’s lust for power sold me to thee. Thy lust for fair flesh bade thee pay a high price for my possession. So! I have endured and waited. The hour of my vindication is at hand.”

“Seemingly thou dost forget my nobles — my guards who will rescue me, and tear thee limb from limb. Repent, and let me pass! I will spare thee.”

“Yea, perchance, and again perchance. Thy memory is short, O Lord. Thou hast exiled or alienated such nobles as might help thee—and in their not unjust anger they have turned to us for protection. Thou hast raised the hatred of thy soldiers by thy late floggings and other cruelties. Thou *hast no army, no nobility. They are mine!*”

“What, then dost thou propose to do with such unwieldy toy—unnatural woman?” The King strove to speak casually.

“To rule this land as province of the greater land of Egypt. Aye, we shall rule, and we shall build. If we build not by magic, nevertheless we build. Aie,

many lazy backs shall crack beneath the taskmaster's whip." Again she laughed mockingly and advancing drove the King back to the parapet.

The King groaned. "O Astrellon, would that I had hearkened unto thee—"

"Yea, call upon Astrellon if thou wilt. Never more shall his ears be unstopped to hear thee roar or whine. Never more his fierce eye pierce my soul."

"Fiend—what meanest thou?"

"Ha, poor fool—drowned in thine own wine casks. Concerning thy fate, Astrellon spoke but truly. He sleepeth the long sleep amid the ruins of his tower. Osiris hath heard my prayers,—look, my pretty one, my brother advanceth on thy palace at the head of a throng so large I fear lest this poor place be not large enough to feast these loyal hearts. Rest easy, my beautiful fool, the lower doorway is well guarded. Escape me, and thou shalt fall 'neath the Nubian's axe—!" In spite of his efforts to be calm, the King winced. "Aye, wince!" said the Lotus Lily,—“Yet easier the caress of Death, than thy caresses which I have too often been forced to endure, fallen King!”

At that instant the door opened and the Fox stepped out upon the roof top. His sister greeted him with a smile of real affection—which the Fox returned ere a malicious joy in the King's humiliation swept him to taunts and threats. He pictured for the King the hideous tortures reserved for faithless priests—extolled the glory of Egyptian Gods, and goaded the King in a vain effort to make him answer. Pale and composed, bereft of every friend he owned, the King folded his arms and faced his tormentors with some of the grandness the old-time Lumnos had been wont to display. They began to weary of their game. "Tomorrow thou shalt know thy fate—whether thou shalt be sold as galley slave to Egypt or—"

"Or despatched by my hand!" said the Lotus Lily blowing him an airy kiss.

"Thou canst not escape—" warned the Fox. "Too high thy parapet for rescue—and thy chamber door shall be barred and doubly guarded. However, thou

shalt have free use of thine apartment, until tomorrow." The Fox turned and went down the stairway after the Lotus Lily—and the King rushed impetuously after them. But they reached the outer door and passed through leaving two giant Nubians with raised axes to guard that opening. The King drew back—shut and barred the door on his side and fled to the roof top to make impotent plans for escape, even gathering together a quantity of jewels, and clothing and concealing them in a shadowy corner of the roof.

The Fox and the Lotus Lily paused to congratulate each other on the success of their coup. Then the Fox strode rapidly toward the place of his rendezvous with Hemora.

Hemora had waited patiently in the yellow rose arbor beyond the colonnade. He wished the King no ill-will, but he, Hemora, should be a great man in the new kingdom. It was a pleasant thought and Hemora rose to do full justice to the new importance. Something white glittered at his feet, and he stooped to pick it up. It was an ivory tablet printed in strange letters, but he had not time to examine it for he could hear the Fox's step drawing near. He thrust it carelessly in the bosom of his tunic, and went forth to meet the man he had placed upon a pedestal.

"O King, live forever!" he cried, dropping on one knee.

The Fox raised him with a sour smile. "Let us walk further. Who knoweth what ears listen to our plans?" He indicated a group of cypress trees hard against the palace wall.

Hemora agreed, but though he listened attentively to the Fox's exultations, a shudder he could not repress shook him, as the serpent-light in those cold green eyes seemed to dart and sting.

"Thou hast many faithful followers—" he said to cover his depression at the gloomy spot in which he found himself.

"Aye!" said the Fox, turning toward him, and pausing in his advance. "And not the least faithful art thou—Thou hast served me well, and for that thou

shalt have thy reward." There was now no mistaking the evil glitter of those eyes, and Hemora would have retreated, but the old hypnotic spell held him rooted to the spot. "Yea, thou shalt have thy reward," the Fox continued. "I shall preserve thee from all earth's worries, O Hemora. Thou knowest too much—yet not enough to keep thy tongue still. I bestow upon thee the sweet gift of oblivion. Therefore, O Hemora, farewell — to thee the long sleep and its pleasant dreams!" His dagger struck downward like lightning and the youth fell silently. "A bone," muttered the Fox as he braced his foot against that fallen body to withdraw his dagger.

"Bah! Now thou shalt not prate of thy reward poor silly fool—" and he wiped his dagger daintily on a square of fine linen. Then, turning his steps toward the east, he doubled several times on his own tracks and emerged near the Western Gate, whence lay easiest access to the Palace. There he sought out the Lotus Lily, and leading her to the steps of the palace, harangued the crowd of curious townsfolk who came to gaze upon the ruined wall, winning them to him by that golden-tongued oratory, that hypnotic influence he so effectively employed. Well content with his morning's work, he ordered a feast for the hour of sunset—a feast of great prodigality—and sought relief from the cares of state in a prolonged siesta untroubled by dreams of Astrellon—or the murdered Hemora, unaware that the gods of mischance had smiled sardonically and tangled the skein of his plans—unaware that a treacherously silenced tongue would denounce him.

For Rollo, following the course of the morning's events, with the interest of prescience, had scaled the wall and been unseen witness of Hemora's assassination. When the Fox had completely passed from view, Rollo gently raised Hemora's head and felt his heart. Pulling aside the brown tunic, he discovered the wound was a very superficial one, for the dagger had pierced an ivory tablet resting against the breast and but slightly grazed the skin beneath. In a nearby

fountain, he soaked Hemora's handkerchief, and deftly bathed the wound. Presently the young Atlantean began to stir, and opened his eyes.

"Nay, the Watcher of the Stars was right—there is another life, and behold am I part of it!" he gasped wildly. "Who art thou—Why thou'rt Astrellon's slave! Is then the sage here also?"

"Hush, friend! Thou'rt still in Atlantis. We know not who heareth us."

"Nay, but I am dead as thou art. Thou wert destroyed yesterday in the tower. But this moment the Fox despatched me. Is yonder not the sage's daughter?"

Rollo turned in alarm, but the diminutive slender maiden who stood at the entrance to the yellow rose arbor smiled disarmingly as she came nearer.

"Thou'rt wrong, friend. I am Luelila of the King's singing maids."

"Thou hast not passed into sleep, but shall I bear thee hence in safety, by all the gods in heaven. Would that I might bear hence so easily the King!"

"Thou wouldst save the King?" said the girl, her great eyes filling with tears. "Well, then, I am with thee. Two friends hath he only in his palace, thou and I. While she whom he adored planneth his death. My life be ransom for his. I will show thee a safe exit, if thou wilt give me aid."

"For such purpose came I hither, at the desire of Astrellon, who liveth." He glanced about their gloomy retreat. Luelila caught his glance, and beckoned him to follow. Then she lent her aid to help Hemora to his feet, and with the lad walking weakly between them, they came to a small postern gate, almost smothered in roses. This Luelila opened, and they found themselves in a small grotto, which gave in turn to the sea shore. The tide was out, and bidding Hemora rest on his back, Luelila in low sweet voice, told Rollo what had transpired within the palace that morning.

"Were he once free, I would convey him to ship of mine which lieth—perchance I would do well to stay my speech."

"No traitors here, my lord," said the girl proudly lifting her head. "If need arise, my life be given for his. The King shall escape!"

Hemora looked at her in bewilderment. His world lay in ruins about his feet, yet these two had delivered him from the garden. He chose to cast in his lot with them for Atlantis was no longer safe abiding place, had he desired to stay. He pressed Rollo's palm to his heart, and swore fealty to Rollo, and to the King, on that Sun-God so lately despised.

Touched and gratified, Rollo accepted the young Atlantean's oath, and the three talked long and earnestly. When their plans were comparatively complete, they bade Luelila adieu, and following the route she designated turned the castle wall, and came out near the Central Square. There Rollo called a litter and despatched Hemora to confide in his father and arrange with him for the egress at different hours of the day, and by different gates, of such Atlantean nobles as remained loyal to the King. So great a confusion prevailed in the city, due to the strange tremblings of the earth's crust quite as much as to the morning's brief and surprising upheaval that little danger attended this exodus. Besides, at this season of the year many of the rich sought relaxation in their country homes.

These refugees were to take a few easily transportable possessions—clothing and what money they possessed, food enough for their needs, and were to await the coming of Rollo and the King at the deserted Temple of the Sun, midway to the Bay of Alligators. Sixty people additional would tax the boat's capacity, but could be taken in case of need.

"Sixty!" echoed Hemora's father sadly. "Alas! son—thirty at most dare I trust with the tidings. Half that number perchance be willing to come."

Nevertheless he methodically set about the task assigned him in the all-too-short time. Ere sunset, the

band of refugees travelling by horse or litter met at the Temple of the Sun, to wait, a shivering frightened group, within those deserted melancholy walls.

At that hour Rollo, who had been re-admitted to the garden by Luelila, and concealed in a huge jar used for holding water, watched the lights stream out across the western side—lights that told of the feasting victors. The noise of merriment grew, and Rollo scarcely dared to move in his cramped quarters. And still the lights flared up, and the noise became din. The nobles feasted in the banquet hall with the Fox and the Lotus Lily—the guards feasted in the guard room—the servants made merry in the kitchen. Even those slaves who were not required to serve at the feast left their appointed work, and made themselves drunk with forbidden wines.

“Tomorrow, tomorrow!” counselled the Fox, when the Lotus Lily would have ordered decorum. “Tonight we must e’en secure the rabble e’re we tame them!”

So the noise mounted, and presently Rollo heard the little tap-tap of a hand against his hiding place. He sprang out cautiously, but Luelila laughed lightly. “Fortune favoreth—I have reached the Knig by message. He hath unbarred the door on his side and waiteth our coming. Tread softly—the guards revel, but I know not if they return.”

Miles long that marble passage—heaven high those marble steps—and amid the noise their heart beats and their footsteps blared forth like the crack of doom. They had reached the door! Luelila tapped softly. The bolt was cautiously slipped, and the King peered out. He had wrapped himself in a dark cloak and carried two bundles. One of these he retained—the other Rollo took, and, replacing the outer metal bar of the door they began to retrace their way as silently as they had come. And none too soon. Far away snatches of song and uncertain steps marked the Nubian’s return. Luelila held back a great velvet hanging that warmed the wall at the stair’s turning and they crept behind that breathlessly. Staggering and

swaggering the Nubian stumbled upwards, tried the bar of the door and finding it secure settled himself cosily on the floor and steadied his heavy head against the post. After a few moments his labored breathing told of his slumbers and the trio continued on their dangerous way. The palace seemed full of echoes and once they narrowly missed colliding with slaves returning from the banquet hall. At last they stood beneath the stars and the King would have spoken had not Luelila anticipated each attempt, and stopped it by laying the tips of her fingers on his lips. Fear lent speed to their footsteps as they stepped upon the grass to deaden such slight sound as they made. But when they would have turned toward the door leading to the grotto, the King determinedly pulled them towards the east, where yet another door was concealed mid the clematis that covered that portion of the wall in profusion.

They were without the palace, but there still remained the city walls to be scaled, an element of danger not to be underestimated. Again the King sensed their plight. "Follow closely"—he said in an undertone, and struck off across the city. After half an hour of rapid walking, he turned to the left, approaching a small insignificant dwelling and pulled the cord. An old Atlantean opened the door and the trio entered the uninviting interior, the King confidently, Rollo and Luelila with suspicion. The old Atlantean looked at them from half-blind eyes, leered at the King and brought him a lighted lamp. Then he shuffled away and when they were alone, the King went to the middle panel of the elaborately carved northern wall and pressed a spot about the heart of the nymph portrayed there. The panel slid back disclosing a flight of steps. The King motioned them to descend and following, closed the panel by pressure of an iron knob. At the foot of the steps lay a winding passage, walled and floored with brick, but stiflingly hot, and malodorous to a degree. The King led the way, holding his lamp aloft and shutting out the fumes with a twist of his cloak over his mouth.

Fortunately they were scarcely ten minutes traversing the nauseating length, and a flight of steps led them once more into the open air. The King blew out his lamp and stepped forward calmly. They were without the city gates, at a point in the wood not far distant from the spot where a litter stood ready for them.

With relief Rollo placed the King and Luelila in that litter, and himself mounting a small pony, they pushed forward to the Temple of the Sun. The moon shone palely, but the cavalcade hurried through leafy woods, forsaking the beaten track, and wending toward that sluggish river that emptied through a marshy mouth into the Bay of Alligators.

So low hung the branches of the willows that at first the Falcon was indiscernible to those seeking eyes, till Rollo gave the low bird call, and was answered by a note so near at hand as to startle the nervous women. A small boat had been rowed up the river to a spot where the soil was sufficiently firm to bear a man's weight. The party dismounted, and the Helmsman, Althus, sprang ashore and bent knee to Rollo.

The King suffered himself to be placed in the boat—after Rollo had assured him no further harm awaited him and Luelila took her place by his side. The King gazed at her in surprise—the faint moonlight finding an odd humility on that face so lately arrogant.

"What, have I then so faithful a heart? Wilt thou follow me into exile—where I know not — O child?"

"Always my King art thou—where thou goest I follow, for my heart thou holdest in thy hands."

"So be it—fill up the boat, and let us away. The vapors of this place smother me!"

Three times the boat returned to the shore. The Atlanteans turned their litters into the quagmire—where they were sucked under from view, and with swift merciful blow despatched the horses they could not take with them. Tears blotted their eyes, for they

were tender hearted, but they deemed death a kindlier fate for those loved animals.

Slowly, and with infinite care, the Falcon edged back from the overhanging willows, till her length stood clear, and she swung toward the open sea.

The King turned to Rollo. "Who art thou stranger—who so generous to save a fallen monarch? Thy face seemeth familiar—yet I know not."

Rollo flung back the enveloping cloak—"Fear not King Lumnos—I am that barbarian Rollo, friend and pupil of Astrellon. His the mind that foresaw thy plight and planned thy escape."

"So, from thy long sleep thou dost remember me, Astrellon. Still faithful though I compassed thy death, albeit unknowingly. Still thoughtful of my safety."

"Deceive thyself not O King, Astrellon liveth and loveth thee. Be content with that word. I will tell thee more later. By dawn must we be far beyond reach of the House of Power. And like thee, I fear the acrid odor which riseth like mist about the coast. It smelleth as steam rising from unclean pots. Thy faithful friends who follow thee into exile are already below in their quarters. Come, take the rest thou needest sorely. Thou'rt with friends, and above thee the Great Power all adore guideth and guardeth us.

CHAPTER VII.

DESTROY! DESTROY!

"The green and greedy seas have drowned
That city's glittering walls and towers,
Her sunken minarets are crowned
With red and russet water-flowers."

John Masefield.

All night the revelry lasted in the palace of Medelos. The great banquet hall rang with music and the cheerful tinkle of glass; the mirth, as the night wore on, swelled to boisterousness as the wine set fire to their brains,—and sank to a thin thread of foolishness, as one by one they nodded where they sat, or rolled beneath the table for greater ease.

The cold, grey light of dawn discovered that vast marble floor strewn with untidy heaps of revellers. In the throne chair the Lotus Lily drooped her proud black head above her lovely golden shoulder and the emeralds, that festooned her person in long ropes of liquid green, sparkled with every breath she drew. Beside her slept the Fox, his lips still twisted in an ugly sneer, his dark skin drawn so tightly over the bony framework of his body that he appeared skeleton-like in that half-light. The roses drooping in their garlands still sent waves of sickly perfume to mingle with the fumes of wine and the odor of the gutting flambeaux,—which the Fox employed in his decorations solely to call to mind the Land of the Lotus, for light, as heat and power, the Atlanteans drew from the sun. By giant reflectors Atlantis drove the wheels of her factories and turned the mechanism of all her scientific devices. Therefore the Sun to Atlantis was no meaningless symbol; it signified life in all its phases, with terrors and blessings intermingled. Not a few had

lost life or sight in pursuit of science destined to pour great blessing upon the country.

But with Egypt it was different. There the flaming torch made but dim lightening of the blackness of night. Their power of production was reckoned in terms of slaves. Thus aptly at the banquet of the Egyptian usurpers shone the dim light that signified their creed, the glimmering of truth destined when set the sun of Atlantis, to burst forth in blaze whose glory, streaming down the centuries of time, should cause nations yet unborn to pause, and pausing, to wonder.

Without in the palace gardens, the bird chorus welcomed in the new day. Something of their elfin music pierced the Fox's consciousness. He stirred and dozed, and stirred again. Then flinging his arm across his eyes, as though to escape some awful vision, he sat upright and gazed about him. With a sigh of deep relief, he woke the Lotus Lily. She opened her eyes languidly, then memory stirred and she sprang erect—"Dawn! my vengeance!"

"Time enough for that, sweet sister," said the Fox, and, stepping fastidiously over the heaps of amphorae, faded flowers and human forms, they sought the dim garden.

"Swine!" he said, gesticulating contemptuously. "Let them sleep. Let also thy vengeance wait. How could he escape, this fool to whom thou hast played slave so long? Have patience. First pay we vows to Isis. We owe the gods that for their friendship. Wait!"

"Always thou pratest to me of patience. 'Wait,' thou sayest, when I would strike. Nay, sometimes I could think we sprang from different parents, so hot the fire that burneth in my bosom,—so cold the blood that creepeth through *thy* veins!

"Beware lest thou delay too long. Last night I dreamed. Yea, a dream of a dark ocean, whereon sailed a company of ships. On those ships moved richly-clad figures, and among them, that hated Man of Knowledge, and his mincing daughter."

"Too deeply didst thou imbibe, sweet sister. Didst thou not behold the destruction of the tower, the hated sage being within?"

"I tell thee, Memhota, last night Astrellon looked me in the heart as he hath ever done. But sorrowfully. And as I looked a voice exclaimed, 'Thou fool! This day thy folly shall destroy that fair body.' And I am fearful. Let us go at once and despatch yon toothless lion, and do thou make certain Astrellon's remains lie under yonder tower."

"Sweet sister, thy fear hath made thee vision thus. I tell thee Astrellon sleepeth. He came not from the tower that day, for I had set spies to watch and turn him back. Only the slave came down, but he also returned, and entered the tower, to be seen no more. No body could stand that blasting heat. Yet, yea, I shall send to do thy bidding, when the Gates are opened, that thou mayest be at rest. I promise thee thou shalt do with Lumnos as thou wilt. Nevertheless, we may not neglect Isis, for I, too, dreamed a dream, and I liked not the vision which thrall'd me in moments of darkness.

"Methought I was in a boat which sank, steadily, steadily, so that water hot as heated by many fires spouted up and engulfed my boat. And I struck out my arm to shield my face. So I awoke. Perchance Astrellon knew that which I know not. At least, let us seek the goddess for her favor. Take the ivory tablets of sacred word, which our father gave thee, and the amulet of emeralds given thee by our mother, and as thou hast never prayed before, kneel to Isis. Mayhap she be not so deaf as to turn from thy prayers."

The Lotus Lily obediently stirred her jewels and silken draperies. Paling, she searched again, more slowly, and yet again in frantic haste. "The tablets—they are gone!" she faltered.

"Thou'rt careless, my sister. In time of need thou shouldst hold fast to ancient lore. Stay! Wert thou yestermorn near the cypress grove at the South wall?"

"Yea, I wandered thither for yellow roses from that arbor. None fairer bloom in the gardens."

"Then perchance all is well. Methought I saw the poor fool Hemora pick some such trinket from the ground. Yet did I think it his. Wait thou for me in the portico of the temple. Meanwhile recite the invocation on thy sacred amulet."

He strode away impatiently and the Lotus Lily reached the portico in a terror that expressed itself by quivering limbs and twitching mouth. So long was the Fox in returning that the first, blood-red beams of a strangely circled sun shone on her pallid face ere he flung himself up the steps dark with wrath.

"A thousand curses on the evil spirit that haunteth this place! Hemora's body hath been moved hence. Foul fiend that stayed me yester morn! Why left I his body lying there—and yet I feared lest eyes should see me bear it hence. I did plan he should be discovered there, and thou and I should mourn a lost friend.

"But the body hath vanished as smoke upon horizon. I must discover how. I tell thee danger stalketh the path we thought secure. For if another guess the hand that sped Hemora, shall we be safe? Nay we must find that spy—and destroy—destroy—destroy!" His talon fingers clutched the air as if he would render that also wholesale.

"Come, thine amulet and we will to the shrine," he added in a milder tone, holding his hand out authoritatively.

The Lotus Lily shrank back. "My lord brother—it is also gone, also!—I know not how."

"A plague on thee!" shouted the exasperated Fox. "'Twas ever thus. The man who seeketh to climb doth well to brush his skirts clear of womankind, lest ere he reach the ladder's top, the woman looseneth the support. Faugh! Methought that golden beauty cradled a brain akin to mine. So have I been blind in mine ambition."

"So—thou speakest thus to me, the Queen, my lord brother? Have a care,—the fox may be wary,

but the serpent is quick to sting!" And with a deft movement she poised her dagger point above his heart. Thus for a brief space they regarded each other with hostile eyes. Then the Fox smiled.

"My sister, forgive me if I have underestimated thy resource. I spoke hastily, doubtless. But thou must perceive what annoyances fill my soul with fear. Such untoward happenings shake my confidence. But thou wilt pardon thy luckless brother with thy usual graciousness. Doubtless thou wilt recover the jewels; of a surety some of these swine have taken them during the night watches! If thou findest them not, the coffers of Atlantis are thine. Let us make our oblation. Then we shall repair to the Lion's den and make sacrifice unto Osiris, eh my Golden Lily?"

Thoroughly mollified, the Lotus Lily replaced her dagger and entered the small, but beautifully adorned Temple of Isis, which stood in the Palace grounds. The chanting of white-robed priestesses, the intonation of the stately priest, the peace of their surroundings, all helped to restore sangfroid to the charming pair who knelt to mumble their petitions, and eagerly bent forward to watch the Priest of the Day as he made the augury.

So long was this in coming that the Fox lost patience—as was ever his way with inferiors. "Speak! What of the Day?" he cried.

"Lord Memhota—the augury for the day spells danger albeit it is very difficult to read," faltered the unlucky necromancer.

The reverence inspired by holy surroundings was forgotten as brother and sister together sprang to gaze in the bowl of clear water—pushing the frightened priest to one side unceremoniously. They gazed into those limpid depths and horror wiped every other emotion from their faces. "Aye—it warneth of disaster!" whispered the Lotus Lily, but the Fox with a fearful oath, swept the bowl from its pedestal, and rushed from the building ere the tumult of crashing glass had subsided. The frightened priests and horrified priestesses ran to wipe up the debris and make

fresh petitions before the image of the goddess. The Lotus Lily, dragging her feet as though they were shackled and fettered, came out to find her brother shaking defiance at the risen sun, an orb of hideous crimson.

"My plans shall not fail!" he cried, "Nay, though the heavens fall about me, I shall prevail! Yea, Atlantis is mine, the world shall be mine. What other men build up, I will destroy. I shall be sole master of the earth. Its heat, its moisture, its products and its people shall I regulate to suit myself. I shall regulate the sea itself by the power of the Atom!"

"My brother, beware! Thou defiest the King of Heaven himself. I tell thee beware, lest greater disaster pull thee lower than thou wert in the beginning!"

"Bah!—once more a whining woman striketh at manly ambition, shrinking and turning pale at the destruction of a few worms—for worms they are that grovel in the dust of their petty accomplishments. Less than that dust are they!"

"I grant thee thy ambitions, but I bid thee beware how thou dost blaspheme the great gods. Not above revenge are they, as thou knowest. Having warned thee, I leave thee to wait in patience for the sum-total of thy desires to be accomplished. I go now to seek the Lion."

"Stay, I come also!" said the Fox hastily, and they entered the palace where life was beginning to stir, and climbed the stairway to the King's apartment. The giant Nubian lay sprawled before the door, his axe fallen from his hand. The Fox kicked him into wakefulness none too gently, and, stepping on his prostrate body, lifted the bar and passed in. Her delicate chin held high, her dagger negligently dangling from one hand, the Lotus Lily stepped daintily across the cowering slave. Silence upon the roof-top—silence born of emptiness. Brother and sister searched frantically, furiously, every fold of satin, every tapestried crevice, as if the gigantic Lumnos might be concealed in some remote corner. At length the truth forced itself upon them—Lumnos was gone!

Fear, dismay, anger, contempt and again fear shook them to the soul. They screamed maledictions and threats until frightened retainers came flying from every direction. The Fox slew the hapless Nubian with his own axe.

"That, O my brother, was foolish. Perchance he was bribed. Perchance thou couldst have wrung the truth from him by delicate means thou dost oft employ in less worthy cause. This idle rage availeth little. Lumnos hath gone—and he hath taken the casket of jewels that ever stood by his bed. Fool that I was to leave it there yester noon! . . . Listen my brother. In the household is one Luelila, whose worship of the King I have marked—albeit he hath eyes for me alone! Send thou to seek her. And let the news be flashed throughout the length and breadth of Atlantis. Say that whoso holdeth the King in safety and faileth to return him to thy custody shall forfeit his own life and the city wherein he dwelleth shall be razed."

"Good! Thy woman's wit, I trow, moveth faster than my slow rage. I go to do thy bidding."

"Stay. Fail not to seek Astrellon. For my heart misgiveth me and I believe he liveth and wreaketh vengeance. Hadst thou not stayed my hand yesterday, this cup of bitterness had passed us by. To fail when so near attainment!"

"Tush! Fear not—such small considerations shall not hinder our plans!"

The Lotus Lily made an impatient motion with her hand and walking toward the parapet, gazed dreamily over the dew-freshened lawns. "O fair country, I will build thee and cradle thee as I had cradled son had such been granted. Beside thee, Egypt loometh a wilderness of sand and sun."

Leaving that lovely view, she turned her eyes across the city whose marble walls and slender columns gleamed rosily in the sunlight. Street upon street the city stretched from her in every direction. Palm, cypress, dragon-tree, ilex—every street bore its necklace of waving green. She moved nearer, that she might see plainly the city's pride, that great Central Square,

where the river had been broadened into an artificial lake—that clear, limpid river, which, rising in the valley to the west, flowed through the city to become part of the sea at the quayside, below the House of Power. She could rest eyes on the emerald turf that surrounded those sparkling waters—the pink and yellow mimosa, the deep rose of oleander, the giant fuchsias dropping purple bells in great profusion. She could almost hear the merry voices of the children as they played about the fountains, or dipped muddy fingers in the cool water. The hum of the city traffic, the musical call of the food-peddlers rose pleasantly to her ears. Presently small shafts of intense brilliance began to play about the sky at regular intervals. The huge reflectors had been set to signal her commands throughout the kingdom. The Lotus Lily clasped her tiny hands. Perhaps after all, she would keep the King in pleasant captivity, as she had been kept. There was a faint smile on her lips, as she turned to welcome the Fox.

“Thou’rt right in thy surmise, Sister. Luelila hath disappeared also. No one hath seen her since sunset yesterday. They cannot escape us—and when they are in our power we will deal with these runaways as it pleaseth thee. Come, break thy fast, and be comforted. A bold front will carry us over a difficult space.”

“I like not the look of yon sea,”—said the Lotus Lily, turning troubled eyes in that direction.

“Nor I,” answered her brother, unconscious of the part he took in producing that strange aspect. “A storm breweth. Ha!—we shall have tally made of the ships lest, haply, the Lion seeketh safety by the sea.”

“In that case thou canst reach them and destroy.”

“Aye, destroy. ’Tis strange,” he went on, passing his hand across his forehead in favorite gesture—“since I levelled yonder tower and made of the palace wall orts, my hand lusteth to turn the lever and destroy. Yea, when we have broken fast we will repair to the House of Power and bid them bring all messages thither.”

East, west, north, south, sped slaves, intent upon the Fox's bidding. Incessantly the great reflectors sent and received messages, till the dimming of the sun prevented further signalling. The air was hot, and thunderous and to them as they paced the terrace above the sea, came rumors of revolt, and protest from all quarters of the continent.

The Fox became the plaything of his rage and disappointment, as message after message recorded no cognizance of the King—but hinted if found they would rally to his support.

"We are betrayed!" cried the Lotus Lily. "We are betrayed! The very ground shaketh with indignation. The air is so dreadful I can scarce breathe. Let us return to palace and wait till the people have become calm and resigned."

"So. Now *thou* pratest to *me* of patience. My patience is at an end forever. It is to-day—or never! Well?" Two panting messengers prostrated themselves at his feet.

"O great Memhota, I have searched the tower ruins, sifted the fragments, combed the earth beneath,—yet found I no single trace of human remains. But footprints led me to a cave nearby and there did I find traces of recent occupation. Lord, I believe the tower was empty when thou didst raze it."

"All the boats in the harbor are as before—none hath passed the outer tower since noon-tide yesterday. Yet, far to the east at dawn was a slender sail upon the horizon. If Lumnos hath escaped by sea, behold it is not by Atlantean vessel."

"Did I not tell thee Astrellon lived?" cried the Lotus Lily. "Wily and terrible, he hath kidnapped the King and having created a ship by his magic, now saileth to give the world word of our perfidy."

"It shall not be—I swear it!"

"Lord, lord, they call for thee angrily in the city!" cried a third slave. "A great crack hath appeared in the Street of the Kaledos. A freedman who sought to bathe in the sea hath been scalded, so hot its waters are become!"

"Speakest thou truly?" asked the Fox, bending fierce gaze upon the speaker, ere, turning, he swept the expanse of the bay with alarm. Everywhere panic was evident as the sailors rushed madly about the vessels making preparations for departure. Little curls of dark vapour rose where water met wood and breeze.

"If thou dost not believe, I pray thee dip thine own hand in the sea," said the messenger, an evident desire to prove of his declaration. "But I beseech thee, return at once to the city. The Wise Men from the College preach against thee. O delay not, lest a fickle people turn!"

Ordering their litters to make all possible speed, brother and sister reached the Street of the Kaledos and, with growing fear in their hearts, saw that the messenger had spoken truly. The Street of the Kaledos was indeed rent by a giant fissure from whose grinning depths wisps and spirals of yellowish mist arose.

"Tush—a minor earthquake!" declared the Fox. "I will close it over for thee,—but if this be all that giveth alarm, I will go hence. I have greater matters waiting my attention at the House of Power."

"My Lord Priest—" a grey-haired citizen pushed his way forward to face the Fox fearlessly. His blue robe betokened his membership in the College of Wise Men, whose head Astrellon had been. "My Lord Priest—meddle not with matters concerning which thou hast little knowledge. So far thou hast done slight damage—save the destruction of tower, of palace wall and certain minarets that opposed thy aim. Yet, beware. Forces sleep within the earth greater than thy power, O Lord Memhota! Would that Astrellon were here to close the fissure and rebuild for us that which thou hast destroyed! For we know, Fox, that thou possessest but half the secret, and that which thou dost possess—cannot control. If so be we, who have led our path out of the sunshine, be required for sacrifice and atonement, I rebel not. Yet I do revolt that this so fair continent should suffer through one man's folly and ambition. Beware!"

"That word be thy last!" screamed the Fox, plunging his dagger deeply in the speaker's side. The crowd moved forward, but the Sage held them back—

"Hark ye, my Lord Fox—so hast thou despatched many who sought to save thee. For me—I care not, my work is done. I have given my life in my country's behalf—for that which I knew to be right, I fearlessly declared. Yea, O Fox—remember. When Atlantis hath ceased to be, and thy people pause on the apex of their glory, let them beware, for surety breedeth contempt, contempt breedeth treachery and treachery breedeth downfall. So, too, thy country now glorious shall sink to obscurity, wax and wane as the moon. Yet, ere I fall upon the long sleep, I tell thee again—Meddle not with the House of Power. For thou shalt destroy thyself and this country. Men of Medelos—farewell!" The light grew dark in his eyes and he sank back in the arms of his supporters.

The Fox, who had remained as one paralyzed during this speech, suddenly turned and elbowed his way to his litter but the people hemmed in the Lotus Lily, gazing at her with marked hostility till there seemed no avenue of escape.

"O false queen. Deceiver and traitor. What hast thou done with Lumnos and Astrellon?" "Take her to the Tower of Detention!" "Aye, take her thither."

In a solid mass they began to move forward, bearing the terrified Lotus Lily in their midst. Jeers, curses, foul expressions, hateful contempt trailed her progress. But in that last strange procession, the Lotus Lily remained a Queen; her head erect, her wide eyes calmly cold, she walked unheeding their ugly taunts, and, ere they reached their objective, a thunderous roar shook the city to its foundations. Buildings toppled in every direction, the frightened people fled screaming into the gathering gloom, struggling for breath, fighting for precedence.

In the darkness and foul gas that rose from sea and land, none remained to tell of the glorious Medelos. Nay, not even the Fox with his hand still grasp-

ing the levers in the House of Power. For the great vaults of heat had burst their walls, and the sea rushed in. The vast volume of steam sought room for expansion, and all through that dreadful night terrific explosions rent the tortured continent, as sea and heat made a seething cauldron of power. Tidal waves rose and washed across the land. From side to side, from peak to peak, the country side was split, and torn. Lower and lower sank the land, higher swept the angry waters hungry for their prey.

And the noon-day sun shone on a waste of blue whirling waters that, grasping, sucking, eddying, drew such stray forms or bits of wreckage as tossed about, fearful lest some small fragment should escape its maw. Atlantis had passed into oblivion.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAND OF THE SETTING SUN

"The golden water sweet and cold,
The moon of silver, and of gold,
The dew upon the gray grass-spears—
I shall remember them with tears."

Katherine Tynan.

Away toward the westward a company of ships raced steadily toward the Land of the Setting Sun. Five vessels of hardwood, covered with sheets of hardened hammered bronze, their prows rising from the water in a graceful curve which took the form of the neck and head of a swan, composed the flotilla. In the ensigns of crimson velvet with fringes of silver that hung above the single mast of every vessel, the emblem of the swan once more appeared worked in lustrous threads—the emblem of the house of Mascallon. These ships were equipped with motive power derived by a delicate mechanism from wind and waves, and sun—and their speed was even and incredible.

In the largest vessel, which like a leader spread its graceful wings in the advance of its mates, the majestic form of Astrellon might be discerned leaning on the stern—his eyes turned toward the land behind. Thus,—save for morning invocations he had remained since they put to sea,—nor pleading of Estrella, nor solicitude of Mascallon, could move him from that chosen position. Astrellon remained wrapped in the mantle of his own impenetrable thoughts and, respecting his silence, they forbore to question.

Little joy abode in the bosoms of the voyagers. They left behind them a fair and settled land, whose like there was not on earth; they left behind friends and treasured belongings. Ahead lay dangers,—un-

known adventures—perhaps death itself. But so great the reverence accorded the Man of Knowledge, not one voice dissented, or gave vague fears a spoken reality. They talked together, in measured tones, answered cheerfully the innumerable questions of the children, and quietly put their trust in the representative of the great Sun God who led them onward to the establishing of a new kingdom.

Estrella, more quiet perhaps than her companions, maintained a calm dignity befitting her father's daughter,—and if by night her cheek grew pale, her eye wistful, her steady hand faltered not in any task found to do. Once when Mascallon ventured to suggest Astrellon's need of food and rest—she answered gently:

"Nay—methinks my father communeth with his soul—mayhap leadeth it upon the same strange dream journey as he hath done many times previously. He will return to us when he hath finished his task—and will tell us what perils he hath surmounted."

Late on the afternoon of the second day the sea grew wild, and the waves tossed high above the ship's prows. Strange whirlpools troubled the course they followed—and the hearts of all turned sick with fear. Louder grew the howling of the wind, higher the angry billows tossed their white heads. But though the voyagers did not close their eyes for very fear, though the helmsman's skill in keeping their vessel pointed south was sorely tried, dawn found the wind and waves subsiding into a frightful calm. The weary watchers rose to greet the Sun, and when the invocation was complete, Astrellon stood among them, his clothing drenched with the waters that had swept over the decks, his eyes weary with long vigil and red with the slow tears of sorrow.

"It is finished!" he said quietly. "Atlantis is no more. If ye believe me not, gaze backward to the wreckage that cumbereth the ocean's bosom. The Voice declareth that green waters roll above my cherished country. No more shall travellers from distant lands come to gaze wonderingly upon her beauties. No longer shall the streets echo with her happy life.

For the Book of Time hath turned another page! Yea lust of power, lust of wealth—lust of revenge hath destroyed thee, my country—my country which I built with my hand and my brain and my heart! I would have saved ye, my people, but ye turned from me calling me fool and dotard! Yet shall I grieve for thee, as for the child of my flesh! And ye called for me when I was far from ye—when ye had driven me hence. Am I the Deity to stay the hand of fate?

“But shall I not cherish thy majesty and magnificence in my bosom, O Atlantis?—O country unequalled in history? For man’s comfort did the Deity grant knowledge of the Atomic principle—Man sought not to build but destroy. Therefore no longer be the knowledge granted to the World—It dieth, untold with me.

“We seek the Rock of Ages in the Land of the Setting Sun—There shall I build thee a Temple fitting thy Majesty and Glory, O wondrous Deity! And, having built thee once more a city, shall lay me down to the long sleep and be forgotten. Aye, and with me shall be forgotten the Atomic Theory. Man shall seek it and find it not. Thousands of years shall he seek, and build by the sweat of his brow that which I have raised high by knowledge. Lest man destroy the whole world with his daring, I will withhold that secret.

“I shall fall on sleep, yea, in due season—mayhap to wake once more when turneth the Wheel of Time!—dust of me to the dust of earth, soul of me to thy keeping, Great Deity whom I have served so poorly—for thy great gift to man have I brought into disrepute. From thee it came, and to thee shall I return it when all is accomplished.

“Fare thee well Atlantis! Who shall remember thee in the years that shall come, when the country of thy destroyer hath filled its puny cycle? Change and re-birth—death and new life—so twisteth the whirling wheel of life. That which is not, tomorrow shall be, and the day after falleth once more into discard.

"So shall it be in all the ages to come. Great peoples shall spring into being, shall write their names upon the heavens—shall return to the darkness whence they came, and Earth no more remember them.

"Thou, O my King—thou who hast knowledge and hast taught thy mind to scan the hilltops of intellect—ill shalt thou fare, alas! In that barbaric land whither thou goest, thou shalt eat the dust of humiliation and taste the bread of loneliness. My King, farewell!"

Astellon lowered his head to hide the tears that dropped from his burning lids. He passed along the galley to the small cabin set apart for his use and no one saw him again that day.

The effect of his prophetic utterance upon his audience was tremendous. Terror swept away the welcome thought that had lurked hopefully in every mind,—“Perchance I shall return some day.” Relief for their miraculous escape raised them to a pitch of joy—ere they remembered those dear lost homes. Mascallon flashed the word to the other ships, and for some time the noise of mourning rose like a wail on the soft breeze.

By midday the signs of wreckage were fewer. The sea was glassy smooth and clear. The voyagers resolutely set their faces toward the setting sun, and with courage born of necessity began to talk hopefully of that strange new land.

Day succeeded day in steady procession. Still southward fled the ships, till the air grew chill and cold, and the Atlanteans shivered in many wraps. At last rounding a point of wild and rocky prominence, the ships turned northward, and sailed joyously into more sunny spaces.

One morning Astrellon directed Mascallon's attention to mountains so high that their peaks were lost in clouds, and putting his arm affectionately about Mascallon's shoulder pointed to a small and perfectly sheltered bay in a rugged coast-line.

"Many times have I beheld it in my dreams. It is the spot," he exclaimed—"There may we land in

safety, and begin that upward journey into the eternal peaks. Nearer to the sun—nearer to the sun!”

“But the natives—how shall we protect ourselves, what manner of people dwell here?”

“Northward fifty leagues, southward fifty leagues perchance they dwell. Here I think not to find members of the brown-skinned intelligent race that dwelleth in this Land of the Setting Sun. If such should be—trust me my friends—and when we are safely gathered into our rock city, we shall make friends with these peoples, and dwell in amity with them.”

He directed the helmsman's course, and they turned as homing birds toward the shore. Mascallon was still somewhat uneasy, and scanned the coast line with apprehension. So small an opening in that harbor, one ship only could enter at a time, but the five ships had soon passed that orifice, and for the first time since leaving Atlantis, the mechanism stopped and they rode at anchor.

Astellon ordered a small boat launched in which he would go ashore alone, for Mascallon's uneasiness had been plain to him. But Mascallon's courage rose in a great urge, and commanding his head man, Beldenis, to attend him with a party, entered the boat with Astrellon and was rowed ashore.

Blue and very still the waters of that bay. A short space of smooth sandy beach, and a wilderness of trees—such as were never seen in Atlantis. Tall, thick, with glossy dark foliage, they mounted in serried ranks up and up the hill until they became a faint blur in the distance. Festoons of moss and creepers gave a veiled effect, which the vividness of odd scarlet and purple blossoms starring those filmy drapes merely heightened. It was as though the new country were a strangely-alluring beauty veiling her face from the newcomers with coquettish mystery that drew them on.

Astellon gazed thoughtfully about him as he stood once more on land. Then, lifting his robes above his sandalled feet, he strode rapidly forward into the woods, followed by Mascallon and the rest of

the party treading delicately, eagerly, on strange ground. They made the circuit of the little grove, threading it in every direction.

"It is as I had hoped," said Astrellon at length. "A valley formation—By the sides of the stream which provideth us with fresh water, I know we shall reach the heights I seek. It is as though the hand of the Deity had cleft for us an abiding place. What better defense—if defense be needed—ask ye, than these sheer rocky walls at either end. We are protected by land and sea. So shall we work from this spot—till we have cleared a pathway to yonder brow and thither taken all that we have brought with us in the ships."

"What of the ships?" asked Mascallon, his eager mind leaping ahead and encountering dangers seen, and unseen.

"What need have ye of ships further?" asked the Man of Knowledge quietly. "Whither would ye sail? My friend, we shall remove from them all of value and when that hath been accomplished I will destroy the hulks lest an enemy discover them. I speak not of the native—barbarian—be he hostile or friendly, is ever honest in his loves and hates. Fear not, mine own familiar friend," he continued—"Did I not save thee and thine from Atlantis? Thinkest I should have parted my one well-beloved daughter from the one her heart held dear, only to sacrifice her in these distant lands? Nay—thy beard shall be long and white ere thou sleepest. Thou shalt be king of a land the Sun delighteth to warm—thou shalt number thy dear ones as the sands of the sea shore and brown and white thy subjects be.

"Friend, Son! Here would I establish our ancient creed—upon the rocks eternal, and thou, Mascallon, as guardian of that faith. I will teach thee all that is in my heart, save one thing only, lest peradventure I tempt thee beyond endurance to unlawful use of it!" Astrellon sighed heavily, and bade Mascallon order the boats unloaded that the live stock might have freedom after their long confinement.

So carefully had their plans been laid, so excellently every detail attended to, that the large vessels were loaded with every commodity imaginable. The largest ship contained Mascallon's household and Astrellon, and Estrella, with a number of freedmen and slaves. One boat held the choicest of Mascallon's stock — sheep, goats, horses, cattle. Another seeds and foodstuffs over and above the needed supplies for the journey which each vessel carried for its own voyagers. The remainder of the ships contained freedmen and slaves, and one or two lesser nobles with their families.

Great activity prevailed on ship and land that day. A level space near the stream, grass-covered and open, they selected for the tents. These they constructed from ship awnings, and tarpaulins used to cover the decks in time of storm. Then, when the women and children were safely housed, the men began to make a clearing, a trail up that mountain-side to the first brow of the hill,—a task made easy by Asrellon's aid. When the way was complete and a portion of the goods removed thereto, the tent shelters were taken down and placed in the new location. Each member carried some burden as he climbed that hill. The children rejoiced to pack the lighter articles while the animals bore the heavier portions. The ships had been dismantled and denuded of every valuable accoutrement,—and when the last slave had rounded the first bend in the upward way, Astrellon, using a powerful signalling reflector, destroyed the hulks one by one, till the blue waters of the bay forever closed over those erstwhile gallant vessels.

To the toiling feet it seemed a long, long way to that first small clearing, but once more ensued for the weaker ones a period of rest, while the way was made safe for their advance. Sometimes the road was over level plateau, or stony ridge; sometimes it lead them through fertile valley, and past leaping cascade; but it was always an upward winding way. To Pensera, Mordena and Estrella it was a *via dolorosa* strewn with longings for comfortable litters, and their own

peaceful gardens. In this land of majestic silence, they hesitated to laugh—and spoke in hushed accents.

But Mascallon's long limbs covered the ground as though he found keenest pleasure in violent exercise. He was alert, courageous, thoughtful and tender. And when the tiny limbs of his small sons and daughters grew weary with continued effort—he thought nothing of swinging them in turn on his broad shoulders in addition to the heavy burden he already carried. To him firelight against strange backgrounds, sunrise in a wilderness, brought a tang of pleasurable excitement.

So stage by stage they progressed and rested, advanced and halted, till the luxuriant foliage and vivid flowers merged into bluish green trees of the higher altitudes. A forest of trees behind them, the blue skies up above, they hung suspended, as it were, in a world of their own. The way grew more stony and difficult with every passing day, and at last they came to a gorge in the mountains, where the narrow path twisted sharply to one side, and on the other the sheer walls of the cliff went down, down to dizzy depths.

Here Astrellon halted the forces, and with Mascallon and Beldenis, traversed that rocky ledge. With trepidation the others waited their return, but they came, at last, joy in their faces.

"My friends, the Deity hath favored us. Our destination lieth round yon rocky cornice. Tomorrow's sunset shall find us within our citadel city!" cried Astrellon. "Yet let no one venture the ledge alone."

That was a warning well given, as they discovered the following morning, when, reversing their usual custom, Astrellon and Mascallon decided to take forward the women and children, first. That rocky shelf, they later learned to tread in confidence,—even nonchalance, but that day, they crept fearsomely along its length, hugging the unsympathetic walls—not daring to look at the dread depths below them, and dazzled by the shafts of light bearing down upon them between the jagged walls. Once a sheep, venturing too near the edge fell over, and sick with terror the

women and children clung faintly to their narrow perch. It was sometime ere they could be persuaded to proceed, but with infinite patience, and careful arrangement of rope guide lines, Astrellon and Mascallon finally led them between two frowning pillars of rock into a wide and solid passage way. Once past the threatening defile, Mordena whose plucky spirit had urged the women forward, fell in a dead faint, and Mascallon picked her up lightly, and striding forward easily passed between those sentinels to lay her on the grass of a plateau of exquisite beauty.

Exclamations of surprise and joy burst from the party. A great plateau,—as large as the city of Medelos in extent—lay cradled in a cup between shallow walls of the mountain. Above and beyond it the parent mountain soared, the snow-clad beauty of its crest veiled in drifting clouds of finest mist, that parted and closed, revealing a view of enchanting loveliness. In the very centre of the plateau a large lake of deep blue, was fed by a sparkling stream, down-dropped from the far heights—and trickling from the lake's eastern extremity another tiny brook lost itself amid the rocks to appear many feet below at a jagged cut in the canyon's outer face, and fall with tinkling music down, down—into the shadowy gorge.

Clumps of trees relieved the plateau of any suggestion of bareness, and myriad pink, yellow, scarlet, blue and mauve blossoms danced in the breeze which was pleasantly cool. Bushes and low trees lined the cup on two sides, but the rear, through which the inlet rushed, was another rocky formation.

O the relief of resting quietly in that haven while the men returned for the tents and possessions!

The peace and security of stretching carelessly on the grass, without fear of reptiles! The delight of the children as they wandered happily from fair flower to fairer one! To see the tents put up in a warm yet sheltered spot—to watch the fires built and to sniff the aroma of appetizing food—To behold the barrier of boards securely fastened against the sentinel rocks that the stock might roam safely. Home! After a

voyage that had taken toll of life and property—after heart-breaking climb—home! Tears of thankfulness clouded their eyes.

As the sun sank low in the west, Astrellon bade them lay aside their occupations and assemble by the lake side for their farewell to the great Deity. They sank to their knees and faced west, while Astrellon raising his arms aloft gave thanks.

“O great Deity that rulest earth and heaven!

O Father of mankind—we thank thee!”

As with one voice rose the chorus:

“O Father of mankind, we thank thee!”

“Thou hast led us from darkness and destruction into life and light—For the day that hath ended, for the night that is given, O Father, we thank thee!”

“O Father, we thank thee!”

“To thee all honor, all glory, all praise. Let thy light warm and comfort us—thy pity bless us and give us rest. Father we thank thee!”

“We thank thee, great Deity.”

They lay that night in perfect security for the first time since leaving Atlantis, but Astrellon watched the changing stars of heaven until night paled into dawn.

CHAPTER IX.

TERESTES AND LUMNOS

Lumnos moved restlessly about, wondered at the hardness of his narrow bed, and at that strange, swaying motion of the ceiling.

"Too much wine yester e'en!" he groaned, raising himself in his limited space, only to fall back as that kingly head, accustomed to silken pillows, came in contact with solid wood. Thoroughly roused, he looked about him, curiously. The narrow cabin with its single hard bunk, the small embrasure, the great supporting timbers displaying yet the marks of the axe that shaped their bulk. A ship! But what a ship! No silken-hung, carved galley, with noiseless, swift motion. A creaking of chains, a scraping of oars in their locks, and a soft chant grated on his ears. A lively realization of his predicament and a sense of adventure rising in him, he got up, but more carefully this time, and, finding the door ajar, stepped into the main cabin of the vessel.

Unlike the Atlantean ships, whose delicate mechanism left much room for living quarters, this ship was so constructed that either end rose higher by two decks than the broad central portion, where, protected by the sturdy sides of the vessel, thirty brawny oarsmen on either side pulled at the long oars. The higher portions held the living quarters of the occupants, and above them, decks gave space for eating or carrying surplus cargo. The helmsman, on the bow end, steered with a somewhat clumsy arrangement of wheels, and up and down the central platform that, running between the banks of oars, afforded support to the masts as well as making easy access to all parts of the boat, a tall coxswain walked, beating time for his mates to row.

Lumnos passed through the cabin, heedless of the company gathered about the central table and paused where the platform extending beyond the cabin's door, ended in a short flight of steps. His amazed eyes roved from orange sails bellying in the wind that blew steadily, to the sixty oarsmen, naked to the waist. Slow as the speed was by that the Atlantean vessels made, they were driving ahead at a fair clip. Lumnos was fascinated by those oarsmen. Tall was he and great of girth, yet each member of the crew overtopped him by inches, and out-weighed him by many pounds. Pink was their skin and steel muscles rippled below that firm surface. Never had he seen such magnificent physique—his Nubians were puerile by these men. Where had he beheld a similar type?

"Dost thou admire my countrymen, my lord King?" a courteous voice broke in upon his musings, and, turning, he became aware of the origin of that strange sense of familiarity. Rollo, of course. But no longer the silent, dreamy-eyed, quietly-thoughtful slave of Astrellon. This man wore a short tunic that ended just below his knees. His feet were encased in sandals, fastened with recrossing strands of fine leather that circled his bare leg and met below the knee in a jewelled clasp. His tunic of orange color was embroidered in gold, and a jewelled dagger was thrust through a girdle of the same beaten metal. From his shoulders hung a cape-like fold of fine woollen stuff, deep purple in shade, and fastened to his tunic by clasps of topaz. A dress not remarkable for its richness in period when rich costumes were the rule, but so simple and yet dignified the man who wore it, so kind his face, but firmly moulded in mouth and chin, that Lumnos paid mental tribute to him.

With one accord the oarsmen sent up a rough and hearty greeting. Rollo replied in a lengthy speech, whose wording baffled the Atlantean, but whose meaning he could plainly guess from the manner in which it was received. The oarsmen bent to their oars with new vigor. The song became a fierce, almost discord-

ant chant, whose time accorded well with the sweep of the oars.

"What meaneth this?" asked Lumnos, with a slight frown of perplexity.

"My King, 'tis but a wild song my men sing to speed their oars in unison. It repeateth with many variations, 'Lo, we are conquerers of land and sea; we return to our homeland laden with the fruits of our prowess.'"

"So—and thou bearest me hither as spoils also?" Lumos was more interested than alarmed.

"Nay, say not so!" So forceful the character of Rollo, that Lumnos used as he had become to servility from every type of subject, forgot Rollo had ever been slave of Atlantis and accepted his address as friend and equal. "Food and wine have they placed for thee in yonder cabin, and as thou breakest fast thou shalt learn that which thou seekest to discover," and he held aside the curtain that the King might enter.

Barely furnished that cabin might be, yet royal was the beaten silver that stood on the table, finely wrought bowls and dishes, and the high carved chairs of unfamiliar shape at either end bore cushions of gold and purple. Benches ran along either side the table, and a banner of orange ornamented with black ravens filled the space twixt window and window of the larboard side.

The assembled company of nobles withdrew to the stern of the boat, leaving Hemora, his father and Luelila to await the King's pleasure. Lumnos greeted Luelila with a light kiss, as she waited on his wants, standing quietly behind his chair.

Hemora, pale and composed, sat by the window, having already breakfasted, but the King and Rollo did ample justice to the repast.

"Where dost thou propose to land?" he queried.

"King, I return to my country and people, having been too long absent. I would take thee thither, if such be thy desire. Yet many struggles lie before us. Perchance we shall not live to attain that which we desire."

"Leave us, I pray, Luelila," said the King. "I will send for thee later, for I have much to thank thee for. Nevertheless am I become a man among men once more. We talk of wars—which subject woman's brain cannot comprehend. Nay, grieve not, little one; thou hast surely saved my life—but still thou hast not the wisdom which inspireth mankind to valorous deeds. Go, pace the deck, that the sea air may restore some color to this pale cheek, but lose not thy heart to some handsome Cretan—I will not let thee go!" and once more kissing her with whimsical smile, he dismissed her.

"Dost thou mistrust womankind?" asked Rollo, when Luelila was out of earshot.

"Yea. Once did I trust them all—poor fool that I was. Went I not faring to the Land of the Lotus whence brought I in triumph one whose like for beauty I have never seen excelled. I who went to conquer remained to bargain with mine arch enemy. Such exquisite grace, such charm, such dainty features! I would have given Atlantis to possess her, such madness wrought she in my brain. Her father sought peace. Therefore did I bear her to my palace and tamed her — little tiger that she was! For her I scoured the seas that earth's treasures might adorn her. Yea, for her turned I to Isis, neglecting mine own Deity, —and I loved her. O hear me, high Deity that rulest —I loved her and thought mayhap she found delight in me!"

The King rose, and, pacing the cabin, his hands inter-locked behind his back, made no effort to conceal his emotion.

"She betrayed me—me—Lumnos, King of Atlantis! Her brain, of whose achievement I was so proud, swelled to madness. Aye, she would have killed me with her two golden hands, but for Luelila. And I love her yet. Woe is me—I must love her till I die!" He flung himself once more in the chair and buried his face in his hands. Hemora and Rollo watched him pityingly and finally Rollo approached

him, and placing his hand on the fallen King's shoulder, began to speak.

"O King—I do not say to thee—'live forever'—for thou wouldst not wish fate so unkind. What greater punishment could the Deity inflict? Unhappy man, if condemned to wander alone and accursed through barren years, bereft of those whom his heart held dear. Yea, better than this, the long sleep, so that we carry to it memories that will gladden our dreams,—so that our dust mingle with the dust of those we have loved.

"Yea, O King, I tell thee, by woman thou hast lost faith, by woman shall thy faith be returned to thee. For love, if it be love and not lust, must beget love. Thou didst believe the Lotus Lily betrayed thee, but what of those who first betrayed her—the father who sold her to thee, sent her, a tender child to be a King's golden plaything? Nay, start not, O Lumnos—is it not so? Thou speakest of her goodly brain. Thou couldst have filled it with knowledge and love—instead thou didst cram it with passion, luxury, jealousy, leaving much room for those rank growths of hatred, intrigue and revenge that ever follow close upon the footsteps of misunderstanding. Yea, betrayed was she also by that brother who sought to usurp the privileges of the Deity Himself. Ah, poor Golden Lily, torn from the placid bosom of the familiar pool, to wither in the blasting breath of man's greed and indifference. Peace to thee in thy long sleep!"

Lumnos sat with downcast eyes, nor made fitting retort to Rollo's accusal, and presently Rollo began to speak again.

"Yet who am I to sit in judgment upon thee, O Lumnos, I who, cradled in that fierce Creta, sought to raise standard higher than my father's. Unnatural son of warlike father, who, adventuring into Egypt learned of Astrellon and his magic."

"Ah, Astrellon—", exclaimed the King. "Tell me of him. Would that I could undo the past. Would that one small word of mine could waken him from his sleep whither he was cruelly hurried by my stupidity

and credulity. Why was I prey to vile insinuations which named that magic name? 'Thy life or his,' they argued, but even then would I believe them not. He angered me, and I fell! O cruel, crafty Fox, for this may untold torture rend thee limb from limb! Curse thee! Curse thee! Curse thee!" He shrieked till the timbers echoed the noise; he thumped the wooden table till the vessels jumped. A startled sailor put his head in the doorway, but withdrew at Rollo's quick motion. And, as quickly as his rage had taken possession of him, the King subsided and collapsed in his chair, pouring for himself a beaker of wine with unsteady hand.

"King Lumnos", said Rollo with a certain measure of calm had been restored. "Astrellon did not perish in the fall of the tower."

"What sayest thou?" whispered the King.

"I tell thee Astrellon liveth," Rollo repeated. "He learned of the Fox's trap and cunningly evaded it. At dawning of that day which marked the Fox's triumph, I did remove to small adjacent cave all that Astrellon valued. Long had Astrellon known their base designs. For weeks he had made plan with Mascallon. Not that he feared death, but that he wished to perpetuate the Sun God's kingdom. Fain would he have taken thee also, but, having delayed till the moment when the Fox's plans endangered all, he set sail ere dawn of yester morn, together with Mascallon, their households and many slaves. They sail toward the setting sun. He loved thee, Lumnos, but thou wert blind even as I was when I was given in charge to him. He left thee behind, unwillingly. Nevertheless, knowing of the predicament in which thou wert involved, he gave me counsel concerning thy release."

"Astrellon liveth!" cried the King, springing to his feet in such haste that he overturned the chair. "Astrellon liveth! O great Deity praise to thee! I have not done murder! True, I have reviled the Teacher who did show me the upward path, but, yea, I have not destroyed the Man of Knowledge. He liveth to give his wisdom to the world. Exalted be thy name,

Giver of Life! So—he saileth toward the Setting Sun, mayhap we live to meet again. Stay—how came ye thither?”

“I told thee truly when I said I came to Atlantis learning of Astrellon’s magic powers. So great my conceit, so marvellous my assurance, I felt I must learn the secret spell, and conquer thee!” said Rollo bravely.

“In faith thou wert a braggart lad!” said the King. “Come, why didst thou not carry out thy plans?”

“In those years I tarried in the Tower of the Stars, did I not learn something greater than magician’s garble, and finer than conquest? Yea, I learned that there is no enchantment thou canst cast as great as the enchantment of an honest heart and pure. That all conquest paleth beside conquest of the demon ‘self,’ which rideth us all, until according to our strength of will, we rise above it or fall beneath it. From Astrellon to whom men’s lives were as open as books, I learned that tolerance was the greatest weapon of mankind, so that no longer revenge of those who had wronged me in my absence swayed my heart. To build and not destroy is the work of the true King; to unite by peace, not separate by bloodshed. Yea, associating daily with one who towered above the kingliest of his fellow men, I learned that one who liveth unto himself alone shriveleth as the leaf in autumn. To give, and give, and give yet again of thyself in service—*that* enricheth thy soul past conception. Fain would I ever remember the hours I spent within the Tower of the Stars—so fraught was every moment with truths old as the sea, so jewelled with acts of kindness. And love.” Rollo lapsed into silence, and after a time Hemora spoke haltingly of the beauty of Estrella.

“Thou hast seen her?” asked Rollo.

“Yea, and admired. Albeit she mingled little with the life of court, and I knew only that she hath the name of being haughty.”

“Haughty? Estrella? Nay. The bell that droopeth in the shade be proud—but not Estrella! The gentle gazelle that starteth from the eye of man be

vain—but not Estrella! In all earth there is not her equal—”

“How!” exclaimed Lumnos. “Thou dost love her, yet suffered her to go from thee—or perchance thou hast concealed her elsewhere in the vessel?”

Rollo shook his head and stifled a sigh as he answered, “Not I. My love for her is the love of the rose for the midday sun. For me to adore, to revere, to serve, but to pass onward silently.”

“Tush, fellow. I took thee for a man of spirit. Methinks Astrellon would have given her to thee. If not, thou couldst have taken her.”

“Knowest thou so little of love that thou couldst bid me tear from the father I loved only less, that daughter, sole joy of his life? Should I thus further rend a heart already bruised with the ingratitude of King and nation? Though Estrella loved me as I love her, yet would I hesitate to thrust that delicately nurtured flower in the midst of such warfare and strife as I face. A King am I without a Kingdom—a truant sovereign fighting to regain each inch of soil I carelessly thrust aside. And if I come to bring peace to my people, first must I rend the Kingdom with bloodshed and horror. Therefore do I worship—and pass by—Moreover an insurmountable barrier doth separate us.”

The King regarded him curiously. A disposition so foreign to his own, he could appreciate but not understand. “So thou standest alone?”

“Yea, alone—and not alone. Her thoughts fly to me as mine to her. We shall meet again somewhere.”

“A cold faith—a cold hope. Still in this thou’rt right. Women have not place in warfare, nor the ruling of kingdoms. Thou, Hemora, wert thou not of late satellite of the Fox?”

“And the Fox hath repaid service with treachery. The morn thou wert imprisoned the Fox enticed Hemora to the cypress grove under the pretext of reward and would have sped him but for the Queen’s ivory tablets which he found and thrust in his breast.”

"Yea, and this good Rollo, perceiving my plight, did rescue." Hemora plunged into an excited account of the events leading up to the King's rescue, and the King listened in growing gratitude and wonder.

"My friends, thanks, thanks to ye."

"Nay, had not Luelila risked her life to communicate our plans to thee, we had e'en failed!"

"Luelila—yea. And ye have followed me into exile. Forlorn hostage am I to fortune, without funds or followers."

"Not so bad as that, O Lumnos! I have gathered to thee a number of thy followers and if we fled hastily we came not empty-handed. If thou hast no longer a realm, thou hast coffers of gold and gems, some apparel and some weapons. I do not ask thee to go where I go, but thou shalt be landed and established wherever thou hast desire. Come, let us look at the Chart, and thou shalt behold whither we steer and make thy decision when it suiteth thee."

He drew from a drawer a yellowed parchment roll, and spread it before the King, his slender strong fingers indicating the lands he would pass. So the King without a realm and the King without a throne studied the chart far into the noontime.

"Nay," said Lumnos at last, leaning back to ease the muscles of his back. "Danger enough hast thou before thee. Thou didst save my life and for that thou hast my eternal gratitude. Would that it were in my power more fully to repay thee, yet mark me well, time cometh when I shall rise again, perchance less strong than had Astrellon's hand been there to aid—nevertheless I shall return to claim mine own, Friend Rollo."

"My name, O Lumnos, is Terestes of Creta; no longer name me Rollo! I seek no further payment than that which cometh from mine own inward peace. I would aid thee to the utmost, if only since Astrellon loved thee. Yet withal thou hast much that time hath not frayed. Let courage rise to make thee once more the King who knew not fear. Thou shalt carve for thyself a kingdom in what land thou wilt, but to take thee with me, mayhap would

bring on thee more evil days than have yet befallen. Feebly would I interpret Astrellon's teachings were I to thrust thee knowingly into danger. Therefore, as thou sayest thou wilt be guided by counsel, I lay this plan before thee: Yonder from mine own island kingdom lieth a land of sunshine peopled by friendly tribes who pay tribute to Creta. If thou wilt be content with such poor comforts as may there be found, thou shalt dwell with some safety where the blue waters of the Mediterranean wash the golden shores. But hearken, Lumnos, nowhere, save in the Land of the Lotus, shalt thou find luxury such as thou hast known. Yet if thou wilt, I will send thee to the Court of Pharaohs."

The King swore a terrible oath—"May my tongue be torn out, my body ripped asunder if e'er I tolerate Egyptian deceit again! Little do I love their crafty ways. Shall I, who purchased the Lotus Lily with my power, shall I creep tremblingly to that cold-visaged Pharaoh and seek refuge? A thousand times, nay! Better the sea swallow me, or that I plunge dagger in mine own heart. Dost thou so misjudge me, Rollo, that I would escape precarious livelihood by fawning on the contemptuous charity of a *Pharaoh*?"

"Wisely hast thou spoken, King Lumnos!" Rollo answered gravely. "Therefore shall I convoy thee to Athros where thou wilt find barbarians indeed—a race fairer skinned than these countrymen of mine, and fairer-minded than those dark plotters of the desert. Gone thy days of blissful idleness in scented voluptuousness. Thou shalt know cold and hunger, fear and loathing, but surely thou shalt rise the man thou wert patterned to become."

"And when I have risen, I will return to Atlantis and reclaim mine own. Once more my palaces shall be the envy of the world; once more my Queen shall hold the jewels of the four corners of the earth in her slender fingers. I will recall Astrellon and together we will plan many things." The King's cheek flushed and his eyes sparkled with splendor of his dreams. Terestes looked pityingly at him.

"O Lumnos, deceive not thyself. For thee the way lieth forward—never backward. Knowest thou not that Astrellon warned thee of disaster?"

"True, but that danger, O Rollo, is past. I have lost my throne a while, but I will return to sit upon it, and heavy be the hand I lay upon the Fox!"

"If thou couldst return to Atlantis wouldst thou visit these with death?"

"Aye—and how else? Should the Lion tolerate the sneaking Fox? Yea, I will avenge me!"

"How thinkest thou Astrellon would deal with these? Thou knowest he hath ever warned thee concerning them. Would he not send them hence in pity and forgiveness?"

"Well, perchance Astrellon shall devise more fitting punishment. Mayhap he angered me somewhat by preaching simplicity to me. But we shall make of even Atlantis a land more fair."

"Thou dost believe Astrellon?"

"Yea, he hath ever spoken truthfully to me. Why askest thou?"

"Well sayest thou so, for thou didst *not* believe Astrellon. Listening to voice of Lotus Lily and Fox thou didst doubt that Man of Knowledge to such extent ye sought to test him with task impossible. The reward to be—death. Yea—Lumnos to whom he made all marvels as an open book—Lumnos for whom he spilled the treasures from the storehouse of his brain, he forgave thee and loved thee, even when thou didst stand confessed his potential murderer. I tell thee, thou *didst* doubt."

Terestes drew himself to his full height, and advanced toward the King, his eyes dagger keen. Lumnos threw his hands apart in regretful gesture.

"Yea, thou'rt right. I own that for a space I did doubt. But I will reward him a thousand times when we are again in Atlantis."

"Thou wilt never return to Atlantis, never! I tell thee if thou didst believe Astrellon ever, believe him in this. He hath computed the day and the hour of its disintegration. I tell thee that the pitching of

the vessel this moment warneth that the greatest speed we can force is all too little to escape some peril from the ocean's heaving. And thou hast share in this, for thou didst give to the enemy of mankind the gift which the Deity designed for the comfort and progress of mankind. Lumnos, I pity thee. Thou hast kindled a flame by thy negligent ease, and thy love of flattery that consumeth thy kingdom."

The King stepped back a pace, white-lipped. "Thou'rt rash, Terestes. Yet, perchance thou seekest my life."

"Had I desired thy life I would e'en have left thee to the tender mercies of the Fox. I desire no man's life but I would rouse in thee some realization of thy present peril. Art still steeped in vapid dreams? Gird on thy sword and dwell no longer on past glories. Look to the future. Lift thine eyes and gaze upon the sunlight. Pity those who brought about thy downfall, but cease this talk of vengeance."

"Wait, wait, bid the men put back to Atlantis! I would rescue the Lotus Lily. Turn the ship about." He flew toward the door, but Terestes caught him and held him forcibly in the chair. When he ceased to rage, Terestes said with a quiet emphasis outweighing all the King's bluster:

"Too late! To return now were certain death, nor can I risk these other lives even to save thy beautiful Queen. Perchance she sleepeth well, or, according to her belief, now wandereth the Halls of Death with a certain dark-eyed Princeling of Egypt, whose smile made sunshine in the darkest hour, whose gentle pressure would have guided her toward understanding through love. Yea, I speak of Amentah. Thou didst outbid him for the hand of the Lotus Lily. He sleepeth with his fathers, self-destroyed. Perchance they meet again!"

"So—thou didst know that also?" whispered the King.

"Yea, lord—much I learned from Astrellon, but this I did discover from certain rude markings on the reverse side of ivory tablets the Queen dropped in the

yellow Rose Arbor. The same that did save Hemora's life. That the tablets were sacred, a gift from the Lady's father the face of them plainly sheweth. Behold!"

There was a little silence in the cabin. Hemora had slipped away to join the other Atlanteans. The wind was rising, and the vessel had developed a sickening lurch. Above the dash of the waves, the voice of the helmsman could be heard, urging his men to yet further effort, directing the hauling in of the sails, lest the boat be upset by the heavy blasts of wind. The King fondled the tablets and, kissing them, put them carefully in his bosom.

"Whom didst thou designate "enemy of mankind?"

"King, the enemy of mankind is he who seeketh to encompass slavery of the masses that he himself may have unlimited power. The enemy of mankind, whatever clime or peoples he may spring from would wield the government of heaven itself and trample 'neath his feet mercy and integrity.

"The power of the Atom which Astrellon useth to build, the Fox useth for destruction. So long hath he pondered with this obsession that he hath become mad with lust to kill. With thy consent he obtaineth control of the House of Power, excluding therefrom those whose knowledge had prevented such disaster. For, because he knoweth not the whole, he overchargeth the vaults with heat. Thou knowest with what care Astrellon did build and divide the heat containers. These the Fox did carelessly rebuild and alter, not being cognizant that by so doing he prepared the way for catastrophe. If I take vessel of ware or tin, warm it to the sun's noonday heat, and pour in the empty kettle cold sea water,—ah, thou dost comprehend! Consistently the Fox hath heated and overheated his storage vaults, till the pressure from within made the earth tremble. He hath released destructive charges on nearby rocks that he might be sure of his ability to carry out the affair at the appointed time. With each discharge he hath weakened yet further those

overburdened walls because he knoweth not what method Astrellon useth to prevent accident. One charge more or twenty, the same result ensueth. The walls of heat shall break, the heat expand and lay the final barriers low. The sea will rush in and the earth be torn by explosion that shall lay waste and spare not. Though Astrellon hath belief that the poisonous gas which riseth from the cracking soil will kill all inhabitants ere the final cataclysm occurreth. Moreover he holdeth that the eruptions shall produce counter eruptions on the ocean's floor and the whole continent be submerged in the waters. I know not—yet doubt not Astrellon's word."

"Why did not Astrellon destroy the House of Power? Why came he not to me? Why slew he not the Fox?"

"O Lumnos when ever did Astrellon take human life? Came he not boldly to thee, knowing thou didst give the Bronze Casket of the Atom to that wily Egyptian? Didst thou not revile and threaten him?"

"Yea — thou speakest truly," the King replied humbly. "The Fox persuaded me we would talk with all lands, conquer the air and regulate the seasons."

"And thou didst believe? Verily, I am sure he held thee in hypnotic power, even as he swayed the crowd. How should Astrellon destroy the House of Power—he who knew so well what danger slept within? I tell thee, Lumnos, the Atom, that greatest of powers, doth speak with the Deity's voice, and protesting at its diversion, shall smite the blasphemer. It is inevitable! Moreover was it not the perfidious Fox that stole the book wherein the stars were recorded?"

"Sayest thou so? And thou didst permit?"

"Yea, stolen by guile, whilst Astrellon was absent in thy palace. Alas, foolish Fox, thy cunning hath overwhelmed thee."

"I shall e'en make it all up to Astrellon—all—all. For if we return not to Atlantis, he shall come hither to me."

"Alas, alas! My King, so hard art thou to convince. Thou wilt never behold his face in this life. Perchance if we live again—I know not!"

"Shall I never make compensation?" groaned the King, clinging to the heavy table for support, so horrible the pitching of the ship.

"Not to Astrellon. Make thy compensations to one who saved thee and now flieth to thee for protection." Terestes pointed to Luelila, half flung into the cabin by the wind's fury. She tottered to the King's side, and, falling on the floor, seized his legs with both arms as if she believed he alone would endure the storm.

"Lord, lord, I dare stay above no longer. The waves frighten me, so high they rise. Let me stay with thee. I shall be silent and enduring, but let me stay with thee."

"Poor child, thou'rt drenched," said the King, lifting her from the floor and placing her in the heavy chair.

Terestes fastened about him a heavy purple cloak which he had taken from a chest.

"Stay thou within and keep dry. My place is with my gallant men. Much peril hath compassed us, yet, haply we shall battle through in safety. I do all that I may." And with a slight farewell gesture he made his way with difficulty to the helmsman's side.

It was a night of horror. The sea rose up in mountains that threatened to swallow ship and crew. Huge water-spouts barred the path of the vessel, and twice it was seized in a vortex and whirled helplessly around despite the utmost efforts of the crew to hold it steady. Escaping seemingly unharmed from these dread fates, they met accident when the howling tempest snapped off the great masts like match wood, and they fell across the tarpaulin that had been lashed to them to protect the oarsmen, (four of whom were killed) well-nigh upsetting the ship. The sky was inky black lit by lurid flashes in the west, and low rumblings accompanied by frequent staccato explosions added to the hideous nightmare.

Back and forth went Terestes, heedless of his own danger, and with him the Atlantean men, who strove courageously to fill whatever place they fitted. Two men were needed to hold the clumsy wheel and keep a straight course for the shuddering ship. Terestes was everywhere, caring for the injured, encouraging Lumnos and Luelila who crouched in the cabin terrified and rocked by a devastating nausea.

Dawn came and the wind abated slowly, but the waves in angry commotion still whirled the ship. Objects floated in every direction—strange broken mementoes of a beautiful land—bits of board, sails, branches of trees, flowers, figures. Terestes looked about him with bewilderment. Gallantly as the ship had fought, it was no farther ahead than it had been when the storm arose. No fair blue hills loomed on the far horizon. No sparkling signals glinted in the air. Only a vast wreckage strewn the sea's surface, wherein floated dead fish, birds and an occasional human form torn and disfigured.

Terestes shuddered; then, with memory of his own denunciation of Lumnos, vividly before him, he mounted to the bow of the boat, and gave thanks to a Deity that had preserved them amid untold horrors. Estrella—his heart leaped to Estrella.

"Forward to thee, O Rising Sun—Be thou my guide. Thy face my beckoning star, Estrella, Maid of the Stars, White Rose of Atlantis!"

Turning with a dauntless smile, he went to assume the day's burdens, and repair the damages of the night as best he could. And if in his heart there was rejoicing for perils passed, there was also sorrow at the memory of those brave souls who had forfeited their lives that he might be carried safely to his own land.

"So touchest me already, shadow of a throne?" he queried. "Would that my way lay not through sorrow and bloodshed. Yet if men once more proclaim thee King, Terestes, shall women weep and denounce thee, since through thee hath death touched their dear ones? Yea, the world is very hard for women, bought and

sold are they as cattle; buffeted by adverse fate, and after a brief space of blooming, left to wither forgotten. If I come again unto mine own, I shall e'en make the world safe for thee, O Womanhood of Earth. Thou shalt not be sold into bondage, but shalt be free to choose whom thy soul desireth. This shall I do in thy name, Estrella, Queen of all women. In losing thee have I perchance gained thee for all time? The Deity guard thee and make the path wherein thy feet must walk, pleasant to their tread."

CHAPTER X.

A PERILOUS PASSAGE

The sun shone pitilessly on the swirling sea, and the ship made little headway for the sails were gone and the oarsmen lagged at their oars. Hardy though they were, the terrific battle with the elements during the hours of darkness had exhausted both shifts of rowers, and while one weary lot rested, the remainder by Terestes' orders barely kept the vessel moving. Terestes moved about quietly with the helmsman, for though both were exhausted their one concern was the welfare of the Atlanteans, and the crew. Indeed, the Atlanteans had fared badly. Few of them were seafarers, and all had suffered *mal de mer*; many had cuts and bruises—even broken bones, received as they were buffeted from end to end of their quarters.

Pale, but very composed, the King sought out Terestes where he stood on the forward deck. Terestes compassionately noted his bloodshot eyes, and ghastly pallor

“Thy sufferings have been great O Lumnos!”

“Yea, of mind as well as body. Still, not so great as thine, Rollo. They tell me thou hast lost four good men and true, not to mention thy masts carried bodily overboard by the gale.”

“Aye, four good men and true! May they return to the Deity which breathed the fire of life into their souls. The masts we can replace—but these shall come not again to Creta.”

“Thinkest thou not, O Terestes, that these passed joyously into the long sleep? If they battled not with axe and spear, still did they strive 'gainst the twin furies of wave and wind whose might doth dwarf earth's vaunted strength. Grieve not for these. These passed as he would have chosen, for *thee*.”

"Thou'rt right, my King. A sailor's death for a sailor. Shall not the sea which they have ever loved receive and lull them in their slumbers?"

"And I have been the cause of thy misfortunes. Hadst thou not delayed to save me, surely thou wouldst have been far hence when the deluge came. Yesterday was I not angered with thee? But in the long hours of darkness, I did wage warfare with the demons themselves for possession of my soul. Lumnos the King hath ceased to be—yea as truly as sleepeth Atlantis 'neath the bosom of yon ocean! Lumnos, the King, hath passed—his vaunted glories, his boasted riches, his treasured power, all, all vanished with the morning's light. Wicked was he, and cruel, yet mayhap not altogether bad, but rather swayed by the voice whose music thrilled his heart. I have done wrong, and I must repay."

"My King, when the heart speaketh truly, there can be no mistake, yet if thou hast locked away understanding and loosed greed and ease, shall the heart counsel rightly?"

"Such the course I followed!" sighed Lumnos. "I did make my boast in power, but thou seest power faileth! Therefore have I swept my soul clean of all that therein lay stagnant. Till death must I regret Atlantis—no anguish I can suffer shall bring back the innocent to life. In the hours of exile, fair drowned faces shall reproach me for their wanton betrayal. Such the punishment my wilful carelessness hath brought. So be it. I shall remember."

"But as I rise clear-eyed to seek a truer path, I offer thee my sword and life, O Terestes of Creta. Most nobly hast thou conducted thyself—thou, a barbarian hast shown me consideration I fear I would not have accorded thee in like circumstances."

"From my heart I thank thee, my King. Yet, though I grieve thee by refusal,—no willing act of mine shall cause thy life to be forfeit. I am more grateful for thy proffered sword than I may tell thee, but it may not be. Would that I might ease the stony road for thee."

"Pity me not, Terestes. I am a King and shall prevail. I shall ascend the lonely way—and if in my heart I keep one memory green, one chamber wherein I may retire to pray for the rest of another's heart,—perchance it be not counted against me. If it be true that we live again, I shall seek thee out and make recompense, my Golden Lily!" His eyes wet with tears, the King resolutely turned his back on the spot where Atlantis had gemmed the ocean. "Let us look ahead, Terestes. Well for me that no son or daughter rise to reproach me with lost heritage. Look you, I will wed as Queen, this faithful Luelila and we shall go on together, somehow.

"Would that I could once more touch Astrellon's hand and beg his forgiveness for my doubt and disbelief. Methought when the tempest raged most wildly, I saw him standing by the doorway of the cabin. I did creep to him in anguish and petition him for courage — Methought his hands outstretched to bless me, and I rose to kiss them, when lo! I was alone with Luelila and that which I deemed Astrellon's voice was but the booming of the angry seas! A dream—but my heart was as water with disappointment. So I fell on sleep once more. Would that Astrellon knew my humble desire for his blessing."

"My friend comfort thyself. Astrellon doth know. Who shall say thou didst not behold him in vision? Be sure of this, Lumnos—where'er Astrellon sojourneth, his thoughts go out to thee in love."

"Thinkest thou so? If he be with me in thought I shall not fail again. Though ten thousand fiends rise up to whisper, still shall I be true to him."

Terestes looked at him intently. "I believe thee, Lumnos, and now, if thou wilt forgive, I go to sleep a time. In daylight, little danger shall threaten, but I would keep watch by night."

For days that seemed endless, and nights that brought no relief from the heat of the day, the Falcon staggered eastward. Handicapped by loss of their sails, and unable to replace their shattered masts, the progress meant hours of body racking toil in blaz-

ing heat. The Atlanteans took their turn at the oars with praiseworthy courage, but the muscles of the oarsmen began to show too clearly through heat-blistered skin for food and water ran low. Terestes grew gaunt and hollow-eyed with anxiety.

And then one night when the blue coasts seemed farther off than ever, the rain fell suddenly, drenchingly, and the weary wayfarers lifted scorched faces to the cooling showers, as they ran to fetch every available utensil for water. But with the fear of thirst removed, the need of food grew greater, and they were forced to cast lines over the galley's side and make meals of such fish as they could get. The King's stomach rebelled at the sundried fish but his muscles grew lean and hard, his eyes keen and clear.

Then, one blessed morning they touched land, wild, uninhabited land to be sure, whose rocky coast showed a few tall trees, but they warped the Falcon into a shallow indenture and anchored. For five days they toiled ceaselessly, felling and trimming trees with bronze Atlantean axes; dragging them laboriously to the water's edge; with infinite pains and much jeopardy raising them in the ship in lieu of masts.

While the men exerted themselves to bring this task to completion, the women and children of the Atlantean party led by Luelila scoured the coast for shell fish, dates, coconuts, and strange orange fruits. In those weary days many thought regretfully of their Atlantean homes.

The King, as he sweated and strained at the ropes circling tree trunks wished fervently for Astrellon who had made such tasks easy, and with swift rush of shamed remembrance, recollected he had relegated to such work of clearing forests certain outspoken Atlantean nobles. He recognized with a cynical pleasure in his own martyrdom the justice of the turn events had taken, but not yet was he so far removed from days of luxury that he could think with comfort of the palate-tickling feasts of the palace. He would have given any of the jewels in his coffer for a deep draught of chilled wine. But alas! all he had to

quench his thirst was lukewarm water from the little sun-steeped spring, or juice of tart fruits. Then, casting dreams and desires behind him he would turn to the task in hand with such vigor that water streamed from every part of that great body. Terestes, watching, would realize that Lumnos was working off maddening temptations. He himself was everywhere. His hand was steady to lift where lifting was most needed; his cheery encouragement brought smiles to languid lips, and hope to weary eyes. He was never too tired to carry some child back to the ship, nor too busy to bear some heavy burden for one of the women. But as he worked he saw not the battered Falcon with her haggard crew, nor the regenerated King with his faithful followers,—but Estrella. Ever the sweet face of Estrella led him to greater sacrifices. His mind bridged the miles of watery waste between them and climbed the heights at her side.

When the masts rose tall and tapering once more, and the ship was fairly stocked with food of a kind, there came the problem of sails. They did not possess so large a piece of cloth. One sail they could replace with some spare pieces of tarpaulin joined; and there they were halted—till the women whose counsel had not been asked, discussed the matter among themselves. Each brought forth a cherished length of cloth one of the few treasured relics they had salvaged in their flight. These they painstakingly stitched together, and when the whole was strong and complete Luelila carried it to Terestes. His pleasure and admiration knew no bounds. The sails were set in position at once, and spread a motley patchwork to the breeze. The King stared and laughed, and laughed, and stared.

“My faith!” he gasped when he could speak, “They will e’en take us for folk of the land where the spotted cat lives.”

“And if they do—what then?” asked Luelila. “Behold, my lord King—the wind swells the motley sails, but they hold—yea, they hold! We shall progress with less difficulty, thanks to women’s wits.”

"They hold indeed," said Terestes smiling on the assembled women. "Well for us that woman's wit is nimble, and her heart sacrificial. I ask thee, Lumnos, whether thou wouldst part with thy mantle."

"How—" the King exclaimed. "Part with my mantle? But nay—it is the only one I have."

"Yea,—these, too were treasured only possessions. Mark me, Lumnos, yon scarlet cover hath been woven and embroidered with much care. It is a thing of beauty, yet did its owner give it freely, and with cheerful heart to speed thy way."

"Well, it is not meet for her so to do?" The King was parting painfully with many cherished theories. "Was not woman sent for man's comfort and convenience?"

"Never!" exclaimed Terestes emphatically. "Ill should we fare were it not for the women whose souls being higher than ours reach down and lift us from the mud wherein we wallow. Where wouldst thou be today, Lumnos, were it not for a woman? I knew not the devious ways of the palace; moreover she risked her life to get the message to thee. But I will go further back than that. Had not Estrella taught me the superiority of love and forgiveness, I should have left thee to thy fate."

The King flushed—"Have thy way!" he remarked testily, and with his hands folded behind his back began to pace the deck.

Terestes turned once more to the women. "We are not so ungrateful as we do appear. If we reach our destination safely, surely ye shall have returned ye that which remaineth of your treasures. I cannot thank ye, but ye are the saviours of our expedition. Remember that when the wind swelleth the sails and the ship moveth onward." To hide his emotion he too, turned away.

Then fortune seemed to smile on the small craft. The sun shone benignly, the gentle breeze swelled the sails and the Falcon spread her wings to forward flight with undisguised joy. They turned northward and passed the frowning bulwark that guarded the

entrance to the blue Mediterranean, and after a night of rain landed on the northern shore in search of food.

But as they were returning to the ship at close of day, laden with fruit, and birds, they were pursued by a band of thick-set naked savages, so that they must needs send the food on to the boat whilst a small party of defenders covered the retreat. It was a brief battle. The King, his great two-edged sword swinging furiously about him advanced rashly to the very centre of the melee, where he was hemmed in, and had hard work to defend himself. The days of privation had steeled his muscle and his small antagonists, armed with sticks, were no match for him. He cut his way exultingly free, and went to the help of Terestes who was surrounded by a quartet of savages with thorned clubs.

"This for Astrellon! This for Luelila! This for thee, O Terestes!" shouted the King scattering the foe like chaff. Then back to back, the two fought their way to the water's edge. If small, the barbarians were persistent, and they determinedly followed. The King and Terestes were separated in the conflict and Terestes furiously clubbed from behind, fell forward into the water. The King did not see his plight and Terestes was in fair way to being drowned, when one of the maidens who had watched the affray from the ship, cast herself into the shallow surf, and dragging and tugging drew Terestes away from shore, holding his head above water till the Helmsman seized both and hauled them to the ship. So quickly had it all happened that before the oarsmen who beheld had lowered themselves into the water, to come to Terestes' rescue, the trio were at the prow. The King still doing fearful execution with his sword, shouted his old battle-cry, and was with difficulty prevented from following the rapidly vanishing enemy into the rocky fastnesses.

"My faith! 'Twas a fight to stir a man's blood, Hemora!" he said, his eyes still bright with the glint of battle. "Aie, still am I able to defend myself.

Methought I had forgotten the art! Terestes—what of him?”

“Lord, he hath been wounded,” rejoined Hemora, “and had e’en been drowned but for Delita. A gash the length of thy hand goeth from crown to neck. Nevertheless, I fear not—Delita careth for him.”

“I would go to him—” cried the King anxiously.

“Nay, King, stay yet a while!” pleaded Hemora. “Terestes hath need of rest for he suffereth shock and loss of much blood. Moreover, Delita saith, his wits be scattered, and he knoweth not what he babbleth. For today, absent thyself. Tomorrow mayhap, he will be recovered. Yet if he call for thee, I will myself fetch thee.”

The King was far from content, but assented with a new reasonableness. But not for many days did Terestes regain consciousness. He lay in his narrow bunk and stared wide-eyed at the ceiling, or prattled of Estrella. Those who loved him came and gazed on him, but he knew them not. And while he tossed in his delirium, Lumnos led sorties into other portions of the northern shore, and brought back in triumph fruits, roots, birds and a wild boar, so that there was feasting as the ship went forward toward Athros.

One warm day when the breeze from the open window ruffled his sunny hair, Terestes opened his eyes and gazed rationally at the maiden whose deft fingers had carefully tended his gaping wounds. She was unaware of his scrutiny for some time, as she bent over the careful mending of a blue tunic and Terestes noted the lively humor in her brown eyes, the plaits of smoothly braided hair, the once brilliant tunic faded by sun and rain, the deeper blue cape that hung from her shoulders, before she turned and smiled into his questioning eyes.

“It is well! My lord waketh!” she cried clapping her strong brown hands softly. “So long wert thou absent, methought thou hadst forever departed thy body. It is well.”

“Where are we—who art thou? What hath befallen—and Lumnos?” gasped Terestes weakly.

"Lumnos waxeth in strength, and let us trust in intelligence also! He cometh a dozen times a day to gaze fearfully on thee. Yea, he waxeth in courage, and in humanity—even for us poor chattels—women," she answered, her eyes dancing.

"What meanest thou?" Terestes smiled back at that demurely mischievous face.

"Doth he not come hither—'Maiden, thou'rt tired—Go thou and rest. I will watch patiently by thy charge till thy return.'"

"And dost thou go?"

"Yea, lord, sometimes. Methinks my lord King learneth patience and pity when he sitteth in this stuffy cabin—albeit he biddeth fair to blow thy beams away with his sighs." And again she laughed displaying an engaging dimple in her cheek.

"I remember, I remember, thou'rt the maiden who plunged recklessly into the water to save my life—and yet, and yet—somehow I place thee not."

"How shouldst thou Lord! I am but a simple maiden erstwhile of Atlantis—a life for a life—daughter am I of Delexos,—and bethrothed of Hemora!"

"What! I knew not he was betrothed! How came he to keep thee so in the background?"

"Blame him not, lord—" the girl's face was grave and sweetly earnest. "Since first we played together in the Central Square—he, a gangling boy, I a prattling girl-child, have I loved Hemora. Our bethrothal was arranged but thou knowest man seeketh to probe life for himself—and while mine in name, he did drift into the company of that arch-reptile the Fox. Thou didst save his life and with returning reason, he did remember me in the hour of flight. How could I repay thee? Yet were the Gods kind—for to me they granted this privilege. O Terestes! As thou dost reverence womankind, we venerate thee. Thy example hath set Hemora thinking. He did think well and long on many matters, and then, lord, behold I was at hand, and after all—man is weak, yea,—it is so!"

"Man is weak when he seeketh to escape thy net Womankind!" Terestes laughed weakly. "So, then, all is as before."

"My lord, it is much better. Yet whether Hemora go with thee or with the King, I go also. My lord, I pray thee lie still, and I will bring thee broth made of wild fowl, which the King brought aboard in triumph last even. For since thou hast been ill, the King hath found joy in raiding parties and boasted much of his skill as a hunter. Albeit, we were hard put to cook it, over such braziers as we have aboard.

"Last even we anchored in bay of glass. Above it, Lord Terestes, a mountain which smoketh mightily. Yea, the King did wrest his trophies from barbarians, but he hath not lost a man, and, my lord, their stomachs be full, and they are all good-tempered."

Delita sped away, and Terestes lay back smiling at her lively sallies, and quick comment on the King's actions. When she returned with a bowl of steaming broth, the King was in her wake. A smile of genuine pleasure lighted his mobile features.

"Hast thou indeed awakened, my friend? My faith! Thy skull must be of eggshell fineness so readily doth it crack. Thou shouldst have one like mine!" He tapped his own head suggestively.

"How doth the ship progress?" asked Terestes between sips of the comforting broth. "I hear thou hast turned raider."

"And wert thou well, mayhap I had followed meekly in thy train. But in thy stead—my faith, 'tis pleasant to feel the muscles swell once more,—to see the tough-skinned savages run when I prick their filthy hides! Yea, I have not so enjoyed myself these many seasons. Moreover, my stomach is content. No longer doth it bawl at me, 'Give me meat!' for we have feasted on boar."

Terestes laughed. This was to him a hitherto unrevealed aspect of the King. Lumnos, weak and tyrannous in ease, became strong, humorous, resourceful, in time of difficulty. There was about him a bluff heartiness more winning than his jewelled crowns or

courtly gestures. Something of the leader he had been, and might be again, crept to the surface.

"My lord King—I verily believe thou wouldst fight the whole barbarian band single-handed."

"Yea—" said the King, stroking his head complacently. "Give me my back against a firm rock, a flagon of ale to set my muscles afire, my good two-edged sword in my good right arm,—my dagger in my left hand and I will keep at bay all savages, however stout their clubs. Come, eat up thy broth, and grow strong. The Helmsman Althus doth declare the island where we ride at anchor, is full of goodly food and beastly barbarians. Also he declareth the port thou seekest doth lie short distances north and east of here. I will e'en provision the ship, and we will steer thither, for I am weary of tipping decks—and fish!"

Delita poured the last few drops of soup into Terestes' mouth, and quitted the cabin serenely. The King followed her exit with a chuckle of amusement.

"Yon maiden liketh me not because forsooth, I did but chuck her 'neath her comely chin. Nevertheless, she hath saved thy life—both by her valor in leaping into the surf, and her constant care of thee through many days. But thou—why, lad thou didst babble of Estrella! Behold, Terestes, Estrella is far away. Thou dost declare never more shall ye meet in life. Shalt thou walk henceforth alone, unloved? Nay, my friend console thyself. This damsel hath a witching candor,—aye, and a comely chin. And she is e'en devoted to thy service."

"Knowest thou not why?" The wistfulness that ever followed mention of Estrella made shadowy pools of his eyes. "A life for a life. She is betrothed of Hemora whose life I saved by chance. Therefore she seeketh to repay me even with her life. But should my fancy bid me seek—could honor fall so low that I forget the claim of friendship?"

"Ah well—each in his own way. Still thou hast a duty to thy country. Shall never face of maid be dear to thee?"

"Perchance, yea, I know not—Yet am I better since for a brief space her path crossed mine—since from the depth of her purity a cleansing flood poured o'er my heart."

"I speak not thy language—yet saith my sword, 'Up Lumnos and at the foe.' I bring thee perchance roast duck for thine evening repast," with a resumption of his hearty manner, Lumnos sought the cabin door.

"See thou bringest hither also Lumnos—undamaged!" cried Terestes.

However much to the King's disappointment and Terestes' relief, the raiding party encountered no natives, and returned to the ship with fruits, birds, deer, olives and greens.

"No fish tonight!" boomed the King, tossing a brace of birds on the floor by Terestes. "Never shall I add fish to my table hereafter. The sight of it turneth me ill."

In the days of calm that fell on them, he was forced to return thankfully to the loathed fish diet. He strode the decks, supporting Terestes' weak legs, eulogizing the sparkling water in one breath, and in another declaring he could not bear to gaze upon it, so poignant the memories it caused his stomach! Terestes was constrained to laugh at the child which dwells in each of us—successfully subdued till some untoward event pulls away the superficial veneer of habit, when the sulky, boastful, wilful child jumps forth. The childlike side of Lumnos amused him, but the old arrogance flashed out at unexpected times. The King was repentant later, but Terestes found it especially hard to curb the indignation Lumnos roused when he took his evil tempers out in cruelty or on Luelila. He had real affection for the King, but realized how much more valiantly that haughty spirit would succeed when forced to depend on its own resources.

And one evening the setting sun sent level rays to light a coastline with a low range of purple hills in the background. They were in sight of their port. Great was the joy among the Atlanteans who longed

for land, and less cramped quarters. The women began to arrange their small possessions, the children lay down to sleep in excited hopefulness and Terestes and the King called the men into the forward cabin, that they might learn something of the nature and habits of the people among whom they were to dwell.

"Barbarians as these are," he said, "they are gentle and lovable. Like children, quick to hate, yet also quick to love. See that ye treat them as friends and equals, and unite with them for common defense against the Hill Tribes. Teach them the arts of commerce, and learn from them to till the soil. And, perchance that beauty, that wisdom and culture that formed Atlantis—ye shall hand on to the future through these—So! I have wilfully retained one amphora of white wine—Yea—" as the King started and scowled—"perchance ye have thirsted for wine—but have I purposely kept it for this one end—We will drain one draught to the memory of Atlantis, ere we cast our lot with barbarians."

He skillfully loosed the stopper of the amphora which the Helmsman held for his pleasure, and measuring carefully poured each of the fifteen men present a moderate portion. Not one drop remained in the stone jar. Each raised their drinking cups high, and turned westward a moment in silence ere they quaffed the cup of remembrance. The rite was completed, and the nobles withdrew—save only Hemora, who fell upon one knee before Terestes.

"Terestes, to thee my unworthy life belongeth! What wilt thou that I do with it?"

"Make thyself worthy—Nay Hemora! Thou'rt wrong. Thy life doth not belong to me, or to thee. It is the gift of that great Deity which placeth all upon this mortal life. Therefore make such good use of it as thy good sense teacheth is attribute to a divine gift."

"Terestes, my tongue stumbleth—I would offer thee my sword."

"Dear lad, to thee, as to thy King must I answer, 'nay' and yet again 'nay'. I will not precipitate thee into my warfare. If thou feelest any debt toward me—

though such were long since discharged—repay it thus. Take thy betrothed and settle in this land. I will surely come again, and let me find thee making Delita happy with thy consideration, and teaching brown-eyed sons and daughters to revere the memory of Atlantis. Thus canst thou best serve the world—not by death which mayhap glorifieth thee, but by thy posterity which handeth to all generations all that was fine of 'Atlantis.'"

The youth flushed and would have spoken, but Terestes stopped him with a gentle gesture. "Remember O Hemora, no love of thine is great enough to repay Delita's loyalty and faith. Be of good cheer, the world were well lost for love."

"Or for a pretty face!" muttered the King as Hemroa withdrew in obedience to Terestes' nod. "My faith! did I not count the world well lost for such? And rightly,—the world, *my* world, hath gone."

"Lumnos, thy world is before thee."

"Thou hast some knowledge of the stars which thou hast learned from Astrellon?"

"Yea, some knowledge is mine."

"What then, say the stars?"

Terestes went to a small cupboard which he unlocked with key from his girdle. From the cupboard he drew the roll on which Astrellon had inscribed the various constellations, and studied it carefully, in the feeble glimmer of the small window.

"The stars, O Lumnos, bid thee hope—and grow strong. They forecast toil, pain, envy, but victory of thy soul. They promise thee after loneliness and hardship, a peaceful existence, some happiness, and a child to crown thy years."

"So!" the King was divided between disappointment and relief. "And for thyself?"

"They speak not of victory, but strangely enough speak glowingly of happiness and adventure."

"Thy stars are but gloomy things at best. Let us pace the deck for the last time. In the morn we part, perchance for a lifetime! Would that I had Astrellon to aid me."

"Thou couldst have had thy wish, Lumnos—nevertheless unworthy that I am, I do pledge myself to aid thee in his stead. Thy welfare is my first care—These people shall be thy protectors and if I succeed in regaining Creta, I shall aid thee with money and commerce. Or, if thou wilt, thou shalt come thither."

"O wise Terestes! Thou hast not regret to rend thee. May the God of Battles speed thy victory."

"I know not. Thou hast in Luelila, lord, a mate such as the Lotus Lily had never been. Perchance when a year hath passed the Lotus Lily will be a vanished mystery. But Luelila hath a warm heart and gentle ways. Surely thou wilt find delight in her."

"A thousand years— and I will still remember. But thou, thou'rt weak and weary. Let us rest for tonight."

In the morning they threaded the clustering islands and came into the blue bay of Athros. A rolling land it was, rising in slow broad steps from water's edge to distant mountain range. Trees waved in the morning air and in their leafy branches birds sang joyously. The children pointed out to each other wide spaces of turf, soft to childish feet. The older folk smiled somewhat tearfully, and gazed apprehensively at the people who were collecting on the beach, for their experience with the barbarians had not been conducive to trust.

When the vessel had slipped as close to the shore as possible, Terestes ordered the sails dropped, and with his own hands freed the tattered patchwork from the ropes. This he gave into Luelila's keeping, bidding her return the various parts to the owners as soon as possible. And he said:

"Perchance their beauty is defaced. Nevertheless preserve them, that thy children's children beholding, shall remember woman's sacrifice brought us safely to our destination."

Still smiling he stepped into the small boat that had been lowered, and followed by Luelila, Lumnos, Hemora, and several of the oarsmen, they rowed toward land. As they drew near two of the tall,

bright-haired young tribesmen sprang into the surf, and seizing the boat by the prow, dragged it ashore.

Terestes leaped out first, and became at once the centre of a laughing, welcoming group of tribesmen.

For some time they held animated converse; then Terestes assisted the King, Luelila and Hemora to disembark and bade the oarsmen return to the anxious folk in the vessel and bring them ashore quickly. The barbarian Chief stood at Terestes' elbow, and he, too, gave several commands to his tribesmen ere he turned to salute the King gravely, but with a searching directness of gaze.

He stood well above Lumnos in height; he wore his dappled yellow fawn-skin draped about his huge torso. His feet were encased in sandals, his sinewy bare arms clasped by broad silver bracelets. His fair hair was plentifully sprinkled with grey, but his blue eyes were piercing and intelligent.

He smiled at Lumnos and in a musical voice let loose a flood of guttural words. The King had learned a little Cretan from Terestes on the voyage—but this wild burst of eloquence left him gasping, and he looked helplessly to Terestes.

"The Chief biddeth thee welcome. He said he hath pity for thee—and if thou wilt abide with him, thou and thy people, he will provide thee with food and lodging so that thou dost help him defend his city from invaders."

"Tell him, yea, O Terestes," said the King, looking everywhere for the 'city' and finding it not. "This land is fair to my water-wearied eyes,—I will dwell in peace and make alliance with him. I keep my word, Terestes."

This remark Terestes repeated, and once more assuring Lumnos of his friendship, he turned to his tribesmen and issued another volley of orders that sent them scurrying about like ants.

When the entire party had been landed, together with the majority of the oarsmen, the Chief put his arm through Terestes', and led them up the sandy beach, beyond the rocky headland, and through the

circle of trees that screened the higher meadow land from the sea. The children ran happily through the grass, and the tired voyagers trailed joyously in their wake. They passed through a second, smaller clump of birches,—and there the city lay.

City? Enclosed by a wall of stones piled carefully lay the rude collection of huts. There was no gate, but one small opening gave egress and entrance, which could be defended by one man at need, Terestes explained. The King's heart sank with a sickening thud. He had counted on stone houses, at least, and streets with some regularity of placing. This was a jumble of rush laced huts with no windows, and probably no floors, all opening on to and enclosing a large space in the middle—O quite as large as his own Central Square!—where on rude platform of stone burned the tribal fire.

Comely women in skins like those worn by fathers and husbands, and children with nothing on whatever, surrounded the wanderers with soft little cries and exclamations of pleasure. Hasty preparations went forward for their comfort. They could see two great animals being turned steadily on spits before the fire by shy-eyed maidens. On flat hot rocks a thin kind of cake was baking. A savoury steam arose from a huge caldron, swung by stout crane from far side of the fire.

Terestes followed the King's eyes as he gazed desolately about him, and a great pity stirred his heart.

"Yea, Lumnos, barbaric! Yet these have houses of a sort. North, east, west, the tribes seek shelter in trees or caves. These have fire which is never permitted to die out. These have cake which they make from ground grain — laboriously must their womankind crush the kernels twixt stones. These are clean, my King, for the tribal law ordaineth daily cleansing by bath in yonder sea. They will feed ye, comfort ye and protect ye, and in turn thou canst teach them how to build—show them better mode of living. Thou wilt find honesty, loyalty and a desire for knowledge prevailing here.

"Behold they already build for thee." He pointed to a spot back of the original circle, where brawny tribesmen were placing long supple branches in the earth, and bending them over to form roofs. "Later, they will lace the framework with rushes—and if thou wilt thou shalt have thy floor likewise strewn.

"Yea, barbarian though he is, the Chief hath built wisely. The trees behind and before screen Athros from alien eyes. Beyond these woods are many fields where they plant grain and pasture goats. A small but steady stream floweth through the city providing water should the Hill Men besiege the place."

"Thou wilt not leave us alone with these barbarians so soon?"

"Nay, I tarry with thee a space, that my men may be rested and invigorated, for the Chief in his kindness hath already sent men to watch The Falcon that the weary oarsmen may relax. Thy lines have fallen in more pleasant places than thou believest, therefore, O Lumnos, smile, and we will e'en go forward to do full justice to the food they have prepared."

CHAPTER XI.

DELOSARIAN

Golden noontide lay caressing fingers on the emerald cup cradled on the bosom of the snow-crowned mountain. The breeze wafted strange sweet perfumes through the warm air and ruffled the blue waters of the lake into tiny shimmering ripples that broke against the shore. Clear and deep that lake, cold with the chill of melted snows. Mascallon surveyed it with delight and thought of graceful boats to glide about its surface.

The women washed their clothing in the little crystal brook, and charmed by the beauty of the water, bathed their own bodies, and laughed at the children as they splashed amid the singing shallows. Afar at the edge of the plateau they could see Astrellon and Mascallon pacing and talking earnestly. The sheep and cattle browsed contentedly to the very edge of the cup; the dogs swam and raced about in the grass. Atlantis seemed to the women a far-off happy dream, as they dried their long tresses and resumed their sun-bleached undergarments. They began to plan in happy voices with the natural optimism of womanhood. They forgot the fatigue of ascent, and the never-absent fear of attack, they forgot the horrible defile that divided them from the world, and remembered only that it was good to be alive and warm in Astrellon's protection. Even Estrella played smilingly with the babe on Mordena's knee, and rested in numb peace, aftermath of her soul anguish.

Back and forth paced the Sage and his companion, the younger man as ever thrilled by the comradeship of the Watcher of the Stars. His quick mind absorbed the gist of discourse and, leaping ahead, found many a question to perplex Astrellon.

"So—" said Astrellon at length. "Thy curiosity maketh thee an avid student. We shall do well Mascallon. I ask no better foundation than this cup—no finer quarry than yonder rocky height. The goodly edifices shall rise—but first a season of rest. Two days shall we repair the ravages of ascent and on the morning of the third sally forth to discover fully the strength or weakness of our position. Yon stream that feedeth the lake and that which draineth these blue depths—can enemy find entrance by their clefts?"

"Thinkest thou enemies are at hand?"

"Nay, but the general taketh cognizance of his position ere he staketh all in battle. Moreover, seed time passeth, yet a little food must we plant against the season of such cold as thou hast not dreamed of. No lack of care in such details by thee or me shall bring suffering to our kindred.

"I love thy head man Beldenis. He hath the sturdy uprightness that marketh an honest man. Thou wilt do well to exalt him for thou wilt have need of equals. And when I am no longer with thee—"

"O Astrellon, speak not to me of leaving. Thou wouldst not leave me here alone? Thou wilt bless me with thy presence surely, for thou hast some regard for these if not for me—" Mascallon included the women and children in a single gesture.

"Peace my friend. I leave thee not alone and unprotected for thou hast within thyself the purest protection man may know—belief and love. I love thee, and speak not of leaving thee to go hence to another kingdom. Nay—when I go hence, earth shall know me no more. The tale of my years I have well-nigh told. It is well. I tell thee this, Mascallon; by reason of my knowledge hath my life been prolonged beyond the usual span, but now I am weary. And, mayhap the mistakes I have made fill me with regret. Since that day when first I took Lumnos to teach and train him in the way of life, I have seen much suffering of body and of spirit. For it is written if we love, we suffer, and if we suffer, we are purified and made strong.

"No need have I to tell thee of the solemn events which all the years between cannot erase in one particular. Thou knowest these—and much more. Mayhap I deemed him stronger than man—yet who am I to judge who also faltered by the wayside? Well did I know that love was not my portion nor my mission on the earth. Therein I failed, yea, failed! Better that I had walked alone, than that she, the Rose of Creta, should have passed into the long sleep at Estrella's coming.

"Thou dost not know the tale, Mascallon, for e'en Lumnos knoweth it in part, only. Sister was she to that Rollo, whose grace and beauty thou hast so often admired. Children were they both of that ancient Cretan civilization, but she was twelve years his elder, when as child of sixteen, she was sold as bride to the Land of the Lotus . . . whither, I went with Lumnos, and seeing, loved her. I—snatched her from that court of wickedness and so well did I conceal our flight, it seemed she vanished into the murky Nile. And the heartless Prince to whom she was wed was but too glad to accept certain proofs offered him of her death, for he had wearied of her sweetness. As for Rollo, he ever held that sister dead, such the tidings he had received in Creta . . . And what doth four year old child remember of lost and dead sister? He came to me seeking knowledge to aid his cruel Cretan kingdom and knowing not his relationship, did fall in love with Estrella. At first I noted not, but when mine eyes were opened I took him and told him what lay between them. Though ceasing not to love her, nevertheless, he did contrive to be more aloof than ever. Thus met I punishment. Bound was I by all the chains of love to shield and aid this man. As I looked at his mouth, his eyes, his nose and mine own lost Rose confronted me, I was as one turned to wax for very love of her. Yet when I looked in his heart and read there nobility and honesty, my heart went out in love to him.

"And I did teach him much, for he hath not defiled himself after the manner of Atlantis. Yet so dearly I loved him, I scarce marked the time Estrella's

affection flared to ardent love. Yea, I could not tell her the tale, for in so doing she must learn the secret of her birth and grieve. Therefore did I teach her she must tread alone the way of life, bidding her close her heart to love and seek knowledge. I have erred, and I know that I have erred, for though she meekly obeyed my mandate she yearneth for reason thereof and—Mascallon, I am but human, I cannot tell my child! She dreameth still of him, she suffereth in secret, and I, who would behold her happiness, must share in her grief. He hath his kingdom, his duty and a right beautiful love to blossom for him as a flower. If she must tread alone, I pray the Deity that ere her exquisite beauty fadeth she be gathered to her mother. Yea, how I yearn over each in turn."

Astellon's eyes were dimmed by the slow tears of age and for some little time there was silence, till the sage resumed his theme.

"Not all things do I regret. My Rose I found languishing in hatred and shrinking from licentiousness. She loved even as I loved and went with me gladly. One year of such happiness as few may know was granted us, ere she passed. A small span but sufficient she deemed to balance years of torture with a vicious prince. But Estrella—would that it could be otherwise!"

"May there not yet be some happiness for thy daughter?" Mascallon looked across the plateau to the spot where Estrella romped with his children.

"Mayhap in the future. Let us join thy family. When I am sore at heart, their sweet prattle doth comfort old wounds."

Mascallon understood the subject of Estrella's happiness was closed, but as they went forward together, Astrellon spoke freely of Rollo—praising his magnificent body, his keen mind and his high ideals. "Too ready were we of Atlantis to dub these less-favoured nations barbarians. True, they knew not that which we have knowledge of, but Creta hath splendid cities, palaces, well-paved highways. Commerce too, it doth enjoy with Egypt and Asia Minor."

Mascallon eagerly questioned the Man of Knowledge about Cretan life. "Thou shouldst have gone further afield, my friend," said Astrellon smiling. "'Tis too bad, thy fear of water hath been conquered only when thou hast little need of water traffic."

"I have been in Egypt, but little did I love that hot and sandy desert o'er run with poisonous reptiles. I like not the people, either, ghoulish in their preservation of the dead."

"Their belief differeth from ours in that they seek to preserve the body for future earthly use. Of late I have believed the heart ego outgroweth the body. It throweth it thereon aside as a worn-out garment, and springeth up to newer, fuller life. Yet ere I state my belief positively I must dwell longer on these matters."

The children ran to Astrellon as naturally as flowers turn toward the sun. They clambered over him as he sat in the soft grass, and besieged him with eager questioning. What was the white stuff on yonder peak? Why was the peak hidden in fog most of the time? What was the name of the strange bird they heard singing? What made the sky so blue, blue as a turquoise in Mamma's belt? And what was the name of the place?

Astellon answered them patiently in turn. The white stuff was a substance white and soft which fell as rain and lay as a blanket to protect ground during the season of rest. It was not fog, but clouds that crowned the peak, so high did the mountain hold its head. He knew not the bird's name, but why should they not call it Caritas after the grey-eyed Caritas who ever sang softly to herself? That pleased the children hugely. They clapped their hands and sang a little Atlantean rhyme about bird voices. The sky was blue, he said, because of the many, many leagues of clear space between dome of heaven and land. He thought it more like the sapphire in Pensera's file. He did not know the name of their cup city, because he did not think it had any name as yet. What did the adults suggest?

A babble of sound broke out at once. Astrellon listened with indulgent smile, as each in turn spoke the name the haven suggested.

"As it is dedicated to the Sun and founded by Astrellon, should it not combine these two after some manner?" Pensora ventured.

"Nay—not my name. But as thou sayest, Pensora, it were well to take the Deity into account. Yet we will not repeat 'Medelos,' the city of the Sun Deity. Nay, rather, I say 'Delosarian'—'the place where the sun's rays strike full.' And if thou wilt" he added, sensing their disappointment, "later we shall call the street whereon the Temple standeth the Street of Astrellon. I will build me a house at yonder rocky rim, a small tower where I may make preparation once more to build."

Mascallon's head man crossed the meadow, and taking his place at Mascallon's side, informed them of the steps taken in constructing temporary but substantial shelter. On Astrellon's advice, the headman had supervised the erection of tent-like structures toward the western end of the plateau, where a grove of pines made excellent shelter. With their keen axes, they had cut and trimmed timber for ridge poles and wall poles, and these they then covered with canvas taken from the ships. One tent for Mascallon and Astrellon, one for the ladies, and another for the children of the nobles, tents for the freedmen, with their wives, and children. The slaves lay under a canvas shelter for the time being. This latter arrangement did not meet with Astrellon's approval, and he bade the tents for the slaves be properly constructed.

"Human beings are these, thy dependents, thy followers, yea and thy subjects, Mascallon. We shall have no slaves in Delosarian, but each shall contribute in share as he is able, whether it be by the sweat of his brow or the keen edge of his sword. And in return thou shalt accept them as the nucleus of the new nation thou buildest. Long have I had this in mind, but Lumnos raged when I so suggested."

"If thou shouldst do this thing, the slaves will surely kill us!" Mascallon exclaimed, agape.

"Not so, Son. Thou shalt safeguard thyself by that very action, for here wouldst thou breed discontent and rebellion if thou didst keep a loyal people in slavery. Mayhap they are not all Atlanteans. So be it. The blood of Atlantis could profit by the mixture with barbarian eagerness. A fine physique these display. Is it not so Beldenis?" He turned to the headman for confirmation of his statement.

Beldenis bent low in acquiescence, then raised his own superb figure erect. Tall was he, broad of shoulder, slim of limb and firm of flesh. His features were aquiline, but a pleasing sweetness of mouth mitigated the arrogance of curved Atlantean nose. His hair very black and very curly, framed a sun-tanned pleasant face, from which laughed keen and dancing hazel eyes. His tunic of deep wine color patterned in silver bore the insignia of Mascallon, but above his left elbow a broad silver bracelet richly chased, bore his own family emblem,—the Eagle.

It was a common occurrence for Atlantean youths of old and impoverished family to accept service at the head of the retainers in some princely house. They were accepted on the same status as family members, and although they were required to give absolute fealty to their employer, were nevertheless treated with respect and kindness. By virtue of shrewdness in managing the affairs of the household, valor in defense of noble or property, they were frequently exalted to lesser nobility, and enabled to keep a small retinue of their own.

Beldenis wore his livery as a royal robe, and Astrellon regarded him with favor. It was Beldenis who had accomplished the not-inconsiderable feat of equipping, provisioning and manning the fleet of adventurers, his prudent forethought that had insisted on live stock and seeds. He did not take advantage of the freedom of speech accorded him by Astrellon, but led the way toward the grove and displayed energy in completing his task at once. In the wood a long

table had been set up made of planks taken from the ships, and carried laboriously up the ascent. It was sheltered by an awning which could be lowered on every side in case of rainstorm (with which the Atlanteans were only too familiar) and had likewise benches running the length of the table. Further off, a rude fireplace had been built of stones, and there a fire kindled by the sun's rays shining through burning glass, gave promise of a meal in the near future.

The task finished, Beldenis rejoined the family party, and explained his alterations.

"Thou hast done well, Beldenis. Thy busy brain for ever surmounteth difficulties," praised Mascallon.

"As yet, lord, little difficulty hath beset us. The stores are great, but I would retain as much as possible for winter use. And I would make sortie to discover whether meat may be obtained, since forsooth our animals must be preserved for increase. Nevertheless thank me not, but rather these willing slaves who bend their bodies double with effort that they may increase thy comfort." A flashing smile took any sting from his speech.

"Say not slaves, Beldenis. They shall be free ere sunset, and shall e'en take their part in the kingdom. Come, thou hast done well. Rest with us a space. Much need have we to be friends, we who are exiles without hope of returning—stray wanderers upon the face of earth."

"Nay, lord," Beldenis answered him—"Say no longer wanderers, for we have come home. In Atlantis the heart was smothered 'neath its load of luxury. Man must work if he would grow—since he maketh progress by pain and sacrifice only. So! Shall we not carve from rock our city? Shall we not tear from the earth fruits of our labors? And if we eat not from golden vessels nor imbibe chilled wines, still shall we be strong and free."

"How now, Beldenis. Where hast thou learned such sage reflection?"

"My lord Astrellon, thinkest thou man of any spirit could sojourn with thee, and with my Master

Mascallon, this length of time without absorbing somewhat of your dauntless beliefs? Nay, I too would be free, would rise."

"Thou soarest like thy symbolic eagle in thought, and 'tis well that, like the eagle, thou dost keep purity of aim. If thy soul yearneth for adventure, here thou wilt find adventure to thy satisfaction. Yet do I like a man of spirit." Astrellon's keen eye noted that though Beldenis seated himself modestly at a little distance and entered into the conversation only when directly addressed, his face was turned toward Estrella. Little Caritas crept under his arm and wound her small arms about his neck. Astrellon nodded to himself as though well pleased.

"Caritas, if thou dost love him, there must e'en be much that is good in him. Thou dost trust thy sweet self to so few, and thou'rt ever chary with thy favors. It is well."

Then his mind blotted out all human considerations and he fell into a reverie, so deep, so unfathomable, that all noise faded from his ears and he sat as one turned to stone. Mascallon would have sprung to lift him so deadly the hue of his countenance, but Estrella barred him with her arm.

"My friend, disturb him not. My father communeth with his soul as oft before—as in days of Medelos he sought and found this place. He will return in due season. Thou wilt not disturb him if thou dost speak softly."

But they sat unmoving, unspeaking, wrapped in memory's dappled cloak, and the shadows lengthened, but the sage maintained his position. The happy voices of the children came faintly from the streamlet whither they had stolen to play. Little Caritas still lay in Beldenis' arms, and listened to the soft flow of talk that began to ripple about her, her sweet grey eyes concerned with the curly hair of her big play-fellow. Beldenis said little, but watched Estrella as with flying fingers she braided her hair and bound the masses about her head. The soft blue robe she wore was brodered and bordered in silver, and it fell soft-

ly from dimpled throat and rounded elbow. Beldenis strove to turn his eyes away, but they always returned yearningly to the little hollow of her throat. There was a wistful fragility to Estrella's appearance foreign to the merry healthy women at her side, and below her eyes great shadows intensified their velvet darkness.

Mordena's robe of rich soft rose color had been embroidered in lotus flowers by her own skillful fingers. That robe was tribute to her free and independent spirit, for though Pensera wore the wine colored dress that betokened her husband's kin, Mordena steadfastly persisted in wearing her own preferences. Even on such state occasions as the convening of the Council when it was customary for the Atlantean women to don garments suggestive of their husband's rank and household emblem, Mordena refused to wear wine and silver which she loathed. "For" said she, "if I am his wife am I one with his slaves to don livery?"

Then Pensera would chide gently, but Mascallon laughed mightily. Truth to tell, though more than once each had battled over some important decision, Mascallon's successes were merely superficial. So dominant Mordena's personality, so gentle the persistence with which she presented her wishes, in the end she was generally victor. For example, the naming of Caritas. Mascallon had wished her named for his mother, a stately dame. After many heated arguments Mordena gave in and the baby was duly named "Exascla"—"But" said Mordena "such a long name for such a wee mite. Let us therefore call her 'Caritas' till she is grown a little and the full name be more suitable." But as Mordena very well knew "Caritas"—"flower of my heart"—that tiny elfish creature whose hands reached out and clutched the heart strings of all—remained "Caritas" to the end of the chapter.

Suddenly Astrellon rose upright, and gazed about him. The circle sat hushed and expectant as his smile warmed each in turn.

"Thou hast been long absent, good, my father? Doth it please thee to tell what thou hast seen?"

"Fear not child. He liveth and is well. Nay more. He hath remembrance of thee," said Astrellon in a low voice that reached the ears of Estrella and Beldenis only.

"Yea, I have been absent—Thou knowest these dream states come upon me, and I behold things which are far off. Methought I was in a wild and wooded space, not distant from the ocean, and there were rude huts of grass. And there—Lumnos—the old, old Lumnos, lean and tanned, his hand itching ever to swing the sword. In his heart he calleth for me, but he must e'en walk alone. He knoweth cold, hunger and isolation of spirit. Ah!"

"Hath he then met foe?"

"Yea, the foe of himself—than which mankind hath no greater, none so hard to conquer. This the lesson he, as every soul that liveth must learn: Master the forces within thee; rise today above the mistakes of yesterday."

Across the plateau came the musical note of a horn. The second, and final meal of the day was ready, and with keen appetite induced by the vigor of the mountain air, the party directed their steps toward the sheltered dining tent. At one end sat Astrellon, at the other Mascallon, with Pensera and Mordena at either side. The meal consisted of a form of cereal, cakes, honey, dried fish and fruit washed down with drafts of mild herbal drink.

The children were encouraged to talk, for much of the child-training in Atlantis came from lessons given at the family table. Each day, at the evening meal if there was no company present, they were required to repeat to their father the gist of the morning's lessons. Mascallon, who was humorous to a degree, propounded riddles for the children, or told wonderful tales. Mascallon was ever tempted to exaggerate the details of these stories he improvised, but Caritas was sure to discover the weak points in his narrative.

"My faith, Mascallon!" laughed Astrellon, when Caritas had as usual succeeded in tangling her father

in a network of questions—"Thou wilt do well to confine thyself to practical facts when thou'rt dealing with Caritas. She hath thine own curiosity, but also her Mother's quick wit. When thou dost invent stories, do thou see that the details thereof fall not asunder like the boards of a dried out water cask! Sweetheart, I shall take thee in hand. That wise little brain needeth proper stimulation."

Finding delighted intention in the sage's face, Mascallon nodded with satisfaction. He realized that Caritas would be taught to follow in Estrella's footsteps. The knowledge of the stars would be an open book for her eyes to read. Still another proof of the Sage's love. What could he do to be worthy such belief? Then, suddenly recollecting, he bade Beldenis assemble slaves and freedmen at the lakeside for the evening invocation.

The Sun was fast dropping behind the hills as they made their nightly reverence to the Deity whose all-seeing, all-creating power they visualized in the Sun. Then, as the slaves would have departed to their tasks, Mascallon stayed them with uplifted hand, saying—

"Friends, ye have come with me to this strange land, perchance not of your free will. Nevertheless ye have been delivered from fate more awful than ye may imagine in the disintegration of our beloved Atlantis. Here are we far from the world yet nearer the Deity. Here in this wilderness no man knoweth what danger stalketh at eventide, or by light of morn. Let us be free men together. This is my will. Ye are no longer slaves, but free citizens of that city which having built we name 'Delosarian'—free citizens to leave us if ye will. Nevertheless we greatly desire that ye tarry with us, for if we be all together 'neath the guiding hand of Astrellon, what ill can befall?"

There was a murmur of joy throughout the ranks, as, at Mascallon's command, Beldenis went from slave to slave unlocking the broad silver collar stamped with the swan which signified their slavery. One after an-

other ran forward to prostrate themselves before Mascallon.

"Nay, kneel to Astrellon. While perchance I felt for ye, so set are man's ways in well accustomed grooves that I had no thought of freeing ye, had not Astrellon shown the path."

"Nevertheless, lord," said one fine upstanding fellow,—“nevertheless thou hast ever been most kind, so that our burdens have fallen pleasantly on our shoulders. We accept our freedom, in the spirit thou dost display when thou dost grant it. Loyal are we to thy purpose, O lord Mascallon, loyal citizens of the city thou buildest. We pine not for Atlantis since here are we happy. But if any man hath treachery in his heart, let him beware, for such shall I surely despatch with mine own hand. Yea lord, loyalty be our watchword and reverence also to the Watcher of Stars. Born was I in slavery, but if I be exalted to freedom, still my life standeth at thy behest, Lord Mascallon.”

"Thou speakest well, Demnos," said Mascallon delightedly. "So. I look to each man to conduct himself that his fellows have no complaint to make of him. Let us build Delosarian by our might and brain—share and share alike. If ye do give labor, I will provide food for all. If ye do give loyalty, I must e'en be deserving of your faith. Look well to Beldenis, Captain and friend hath he ever been—so be it still. Yet now he standeth before ye, Lord Beldenis, equal in rank to myself,—but superior, methinks in brain."

"My lord, nay! Thou dost do thyself injustice with such remark." Beldenis dropped on his knees before Mascallon, a dark flush covering his face.

"Peace, lad, peace—my brains suffice to keep me alive, and I ask no more."

"Yea, Son, none findeth fault with thy brains. Oft thou dost sorely tax me to find answer for thine eager questions," Astrellon said with a smile.

"Lord, our lives be ransom for thine, as thy soul hath ransomed ours!" said the erstwhile slave who had spoken before. "Great thou art, greater thou shalt be."

"Disperse ye now, and rejoice if ye will, but quietly, lest peradventure our joy bring sorrow upon us. Tomorrow we fare forth to explore the land."

The assembled people moved quietly away, but with such joy apparent in every face that Mascallon was fain to turn aside that he might conceal his tears—an unsuccessful attempt, for Caritas spied him out, and exclaimed—

"My father, wherefore weepest thou? At kind deed thy tears start as at sweet song—why dost thou not laugh?"

"My child," said Astrellon lifting her in his arms, "when thou'rt older thou wilt discover that there is much joy in sadness, albeit much sadness in joy. Laughter meaneth much more than mirth, and tears do not always mark the deepest sorrow. Turn that bright mind of thine upon the world about thee. Faith, thou wilt find much to lend thy curiosity a new turn—" and he gave her into the arms of her smiling Mother to be put to bed.

Mascallon still deeply stirred by the experience through which he had passed, moved into the shadow to pace alone a time, and reflect upon what he felt was his own unworthiness. Beldenis saw that all was secure for the night, and posted sentries within the barricade, and at different quarters of the cup's edge before he joined the group that sat on the sandy beach talking. The moonlight lent all faces ethereal beauty, and the strange isolation of their surroundings drew them all closer than ever before.

Estrella, resolutely putting behind her all thoughts of Rollo, engaged in conversation with Mordena. One by one the members of the group slipped away with sleep-filled eyes, till Estrella was left alone. Yet not alone, for when the sweet silence of the moonlight would have opened the floodgates of her soul, she rose quickly as if to flee,—and there in the background still reserved and quiet in her presence sat Beldenis. Estrella controlled herself with an effort, and in her low voice, she asked—

"What! Art thou also captive to the beauty of the night?"

"Yea, Lady, I am captive."

"But the night, it is so lonely—it striketh to my heart as a dagger."

"Yea, Lady, perchance I also find it lonesome."

Estrella moved closer to him, and putting forth her hand touched him gently on the arm.

"Poor Beldenis—perchance thou grievest for one thou hast lost, also."

He made no answer, and she went on as though he had spoken. "Then Beldenis, if thou'rt lonely, and I am lonely, shall we not be friends? That shall be bond between us, and I am mindful of thy exertions in my behalf when in Atlantis I visited Mascalon's home. I have ever trusted thee—let us be friends."

"Thy will be mine, O Daughter of the Morning Star!"

"Come then, my hand upon it. Let us say good even, and leave the moonlight to woo the lake. Thou hast much ahead of thee—and I—yea, I am also desirous of sleep and forgetfulness." She smiled enchantingly upon him, and was gone. But Beldenis kept watch till the moon paled, and the clouds filled the sky with foreboding.

No expedition set forth the following morning, for the sky was black. Great sheets of lightning flashed across it, and the rain fell in torrents. They huddled in their flimsy shelters, shuddered at the moaning of the wind through the tree-tops, and longed desperately for the comfort and protection of solid Atlantean homes.

But on the morning after, the Sun rose in a sapphire sky, and despite the natural nervousness of the women, preparations were made for the expedition. Before the Sun was high in the heavens, they had said goody-bye to the safety of the cup, and bidding the women fear not should they fail to return at nightfall, once more made their way around the rocky chasm.

Darkness came, and dawning; another day dragged its weary length to dusk, and another, and another—still was the party absent. Within the cup hope had given way to despair, and despair to grief. Indeed, Mordena pleaded earnestly to take the small guard left them and go in search of the wanderers, and when they tried to reason with her, she called them cowards, and attempted to get out herself, so that Demnos was forced to pick her up and compassionately return her to the other women. Even the children ceased their play and sat, wide-eyed caressing their pets, or watching the guarded barrier. Only Estrella maintained her calm—"Fear not. They will return. My father knoweth whither he goeth—moreover the stars spell success."

At noontide of the sixth day, a shout of joy was heard, and the barricade was lowered to admit a weary but happy group of men. They had camped the previous evening not far from the gorge, but dared not attempt the defile in the darkness. They had seen no natives, but some signs of human habitation. They had found great fields adjacent to the cup where grain might be planted, and the toilers go to and fro daily. They had found fruits, nuts, game—and a strange red thing neither fruit nor vegetable but deliciously refreshing, and they were footsore and glad to be once more in the haven of Delosarian.

Great was the excitement as the women hastened to prepare warm food for the travellers, whilst they themselves withdrew to the bush-sheltered outlet stream, and bathed and put on fresh clothing. The women hung upon every word and hungered for the caresses of hands they believed for ever still.

As they sat at the table, Astrellon outlined the plans they proposed to follow, and he and Mascallon talked for hours till they had reached a perfect organization of their details. But Beldenis stole away, and sought Estrella where she sat by the lake mending her father's torn robes. From his tunic he produced a linen handkerchief made into a bulky parcel, and un-

wrapping it, disclosed a handful of purple bells cradled in leaves and damp moss. These he offered Estrella.

"Didst bring these for me?" she exclaimed, caressing their waxen tips. "Didst give thyself trouble and risk to remember Estrella? I thank thee, they are most beautiful."

"Dost thou not think they are like unto those blue-bells of Atlantis?"

"Yea and nay. These have no perfume and are not blue but violet. Would that I could keep them fresh as now."

"When thou hast a dwelling, thou wilt surely have flowering garden nearby. Then shall I bring thee roots, and thou shalt have them blooming at thy desire."

"Alas—no—not at my will, but the will of the Deity. Perchance I would seek to have them bloom for ever without rest. But thou shalt do as thou dost promise—Ah—how shall I have garden where there are no roses?"

"Lady, there must ever be a rose in thy garden—the rose that is thyself. Didst thou think like these others we should not come again?"

"Nay, I knew well my father. Moreover the stars foretold success. Come, tell me what thou hast seen. I would know more of this vast land. Thou knowest Delosarian, safe though it be, is fit symbol of the life womankind must lead. Hedged in are we by wall of convention and sex; kept securely are we by those who love us. Yet womanlike we long to peep over the wall and see what is behind the barrier as thou hast seen—Make thyself at ease, and as I stitch tell me what lieth beyond."

Obediently Beldenis stretched at full length before her, and in purposely matter-of-fact voice recounted his adventures.

"Thou wouldst behold a strange land of towering peak and deep valley—of unexpected plateau and inaccessible cliff. A land of strange vegetation, some rank and deadly, some delicate as the flower on thy

bosom. A land of singing birds,—and silent cat-like creatures,—yet withal a land of promise.

"We did follow the defile to the small plateau where we last camped on our upward way. There did we divide, and circled downward, one party to right, one to the left, meeting a thousand feet or so lower, and to the westward. That night we did camp by thunderous waterfall—an eerie place full of strange echoes! The next day we went further west, and still descended. Rank was the growth, and twisted the way. We beheld many serpents, which I like not, but were mercifully spared. At even we sought shelter in the trees, but rested not because of discomfort and hazard. And then we began the ascent which, as we do climb less quickly, took us longer. Also we began to gather edibles. That is all."

"Methinks thou hast left out all that telleth of danger, and hardship," said Estrella smiling as she filled in the colorful details Beldenis had modestly omitted. "So we are secure in position."

"My lady, no foe could cross the defile and surprise us. Thy father hath chosen admirably—the cup is impregnable. Moreover when the city be built and the people housed, he doth propose to seek the natives and make friends of them. He knoweth best."

"Yea—he knoweth best," echoed Estrella, with a sigh as the garments fell unheeded in her lap—"Yet sometimes Beldenis, methinks I could find it in my heart to wish one need not be content with that which is best for them, but haply, might seize that which they desire."

"Nay Lady, 'tis well the Deity doth not see fit to grant our random wishes. Did I desire that nevermore rain should fall but the sun shine ceaselessly—thinkest thou the crops would flourish?"

"I spoke not of food, not of corporal man, but of the spirit that dwelleth within, Beldenis."

"Very haughty and rebellious the spirit that dwelleth within. Moreover, I would have added, man doth change his ambitions from day to day. That

which lureth him as a boy, doth not interest him in manhood, for always he doth find something better."

"Why must the spirit be afflicted—or dost thou think we shall cease to desire love?"

"I said not so. Nevertheless, perchance we change our object in due season." Beldenis sprang to his feet and smiled down at Estrella. "Too serious are we become. Let us not puzzle with such problems. We are young. Let us play with the children, and, if the body be weary, perchance the spirit will be more docile."

He held out his hand to her. For a moment Estrella looked up uncertainly. Then, catching the infectious good-humor in the face above her, she laughed and took the proffered hand. Racing like a pair of children they sped across the beach, and through the green meadows.

CHAPTER XII.

AN AUGURY FULFILLED

Darkness brooded over the collection of huts known as Athros, deep, vibrant darkness. Magnified to majestic proportions by the light of the flames, figures moved back and forth piling yet more fuel at hand. The rush huts—their single opening gleaming darkly like some gigantic eye, sank into the background. In a wide double circle about that inner square, sat the tribesmen. In the exact center from which on either side according to rank from spokesman to slave the tribe extended, the Chief held place of honor, with Lumnos and Terestes on left and right.

Diametrically opposed to the Chief's throne, and separated from it by the fire, was the group of musicians. Drums had they, the skins of animals stretched across the top of hollowed logs,—and pipes of the reedy stems that grow in swampy woods. Weird and elfin was the wail of the pipes above the constant throbbing of the drum. Something in that uncouth movement stirred the tribesmen and they began to sway from side to side in perfect rhythm, at the same time crooning a low monotonous chant. Accustomed to the delicate melody of harp and cithara, Lumnos shuddered at first, but the primitive instinct responded to the music, and he too, began to sway.

Higher and higher rose the chant of the people—louder and louder shrilled the pipes, till as it reached a triumphant climax from the shadow darkness beyond the circle came a double line of youths and maidens, the dappled skin which formed their solitary garment, throwing into bold relief their white flesh. Their heads were bound with garlands of white flowers, and the hair of the maidens flowed free and curling below their knees. With gliding steps, and swaying of slen-

der bodies, they advanced circling the fire thrice to the right and thrice to the left. At a quickening of the music the dancers separated, the youths to the left, the maidens to the right,—And standing thus parted by the fire in changing postures of graceful movement, they told the story of seed time, harvest, and the season of rest.

Once more the music quickened and the dancers whirled rapidly, now bounding high in the air to the accompaniment of shouts from the audience, now prostrating themselves in mock rest. Faster and faster throbbed the music, faster and faster twinkled the dancers, faster and faster the tribespeople swayed. And the music gradually slackened till the movements of the figures became slow and dreamy, etched cameo-white against the crimson flames. The accompaniment sank to a mere whisper, and the performers dropped exhausted on the ground.

Lumnos' breath came quickly, and his head felt as bound by iron bands, which he must burst. Terestes looked at him understandingly.

"It doth go to the head like wine of grapes well seasoned. But have thou a care, Lumnos. No longer dost thou deal with polished courtiers adept in thine own game. Strong are these people to love and protect, but also swift to hate and to retaliate. Used as thou art to many wives, and fair playthings, to thee the tribal law which ordaineth one mate only at a time, seemeth stifling. Rigid is their code of life—and if any offend—the penalty is Death. I speak to warn. Thou wouldst do well to turn thine eyes from white ankles and contemplate thine own Luelila."

"Thou speakest truly," said the King humbly, "much reason have I to seek the love of Luelila,—and if there is any virtue in me I will prove it by my loyalty to her. And mark me, 'tis not alone the fear of punishment which holdeth me,—but the knowledge—which cometh from within that right is right, and strong must I be within if I would be strong without."

"Thou wilt grow accustomed to the music, Lumnos. 'Tis but the significant setting which stirreth

primitive man. I will tell the Chief thou dost appreciate the Dance of Welcome given in thine honor, for these dances are to them a religious symbolism most sacred."

The Chief listened with apparent gratification to Terestes, and in return bade him make known to Lumnos that if he were willing, the Atlantean children should be taught to take part in these ceremonial dances. This was, Terestes added, a tremendous compliment, and indicated that Lumnos would be received into the tribe.

The fire began to die down to its usual glow, and the tribesmen to disperse. Exceedingly weary with the day's surprises, Lumnos asked permission to retire to the hut placed at his disposal. His brain whirled with confused pictures, but the scent of the rush walls was pleasant, the skins relaxed softly beneath his tired body, and he slept.

Unlike the fastidious Atlanteans who designed separate quarters for men, women and children, the tribal families each occupied a single hut, father, mother and children lying in rows upon the rush-strewn ground. In the morning they arose and bathed together in the surf. Barbaric as this habit seemed to Atlantean culture, they were, as Terestes had said, scrupulously clean. Except on feast days, each family ate in its own hut, a fair portion of the food cooked on the great fireplace.

All property was held in common. All spoils of chase, and fruits of the soil were laid before the Chief. He in turn allotted such to the various members of the tribe with impartial justice. Chief was he, whose word within the village, or in battle was absolute. And for these privileges he assumed the responsibility of the welfare and protection of his people. His lot was no better than theirs—his hut no larger—his one superiority the tribal bracelet of beaten silver handed down from Chief to Chief through dimly defined years. Nor was the rank of Chief hereditary office, for when the old Chief passed, the tribesmen met and selected another from their number, choosing

always one whose shrewdness in chase and in battle, and whose personal integrity was foremost in their eyes.

These and many minor matters Terestes explained to the still bewildered King on the morning following, as they walked in fields and woodlands beyond the wall. The tribesmen had departed at dawn in search of game, and within the city, the women were busy with the domestic duties attendant upon all peoples, primitive though they be.

Terestes' heart was heavy, for the previous night he had held long conversation with the Chief when they were alone, and they had spoken of Creta. Not three moons since had the boat visited Athros for tribute, and the Cretans had spoken glowingly of prosperity under the new King, who if iron-handed, was just and zealous in their behalf. When the Chief had questioned them concerning Terestes, they had proclaimed him dead in foreign lands, and condemned him fiercely for loving knowledge more than his people.

"Thou seest, O King, how mine own wilfulness hath led to mine undoing. Yea, the wish I held was pure and true. Fain would I have helped my people—but these love gold better than wisdom, and strength more than mercy. I know not what lieth in store for me. Nevertheless, when the moon waneth, I shall return to Creta and behold with mine own eyes, the true state of affairs. The Chief declareth my cousin Tale-des governeth wisely. Moreover the land is at peace. Shall I, therefore, bring chaos out of order, and bloodshed out of peace?"

"Would that I could induce thee to remain—" Lumnos made reply—"Why lightly toss thy life into the scales in a hopeless cause? Tarry thou here. I am distressed to learn to match my step with these."

"Seek not to match thy steps with theirs, O King. Teach them to measure stride with thee. Use the great force within thee to show these friends those arts in which thou dost excel, and then shalt thou find not only contentment but success as well. Mayhap nature framed me not in kingly mould; mayhap from

gentle mother, daughter of the High Priest Mamthana I did inherit taste for the quiet ways, the deeper mysteries of the world. I know not.

"Nevertheless I will return to Creta—and if I fail then shall I perish. But if I win, then shall I find refuge in my civilization which yet lacketh the kindness of these barbarians. Mayhap, I shall return if I prevail not but still live, to abide with the Chief. So be it. My heart misgiveth me, for some strange event which spelleteth surprise and yet ultimate joy is forecast. Would that I could confer with Astrellon and be guided with the potent wisdom of his thought."

"Astrellon, Astrellon! The name ringeth in mine ears like silver clarion morning, noon and night! I yearn to behold the city be buildeth of which I may not be a part—Where dost thou think he hath found abiding place?"

"That, O Lumnos, I cannot tell—This only do I know—In the land caressed by the Setting Sun he knoweth of a chain of mountains. There doth he propose to establish the Sun Faith. Well are they outfitted. For weeks they did plan and gather stores—this have I told thee. Thou knowest also how Astrellon did go throughout the length and breadth of the land, seeking to forestall events—Also thou knowest how the people laughed and called him 'dotard'—"

"Yea—I know—let us not speak of this further. It paineth my soul greatly. Well for Mascallon whose blind faith made him trust implicitly, but ill for Lumnos who knew better."

"My King, we do all err—We grow by our mistakes. . . . Hath not Athros charming settings?"

They began to talk cheerfully of the broad fields and fruited trees, and came to a little wood of silver birches, whose beauty called to mind the graceful slenderness of the dancers — And where two paths crossed by a pool, they came suddenly upon a maiden with a basket of fruit in her arms. She jumped back in astonishment, and dropped the rush basket—but when she would have picked it up again the oranges rolled in every direction. The King royally amused

at the damsel's dismay and evident embarrassment, leaned against a birch and watched her try to stem the flood of fruit. But Terestes advanced smilingly to help the maiden gather her treasures, with an indignant glance at the laughing Lumnos. The rush basket was quite useless. So Terestes unfastened his cloak, and spreading it on the grass in spite of protest from maiden and King alike, piled it high with fruit. Then twisting the corners together he slung it across his shoulders and bade the girl follow. The King strode on ahead, busy once more with his own problems, and though twice he addressed a remark to his companion, a backward glance showed him that Terestes was some distance behind and quite plainly carrying on a heated argument with the maiden.

When they came in sight of the walls, the girl hung back and begged Terestes to empty his cloak on the ground saying she would come later and get it. This Terestes refused to do, and close to tears the maiden would have fled but Terestes seized her arm and held it fast, unconscious of a curious group watching from the City.

"Child, this burden is too heavy for thee. I will myself carry it to the Chief—a short distance, behold he sitteth by the fire."

The girl trembled and endeavoured frantically to get away, her eyes downcast and troubled—and the more she struggled, the tighter Terestes gripped her.

"Lord I would not trouble thee. Strong are my hands to work—willing my heart to do what is right. I pray thee release me, Lord, that I may go about my business."

"If thou wilt come peacefully, O fearful child, I will release thee." Terestes seemed possessed of a spirit of mischief.

"Lord, I pray thee, I beseech thee to let me go!" cried the girl in an agony, suddenly conscious of the growing crowd of spectators.

"Maiden thou art by the violet blooms in thy hair—?"

"Yea."

"Well, then, if thou wilt not come peacefully, I will carry thee, oranges and all!" exclaimed Terestes laughingly, and he swung her easily into his arms.

"Oh, I beg thee put me down! Thou knowest not what thou'rt doing!"

"How then, thinkest thou I am weak? Do not struggle, my child, for I intend to carry thee to the Chief himself!" and he strode through the crowd that parted to let him through and turned to follow after. Straight up the street of Athros, bearing the girl now limp and passive, he made his way with a triumphant smile for all beholders—on to the Chief's throne, and stepping so as to span the brook with a brawny leg on either shore, he paused.

The Chief had risen, his eyes sparkling with a pleasure Terestes could not fathom, as he gazed up merrily into that fierce face above. He put the maiden down before the Chief, saying laughingly—"Behold what I found without the City and brought to thee! Is it thine?"

The girl gave an audible gasp, as Terestes still holding fast to her arm across the little stream,—looked up to the Chief with a growing perplexity at the proximity of tribesfolk, and the sudden hush of activity.

"Nay, Terestes, the maiden is thine. By the rites of Athros, she is thine albeit thou dost woo swiftly, my friend. Wed thou art, and honored am I by thy kinship. Thou hast knowingly or unknowingly fulfilled custom—It is well."

Terestes and the Atlanteans were dumb with amazement, but the Chief stepped toward the pale, and trembling girl, and kissing her on either cheek, tenderly, plucked from her hair the violet wreath, and cast it in the brook. The girl watched it floating away from Athros, as two of the tribeswomen ran to braid those shining locks, and the children sped on some un-named errand—but returned almost at once with starry white narcissus which the Chief took and fastened in clusters at either ear, while he bade her be industrious, worthy and obedient.

"Stretch thy hand across the brook and draw the maiden to thee!" the Chief commanded.

Some inkling of what had taken place began to pierce Terestes' mind, but not for a moment did he falter.

The girl was very white, and her eyes still down-cast, but after a few kindly words the Chief dismissed them, and bidding the tribesfolk prepare a fitting feast sighed heavily, smiled and returned to his throne—if skins piled upon crude bench could be so designated.

Still holding the girl's icy fingers, Terestes drew her past the gaping people, outside the gates, and to a shady spot in the meadow beyond. He motioned her to sit down but before he could speak, she lifted sad and beautifully clear blue eyes to his.

"Yea Lord thou hast reason to be angry with thy servant. I did seek to stop thee—but I should have chosen flight at the first! Doubtless thou dost not know, or dost not remember that our marriage custom thou hast perfectly, if unwittingly, carried out. The Gods must laugh at mortals when they set the stage with hidden traps and watch our feet blunder over the obstacles. If thou hadst so arranged thou couldst not have managed better. For when youth of Athros desireth to wed the lady of his choice, by agreement he doth waylay her without the walls, and her struggles availing her naught, doth bear her through the watching throng and drop her before the Chief with the very words thou didst utter—'Behold that which I found beyond the walls—Is it thine?' Also, Lord, thou hast wed this unworthy one, and Lord, thou knowest the tribal law that man may not discard woman of his choice under penalty of death."

"Maiden, little thought I who sought to aid thee, that I should bring misfortune on thy head. I had forgotten thy marriage customs, yet perchance some slight memory lingered to put such words in my mouth. Forgive me—I have done thee harm unwittingly! I have spoiled thy life—and snatched thee from one perchance who loved thee."

"My Lord,—nay—He whom I would have wed passed in battle!"

"Then I do acclaim thee my wife before all the world, and that which I may do to repay thee, I will do yet. I tell thee this, not to cause thee pain, but to save thee sorrow. My heart hath long been given to another whom fate hath borne far from me. I cannot give thee love, for my love twineth about thoughts of another. But I shall give thee kindness, and whatever I have thou shalt share. For thee, I do most heartily regret this untoward event!" Yet as he spoke, no memory of his words to Lumnos that morning touched him with foresight.

"I too, Lord, lost the one I loved. Yet mayhap if thou wilt suffer me to wait upon thee, I shall find service in thy noble cause. Swift my feet to go upon errands, strong mine arms to lift burdens. And, Lord, perchance, the Chief in love and tenderness saw in this unwitting act union twixt Athros and Creta. If thou wilt go privily to him, perchance he will overlook—"

"Nay. What is done, is done. I would not undo it. The Deity doth work ever to mould us into better men. Who am I that I should question that wisdom?"

At this moment Lumnos approached, frowning heavily, and demanded an explanation of the scene. Terestes complied at some length, being particular that the King should avoid a similar occurrence which would be fatal on his part. Lumnos was incredulous, then angry, and finally amused. He laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks at what he was pleased to describe as Terestes' plight. He nudged Terestes and laughed again, the anger in the girl's eyes merely adding fuel to his mirth.

"Hold!" cried Terestes indignantly at last. "I pray thee Lumnos, remember what thou deemeth comic my wife findeth perchance tragic. And if she speaketh not thy language, she cannot fail to mark thy meaning. Truly it hath been said that man liveth his life, but the Deity turneth the wheel and grindeth the soul. Therefore though I had not so planned thou

wilt be pleased to recollect that by the laws of this tribe and age, by all that earth pleaseth to call justice, this lady is my wife and as such entitled to thy respect."

Lumnos choked back his mirth. "O my wise Terestes!" he jibed. "Why didst thou not pick one of yonder white-skinned birches that did sway so gracefully last even?" His glance roved appraisingly over the girl's slim figure. There was indeed nothing unusual in her appearance, except perhaps the shell-like perfection of her skin, and the violet blue of her deep-set eyes. Terestes, looking more closely, approved the mobile mouth and firm little chin.

"Lumnos, all beauty cometh not from without. The greatest beauty of all is of the soul, which shining through the orb, doth give slight glimpses of the mystery dwelling within. I pray thee, leave us. We are both somewhat bewildered and seek to find our bearings."

Lumnos gallantly bent to kiss the maiden's hand and went to rejoin his own company, laughingly silently as he went. But so strong the appeal Terestes had made to him, he bade his followers keep aloof till Terestes signified a desire for their company.

When Lumnos had passed within the gate, Terestes sensed the nearness of the girl's tears and bade her seek her own hut and return to him at the sunset hour. He himself would seek the beach. Gratefully she moved away, but ere she had taken a dozen steps, Terestes was at her side.

"'Till seemeth my courtesy. Tell me thy name, I pray thee." Blue eyes drenched with tears gazed into perplexed sorrowful brown eyes for a long moment. A tremulous smile broke over the girl's face as she answered:

"My name is Theonis." She waited a moment, but as Terestes merely repeated the name, with a smile, and released her hand, she turned and went on her way, not returning to the city, but seeking a certain hidden dell wherein to weep, and dream.

Terestes sought the beach, to pace in meditation. He had arrived at a stone wall in his forward march, and like Lumnos, would have given much for counsel from Astrellon. The day's thoughtlessly-developed marriage had complicated matters, but it was typical of the man that, though he felt little pleasure in the affair, he accepted it with calm determination to bring it to a satisfactory triumph. Such the strength much buffetting with fate develops in some natures.

True, Estrella was a lost dream; Theonis a perplexing reality. How should he proceed to regain Creta? That was the greatest problem. His brain whirled with a chaos of Creta, Atlantis and Athros and at length, worn with the stress of impotent planning, he decided to return to the city and, facing in that direction, he was surprised to see the Chief watching him from the rocks above the beach, that vantage point which offered the tribe a great panorama of coast and sea. As Terestes climbed up, the Chief came to meet him with frank and open smile.

"So, thou dost ponder in thy soul, Terestes?"

"Yea, over my kingdom which I cast from me in thoughtless pursuit of a dream. Little thought I to come to Creta thus!"

"Son,—for son thou hast been to my heart since first I gazed upon thy kingly countenance,—dwell here with me in safety. What availeth all thy knowledge if thou dost fall to knife of assassin? Terestes, stay with me—I would fain have thy counsel, and when time cometh that I pass to my forefathers—as come it must—thou shalt rule in my stead. Thou shalt make our name glorious in the earth, for thou hast wisdom and culture, Son. Nay, speak not yet. Perchance thy heart was angered at the way thou wert wed. Perchance thou dost believe the Chieftain too hasty when he endorseth rite thou hast consummated in ignorance. Perchance thou dost feel him hard and uncompromising. I would not have thee think so.

"What befell thee in far-famed Atlantis and carved thy face in lines of sorrow, I do not seek to know. Mark me, Terestes, it is not well for maid nor

man to live alone. This Theonis whom I have seemingly thrust upon thee hath more cunning than half the youths in the tribe. Therefore they seek her not, nor doth her heart go out to them. Mankind doth not like to recognize womankind as his equal. And if at times I feared to speak lest that keen mind read through my purposes as through mist the sun doth penetrate—yet is she womanly and kind. Thou, O Terestes, thou wilt know how to fetter that agile brain. Aye, perchance, I longed to draw thee closer by ties of kindred. Daughter of mine is Theonis and wilful as the wind. The last flower left of my family and doubly dear to me, albeit she seeketh to rule. But thou wilt know how to deal with her, Terestes," the Chief chuckled at the joke.

"But what of thy daughter thrust upon me, a wanderer no longer young? She doth thus suffer."

"Tush son! When thou hast lived as long as I have thou wilt discover woman deriveth much pleasure from suffering. 'Tis woman's duty to love her mate, and if Theonis obey thee not, use the goodly goad upon her!" And once more he chuckled.

"Chief," said Terestes. "As long as mankind treateth womankind as beasts below him, so long shall womankind snarl at the heel and so long shalt thou remain barbarian. When womankind is raised to equality with man, the first step hath been taken to raise thee above thy fellows. For thy designs, kindly as they were, I do forgive thee. Thou knowest thy daughter shall receive just treatment at my hands. For thy love and desires, thy trust, I thank thee. But, Chief, I must return and behold for myself what transpireth in Creta."

"Brave art thou and honorable. Well—I like thee better for thy resolution. I love this Theonis with all my heart and my soul yearneth for her happiness. I have heard the dogs howling about my grave and the shadows of my ancestors do beckon me. A moon, a year. I know not how much longer remaineth of life. Do not, therefore, blame me if I have treated thee with guile in this matter. Nay, though I wished it in my

heart, I did not so design. Nevertheless when the gods heard my petition, I dared not let the opportune moment pass."

"My friend, I trust thy fears are false. But if thou shouldst go hence ere I return, put trust in Lumnos. Arrogant he is and perchance boastful. Nevertheless a true man at heart. A greater man than Terestes, verily the greatest on earth hath dubbed him friend—shall I do well to fail his example?"

The Chief looked respectfully at Terestes and held forth his strong right hand.

"My hand upon it, Terestes—" The two men clasped hands above Terestes' unsheathed dagger. And then with a light motion that swept away all trace of deeper feeling, the Chief thrust his arm through Terestes'.

"Come, I have ordered the Feast of Marriage, let us return to the city."

"Yea, I would know more of Theonis."

"Faith thou shalt know enough! A kindly heart hath she but a goodly temper also!" Whereat he chuckled again and again, till the light-heartedness of his mirth made Terestes laugh also. "But beware how thou dost word thy thoughts. The girl hath cat's eyes and seeth to the soul."

And so they came to Athros where great preparations were in hand. Garlands hung before every house, garlands twined about the Chief's throne. Children were busily strewing the great space surrounding the fire with rushes. Others with great rush baskets of blossoms threw the fragrant flowers liberally about the ground.

And when the preparations were complete, the subtle throbbing of the drum bade the tribesmen gather. Forth from every hut they came, clad in beautifully-tanned skins, each fair head wreathed in flowers. In every maiden's flowing tresses the deep violet, in the matron's braided plaits narcissus and daffodil were woven. As summer heightened, these flowers would be replaced by lilies for the maidens and wild oleander for the wives. According to rank these

took their place in the rush-strewn circle, standing silently as though awaiting signal. The Atlanteans passed to their places at the Chief's left hand, their rich robes drawing many envious glances from the women. When all were in position, complete silence endured for a brief interval. Then came a low roll of drums, as of distant thunder, heralding the Chief's approach.

The tribesmen raised both hands high above their heads and, bending forward from the waist, touched the ground. Like grass before a gale they bent and rose till a second prolonged roll proclaimed that the Chief was established on his throne. The tribesmen straightened themselves and their arms fell to their sides. The Chief stretched forth his right hand and cried in a loud voice:

"For nightfall and day we give thanks. For food and shelter, for life and death."

Once more raising their arms the people responded, "For all things that are, we give thee thanks, O Chief! To thee we render tribute, to thee whose cunning keepeth from harm, whose wisdom enableeth us to walk securely, we give praise. Be thou exalted in every man's eye!"

And the Chief answered. "I am exalted in the hearts of my people. For them I live or for their glory die."

There was another brief silence, followed by a third roll of drums, and Theonis and Terestes walked slowly on either side the great fire place, according to tribal custom, each led by a small child to the Chief's throne. Once more he raised his arm.

"My people, I present to ye Terestes of Creta, who hath by tribal law entered into union with my daughter Theonis. Thou wilt accept him as kinsman and friend."

A great shout rose from the people as they responded, "We do accept them as kindred of our blood! There shall be peace between us."

The Chief smiled and seated himself with Terestes and Theonis at his right hand, and bade the feast

be served. The tribesmen sank gracefully to the ground, but the Atlanteans, stiff from lack of exercise and used to seats, tumbled awkwardly down, to the amusement of their barbarian neighbors. It spoke well for the sweetness of Atlantean nature that instead of resenting, they laughed with a good grace at their own mistakes, and privately resolved to introduce chairs into Athros as soon as possible.

Sullen, dark slaves, whose ankles were chained together so that they could not move more than a few feet apart, bore great trenchers of food and set before the Chief. These he touched in token of his desire to share food, and they were passed about the circle. Each member helped himself with his fingers to whatever dainty he fancied and proceeded to devour with more gusto than elegance. When finished, he wiped his hands on some leaves from those heaped before him. Roast meat, fowl, fish and fruit followed in slow succession. There was no attempt to hurry at the feast, neither was there any conversation. Each person tended strictly to the business in hand, and though the Atlanteans shuddered at the rude form of service, their half-starved stomachs bade them stretch forth shrinking fingers and seize food. They found some difficulty in manipulating the food without knives or spoons, and kept dropping bits about their persons. At that moment they appeared to disadvantage beside the nimble-fingered tribesmen, a fact the latter felt over-balanced the rich costumes.

When the food that remained had been removed for the slaves, a great horn tankard, filled with a sickly beverage, was given the Chief, who sipped it and passed it to his right; as it was emptied, the slaves refilled it until the men of the vast circle had each taken a sip. Then, the feast being concluded, the tribesmen wiped mouths and fingers on leaves, which were then piled on the flames, and settled back in keen enjoyment.

When the smoke attendant on the burning of the primitive serviettes had died down, fresh sticks of very dry wood were piled high on the fireplace. In this

period of rest Terestes found time to contemplate Theonis, who sat with unfathomable eyes fixed on the fire. She no longer wore the dappled skin, for a robe of coarsely woven cloth dyed a pale violet, clothed her from neck to ankle. Her hair was braided smoothly, and hung in great narcissus-studded ropes below her knees. Quite irrelevantly, Terestes wondered how a band of Atlantean sapphires would look about that slender white throat, and, finding the King's eyes fixed upon him in amusement, he turned hastily away. In her turn, Theonis, who had not been unaware of his scrutiny, glanced at him obliquely from the shelter of her dark lashes, and felt some stranger must be sitting in her place. Surely, surely, this could not be Theonis, the independent, the self-willed, who sat admiring the strong curve of a princely chin!

To both of them, the Dance of Flowers was a dream of flitting figures, fitful firelight, and wild music. At the conclusion, the tribesmen withdrew, and Terestes helping Theonis to her feet led her toward his hut. As they went, some slight alien sound smote his ear, and, bidding Theonis go on alone, he advanced toward the city wall and cautiously peered over.

CHAPTER XIII.

THEONIS

Well was it that he did so,—the alien sound reached him plainly to be separated mechanically into heavy breathing, soft footfalls, and steady rustle of leaves. After one swift look, he fled—followed by a volley of stones—to arouse the village. Still creeping silently in the hope of surprising the sentinel at the opening, the Hill Men circled the wall.

But the alarm had been given. The low roll of the drum so recently used to summon to feast, gave sharp staccato call to arms. Forth from their huts tumbled the fighting men of Athros to defend their homes. Knives in their hands, eyes alight with eagerness for the fray, they dashed from the walls to meet the foe in the open and protect the city.

With the first cry of battle, Lumnos was at the Chief's side. Valiantly he and his followers swung their great swords, and the strife made the night hideous with din. For though the tribesmen of Athros were more adequately armed, the Hill Men were more numerous and they fought desperately. After a battle that crept from Athros out beyond the western wood, Lumnos with a great cry of delight swept the leader's head from his shoulders with a single stroke. The Hill Men faltered and withdrew, and attacked, and withdrew.

Beating them back inch by inch, foot by foot and yard by yard as the Hill Men's defence weakened, at dawn the men of Athros had forced the foe beyond the fields and lake. On the borders of a tiny stream that edged the hills, there was a brief and bitter struggle. Then sorely bleeding from sword wounds the Hill Men turned and ran for the shelter of woods on the hillside.

For some time the men of Athros waited alert, for a return of the foe, but as the light grew in the east they could see the Hill Men toiling painfully towards their own domain. With a sigh of relief the tribesmen carried their dead and dying, through the host of Hill Men slain, back to the City. Thanks to the superior arms of the Atlanteans their loss had been small.

"My faith! thou swingest mightily!" said the Chief admiringly to Lumnos. "Clean thou cuttest through bone as flesh!" He touched with his toe the severed head of the Hill Chief.

"Ha, thou and I talk the same language!" Lumnos answered swelling with pride, and Terestes interpreting both speeches, urged the men to hasten their steps.

"We have been long absent—the sun is high in the heavens and the women alone."

The Chief favored him with a smile—"Tush—they take little alarm at these attacks."

Yet when they came within sight of Athros they found that half the rush huts had vanished, and in the centre of the circle lay a heterogeneous collection of articles. Women and children ran hither and thither excitedly, and on the very threshold of the Chief's hut lay two of the dark slaves—dead.

The Chief stared uncomprehendingly about him, and as he stared Theonis approached—a different Theonis from the wistful-eyed bride of the previous night. Her face was blackened with smoke, her arms scorched and blistered, her skin-robe bloodstained.

"My child, my child!" cried the Chief embracing Theonis. "Tell me, I pray thee, what has happened."

Theonis glanced at Terestes, and back again to her father. "Ere thou hadst been absent an hour we women watching as we do ever, saw of a sudden a hut burst into flame. Thou knowest how quickly these bush huts do burn. Nevertheless, we did save the children—" she added with deep satisfaction—"And as we fought to subdue the flames with water, earth and branches—lo—a hut to the far side flamed also. Sorely perplexed we did save what property lay there—

in, and as we worked beheld a hut afire midway of the circle.

"Then was I aware treachery lay afoot—and I bade the women bring forth their possessions and pile them by the fireplace—Yea, we did pledge ourselves if surrounded, to perish rather than pass into the Hill Men's hands. And I watched as I strove to combat the dread fire—and behold the slaves whom we trusted—they kindled brands at the tribal fire, and would have laid waste our city. Therefore I slew them, yea—I slew them! I knew they would seek to destroy thy hut, and I therefore hid within and as they came, I slew them lest more perish in the flames. I returned to the women in joy,—and we were compelled to stamp out flames which they had set creeping, creeping in the rush-strewn circle.

"We have fought all night with bare hands and bleeding hearts. Thou hast lost little. The huts we can repair—but one wee child—ah one wee child I could not rescue, albeit I made desperate effort—" and slow tears began to trickle down her face making clear tracks in the smoke-grimed skin.

"Well hast thou done Flower of My Heart. Almost I could believe my son liveth again. Yea, we have prevailed also. The Hill Men are routed utterly.—For a time we shall have peace—And mayhap our friends of Atlantis will teach us to build better." He patted her benevolently on the arm, not observing how she shrank from the fervor of his touch, and strode off to survey for himself the damage done.

Terestes forgot his own weariness and the nausea shedding of blood always aroused in him; he drew the girl gently to the hut set apart for his use, and fetching water bathed her hands and face, and wrapped her bleeding arms in his own kerchiefs of soft linen,—all the time talking soothingly to her, so that though she still wept, she became more comforted.

"Now Lord, thou'rt weary, and faint for want of food. Lie upon thy couch, and I will fetch thee meat, and feed thee!" she exclaimed when her arms were swathed.

"Nay, child. Thou'rt weary and hungry as I am. I will bring thee food, and watch by thee as thou dost rest."

"Lord it is not meet. Woman's work to wait upon her lord and master—Yea how should we eat today hadst thou not heard the foe last even?"

"And yea, Theonis how should we eat today hadst thou not saved Athros at the expense of thy suffering and anguish?"

"Aye anguish—the little one—I would have gone in but they held me back—They said I should perish also. What matter—what matter—but I can hear it yet in mine ears!" Once more Theonis buried her face in her hands and began to weep with great heart-broken sobs. Terestes drew her hands away, and putting his arm about the distraught girl, soothed her until she was once more calm.

"My Theonis, thou'rt the savior of Athros—come, hold up thy head. Thou hast done all that thou couldst. Man nor Diety expecteth not from thee the impossible. We shall rebuild Athros. Would that I could persuade thy father to dispense with slaves, for the slave doth suffer, and in his suffering, hate riseth to breed vengeance."

"Yea, lord, but it is the custom of the land."

"Alas, methinks 'tis the custom of all the lands. And I—who was given as slave to one whose masterhood was kindness itself—know how the slave suffereth!"

"Lord, forgive Theonis—I do forget thy comfort in my weakness. I will return to thee, Master, with food!" And Theonis would have fled, had not Terestes seized her, and holding her close, yet tipping her head back so he could look into her clear shy eyes, said gravely:

"Yet hear me Theonis. I am not thy lord and master. Thy husband, yes. But thou art, child, mine equal in birth and valor. Name me not Master, Theonis. I do not seek to make thy life miserable with commands. I am thy friend. For since the strange machinations of fate have drawn us together, thy des-

tiny and mine must be mingled. I do not ask love from thee, Theonis, for love I have not to give. I do ask of thee true comradeship, and trust, and I give thee in like quality my loyalty. No maid shall trouble thee with doubts of my fidelity. I swear it on my dagger. Therefore, maiden, the way not easy for either shall become easier for both, if we climb together." He released her, and with a smile of indescribable sweetness, held out his hand to her, and together they went to the great fireplace where food was being given out, Terestes pausing to speak to the Atlantean women as they went.

The terrors of the night had reduced the gently nurtured Atlantean women to a state verging on hysteria. Their minds had been torn with anxiety for the welfare of loved ones fighting somewhere in the vast darkness—but this was as nothing to the pitiful panic that swept them as hut after hut took fire. Hugging their treasured possessions they cowered tremblingly near the brook, nor could Theonis persuade them that the danger was past and they might return in safety to their huts. To her fire was no less horrible because a familiar danger, and she had watched with them till day brought back the men.

Fabulous tales did the tribesmen tell of Atlantean prowess. Three heads at a single stroke had the doughty King laid low—so ran the story fostered by the Chief himself. His admiration of Lumnos knew no bounds, and his envy of the great two-edged sword was very patent. Lumnos expanded to geniality in the warm air of approval, and promised the Chief (through Terestes) a sword as nearly like his own as could be obtained. His eyes heavy with want of sleep he continued to expatiate on the virtues of metal, till the weary warriors finished eating and turned their attention to shelter, for they dared not rest until some restoration of order had been attempted.

A good half of the huts had been burned, and amongst them the shelter that protected the ever-burning fire from storms. The thatch above it had been set afire deliberately in the belief, that burning to the

foot of its supporting columns it would kindle beyond possibility of extinguishing the rush-strewn centre. Alas for best laid plans. The thatch, being very dry with much drought had indeed burned away, leaving the precious fire exposed to the elements, but the tough trees had not burned half way down,—and the rushes in the circle were too green to light well.

With anxious eyes that noted coming storm, the Chief bade this be repaired at once, lest the fire be washed away. Working swiftly, tribesmen and slaves alike, they first laid a temporary shelter of long branches, crossed by shorter branches, upon the half-burnt supports. Then in the neighbouring woods they cut taller, rounder trees and placed these in position, each a little in advance of the charred supports, enclosing a larger space, where the tribesmen might huddle if the deluge came before the huts were reconstructed. The top of each trunk, and there were twelve, one at each corner, two midway in each side—they cleft deftly, and in the cleft wedged horizontal poles shorter than the supports. These were again notched and shorter poles inclined to form the ridgepole's foundation. From ridgepole to eave they laid dozens of small, stripped saplings, fastening them at either extremity by lacings of hide and fibre. Into this foundation they interwove osier willows till the whole was a thick tight network.

Up and down the poles swarmed the workers—the numbers gradually lessening until only two were left on either side to weave in and out, reeds of tough fibre. The whole was finished off by several layers of rushes laid flat and fastened in place by long interlacing thongs that passed from edge to edge of roof, and from ridge pole to eaves, to be secured about the roof's supports.

Lumnos watched this proceeding with surprise at the dexterity displayed without fine tools or material, but his dissatisfaction grew apace. A plan began to form in his mind as he recollected the stone huts of Atlantean laborers, and he broached the subject to Terestes.

"Yea—" scoffed Terestes, "In time, Lumnos, thou canst do even this. But—where dost thou hope to quarry stone? How wilt thou fetch it thither and set it in place. No longer doth Astrellon perform this duty for thee."

"Alas, thou'rt right! Fool that I am to dream." Lumnos was plainly crestfallen.

"Nay, I do but make thee see the difficulties which surround thee. Thou shalt indeed fulfil thy dreams. I doubt not yonder hills are built of such stone as thou requirest. But first thou must make friends with the Hill Men; next—provide tools for thy workmen; and then haul the cut stones thither by the sweat of man's brow. It can be done—in time!—If thou'rt not feaful!"

"I am fearful—fearful of life, of long sleep and yea even of battle, but I can compass that."

"Come, that spirit suiteth a King. He who refuseth to acknowledge fear is kin to fools, or a vain braggart, for the brave man is one who knoweth too well the hazards he runneth, yet doth buckle on his sword and go forth to meet this foe. Let us hold such Athros as thou seest in vision, as a dream time may fulfill, and make for ourselves temporary habitations that shall keep off rain."

"My Lord," said Theonis approaching and considering the newly-made thatch with speculative eye. "If they use osier for yon thatch, why should we not build huts in the same manner? Thou knowest the swamp beyond the lake is a wilderness of osier. Closer is the foundation weave—therefore less readily wind bloweth through the chinks. If thou wouldst trust me with thy bronze hatchet, methinks I could fashion one such, in short order."

"Methought thou wert resting, Theonis."

"Shall I rest while my Lord toileth? Shall I take ease while Athros is laid low? Nay, Lord, not Theonis!"

"Thy spirit doth give thee credit!" Terestes approved. "Yea I will come with thee, and we shall bring osiers to the city. Yet ere we cut profusely let

us make experiment with one hut, for by so doing we shall have greater success." He picked up his bronze hatchet and turned toward the gate—but a sudden thought swung him toward the city again.

"Fear not, Lord — The Hill Men have removed their dead, and ours be gathered in against burial."

Terestes started perceptibly. "How didst thou know that which I forebore to mention?"

"My Lord Terestes, many things do I sense beyond that which is spoken. Fear not—I do not seek to penetrate thy sacred thoughts! Behold thy friend the King pitieth thee for thy unexpected acquisition of poor Theonis!" And she laughed mockingly at the King's perplexed face.

"What saith the damsel?" he demanded gruffly of Terestes. "Faith, can I ever learn this heathen tongue?"

Terestes repeated the conversation to the King's discomfort. "Tush!" he growled as he stalked away with dignity. "An uncomfortable companion indeed—If so be she doth read thought, my faith, keep her from me!"

It was Terestes' turn to laugh, and he began to suspect the King would avoid Theonis whenever possible.

"Yea Lord!" Theonis' blue eyes danced with enjoyment. "He will not linger in my presence lest haply I surprise a thought of white ankles, and birch-slender forms! But thou, my Lord, hast no such thoughts to trouble thee. Come, it groweth dark with storm. Let us gain our osiers ere the rain fall."

Darker and darker grew the sky. Faster flew the fingers of the weavers on the thatch. The Chief ordered all possessions carried under that sheltering roof, and further covered by tarpaulins brought from the Falcon. The tribesmen carried quantities of fuel in case the rain continue for several days. Those whose huts remained standing took under their wings the homeless and desolate, the mourning and bereft, cheerfully crowding into smaller space and jesting about their discomforts.

Scarcely had these preparations been completed when the rain began to fall steadily. A warmth and fragrance lingered in the air, and hut doors were left ajar to admit light and the balmy perfume of rain on green ground.

Theonis and Terestes were caught in the sudden down-pour. They returned leisurely to the city laden with osiers, their wet garments clinging to their bodies. Theonis had tucked a cluster of blue hyacinths above her ear, and as she walked she hummed a quaint little tune in a voice deep, but not true. Terestes following in the wake of her elastic steps, thought of Estrella with her golden voice honey-sweet above the lilt of the cithara. He dwelt on the picture, and as he dreamed, the humming stopped abruptly and a cloud descended on Theonis.

The Chief was awaiting them in Terestes' hut. "My daughter, I feared whither thy adventurous spirit led thee."

"We did but go to cut osiers, my father, for as thou knowest I have long declared thou shouldst use osiers rather than reeds. Behold, at last I have found agreement. My lord at my request went with me to the swamp beyond the lake."

"So, dost thou expect thy lord and master to take thy advice, Girl. Thinkest thou,—a woman!—to know more of building than seasoned men?" The Chief frowned fiercely on Theonis.

"Yea, if women must tend the home, thinkest thou not they should have some word in its construction? Much could I do to make the lot of womanhood easier! Many things could I suggest to add to man's comfort and to woman's ease." Her blue eyes snapped with purpose and ambition.

"So? Terestes what dost thou propose to do with this spitfire? Wilt thou tame her, and keep her in her place?"

"Nay. I will e'en take her advice for it hath the ring of good sense. And when the rain ceaseth, mayhap thou wilt give us leave to build for thee an osier

hut after the maiden's heart. If thou dost dislike it, we can lay it low again."

"Son—too lenient art thou! Beware, she will twist thee about her finger as a hair is curled. Be most firm, most stern with this saucy maid!" His mouth twitched as he gave the good advice.

Theonis gazed deeply into her husband's eyes for a moment; "Fear not, my father. Have I not given thee obedience through my love for thee? I will give obedience to this Terestes, because he doth excel me in culture, in wisdom, and in nobility of heart. Unworthy am I to be named in the same breath. Who am I to call Terestes, lord—thy rebellious wild Theonis? Nay, lord, reproach me not in thought. Thy choice is elsewhere—as thou hast said, and cannot be twisted to semblance of Theonis. So be it. Yet we shall make of this strange web called life a pattern not so fair as that thou didst dream, but on the whole,—a well-woven article."

"My child, whence cometh these strange notions? Thy mother—gentle and obedient was she! Thy father—"

"A ridiculous old darling!" cried Theonis with the sudden change from grave to gay that characterized all her movements. "Albeit a conceited one, who is prone to believe Theonis doth follow in her father's footsteps."

"Unhappy child! Hast thou so little respect for thy father's age and position." The Chief pulled one of the long braids till Theonis grimaced. "Little warrior, who didst save thy father's city, I would see thee happy."

"If thou wouldst see me happy, hasten to thy hut I pray thee, and lay aside this soaked and blood-stained robe, whilst thou dost repose. Thou'rt no longer young, my father, and thy bones ache when thou dost steep thyself in wet clothing as thou knowest. Therefore, my father, do as I direct thee!"

The Chief rose from his cramped position, giving vent to a little groan as he did so, and holding his back with both hands. Theonis flew to his aid, uttering

soft little cries, and urging him to make no delay in warming himself.

"I will come with thee, and heat stones to put at thy back, and rub thee with grease and feed thee hot broth."

"Peace, woman!" thundered the Chief. "Think-est thou I am babe in arms to be thus coddled? Not yet have I reached my dotage! Rub me with grease—wilt thou indeed? When my flesh crieth out to rest, thou wouldst stir it to fresh gnawings. Moreover the grease stinketh. I go to rest. But do thou, Theonis, stay with thy husband and tend to thine own clothing—Faith thou dost look like drowned rat!"

Theonis looked down at her scorched and soaking fawnskin robe. Her hair sprang away from the braids in tight little wet curls, and her bare feet were mud-covered. She rippled a low laugh, and began to unbraid her long plaits. The old Chief still bending with the pain in his back, kissed her, and slowly started for his own hut.

"See thou dost not go near Zeleatha!" Theonis called after him, leaning out the door to shake the water from her head. The Chief did not deign to reply, but Terestes said uneasily—"Thy robe is wet also!"

Theonis smiled to herself as if she had a little joke of her own. "Tush, there is no ache in my bones, lord. Wilt thou watch the progress of my father, and see that he fall not? I have other business to attend."

Unsuspectingly Terestes took his place in the door-way and looked out upon the empty square. The only persons he could see were slaves intent upon food preparation, and the maiden whose duty it was to tend the fire at that hour. He half turned toward the interior—"I do not see thy father—"

"Look again lord—surely thou canst behold him! He cannot have reached his hut yet." Once more Terestes scanned the great circle. "Nay, Theonis, he hath disappeared into some—"

Terestes turned about, and his eyes began to twinkle merrily. "Thy father spake truly concerning

thee. So—thy anxiety was not wholly on his part.”

“Nay,” laughed Theonis shaking her hair free from the mauve robe she wore, and tossing the dripping fawnskin across the open door. “I pray thee do likewise my lord. I will commune with my soul meanwhile.

“When I build huts,” she continued, “I shall have two rooms within, so that a maid may change her mind without the rest of the household gaping at her labors. And I shall have one more room for sleeping and one to eat in—my father hath taken my advice and visits with Zeleatha!”

Terestes’ laughter was the only answer to this sally and presently with the gravity that was a part of her nature as deep as her gait was delightful, she remarked:

“Where thinkest thou they sojourn—those who have passed? Go they indeed to Isles of Delight? Sleep they forever—or thinkest thou they sleep to wake to Life again?”

“Theonis I know not. Would that I could answer thy question with some degree of certainty.” He had come forward and stood against the lintel, meeting freely the frank blue eyes turned up to his. “I know not. Only this do I know. Astrellon, concerning whom I spoke to thy father, the Man of Knowledge, than whom no wiser hath lived on earth, Astrellon thinketh we sleep, perchance to wake once more and carry out the round of human existence.”

“And thou hopest, if thou shouldst live again, to be joined perchance to the maid thou dost love?” Theonis whispered with decision born of certainty. “When this life and its sorrows are forgotten, then dost hope for happiness?”

Terestes took her hands, and looked earnestly into her face, as he made answer.

“Rightly dost thou believe. Yet mayhap life holds some happiness for thee as for me. Let us therefore seek not the shadows ahead, nor behind, but live out each day as it seemeth best.” There was a finality in his tones greater than he realized, and Theonis, sensi-

tive to the slightest change of mood, withdrew as if a door had been closed in her face. She sighed and freed her hands, and when she broke the long reverie that held both, it was in entirely different tone.

"When dost thou set sail for Creta?"

"Mayhap when order is restored, and Athros rebuilt. Let us say when the moon waxeth once more. Fear not, Theonis, I will leave thee in safety with thy Father, and if I gain my Kingdom I will return for thee—And if I do not gain it, but am permitted to leave I will come to Athros; but if I come not again, I will send thee certain monies to keep thee in comfort, and thou shalt have freedom."

"Say not so, Terestes!" cried Theonis drawing herself to her greatest height. "Am I child to be thus treated? Am I spineless jellyfish to be left defenceless to the scorn of Athros? Nay Lord Terestes! Daughter am I of one grown grey in honourable warfare. Wife am I of one whose chivalry and prowess all delight to honor. Mother may I be of sons whose valor pales not beside their forefathers' achievements.

"Nay Terestes—Shackle me if thou wilt, beat me if thou wilt—I go with thee, lord! And if we fall on sleep, we fall on sleep together. And if we gain the Kingdom thou shalt dispose of me as seemeth best in thy sight. Yet if foul chance befall us, we shall return to Athros, not as defeated host creeping thither for protection, but as kinsmen of the tribe. I will starve with thee Terestes, I will die with thee, but go with thee I will if I must swim behind thy ship. See? My hands are strong—I could pull at the oars!"

She extended her clenched fists to him pleadingly; Terestes took them, and gently unclasped them.

"Child, thou goest perchance to bloodshed and terror. I thought only of thy protection when I told thee I would leave thee with thy father. Why shouldst thou seek death at my side? I who have told thee my heart is given elsewhere?"

Quick tears welled over in Theonis' eyes. "Lord, I go with thee willingly. Thou dost ask why, and I will tell thee. Behold about me I have seen no such

consideration as thou dost show womankind; fear, hatred, abuse, work, passion! these womankind doth know too well. But thou—thou dost offer kindness, and understanding. I do not seek that which thou wouldst withhold—I ask that thou wilt show me the treasures thou hast stored in thy mind. Greater to me are these, than all the treasures of Creta.

“I ask that thou wilt let me walk by thy side—unloved, yet no longer lonely. I offer thee, all that I have to give, freely, gladly and without stint. Lord, wilt thou not find some small solace in voice that speaketh to thee—a voice haply less sweet than that thou dost hear in fancy? Wilt thou not find cheer in eyes, blue perchance—nevertheless swift to laughter? If thou’rt ill, I will nurse thee to health. If thou’rt wounded care for thy wounds. Terestes, I will not be left in Athros—and if thou wilt not have me in the flesh, then will I surely slay myself and accompany thee in spirit! For I believe the spark within surviveth sleep! But thou wilt not do this thing. Thou wilt not force me to seek thee thus? Thou wilt take me with thee, Terestes!” The clarion tones in which she had delivered her ultimatum sank to a thrilling whisper.

Moved beyond words Terestes drew Theonis to him. “How could I refuse thy plea, O Child of Courage? Thou hast beseiged and conquered the forces I arrayed in thy behalf. For mark me, maiden, if I sought to leave thee behind, ’twas in thine own comfort and safety. I would have spared thee suffering, but I own thy companionship tempteth me beyond my strength. Thou shalt come with me as thou hast desire, and with thy brave spirit bidding me hope, shall I not prevail? Sorrow and bloodshed I fear me thou shalt see, but I take thy precious gift as freely as willingly as thou dost offer it. I have given my word. Thou shalt go with me Theonis.” Stooping Terestes kissed her gently and tenderly on her quivering mouth.

Theonis raised her eyes to his, their fire quenched in the tears that flowed from them.

"Thou will not regret Terestes, for if I add one iota to thy burden, in that hour may I perish. So be it, Lord and King. If we return, great be the joy of our returning. If thou dost pass—I join thee in death. By the tears of the Gods, I swear it." And dropping swiftly to the ground she pressed her lips to each of his feet in turn, much to his embarrassment. "My destiny lie in the path thy feet do tread," she said, rising with dignity—"My life in thy keeping!"

"And what of that will of thine? Is it also in my keeping?" queried Terestes with a swift smile.

Theonis laughed deeply as one still smitten with emotion. "Nay, lord, that I reserve for my use or abuse. I will my father to wed ere we depart—therefore I do warn him against Zeleatha at every opportunity. She is a comely widow who gazeth with compassion on my father's wifeless state—albeit she shrinketh from the incubus of my father's daughter! I know, and am well-content. He needeth a wife to rub him with evil-smelling grease and to coax him into humor when he vexeth himself. Let us seek him, for the tears of the gods cease to fall. Methinks he wendeth toward his own hut comforted. It is not well for man to live without wife. He waxeth surly and unclean!" Theonis laughed mischievously, and went on. "Nay Lord Terestes, it ill becometh Theonis to have jealousy. For if we love beyond shadow of doubting, how shall we be jealous lest that which is our own be given another? Each hath his separate place in the heart—and if one be valued above another, let us be content that each in his own niche, are we desired and needed."

Terestes gazed at her in amazement. Such theories in the realm of womankind he had not met before. The gentle Estrella wrapped in her dream-love, had been content to go her own way nor ponder on the fate of woman less kindly placed. This sentiment of Theonis' was akin to the desire he felt to bring what good he could to his own people. The dauntless spirit of this generous girl set a still higher standard for his achievement. Suddenly the grey

vista of the future stretched before him warm and pulsing with life—a shining upward ascent, wide enough for two to climb side by side. There was so much they could do together!

He turned toward Theonis with a little gesture of pleasure infinitely consoling to the girl who had watched his face change from incredulity to delighted surprise.

“My lord,” she said gaily, “Thou wilt find Theonis as uncertain as spring showers—but full of surprises.”

“But I like surprises!—” cried Terestes, “and yea, I like also—Theonis!”

CHAPTER XIV.

FORGOTTEN BY CRETA

Faint streaks of crimson and gold outlined the hills in the far east. There was no sound on the ocean save the quiet dip of the oars as the galley drew nearer the island whose mountain and plain rolled a mass of velvet shadows before the advent of light. Silhouetted against the sky, two figures on the galley's deck gazed with palpitating anxiety toward that land. Strange premonitions and poignant memories stirred in the heart of Terestes as he beheld once more his native shores. Faded and torn was the tunic the wanderer wore, thin and older the eager face above it.

Strange the thoughts of Theonis, as she, too, peered through the darkness toward that unknown country. A forecast of failure dimmed her face, and she held fast to the vessel's side with both hands.

The ship drew near to the quay, paved with stone and built of white hard brick. Far as the eye could see, masts of ships rose blackly,—for Creta prided herself on her commerce and her prosperity,—a forest of ships from every nation known to the world; coracles from Asia Minor; feluccas from Barbary; queer-prowed Pheonician boats, speaking mutely of the wealth in that island empire. In and out the Falcon twisted and doubled among their ranks, as the light grew in the East, and life began to stir on sea and shore. Sails fluttered in the faint breeze, white-robed figures began to move in the winding streets, and from some hillside temple came softly across the water strains of music.

Slowly and with infinite care, the Helmsman, Althus, warped the vessel to a vacant spot by the wide quay, answered in Cretan the hail of the night-watch on the seawall, and made the Falcon fast. Then,

while the oarsmen rested at their oars, like children impatient to be let out of school, Terestes walked among them, thanking them and promising gifts for their devotion. The Helmsman added to this speech a final injunction to forbear mentioning Terestes by any name save that of Leon. The crew sprang to the quay—save a light guard—followed by the Helmsman, and Terestes and Theonis were left alone.

For, after much discussion, they had decided to announce themselves as Lord Leon and Lady Theonis of Athros till they discovered in what repute Terestes was held. The Helmsman had demurred loudly at this, for he desired to raise to his standard at once those loyal to Terestes, and, he argued, with an army at his back, Terestes would have better chance to regain the people's vacillating affection. That Terestes had forbidden, for he said, "If it be true, my Cousin ruleth wisely and well, shall I who discarded my kingdom sweep him from the throne?"

The old seaman had vehemently defended Terestes, but Terestes would not defend himself, and they finally reached a compromise in the assumed names. So Althus had gone ashore to find out the latest news and to purchase suitable wearing apparel for Terestes and Theonis.

As they sat in the cabin at the first meal of the day, Terestes communicated some of his thoughts to Theonis. He had already discovered she was clear-headed and understanding to a degree, and frequently she gave him new angles of thought on old problems. He told her of the delicate mother whose girlhood had been spent in the precincts of the Temple with her Priest Father. Of the first small son whom his father had dedicated and himself given in offering to Baal, and, touch as lightly as he would upon that hitherto avoided theme, Theonis' mind filled in the details of the picture. Her heart failed her and she asked:

"My Lord Terestes, wouldst thou also cast son of thine into the fire?"

"Nay, Theonis. My heart trembleth in me for very sickness at the thought. That I might learn better

forms of worship did I seek strange lands. But wherever I go, always I find sacrifice of life and it doth not seem good to me. How could I endure to have little ones put to the torture in my name? Poor and small am I beside the Deity. Thinkest thou the Deity seeketh propitiation by human life, O Theonis? I do not think so. The Land of the Lotus giveth sacrifice to the Nile; Atlantis developed certain hideous practices of late years. Yea, Theonis, my heart is heavy within me when I remember the cries, and the stench and the sadness. My delicate mother faded steadily thereafter, and fell upon sleep when my small sister came. One sister had I twelve years older, sold into Egypt ere my heart grew to know her. My small sister my uncle wed with Cretan noble, Althus saith."

"And yet thou dost believe uncle and cousin ruled well?"

"My uncle after his lights. And verily I was more in love with rolls of parchment and journeying in strange lands, than with keeping a fierce people in check. The weakness was mine, and the strength his. I do not cast reproach on him if he sought to gratify a natural desire in placing his son upon the throne."

"Terestes, thou wilt return to Athros?" Theonis affirmed.

"Thinkest thou so? Nay, if my people need me, I will stay."

"Terestes, the heart of a people is so strange a thing. Today adulation, tomorrow contempt, the day after—death."

"Strong are my people to hate, but strong also to love. Thou wilt grace the palace, Theonis."

"Small wish have I to rule, and that wish only thy desire, Lord. In Athros foes come by night. In Creta, they come by day and slay thee with a smile." She drew herself up proudly till Terestes' merry laugh melted her dignity and they went on deck together. There Terestes amused Theonis by naming and describing the different buildings of the city. From low quay-side far up the hill ranged that city, the marble

columns of the royal palace gleaming on the heights above. To Theonis the scene was one of intense interest.. The beauty and weird architecture of Creta filled her with awe, which did not, however, strike her dumb. She began to ask intelligent questions, respecting the reason for various oddities in structure, the man-headed columns, the queer pillars painted in bright hues.

"In faith, Theonis, thou dost put me to shame," Terestes averred. "Many years did I live in Creta, yet beyond marvelling at the ugliness of yon great columns, I sought no reason for such oddity. Would that thou couldst have seen the slender grace, the delicate carving of Atlantean pillars. Then wouldst thou have indeed exclaimed."

Theonis moved impatiently with the chill that ever struck her heart when Atlantis was mentioned.

"My lord, I fear my barbarian eyes had e'en been blinded by the splendors of Atlantis, and Atlantean beauties."

Terestes shot a swift glance at her and laughed. Then brought himself up with a start of dismay. He had not thought of Estrella for three whole days! How could he be so disloyal? And in his turn he moved a little apart from Theonis. So it was the Helmsman found them, each gazing silently into the distance. Theonis had selected the seaward view, and there was little to hold her interest; nevertheless she remained gazing into space until Terestes called her, and bade her don the apparel Althus had brought.

Peace and gaiety held sway in the city. The King had wedded two days previously a beauty from the Asia Minor colony. Very proud were the Cretans of their King and Queen Consort, and though the Helmsman forbore to say it, careful enquiry in supposedly loyal quarters had resulted in blank stares, and the question, "Terestes? Who is Terestes?" The old Helmsman's heart was sad, for he little thought to meet such treatment. He, too, was well nigh forgotten in his two year's absence. He agreed, however, to accompany them to the palace and wait without for their

pleasure. To him it seemed an unsatisfactory project, but if they were held prisoners he could at least give his life to rescue them.

Terestes put on the fresh raiment which he had purchased with some of the few remaining coins in his purse. He smiled ruefully as he counted those still left them, and fastening his cape to his shoulders, he bade Theonis display herself. The warm violet of the robe he had ordered the Helmsman to procure brought out the delicate texture of her fair skin. Her blue eyes sparkled with intelligence as she held her head high. Althus, who admired her very much, swept her a deep curtsy.

"Would that I had jewels to adorn thee, Theonis. And yet I know not. Perchance the plainness of thy raiment suiteth thee best. To-day we shall be received as guests and treated courteously. Tomorrow, well, I shall protect thee with my life."

"Fear not for me, my Lord Leon. Strong is my hand and mayhap I shall protect thee!" She turned the glittering point of her dagger toward the world at large, till Terestes laughed and the Helmsman chuckled.

Leaving the ship, they made their way up streets whose stones were worn smooth by the passage of many feet. The air was full of strange scents, and Theonis, looking about her with avidity, saw for the first time swaying passion flower, jasmine and roses.

Two great flights of black and white marble steps led from the cobbled road to the palace far above. (Yet if one followed the road, one might come also to the palace by a roundabout way.) Before the gates of that stairway, soldiers paced, but as the Helmsman advanced and stated the name and kinship of Terestes and Theonis, the soldiers saluted and sprang aside.

Terestes took Theonis' cold hand and they passed beneath the crossed spears of the soldiers and began to mount the stairs. Very wide and very shallow were the steps, and where the first flight ended and the second began, a broad platform with covered benches invited rest. The little party were too anxious to pause,

and they moved straight up the second flight, emerging on a terrace which stretched on either hand far as the eye could see. Large fountains were scattered about, casting water lazily into the sultry air. The Palace built of dark stone brilliantly painted with warlike figures, presented a forbidding aspect. Gigantic men of stone stood guard at either side of the entrance, and through the carved and painted columns a dim vista of polished marble could be seen.

Tall and broad-shouldered as Terestes were the soldiers on guard before the entrance; but darker-haired and warlike in appearance. They wore ample loin cloths of white and sandals on their broad feet. Glittering breastplates protected the heart of each warrior and on each head rested a helmet, which kept out the sun's rays. Twenty on either side, they stood motionless in the heat, though great beads of sweat stood out on brow and chest. The captain, whose jewelled breast-plate proclaimed his rank, stood motionless, with drawn sword, facing the steps. As the trio reached the top, the captain advanced to inquire the name and rank of the strangers. Again the Helmsman replied:

"The Lord and Lady Theonis of Athros, who request audience with the great King of Creta."

The captain looked keenly at the pair thus indicated, but no shade of recognition passed over his face. He bowed, passed through his guard, and on into the palace. In a few moments he returned to bid the strangers follow him.

Into inward-facing rows once more the guard swung with the precision of clock work, their spears scarcely clinking as they crossed them over head. Terestes, following in the captain's train, scanned every face for a sign of recognition, but none came.

Through lofty dim corridor and many vast apartments they went. Across the great deserted throne room, along another corridor; then pausing before a curtained doorway, the captain saluted and turned Theonis and Terestes over to the care of a distinguished-looking, gray-haired soldier who stood there

at attention. Saluting in his turn the soldier bowed low, drew aside the curtain and motioned them to enter.

The embroidered arras fell into place behind them and they found themselves in a small inner court of exquisite beauty. Roses bloomed, birds sang, lilies floated on the great central pool, and jasmine climbed to the eaves of the palace on every side. Before them seated on a stone bench was a man who regarded them in silence for some time. Tall, of slender build, lean of limb and jaw was he. His fair hair crisped away from his forehead in waves, his large light blue eyes were keen, cold, penetrating. A robe of deep blue adorned by sapphire clasps fell in rich folds about him. Sapphires sparkled in his sandal-lacing, and starred the slender silver band about his head.

He studied Terestes intently for some time. Then, rising, he advanced to put his hands upon Terestes' shoulders and gazed at Terestes with a quizzical smile.

"By my father's bones, Terestes, I would have passed thee by, had I met thee elsewhere. So—thou comest again to Creta—well!"

The King Taledes had had many days in which to think over Terestes' possible return and plan accordingly. He had long since ceased to fear his coming though as the years passed peacefully he seized upon the hope that Terestes was dead. There still remained a goodly measure of the affection he had felt for his boyhood playmate, and a little of the contempt the soldier holds for the scholar. He smiled, not unpleasantly.

"What seekest thou in Creta? I tell thee I will not yield the throne to thee. Nevertheless let there be peace betwixt us."

"Yet, O Taledes, thou knowest the throne is mine by every right of inheritance!" Terestes answered calmly.

"Have a care, Leon, the walls have ears. By every right of inheritance mayhap. But by every right of kingly duty, no! Tamely didst thou flee thy

kingdom and wherefore, foresooth? In search of musty rolls of forgotten ages?"

"Nay, I sought one whose wisdom could have made Creta the greatest civilization of all times."

"Creta is the greatest civilization of all times. Well, then, didst thou find him? Or perchance thou hast him with thee?"

"Nay, he went elsewhere," said Terestes sadly.

"Aye, I recollect. Thou didst go in search of a fabled magician who dwelt in Atlantis, purposing to learn his secrets from him. Well?" Taledes had a habit of rapping words out with staccato suddenness.

A flush rose to Terestes' cheeks as he answered, "Yea, I found him, and I served him,—and learned many of his secrets."

The King studied him awhile, and as abruptly as he spoke, turned his attention to Theonis.

"Atlantean?"

"Nay, of Athros," answered Terestes proudly.

"Well, if thou hast not hand for kingship, thou hast eye for beauty! Thou shouldst behold my choice. Power, land and jewels did she bring me."

A corruption of Cretan was spoken by the people of Athros, and Theonis flushed at this remark.

"Perchance love also, my lord King?" she asked in sweet, low voice, with a searching glance. In his turn, Taledes flushed.

"Love? What is love?" he asked. "A feather-weight beside power and kingdom. Terestes, I tell thee this, thou'rt forgotten in Creta, or if remembered, named with contempt. I know. These people like me. I have brought them to supremacy of wealth, and I will not give up the throne. I swear it on my father's bones. Throw not thyself away thoughtlessly. I am stronger than thou wert ever. Yea, a better king than thou couldst be, for I rule with iron hand a cruel race. Return to thy scrolls and parchments, and let there be peace in Creta."

Terestes was very pale, and his breath came fast as he answered. "I came not to bring bloodshed, but better ways of living. And if thou canst show

me that indeed I have no longer place with my people, yea, I will depart.

"Thou wert with the magician?" enquired the King uneasily.

"Yea, and I know many of his secrets."

"So! . . . Well, tarry thou with us and in a few days we shall make decision of the future. I will set apartments for ye, and ye shall be treated with courtesy due kinsmen of the King." He spoke more kindly than before, and, lifting a small hammer, struck a brazen gong that stood near.

"I will send for thee to attend the banquet at nightfall, Lord Leon, and thou wilt perchance discover how many remember thee with love." He dismissed them abruptly and following the slave who waited their pleasure, they left the courtyard by a doorway in the opposite side.

The apartment into which they were ushered, was a lofty circular one, richly carved in a pattern of roses and grapes, the white walls being further embellished by boldly defined scenes in glowing hues. A flush rose beneath Theonis' fair skin before her eye swept on to maroon hangings heavily fringed in gold. Marble tables were scattered about the apartment in juxtaposition to luxurious couches whose carved ends were elaborately inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Great alabaster jars of crimson roses spilled their fragrance about the air, and wide maroon-hung windows overlooked the city below them.

Theonis sank on one of the cushioned couches, and made deliberate and thoughtful survey of the room, but ever her eyes returned to Terestes, as he reclined upon an adjoining couch, his face deadly pale, his manner more nervous than she had ever seen it, as he played, now with the tassel that hung from his cloak, now with the dagger that peeped from his girdle. His gloomy eyes rested on the roses climbing about the window, and for a time Theonis did not force herself upon his attention, but began a tour of the room, fingering the silky fabrics with delight, sniffing at the roses, her beauty-loving soul responding to

the exquisite proportion of the room and its life-like carvings. She persistently turned her back on the crude illustrations of the walls and Terestes, emerging from his daydream, lay back and watched her. A smile played over his face as she hovered over each strange object in turn, and when a turn in the wall brought her face to face with a particularly crude fresco, she turned from it with a gesture of loathing as he called her to his side.

"So long since I sojourned here that I did forget these old pictures. Moreover what in old days struck me not with horror, filleth me with disgust even as thou art filled. 'Tis a series of pictures from a bye-gone age. Let us refresh ourselves with fruit and wine. Come what may, I fear it not."

"Lord, if Theonis be barrier twixt thee and thy throne, send her hence."

"Sayest thou this to me, child?" he asked, in some surprise, not remembering the strangeness of her surroundings had filled her heart with misgivings as to her right to be in such a place. "Why, Theonis, 'tis not thou that dost keep me from these marble halls, but Terestes, whose wandering spirit led him away from his duty. Say not so to me again, Theonis, for I do place thee most highly of all the world left to me."

He began to talk to her of mother, sister and friends and while they were yet engrossed in their talk, the slave who had conducted them thither, appeared with silken garments, which he presented to Terestes with a low bow, at the same time saying he had duly carried the message to the Helmsman to return to the Falcon. Then, standing erect before Terestes, he awaited further orders, the scarlet of his vestment gleaming against his black flesh.

Terestes lifted the raiment and smiled at Theonis reassuringly. "Adorn thyself freely, for of a truth they are thine."

The slave clapped his hands, and in answer to the signal, a gentle-faced, fair-haired woman entered by one of the curtained doorways, and beckoned Theo-

nis to follow her into a small room where was a sunken pool of water deliciously perfumed. Theonis bathed and dressed under the ministrations of the slave whose hands lingered caressingly over satiny skin and glossy hair.

The gown which Taledes had sent to her was a rich amethyst of soft satin clasped with a girdle of amethyst stones. Theonis was enraptured with these and held them to catch the light, now this way, now that. The imprisoned hues of violets, of faraway mountains, of the last sweet starry flower of autumn smiled at her from the depths. And when, to fasten the robe upon the left shoulder, a brooch of a single pure stone was added, her rapture was complete.

"Only behold, my lord, how beautiful!" she exclaimed hastening from the tiring-room to the large apartment,—but even as she spoke, the exultation died on her lips. This was a new Terestes, kingly and far above her. Above the deep amber of his robe, his face shone strangely pale; his head was circled by a slender silver band studded with rubies. The beautiful amethysts were forgotten as Theonis sank low before him, touching his sandals with her forehead, while all her barbarian ancestry rose up to form impassable barrier. No sooner had she stooped than Terestes leaned over and lifting her to her feet with one effort of his sinewy arms, placed her directly before him. She stood with eyes down-dropped, and sweet lips trembling in attempt to be dignified as Terestes would wish. No longer was she Theonis, Lady of Terestes, but a barbarian, a lonely sojourner in a distant land. Her heart swelled with pride of Terestes and pain for her own unworthiness. Terestes swept away the barrier and bridged the gap as he drew her near, and kissed her very tenderly on the mouth. And, still holding her firmly to him, he smoothed her head, and said, so sincerely Theonis could not doubt him:

"But I will not have tears. For surely no fairer form or more eagle mind will sit tonight at the table. Fear not, Theonis. I feel only pride in thee. Thy

lord doth stake his life on thine astute surety of thought."

He drew her arm in his and bade the slave go before them, and as they went through the labyrinthine passages, Theonis ceased to tremble.

"Well that thou hast taught me a little of thy true tongue, O Lord, for we shall have need of all our wits, methinks."

"O Theonis, be quick to discover what lieth in all hearts. I need thee."

Her confidence restored, she flashed up at him eyes so starry that he involuntarily exclaimed, "Dost know thine eyes are brighter and infinitely more beautiful than these amethysts?"

A rose flush stained her cheeks, as strains of music reached their ears, and before a huge screen of beaten silver the slave bowed and indicated that they must enter alone. Terestes drew Theonis a little closer and they passed beyond the barrier, and stood waiting.

So high this apartment that the blue vault of sky could be seen but dimly, for the roof was partly open, great branching columns stretching forth arms to support awnings in inclement weather. Huge pillars topped by colossal beasts surrounded that enormous room. At the base of the pillars dozens of black slaves, nude, save for their scarlet loin-cloths—bore flaming torches in upraised arms. Down the length of the apartment went a table adorned with a rich profusion of gold, silver and glazed pottery. The Cretan nobles were grouped to one side, waiting the command to be seated, their jewels sparkling in the light.

All this Theonis noticed as they passed the silver screen and advanced toward the dais where sat the King, a robe of cloth of silver forming a scintillating background for the jewels that adorned his person. At his side was the Queen, a rounded, voluptuous figure, whose trailing gold tissues scarcely veiled her flesh. A great veil floated free from a jewelled crown, and a circlet of diamonds flamed on her neck.

Taledes imperiously bade the kneeling pair rise and, descending a step, so that his one hand rested lightly on Terestes' shoulder, he lifted the other for silence.

"Lords and Ladies of Creta, my kinsmen, Lord Leon and Lady Theonis of Athros, who have come hither to honor us."

The Court swayed gracefully and Taledes offered his arm to the Queen, leading her to twin carved seats inlaid with gold, which stood at the table's head. He bade Theonis and Terestes seat themselves at his right and the assembled courtiers moved to the places their rank entitled them to take. The stewards rushed forward the slaves with great platters of food, and the banquet began. A few curious glances were directed toward Theonis and Terestes, but visiting nobility were common in Creta, and the feast of vastly more importance.

The rich sauces, the heavy and greasy meats were repugnant to Theonis, and she touched them but lightly, watching and imitating the manners the others employed in consuming the various dainties. At the end of each course, bowls were brought round, and the guests dipped their hands in the perfumed water.

Glancing up and down the long board, Theonis soared above her awe. "Faith, these are but barbarians also!" she said to herself, as the walls of the palace seemed to fade away and the glare of the flambeaux shone as redly on upturned faces as ever did the fires of Athros fall on revellers. Midway of the table sat a rubicund gentleman whose one object seemed to be consuming the greatest possible quantity of food. Theonis smiled, "Exthose, the glutton!" Her eyes travelled to a thin shrewish woman at the far end whose thin fingers sparkled with gems. "Scolina, the Scold! Take away the jewels, remove the fine mantles, and shall not the people of Athros be as comely as these?"

Strange, sticky sweetmeats were brought in, and snow-chilled wines in great alabaster amphorae.

Tongues were loosened by the wine and quip and satire flashed from end to end of the table.

Suddenly came a lull in the repartee, and a noble, whose venerable aspect Terestes had been regarding somewhat sadly, sprang to his feet and cried in a loud voice, "A health to the greatest King of the greatest Kingdom on earth. To Taledes and his bride!"

Every courtier rose, and every throat drank deeply of the toast. With a proud smile that somehow lingered on Leon, Taledes cried, "Let us e'en drink to our forefathers! To the Kings of Creta, and to the Kings of Creta!"

"To the Kings of Creta—yea—with one exception, great Overlord!" said the noble who had spoken before. "We will drink to all the Kings of Creta, save that renegade What's-his-name who basely fled his people. Well for Creta that he did so, for Creta hath prospered by thy hand, as it had never prospered under that puling youth!"

"Well said, Maxallos!" "Right art thou!" "Brava" came from all quarters of the feast. Taledes smiled enigmatically at Terestes, and cried, "Then will ye drink to the faithful Kings of Creta, who shirked not their duty?"

They drank with ribald enthusiasm, and when they were seated, Taledes said smoothly.

"My kinsmen are of Athros, and perchance know not whereof ye speak."

"Sire, I speak of a King—whose name I cannot quite remember—"

"Terestes! That traitor name!" cried a sweet voice from the far end, and, leaning forward Theonis descried a girl in her early twenties, flushed with wine and anger, and with a bitter sneer curling her lips. "Name not that name in my presence, Maxallos. It is insult to my royal house. Weak-kneed, traitor-hearted that he was, of a surety our father sired him not. Little love have I for one who brought shame and discredit to the royal lineage that he bore. Poor fool, his stomach turned at the sacred rites of Baal! Were I not certain he rested in the tomb, mine own

hand would glory in despatching him!" Her voice rose to a shriek that made Terestes shiver and turn ashly pale. Theonis pressed him warningly under cover of the table, her own eyes glancing fearlessly about.

"Peace, woman!" Taledes said in a voice as still and cold as ice. "Terestes is dead. I tell thee I have proof of it. And what he sought to accomplish sleepeth with him. Let the discussion rest. He is forgotten, and thy manners likewise. For thou'rt flushed with wine. This feast is in honor of my bride. Little thought I by kingly toast to call such maledictions on my head. My shame is thine—doubly so in that thou dost forget thyself!"

The girl sank back white and subdued, while every eye turned on her in cold surprise.

"What ho, Halerses! Bring on the dancers!" said the King, leaning back in his chair at ease.

The stewards refilled the wine cups, and the people settled back content. A few admiring glances rested on Theonis, but neither recognition, antagonism nor interest did Terestes discover in any face. It was a bitter cup to drain, anything but contempt and oblivion. His sister had stabbed him no less surely because she had used woman's most effective weapon on him. He sipped slowly at his hitherto untouched wine cup, and surveyed the dancers who slipped by the great screen, maidens veiled in filmy garments and decked with garlands of red roses, which as the dance proceeded, they scattered to the laughing, shouting guests. Theonis could scarcely conceal her aversion and, looking to the Queen for acquiescence in her feeling, she found that olive-skinned beauty following the measures of the dance with languid enjoyment in her black eyes. With a wild yearning she longed for the clean, dew-spangled atmosphere of Athros, and the graceful dancers who appealed to the highest in man. She was amazed and annoyed to discover that Taledes was laughing at her disdain, and her blue eyes undimmed by any fumes of wine, did battle with the King's pale ones, till he withdrew his, and Theonis

calmly returned to contemplation of the faces of her companions. She sensed Terestes' inward strife and a rising nausea induced by the unaccustomed rich foods and longed intensely for the feast to end; it seemed years before the flambeaux began to burn down and the dancers to depart. The King withdrew with the Queen, leaving the company to continue their revels or retire as they pleased. Terestes and Theonis seized the opportunity the King accorded them in a sweep of his hand and sought their own apartments.

Theonis made haste to lay aside her rich garb, heedless of the winking stones that had so delighted her, and resuming her own robes, ministered to Terestes' who was deadly sick by this time. With tireless patience she laid cold cloths on his head, and when he had found release from his troubles in sleep, she kept watch by him, till the weariness of her body overcame her valiant spirit and she slept on her knees by his couch, her arm with drawn dagger pointing outward, flung across Terestes' breast.

CHAPTER XV.

A KING'S PROTECTION

Thus, in the midmorning, Taledes found them still asleep. He advanced silently till he stood above them, gazed down at Terestes' pale face with unmoved calm, but softening to pity for Theonis. Something in that protective attitude touched him and he withdrew without waking them, bidding the slave see to their wants. Restless and perplexed, he wandered about the palace, till, with a sudden decision, he ordered his car and drove his fiery, coal-black steeds down to the quay. There he sought out the old Helmsman and gave orders for the purchase of all sorts of supplies and luxuries, handing him a bag of gold to make the necessary payments. Feeling very pleased with himself indeed, he made his way through the city to the accompaniment of great acclamation, which rose to the palace and smote the ears of Terestes and Theonis as they walked on the broad terrace.

"Yea, my Theonis, thou'rt right. We will return to Athros. Though, mark me, my wife, 'tis not a coward's fear of death that doth drive me hence. Thou didst hear the disdain and hatred with which my name was spoken last even. That also I might conquer, but, Theonis, to thee I cannot deny that Taledes doth make finer King than the wandering Terestes." He made a humble gesture with his hand, but Theonis stayed it.

"Lord, it is not so. Thou shalt make King such as Taledes hath never been. Yea. But thou hast changed, my Terestes in soul as in body and appearance. In the days of yesteryear the mockery of this life did not smite thy soul. Last night, my heart shrank and turned to water at what I beheld. Yea, thou didst blanch at the licentiousness of life

among those whose lives should be a pattern to the people. Thou canst not change them, Terestes, steeped as they are in tradition, for they love their cruel sacrifices and their animal pleasures. Nay, thou couldst not change so warlike a people. As well shouldst thou control the wind or alter the course of a stream. Lord, thou couldst not compel their change, hadst thou ten times ten thousand soldiers at thy back. For one cannot force a people to a trend of thought even though life itself be given in the attempt.

"We will return to Athros where the clean, the free, the untutored, pray for our return. Thou canst shape that people to the pattern that filleth thy brain. Better for thee to build Athros than to destroy Creta. Better for thee that barbarian generations yet unborn should call thee great, than that Creta should obliterate thy name from earth!"

Theonis was dewy-eyed, but resolute, as she regarded Terestes.

"Yea, let us return to Athros! There at least we shall find peace and honesty."

"Grieve not, my King, that thou didst hear accusal from the lips of one whom accident of birth hath made kin to thee."

"But she did revile my mother's name."

"Even so people revile hers," said Theonis calmly.

"My King, be tolerant of such, and as thou'rt forgotten, also forget, for I tell thee thou'rt above them as moon is high above struggling earth."

A turn in their pacing brought them abreast of the entrance where Taledes was with difficulty reining in his fiery horses. Throwing the lines to a waiting slave, he vaulted easily over the chariot's side and strode toward Terestes and Theonis.

"Let us walk in the open, for I would talk with thee, and walls have ears!" he said, leading the way to a stone bench that stood by one of the fountains. Theonis would have remained standing, but the King imperiously bade her be seated as he regarded Terestes searchingly. "Well?"

"Right thou wert, and mine the error. Thou hast been a good King and just, whilst I fled my people. Right art thou also in that the people forget me, or hate me. Verily also my sister! I will return to Athros."

"As to thy sister, little cause hath she to prate of thy misdemeanors! But, thou wilt do well to sail with the even's tide. Nay, resent not my will. I design to protect thee, O cousin, whom I loved of old!" said Taledes as a painful flush spread on Terestes' face. "Mayhap if thou hadst chosen to remain and contest my kingship, I had grown to hate thee. I would not have it so. Also Maxallos suspecteth thee, and though I have sent him on a delaying mission to adjacent city, I would not have him find thee here on his return. Thy sister hath an unholy passion 'gainst thee, and she will e'en win the truth from him with herself as price for his knowledge. So, if thou dost return to Athros, I will fit thy vessel with every comfort. Thou shalt have money and jewels if thou dost depart at sunset—alone!"

"What meanest thou, Taledes?" exclaimed Terestes starting to his feet.

The King rose also, "Beware kinsman! Though out of earshot, I would stake my life that we are watched! One false move and thy life is forfeit. This is my meaning—thou shalt leave Theonis to me. Fain would I add her to my collection of jewels. She is worthy so to shine." The King patted Terestes' shoulder condescendingly, as though he were offering kingly ransom "Come, what is one barbarian maid compared with thy freedom? She shall be well treated and luxuriously housed. Thou wilt find many another to take her place."

Terestes grew deathly pale. "Surely thou dost jest. But thou knowest my answer ere it is spoken. False Cousin, cruel King—not at such price do I purchase freedom. I will remain! There is but one Theonis in all the world—nor doth any gem in thy collection however fabulous shine with as pure and lustrous a gleam. Grant Theonis safe conduct to

Athros and thou shalt dispose of me where and when thou wilt! My life as ransom for her freedom."

"Wilt thou dictate to me?" enquired the King with a smile playing over his cold features. "Look about thee—thou'rt surrounded by my warriors. If I will, I may slay thee and take this Theonis."

"Thou shalt not take Theonis, King Taledes. For, if by malice aforethought thou dost despatch my lord, I swear thou wilt taste the mettle of barbarian steel, ere I join my lord in the Land of the Shades."

"Lady, I woo thee with jewels and gold. I will adorn thee in satins and bathe thee with perfumes."

"A fig for thy satins! Better I like the rough edge of the linen tunic my lord did buy. I seek no bath of seductive smell. Better to my flesh the sting of cold salt water! Thou canst not woo me with jewels, for behold we woo only with love,—and my love thou couldst never own since 'tis given to another. I am not for purchase, Lord Taledes! Call thy soldiers if thou wilt. In thy heart thou dost fear Terestes, and poor barbarian Theonis! Call thy soldiers and despatch us. Then thou wilt behold the barbarian maid die gladly with her lord." Springing up, Theonis grasped Terestes' arm, and braced her body against his.

The King clapped his hands, and the Captain of the Guard came running. The King gave him a command in an undertone and turned once more to Terestes and Theonis who stood pale but firm, their arms about each other. In a short space of time the Captain returned, bringing with him the King's own Nubian slave. The latter bore beneath his arm a casket, which the King took and opened so as to display handfuls of jewels, and rich cloth in folds. Holding to light the robe and the amethysts Theonis had worn on the previous evening, he said sardonically:

"Come, thou shalt have these and as many more as thou dost desire. Release thy lord, and he shall have safeguard to Athros."

Tighter Terestes drew Theonis, till his arms were as steel bands binding her close. "Such foul proposal doth demean thy Kingship, Taledes!"

Taledes beckoned the Nubian, and bade him touch the girl's throat with his dagger. Nearer and nearer came that gleaming point. The eyes of Theonis clung to the eyes of Terestes but no flinching did she make when the point pricked that white skin. "Hold!" cried the King. "Choose, Theonis, death or my protection. Death or my love."

"Death!" answered Theonis, without taking her eyes from her husband's as she waited for the final thrust. The King laughed suddenly, and bade the Nubian sheath his dagger.

"Forgive me, kinsmen, for so cruelly trying ye. I could not but mark thy attitude yester'en Theonis, and did marvel in my heart that virtue remaineth in any person. Therefore, I sought to try thee, whether thou wouldst choose death or dishonor. Would that there was one other in my kingdom so brave!" And, for the first time that day, he smiled kindly, and held out his hands to the pair. Relaxing, but not releasing his hold on Theonis, Terestes replied—"Thou dost behold, Taledes, one jewel that money cannot purchase."

"Let us repair to the Court of the Lotus, and refresh ourselves. Thereafter, I myself will drive thee to the quay. Would that I might ask thee to stay, but a thousand hazards are around thee."

"Thou wouldst speed thy fallen rival on his way! So be it, Taledes."

The King drew himself up proudly. "Kinsman, I have no rival. Taledes of Creta am I, whose sword is swift to strike the offender from his path!" Angry eye met angry eye, but ere heated words could follow Theonis swiftly interposed, smilingly saying to Taledes, "Fain would I behold thy Lotus Pond, O King, for of a truth, much have I heard concerning these fabulous flowers. Let us indeed go thither, for the sun is very hot and I would welcome shade."

The King drew his hand across his brow and turned toward the palace, leaving Terestes and Theonis

to follow. They traversed again the long marble corridors, but a turn in the opposite direction brought them at length to a doorway and beyond it lay a courtyard enclosed on three sides by palace walls, whose columns of green marble with gargoyle heads, supported the Queen's apartments. On the fourth side, the velvet grass stretched away in a long sweep of verdure, and directly down the centre of the plot, extending as far as the palace walls, ran a broad marble-walled pool on whose placid surface floated the golden lotus. Ilex trees bordered the garden, like soldiers in sombre green uniforms, their thin spears pointed forever to the sky. Pink oleanders and azaleas spread great pyramids of bloom. Magnolias opened pearly buds to the sun, but white roses predominated everywhere. They twined about the cold green marble pillars, lovingly; they stood out sharply against the foliage of ilex; they completely covered the small pavilion at the end of the pool.

Theonis stood for a moment spell-bound. Then with a little cry of ecstasy she flew from bush to bush, and leaned over the pool to touch the lotus with speculative fingers. Taledes watched her from the threshold of the little pavilion, amused at her enthusiasm. The Queen too, leaning from her casement, laughed with a child's glee, till Taledes becoming aware of her, beckoned her to join them. She came into view presently, walking with the indolent grace of the east, her heavily-jewelled gauze gown fluttering behind her, and the rose-colored lengths of the veil which fell away from a diamond circlet, floating from side to side. The King advanced to meet her, and dismissing her attendant, led her within the pavilion. Quite conscious of her beauty, and superiority, the Queen settled herself on the cushioned chair, and gave herself over to the careful arrangement of those flying draperies.

Theonis approached to make obeisance, her hands full of flowers which she offered the Queen. The Queen smiled languidly at her, and selected one plummy spray of azalea, which she fastened coquettishly above a roughed ear-tip.

"So, thou dost like my flowers, if thou dost not like me," said the King, bending a sharp look on Theonis. "Suppose thou wert the Queen here, wouldst thou be happy?"

Theonis looked about her at the garden, sighed a little and smiled.

"Nay, King Taledes—the grandeur of the palace doth smother me. I like not unseen eyes fixed on my most innocent act, unheralded ears hearkening to my lightest word—unknown tongues babbling away my fair repute! Nay, lord, I like thy garden—and thy palace is beyond dreams. Nevertheless, I yearn not to remain. Tales of thy splendor and majesty have reached our hidden city—yet, also my lord, strange tales of dread rituals, of feasts whose reason is the sacrifice of innocent babes. Ah, such thoughts fill my soul with an illness. Tell me, Taledes, these mothers of Creta, do they give their first-born willingly to Baal?"

"Lady, they have been so trained from infancy. Use is a stern taskmaster. 'Tis but their manner of propitiating the warlike, vengeful God of Heaven. Say, hast thou not also sacrifice?"

"Sacrifice to our god? Yea, King Taledes, but we give perchance the first lamb of the flock, the finest fruit of the soil. But human life? Never!"

"Is then thy god so weak a thing that paltry gifts appease him? Yet, if thou hadst been taught the glory that awaiteth soul of infant so dedicated?"

"Then would I still say, 'Nay! Nay it is wrong, and heartless and cruel are the mothers of Creta!' For we who bring children into the world with anguish and tremors of soul—shall we perchance find pleasure in casting to torture that which is blood of our blood and flesh of our flesh?" Theonis' eyes flashed in her pale face—her whole attitude from clenched hands to aggressive chin spoke eloquently of intense indignation.

Taledes glanced from her vital eagerness to the bored, faraway expression in the Queen's face as she

leaned against the silken cushions, and sighed. Well might Terestes thrill with pride in Theonis.

"I tell thee 'tis all a matter of training and custom," he maintained.

"And thou, my lord, perchance thou wilt also give thy firstborn—the child whose curling fingers fasten about thy heart, the child for whom thou hast waited?"

Taledes flushed a deep and mortified crimson to the roots of his fair hair.

"Even so, Theonis—Can I do less?—If the King fail in duty to the priesthood, the people should fail the King in his hour of need! When that hour comes, I shall remember only the greatness to which such child shall attain in heavenly kingdoms—and after all 'tis but a moment of pain." He spoke with forced lightness, for Theonis had probed deeply.

"Taledes, from my heart, I pity thee!" exclaimed Theonis with tears in her eyes. "Bitter is thy lot, and sad thy heart. Thy palaces are but empty halls, thy gardens but fading flowers, thy feasts but hollow mockeries; for thou dost not understand one little letter in the great language of love. Too busy hast thou been with power and kingship to seek that greatest of earthly treasures. Now love hath passed thee by and left thee lonely."

Taledes, who had grown deadly pale during this daring speech, half rose from his seat, and sank back as a servant approached with food and wine which he set before the King and stood waiting for permission to speak.

"Well!" said the King impatiently.

"Great King, live forever. Balthus the Priest, doth require audience with thee concerning sacrifice."

The King rose with an exclamation of anger. His eyes met Terestes in consternation. Too well both knew the meaning of that dread command. Bidding the Queen withdraw, he dispatched the servant and, when they were out of sight, pressed a panel in the pavilion. It flew back disclosing a fair-sized aperture, with a marble bench. Taledes motioned Terestes and Theonis to enter, that unseen they might see and hear,

and composing himself in the great carved marble chair, awaited the arrival of Balthus.

Through the lacy carving, Theonis shivered and drew closer to Terestes, as that gaunt individual drew near to the King, bowed slightly and folding his arms on his chest, gazed fixedly at Taledes.

Taledes gave him formal greeting and waited for him to speak. For some moments they gazed at each other in silence. Then the priest spoke in a high-pitched disagreeably nasal voice.

"Thou'rt alone, Taledes? Methought thou didst have company."

"The Queen was with me, but hath withdrawn as is seemly."

"Yet surely ye twain have not need of four drinking vessels," said Balthus stroking the venerable beard that did not screen that cruel mouth.

"Since when am I accountable to the High Priest for companions who sup with me?" asked Taledes haughtily. "Moreover, thou hadst been well-advised to seek audience at the appointed time."

The Priest's eyes flashed, but he continued to speak softly.

"Perchance thy kinsman doth loiter within thy gates."

"What is my kinsman—a barbarian—to thee Balthus? State thy business quickly and begone, for 'tis a pleasant day and fain would I enjoy my marriage week without interruption from the common herd."

"Since when hath the High Priest of Baal become one of the common herd? My learning is superior to thine—my power groweth. Well that sacrifice cometh on the morrow. Too sure art thou of thy power. Faugh! What is love to thee? Thou knowest, and I also, that thy marriage is a state affair."

"Well—I await thy business, my lord Priest. State it quickly and get thee hence. I weary of thy dark illusions."

The Priest's face changed suddenly.

"So be it," he said coldly. "My Lord Taledes, I know thou dost harbor in these walls the renegade Ter-

estes. I know it! Barbarian may his lady be, but by the great god Baal, he whom thou dost call kinsman is none other than that Terestes who shrank from the glories of sacrifice—who fled to seek softer modes of worship!"

"What seekest thou of Terestes who hath been dead for years? Consult thy sorceries, Priest and trouble not my guests."

"I tell thee Terestes is not dead," said the Priest—"for in Atlantis was he not pupil of Astrellon once Priest of our order, nevertheless sickly-hearted as Terestes himself, since he, too, fled from the beauties of Baal?"

The priest licked his lips as though the thought of sacrifice filled him with pleasureable anticipation (as indeed it did). Behind the carved marble screen of their hiding place Theonis crept yet closer to Terestes, and shuddered violently. Once more the King spoke, and so cold and clear his voice, it fell as tinkling ice on the silence.

"What seekest thou of my kinsman?"

The priest glared and stepped yet closer to the King who towered above him.

"Of Terestes, renegade King of Creta, I seek his death. Death in the name of Creta—Death in the name of Baal the Beneficent! But first he shall be tortured till his racked body forceth him to disclose that secret of secrets, that wondrous power which the magician employed to defend Atlantis. So that Creta—and Baal—shall be invincible!" Again he licked his lips suggestively, but the cold silence of the King penetrated his pride, and he shrilled forth—

"Give them up to me in the name of Baal, or as Baal liveth both of ye shall die!"

"So!" said the King. "Thou biddest me break all laws of kindness, of hospitality, of humanity. And for what? The gratification of thy lust to kill. If I hand them to thee—what shall be my reward?"

Behind that slight barrier Theonis had hard work to keep from screaming—only the memory of Terestes' peril held her silent. Had Taledes enticed them

into his palace again only to hand them over to torture?—

A gleam of delight burned in the priest's eyes.

"This, my lord King, if thou dost well my bidding, thy first-born shall be redeemed from the fire. Think well, Taledes. Thou wilt not need to hand thy little one so fair of flesh to brazen arms that wither and blacken."

The King shuddered as if a great passion shook his soul. He drew his hand across his eyes, and the watching priest smiled maliciously. But his triumph was brief, for the King drew himself erect, and gazed at the priest with a ferocity that caused him to draw back a step.

"Thou hast forgotten thyself, Priest of Baal. Mayhap temple affairs lie under thy control, but thou dost not rule Creta. I am the King."

"True, O Taledes—but not therefore exempt from sacrifice. Think of it Taledes—thy little one safe, unburned!"

Again the King shuddered at the tempting figure ingratiatingly near to him. He repulsed the extended hands.

"Not even at that price do I yield kinsman and friend to thy talons, buzzard of prey. They shall depart safely from Creta—on the sword of Creta I swear it!"

The Priest recoiled till his serpent likeness stood in bold relief.

"Fool! Thinkest thou to oppose the will of Baal! Fool! I shall have thy life and rule in thy stead."

"Stay! I might slay thee in mine own garden, Balthus, and have e'en the blessing of Creta for my good action. Hated and feared art thou throughout the length and breadth of the land. The people weary of such needless sacrifice—beware lest they turn and rend thee. As for me, what I take by the sword, by the sword do I also keep."

The King's voice grew louder and more forceful, and the infuriated man began to gesticulate wildly. Suddenly he seized his dagger, and rushed toward the

King with such swiftness that Taledes could not evade the onslaught. He threw up one arm to ward off the blow, while Terestes and Theonis sought wildly to liberate themselves that they might aid one who had defied heaven itself in their behalf. But the Nubian slave had drawn near during the altercation, alarmed as ever at the presence of Balthus, and even as the priest plunged his dagger downward, the Nubian plunged his and Balthus sank to the ground writhing.

Taledes put his arm out and the Nubian pressing his lips to the slight wound, sucked till the blood ran freely.

"A mere scratch," he said to Theonis. "Go faithful Hartha. Bring linen and remedies to bind the wound. I thank thee for thy care of the King."

Theonis looked shrinkingly on the still malicious smile of the expiring priest.

"Go, fool—to the Land of the Shades. I do not regret that thou'rt despatched. Long have I had mine eyes on thy young priest Sathris. Kinder is he than thou, and I tell thee, O dying Wolf of Baal,—the people of Creta grow weary of everlasting sacrifice to the gods. They cry out 'Have mercy, for we bleed at every pore.' Thy day is done, Balthus. Thy body shall be found at sunrise without the door of thy mistress—aye—I know her!—and who plunged the dagger in that traitorous heart, no Cretan shall discover. So perish all enemies of the King. I am the King, and yea, I will hold my kingdom!"

The priest with a last convulsion, rolled over and lay still. Terestes, fearing treachery, bent over him, but that intriguing heart had ceased to beat—Balthus had joined his victims in the Land of Shades.

The Nubian came running with water, bandages and unguents, and while Theonis tended to Taledes' wound, the King despatched the Nubian for a scarlet cloth, and when he had brought it, bade Hartha wrap the dead priest in it. Lifting his gruesome load easily, Hartha pressed a sculptured rose in the King's seat, and it fell asunder, disclosing a flight of steps down

which he vanished, leaving Theonis wide-eyed with surprise.

"In a country of intrigue, even the King had need of secret passages and devious hiding places." Taledes granted.

"For thy protection, lord, how shall I thank thee? Thou'rt kingliest of Kings, and fitted to rule. But did I e'er deserve such consideration who sought to dispossess thee?"

"Learn then Terestes, that if Taledes be fierce and cruel, he may also be just and paternal. What! Wouldst thou, that I be outfaced by a woman's bravery?" he jested. "Nay, such were poor display of the greatness which is Creta. Let us finish our repast and talk for the sun is sinking slowly and I would speed thee, lest more treachery lay thee low. I cannot, alas! guard the outlets of the air, and scarce do I know in whom to put trust. For this at least, I thank thee Terestes. Thy coming hath brought Balthus the Serpent into the open. Ever have I feared his writhings and coilings, for who knoweth where the serpent hath his abiding place?—Touching the matter of Astrellon, what dost thou know?"

"Of his great secret, naught. Closely did he guard that priceless treasure." Then while a faint breeze stirred the flowers of the garden to waves of spicy sweetness, Terestes told at length of his sojourn in Atlantis. He told of Astrellon with his wisdom, and kindness; of the intriguing Fox, and the beautiful Lotus Lily; of the Atlantean palaces and cities, and the destruction he knew had overtaken them. He omitted nothing, and the King listened intently till the bubbles died in his wine cup and the fruit dried half-eaten in his fingers. Theonis listened too, with averted face, and sinking heart, for though Terestes spoke of Estrella, she read more in his restraint than in his eloquent talk of Astrellon. For Taledes he pictured both Lotus Lily and Estrella, and as he talked, poorer and poorer grew Theonis' opinion of her own charms. She drooped on her stalk like a broken lily, but neither

Terestes nor Taledes noticed, so deep were they in discussion of Atlantean achievement.

At length the descending rays of the sun touching a set of chimes on the palace wall, caused it to give forth a single musical note. Taledes started to his feet, and bidding Theonis and Terestes gather any flowers they might desire to take with them, he clapped his hands sharply. Hartha appeared, as unconcernedly as if he had not been walking about in the bowels of the earth. He received the King's commands and sped to carry them out, while Terestes turned to Taledes with a half-smile, one perfect rose in hands.

"My faith, Terestes, almost I envy thee. Thou wilt carve thyself an empire in the land of Athros, perchance a greater empire than Creta. But, kinsman, take the advice of one who hath long been harassed by intriguers,—let not the priesthood set heel upon thy neck, lest they seek and hold the balance of power——Yea, almost, I envy thee, for thou dost possess the greatest jewel of womanhood it hath ever been my lot to know."

"Two such have I known!" Terestes looked proudly on Theonis, as she stopped to gather creamy white buds, as richly ivory as her own skin. "Two such. The bravest bloom that ever weathered storm—and the fairest White Rose of Atlantis!"

Low as his voice was it reached Theonis clearly, and struck her deeply as though a dagger had rent her flesh. The King moved impatiently.

"I speak of her whom I have seen. Lust have I seen for jewels, or power or money—but true faith such as thy lady did display so short a time ago never!"

His words brought little comfort to the girl's heart, but outwardly composed, she advanced, burying her face in the cluster of oleanders, lotus buds, and roses she bore.

"Thou shouldst have seen the White Rose of Atlantis. Her beauty did e'en display more perfection than the far-fabled Lotus Lily. But yea, Theonis is brave and true."

"Keep thy jewel in safety, Terestes, for she is above price." And taking the coffer which Hartha presented, he opened it that she might see what lay therein.

"Receive these poor gifts, Lady Theonis, in token that thou hast forgiveness and some pity for one who is, mayhap, lonely. No jewel have I seen that doth approximate thy charm—save only the fair depths of amethyst. Cold the diamond, and strong the sapphire. Green as the eyes of a serpent,—the emerald; the ruby speaketh of spilled blood,—the pearl of tearful sorrow. But when I behold the amethyst I shall remember thee, Theonis, peer among women." He bent and kissed her hand with kingly grace.

"My Lord Taledes—from my heart I thank thee and I do pity thee for thou'rt indeed lonely." She flashed at him a smile so winsome that Terestes must have noticed had he not been engrossed with his thoughts.

"Not always shall it be so, for the day cometh, Taledes, when child-arms shall hold thee close, and a child-voice call thee beloved. Till then, be patient! These I accept with gratitude, and acknowledgment of thy forbearance who couldst have slain us."

"And by so doing raised thy Terestes to pedestal of martyrdom and outlawed myself?" asked Taledes gruffly.

"Nay, who would judge thee for speeding Theonis—forget not that I am but barbarian maid, untutored and wild,—aye, wild as a weed in the wet woods of Athros!"

Terestes started, and lifted his eyes from the white rose that reminded him of Estrella he had sworn so loyally to remember.

"Nay, Theonis, I would say thou wert wild hyacinth or violet!" he protested.

"Yea, lord, but that is still a wild thing," she answered gravely, and swept away after the slave with such swiftness that Terestes and Taledes were hard-pressed to keep up to her. And, as she went,

Taledes noted she dropped one by one the creamy rose-buds from her bouquet, and he smiled.

At the palace entrance the King's car awaited them, the horses prancing in desire to be off. Taledes sprang into the chariot and gave his hand to help Theonis up, while the Nubian took the reins in his muscular arms, and turned the chariot about. The almost level rays of the sun touched the palace with unearthly beauty and transformed even the weary soldiers who awaited their relief with impatience.

The car rolled smoothly along winding road, past villa and palace, past the great temple, down—down through palm-decked streets; through the great square where fountains played and youth made merry after the day's toil, they raced, past shops and humble dwelling to the edge of the quay. Drawing up with a flourish, the King dismounted and waited for Terestes and Theonis to join him.

In a silence fraught with poignant thought they traversed the quay to the spot where the Falcon swung. The Helmsman saw them while they were still distant, and made haste to draw his vessel nearer to the brick curbing. Within a few paces of the ship they paused.

"The amethysts are thine, and to be worn by thee. The other jewels, use as seemeth best to thee," said Taledes bidding the slave carry the heavy coffer aboard.

"Think not ill of me, Theonis, for if I have kept thy lord from the throne he did leave vacant, I have also spared him sorrow and unrest. In the matter of the priest—fear not. I can defend myself, but when I come to Athros let me find thee ensconced upon the throne of a budding empire. And now, farewell." He raised her hands reverently to his lips.

Theonis bowed low but her voice was very sweet as she answered:

"O King, live forever! Thou wilt be remembered in Athros for kindness as for bravery, and for boldness as for thy loneliness. Fare thee well."

She stepped daintily aboard the boat, and gave her flowers to one of the helmsmen lingering near, be-

fore she climbed to the forward deck and smiled down sadly at Taledes.

"Go forth in peace, Terestes—and if thou hast need of aught, send to me. I will not give thee the throne,—but I will share the kingdom's riches with thee. Till we meet again—farewell."

"What I would say were best left unsaid. But I go hence with less heavy heart than I came. Farewell."

He too sprang into the boat, and gazed at the city lying, a great pink pearl, between the sheltering outstretched arms of the land. The oarsmen let go their hold of the quay, and bent to their oars, the sails eddied out in the evening breeze,—new sails of vivid orange. The Helmsman worked his ship free of the wharf, then, like a bird she fluttered across the golden bosom of the bay, between the many ships, and turned toward the setting sun a homing pigeon. Until they had moved into mid-stream Taledes remained on the quay, but the last glimpse Theonis had of the King was the erect figure holding the lines taut as his chariot raced madly toward the palace once more.

Theonis turned toward her husband, but Terestes fixed his melancholy eyes on the receding city and still toyed with the white rose. She moved a little nearer to him, and gazed at the beautiful scene before her unseeing whilst she cudgled her brain for diplomatic speech. None came, but the droop of her shoulders filled Terestes with tenderness, and he said gently—

"Poor child—thou'rt weary with a trying day! Go thou and rest. I will stay here alone—to dream." He smiled as he spoke, but Theonis did not note that. She only saw his glance down-dropped to the white rose, and she left him with a word, walking sedately till within the main cabin. Then she flung dignity to the winds, and rushed into her own small cabin, banging and barring the door with fervor. Once secure from prying eyes, she threw herself on her bed and eased her throbbing nerves in a passion of tears.

Once during the night Terestes stole to her cabin door and listened, but stole away again with a smile. "Poor child, she sleepeth," he murmured, and returned to his musings till he, too, fell asleep, his head pillowed on coiled ropes.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DAWNING OF A GREAT LOVE

Theonis was up at the first glint of the sun, moving quietly about the main cabin in the housewifely fashion she had assumed when they left Athros. At her bidding the page brought vessels from the hold, but such vessels as she had never seen before. Perplexed, she sought the Helmsman.

"Taledes!" she said, waving her hands towards Creta as the old Helmsman finished, "Taledes, I thank thee for thy thoughtfulness and generosity. Thou hast treated us more kindly than we would have treated thee."

The flowers from the palace gardens, hastily thrust into a drinking cup, she rearranged lovingly. So it was Terestes found her when, wakened from his uneasy dreams by the sun's bright rays, he came below.

Theonis endured his morning greeting, but continued her occupation, and Terestes smiled at her with a naughty twinkle in his brown eyes. "Hast slept well, lady? Our ship driveth swiftly toward Athros. Thou wilt gladly behold thy father's habitation."

"Yea."

"The sun shineth fair on the water, but still I can behold the outlines of Creta."

"Yea."

"Was not Creta beautiful?"

"Perchance, yea. Little did I love the polished cruelty of thy Cretan life."

"And yet, Theonis, ne'er loved I Creta more dearly than at this moment—my lost kingdom."

"Of a truth, my lord, doth not the heart ever crave that which it may not possess? Have we gold? Well then, we must covet much goodly raiment and fine jewels. Have we dwelling? We sigh for palaces.

Are we king? We must be emperor and rule the world. I doubt not that the cool sweet moon whose silver lamp doth make the night fair, yearneth for the glory of the sun. So runneth the tune of man's thought. Ever was man wayward and jealous at heart."

"Mayhap. Yet do I remember I might have sat where sits Taledes."

"Yea, lord. Perchance thou dost also covet the briars with which that seat is lined. Dare he speak freely within his own walls? Nay, some loving heart would straightway repeat it with gusto. How shall he have friends whose enemies compass him on every side, and they that hung upon his speech do so in fawning. Shall he have love? For his kingdom's sake he doth wed with a—a—a—an Eastern sofa cushion. Bah! Speak not to me of the glories of kingship in Creta where the priesthood doth make right merry at the expense of the people!"

Terestes considered this in silence as he seated himself and selected a melon for his consumption.

"Thou dost admire that man of flint, Taledes?" he enquired presently.

"And forsooth, why not? Flint striketh fire when pounded. Behold his generosity, for Althus hath said Taledes did give him money to stock the Falcon with an abundance of good things, food, raiment, vessels, he hath bestowed with lavish hand. Aye, Terestes, we will do well to learn of Taledes, thou and I, for we went thither to stir strife in his kingdom and perchance seize the throne. But behold, when he holdeth our lives in the hollow of his hand, he doth give us life. He hath sent us forth rejoicing in an abundance of good things. Shall we not remember Taledes with gratitude?"

"Thou speakest truly, Theonis. Mayhap to thee I do seem most gloomy and tenacious of a lost kingdom. Since boyhood mine ambition held me in thrall. I renounce a lost dream painfully. It is right, it is just Taledes should maintain what he fought to win, but, Theonis, my heart burneth for regret of past delin-

quencies. Forgive me if I seem to thee a poor figure beside the great Taledes—”

“My lord, cease!” cried Theonis hotly. “Said I that Taledes was the greater man? Did I cling to Taledes when chance was given me? Did I seek to stay at his side in the royal palace? Answer these questions, Terestes, and tell thy heart it lieth when it doth speak so.”

Terestes stared at her in amazement for a moment. Then the cabin rang with his laughter, in which, after a little hesitation, Theonis joined shamefacedly.

“Well, then, I meant the words I spoke. No wish have I to wed Taledes, were I free to do so, my lord. Nevertheless, I am grateful to his bounty. His gifts shall make our dwelling fair ere thou dost design and bring into being like industries in Athros.”

“Ah Athros! Shall I build well?”

“Thou must. For if Terestes doth not, my lord, Theonis must e’en take a hand, and thou knowest not what my barbarian brain shall devise.” She addressed herself composedly to luscious peach. Terestes looked across at her with the twinkle very much in evidence.

“Thou’rt no barbarian. Didst not see the admiration Taledes displayed for thee?”

“Nay, lord, Taledes knoweth not women. Sycophants or bales of silk, these only he doth know.”

Once more Terestes shouted with laughter. “My faith, Theonis! Which didst thou dub the Queen?”

“Well, lord, such animation as her face displayed was for the arrangement of her draperies and jewels, albeit she had scarce enough of either. A sculpture would show more life. Poor Taledes.”

“Did he not chose her?” asked Terestes, bubbling over again at Theonis’ airy disposal of the Queen.

“Yea, misguided man,” and with a quick change to gravity, Theonis continued. “Nevertheless that womankind tamely surrender their little ones to sacrifice is proof of their weakness. If I had so been placed I would say ‘Touch if thou wilt dare, the child, and I will slay thee first, and afterward the child and myself if necessary.’” There was a very beautiful light in

those blue eyes, and Terestes watching, caught his breath.

"Nevertheless, lord, I like Taledes' gardens, and fain would I have lily pool and oleander tree. Think-est thou such is possible?"

"Yea, Theonis. In Athros the rarest plant would bloom, so mild the climate, so rich the soil. Thou shalt have lily pool and oleander tree, and twining about our pillars roses—"

"Red as blood, pink as dawning and yellow as sunset!" said Theonis firmly.

"Nay, child, have those elsewhere an thou wilt. They have their charm, I grant thee; but we shall have many, many rose trees of—"

"Blood-red, dawn-pink, sunset-yellow."

"Nay, white—purest white!"

"I hate white!" Theonis put down her peach and looked at Terestes in kindling anger. Gone were all the night's good resolutions to forget white roses and their significance. "If thou hast white roses about thy pillars, behold thou shalt not have Theonis within the pillars."

Terestes looked at her and the twinkle began to grow in his eyes again, but he answered craftily.

"Child I did but plan to pattern after rose-wreathed pillars of Atlantis, whose beauty none may extol too highly."

"Talk not to me of Atlantis. What place have I in Atlantis or Creta? Yea, I have done wrong to presume—take thy barbarian to Athros and leave her there."

"Call thyself once more barbarian and I shall be angered. Thou hast touched heights no woman I ever knew did attain. Thou art Theonis, the Queen in truth, and no bale of goods about thee either!"

Theonis eyes swam in tears, that dimmed their fire. "Forgive, lord, if I made thee angry, in such am I barbarian indeed. Perchance if thou wilt have patience and bear with me, I shall cast away these faults and grow dignified and serene as thou dost wish."

Terestes looked at her downcast face, her flushed cheek and humble mien. With a brief exclamation, he pushed back his chair and went round the table to her. There he fell on his knees and drew her close, kissing her again and again. When he spoke, his voice was soft and tender.

"Theonis, Theonis! Forgive also thy jealous lord. Could I not see the admiration with which Taledes beheld thee? Could I not be cognizant of thy superb courage, thy charm and the wisdom of thy fertile brain? I was thrust upon thee without thy choice. How could I blame thee if Taledes touched thy heart?"

"Perchance my heart went out to him,—in pity." said Theonis, cupping Terestes' face in her hands. "I would not wed Taledes were we two only left of all the earth. And yea, my heart leaped in my breast when thou didst defy him and refuse to yield me, but it sank and fell as a dead thing when thou didst exalt the White Rose of Atlantis.

"Yet, lord, forgive. For I was thrust on thee unwanted. I knew of thy adoration, and in truth, I am not jealous, only very sensible of my own deficiencies, and very lonely." She would have drawn away, but he would not let her go. Rising, he sat on the arm of her chair, and turned her face so that she must look up at him.

"Theonis, we have each of us played but very sorry figures in the game. Behold, I must tell thee the truth. If I remember the White Rose of Atlantis, I who swore eternal faithfulness to her memory, 'tis as the star whose beams illumine the night. Far and faint above me, cold and purely aloof, a being removed from my world and my life. Such the worship I gave one whose sandal-tips I was unworthy to kiss. It was the adoration we give the moon, or the cooling wind that doth bless as it passeth.

"But thou, Theonis! Thou'rt no being apart, thou lovely creature of fire and snow! Thou'rt all woman, fit mate for man of thought; thou'rt a queen to grace whatever realm shall rise. But most of all art thou my beloved Theonis, my wife!

"Yea, I have striven against it, fearing thou wouldst shrink from my wooing. Perchance, my conscience pricked me that so soon I could forget the White Rose of Atlantis, for when I would recall her image, ever thy blue eyes, Theonis, bade me turn to thee. Theonis, Theonis!" he said the name lingeringly as though its very accents charmed. "Theonis! As the Deity liveth, I love thee with all that is pure and true. Let there be no clouds twixt thy soul and mine. If any come, I will tear them asunder." He kissed her again, finding the action sweet.

Theonis lowered her lids demurely and began to speak, plaiting the loose ends of his girdle as she did so.

"Many summers ago did come a fleet of galleys to Athros bent on friendly visit that the princeling of Creta might behold his humble subjects. And the princeling loved the Chief of the Barbarians greatly, so that he tarried with him from seed-time till the rains began to fall.....And thou wert kind to a red-cheeked barbarian maid and saved her from many a well-earned beating, so that she took to following thee around to thy great distress. Thou didst bid her no longer play shadow to thee, but in the heart of that small maid was kindled a true love, a love that years fanned to greater flame.

"Years went, and as thou didst go toward Atlantis thou didst pause at Athros, but thou didst not remember the child who played at thy heels. But the girl thought steadfastly of the one she deemed in glory little less than the sun. She knew, poor maiden, that as the seas divide Athros from Creta, the greater sea of position did divide maid of Athros from Prince of Creta, and at the appointed time suffered herself to be betrothed according to the will of her father. But as hour by hour brought nearer the day of marriage, she pined. Before that day came the Hill Men descended and the youth fell in valorous battle.

"The maid was sorry for the youth who had passed in the flush of his manhood, but she was free once more. Free to dream! . . . And after a time,

thou didst come again to Athros, but thou hadst forgotten Theonis, and she was shy of thee."

"Yet so worketh the hand of Deity that both were brought safely into the haven," Terestes finished for her. "My Theonis, I do now remember. But in those days I sought only knowledge, and now have I learned that there is one thing greater than knowledge, love. The love that burneth in souls that are akin. My Queen! My love! My life! Theonis—look up and smile at me, beloved!"

Sweet to the girl those caresses and tender words. The touch of Terestes' lips healed every wound of her soul, and she responded shyly. Her heart told her this was no ordinary marriage bargain, arranged and dully adhered to. This was the glistening gossamer fabric of her dreams.

Twice the old Helmsman moved aside the hanging and dropped it unheard, but the third time Terestes saw him and arose.

"My lord, a galley of Egypt approacheth passing toward Creta. It beareth the ensign of the Pharaoh. Wilt thou make salutation? I have run up thy purple standard."

"Quickly, Theonis. Thy fine raiment and jewels! Helmsman, stay the oars till we come out."

As they came out to the deck, the galley of Egypt floated toward them, scarce a double stone's throw away. Her decks were built well above the water, and the high narrow ship was rowed by three tiers of oarsmen. The bow and stern were identical, so that it was difficult to tell which way the vessel was headed when it stood motionless. The elaborately carved decks were strewn with costly stuffs; an awning of scarlet and gold covered the forward deck whereon was placed a throne-like chair, facing toward the east; nude slaves waved scarlet feather fans slowly to and fro; a company of musicians played on small stringed instruments and a few men in the light Egyptian robe lounged about easily on cushions. The ship swarmed with a retinue of varied type, but the attention of the Falcon's owners was rivetted on the occupant of the

throne-like chair. Young he was, scarce more than a boy, his black glossy hair curled and dressed after the manner of the time, surmounted by an uraeus with emerald eyes. His own eyes, hazel and piercingly keen, peered out beneath bony brows. His nose was aquiline, but not disagreeably so, and his mouth firm and secretive. The whole aspect of the face was one of benign sagacity and lofty ideals. His fine robe of pale gold was ornamented lavishly with jewels, and jewelled serpents twisted up his bare brown arms toward his shoulder, their diamond and ruby eyes winking in the bright light.

As the two galleys came abreast, both crews rested on their oars. From the deck of the Egyptian galley one who wore Cretan dress and spoke the Cretan tongue, cried:

"In the name of Ra—Greeting! The Galley of Amentopah, Princeling of Egypt, who deigneth to visit his friend the King of Creta. Who art thou?"

"In the name of the Sun, peace and greeting!" said Terestes, motioning Theonis to bow with him. "A kinsman of the King of Creta, Leon of Athros and his lady Theonis."

This intelligence the Cretan conveyed to an Egyptian noble, who made answer through the interpreter.

"In the name of Ra, peace. Stay thy ship a moment." The Princeling leaned forward and looked long and earnestly at Theonis. He gave a command and slaves ran to do his bidding. Presently a young Egyptian appeared with a casket which he offered to the Princeling. The Princeling, opening it carelessly, made a selection, which he wrapped in a fine linen cloth securely and gave to a second boy. This lad darted to the rail of the galley which the Egyptian oarsmen pulled nearer with caution till they were scarcely an arm's length apart, and flung the little parcel deftly to the deck of the Falcon. Terestes picked it up and opened it to discover it held an armband of chased gold set with seed pearls in the form of lotus flowers.

"For a pearl of the wilderness, largess from the vast stores of Egypt," said the interpreter. "The Princeling saith thy lady's beauty is as the loveliness of a pink pearl, and the Princeling maketh wish he may find her like in Creta."

"Thank thy lord for his largess, and say that the kinsman of the King of Creta shall treasure the gift of Egypt concerning whose majesty he hath heard many tales. But also add that there is in all the world no pearl like the Lady Theonis."

"The Princeling doth say in Egypt behold an emerald of which there is also no equal. She who shall share his throne. The Princeling hath understanding of thy pride in thy possession," said the interpreter after some parley. "In the name of Ra, peace and farewell."

"In the name of the Sun, peace and farewell," echoed Terestes, bowing once more.

The Princeling inclined his head graciously, waved his hand, and the craft of Egypt sprang forward so rapidly and smoothly that the ships were soon far apart. The great sails filled out in the breeze, and with majestic pomp, typical of its country, the galley glided rapidly toward Creta.

As they watched those scarlet sails flame against the turquoise blue sky, Terestes said:

"So the pomp of power. To-day Egypt doth homage to Creta, whom she did make by her commerce therewith—tomorrow Creta also falleth—"

"And boweth to Athros which shall be!" Theonis' voice rang clearly, as with her face touched by the light of ambition, she turned very deliberately from the east toward the west, as though at any moment a sun might rise in that direction.

Terestes gazed at her speculatively.

"Aye, so turneth the wheel of time. Oft have I heard Astrellon voice that very thought. For yesterday was Atlantis, but to-day is no more. He hath also belief that the Deity bringeth into perfection each country and race in due season, that all peoples of the globe should share in the great development of man-

kind; so, too, he said, each civilization doth seem greater than the preceding one, but when the great Book of Records be unfolded, behold the first shall be as great as the last. For it is there written that each shall excel in one particular and shall fall by overdevelopment of that very glory. I know not. But this I do know. As far as Atlantis is named, she is famed for her atomic power, yet by that same principle was she destroyed. Nations yet unborn, said Astrellon, would hear of her greatness vaguely as one heareth familiar voices in a dream. Forgotten shall be her wise men, her poets, her kings and fair maidens. Wreathed in seaweed are such of her palaces as were not destroyed. Perchance a thousand years hence, people shall say, 'Behold a rumour persisteth concerning a continent of wondrous wisdom and beauty. Forsooth, where did it lie? Whence sprang its people? Whither did they go?' And in the brief silence that marketh the heart beat of the world shall come the answer, 'We know not. There is small record.'" A peculiar sadness thrilled Terestes' voice as he spoke.

"Yea, and yet again, yea. But thou hast told me that though Atlantis was fair, her people had fallen on days of idleness."

"Truly they did love ease and feasts—"

"And braggart boasting, and white arms, and two-edged swords, and thundering voices!" Theonis mimicked the swashbuckling strut of Lumnos, till Terestes dropped his pensive air and laughed.

"Little baggage, thou knowest he is afraid of thee!" he said fondly.

"Aye, so is my father. Thinkest thou Zeleatha doth see to his comfort as Theonis?"

"How can I answer thee? No matter what I say, thou wilt be disappointed."

"My father waxeth old, not in years, but in body. Thou knowest our mode of life doth bring the pains of old age early. And many pass ere their time. My lord, let us teach the people of Athros to care for their bodies, that their muscles be hard and trained, and they fall not prey to the terrors of wasting away.

Let us make honest labourers of them, but teach them also to respect knowledge and accomplish beauty, for it is well to be equally developed."

"Wise art thou, Theonis. But thou speakest as if already I were Chief of Athros, and the people as puppets in the hollow of my hand."

"They will ne'er be puppets with thee, Terestes, for thou dost not forget the need of the individual in the wants of a multitude. And because thou hast respect for every man's right, nevertheless hast also force to keep check on lesser intelligences,—thou shalt prosper mightily. As for the rest, doth not my father love thee as the son he lost in valorous strife? He feareth sudden departure from life, but ere he doth go, shall win the tribesmen to thy cause. Already they love thee. They shall turn willingly to thee, Terestes, and it is well, for thou art worthy."

"Go fetch myrtle and laurel to crown my head?" said Terestes jestingly.

"I could crown thee with lotus buds, which are methinks a trifle heavy, so that e'en a god-like brow such as thine would bulge with dismay. Or shall I fish for some seaweed, and twist its glittering fronds about thy head?"

"Spare me the seaweed! The very name of fish nauseates me beyond belief. Nevertheless,"—in a soft tone, "Crown me with thy belief, Theonis, for how shall I fail whose purpose is built in thy faith and loyalty."

"My lord, shall the river not be true to the snows, whence it sprang? Shall the bud be false to the tree which bore it? Aye, can love such as thine and mine fail to blaze more brilliantly when fed by thy desire for noble achievement?"

"My heart be ransom for thine! Perchance a people shall arise from Athros whose grace and beauty doth surpass Atlantean virtues. On, good Oarsmen, speed the homing Falcon! Swell out, good sails, and bear us onward safely."

Terestes laughed gaily as he shouted these commands. The oarsmen caught the infection and bent

to their oars with vigor. The summer sun lay warmly on the smooth water, and day after day the course of the ship was a smooth progress.

It was a time of enchanting loveliness for Theonis. She delighted to sit in the prow beside Terestes and Althus, where her sage observation and quick little flashes of temper, kept them in continual amusement. The Helmsman openly adored her, and in his turn amused them with preposterous tales of sea-monsters, and of the weird darkness that lay about unexplored parts.

"Far to the North," he said, "lieth a land of ice and snow, where people have skins like unto bears and walk and eat as do the animal kind."

This Theonis would not allow. "How dost thou know this? Hast thou seen this people with thine own eyes? Hast heard them growling as they tear the ice apart to hunt for fish?"

"Nay, lady. I love the sunlight. Why should I seek such dark and gloomy regions? Nevertheless, I tell thee they do exist. Behold a friend of mine, who hath a friend who hath an uncle who did send a vessel thither and found it to be so!" he said triumphantly.

"Perchance the Animal People devoured the vessel," she mocked. "Nay, Helmsman, I tell thee folk in such distant lands know not the art of weaving cloth, and cannot purchase it. Well—do not the folk of Athros wear hide of fawn and leopard in preference to the rasping touch of cloth? And beyond us, Althus, the Hill Men trouble themselves not at all with covering. And beyond the Hill Men many days journey, are a people with hair fair as rope, and great hulking bodies! They roar at each other in voices like the thunder of many boars, and cleave trees with a single blow of a stone axe. And I know 'tis true, for a Hill Man slave of Athros once journeyed thither and hiding beheld the giants at play."

In such wordy battle did they consume many pleasant hours, and when Althus and Theonis began to argue a point, Terestes always stepped in with a story

of Atlantean wonders, till both his listeners forgot their differences in spellbound awe.

There were many other hours, too,—golden sunsets, rosy dawns, moonlight nights, when Terestes and Theonis sat apart and talked, or spoke the language of love, which, saying nothing, yet says more than all the screeds in the Universe. A new beauty graced Theonis in those days, for she was supremely happy.

At first they passed many galleys inward bound toward Creta, but as they turned northward from the beaten track, fewer and fewer ships came into their range. They traversed a great stretch of water and threaded their way through a group of small islands that paid tribute to the Chief of Athros. Wild and uncouth were the people who lived on them, but simple-hearted and friendly. The passing of the boat was a great event, for their only link with other peoples was the occasional state visit paid by the Chief of Athros.

Towards sunset of that day they sighted the crooked curving arms that sheltered the Bay of Athros. Theonis sang for joy in those unmusical tones that always brought a smile to Terestes' face. She left her lord to watch the navigation of the entrance, and flew to deck herself in her shimmering gown and the amethyst jewels. The setting sun touched these with fingers of light, causing them to glow with hidden fires, so that Terestes mockingly put up one hand to shield his eyes, and enquired whether she hoped to blind Athros at a single glance. But he was proud of her, and she of him, as they waited the lowering of the small boat.

What shouts went up from the assembled people! What pleasure lighted every face, as the light craft sprang swiftly toward the shore. Willing hands reached out to draw it far up on the beach, and hold it steady while Terestes sprang out and lifted Theonis to his side. The Chief embraced Terestes and held out his arms to Theonis, almost squeezing the life out of her in a bear-like hug, and entirely destroying her carefully assumed dignity.

"By my faith, girl, much do I fear to caress such gorgeouness. Art thou indeed the Theonis who left us and hast thou returned to visit the vassalage of Athros?" he asked, wonderingly, holding her at arms' length.

"Nay, my father, we have come home. Little did we like Creta. And though perhaps we might have fought our way bravely enough, we did like Taledes, King of Creta. My father, our hearts yearned for Athros, and we have come home. Perchance thou hast a little room for us. And do thy bones trouble thee? Hast thou consoled thyself in mine absence?"

The Chief drew off and gazed sternly at his daughter, who, not one whit dismayed by his fierce appearance, continued to smile.

"Shades of thy mother! Dost mock thy father's grey head?" he bellowed. "Behold the tribesmen listen to thee. What will they think?"

"What they ever think, my father. That there hath ne'er been Chief like thee in Athros. They know thee as well as I do, therefore why trouble thyself? Terestes will tell thee I have yearned ceaselessly for thy welfare."

"Thou dost look as if thou hadst pined for thine absent father," he said, pinching her cheek. "Well, then, woman, in truth I am well, for the sun of summer hath mellowed my joints and the wine of woman's companionship comforteth me, since I have wedded Zeleatha," he added somewhat uneasily.

"At last—methought thou wouldst ne'er compass it, so slow thou wert!"

"But damsel, thou didst bid me avoid her company." The Chief stared aghast at Theonis till Terestes was constrained to move, lest the Chief should see his unseemly mirth.

"Yea, I did so, knowing well 'twas surest way of sending thee to her arms. I would not have thee lonely when I am — consoled. I trust she is less patient with thy tempers than was Theonis."

"Baggage!" roared the Chief. "Artful minx that thou art! For all thy fine raiment still Theonis,

the wilful. How now, Terestes, hast not tamed this headstrong maid ere this? I thought to see her meekly obedient."

"But, Chief, who am I to lay harsh hands upon one whom the King of Creta admired? I whom he envied for my possession?."

"Is it so?" enquired the delighted Chief. "Hath the King no Queen?"

"Yea, my lord father. At least he hath a female who rejoiceth in that title."

"What! Dost thou also make mock of the great King of Creta? Girl what hast thou reverence in?"

"Perchance, my Lord Terestes. But father, I mock not the King of Creta. Nay, I pity one whom greed for power had joined to a—to a—a"

"A bale of silk," supplied Terestes with twinkling eyes.

The Chief looked from one to the other.

"So? A bale of goods? Well, then, Theonis, didst show him what barbarian maids were like?"

"Nay," said Terestes. "She did humble the King to reverence, by the sweet womanliness of her—"

"My faith! Of all words I would choose that last. Call her a bed of thistles to prick the lazy idler, a whip to flay the unjust, a wine to fuddle man's wits, but faith, Terestes, she hath thee twisted about her finger even as I prophesied. Come, let us not mince words. Let us return to Athros to sup, for I weary for your faces at my fire. And thou and I will teach this girl to be an obedient wife."

"That is she already," said Terestes, drawing Theonis' arm in his. "Yea, and a well-beloved one."

"Good!" said the Chief, looking closely at each in turn, and then to hide his emotion, bawling several quite unnecessary orders to the slaves who were bringing the ship's contents ashore.

"One pineth for thee," he continued as they went up the steep path. "Thy friend the King will welcome thy return. He maketh some progress in our speech, nevertheless, I cannot twist my tongue about his unholy language and our conversations must e'en be

strained. He yearneth for his homeland and our simple life doth greatly irk him. Doubtless he will be reconciled with thy return, and find solace in thy company."

As they approached the city, Terestes looked about him, and the collection of huts seemed to vanish in a vision of palaces and temples that should arise from the present village. Great preparations were under way for the welcome of the travellers. Pots boiling, meats roasting, people knocking each other in their haste.

The King came running from the portals to greet them. He embraced Terestes as though he were the dearest sight his eyes had rested upon in many a long day. Forgotten the pomp that separated them when he was the King of Atlantis and Terestes the slave of Astrellon.

"By my sword, Terestes, but thou'rt welcome sight for weary eyes. Much have I yearned for thy company. For we, behold, we make strife among ourselves and patch it up again. We fret ourselves for Atlantean beds of roses, and thou knowest O Terestes those barbarian rushes pierce the back."

"Still, thou'rt amply fed, my King, and thy frame is of hardened steel."

"Yea, my hands also," sighed the King, holding forth calloused palms that all might see. Gone the precious jewels that once adorned their whiteness and they were sinewy and brown. Terestes looked enquiringly at Lumnos.

"Well, shall I wear gems in a camp where such is considered womanish? Moreover I feared to lose them as I toiled. They now adorn Luelila who hath become my wife by these barbaric customs."

"Barbaric or civilized, they hold as binding contract. What difference whether the rite be tribal or incantation mumbled in ornate temple so that thou dost love her? What thou hast in thy heart toward the woman thou dost call wife, doth consecrate or desecrate marriage. For if thou dost not cleave to her in thy heart, thou'rt faithless." Terestes answered quietly.

The King looked blank for a moment, then laughed uproariously. "Almost thou speakest as infatuated bridegroom, Terestes. Thy sentiments do thee credit."

"True are they, nevertheless, though perchance thou wilt not allow such to be the case. Behold, Lumnos, the maiden whom I wed. Saw ye ever more queenly figure?"

The King gazed incredulously at Theonis, whom Terestes held fast so she could not escape. After a pause, in which his eyes grew dark with memory, Lumnos murmured. "Save only the Lotus Lily."

"Perchance. Yet what avail to thee her beauty since it was not for thee? Thou shalt hear presently, Lumnos, of the most excellent courage my lady displayed at the court of Creta so that Taledes the King admired her."

"And—what of Estrella? Hast thou forgotten her?"

"The Deity forbid that I forget one who taught my feet the right path in which to tread. Nevertheless, she is forever departed from my life, and I do think of her as some pale star whom I worship. But here have I a living companion whom I may love."

The King sighed and then smiled.

"I believe thee. And moreover thou didst never love Estrella, but thou dost love this girl with enduring love. So be it. Let us go within and thou shalt find warm greeting in Atlantean voices. Now that thou hast returned, we will destroy these huts and build us palaces of stone. I pine for more commodious quarters. Well, thy bargain bride doth shine with splendor."

"Tell him, O Terestes, to spread his couch among the bracken and he shall have all heaven for his canopy, and all the flowery host of earth for his attendants. Tell him also that the hut he doth occupy is larger by far than the last home wherein we all sleep well. Bid him remember that we shall take out of life only that

cheat life by dishonest effort, by dishonest reward shall we be paid."

Terestes translated with a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. Lumnos reddened.

"Faith, Terestes. Art thou not most uncomfortable? The woman readeth thought. Dost thou not feel naked in thy soul? Bid her, I beseech thee, to turn her thought elsewhere."

Before Terestes could reply, Theonis smiled sweetly at the discomfitted Lumnos and spoke gently:

"Tell him, my lord, thou hast no thought thou dost fear to show. Only when we are victims of our own conscience do we fear the gaze of others, even as the sickly nightshade shrinketh from the light of day. Thy mind, Terestes, is very clear and clean as the blue sapphire. But bid him not fear Theonis. She seeketh not to compass his rage or his embarrassment, but to turn his heart toward that fair pearl of womanhood, Luelila."

"Thou speakest well," said the King, when Terestes had translated. "Methinks—yea, methinks thou hast done well for thyself, Terestes. Would that all women had such wit and such love of their husbands!"

"Thy Luelila hath!" said Terestes with a smile. "How fare thy followers?"

"Hemora and Delita are wed. Hexos hath a son, and the daughter of Praxel hath passed into sleep. Aie! We do well. We are fed, after a fashion. We are housed and we also quarrel after a fashion. But tush! These but lend spice to dismal days!" said Lumnos, smiling broadly as they walked along.

Terestes listened half-heartedly to the description of their life, and a lengthy account of the feud between the women for the possession of certain huts. His glance, roving about, met everywhere friendly smiles. The place smelled sweetly of briars and clover blooms, and all at once a pang smote his heart, even as Theonis pressed his arm and murmured,

"So, Lord, thou dost feel it also—that home love. No longer dost thou think of Athros as a foreign land where thou shalt reign while thy heart pineth for

Creta. Lord, it is the feeling of the bird that droppeth to her nest from the great solitudes of the air, the delight of the water when it doth reach once more its parent ocean. Thou hast come home, my lord!" Her eyes filled with tears of joy and her head was held very high as they walked up the long line of waiting tribesmen and stood still. Again the long roll of drums the Chief's advance with the comely Zeleatha at his side. Theonis remembered Creta and shuddered. She thought of Taledes and wondered whether the priest's death had been traced. Then, from the casket which the Helmsman still carried, she took a chain of gold set with topaz stones and, kneeling before Zeleatha proffered it with a smile. Zeleatha took it with a cry of delight and, putting it about her throat, kissed Theonis, and she returned to her place beside Terestes, while the people made vociferous approval of her action.

As they seated themselves, Terestes bent on her a look almost amounting to worship.

"Thou dost not mind my so disposing of the necklet, lord?"

"Nay, I applaud thy generosity and thy diplomacy, O Theonis. Thou buildest well, if unintentionally. Yet methought Taledes deemed amethysts alone became thee?"

"Perchance he knew the chameleon that is woman's mind. Or perchance he visioned our desire to make such gifts. Or, again, he deemed in such lay greater use than large sums of money. The casket hath a false bottom which I did discover by accident no later than this afternoon and beneath it lay many gems both loose and set. They are thine, dear lord, to use as thou wilt. What need hath Theonis of jewels?"

Terestes looked at her with the half-tender, half-mischievous look she had learned to know well.

"And the amethysts? Wilt thou give them to me, also?"

"Yea, lord, freely." Her hand went to unclasp the brooch.

"Child, nay. I do but tease. Like Taledes, I believe they best become thy fairness, and if there be any further in the casket, thou shalt have them also. The rest I do accept for they are redeemable in timber, in services and in fabrics for our need. I thank thee, Theonis."

She settled contentedly to listen while her father eulogized Terestes, but the Chief had barely finished when Terestes leaped to his feet.

"O men of Athros, and women of Athros, give ear to my words. Thy Chief doth vaunt of my attainments. I will tell ye the truth—I have returned to ye, a throneless wanderer!" He told them of Creta and the revolting practises of human sacrifice till many a mother blanched and drew her own child nearer. He told of his desire to raise the people and of the uncle who had aided his quest for wisdom and then falsely reporting his death, placed his cousin on the throne.

A low murmur of indignation arose, but Terestes stopped it with a smile.

"Nay, people of Athros, hear me. I was weak in that I did not prevail over priesthood then. Yet if I have lost the kingdom of Creta, perchance I have found compensation."

He pictured for them their reception in Creta, their trial at the King's hands, for he wanted them to know the valor Theonis had displayed. Of Balthus' demands and Taledes' firm protection of them he spared no detail, and finished with an enumeration of the gifts Taledes had bestowed on them in parting.

"O men of Athros, mighty and valiant that King of Creta. I do return to Athros gladly, however, for here have I found none of the cruel licentiousness of the Cretan nobility. If thou wilt accept me, I would join my life to yours, subject my body to thy Chief's command, ceasing to be Terestes of Creta, become Leon of Athros."

A mighty burst of applause warmed the hearts of Terestes and Theonis, till the old Chief bellowed that their exuberance would draw an attack of the Hill Men, but the proud look he gave the returned ad-

venturers belied his harsh words. So the feast passed in a whirl of emotion for Terestes and Theonis, who weary with the long journey were quite content to sit and let the present wrap them in a mantle of sweet dreams. Terestes in thought, builded a city, through whose spacious streets moved the figure of Theonis, but she, misty-eyed, dreamed of a son who should bear Terestes' features, and his name.

The flames died down. The old Chief, nodding on his throne, gathered himself from the skirts of sleep and went to his hut. Terestes and Theonis slipped away quietly in his wake, and presently there remained only the watchmen by wall and gate, and the youth whose duty it was to keep the fire alive. Peace, and slumber rested on Athros.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

The little file of people climbed up and still up over the tortuous pitches of slender foothold. Up, and still up, while the chill wind from the snows blew refreshingly on hot faces. At last a small ravine almost at the snowline was reached and here they halted. Far below them lay the irregular cup of Delosarian, poised seemingly on the very apex of an invisible column. Tiny specks of colour moved about its shallow bowl.

"Like ants they seem," mused Estrella, as she sank on a boulder still slightly panting from the exertion of the climb."

"What seekest thou in yonder clouds, my Lord Mascallon?" queried Mordena. "Thinkest thou to lead thy fainting Mordena to the very top of the world?"

"Yea, the very top of the world!" Astrellon assured her. "Thou shalt find berries such as thou hast never tasted, and flowers such as thou hast not dreamed."

"Only for that do I make myself a winging eagle? Nay, Lord, methought strange treasures waited me here—else perchance I had made busy my fingers in useful work!"

"As if thou couldst stay in Delosarian, knowing thou couldst come!" scoffed Mascallon. "My lady wife, thy most restless spirit doth bid thee seek new worlds to conquer if they be but worlds of snow and ice. Come, let us go higher."

"What—still higher?" mocked Mordena. "Lead on, then lord, I follow in thy footsteps."

"Beneath those tiny feet wealth untold doth lie—" said Astrellon. "Gold, silver, copper, I know not what

marvels await the hand of man. For in the long past ere yet mankind stirred, methinks within these hoary heights burned furnaces of exceeding fierceness, and from that crucible strange jewels thrown forth into the lap of earth, lie to await man's need and his knowledge."

"Lord, thinkest thou the fires still burn?" Mordena fixed her brown eyes thoughtfully on him.

"Yea, Lady Mordena, ever the eternal fires smoulder in the heart of the earth. Mayhap a thousand years they sleep undiscovered, then they burst forth, and new lands emerge from old. Yet fear not, Mordena, though forsooth I believe this world was so formed, behold the snows cover the peaks, so that thou may'st e'en be sure the fire sleepeth."

The difficulty of the way precluded further discussion. Up they toiled till their heads swam in the dizzy atmosphere, and their breath came laboriously. Presently turning a sharp curve they found themselves in a tiny pocket of exquisite beauty. They cast themselves on the mossy banks of the little pool into which the silver thread of stream fell from greater heights beyond. So still that pool after the mad rush of the waterfall, that it seemed the water was weary and sought to rest a space before it slipped through woody byways to the lake in the cup.

High though the spot, delicate greenery edged the stream's banks. Great fronds of fern, lace-like in their airy tracery; white star-shaped blossoms of a haunting sweetness; a creeper whose waxy pink bells hung over glossy leaves; and here and there waving its racine of snowy blossoms in the breeze, a slender plant raised its head gracefully above its neighbors. It was a dell to gladden the soul.

For a little time the party rested quietly. Before them only the green of the forest through which they had passed, and beyond that deep azure sky. The wind still blew freshly from the peak that towered above them unseen through its very proximity. Strange birds added their liquid notes to the music of falling waters, and a small animal chattered to its fellows in

the green deeps. It was very still in the little glade, with the sunlight stretching long golden fingers toward the evergreens.

After an interval, Astrellon signified to Mascallon that he would continue toward a spot, previously visited, and discuss the advisability of the project they had in hand.

"There is no need for ye to come further," he said to Mordena and Estrella. "Stay thou here also, Beldenis, lest they feel too deserted upon the apex of the world."

Mordena, who had half risen at Astrellon's first words, sank back again with a sigh of relief.

"Ne'er was I meant for eagle," she declared. "So, my Lord Mascallon, let not thy wings carry thee too far, else thou shalt surely travel alone!"

"Nay, sweet one, we go but a short distance farther. Let not thy venturesome spirit tempt thee to ford this pool, or climb this waterfall!" With a laugh at the discomfited Mordena, Mascallon joined Astrellon and they disappeared amid the thick green bushes that fringed the eastern side.

"Behold these men, Estrella, and take warning," Mordena cried. "Let thy Lord but once find thee in ridiculous plight and thou shalt hear the tale of it all the days of thy life. Moreover, how was I to know the pool of the inlet-stream was e'en so deep? I did but seek a bathing pool where the pebbles should not cut the feet."

"Methinks Mordena, thy lord who loveth a jest above all things sent thee to that pool on purpose," laughed Estrella, the memory of Mordena, wet and very angry, flashing before her eyes.

Mordena laughed good-naturedly, and sat up to survey her surroundings. "What is done, is done," she said. Then uttering an exclamation of delight, she sprang up and began to explore the bushes that ranged the spot where Astrellon and Mascallon had disappeared. Beldenis and Estrella watched her but made no attempt to join her and presently she came

running back to them, her outstretched hands full of large blue berries.

"Only see, lazy ones, how good!" she cried, cramming the whole handful in her mouth to the alarm of the others.

"Art thou not afraid to eat strange food? How dost thou know these are not poison? I beg of thee, Lady Mordena, do not swallow them," said Beldenis, springing to his feet and extending his hand for the remainder of the berries. "Give them to me, I pray thee."

"Too late, Beldenis, they are gone, and behold, they were delicious as any Atlantean fruit. Yea, stupid! If thou didst make as good use of thine eyes as I do, thou wouldst have discovered that the birds feast upon them!" said Mordena, shaking an admonishing finger at him.

"Yea, thou'rt right Mordena." Estrella looked at the berries and carefully avoided glancing at Beldenis' face which had reddened furiously at Mordena's thrust. "These have bloom on them, and I think we may safely eat . . . They are good, Mordena!"

"Now what shall I weave a basket from? I must e'en make some sort of contrivance to carry some of these to Pensera and the children. Come help me, lazy one, do not dream the time away!" With her laughter echoing pleasantly through the dell, Mordena flitted about, gathering long grasses, slender, pliable twigs. She twisted these, now this way, now that, working with dexterity and energy, till she had produced a basket of a sort, which she proceeded to overfill with fruit. This she covered with broad, clean leaves, tucking them about the berries so that these could not spill out in the descent—and about the whole ingenious contrivance, she deftly twisted one of the long cords from her mantle, separating it with her strong little white teeth.

Estrella and Beldenis caught some of her enthusiasm, but they were less successful in their efforts, for after much fumbling, their united attempt fell to pieces as soon as it was put to use.

"Alas! The children will not make themselves ill on the amount ye take them." A peculiar huskiness in her voice caused Estrella to drop the basket she held, and run to her side. She was just in time to catch Mordena as she went over in a dead faint.

"Beldenis! Can it be the berries after all?" Estrella wailed.

"Nay, Lady. Methinks the Lady Mordena doth suffer from the great altitude, for she hath a weak heart by these too-blue veins," Beldenis answered, lifting Mordena easily and carrying her to the brookside. "We will e'en put cold water on wrist and brow, lest she bleed at nose or ears."

For some moments they worked in anxious silence. At last Mordena opened her eyes with her characteristic cheery smile.

"Thou hast not rid thyself of me yet, Estrella, for though I fell through several realms of space, behold here I am!"

She would have risen, but they bade her lie still and rest while they talked in the frank, free comradeship that puzzled and annoyed Mordena. The affair was much too desultory to suit her fancy. Mordena liked to carry every project she undertook to completion in the shortest possible time. She had matched these two in her mind long ago, and still they were no further ahead. Indeed though they openly sought each other's society, Beldenis, who was a prime favorite, seemed quite as fond of Lileon, or Delmas as Estrella. While as for Estrella—she went calmly on her way, happy when Beldenis was in her company, and when he was not! It was really very provoking.

While Mordena racked her busy brain for more drastic measure to bring this extraordinary courtship to a head, Mascallon and Astrellon returned, their faces bearing the exalted look of those who behold a superhuman achievement. This was quickly replaced by a very human anxiety and love, as they listened to the story; and Astrellon, taking the slender wrist in his hand to mark with concern the rapid pulse, decided gravely:

"We shall descend at once. And, Lady Mordena, thou must ne'er climb to this height again lest this too-fragile heart stop entirely. If thou must leave the cup, then go downwards."

"Across that dread defile? Nay!" said Mordena, as she sat up and pushed her heavy braids back. "Do not carry me, Mascallon. True, I am slender, nevertheless thou dost ever pant for breath, and if my weight cause thee to stumble and fall—in truth, Mascallon, no mind have I to roll down yonder mountain-side albeit in thy arms, my Lord. Well, and in faith I like it little here, for the woods do seem full of presences . . . If thou wilt walk slowly, I shall compass the descent well-enough, but I will take my berries, and if I have need of more—"

"Thou wilt send someone else for them," said Mascallon decidedly, leading the way to the descent, which was accomplished without untoward incident.

Very busy were the days that followed. From dawn to dusk, they labored, those builders of a new empire. They made forges, and re-cast the bronze coating of the ships as ploughshares—save one Swan figure-head, which was preserved at Astrellon's command. And when the plough-shares were hardened, thereafter day by day, a company of men went out across the defile to till the hillside,—and returned at even content.

Day by day the vast cup-plateau was worked, having been first apportioned in districts; so much land for the Temple; so much for houses and gardens; so much for sheltering and pasturing the animals; and yet a large space remained in which the ci-devant Atlanteans planted the seeds of vegetables loved by them.

In the rocky rear declivity of the cup, excavations began to appear. Astrellon, having satisfied himself of the solidity of the cliff above, was preparing to build. And when the rocky foundation lay quite bare, Astrellon and his helpers erected on the higher edge of the less rocky side, a small tower-like structure of large and small boulders cemented together. When

that was complete, he forbade the advance of any member of the exiles beyond a given line without permission, and gave himself over to the setting into operation of the forces he controlled.

Great was the curiosity among the Delosarians, but not one trespassed on forbidden territory. Even Estrella took her place quietly among those who toiled in the vegetable-gardens, or climbed the hills in search of berries. In the weariness of body, her heart found release from pain, and the days of Atlantis were a sweet, half-forgotten dream.

The summer was an endless procession of work-filled hours. So much was there to be done against the coming of the winter. Great stores of fuel were chopped from the forest primeval, and carried into Delosarian to dry. The sheep were washed and sheared, and sheared again, and the women who were unfit for work in the fields, spun the wool into thread, wove the thread into cloth, and bleached the cloth, or dyed it with stains from roots or berries. The children patiently carried water and pulled weeds. One and all they were content, and bound by the bond of their mutual needs.

Mascallon burned to aid Astrellon, but always his pleadings met with a gentle, "Nay, son, this must I do alone."

There came an evening when after prayer, Astrellon bade the people depart Delosarian the following morning, taking with them such provision as the day required, and return to the cup-city at sunset.

Hard was it for them to go, not only by reason of the defile which must be crossed, but also because the curiosity of each and every Delosarian was fully aroused. They desired earnestly to behold the miracle. Nevertheless, their faith in Astrellon was absolute, and they departed without a murmur to spend a long day racked by the still-unconquered fear of hostile natives, and the anxiety to see what should greet their eyes on their return. When the rays of their Deity lay levelly on the horizon, they recrossed the defile, spurred by the hope of the wonder which

should wait . . . And behold! Those square blocks of granite so lately ranged against the tower, now rose in the partially-built foundation of the Temple by the lake. There was reverence and joy in every heart as one and all they fell before the weary Man of Knowledge.

"To-morrow ye shall resume your occupations," Astrellon proclaimed. "For inasmuch as I worked under strange conditions and clumsy contrivance, I knew not if disaster would crown my attempts. Therefore I sent ye hence. But the Deity hath supported my efforts, and from this hour the work will grow apace. 'Twixt the ninth and sixteenth hours, keep from the spot chosen for the city. After that, ye may cross safely, and without fear."

There in the foundations of their Sun Temple, they made their evening prayers, and as the main portion of the citizens scattered to various duties, Astrellon turned to Mascallon and seated himself at the noble's side.

"In truth I wearied and hungry," he said. "What risks I have this day undertaken, thou wilt never know. For though the Sun shineth strongly, and directly upon us, greatly did I fear lest I should have insufficient power stored—or lest too much power, which would shatter the cup at first turn of the lever. Therefore did I send ye hence. Now shall I build in peace, and ere the season of the snows, we shall be safely housed, for which consideration I do most earnestly thank the Deity."

Mascallon nodded gravely, and his heart swelled within him for pleasure, but still he longed to know the secret, and such thought Astrellon fathomed, and combatted, with all gentleness.

"Mascallon, of a truth thou dost not seek to destroy. But vast schemes ferment in thy brain, and lest thou dash a kingdom to pieces as thou seekest to create an empire,—it were well for thee not to know. Son, I who know its mighty power, know also its dangers but too well. All that thou hast need for, I will provide, so shalt thou benefit by its achievements."

With this Mascallon was forced to be content, and he turned his tireless energy and enthusiasm to the devising of better storage, and a system of drainage for the plateau. In this, he was aided by Beldenis, and the city grew apace.

Yet it was not all work, for in the glorious moonlight evenings, they sat upon the shore and talked, or rowed about the lake in boats that Beldenis had built.

On one such perfect night, Mordena sitting at Mascallon's side with her feet tucked under her in oriental fashion, confided some of her doubts to her Lord.

"My Lord Mascallon canst thou not do something? There doth Beldenis go to take Lileon and Delmas upon the lake—and perchance Estrella, if she will go."

"Well, what is it thou dost want me to do?" asked Mascallon with an indulgent smile. "Say, then, Mordena, shall I bid Beldenis stay by himself in the evenings, or shall I forbid the use of the boats?"

"Stupid one!" cried Mordena, tweaking his ear. "Thou wouldst spoil it all. Nay—bid Lileon or Delmas stay behind, that Estrella may be alone with him. Perchance so they might come to an understanding."

"Thou dost forget, O wise Mordena, that if the Lady Estrella wished to be alone with Beldenis, doubtless she would arrange it so . . . Experience hath taught me 'tis ever the woman who wooeth despite all that convention saith to the contrary. If she will have us, why then she will have us, and 'tis useless for us to fight against the maid. Interfere not, Mordena, but let them enjoy themselves as they will."

"But e'en thou canst see, O Blind One, that they were made for each other."

"In that case, my Lady, they will discover the fact in due time."

"There now, she will get into the boat with the other two," she went on, the second Mascallon had stopped talking. "Why can she not stay away for once, that he may miss her? Or hath the girl no jealousy in her make-up?"

"Not yet, Mordena," laughed the gentle Pensera. "Not yet. But behold one day Estrella will awake from the dream she holdeth of Rollo,—and be jealous of Lileon or Delmas. In that day thou shalt see the gentle Estrella transformed . . . Methinks that object Beldenis hath in mind when he so persistently taketh the three maidens with him."

Comforted was Mordena, who liked to see everyone about her as happy as she was herself. She settled herself to enjoy the moonlight, and the harmony of voices ringing sweetly across the lake, for they sang as they floated about, little songs of Atlantis, and gay little ditties that Beldenis was forever composing.

As for Beldenis, he was content for the present to let things drift sweetly along, for he was still mindful of his recent elevation in rank, and felt his unworthiness to lift his eyes to the daughter of Astrellon. He looked at her as she sat in the stern of the tiny skiff, dabbling her hands in the cool waters, and dreamily following the moon's silver path across the lake. A new Estrella was this—a sun-browned healthy one, for all her former milk-white fragility had disappeared. She was no longer a fairy princess dreaming in her tower apart from the world, but a rounded maid content with the duties and simple pleasure of her life—so content, that when she would settle herself to dream of Rollo, the merry face of Beldenis crept in between. But having put love out of her life, she believed she felt only friendship for him.

So she sat peacefully, listening to the gay chatter of the others or joining in the songs to blend her golden voice with Beldenis' rich baritone. And when Astrellon called Estrella, they all came at once to the shore and parted with pleasant good-nights.

But whenever Beldenis went far afield on hunting or exploring expedition, something did he always bring back for Estrella—a rare flower, a luscious fruit—an exquisite plant or a feather from some brilliant bird.

Meanwhile, the great work grew apace under the tireless direction of Astrellon. Houses for the people, and storehouses for food, as well as ample shelter for

the animals, were in turn constructed. A small hut was built above the lake's feeding stream, that there might be a protected supply of running water during the season of frost. And though the expeditions led them further and further afield, they met no natives, and a sense of security began to settle on them.

It was in this halcyon period that Estrella and Mordena learned to tread the defile without a tremor, for their natures were alike, in that each of them chafed at restraint, and longed to encounter and conquer difficulties. There was a spot beloved by them both, a little dell cradled against the outer wall of the defile, where the moss made a soft cushiony carpet for tired feet, and the thick trees a secure screen from all eyes, for eyes, however kindly, forever contemplating her smallest action, formed a real trial to Estrella, accustomed only to her father. Here Mordena loved to steal with her sewing, and here Estrella came to dream about Atlantis and Rollo in the most private sanctum at her disposal, or to brood over her father's inflexibility.

One golden autumnal day Estrella set out for her haven alone. Mordena was busy within the city, and Beldenis, far as she knew, was in the fields below. For days Estrella had not pondered on the mysterious reasons for her unfulfilled love affair with Rollo, but a chance word that day, had kindled the ashes of her curiosity again, and she wished to be alone for awhile, to fit the pieces of the puzzle together again and arrive if possible at some logical solution. As she rounded the corner of the defile, she thought her tiny refuge fit for a queen's bower, with its gorgeous orange, crimson and gold hues, and the blue-green of evergreen, and moss. She parted the bushes and sank on the floor of the dell—only to spring erect at once with a pale face, for the bower was occupied.

"It seemeth I intrude. I beg pardon, since I dreamed not another knew of this spot, or cared to use it," she said coldly, stung to the quick. "But I shall depart at once."

"And why, forsooth?" enquired Beldenis, springing to his feet and catching her hand. "Thou'rt wel-

come as always, Lady Estrella. We were below in the fields and as we came toward the cup, I did persuade Delmas to rest awhile here where it is so pleasant."

"This, then, is where thou stealest when thou'rt e'en weary of our chatter!" exclaimed Delmas, smiling up at her in friendly way, for Delmas loved the daughter of the Man of Knowledge, and hung upon her smile. "'Tis like thee, Lady Estrella, all rich colors, and restful harmonies."

"Me thought none knew it save Mordena and myself," she answered with a slight smile. "Yea, it is charming, and I trust ye will enjoy the shade which must be welcome after the heat of the fields." She moved towards the entrance, but Beldenis was before her.

"Thou wert coming here to rest, Lady, and to what purpose shalt thou go hence so suddenly?" he said with a winsome smile. "Canst thou not sit with us a while, since leisure thou surely hadst else thou hadst not crossed the defile?"

"I knew not the dell was occupied when so I came, but 'tis no matter for I have work I would do well to finish."

"Tush! Have we not all work that must be done? Yet the day is very sweet, and soon cometh the winter." laughed Delmas.

"The more reason I should leave ye to find enjoyment . . . Fear not, I shall not say I have seen ye," Estrella smiled, but turned resolutely away.

"If thou goest, we shall know thou'rt angry that we have usurped thy bower."

"Such were unworthy thought, Delmas. The bower is no more mine than thine."

"If someone must go, Lady, that privilege be ours since we trespassed . . . Come, Estrella, be friends! Sit down with us and talk a little, and then we shall all go in to the city together."

Estrella yielded as she was wont to do when Beldenis requested, and sank down on the soft moss. Beldenis relaxed, then, and took his former position,

stretched out on the turf at Delmas' feet. The girl was weaving a chaplet of golden leaves, and Estrella watched the flying fingers and marvelled at the warm coloring and brown-skinned charm of her.

"Well can I believe," said Delmas, "that fairy hands did paint these leaves with colors from a magic paint-pot, so bright and perfect are their hues."

"The Lady Mordena declareth these woods are full of unseen presences," answered Beldenis, idly plaiting grass in his long fingers. "Methinks thou'rt akin to fairies thyself, Delmas, so skillfully dost thou weave. Is it for thy bright head?"

"Nay, Beldenis, but for thine . . . Shall I not crown him, Estrella? There! Now he doth resemble one of those god-like statues in the King's palace."

Beldenis reddened, and put up one hand to pluck the wreath from his head, but just then he caught a look in Estrella's eyes that surprised him, and he took his hand away, and turned with a smile to Delmas.

"Now wilt thou weave one for Lady Estrella, for since the queen is in her bower methinks she should have one," he teased.

To his astonishment, Estrella blanched. "No queen am I. Indeed, I—was considered unworthy to be a queen!" It was the first time she had spoken openly of her disappointment, and no sooner were the words out than she regretted them. "What nonsense we speak!" she cried, with an attempt at mirth. "Why should we seek to be king or queen, who have health and all needful earthly comforts?"

"But there are kings and queens in the world," objected Delmas. "Once we were of the world. Is it forbidden to speak of its glories?"

"Of its glories, nay! Yet, here between us as friends, Delmas, dost thou say the King Lumnos was a glory, or the Lotus Lily who did send many a brave heart and true to the long sleep, a being to be emulated?"

"And yet, Beldenis, my father hath pity for the Lotus Lily. He knew that which was hidden to our eyes. Mayhap I also have pity. More lovely was

she than goddess, and more sad and lonely. How wouldst thou have liked, Delmas, to have been sold to a man whom many maids called lord? To have been torn from one thou didst love, and given as peace-hostage to alien country? Ah—my heart doth ache for one who must so be treated. Better to live alone, than be so the sport of fate.”

“Thy heart is tender, O Estrella, more tender for her than hers had been for thee . . . yet she sleepeth well, her troubles over. Life is too short to mourn for that which is past. Let us live in the present, and doubtless the past and the future also, will take care of themselves.”

Delmas stole a sideways glance at Estrella, and perceiving that the girl was overwrought, began to sing a song bubbling over with laughter, and presently Beldenis joined her, and they went on, improvising verses till both were tired out. Estrella scarcely heard them for her mind had now two problems to solve. When they paused for lack of breath she said quietly: “Is it not time that we returned? Doubtless my father hath need of me, and the air grows chill.”

“Good-bye for to-day, pretty little bower. We shall come to see thee again!” Delmas blew an airy kiss toward its shadowy depths, as they went across the defile. But though Delmas and Beldenis went again many times, though Beldenis sought the spot alone at hours when he might reasonably be supposed to be elsewhere, never again did Estrella enter the dell. Nor, if she had been questioned, could she have told why.

Grains were harvested, and brought into the cup. Potatoes were dug from their terrace-like beds on the hillsides; fruits of every procurable kind dried and laid on the shelves for winter use; nuts were stored in bins, and fodder stacked for the animals. The days grew shorter and colder, and the leaves on the sides of the cup went from scarlet and gold to russet. The red-cheeked children still played and sang in the frosty outdoors, but already their elders were beginning to seek the fires that burned on every hearth morning

and evening. A blue haze hung low on the horizon. More and yet more firewood was brought in, and one last expedition sent after wild game.

And when all was finished, when human ingenuity could suggest no further plan of adding to their comfort, Astrellon built a gate such as were used in Medelos. Nevertheless, the Delosarians, watching, sighed, for they were secured in their mountain fastness.

Then came one day of perfect beauty,—a day such as is known in the month of August, mellow and dreamy,—and a great feast was spread in the meadow by the lake. Tables were set out with wild game, fish and fruits, and the men rested from their labors or strolled about the lake, and talked contentedly.

Mordena was in her element. Her hospitable soul expanded itself in effort to give pleasure to her family, and she bustled from point to point, till as Mascallon said, "Her feet went so fast, they twinkled like the stars." Estrella was busy, too, but she ever moved in a more leisurely manner. On that day the children were her especial care, and she spared no pains to make them happy.

"Too hard dost thou play, Estrella," protested Beldenis coming in search of her to join his party in a game. "Come, leave them a space, we want thee with us."

"But the children want me also," she said. "Should I think, then of myself?"

"Yea, and if not of thyself, then of us. Too little have I seen of thee lately. Almost, did I not know thee for true friend, I could believe thou didst not like me. Caritas! Canst thou not play by thyself a time? Thou hast tired Estrella out."

"Then shalt thou allow her to rest? Yea, Beldenis, take her away. We can amuse ourselves," chuckled Caritas.

"Now, thou'rt free. Come, race me to the shore, Estrella and cast thy dignity to the winds. Too much hast thou brooded of late—over that which may never be."

"Unkind art thou to speak thus to me. Still, in that thou dost not know the depth of the wound thou dost probe, I forgive thee. And thou'rt right. That which is done is past recall, nor can my fondest wish cause one of my Atlantean roses to bloom again. Of late I have found peace, and resignation. Yet still doth my heart ask 'Why? O, why?' I know not."

"Unkind perchance I am. Yet have I thy good at heart. The Deity doth order all things in appropriate season, and thou wilt also discover His reason in this matter at some future date. Yet I ask thee, Estrella, whether thou hast the right to shut thyself from young company as thou hast been doing of late?"

"Shall I not find peace in mine own way?"

"Shalt thou also bring pain to those who love thee by thine absence and by thy coldness? Duty hast thou to these as to thyself. For behold, we are exiles shut in together for weal or woe, one little company left of all our world. Therefore must each of us do our part and by kindness, friendship and love, make not alone our companions' lot sweeter, but our own."

"Ever thou dost put me to shame, Beldenis. Very selfish have I been, thinking only of my own troubles."

"I spake for thine own good, Lady, for thou wouldst be happier if thou wouldst cease brooding o'er the past, and make of thy life a finer achievement."

"Very faulty and imperfect, then, am I in thine eyes."

"Said I so? Well, then, dost wish me to say thou'rt perfect?"

"Do we not yearn to be called perfect?"

Beldenis shook his head. "Nay. Perfection belongeth to the higher spheres. If one were tied to perfection—how miserable his lot. Never able to rise to those heights, and ever slightly despised by the perfect one . . . Thy father is as near perfection as earth doth permit, Lady."

"Yea. Why then, shouldst thou trouble thyself with one so imperfect?"

"Because Estrella, I can e'en behold how far thou couldst soar if thou wouldst but try. Moreover—and

thou wilt hate me for that which I say!—thou’rt grieving thy father sorely by thy attitude, for of late thou hast shunned his company. Therefore he believeth thou dost still blame him for the loss of Rollo.”

Estrella threw up her head proudly, and her eyes flashed angrily but speedily dropped before the sadness in Beldenis’.

“Thinkest thou not, Lady, that thy father had reason more potent than his happiness in so decreeing? Ever he doth put thee first in thought—next to his Deity. Ask thy father the reason—if thou wouldst hurt him beyond endurance. Then shalt thou have thy faith restored at the expense of thy father’s pride.”

“Dost thou know?” she whispered.

“Yea. Moreover, thy father is right. I beseech thee, Estrella, put this from thee, and become as thou wert of old—thy father’s loved companion.”

“What wouldst thou have me do?”

“Be thine own sweet natural self. Cease brooding, and turn thy mind to the needs of thy neighbors. Plenty wilt thou find to do, and much love will be thy portion. Think not that I love to wound thee. Yet, if I tell thee not, who will be so bold? Consider well what I have said, and decide to make of thy life the lovely pattern the Deity meant it to be. And thou wilt make thy father’s heart rejoice. A few years at most he hath—make these years happy ones, Estrella.”

His smile took away all sting from his words, but Estrella was too startled and abashed to look up. “Perchance thou dost wish time to compose thyself ere thou seest others? Therefore, I leave thee, Estrella, and I pray the Deity I have not forfeited thy friendship in so speaking.”

“Yea, I would be alone. But thou’rt right, and I were but cowardly did I cast off thy friendship since thou hast told me the truth. I—I love my father, and very selfish have I been . . . Thou hast reason to think poorly of me?”

Beldenis did not reply, but moved away to join his companions a trifle alarmed at his temerity in so addressing Estrella. But when the call for supper

sounded, Estrella came to her father with her old-time sweetness, and hung upon his arm. Any mortification she had felt at Beldenis' words was washed away in Astrellon's low "Daughter, thou seekest me?"

"Now, and always," she answered softly.

She watched the lines of his face with all her old devotion as the level rays of the sunset warned them to seek shelter. The feast day had brought Astrellon a gift more precious than gold, than all the wealth of Atlantis, his daughter's beloved companionship. It was a day of delight.

But on the following morning when they arose, a white mantle covered the earth, and weighed the trees down. The children shrieked with delight, and went forth to meet the new playmate, Snow, but the elders looked at the closed gate, and turned aside to hide their tears. Winter was upon them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FIRST WEDDING OF DELOSARIAN

Day by day the snow fell with a gentle persistency, till the paths which the men were forced to clear for their daily traffic became tunnels between high, white walls. White veils of mist hid peak and sky alike from the occupants of the cup, until they felt they must surely be citizens of some cloud city hidden from the world by that white curtain. Cold though the sun-loving Atlanteans found it, Delosarian was nevertheless protected from the storms that raged the heights above or the terraces below. But it was tedious to sit quietly in a world so coldly dazzling, and, as never before since they reached that haven, they sighed for warmth, and vivid hues, and for the social intercourse of their native land.

Perhaps discontent and strife might have followed, had not Astrellon provided suitable occupation for the people. Though the outer structure of the Sun Temple was complete, worship was carried on in Mascallon's central hall, and in the hall of the freedmen, where they ate and lounged. To the interior of the Temple Astrellon now turned his attention, and divided his workmen into companies, each deputed to carry out some special part of the design. Stored in the interior of the Temple were many blocks of stone destined for an inner sheathing. Others, larger and of a reddish color lowered from a greater height, were carved by the more skilful of the workers into colossal representations of the Seasons and Virtues, and ranged in their appointed places. The inner sheathing of the Temple itself was smoothly finished with infinite care, and carved into a deep border with a pattern of divine allegory. The pillars supporting the roof and arches were wreathed in vines and flowers. And that the

men might work in comfort, a temporary fireplace in the centre, gave warmth and light on the short winter days.

The women wove, spun, and embroidered when their household tasks were done, and when the short span of daylight forbade further work in the Temple, the men cared for the stock, kept the passages clear, and carried water. But there still remained the long evenings, when, huddled by the fire, thoughts of all the exiles were lured to Atlantis.

Astellon took counsel with Estrella and Beldenis, with the result that the Delosarians were organized into units of entertainment—actors, singers, dancers, orators. From the precious rolls of literature which Mascallon had not been too hurried to bring with him, Estrella selected tales, adapting them, and changing them into plays.

Estrella had taken Beldenis' advice to heart, and if she was quieter than of old, she was if such were possible, closer companion to her father, watching over him with a love that was almost maternal. Those hours that found him free of study or of work—for Astrellon delighted to participate in the actual building of his beloved Temple, found Estrella at his side.

On one evening a week, Astrellon called all the Delosarians to the Hall of the Freedmen and gave them instruction in the ancient belief. On yet another evening, the budding orators held forth to amused and delighted audiences, or gave stirring debates. Beldenis took charge of the actors, and drilled them conscientiously in diction as well as drama, while the dancers—mostly the very young—began to practise sedulously under the direction of the wife of Demos, who had been a dancer ere she was sold into slavery.

And because they were busy with simple pleasure and duty, they were happy. The halls rang with mirth and music, and the older ones derived joy from watching the efforts of the younger. Mascallon was never happier than when his home was filled with a throng of friends. He teased his children, his wives, and his associates with equal delight.

"Well then, Mordena, dost still believe Beldenis and Estrella love?" he enquired one night, when Beldenis had been more than usually attentive to Delmas.

"Yea. Moreover, Mascallon, see that thou dost not tease Delmas in Estrella's presence as thou didst this night. Thou wilt give Delmas exaggerated idea of her own importance—enough she has already!"

"Almost I could believe thou'rt in love with Beldenis thyself!" jibed Mascallon, and laughed till the tears came at Mordena's horrified face.

"Too frivolous art thou! Worse art thou than Caritas—mischievous as the child is," Mordena retorted, flinging at him a cushion which he caught dexterously. "Nevertheless, I like thee so . . and would not exchange thee for Beldenis!"

The enthusiasm rose to a high peak as time went on. Thrice were banquets set in the great hall of Mascallon when their usual frugal fare was increased by various preciously-guarded dainties—sweetened cakes, candied fruits, jellied rose-leaves, the luxurious relics of a luxurious past! The tables were laid in long parallel rows, and served by the gayest youths and maidens, for there were no slaves in Delosarian. These feasts were dear to the heart of Mascallon, for they recalled the old and beloved days when his bounty was free for every parasite that chose to fasten like a leech on ease.

To one person at least, Atlantean days were well ended. No longer headman of the powerful noble Mascallon, and therefore though entitled to bask in the sunlight of the great lord's presence, still a servant,—Beldenis had become in his own right a noble, associated with Mascallon and meeting him in equality. As headman of Mascallon, it had been the duty and the pleasure of Beldenis to arrange outings and to escort Estrella when she spent infrequent intervals as Mordena's guest. He had, in those days, drained to the dregs the bitter-sweet cup of Estrella's friendship, hoping for no closer relationship. A withered rose from her hair, a torn tassel from her robe—he

cherished in secret and steadfastly worshipped his divinity, also in secret.

Estrella, her heart filled with the fair-haired Rollo, gave only casual kindness to the headman whose merry wit and strong arm were the children's delight. But in Delosarian, Beldenis was not only a personage, but distinctly personable, and thrown together as they were constantly, Estrella had ample opportunity to approve the keen resourcefulness of this man whose dancing hazel eyes were fast blotting out Rollo's brown ones.

Estrella was used to the society of men rather than women, and the merry chatter of the women left her stranded on unfamiliar ground. Her father seemed seized with passion for creating, and with Mascallon, spent endless hours planning, and re-planning the structures yet to be built. They discussed at great length the proposed expedition in search of native settlements, and sank the projected mine with shafts of many words. Estrella turned for companionship to Beldenis, finding it less frequently than she was beginning to wish. Beldenis seemed to know her every mood before she herself had probed its depths, and to bring the finer forces of her nature into play.

Though she knew it not, Astrellon's eyes were prone to watch them as they discussed every-day plans animatedly. In truth, Astrellon was pleased. Estrella had her mother's loving nature, and he had grieved deeply when he had been forced to interfere in her first love affair. So now he watched, and was satisfied to let the romance take its own course, fully aware of Beldenis' cleverness in turning sometimes to other maidens for an hour's laughter and repartee.

"Why dost thou not take part in the plays also?" asked Mordena one day as they sat in the hall at their embroidery frames. "Art thou less fair or less clever than Delmas that thou dost let her usurp all roles?"

Estrella flushed, but preserved her calm. "Nay, then Mordena, but thou knowest that I have not the choosing of the actors. That is the privilege of Bel-

denis, and if he thought me worthy of a part, he would e'en cast me. Moreover, I have my singers."

Mordena sniffed. "So, thou'rt afraid to ask him for part, much as thou wouldst like to have one?"

"Afraid? I? Nay, Mordena—but I do not wish to play a part. I had rather watch."

"Nevertheless, thou'rt actress of finished skill," Mordena affirmed. "Fain would I behold thee as principal!" Naughty Mordena knew very well that Beldenis expected to play the hero in the forth-coming piece, but she did not tell this to Estrella. At that opportune moment, Beldenis himself entered, and Mordena imperiously beckoned him to her side at once.

"How now Beldenis, hast chosen the players for the new piece?"

"Yea, Lady Mordena," he answered, his eyes following the graceful movements of Estrella's flying fingers.

"Then Beldenis, I trust thou hast chosen Estrella here to fill a leading role? Methinks she would grace the part of 'Loris!'"

Beldenis was embarrassed. "I trust the Lady Estrella will e'en forgive me if I pass her by. I—have chosen."

"Thou'rt in command of the actors and thou knowest which are talented," said Estrella in a cheerful voice. Beldenis snatched at the peace-token she extended him.

"Hast thou not marked the ability of Delmas?" he asked. "Right well hath she done, and right cheerfully taken my criticism. It is but fair she should have the role. Thinkest thou not so? Moreover," he added, "She doth fit the part in every look."

"How wisely thou hast chosen, time alone will tell," said Mordena bitterly disappointed. "So be it!"

Beldenis looked in surprise at Mordena, but she did not address him directly again, and presently he wandered to the group of actors conning their parts. When he looked once more for Estrella, she was gone.

So the winter passed slowly. The angels of life and death hovered above the cup city, and more than

one homesick wanderer closed thankful eyes on the snow and ice.

One day toward the end of the fifth month, when the Sun was beginning to shine with renewed fervor, and the snow to melt in little rivulets that ate their way hungrily through the snow walls, Estrella wound her woollen mantle about her and stepped forth. She was lonely, weary of the house, and possessed a vague unrest. She had not seen Beldenis for a week. That in itself did not please her. True, when last they met, he had been too lavish in his praise of Delmas, and Estrella, quite unaccountably to herself had assumed a grande dame manner foreign to her nature. She wanted Beldenis to tell her he preferred her company to that of Delmas, and since he had not done so, Estrella decided in a rush of martyred self-denial to steal from Delmas no more of his time. Still, her eyes missed him from his accustomed places, though she knew he had climbed the crisp snow at the cup's rear, and gone in search of game. For in spite of vast plenishing the storehouse was fast becoming a place of empty shelves.

Little success had attended their efforts, and, weary and discouraged, they had returned the previous afternoon. But Beldenis had not sought Estrella out. Bitter thoughts came crowding to her mind, and made her unpleasant company for herself.

It was crisply bracing in the sunshine. The children romped in the hard-packed snow, and from the Temple came the noise of chisel and the clang of hammer. Estrella besought Mordena and Pensera to come out doors awhile and put color into cheeks pale from constant application at the tapestries destined for the Temple.

They laughed at her enthusiasm, and declined, so she went alone, wondering as she did so whether she must always be alone. Hardly noting which direction she took, she turned a corner in the snow-passages, and the sight that met her eyes sent the blood rushing away from her heart in a stifling stream. So—he was with Delmas! Why—the pang was jealousy! She, Estrella, daughter of the Watcher of the Stars, guilty

of the cardinal sin of jealousy! She who had watched with sweet disdain the sharp conflicts waged by other women! She would rise above it, and so she gallantly arrayed her forces for defence. But the pang smote her again as Beldenis strode towards her, bearing Delmas in his arms kicking and screaming with laughter, he laughing and holding her fast. In one wild wave of primitive passion Estrella craved the privilege of twisting those slender arms till the girl cried out in pain—pain such as Estrella herself was suffering. For one terrible moment, only the cultivated control of muscles prevented her springing forward in rage . . . The next, still shaking, but firmly in command of herself, she bowed, and turned aside from the advancing pair who had just become aware of her nearness.

"It is the end," she thought, and bent on covering her exit from his affairs with dignity, she passed leisurely behind the Temple, and, plunging into a snow-alley at its rear, went wildly, madly threshing through those depths, finding a fierce joy in the struggle.

"We are undone," said Beldenis setting Delmas down with more haste than ceremony. "Now must I e'en find her and explain."

"Yea, and I advise thee, risk thy fate now, for at last is she awake," counselled Delmas.

Therefore as Estrella neared the spring-house, a sound bade her look around, and she discovered that Beldenis was following by the more defined path. Scarcely realizing what she was doing, she began to retrace her steps, fearful lest her pride should fail her, and her hurt be bared, for of all things she felt she could not bear Beldenis' compassion. She must get back to the sanctuary of her home!

"Estrella!" called Beldenis, in the commanding tone he had hitherto reserved for the men under his charge. "I bid thee halt where thou art. What dost thou hope to gain by foolish floundering in that treacherous snow, silly one?"

Estrella made no answer, but, striking away from the comparative safety of the path, she started toward the lake, which, covered with a thick sheet of ice, had

all winter provided a shorter route to the water-supply. The relaxing crust gave alarmingly beneath her feet, so that had she not been carried away by wounded pride, she must have sensed her danger. But she kept on, because she did not dare to face him till she had had time to compose herself.

"Estrella," called Beldenis again. "Wait but one little moment. It is unsafe where thou goest, and thou'rt fast becoming wet. What hath tempted thee to such mad course?"

Estrella might have been deaf for all the answer she gave him. How dared he command her? Did he think that she, Estrella was under his thumb, and must needs be docile to his orders while he loved another woman? Never! Her father must find some way of escape for her from this tangle. Could it, oh could it be possible, that, having attained nobility, Beldenis planned to take more than one wife in the old Atlantean custom? Well, if so, Estrella would not be the second one, no—nor the first. Rather would she die.

Little did she imagine how close she would come to that issue.

"Lady Estrella, stay. Wait but one moment, for thou'rt in difficulty. Go no further, I beseech thee, but permit me to carry thee back."

"Nay, save thy strength for those who may need it, Lord Beldenis. Estrella walketh securely—alone."

Estrella's tones were as chill and aloof as the frozen lake, but her danger spurred Beldenis to further blunders.

"Girl, let no foul fiend tempt thee to cross the ice. It fast breaketh up, I tell thee, and wilt bear e'en thy weight but poorly. If thou dost not desire my company, take at least some thought for thy self, and for thy father. Return by the roundabout way!"

Estrella looked at the ice, and back at Beldenis. Half-sick with anxiety, he mistook her gesture, and held out a pleading hand. "Come that is better. Let us go back to the city together, for there is that which I fain would tell thee."

Anything to stay the evil moment of acknowledgement! She looked once more at the ice which seemed firm enough to her inexperienced eyes, and stepped resolutely on that smooth snowy surface. Alas for dignity! Her feet slipped from under her, and she fell with a thud that cracked the ice in every direction, and precipitated her into the paralyzing waters of the lake. Estrella struggled frantically for what seemed thousands of years, for though she was in the shallow water near the shore, the weight of her clothing held her down, and the ice split under her wildly fumbling grasp. Life was very sweet to her in that moment, so she was battling gallantly when Beldenis reached her, and treading softly on the far side of her, with a tremendous effort drew her dripping and shivering to safety. And, as he stepped on the land, the ice cracked in a thousand fissures from end to end of the lake.

Beldenis was both frightened and angry. He wrung the water from her garments as best he could, and gave the terrified girl an impatient shake.

"Fool that I was to follow thee! Perchance had I not pursued thee thou wouldst not have had the ducking. Estrella—how camest thou to be wilful and angered? I could have sworn such were thy ways thou wouldst display reason at all seasons."

"Surely I have the right to control mine own temper, Lord Beldenis, and mine own actions. Thinkest thou to class me with Delmas whom thou canst sway by thy lightest word?" No amount of will power could make her voice steady, because of the chattering of her teeth and shivering of her body.

Beldenis looked at her and the angry retort died on his lips. "Only thy safety and thy happiness weigheth in my sight. I—wished to speak to thee on another matter, to tell thee of my dearest hopes, but I see that I am presuming on thy patience. I would keep thy friendship, therefore shall I forget that which I would have said. Now, thy life dependeth on my speed, therefore fight me not."

He picked her up and started for the city, warned by the increasing tremors that the girl was chilled to

the bone. Her pride still undaunted, Estrella stiffened herself fiercely away from him, shutting her eyes and turning her head away. Little as she was, Estrella was plump and firm, and long ere Beldenis had rounded the lake, and reached the corner of the Temple, his breath was coming fast, and his heart thumping in his own ears. As he paused to shift her weight, Estrella struggled to free herself. Beldenis gave her a little shake, for he, too, was hurt, and mortified beyond words. He did not dream that Estrella interpreted his conduct in an entirely different light.

"Seekest thou to further tax my waning strength? Knowest thou not thy very life dependeth on my speed in getting thee beneath thy father's roof? That at least, I owe him—and thee!"

But disdaining the help of the people who poured from every direction at the shrill call of the watching children, he carried her a bitter-sweet burden into her own home and laid her on her own bed.

Mordena and Pensera left their embroidery and came flying to minister to the girl, and the whole house became a hive of industry as fires were built up, and water heated. But the last conscious thought Estrella retained for many a long day, was the memory of herself plunging madly through the snow, whilst Beldenis gazed at her in anger. Night and day she tossed on her pillow, a raging fever wasting her, a cruel cough racking her body. At times she would lie quiet, staring with such heart-broken eyes that the watchers wept in pity. At others, she would call for Rollo to save her, and beg her father not to leave her alone. At such times, Astrellon's cup of sorrow brimmed over. All his great plans were discarded; forgotten was the beautifying of the Temple, as he hung about his daughter's couch.

Once, when the delirium was at its height, he summoned Beldenis, but the experiment was not repeated, for Estrella started up, screaming, and tried to get away. Astrellon, who knew the whole tale, endeavored vainly to soothe the man's bitter grief.

"Son," he said, "Deep in the heart of woman are fountains whose source man doth not comprehend. Perchance for a life, the waters of her soul flow easily, and the woman doth happily pursue her way, untroubled by jealousy, and its kindred emotions. Perchance also, one day, a loving but tactless hand smiteth the source, and the waters thereof rise up and overwhelm her. Aye, though she doth struggle against them. The reason therefore, who shall say? For behold, in all of us—even thee and me!—doth dwell the primitive creature which shall some day escape its shackles, and cause us pain or distress."

"Yea, verily, and perchance I was to blame, for with impatient touch I sought to waken her from her dreaming."

"Blame not thyself. Thou wert too tardy in wooing, but I did not wish to hasten thee. I thought this time to let it take its own sweet course . . . But these things happen, and no man can say why."

"Yet how shall I undo the harm which I have done?"

"Now thou must be patient and tread softly. Nor let fear nor regret carry thy ship of love beyond hope of anchorage. Perchance, when she doth awake, she will have forgotten her dreams,—and that which went before. If she doth not, then thou must teach her to forget by all the means at thy command . . . And again, perchance, the rumour which reached mine ears—reached hers also, and bade her beware."

"What rumour? What meanest thou, O Man of Knowledge?"

"That thou wert about to wed Delmas—first."

"Beldenis flushed darkly. "No such thought have I. A sweet child, Delmas, but I do not give her love."

Astellon nodded. "So I believed. Yet think me not unkind that my fatherly love bade me put thee to test . . . This gentle Estrella, this maid of mine, hot though her small temper be, meekly obeyed my will regarding Rollo. True, she did grieve silently many weeks for him as for lost home, yet for thee, for thee, Beldenis, she is as a strange untutored woman! For

thy apparent defection, she hath sprung to wild anger, agonies of jealousy, and kindred fears. Be cheered, my Son, Estrella loveth thee, and in the good time of the great Deity, thou shalt become reconciled. All that I may do for thee, I do."

"My Lord Astrellon, for that day I live and pray."

So, though many an evening Beldenis sat by the sage's fire and comforted him, Estrella knew not he was so near.

When the snow had disappeared from the cup, and the first flowers were beginning to flaunt their bright colors against the tender green of the young leaves, Estrella crept back to life, a mere wraith of herself, her eyes shadowy and immense in her white face, smiling patiently at her father, but steadfastly refusing to see visitors other than Mordena and Pensera.

Day by day the preparations for the proposed expedition had gone ahead, and one night as Estrella sat with her father, he caressed her head tenderly, and said:

"Child of my Heart, in the morn we go hence to be absent many days. Wilt thou not say godspeed to the man who saved thy life?"

"Father, to-night I would see thy face only of all faces on earth. Thou wilt say godspeed for me, and say also that I hold him in no way to blame for my illness for I was wilful and angry, and do regret the unfriendly spirit I displayed . . . Moreover, Beldenis cannot wish to see me. Such friendliness as he had for thy Estrella he must have long since replaced with dislike, for I was indeed, most unkind."

"Child, it grieveth me to see thee suffer again. Be not stubborn, Estrella, nor deem he whom thou hast hurt of thy wilfulness, unforgiving. He wisheth to make peace with thee."

"Then O my father, tell him I ask for his forgiveness—but I cannot face him yet. What shall I do while thou'rt absent, dear father?"

"Grow well in heart, and soul and body, my child. Pray the Deity to show thee the right way, the way

of justice and peace, for if thy soul be healed of all hurts then shall thy body grow strong once more."

"I must e'en grow strong thy strength and comfort to be. Moreover, I verily believe in illness I have lost that temper which hath often caused thee to grieve. Thy quiet and most docile Estrella shall I be henceforth."

"Better I liked that Estrella whose laughter made merry her household." He sighed as he kissed her, and blessed her.

And the next morning, the expedition departed very early.

Down on the plateau, the freedmen were ploughing and planting. The women were seeding the vegetable gardens and life was sweet in the balmy air. Estrella submitted herself to the merry rule of Mordena and the ministrations of the freedwomen who had been her nurse and companion all the weary time of illness. She asked no questions, and with a gentle meekness, submitted to the plans the kind-hearted women made for her. The first day her languid legs carried her as far as Mordena's there was great joy, and when at last, led by little Caritas, she found her old haunt by the stream, they held a miniature feast in her honor.

Youth is elastic, and the fresh air began to put some measure of vigor in Estrella's body. She gradually took up the lighter tasks and found peace in the action of doing for others. Only on the subject of Beldenis, was she dumb, and, having been warned by Astrellon, his name was not mentioned by the folk about her.

So to herself, as to others, Estrella's mind remained a more or less closed book. Now and again, she heard the freedwomen speak of Delmas' wedding, which was to take place when the expedition returned. She accepted it with a calm resignation, and began to plan for means of avoiding chance encounters later. And a gush of love rushed up in her heart as she thought that her father had been right as always when he said the rose of love was not for

her. In thought she devoted her life to his service, and beyond that she did not care, or dare to go.

Twenty-two days was the expedition absent, and the women once more sank under a load of anxiety. Life was peaceful in Delosarisan—but what fate had their dear ones met? Night and morning, Exora and his sister Caritas, crossed the defile and watched for the returning band. Then, one mid-day, the freedmen toiling in the fields spied them clambering homewards with several copper-colored natives accompanying them.

Delosarian received the news with ecstasy. Work was abandoned and the women donned holiday attire, and made haste to prepare food. Though it seemed to them they were hours performing these beloved tasks, they were assembled within the gateway and fidgeting with impatience long before the men could reach the defile. Estrella, unable to stay away, sank upon a rock in the background when the trembling of her body could no longer be ignored. Delmas, who sought every opportunity to be near her, was on the opposite side just within the gate. Estrella interpreted Delmas' glances wrongly, for she felt the younger girl wished to display her triumph. "Perchance, she e'en doth look forward to the day when I shall be second wife. That day shall never come," she thought sadly. So, ever courteous to Delmas, she met with a gentle dignity and reserve all attempt at friendliness.

Presently the lookout gave a shout, and came running to the women. "They come!" he cried.

The gates were thrown open, and the expedition entered. Foremost walked Astrellon, fresh in spite of the hard journey, and behind him, Mascallon in company with a group of natives whose keen intelligent faces accorded well with their dignity and poise. Then came Beldenis, and as he passed, Delmas plucked at his sleeve, and looked laughingly up into his eyes. Estrella could bear no more. She slipped away through the excited crowd like the small white ghost she was, sought refuge in her father's dwelling, for knowing

her father well, she was sure he would seek her as soon as his duties of courtesy permitted.

The wonder of the natives grew as they came into Delosarian; they gesticulated and bowed before Astrellon, bending their proud heads to his kingly aspect. The Delosarian women gave their awe-inspiring visitors a somewhat trembling welcome—and few of them slept well during the visit of the natives!—and were duly impressed with the splendid type these people represented as they placed viands such as the natives had never before tasted.

Leaving the chiefs with Mascallon, Astrellon went at once in search of Estrella. Touching and tender was that meeting, and then, though the daughter would have hung back, the father drew her arm through his and firmly led her to the lake-shore where the tables were spread. Beldenis was watching for them eagerly and came at Astrellon's gesture. Estrella gave him gentle greeting, and smiled as she clung to her father with both hands but she did not raise her eyes, so she was not aware that Beldenis was devouring her beauty—now more ethereal than ever. Beldenis sighed, but remained to take his place at Astrellon's side as they sat at table.

That was a prolonged and joyous meal, for the events of the expedition must be told in detail, just as every item of family life must be given the wanderers in exchange. It was a beautiful land, they all agreed, but sweeter to their eyes Delosarian and its womankind. The awe the natives felt for Astrellon, —whom they plainly considered a god—was expressed in gifts of jewels and food to the whole company. Mirth and music filled the air, and, when they finally left the table to sit, or to wander about the lake, Beldenis still doggedly clung to Astrellon and Estrella, as silent as Estrella but more determined.

The Man of Knowledge watched the little tilt with amusement, and talked learnedly of things far from the thoughts of all three, undeterred by the halting replies of the other two.

Suddenly from out of the merry-makers came one young couple to stand before the sage.

"Lord Astrellon," cried the youth, his splendid eyes afire. "We have been betrothed since the snow melted. Grant that ere to-morrow's sunset we be joined as one."

Astellon looked from one happy face to the other—"Maiden, it is thy wish also?"

"Yea, Lord," the girl answered, with a sweet gravity. "I have loved this lad for long months, but he, being blind as are all men, perforce I must arouse his jealousy to make that slow tongue speak. Weary the weeks since he went forth in to the unknown, and I,—I knew not if some native maid had won his heart. My parents know, and approve."

Astellon smiled into the dancing eyes. "It is well. Shalt thou not have the first wedding in Delosarian?" He moved away, but the girl caught at Estrella's sleeve.

"Lady, I grieve that thou hast met sorrow through Delmas. I love thee, and have felt the loss of thy friendship. But hearken. Hold not the prank of two merry children as bar to thy happiness. A foolish maiden seeking to arouse jealousy in one she loved, and for that purpose, using one she trusted, I would have told thee before, but thou wouldst not let me come nigh to thee, and I blame thee not, for so would I have acted toward thee in similar circumstances. Hold not this against him, I say, for behold, thou'rt young, and 'tis good to love and be loved." And Delmas slipped away ere Estrella could give utterance to the multitude of thoughts that crowded to her lips.

Astellon had made good his escape, and Estrella found herself alone with Beldenis. He turned to her with a half-smile.

"This time wilt thou come willingly, or must I carry thee? I have a tale I would tell thee."

"Whither wouldst thou go, Lord Beldenis?"

"A little apart from these merry-makers. Come, Estrella, I yearn for the sound of thy voice!" He held

out his hand, and after a slight hesitation, Estrella took it, and they walked away, not unobserved.

"AT LAST!" exclaimed Mordena. "Let us see that the children keep to this side of the lake."

Beldenis did not hear them. He walked by Estrella as one in a dream, for no trivial words could break down the barrier between them. And so they traversed a fair portion of the lake shore, and came in due season to the spot made historic for them both by the winter's episode. Here Estrella faltered, and Beldenis drew her gently yet firmly down to one of the many smooth boulders that lined the beach.

"Hast thought of me since I went from thee?" he began. "Thy face like a star hath beckoned me homeward, yea by day and night I thought only of thee, and prayed that it might be given to me to recompense thee a thousand-fold for all that thou hast suffered through me."

"Say rather through myself, Beldenis. Very foolish and very headstrong was I. For I thought thou wert but mocking me."

"Mock thee,—I? Lady, how couldst thou believe that one who loved thee in Atlantis as here, could pass thee by for a child's face, and a child's mind? A child do I deem young Delmas, a friend, a playmate, a ward—but such, Estrella, is not the woman I seek as mate. Never have I loved maid but thee, never shall I love maid but thee."

"And yet, thou foundest me imperfect, and full of faults."

"And what of that? Are we not all full of faults? Do I not blunder on every hand? Behold how I failed in my wooing . . . Wilt thou give me chance to do better, Estrella? For I would woo thee, if thou'rt willing to be wooed."

Beldenis paused as though waiting signal from her, and after a moment, Estrella laid her hand tenderly on his arm. Beldenis took it in both his and went on:

"Lady, in yonder jungle on a drooping tree did I behold one marvellous yellow lily which I would

have plucked for thee,—the only one of its kind that I did see in that weary marching. But as I reached to pull it, the roughness of my eager hand crushed its beauty, so that it faded in my grasp . . . Have I also crushed that fragrant lily whose petals I dared to hope had begun to unfold for me? Hath my hasty hand bruised that lovely bud? For I would fain transplant it to the garden of my love and there would I tend it, and shelter it so that the years should add to its beauty, and storms distress it not. This would I have told thee the day thou didst flee from me, this only. For thou hadst held me at a distance, Estrella, and I verily believed thou couldst not care. What anguish I suffered in thy illness none but the Deity doth know. Estrella, I love thee! More than life itself do I love thee! Yea even in Atlantis where I was but Beldenis, the captain of the household, thy every look was treasure to my heart. If thou wilt trust thyself to me, I shall care for thee with my life and with my soul. Speak, ah Lady speak!”

Gone forever were Estrella’s doubts and fears. Gone all the crucifying thought of loneliness. Her face was transfigured with love and peace.

“Beldenis,” she breathed, “The lily bloomed for thee alone. Very sad was my heart when I thought thou wert to wed Delmas. I knew not how I should compass thy presence, then. Moreover my heart troubled me lest thou shouldst desire us both after the Atlantean manner.”

“Estrella, could I give thee but half my heart, and half my love? Thinkest thou I would share that which I prize above all earthly possessions with e’en another woman? Nay, now and always, thou shalt be my one, my adored, and my only wife.”

“Very faulty is this maid Estrella, but perchance thou canst aid her to grow strong and true like thee.” She lifted her face for his kiss as naturally as the flower turns to the caress of the rain.

Beldenis folded her in hungry arms, and caressed her gently, but still fiercely, strong arms shielding her against the world itself. He stroked her hair, and

mourned the pale hue of her cheek. So wrapped were they in each other, that they did not see Astrellon till his voice made them spring apart like guilty children.

"Hast made thy peace, Beldenis?" he asked as Estrella flew to lay her head against his breast.

"Yea, Lord. Moreover, thy daughter hath promised to wed me."

"It is well. I am rejoiced to bring thy frail barque to the sheltered haven ere I depart for realms of sleep."

Beldenis looked at Estrella with eager questioning eyes. She hesitated, then nodded shyly.

"Lord, we have waited and suffered. Wilt thou wed us now?"

"What? So soon? Perchance it is well." Astrellon scanned their faces in the moonlight, and reading their desires in their shy smiles, he sighed and bade them join their hands while he spoke the sweet ritual of marriage.

"O Deity—Ruler of Earth and Heaven, whose watchful eye doth yet descend from aspects glorious to the humble creatures Thou hast created, receive and accept these children in love, that they may be one at heart with each other as with Thee. Set Thou the light of Thy torch to guide them in life's thorny path which henceforth they will tread together. Be Thou kind to them, and teach them in sunshine and shadow to trust in Thee. From their love and marriage spring up new shoots of love and belief for Thy glorification. For there are none whom Thou hast not joined together."

As they rose from their knees, Astrellon turned to Beldenis.

"Son, I give thee my one well-beloved daughter in wedlock. Do thou cherish her as thou dost wish the Deity to cherish thee in the day thou dost go before His face. My child, be faithful, loving, and obedient to this man, for I have tried him and found him true."

He blessed them, and said with a half-smile. "I have broken my word, and must e'en go tell Delmas that her's shall not be the first wedding in Delosarian!

. . . It is well, and I am glad for ye both. I pray the Deity to give ye many years together . . Linger not overlong in the moonlight, for Estrella doth yet resemble its pale thin beams."

He left them abruptly, but heedless of his warning Estrella and Beldenis walked the shore and talked away their hurt and misunderstanding.

CHAPTER XIX.

LEON, KING OF ATHROS

When several days had passed in rest and good fellowship Theonis began to chafe at the delay. She hinted broadly, then suggested and finally demanded that her father and Terestes settle to work.

"Ye know," she said deliberately, "how cruel the rains that freeze us to the bone. Why should we longer content ourselves with rush huts? Let us make ourselves better habitations."

Her father laughed tolerantly at her impatience.

"Well minx, go cut the marble for us, and we will make thee a palace. Hoho!"

"Very well. Let the rain come in on thy bed if thou wilt. Much grease will Zeleatha put on those aching bones,—and her hand is heavier than thy daughter's."

The Chief frowned at her. "Faith, in fair weather thou wilt not let me forget my bones?"

"Why should I when in foul weather thou wilt not let me forget them? Terestes! Wilt thou leave Theonis, helpless as she is, to hew osier and weave huts?"

Both men laughed at the sudden change in her voice. "It were well we made better provision for the winter," said the Chief.

"This very day we shall call the tribe together, and speak to them!" Terestes promised.

More than one tribal council was needed, for difficulties beset them on every side. Stone as a material was quite out of the question. Their tools were hopelessly inadequate for the cutting of stone; moreover all that was suitable for their needs, lay far in the

Hill Men's territory, and it was foolish to wage needless warfare.

What could they substitute?

"Behold, we propose in time to build an Athros which shall be stately and splendid; but that will take many seasons. Let us make more comfortable dwellings for this winter, and in the spring shall we not commence the greater task. At once the Falcon shall return to Creta bearing money and gems, and these Althus will exchange for food, raiment and tools against our need. Such is the suggestion of thy tribesman Leon."

A shout of approbation rose from the tribe, and the Chief dismissed them in high humor, and with Lumnos and Terestes, or as he called himself, Leon, they made a circuit of the city, and its enclosing walls.

The following day the Helmsman put back to Creta bearing a letter to Taledes, and a bag of gold for the purchase of certain staples. Those of the oarsmen with families were bidden to bring them thither, for one and all the crew of the Falcon had taken the oath of fealty to Athros and the Chief.

With this business despatched, under the Chief's order, Leon bade the tribesmen gather great piles of boulders from every quarter, and pile them by the walls. The bed of a dried stream furnished them with a large quantity; others lay to their hand, where the Hill Men had obligingly cast them in a futile effort to break the walls down. These stones were used to extend the walls through meadow and intervening woodland to the rocky shore itself. And, at the distance of a furlong, a second and higher wall was erected, ringing the old wall and forming a further defense against surprise attacks. Once, as they worked at the outer wall, they were taken unaware by a raiding party of Hill Men, but the men of Athros carried the warfare into the very hills, and the Hill Men suffered greatly.

As the wall grew, plastered with mud and straw, Leon and Lumnos designed gates for the four sides, rude copies of Atlantean portals, and worked out a

system of leverage that, though cumbersome, worked successfully to the mystification of the tribesfolk. During the day these gates stood open, with a sentry at each, whose duty was to sound alarm if the foe approached, by striking a drum hung at the side of the portal. At night they were shut tight, and a fresh relay of sentries posted. The top of the walls were fortified with sharp thorns, shells, jagged rocks and pointed stakes cemented in the mortar, so that it would be a bold invader, indeed, who succeeded in scaling those sharp heights.

While some worked at the walls, others cut down logs in the neighbouring forest, and dragging them into Athros with slave-power built huts comfortable and reasonably fireproof. The logs were notched to fit into each other, even as the roof poles had been notched and the space between was filled with sod, and osier.

These log huts, a great step in advance of the flimsy rush ones, had two rooms, and sometimes three, with an opening for light and air in each one, and a two-part door hung on wooden pins. For the first time in Athros, each family had its primitive stone hearth, and its own fire. As these habitations were completed, the tribesmen took possession, and the old huts with their ever-present fire menace were torn down, and consumed.

In the centre of the new village Leon constructed a large wooden hut with three apartments, which he would not permit to be occupied. Speculation was rife among the people as to its use, but when the ships returned from Creta, the goods were carried into this building and the people made to understand that whatever they needed from that stock, they might have. But in exchange for the commodity they must give labor, or workmanship of some kind, fruits of the soil, or of the chase. This was the first shop Athros had ever seen, and they did not grasp the full extent of its possibilities for several seasons.

One ship went forth from Athros, but two returned bearing besides those articles which Leon had ordered,

many conveniences he had not thought of. The oarsmen had been divided between the two ships, and brought back their families and chattels. The Cretan women were confused and somewhat frightened at their rough surroundings until they were made to understand that human sacrifices were taboo in Athros. Then they stoically settled themselves to endure their fate, little dreaming the Atlanteans had gone through the same process of evolution so short a time previously.

Althus had a letter for Leon, and a casket for Theonis, both of which he resigned with evident pleasure. Leon sat down on a nearby rock and broke the royal seal. "Hearken, my Theonis, to the words of thy great admirer, Taledes!" He said with a sly little twinkle. "What hath he sent thee now?"

"Never mind my lord. Read thou the letter." Theonis dropped at his feet with such engaging attention that Leon must stop to tell her first how much he loved her.

"And within a few yards all Athros doth tramp about on thy business. Perchance also Lumnos smil-eth at thy ardor."

"Let him smile, I love thee."

"Yea, and I love thee.—Well, art thou going to read Taledes' letter?"

Leon unrolled the parchment, and began:

"To my kinsman Leon of the House of Creta and Athros. Greeting. Whereas it pleaseth me greatly that thou hast trusted my faith in thee to extent of asking my aid, I do give thee what thou dost desire. Keep thy monies. My coffers overflow with gold and jewels, yet have I no riches as thou dost possess.

"Much hath transpired since thou wert here—For hath not the kingdom been twisted with sudden death of Balthus, High Priest of Baal. Perchance ye may have heard of him ("say rather heard Taledes. Right well did we hear his evil voice," Theonis interposed). "Well, his body was e'en discovered on the steps of one whose wickedness the city knoweth only too well. Therefore was consternation among the priesthood, but

rejoicing amid the populace, grown weary of overmuch sacrifice. However, as the body of Balthus was not discovered till the sacrifice had commenced, it was carried on. (Thou knowest my opinion in the matter.) But 'twas a small thing for in the confusion the priests were more concerned for their own safety than for the rites of Baal! Into the midst of an angry people, a temple slave did bear the body of Balthus, and casting it at my feet cry for justice. What would ye? My stomach being right full of the justice these priests dispense and right sympathetic with the suffering peoples, I called to them 'People of Creta—behold the body of thy Chief Priest Balthus, murdered doubtless. What wilt thou in this matter?' With no delay did they roar so that the Temple trembled with the sound—'Give us the body that we may avenge ourselves!' Whereat, springing on nearby pedestal a giant whose one ewe lamb had e'en been torn from his grasp by the lust of Balthus cried, 'Citizens of Creta! Let us have done with Balthus! Behold, the King's heart is with his people. Tear the body piecemeal as he hath so often torn tender limbs—and let us deal likewise with all these false prophets who cry, kill, kill, kill!' Ere I could have stopped him, he hurled the body into the crowd. Remembering thy tender heart, I draw a veil over that which followed for e'en was my stomach sick. He, who by violence had held the mob at bay, became the plaything of a violent mob. Suffice it to say that his associates fled in haste, save only the young priest I did commend to thee. Therefore have we had occupation in re-shaping certain elements of the service, and I charge thee on the bones of thy father, if the miscreants come thither to deliver them to Creta. This only do I require of thee Leon, but knowing thy interests in all such matters have told thee at great length.

"It pleaseth a certain princeling of Egypt to sojourn in Creta and study our customs. A grave youth, most haughty and too liberal in the matter of largess. Whene'er he walketh abroad, the people flock to his path. I like not his emblem—the serpent.

"And to thy Lady Theonis, wife of thy heart, greeting and peace in my name. I send thee certain small gifts. When thou has need to barter, do not, I pray thee, deem them too precious for use. More marketable are they and more valuable than gold. I shall send thee oleander and azalea for the garden. And to the little token I send, the Queen hath added a length of veil, for albeit she hath a kind heart, and much admired thy fire, O Lady Theonis.

"Touching the matter of the vessel, kinsman, speak not. It is thine. Send it where thou wilt, and send it to Creta whenever thou wilt. Behold we yearn for skins of animals wherewith to make us fashionable apparel. Send us such and receive cloth in return.

"Perchance I shall one day come myself to visit thee. Who knoweth?

"In all things thou'rt wise, my kinsman, Leon. Therefore let thine answer drip wisdom, for in truth I scarce dare trust myself at times.

"Farewell, and peace and contentment be thine in the name of the Deity."

Taledes, King of Creta.

"Well!"

"My Lord Taledes hath the wisdom of the serpent if not the ways of a serpent," she said with dancing eyes. "Behold he doth make plain to thee the events which follow on the death of Balthus—but discreetly. So doth he contrive to convey his fear and dislike of the Egyptian—yet anyone might read the letter, and be no nearer the truth."

"Come, open thy gift-box. Let me behold what the King of Creta hath sent to stir my jealousy this time."

"My Lord—jealous—thou? Thy kinsman hath a path of thorns to tread. He seeth the downfall of Creta and doth lay the blame at the Altar of Baal. Ah—" Theonis opened the casket as the Helmsman had shown her, and within lay many yards of finest silver tissue folded to a tiny parcel, so soft was it. Theonis thrust the casket into Leon's arms, and springing up, draped the shimmering thing upon her head

securing it with the slender, amethyst-studded silver circlet.

"Leon considered the effect gravely. "Yea 'tis well for state occasions!" he granted. "But I like best thine own bright hair."

"Would that I could see my image. Hath the splendor eclipsed my poor grace? Open thine eyes, lord, that I may behold myself mirrored in them."

Leon laughed and obediently bent to her level while she preened, and perked with delight. She saw at length something else in those eyes, something that always made her heart stand still for very wonder of it, and she snatched off the gorgeous head-dress and raised her face to his.

"Now who doth disregard the folk of Athros!" Leon laughed as he kissed her upturned face.

"My Lord, forgive thy vain Theonis. Thou dost desire speech with Althus, and would fain count the treasures thy ships have brought. I will depart."

"Nay—" Leon drew her firmly—"Thou wilt come aboard with me. For what things are mine, are thine also. As for thy plans are they not mine?" He called a slave, and bade him carry the casket to their house.

"Yea, lord—Thy will is mine also—most of the time, but sometimes my will is the better. So. Tal-edes doth send me lotus and oleander for my garden. Fair must be the garden to retain such precious gifts."

"A garden cannot be a garden if therein are no white roses."

"Tush, pale sickly things I like them not!"

"Exquisitely fair and fragile—the most perfect flower in all the world."

"A fig for thy white roses! I will not have them. I hate them! I—" as she discovered Leon was openly laughing at her heat, she began to laugh too, until the wondering Cretans passed them surprised at such mirth.

"My faith, lord, thou hast an ill-tempered wife. Well, then, thou shalt have one tiny rose tree—only one!—tucked away in a corner where thou alone canst see it. So be it. Do thou go aboard, Lord, and I will

await thee in full sight, for I cannot abide the tipsy boat."

From her vantage point on the rock, she watched the steady procession of slaves from the ships, and her mind flew to Taledes with his cold face and generous heart. She thought, too, of the Queen who was indolent but "kind-hearted." Poor Taledes! Then her heart swung back to its pivot as surely as the magnet draws the wandering steel. Leon was returning. How kindly he spoke to all! How kindly he bent his eyes on hers, till the flush of shyness rose to her sweet face.

"My faith, 'tis well Balthus hath passed! Could he behold the munificence of equipment Taledes hath sent hither, he would straight-away command a sacrifice to propitiate the Deity lest poverty stalk the wasteful footsteps of the King. No longer shall the tribesmen doze about the fire between hunts, for there is work for all."

The winter, unusually stormy though it was, proved the truth of Leon's words. Amongst the Cretons were several who had lathes, and potter's wheels, and many a vessel was whirled and baked in the days of brief sunlight that interspersed the rainy ones. The women of Athros learned to ply a needle, clumsily at first, but with ever-increasing skill.

Rain or shine the tribesmen assembled daily for a drill routine, so that their muscles began to harden and respond like well-oiled springs. The increased protection against damp went far to mitigate the usual colds of the tribe, and they were active as never before.

Weary of the Atlantean feuds, Leon contrived to spread the families so far apart throughout the city, that, hedged in by tribesmen whose language they spoke haltingly, the Atlanteans were so glad to meet with their own kind, that quarrels were forgotten and petty jealousies laid aside. Lumnos suffered acutely. For that trained mind once so tutored and developed by Astrellon, fretted at the bars of its prison cage. He took his place among the workers, doing well, but apathetically, all that he was given to do. Opportunity for prolonged discourse was impossible, for Leon

was concerned with the many matters the Chief deputed to his attention. Lumnos hunted; but the uncouth killings of the tribesmen nauseated him. He wanted his library, his gardens, his chariots, his musicians, and most of all, Astrellon. In his loneliness he turned to Luelila for solace, and found companionship in that loving nature.

The old Chief was badly crippled, so that he walked abroad only on the warmest days, and then needed stout stick, and the aid of Zeleatha's arm. His eyes had a far away sadness in them, and his voice seldom boomed forth in its thunderous tones. The tribesmen watched, and awaited the inevitable, privately resolving the next Chief should be called King,—and that King, Leon. Nevertheless in spite of the pride of accomplishment that thrilled them as they sat luxuriously in warm dwellings—their hearts leaned to the old life fast passing from them. As in a dream they saw their old tribal customs slipping, slipping into the forgotten past, till, somewhere in the radiant future that swept toward them, all trace of origin and habit should be lost to view. It was the retrospective mood that engulfs the pioneers of all time—be such pioneers nations or individuals,—as, hesitating upon the threshold of the Unknown, they paused a moment to gaze back into the Familiar, ere they close the door, and step forth boldly.

The Chief's steady decline was the one blot upon the serenity of Theonis' happiness. She watched the shadows creep over that well-loved face, and murmured a petition to the Deity to spare him yet a little. The old Chief fought every inch of the way, forcing his pain-racked body to yet further effort that he might behold at least once the child of his beloved daughter. Thus he talked long with Leon, and lived in each day as it came.

There came an evening when the wind danced through the first flowers of springtime, and the old Chief's couch stood by the open window that he might see the purple hills once more. Only these he loved most dearly were with him. During the day the

tribesmen had visited him one by one, and said their awkward farewells. Lumnos and the old Helmsman had made their last visit, and had gone away with wet eyes unashamed.

Theonis crouched by her father's side, but as a tear slipped from her lashes, he exclaimed with some of his old-time peremptoriness:

"Tears—and in a Chief's daughter? Child, weep not for me. My feet have trod a weary way and they are torn with much travel. Yea, I will sleep, and when I awaken 'twill be in the Blessed Isles, borne thither by the warrior guard that watcheth me. Would that I had fallen in strife."

"My father," said Theonis, keeping back her tears with an effort, "Thou hast made valorous fight. As truly, as bravely as thou didst ever fight the Hill Folk, thou hast done combat with the enemy Death. Who shall prevail 'gainst that last great foe? If thou dost go to the Blessed Isles, thou wilt behold my mother, my sister and my brother. Tell them, I pray thee, that Theonis still doth love them."

"Yea, child, yea. Good daughter hast thou been. O son—thou wilt be next Chief of Athros. Right well have I seen to that, and the wolves will yet heed the voice of their leader. Be firm, be bold, be zealous, but also be ever-loving to Theonis. I bespeak also thy protection for Zeleatha who hath eased my pains with her tender care and for that am I grateful. Wherever I am my love will reach ye all, and remember ye. I would stay a little longer, but, behold they call, and I must go!"

The Chief's head sank suddenly on his breast as the gallant spirit fled. Theonis flung herself on him in hysterical grief, till Leon, fearing for her welfare, lifted her and bore her tenderly to their own dwelling, holding her in his arms throughout the long night of sorrow, and soothing her with loving words and healing touch.

At even of the next day, they brought forth the old Chief wrapped in his state cloak, and lying on a board as though he slept, so peaceful his face. High on the

shoulders of four slaves was it borne thrice about the tribal flame, while the people knelt with a low wailing of anguish. Then with solemn step, preceeded by a company of armed tribesmen, they issued from the west gate at moonrise, and laid him in his chosen spot of rest, beyond the lake. There, with his head turned toward the west, they left him without the city alone, for the first and last time.

For seven days there was mourning in Athros and the tribesmen ate sparsely of herbs and drank only water. On the eighth day they assembled in solemn concave, from which the women were excluded, to appoint a new Chief. Short and decisive was that meeting, for one name and only one name, echoed from every quarter. Speakers rose to laud Leon, and when all who desired the privilege of speech had spoken, the time of silence was observed. Then the Chief Spokesman rose.

"Behold, men of Athros, and hearken, men of Athros. Will ye accept Leon as Chief and King, the King of a new kingdom? No longer are we nomads, or barbarian tillers of the soil. We advance to commerce, and as befitteth such shall we not be known as the Kingdom of Athros."

"It is good," the tribesmen answered.

"Is it your will that Leon rule over us in place of One gone from us?"

"It is our will that he reign over us."

"Will ye serve him in true fealty, accepting life as his gift, and death in his defense as your desire?"

"Yea, we will serve him with fealty. To live at his behest, our honor. To die in his service, our glory!"

"Rise, O Leon of Athros. Wilt thou serve these people as thy leal subjects? Wilt thou be governed by their welfare and their progress, and setting aside thy personal glory, wilt thou advance the future of Athros?"

Pale, but resolute, Leon answered. "I will do as thou hast charged, according to my ability and my opportunity."

There was no chanting of many voices, no garbling of strange rituals, no vain pomp. Only the terrific sincerity of truth, and strong though he was, Leon quailed before it.

"Speak, O Leon of Athros, that the tribesmen may hear thy voice. Wilt thou deal with each justly as becometh the Overlord, who beholding all circumstances, hath pity and understanding?"

"According to my need, so shall I deal mercifully with them, lest the Deity who is Overlord of all men, demand of me strict accounting for my misuse of authority."

"Wilt thou also share with the people of Athros all that is brought to thy sovereign hand? Wilt thou keep our records clear, and our name free of stain?"

"Whatsoever I have, that will I share with this people — and may the Deity that guideth mankind direct my steps in the honorable paths, that ye may also tread therein without fear."

A murmur of applause ran through the ranks, which the Spokesman instantly silenced. He advanced to Leon and led him forward to the vacant throne-like chair. There he placed on his arm the broad silver bracelet of Chieftainship, which the old Chief had withdrawn from his own arm and given in charge of the Spokesman the day of his death.

"Hail Leon, King of Athros. Until death do we accept thee as our Sovereign Overlord. Thy word be our will. And if we fail in duty to thee or thine, may we perish from the face of the earth."

A mighty shout came from the tribesmen. "Hail Leon, King of Athros, we do accept thee as our Sovereign Overlord, until death."

"Go quickly. Bid the drummer roll his call, that the women come also and do reverence to the King," said the Spokesman.

The drum thundered forth in sonorous roll, and from every hut came the women and children lining themselves in readiness for the part they must play. When all were assembled, the drum ceased. And one by one according to rank, the tribesmen came forward.

Led by the Chief Spokesman, they stepped carefully across the brook, advanced in single file, and kneeling before Leon, touched both his feet with their foreheads, rose and kissed the Bracelet of Authority, and departed to stand in their places at the far side of the central square. Lumnos, to whom much of the speech had been unintelligible, was touched by the solemnity of the occasion, and knelt as humbly as the lowliest slave.

Following the men, came the women and children, among them Theonis. The whole ceremony was completed in the greatest of silence, and when every living soul in Athros had done homage to the new King the Chief Spokesman held up his hand again.

"Come hither, Theonis, Queen of Athros, and follow diligently in thy husband's way."

From the side of Zeleatha where she had been standing, Theonis stepped forward hesitatingly, her tear-reddened lids down-cast on ashy-pale cheek. Scarce half the length of that long living aisle had she traversed, when she became aware that Leon was at her side. She paused uncertainly at this upheaval of tribal custom but the color had returned to Leon's face and he drew her arm proudly within his and led her to the head of the lines. "We shall go forward together as we must ever do," he proclaimed clearly.

The people of Athros broke forth into a tumult of acclamation—until the Spokesman once more held up his hand for silence.

"Go—put from ye signs of mourning. Bathe your bodies and adorn yourselves with garlands against the sunset hour when we feast the new King."

"My Theonis—thou who wouldst have given thy life for mine. Didst thou believe I would leave thee to come forward alone?"

She looked proudly at him.

"My Lord, my heart leapeth for all that it is yet heavy with grief. O Lord of Theonis as of Athros, I do homage to thee."

"Nay Theonis, thou shalt not do homage. I ask of thee only love," he said as the tribe eddied about them.

"My love thou hast ever had, my Leon. Thou wilt ever have it. Yea, death itself is not strong enough to break the cord twixt thee and me. For wherever am I, I shall remember thee and love thee. And if I do thee homage, it is the homage a heart giveth to one most dear on earth or in heaven."

"As such do I accept it. Tell me, Theonis, hast thou put from thee all thoughts of the White Rose of Atlantis?"

"Nay Lord. I love her as thou dost love her. She shall have her place in thy heart—while I—"

"Thou dost own the heart itself, truly. And if thy last small fear hath fled, I tell thee this, as the Deity liveth no power in heaven or earth shall permanently separate thee and me. I will search through all the realms of the Land of the Shades till I find thee, and draw thee to me by the longing of my heart."

"So be it, Lord. I have tryst with thee in life,—and after."

Spring melted into sweet summer, and the city teemed with life, but Leon went about his duties soberly, for he still felt the responsibility he had assumed and he missed the old Chief's bluff companionship sorely.

Vessels put out to Creta laden with furs; the ground was tilled, and some improvements to the town started. And in the month when came the longest day, a son was born to Theonis and Leon, a son so fair and perfect that they held their breath for awe, and loved each other more than ever.

They could not find a name for that mite of humanity. Theonis wanted him named Leon, arguing that she could handle two of that name nicely, and Leon wanted him named for the old Chief, till the pain in Theonis' face forbade such stirring of memories.

At length Lumnos wearied of it, and swaggered over to the King's dwelling.

"Faith, in all Athros, one subject only do I hear—'What shall the King call his son?' saith Luelila when I desire to speak of great projects. It is the same everywhere. He is e'en a perfect babe, but by my sword, let us name him, and get to more serious business."

His laugh shook the rafters as Theonis cuddling her wonder-child said mischievously, but with a spice of meaning underlying, "Well, then, we wait thy suggestions—But when I remember thou wilt e'en be in the same boat this day two years hence I am consoled. Speak."

Lumnos wriggled uneasily, as he always did when Theonis gave voice to what he was pleased to designate "uncanny" remarks.

"I say, 'Theos', since 'tis gift from the Deity. That doth also resemble the lady's name."

Theonis and Leon looked at each other in delight.

For once Lumnos had made a very practical suggestion. So Theos it was. And the child thrived as truly as if God's gift he had really been—for after all is not every child born of true love, the gift of the great God who is, Himself, Love Incarnate?

CHAPTER XX.

TALEDES IN ATHROS

It was a rather uneven quay of sun-baked brick that nestled against the curving shore of the bay, and terminated the longer arm in a little tower which gave oversight of a vast expanse of sea and island. On the apex of that tower a man stood, gazing intently toward the south-east. Many goodly vessels lay in the smooth harbor, their furled sails flapping lightly in the sea breeze which alleviated the intense heat of mid-day. In the very centre of the quay, an awning of purple-striped cloth had been erected, and the supporting poles were garlanded with flowers already wilting in the sun.

The man on the tower turned suddenly from his contemplation of the sea, and struck a brazen gong that hung against the side of that elevated platform. At the long-expected clamour, the people of Athros crowded out of the wide-open city-gates, jostling each other in their haste to reach the quay side, . . . Folk of Athros, no longer wrapped in tanned skins but garbed in robes of cloth as variegated in hue as the wild-flowers of the fields. Here and there, one of the older people lifted a foot gingerly in the still constricting sandals. Every face was alight with pride and health; every head was crowned with flowers and leaves, and every child carried a rush basket filled with the choicest blooms to be cast before the feet of the august visitor. It was a day of tremendous importance in the annals of Athros, and the citizens showed it in every movement of their excited bodies.

As they pushed to more commanding places of vantage, four galleys came round the long eastern arm of the harbor and turned toward Athros with a ponderous and stately sweep of oars, as each oarsman

bent his body in time to the steady beat of the coxswain's musical gong.

The galleys were gorgeously gilded and sails of deepest purple bore the sign of the House Royal of Creta in great golden characters. Down between the rows of anchored craft they came, and midway of that channel the three rear ships halted; floating gently on the bosom of the bay, they allowed the first great ship to pass on alone, past quay and populace and draw up with a cumbrous grace by the awninged space.

Men of Athros sprang to make the galley fast to great rings at the quayside, and a shout of welcome rose from the waiting people to cheer the heart of the man who stood ready to disembark. The other galleys drew near, and took up their stations at either side, and behind, as if to guard it from surprise attack, while on every ship a number of armored men made ready to come ashore.

From the tribesmen came the salutation: "In the name of the Deity, peace and welcome! Hail, thou greatest King of the greatest land of earth. Hail sovereign overlord of Athros!"

The man on the deck raised his hand, and bowed his head in answer, and, turning to a slave woman who stood behind him, took from her arms a beautiful child. Out sprang four of the soldiers, and held for the King a short flight of steps extending from vessel's edge to wharf's level. Holding the child carefully in his arms, the King stepped forward and as he walked the folds of his wine-coloured satin cloak floated behind him.

Leon awaited his coming on bent knee, and as Taledes paused before him, Leon touched the palm of the King's hand to his forehead and cried:

"Thrice welcome, King of Creta, to thy vassalage, of Athros. No diadems have we to offer thee, but behold we have peace and some comfort in our borders and our hearts rejoice to make thee our guest. We are thy servants."

"Say, rather, my friends, kinsmen, for though servants may be purchased with money, true friendship cannot be priced in gold. Rise, O Leon, that I may gaze once more upon thy countenance."

The people cheered loudly and the children, drawing boldly nearer, pelted the flowers at the King's feet till the ground was carpeted with blossoms. (And when the King had passed into the city they rushed to gather those his feet had crushed.) Taledes, smiling gravely, and inclining his head to left and right, drew Leon into the shade of the awning where Theonis waited with the Chief Spokesman, and Lumnos and Luelila.

Theonis sank to her knees as Leon had done, but Taledes, with the old imperious gesture, bade her desist.

"Sweet lady, more fitting that I kneel to thee. Thou'rt well? Thou dost grow fairer! Behold, I have come hither according to promise, and have brought with me my little flower-child to give thee greeting also." He placed the tiny maid on her feet, where she stood a moment, shyly, before she curtsied with a quaint little bob as she had been taught to do. Her smooth, dark hair fell in ringlets on ivory shoulders. Her sapphire-coloured tunic was fringed in silver and a narrow silver ribbon bound her head. Looking at her closely, Theonis was puzzled by a vague familiarity of countenance which was not a resemblance to Taledes nor yet to his Queen. She bent and kissed the child, and the little one ran timidly back to her father and seized his hand. Taledes laughed as he swung her tenderly to his shoulder, and turned to greet graciously the folk whom Leon presented.

Behind the King came a small retinue of servants, headed by the great Nubian, Hartha, who saluted Leon with a glad gesture of remembrance. In his arms Hartha bore a casket, the weight of which made the whipcords of his arms stand out, and each of the servants carried a closely wrapped bundle, baffling to the child-like curiosity of the tribesmen. And behind these, several nobles, the captain of the King's guard,

and one who was most evidently of the Land of the Lotus.

Taledes presented each in turn, and Leon deputed his Helmsmen, the Chief Spokesman and several of the more trusted tribesmen to take these visitors under their protection for the time being, for not only was Leon's palace modest in size, but he knew Taledes would desire if possible to avoid sharing his visit with the nobles. The Egyptian was dissatisfied, but neither Leon nor Taledes troubled themselves on that score. They were too anxious to seek privacy and talk in comfort.

A well-hardened road wound up the slight ascent toward the city gates, for a wall divided the town from the harbor. Taledes gazed about him with surprise and delight for the town that met his eyes was quite dissimilar to that collection of huts his tax-gatherers had contemptuously described. It was built in the form of a square, with outer and inner defensive walls. The streets ran straight north and south, and others crossed them at right angles. Comfortable houses of sundried brick, one or two stories high, lined the streets, their flat roofs gay with awnings and jars destined to catch rain-water. Some trees had been left in small clumps, to break the monotony of too angular construction, and in the very heart of the town, a great square was flanked by the most important buildings of the city.

Still flowed the famed brook down through the city to wander off at its own sweet will under rude viaduct towards the seashore. Still burned the tribal fire in the exact centre of that inner square, but it was housed beneath substantial roof supported on pillars and fitted with staples to which awnings could be fastened, enclosing the fire safely.

On the western side of the square stood a building somewhat larger than its neighbours. Graceful colonnades supported the roof, whose pillars were not a single slab of stone, but many small stones, carefully matched and mortared together.

Leon saluted the guard before the door, and passing through the arched portico, they entered a small room where the servants awaited them. On one side of this entry was the chamber of the Keeper of the Door, on the other an apartment where tribesmen waited for audience with the King. In front of them, a servant held aside a hanging drape, and they passed through into the central court, or dwelling place of the King. It was an airy room, floored in smooth yellow brick, and lighted by large embrasures at either end. This occupied one side of the building, that side next the square, and opened on the northern side into a courtyard garden. Ranged about that beauty spot were apartments for sleeping, banquetting and work, and at the very rear was a rude kitchen whose homely pots and smoky hearth spelled luxury to Athros. Compared with the palace of Creta, it was small and very insignificant, but it was such a colossal step in advance of their first log palace that Leon and Theonis were very proud of its grandeur.

Taledes refused the suggestion of rest. "Came I not hither to visit ye? Too short the time I must spend beneath thy roof, for though I brought my mischief-makers with me lest they o'erturn the kingdom in my absence, I must not tarry overlong. Let us solace ourselves and converse. Faith I long to tell the truth, and to hear it spoken."

He bade his servants roam where they would, but to conduct themselves courteously. Hartha alone remained and even he was delegated to stand without the threshold. When they were quite alone, he threw off his mantle with a sigh of relief and stretched out on the skin-covered couch.

"The good folk of Athros will give them warm welcome," said Leon with a smile, as he, too, tossed aside mantle and chaplet and stretched at ease.

"Ho, Leon! I breathe freely here. I weary of their silly themes, pent up all day with their clattering tongues. By my father's bones thou hast done well and thine estate doth become thee!" he exclaimed, scanning the keen visage before him with approval.

"Ah, well, happiness is a gentle chiseller," he added, as he looked from Leon to Theonis. "Years have not dimmed the fire of thine eyes, nor hath motherhood aged thee. Come, where are thy little ones? Call them, that this child may play with them."

"Faith, Lord, dost thou not know my children are no puppets, but flesh and blood actualities? Mayhap they play at hunters in the garden. I knew not how they do appear." Theonis sprang up laughing and ran to fetch her sturdy five year old son and her little maid of two.

"Come hither, my children. I am thy father's kinsman from the land of Creta, and this my smallest daughter, Theonis."

"The children gravely curtsied and eyed one another for a moment. Then the boy turned his blue eyes, so like his mother's, fearlessly on Taledes.

"I am Theos. 'Tis made from my mother's name. And when I grow up I shall be just as brave as my father says she was."

"My father's bones, Terestes!" said Taledes, laughing as the old name fell freely from his lips. "Methinks he is surely a second edition of thy Theonis."

"Yea, Lord, vexed was I when I did discover he resembled not his father," Theonis declared. "Come, Theos, welcome thy cousin."

Theos fixed her with a piercing stare, and quite suddenly smiled engagingly and held out his hand. "I like thee. Ask my mother to put on thee an old tunic and I will take thee to play in the garden."

After a second's hesitation, the child placed her hand in the chubby brown first extended to her and Theonis shepherded them into the garden, leaving a very happy little child in an old tunic belonging to Theos, at play under the big birch tree.

"Where is thy son and heir?" asked Leon as they were left alone. A shadow fell across the King's face.

"With his mother in Creta. A true Cretan, but already obstinate in temper. Once, kinsman, I did dream of a son who should be my boon companion.

That is evanescent. My son prefereth his mother's company to mine. But I have found sweet recompense in that small maid, who doth by some whimsy of fate resemble the Queen of Womanhood for whom she was named. My Taledes scorneth to play with his sister, therefore intercourse with thy little ones shall bring her great joy, for thou knowest the strict seclusion in which our womankind are kept ere marriage. Yea, even now do I think jealously of the day her hand must be laid in another's. But I tell thee this, kinsman, she shall not be bartered for gold, or majesty and power."

Taledes sat very straight upon his couch and the old keen look wiped away temporarily that newer, wearier, sadder expression.

"My father's bones, already Egypt doth seek aid, even as she would make Creta kneel to her tiresome pomp. Shall she bolster her failing power with Cretan wealth? As I live these things shall not be! As I live. But also I know not what hour I may be hurried hence, for under the guise of envoy and gift-slave, my palace is riddled with foreign spies.

"But come, let us not speak of state matters. For this one day hold me as welcome inmate of the house thou hast builded and let tomorrow be as to-day. Behold Terestes, (easier falleth the old name from my mouth!), thou hast founded a dynasty which shall flourish when we have passed away."

Theonis who had returned to the room during this speech, said softly, but with demure side long glance at Leon:

"Honor our poor garden with thy regard, my Lord. Thou shalt discover how golden doth bloom the lotus in the pool, but I fear thou wilt not find therein a white rose, for, in faith, white roses will not bloom in Athros."

Leon laughed. "Think not, kinsman, we failed to plant the roots thou didst send, but in faith they wither, however carefully tended."

"Yea," answered Taledes with a glance at Leon. "Twas ever so. That which charmeth us to-day to-

morrow is withered. And I have learned this: Passion kindleth a great flame, whether it be passion for power, for wealth or for woman, and when it hath consumed itself in its own heat, behold no morbid raking of the ashes will fan the sparks to flame once more."

They crossed to the doorway which led into the courtyard and Taledes saw that the enclosed garden was modelled more or less faithfully on the pattern of his own Court of the Lotus. It was smaller, less skilfully tended, but what it lacked in consummate art, it more than gained in careless grace. Small as it was, it had been carefully planned to give the effect of space. The lily pool was shallow, and sheathed with bricks. It was bordered, too, with ribbon-leaved iris and daffodil, and, to relieve the dull green of those plants whose bloom was past, at regular intervals tawny lilies and tall white lilies drooped their heads in vain effort to glimpse their own image in the water. The oleanders were in blossom and yet another shrub, unfamiliar to Taledes, whose great pyramids of pink and white flowers he greatly admired.

"One of the Atlantean exiles did set this garden and doth care for it," Theonis explained as they walked along a path bordered in lavender flowers of rich perfume. "Behold, lord, how the red rose doth flourish and how sweet is the scent of the lilies."

"Fasten a red rose in thy hair, Theonis," said Leon, handing her one of rich damask. "Sometimes I love to see thee in different hue from our favourite purple."

"In faith, lord, wouldst thou have me wear red robe? 'Twould quarrel with my cheeks, methinks," she answered laughingly as they went toward that great tree from whose tall limbs a grapevine swing depended. There the children were contentedly amusing themselves. Theos holding Theonis and little Daphne on either side of him as the nurse-slave gently pushed them back and forth. They were chattering like magpies, but the instant she caught sight of her father, Theonis launched herself from the swing and

sped toward him, heedless of the fact that Theos' most valiant efforts had not been sufficient to preserve their balance and they had tumbled on to the springy turf.

Taledes picked his small daughter up with a gentle reproof for her haste, and waited for a wailing to ensue from the injured members of the trio. To his surprise, Theos did not pour forth a flood of blame, but said calmly, "Never mind, sister. It didn't hurt as if we had tumbled on the steps as we did the other day."

Baby Daphne was already crowing and reaching for the seat of the swing again.

Taledes turned to Leon in astonishment. "How hast thou managed such control, or perchance thy son hath no temper?"

Theonis laughed joyously. "Hast thou need to ask such question, my Lord? Shall not the son of Theonis have flashes of anger even as his mother before him? Yea. But behold. If he doth let his passion rise, mine doth also flare high, whereat my son hath learned 'tis wisdom to forget his. Moreover he hath become accustomed to pick himself up after tumbles, for I would have him manly as his father. But as for my Daphne, she hath her father's gentle nature and needeth not reproof or chastisement. Sweet is she and generous in all things. Moreover she hath her father's lineaments and is therefore doubly dear. For, mark me, Taledes, man and King as thou art, I do revere thee. But for us doth burn more purely the flame of our love. Such as my Lord hath not been since time began, Taledes. Daily I marvel that I, Theonis, be the wife of man so true."

Theonis lifted her head proudly, and the same dauntless spirit sweetened by pain and sorrow, looked forth. Leon laughed, but tenderly.

"Thou seest, kinsman, how well I have tamed this erstwhile fiery spirit. Be not deceived by humble words, for though I rule Athros according to my lights, Theonis doth guide me in the way I should walk."

In such light banter the afternoon passed rapidly and as the hour of sunset drew near, they withdrew to their tiring rooms and garbed themselves for the

feast, which was by special request from Taledes to take place in the Central Square with all the ceremony of tribal custom, still dear to the hearts of the people of Athros.

This visit was an event of momentous importance to that small, solidly-built city, so lately a collection of huts. Knowing Creta by hearsay only, they gazed complacently and pridefully on their modest buildings and the ease of manner so charming in barbarian tribe lent grace to do the honors of the new town.

To Taledes there was impressiveness and dignity in the formality of procedure in assembly. To be sure, no costly table crowded with rich viands spread before him. His seat was but a carved bench softened with skins; his table but a salver held in Hartha's hands. No great variety of heavy wines robbed the banqueters of decency and common sense. Only a light amber-coloured beverage that sparkled and stung the tongue relieved their thirst. The people ate with relish, but also with restraint, as folk who are accustomed to careful division of their daily food through necessity. The dusk was dispelled by flambeaux though the flames of the tribal fire were plainly visible from all quarters of the square, for Leon had borrowed the idea of flambeaux for light and decoration from Creta and it became the ardent ambition of every youth to become a flambeau bearer. He must be young, perfect in strength and in physical beauty, in integrity as in skill ere he could wear the leopard skin and bear aloft the flaming torch.

The light from these fell directly on Leon's face as, the first part of the banquet concluded, he rose to address his subjects. The flambeaux too, cast a rosy glow upon their bearers, and illumined fitfully the flashing accoutrements of the Cretan soldiers who lingered in the background, half in amusement at the very crudity of affairs, and half in wonderment.

"My people, behold in our midst the kingly representative of the land whose glory doth surpass all other nations of earth. From sea to sea doth Cretan com-

merce sway the world, and we who are vassals of this lordly land, shall we not give thanks that, small as we are, but latched upon the shoe of the King of Kings, nevertheless are honoured with the presence of our Sovereign Overlord. For us hath he quitted his golden throne, and his marble palaces to sojourn in our midst. Such honor hath not fallen to the lot of Egypt the Magnificent. Therefore, O people of Athros, let us do homage to Taledes, King of Creta, to his daughter, his nobles, and his retinue."

The people bowed low as the wind bends to earth the grass of the meadow, and did homage to Taledes. Then the King arose, and when Leon acting as an interpreter, spoke to the folk of Athros. As they stood before her, from the shadow their figures cast, Theonis suddenly was attracted to one malignant face leering at Taledes. His long fingers played ceaselessly with the hilt of his dagger and his strange eyes half closed in evil desire.

When the King sat down amid the applause, that face became suave and pleasantly shallow. The fingers left the dagger and began to tug at the ends of the long black beard. Constantly those fingers stretched and clutched as if they could, talon-like, tear heart from inoffensive man in wanton pleasure. Theonis dared not call Leon's attention for the eyes of all were focused on their group and to forewarn the conspirator by suspicion would only leave him free to lay new plans.

She watched him steadily from beneath lowered lids throughout the beautiful pagan dance that followed, for the King watched the dancers, but the envoy watched the King. One other from the semi-darkness at the King's back kept vigil and observation. The Nubian slave, alert for any danger that threatened his beloved master, moved restlessly and longed to spring at the man's throat instead of stalking his prey with cunning.

As the feast ended, the Nubian stepped quickly behind his master. Theonis as quickly thrust her arm through Taledes' arm. Leon glanced at his wife in

some surprise, for this was a departure from custom, but sensing her alarm in the quick rising and falling of her breast, placed his arm in the King's free one and they walked abreast toward the palace. As they passed down the long line of standing tribesmen, the evil eyes rested triumphantly on them, and the envoy said clearly to his neighbor:

"Thou seest that Taledes indeed came hither not from love of this barbarian King, but for his Lady."

"Thou liest!" boomed the Helmsman in such defiant tones that Taledes halted to listen. "Thou liest. And if thou wert not my Lord Leon's guest, I had crammed thy evil words down thy crane-like neck!" He trembled with rage as he spat upon the envoy's garments. "Bah! serpent. Serpent of serpents! Thou dost wriggle on thy belly amid an unsuspecting people to sting with thy lying words. I know thee for what thou art. Beware, O Spy of Egypt."

"Yea, beware," said the King coldly, facing the envoy. "For thou dost lie, and dost seek trouble. Therefore, I bid thee beware, lest honest barbarian rage grow too great to cringe 'neath the obligation of hospitality, and thou'rt torn limb from limb. Once more I bid thee beware!" The King's voice fell calm and cold on an ominous silence. For even as the Helmsman had named him, the envoy of Egypt was a serpent, content to crawl about and sting, but loathing fight in the open. He looked about at the menacing faces for though the tribesmen did not understand his words, they caught perfectly some threatening element in his speech. He dropped his eyes with mockingly deferential air.

"Thou knowest, great Taledes, I did but jest. Pardon thy too-bold ambassador."

"Ill subject hast thou picked for jest. Choose thy words more carefully while thou dost sojourn in Athros."

Taledes turned away without further word, and the party moved onward lighted by flambeaux bearers.

Safe within the protection of the thick palace walls, Theonis began to tremble.

"Nay, Lord, I pray thee, give heed, for danger doth threaten. Grave danger to us all."

Taledes smiled encouragingly at her. "If thou hast fears of yon poor worm, I can relieve thy distress."

"My Lord Taldees," said Theonis, clutching tightly at her husband's arm, "Thou dost underestimate the stinging power of yonder worm. Truly he hath crawled to thee to suit his own purposes and those of the land he serveth. But—beware the worm!"

"My father's bones, Theonis! I could slay him with one stroke of the dagger. Well?"

"Yea, and bring on thine own head untold retribution. I will tell thee. While thou wert still in thy ship, I did behold that cunning face; moreover as he walked superciliously in thy train, he did cast appraising glance about the city, as one who measur-eth its strength and weakness with unerring eye. And thou didst speak tonight and while all eyes turned toward thee alone, that strange other part of me which doth rise up and peer into other hearts at times, did gaze into his, and became fearful of what lay therein. Leon, I pray thee send to watch him slave whom thou canst trust, for I dare not disobey the word of the inner self."

"But, Theonis, this once surely thou'rt mistaken," pleaded Leon. "Why should he wait till safe within the Gates of Athros? Had he not sufficient chance at sea?"

"Surely, surely thou'rt wrong in this matter, Lady. I would not belittle that strange puzzling inner sight of thine. Nevertheless, he is accredited envoy of Egypt, and Egypt dare not attempt such foul stroke."

Theonis looked defiantly from dismayed face to incredulous one.

"Taledes he doth seek thy life while thou'rt in Athros, that the blame fall on us."

Taledes started back in amazement.

"My life be ransom for thine if I am not truthful. Call thy Nubian and require of him the reason he did draw so close to thy person." She motioned toward

the giant, Hartha, who stood respectfully at a little distance.

Taledes crossed toward him, the flickering light of the single oil lamp on the table making grotesque shapes of his figure as he went. Leon turned and summoned the door keeper, bidding him seek out Gaza, the slave, and bring him thither at once, as Taledes satisfied with the brief colloquy came towards them again.

"He doth confirm thy suspicions. How dost thou know these things? 'Tis like the psuedo-magic the priesthood invoke to cow a credulous populace."

Leon answered for Theonis. "Only one other have I known whose eye beheld the soul and all that therein was graven. That one, Astrellon. But he could send himself forth on journeys to unknown lands. That Theonis doth not do. But she doth read truly all that the heart would conceal. It is well, when she doth warn, to give heed. What that power is, I know not. This only do I know. That when I, sure of man's superior judgment, do ride above that sagacious mentor, my path doth fall beneath my feet, and my plans lie in ruins. If thou wilt not take my word, ask Lumnos whose thought she hath often surprised."

"It is enough. I believe. Give what orders thou wilt!" cried Taledes, waving toward the tall slave who had entered and now waited his master's commands.

"Gaza, thou wilt search out the envoy of Egypt. If he hath left the feast, and repaired to the House of Dion, follow. Say that I have sent thee for his personal service. Leave him not on any pretext. Listen, and be silent. What thou dost discover keep for our ears alone. Althus will relieve thee in the morning. I trust thee, for thou dost hate too well the Egyptian that enslaved thee and left thee wounded to die on lone island, to traffic with him. I trust thee Gaza."

The slave salaamed and sped on his errand, whilst the trio drew their chairs closer and relaxed into more comfortable position.

"Speak, Flower of my Heart. Tell us what thou dost believe."

"Lord Taledes." Theonis addressed herself to the King. "A little time ago thou didst ask me what object Egypt had in slaying thee. And yet—within thine own heart hath ever been suspicion and fear—fear that ariseth from dread of darkness where untold horrors lurk. Rightly hath thy heart spoken. Egypt would absorb Creta to bolster her waning influence. Yea, she seeketh with envious eyes full dominion over thee by fair means—or foul. To-day didst thou not say the Egyptian already seeketh thy Theonis in marriage for a Princeling of his land? Envoys have come to thee, even that Pharaoh who doth rule in Thebes,—commerce they have maintained with thee, for they have sought thy treasures for their storehouses. Fair means, thou hast not permitted. Perchance they now seek foul means.

"I will tell thee more. From some hidden source of knowledge the Envoy doth believe Leon to be Terestes, erstwhile King of Creta. In Creta thou'rt loved by the people, but thou hast rashly come into barbarian stronghold whose lord and governor is that Terestes whom thou didst displace on the throne of Creta. Thy presents to thy humble kinsmen have not gone unnoted. And they smiled as they made plot together.

"Thou wouldst against good advice come to Athros, and there be slain, by Terestes! And if they recognize him not as that visionary Princeling of Creta, they should make pretext of my infidelity with thee, sufficient reason for Leon's hate. Forgive this speech, Lord, but I do but tell thee the craft they have compiled."

Taledes sprang up with a fearful oath. "Little thought I to bring such grief on thy head, Leon. For though ye both know 'tis true my heart doth carry the name of Theonis etched thereon, ever my thought hath been such as is loyal to my kinsman's wife."

"Taledes, well do I know that. Let him mouth his miserable insinuations, if he dare. Athros knoweth Theonis too well for belief of them. Be not dis-

mayed, kinsman, for now that we know we are fore-armed."

"So! Egypt seeketh my life, and if perchance it should become know that the Envoy did slay me and thou shouldst execute him, lo, the legions of Pharaoh shall sweep Athros from the earth," Taledes mused.

"Tonight thou shalt sleep in chamber across the court from that already assigned to thee," Leon said. "And if the traitor come hither he will e'en be caught in his own coils, I trust."

"Thou'rt weary, my King. We will light thee to thy new apartment. 'Tis not so airy, but thou shalt sleep sweeter, doubtless," said Theonis.

The wisdom of this move was disclosed in the morning, when the Helmsman relieved Gaza, for the slave presented himself to his master bleeding from a great gash in the head. Taledes, Leon and Theonis were seated in the dwelling place, confiding to Lumnos a history of their fears. Taledes had taken a fancy to the bluff king whose ruddy countenance exhibited a sad serenity and Lumnos made no secret of his admiration for Taledes, who had that morning discarded robes in favour of martial regalia.

Theonis started to her feet as Gaza prostrated himself. "How, Gaza, speak! What hath injured thee?" Leon commanded.

Taledes clutched his sword till the knuckles stood out, as he leaned forward to hear the slave's story.

"Lord, I did go as thou didst command, to the House of Dion and though the Egyptian liked it not, what could he say? For Dion on my private word, did convey to him that I was slave sent for his service and did usher us both into one sleeping apartment. The Egyptian did ply me with questions concerning thy household as I performed service. But when I made no answer beyond pointing to my throat, and shaking my head, he laughed and said, 'Ha, dumb! 'Tis well. Thou canst tell no tales!' And bade me lie at his feet. I did feign sleep and when the moon was very pale, he arose and put on his garments. I did start up to attend him, but he did deal me such a

blow with his sword hilt that I fell, and when I awoke he was gone, and my face covered with blood. I essayed to follow by the window, but ere I could raise myself on the sill, so long had I been in a stupor, he was returning, and I lay down once more, lest evil befall me ere I report to thee. Muttering and cursing the Egyptian did return to his pallet, kicking me into the corner as he went, and mocking at my hurt. And when his snores spoke loudly, I did stop the blood with the hem of my tunic, but verily I could not stay the fear that injury had overtaken thee, or thy wife and little ones."

"My lord, I pray thee, seek what thou canst discover in that apartment yesterday designated for Taledes' use. Poor Gaza! Come hither and I will dress thy wound, and thou shalt rest sure in thy master's gratitude!" exclaimed Theonis.

The three men looked at each other in silence, with expressions typical of their diverse thoughts. Taledes bore one of deepest gloom.

"If I have brought sorrow on thee, kinsman, how shall I be comforted?" he brooded.

"But let me at him with my good two-edged blade," cried Lumnos, springing to his feet. "No skull of Egypt thick enough to withstand the weapon forged by Astrellon!"

For all his concern, Leon was mildly triumphant. "Doth not my Theonis speak truly? Let us go and see whether she be not right in this thing also."

But all was in order in that apartment, and they were about to withdraw in some disappointment, when Taledes gave a little cry, and sprang to the window that opened on the street, picking from the floor beneath a large oval jade, carved to the likeness of a lotus flower. From hand to hand it passed as they examined it in silence, and still in silence returned to the dwelling place.

"So," said Leon at last. "'Tis written what man shall do in secret, the Deity shall make known to the world at large. No crime so carefully planned but

some small step shall show whither the instigator went."

Taledes sat up sharply and clapped his hands for Hartha.

"Seek the Captain of the Guard. In my name command that none shall enter or leave the galleys until I give permission. Say also that fresh raiment shall not be sent ashore. Go quickly. And do thou," he added, turning to Leon, "see that Althus prevent the Egyptian from changing his raiment, for methinks we will discover a missing jewel in his vestment."

"But let me deal with the traitor," Lumnos snarled.

"Hush, my friend. Thou dealest not with honest barbarians. We will meet guile with guile, and if the Deity be kind, stay the traitor's hand ere he strike downward."

"For the present we are safe, my friend," said Leon. "Nevertheless as we travel about the city and its environs, thou and I, Lumnos, will walk closely by Taledes."

"I fear him not in daylight. He hath not the courage to strike in a crowd, but perchance tonight."

"Aye, perchance tonight," echoed Leon, as they prepared for a tour of Athros.

CHAPTER XXI.

EGYPT'S WILE AND WOMAN'S WIT

Some little time later, they sallied forth from the eastern gate, and swung through ploughed and wheat-clad fields, through woodland, past lake and swamp, and back to the western gate again, that Taledes might have ample opportunity of beholding their environs.

The Egyptian kept ostentatiously aloof from the King, and seemed to find malicious delight in belittling the country and the fortifications to the old Helmsman, but the three who looked for just such emotion, noted his very apparent uneasiness, nor did they fail to remark that he walked uncomfortably with his left hand laid flat upon the broad jewelled belt that he wore. In truth the Egyptian, was distressed by the loss of the stone. To be sure, he had probably dropped it at the Feast the night before, but lest some babbling tongue speak of it, he had already despatched one of the soldiers to the ship for fresh raiment and other jewels. It still rankled in his mind that Taledes, under pretext of needing every inch of room, had not permitted the Envoy to bring his vast personal retinue with him on this voyage. The morning bored him inexpressibly, even as the whole project; nevertheless, he did not overlook the thickness and height of the walls of Athros, solidly built, though the material used was merely the despised brick.

That same brick caught and held Taledes' attention, so that Leon was drawn to discourse proudly on its origin.

"For we would build palaces of marble and granite such as thou hast in Creta, but if there be marble or granite in this land, it doth lie in yonder hills in the territory of the Hill Men. We cannot make

parley with them, since they flee before us. And how should we quarry it, or bring it hither without tools or slaves? We must e'en leave such ambitions to be fulfilled by the nations that rise after us when all the tribes shall unite under one ruler. Lumnos did experiment with fashioning of brick, having seen such in Egypt; and after some trials, we did succeed as thou canst see. It is durable. The designs for our buildings came from this brain, also, for he hath patterned them after Atlantean structures."

"So!" said Taledes turning to Lumnos. These years of residence in Athros had developed in the King a pleasing fluency of the corrupt Cretan spoken there. He answered freely.

"Believe him not literally, O King. His is the credit. Shall I not give to one who saved me the little knowledge I have? I am content. But lay not to my door those graceful curves which make of bricked pillar a thing of shapely dignity. These Leon did model."

Leon flushed like a boy caught in a prank at the words of praise. Taledes laughed and turned to Lumnos.

"Thou and I have much in common, friend, for the sharp tool of suffering doth shape both of us. I envy thee. For if thou hast lost thy kingdom, thou hast also found peace and freedom. Would that I could retire to some mountain fastness and solace myself with solitude."

"Taledes, most unhappy wouldst thou be! Too active art thou in body, too keen in mind for such course. Thy place is in the midst of life's conflicts, where I would fain be also!" Lumnos held out his hand in token of good will, his face beaming with pleasure. Taledes took it.

"Too few are friends,—life doth create us for love and hate rather than friendship—Well!"

"Our theatre!" explained Leon waving to the queer roofless, circular building, with its seats raised in tiers and its broad, flat central platform. "Also copied from Atlantis. Here do we hold masque and

dance. Here our spokesmen become fluent in the art of stringing words together.

"So far all that thou hast seen hath been copied from Creta or Atlantis, but one thing is child of Athros, its own cherished offspring."

Leon with an air of achievement, led Taledes toward a low structure on the right. The place was over-run with boys from seven years of age upward.

"What hast thou here?" demanded Taledes.

"Theonis doth say I train the children of our coming kingdom. She argueth we shall see little surprising result in our generation, but that our grandchildren shall profit by our training." Leon laughed at Taledes' mystified face. Then he went on more soberly. "Perchance it is memorial to the old Chief, her father. For in this land of winter rains, and poor housing, many wasted away, while still in youth, or were crippled by pains in their limbs. Having built more comfortable dwelling, I turned my thoughts to building bodies that should withstand rain and heat alike. Each man child of Athros is taken into this building at the age of seven and trained in manly arts. He doth work to gain strength and suppleness in muscles; he doth run much to gain swiftness in his limbs. He weareth but little clothing that his body may grow hard and firm. He is taught to hurl javelin and lift great weights—in short all that we can devise to bring us to one standard of grace and strength, such as the world hath not seen. Behold how happy these children beneath strict rule of trainers! How brown they are, and how flexible their bodies,—flexible and firm as hardened bronze."

"Well may Athros speak proudly of her King. Would that my brain had fostered such scheme!"

"Thou hast fostered larger and grander ones, Kinsman," said Leon quietly. "One lesson thou didst teach thoroughly—he who would raise his kingdom to supremacy must e'en invest himself in all its affairs, however trivial."

They remained for some time watching the boys wrestle and race. Taledes' face was thoughtful.

"Yea, when I remember the youths who perished in the lust of Balthus, I am sore at heart. What lieth in the past can ne'er alas! be undone. The very excess of the cruelty did turn the people to rebellion and yea—we have dispensed with human sacrifice; though whether it shall be revived when I am gone hence, I know not."

Leon shuddered. Never did he hear the name of Baal but his heart rose in gratitude that no tribal lore compelled the sacrifice of Theos.

"Let us continue our progress, if it please thee, Taledes, for the sun doth grow hot on the pavements, and doubtless thou'rt weary."

The procession moved on to pottery and shop, to tannery and forge. Taledes asked innumerable questions and was lavish in his praise,—but all three were increasingly conscious of the suave Egyptian in the background—and when they came near the palace—if palace it could be called—they abandoned further inspection of the city, and turned gratefully to its portals to rest until the cool of the day when they would visit with Lumnos.

The children sat grouped about Theonis as she told them marvellous tales of the immortal beings who inhabited sky and water, hills and woods. They hung upon her knee and played with the golden border of her white gown, for remembering Leon's laughing allusion the previous afternoon she had left off her favorite purple, only retaining her amethyst clasp. She made haste to set fruit and wine before them, and to laughingly chide them for their long delay.

"Well, Lord Taledes, what does thou think of the outpost of thine Empire," she asked demurely as she cuddled Daphne against her heart. "Hadst thou come a scant five years earlier—how humble wouldst thou have found us."

"Yea," said Lumnos reflectively. "When came I hither exile from Medelos—behold a ring of rush huts, half of which were consumed by fire during an attack the next night. Think how thou wouldst yearn for splendid vistas suddenly swept from the sight, while

thou wert e'en compelled to lay thy weary body on rush-strewn ground. Such our lot. Yet had not Leon rescued me, we must all have perished. And though in the years that followed, it seemed I must indeed perish with the burden of my memories, these were kind and forbearing. No place had I in all the earth to call mine own. A King, without a country. Yea, they fed me and clothed me, sheltered me, and tolerated my vile tempers. And I love them. I have found peace and the son I long desired. I am content."

"'Twas doubtless cheerless to thine eyes; ever did I hate those rush huts," said Theonis compassionately.

"Yea!" Leon teased her, "Right well do I remember thou didst tell me a hut of two rooms thou must have wherein a maid might change her mind occasionally."

"'Twas my clothing I meant, for I was e'en dripping with rain. But I did divert thy attention."

"As thou hast been doing ever since. And for all thy vaunted spirit, thou'rt a shy dove. I like it so, Theonis."

Theonis made no reply. Her eyes, still fixed on her husband's, had a curious, listening look. Involuntarily the men straightened themselves and felt for their dagger hilts. At that moment, the curtain at the far end was thrust aside and the Doorkeeper came hastily to Leon.

"My lord, the Envoy of Egypt doth demand speech with the King."

"Demand!" exclaimed Taledes. "Still — bring him hither."

"Wait" cried Theonis softly as she bade Theos lead his sister and little Theonis into the garden. "Nama, steal softly as the breeze to the door, and remain there till I give thee signal."

The men looked at her in some surprise, but she laid her finger on her lips. "Dost not remember how readily he may gain access to the sleeping chambers from that place? Perchance he doth not risk it. I

ask thee this once to trust woman's wit. Methinks he will seek the lost jewel."

The doorkeeper had reached the hangings. He drew them back. The little audience chamber plainly visible from their seats was empty. The hangings fell softly into place once more.

"Now, Leon, advance with ringing step." When he had gone a dozen steps, Theonis motioned him to return, and when he was settled in his throne-like chair, she bade the Porter show the Envoy in. He lifted the curtain, and disclosed the Egyptian indolently leaning against the wall, his arms folded. He rose with alacrity and, passing Leon, whom he barely deigned to salute, addressed Taledes.

"How now!" Taledes rose to his full height as he gazed angrily on the Envoy. "Thou wilt salute properly the King of Athros whose guest thou art, ere thou dost explain errand which has thrust member of my retinue into my privacy against my strict commands."

The Egyptian complied with a bad grace.

"Lord Taledes, Envoy am I of Creta, never Athros, and therefore responsible only to thee."

"Thou deemest Athros beneath thy contempt, even as I deem thy manners beneath mine."

Stung, the Egyptian made suave answer.

"Lord it is ill for me to part with thee. If thou wouldst have me, I would be at thy side by night and by day."

"Enough. State thy business and depart. When kings confer, shall the nobility presume to interfere?"

The Envoy flushed and cast a venomous glance at Leon and Lumnos. Taledes let the insult pass for the time being, thinking quickly and to purpose behind the guise of stern indifference.

"Must I remind thee that I wait thy errand?"

The Egyptian bowed, and commenced his tale, his hand still resting on the belt, and his eyes darting about the apartment, and missing no detail of exit.

"My Lord Taledes, fain would I change my raiment. I grow weary of one garment. Moreover thou

knowest the cleanliness of Egypt. Therefore I did send to the ships for fresh clothing, but thou wilt permit none to leave or enter these. I pray thee rescind the order, for it is not fitting that the glory and magnificence of the All Powerful Land of the Lotus be denied full expression. That my reason for intrusion on thy privacy."

Taledes looked at him piercingly.

"In that case the order will be withdrawn."

A look of relief passed over the Envoy's face. He bowed low with profuse thanks, and turned as though to depart.

"Hold!" commanded the King. "I will comply with thy request. Nevertheless it is my will that thou shalt make gift to the Lady Theonis in token of thy regret at certain words too freely spoken."

The Egyptian flushed with resentment, but bowed again.

"Choose, Lady Theonis, what thou wilt have of the glory and magnificence of the All-Powerful Land of the Lotus." The Envoy peered furtively to discover whether Taledes jested, but his ponderings were cut short by Theonis' voice, each word of those crystal tones crashing against the Envoy's brain, as he realized their import.

"O King, live forever! If it be thy will that I should choose whatsoever I desire,—Last even did I behold a certain stone of such pure green that my soul ached to possess it. Like the sea at rest or the tender green of young ferns was it. Moreover it bore the emblem of the Lotus. What more fitting gift could heart desire to gratify woman's vanity and recall the glories of Egypt?"

Taledes looked at her with sudden comprehension of her strategic stroke in turning his commanded gift into incriminating evidence. He smiled to behold the sickly greenish hue of the Egyptian.

"Thou hast chosen well, wife of my kinsman. That which thou dost desire is jade of Egypt. Doubtless the Envoy can procure its twin."

"Thou hast asked that which I cannot give. Forsooth, Lady, choose again."

"Nay. The choice stands. Thou hast offered that very stone to me many times. But as thou knowest, I like green as little as I like the reptile which weareth it as natal cloak. I do claim thy proffered gift now, that I may give it to Lady Theonis."

The Envoy raised his head defiantly.

"I spake truly when I said the Lady asked that which was not in my power to give. Behold this—this Leon—did send me a dumb slave who, nevertheless, was cunning enough to steal—perchance at the Lady's request." Leon's arm stretched out to grasp the Egyptian, but Theonis held it firmly as the Envoy cast his web of lies. "Last even I did drink too freely, and have therefore no knowledge of the night's events, but when I awoke the slave and the gem had vanished."

"Yea, thou wert in thy cups last night, for verily the slave returned. But with bleeding brow, whereon was plainly marked the pins of sandals such as thou dost alone wear."

The Envoy paled, but contemplated Theonis with hate and vindictiveness.

"Methinks the Lady could disclose that for which she hath confessed covetousness."

The air in the room was charged with electricity, and of them all, only Theonis was calm.

"Envoy of Egypt," thundered the King, "Behold! Here is thy jade, which I myself found in the presence of two witnesses."

The Egyptian recoiled and gazed at the stone as if, like the serpent, it had fascinated him, ere it struck.

Taledes went on. "The slave Gaza touched it not. It lay where thou didst thyself drop it as thou didst wander—in thy cups! As thou dost not remember the events of the night, thou wilt have no recollection of that memorable place."

He extended the jade as though to give it to Theonis, but she shook her head.

"Nay, Lord Taledes. I would not have it. I love green as little as my Lord, and he doth love it little less than the thought of death, whether the green be of emerald, or jade, of toad or of man's mind. For all minds to me are as colors—and I do mistrust that which sendeth a green haze before it. Knowing the lie in his heart, I sought to try him. Moreover in his presence, Lord Taledes, I warn thee—beware of Egypt!"

"Take thy jade and get thee gone from the presence of honest men." The King contemptuously threw the bauble from him, and turned his back on the discomfited envoy. The Egyptian bowed again and said suavely to Leon:

"If I did injure thy slave in my cups, I crave pardon. Nevertheless he was stupid. Trouble thyself not to send him to me again."

With a movement intended to be dignified, but falling far short of it by reason of his trembling limbs, the Egyptian departed, and they heard the heavy outer door clang behind him. Leon sprang to the window and bade the Helmsman follow the Envoy in all his perambulations. Having somewhat eased his rage with the action, he had time to observe Lumnos stamping noisily up and down the room, clutching his sword, and muttering imprecations against all Egyptians, whilst Taledes, his head bowed on his chest, seemed deep in thought.

For some moments there was no conversation. The storm they had weathered had shaken them all severely and even the voices of the children seemed dreamlike and far away. Taledes, at last, relaxed and sank back with a sigh.

"I crave thy pardon, Theonis, in that I failed to choke the vile lies in his throat. Thou hast, however, understanding that I did act in thy best interests. But thou'rt clever! When I commanded gifts, I sought to appease thy offended dignity, for he failed to make due recognition of ye both."

"Saw ye ever serpent caught in his own wiles? He twisteth in his coils, and his own lies do choke him!"

cried Lumnos, beginning to clap his thigh and laugh with that mighty bellow.

"Nevertheless, he doth plan to strike this night for he dare wait no longer lest we further circumvent his plans."

At that they began to talk, and to counterplot, each maintaining the infallibility of his own scheme for outwitting the Envoy. At last Theonis laughingly put her hands over her ears and exclaimed:

"No plan is perfect. Let us not weary ourselves with endless discussion, for inspiration will surely come. Let us freshen ourselves, ere we visit our friend, Lumnos."

"Right thou art!" exclaimed Lumnos, starting up. "Faith will I depart, for Luelila will surely swear I tarry o'er long." With the haste characteristic of him, he was off, swinging toward the North in long strides.

Leon laughed as he bent to kiss Theonis' hand. "Ill had I fared wert thou not my guiding star, Theonis."

"What—hast thou changed thy preference for white roses?"

"The white rose is the flower of the gods, and I am not a god. Perchance I love to wear upon my bosom, the violet."

"I go to tire the children and myself, Lord. But thou hast ample time to rest, so much easier the dress of mankind."

They laughed as she went away, but speedily followed her example, and as the shadows began to creep across the square, they set forth, attended by Hartha.

It was pleasant to walk through the cool streets, meeting reverential greeting from the rosy-cheeked residents, hearing laughter and rejoicing on every hand. Under a robe of his favorite sapphire silk, Taledes wore a thick, tough doublet of leather fitted with metallic embossing across the back and chest. He was to all appearances, light-hearted, leading small Theonis by the hand, or carrying her on his shoulder

when her tiny feet wearied even as Leon carried that flower-like Daphne, her dimpled knees white against his orange tunic, her small hands clutching delightedly at his thick hair. To the white and gold gown, Theonis had added the silver veil sent by the Queen of Creta, and its shimmering folds constantly tempted Theos to surreptitious fingering of the stuff that looked like cobwebs.

Almost against the inner wall at its northern and western angle, Lumnos had chosen to erect his home. In its construction he had given his fancy much latitude and had a square, stoutly-built central nucleus from which sprang long slim wings on either side, so that it had the appearance of some weird bird, poised for flight. Withal, it was attractive. A substantial wall ran about the whole place with a small tower raised high on the northern sides. Leon explained Lumnos had chosen the spot and built in the vain hope of being besieged by Hill Men, whom he should slay single-handed and the strange ambition of the bluff king gave them all subject for much mirth.

Lumnos awaited them in the octagonal living-place with Luelila and their small, frail-looking son. Ever at his best in dispensing hospitality, Lumnos had able ally in cheerful, kindly-faced Luelila. Whatever the storms of grief, regret or despair that had washed over her heart, her face was sweet and her personality comforting. Children instinctively ran to her, and animals and flowers prospered in her care. Her gown of deep saffron was cut with square neck, and about her throat lay a string of magnificent opals, one of the few treasures saved from the wreck of the kingdom. The same gems studded her ears, and bracelets of them circled her round arms.

As Taledes made gift of two inlaid jars, which Hartha had borne thither, he exclaimed at the fire of those translucent unfamiliar jewels, till Luelila ran and fetched several unset stones and pressed them upon him, while Lumnos tried to thank him for vases that called to memory still more beautiful specimens of potter's art swishing in the ocean tides.

Taledes looked about him in surprise. This dwelling exhibited marked differences of structure and arrangement, and he could conjecture that memory had been its inspiration. The windows were draped in crimson satin, and beneath each, and every one, extended long benches carved and cushioned, as if the folk who dwelt in the house loved to look forth on the outside world. Across the wall at the far end, was a painting boldly executed on stretched white cloth, of the city of Medelos, with its harbor and its watch tower. This, Lumnos explained, was the work of an Atlantean refugee.

"A shrine to our lost kingdom!" he added, pointing to a great bowl of brown pottery filled with red flowers that stood below the picture. Other pictures, depicting phases of Atlantean life, hung between the several windows.

In the very centre of the apartment, a large table of Cretan workmanship, bore a few rolls of parchment, which Lumnos jestingly referred to as his "library."

"I shall have more in time. But the traders like not such poor cargo. Rather they bring sandals and raiment and food."

"But surely thou hast more need of such!" Taledes wondered.

Lumnos shook his head sadly.

"Once was I not great, even as thou'rt great; a room full of thoughts of wise men was mine to enjoy, but mine eye was caught by the glitter of jewels, the sheen of soft linen, and—oysters from the north! And when these toys were snatched from my greedy fingers, I did grieve many months, yea, years. But now have I returned to that state of mind wherein I dwelt as pupil of Astrellon. Food have I sufficient to keep me in health, yet free of gluttony. Raiment have I to cover my body 'gainst heat and rain. Aye, even a few jewels are mine. But my soul longeth with unquenchable desire for that which I may never possess. Gone for me the loves and history of the past. Only these have I, and some are in Egyptian which I cannot read.

Nevertheless, they are books and as such do comfort my heart."

To the active Taledes, this was a revelation. That any man supreme in warfare and statecraft could find delight in studying tomes was paradoxical. True, Taledes found interest in reading of customs and laws of other lands, but the effeminate verse of the court poet, the wildly-romantic love tales, he brushed impatiently to one side, as too futile to be worthy a King's attention. And yet, by all accounts, Lumnos had been King and conquerer. Lest he display his own ignorance, he hastily began to speak of Astrellon, and, nothing loath, Lumnos led him to the painting. He pointed out Watch Tower, Palace and House of Power, giving endless details of the accomplishments, and inventions of the Man of Knowledge.

And he went on, telling of his first meeting with the Lotus Lily, and all the attendant circumstances. In nothing did he spare himself and with humility reproached himself for his deflection from Astrellon's counsel. Leon, watching him, contrasted him with the arrogant King of Medelos,—to his present gain. He looked at Leon with a sad, half-apologetic smile as he added, "Ah, Astrellon would that thou couldst know how I have suffered far from thee in alien land. But thou—thou dost also lean too heavily on the prop of power. Take care it doth not snap thee like broken reed."

"Thou shouldst have both as in my case," suggested Leon, with twinkling eyes. "Shall we not join the ladies in the garden?"

"Thou seest?" said Lumnos, prodding Taledes with his elbow. "Thus it is ever when he is separated from his lady."

"Would that it were so with all," said Taledes moodily.

"Ho! Sits the wind in that quarter?" Lumnos chuckled again. "Well 'tis no disgrace. Do I not love Luelila?"

"Tell me but this, Lumnos," Taledes sought to cover his embarrassment. "Was Astrellon great as

I have heard? Could he indeed make buildings without hands?"

"Aye, column and block raised he, as matchwood, column upon column and stone upon stone. Ask me not how. Some strange instrument had he of his own devising, with which he drew power from the sun, and stored it in underground vaults. He did use this power for defence, as for construction. Moreover, he also constructed mechanism that, placed within our boats, drew unto itself power from wind and waves and sun, propelling the vessel quickly and surely. The captain of the ship must needs know the control of his instrument, therefore were all such trained by the College of Wise Men of whom Astrellon was Chief. Were I to talk unceasingly for a year, I could not tell thee all the marvels—Behold my garden. In Atlantis we did plant trees to bear fruit and nuts, while giving shade."

He waved his hand proudly about that pleasant place, where the grass was dotted with trees and shrubs. Orange, lemon, fig, olive, peach and pear gave promise of heavy yield. Mulberries spread glossy foliage to the sky, and blackberries and grapes were trained against the wall.

"Five more seasons of growth and they shall e'en do well!" he said proudly, seizing his boy and clasping him to his heart as if he were the dearest possession he had, or could ever have.

"Thy only son?"

"My only child. Therefore thou shouldst discern the root of my fondness for him. Was it not ever thus? Behold—our Atlantean exiles wait. Let us go in to the evening meal."

Although conforming in a large measure to the life and modes of Athros, Lumnos had retained as many of the Atlantean customs as were feasible. Instead of lingering about the table when the meal was concluded, they returned to the living-place where lamps of oils made soft light. Seeing that Taledes still thirsted for information, Lumnos led the talk to Atlantean reminiscence, grave and gay, till the exiles

obeying a signal, said their farewells and left together the three strangely-assorted friends.

They immediately began to talk of the present danger.

"Art thou certain he doth intend to strike to-night?" Taledes asked Theonis.

"Yea, lord, he dare not delay. Moreover, so great his hatred for us he would e'en bring conflict twixt thy soldiers and ours within our very gates."

As Theonis had expected, the plan worked out almost of its own accord, and when all details were complete and they were ready to depart, Lumnos insisted on coming with them.

"Grudge me not this favour. So shall I repay in small measure my debt to Athros, and to Egypt. And I do covet hazard, from the zest which riseth in the bosom of each fighting man. Did I not build my habitation against the wall that my hand be first to lay the Hill Man low?"

"Thy courage speaketh thee well," Taledes replied. "Yet if harm befall thee—"

"Tush! Fear not. Nevertheless, if such be the will of the Deity, well for me that I fall on sleep in such cause."

He kissed his wife and child tenderly and, calling sufficient of his retainers to outwit any attempted ambushade, they walked quickly through the streets, the sleeping children in their arms. Save only Leon's palace, where men with flambeaux waited the King's return, no light was to be seen in Athros. At the door Lumnos dismissed his followers, and crossed the threshold with hopeful anticipation.

While the sleeping children were put to bed, Taledes despatched the Nubian with his signet, bidding him bring hither two of the foremost nobles in his party and the Captain of the Guards, all of whom were quartered at the House of the Chief Spokesman across the square. In his turn, Leon called the Helmsman, now Chief of the Palace Retainers (such the proud title that he bore!) and bade him dismiss the guard for the night, then return to keep them company.

As Taledes kissed his small daughter, he said to Theonis:

"Do me this favour. If I should fall on sleep, do thou take this child and raise her as thine own. So shall I rest well."

"Thy time of passing hath not yet come, Taledes. Always do I know that by a Grey Veil that doth hang before the face of him who is about to pass. Yet I do give thee promise and thou hast such desire, whether thou dost claim it now or later."

"Sweet wife, retire and rest in the assurance that all will be well." Leon cupped her face in his hands and kissed her gently.

"Yea, lady, in the morn thou shalt hear the night's events."

"Nay!" Theonis drew herself up proudly as she looked from husband to kinsman. "Nay, but I will not! I will not leave thee. Side by side with thee, my Lord, do I stand or fall, and if it be sleep we shall fall on it as we have lived,—together. I will but speed thy progress; nor will I display womanish fear so that I may stay with thee."

"Yea, Theonis, mother of Kings, it is well!" said Taledes. Leon made no reply, but bade the Helmsman fetch a dagger for her need, and drew her in a circle of his arm, as the Nubian returned with the astonished and alarmed nobles.

"Lord, it is true that we have heard thy life was in danger. Speak—whom shall we slay in thy behalf?"

"Slay no one," commanded the King. "Moreover, speak low, and with caution. Mayhap even here the walls have ears, and the windows tongues. It is my will that ye speak. Of whom have ye heard my life was in danger?"

The noble who had spoken, glanced at his neighbour and then at the assembled party, ere he answered in obedience to an arbitrary gesture from the King.

"But we are told that one Terestes sought thy life and the throne of Creta."

"Terestes . . . If thou meanest Terestes, Princeling of Creta, he hath passed these many years. Whom dost thou designate by such title?"

The nobles looked at each other in perplexity and then at Leon.

The King interpreted this as sufficient answer. "If thou dost mean the man who hath built Athros, thou dost speak of my kinsman Leon, offshoot of lesser branch of my royal family. Speak, Leon, didst thou bear ever other name than Leon?"

"Yea, Lord," replied Leon, with a swift smile. "Once was I called Rollo, the Barbarian. Nevertheless when sickness laid low the old Chief of Athros and I was chosen in his stead, I did assume the name of Leon as more fitting the dignity of my office."

The nobles looked again at each other and at the three kings, but assurance was written plainly on each face.

"I ask ye not who gave such lie to noble hearts," Taledes spoke calmly, "for I tell ye I also learn my way is set with danger. Therefore I ask of ye only this—keep silent and watch as ye are bidden. Nor strike to kill save I command. If ye will not bind yourselves to do my bidding, depart, and I will seek other aid."

"Nay, Lord," said the noble who had taken the lead in speech, "Whom dost thou fear? We do as thou wilt have us."

"I fear no man. I accuse no man. I bid ye only watch and wait in utmost silence the appointed time."

They extinguished the lights in the dwelling place and moved silently toward the King's sleeping chamber, that originally set apart for his use, for the Helmsman had contrived to let the Envoy know which room the King would that night occupy.

Taledes took command. He bade Hartha roll skins into the semblance of a man and place this in the bed with the covers well drawn about it. The walls had been hung with purple in his honour and he directed the men to wait behind these ample shelters. Behind the pillars that held the bed's canopy, he placed

Althus and Hartha, and himself joined Lumnos, Leon and Theonis in the small alcove that served as tiring room. Gaza carried away the light to an adjoining storeroom, whence he was instructed to bring it at a given signal. They settled themselves to a tedious wait, while the muscles grew strained with fatigue. "He will come!" said Theonis to the restless Lumnos. "Be thou still!—Hark!"

Along the street came a furtive, sliding step. It paused, and came nearer. There was some slight sound, as the prowler stumbled against an obstacle in the wall. Another pause—and the faint scraping that accompanies the raising of a body to a window sill. There he hung poised a moment, ere he dropped lightly on the bench beneath the window and gained his bearings.

Another pause, so prolonged that the watchers feared lest their beating hearts proclaim their proximity. Then he began to approach the bed with infinite caution, feeling delicately for its occupant. An arm upraised and descended with deadly swiftmess. At the same instant a low voice full of intense hatred said clearly, "Perish dog of a Taledes who would obstruct the chariot wheels of Pharaoh! Die, O Man of Iron—and thy death shall carry with thee the hated Leon! The Lady Theonis is thine, Pharaoh!" While he laboured to free the dagger, Althus and Hartha seized his wrists and held them fast. At the same instant the clang of Leon's sword summoned Gaza to return with the light. The watchers stepped out into the room and the lamp disclosed the Egyptian struggling to release himself from that steel clutch.

When Taledes appeared the wretched Egyptian screamed and his mouth foamed with a fury of hate and fear.

"Bones of my father!" cried the Captain of the Guard. "Thou'rt the knave who told me 'twas Leon of Athros who did seek the King's life. He whom thou didst call Terestes of Creta."

"As I told thee, Captain, Terestes ci devant King of Creta did pass out of this life many years back. If

thou dost not believe thy King, ask Lumnos, King of Atlantis, who saw such event, yet was himself saved by Rollo the Barbarian, who became later Leon. Speak I not truly?" he asked, turning to Lumnos.

"Thou dost speak truly," averred Lumnos solemnly. "Terestes perished whilst coming hither. A perilous storm, whose horror we had not overcome, save by the prowess of yonder Rollo."

"We need not thy confirmation, O Lumnos," said the noble proudly. "Sufficient for us the word of our King who hath ruled Creta justly and well. Plain to our minds how yon Envoy would bring shame on both Creta and Athros that Egypt might so be glorified. Scum of Egypt!" He spat with fervor on the Envoy's robe.

The Envoy flinched but rallied his courage, and began to hurl malediction on them all, adding threats of Egypt's vengeance, when the treatment of her Envoy should be made known.

"Peace!" thundered Taledes. He outlined for the Nobles the finding of the jade, of Gaza's treatment at the Egyptian's hands, and the suspicion his acts had aroused.

"What would ye that I do with such renegade traitor?"

"Give him to the soldiers, Taledes, that they may tear him limb from limb, as Balthus!" cried the Captain of the Guard.

"O King, live for ever! Give him to us. He shall die for many days with exquisite tortures!" said the nobles.

"Aye, Taledes. But suffer me to cut off his ugly head with one stroke of my sword!" roared Lumnos "So the Egyptian is kind when he is still in death."

"Give him to me, Taledes, that I may stifle his lies in his throat!" Leon moved nearer a pace.

"Give him to me, Great King of Creta, and I will give him to the people of Athros for sacrifice by fire," boomed Althus.

The Egyptian looked from one threatening face to the other, and finding no mercy therein, began to

scream. And as he screamed he was seized with a paroxysm of pain, so that he fell silent for lack of breath.

"The Grey Veil," Theonis cried. "O—over his face the Grey Veil! Taledes stay thy hand! Touch not one already marked for death by dread disease. So doth the Deity punish miscreant!"

Taledes paused—"Is it so?" he asked.

The exhausted Envoy nodded weakly.

"Yea," Theonis went on. "It is so. O King Taledes—make of him prisoner set apart and well-guarded that he may not seek safety in flight, nor yet bring danger on thee. When thou dost arrive in Creta, that same day provision ship and send him back to Egypt. He will arrive there, I promise thee,—dead! So that Egypt may behold the cause of his malady, and lay not this death at thy door."

Taledes considered this for some time.

"What think ye?" he asked the nobles.

"The Lady Theonis speaketh with the tongue of wisdom, O Taledes, myself I have seen him oft in just such writhing when much food doth glut his stomach."

"Let Creta be Master-Plotter, meeting guile with guile and cunning with cunning. Let us return the Envoy to Egypt, unharmed by our hands. Nevertheless Creta and Athros shall learn of his perfidy and thy protection by Leon of Athros and his Lady."

"It is well," decided Taledes. "Therefore, O Captain of the Guard, appoint for him five men by day and five more by night who shall not close eye upon their watch. Take from him all that he might use to end his worthless life, and see that he doth not communicate with any save by my express permission. Hast thou aught to say?" he enquired, turning to the Egyptian now recovered from his spasm, and once more defiant.

"This only, Taledes. Perchance I have failed. Another cometh after me when I sleep with my fathers and he shall succeed."

"Let Egypt fear Creta,—never Creta shall fear Egypt," answered the King contemptuously. "Think

not to destroy the kingdom by my death. Creta doth build upon rock formation, not the shifting sand of the desert."

"Nevertheless, swift is the hand of Egypt to strike. Her minions are myriad, her devices endless. Her magnificence and glory to all time endureth. Puny King of puny Kingdom, beware how thou dost tempt the wrath of heaven!

"Already thou dost totter! Thy yoked slaves hate thee! Yea, Taledes, remember that in the day when the galleys of Egypt land on thy ill-protected shores. What wilt thou do in that day?"

"In that day," answered Lumnos, advancing till he dwarfed the Egyptian by his huge frame. "In that day, dog of an Egyptian, perchance one who was associate of Astrellon shall use his methods of defence!"

"Bah—exiled king of a destroyed land, I fear thee not! So. Already the name of Atlantis fadeth—we have obliterated all record of that hated land from tile and papyrus by the command of Pharoah. Thou wilt not be remembered, but the name of Egypt shall go down to posterity. Forgotten art thou, debauchery and cunning. Mayhap we shall come hither and carry thee in triumph to the Lotus Land that the Pharoah gloat on thy downfall, as thou didst gloat o'er him in thy superiority. Isis give me strength to live to that day."

A leer of hate and a spasm of pain transformed his face into a hideous gargoyle. Lumnos answered calmly:

"Perchance thou dost remember Medelos? Perchance thou hast heard of towers at the harbor's mouth whose purpose was to sweep the sea of enemy ships in war time. No ship could pass that dread sentinel. As mist to the sun they were destroyed, and earth saw of them no smallest fragment more. Didst thou not mark the tower at the harbor's mouth? Didst think, poor fool of an Egyptian, that the tower is for watch purposes only? So thou hast drawn the Lion's teeth? Well then, O valiant one—enter thy ship and pass into the harbor,—if thou dost dare!"

The Envoy paled and retreated a step. Too well he knew the force of that dreaded power. The King's great confidence in his own words almost convinced the three who knew he lied that he spoke truly. The others, not knowing, accepted the statement in awed silence.

Taledes spoke:

"Well? Wilt thou test the Lion's teeth? If thou hast doubt I will send thee adrift—but alone!—that the world may know as well as the craven-hearted Envoy."

"Nay Lord—I believe. No wish have I to be carried to the sea's bed, but rather with my decently-embalmed body protected by my Ka would I go forth into the World of the Dead."

"Thou hast chosen, Envoy of Egypt. Our great care for thy welfare shall bring thee solicitous attention from Creta's heroes. Pass on—thou ambassador of a falling throne!"

The Captain, assisted by the Helmsman, the Nubian and several slaves removed the Envoy to the safety of a chamber of the Palace that it might be said he was entertained in the King's Apartments, and when they were gone, the nobles bowed low before the King.

"Taledes, thy judgment and courage are as the mountains, towering above the earth. We shall make our pleasure a personal concern for the Egyptian's safety. O King, live forever!"

With deep salute they turned and bent the knee to Leon and Theonis.

"Thou hast our gratitude and our respect, O Lord of Athros. May Baal speed thy progress here and hereafter." With another deep bow, they withdrew, one to keep guard before the Envoy's prison, the other to watch before the King's door when he at last sought his couch.

And for a week there was rejoicing in Athros. Taledes hunted wild boars, applauded the masques in the theatre, talked endlessly with the people, and hung with delight on the achievements of the youths in the

House of Training. In all that week the Egyptian was forced to walk abroad under company of nobles and soldiers, meeting hisses and hatred on every side, for the truth had been made known and the indignation ran so high in the King's guard that the Captain had some difficulty in convincing them of Taledes' wisdom.

On the morning of the eighth day, the ships stood provisioned and ready for the return voyage — the people thronged the quay as they had on the day of the King's arrival, and the sadness of farewell which hangs over all partings filled the air.

Taledes lingered a little in the garden saying good-bye. Leon's heart was heavy with prescience, and, too, the heart of Theonis. They felt they would not meet again in this life, Taledes whom they loved. So, too, Taledes felt the shadow on him, for as he drew little Theonis to him to comfort her baby sorrow, he said earnestly to Theonis:

"If I come not again, remember me. Kinsman, if thou hast need of aught in my kingdom, it is thine, for thou and I are brothers, and thou wouldst not change places with me, I know well. I fear I shall not see thy face again."

"Say not so—perchance thou shalt return many times."

Taledes smiled sadly. "Ah, mankind, sad is thy fate, thou'rt born, thou dost wax old, dost pass into oblivion. Wherefore? Are we not as sand upon the seashore?"

"Taledes, there is no such place as oblivion," said Theonis, "Behold everywhere about me I hear lost voices, till turning I think to see my father, mother! Perchance we sleep awhile to waken once more on earth. Perchance we go to people the Land of the Shades beyond the Styx, I know not. We shall meet again some day, that only do I know. Next seed-time, —a thousand years hence! If it be in that Land of the Shades, we shall surely know each other, for friends shall e'en be friends in dwellings of the immortals. Ah—perchance in some great city we and

thee shall pass, and passing, some inner voice shall speak to all and say—"Behold thy friend." Is it not so, my Leon?"

"So do I believe, verily I know, Theonis, that wherever thou'rt I must follow thee and keep guard over thee. For if I love thee today, tomorrow I shall find thee and keep thee forever. Thou and I are one soul, one heart, one hope," Leon made answer, his eyes dim with a film of tears.

Taledes sighed and bent his head.

"If so be we meet again, my soul be ransom for thine. And if we stir to life once more, I pray I be not thrust on throne as King—such payment have I reaped for greed of power. I would know life and love. Though I labor not in vain, how hollow is the reward, how empty the world."

"Nay, somewhere love waiteth for thee."

"Aye, who knoweth? Almost I could envy the Egyptian who thinketh he shall return to inhabit his body again.

"My faith, I would ask a fairer one were I he!" Leon laughed man-like to hide his emotion.

"One thing more ere I depart. If I go hence wilt thou have charge of thy namesake, and bring her up in the safe shelter of thy motherheart? I would have her playmate of thy little ones—and if her heart be thus claimed—wed her to thy Theos in due season."

Leon looked at him enquiringly. "Yea, Taledes, if the mother's heart can part with so fair a flower."

Taledes put the child down, and bade all three children walk slowly toward the city gate. When they were out of earshot he said:

"I dare not lie to thee . . . Theonis is not daughter of my Queen. Child is she of a maiden I did fancy resembled thee, Theonis, a maid good and gentle and patient. She passed at the birth of Theonis, but the only love I have known this maid gave me, and in her child have I found much joy even as thou didst prophesy, Theonis! In Creta, I speak not for her life when I am gone, for the Queen hath little love for the child—perchance because I have so much."

Theonis the elder smiled at Taledes. "But I have known since thou didst come that Theonis was not the Queen's child!" she said.

Taledes stared at her a moment in horrified silence. "Is there aught thou dost not know?" he asked.

"Yea, Lord, much. But if it come to pass as thou dost fear, I shall be mother to this child as thou hast desire."

"It shall be as thou hast wished," said Leon. "On my life I swear it. And when she doth attain womanhood, if thou'rt alive, as we pray, Theos shall go to thee to claim her. So shall all differences be healed in our children! Yet if thou'rt taken, she shall come hither, and we shall e'en treat her as our Daphne. On my dagger, I swear it!"

Taledes gave a great sigh of relief, as he turned towards the door. "Thou hast taken a burden from my heart." They walked slowly to the wharf, talking aimlessly because their hearts were full. The people of Athros hailed them with a mighty cheer and the children threw flowers for their feet to trample. The sides of the royal galley, drawn close to the quay, were festooned with garlands of pink and yellow.

There on the quay, Lumnos, Luelila and their small son awaited them, for Taledes who had become deeply attached to Lumnos, had persuaded him to come with him in a long visit to Creta. Lumnos had at first demurred but when Taledes made plain he was to take not only his wife and child, but such retainers as he chose, the ex-King accepted gratefully. "So that ye give me not fish as we go thither," he stipulated. "My faith, did I not have my stomach turned with it as we came?"

The King laughed and promised he should have no fish while he remained in Creta, but any other luxury he might fancy. Not only did he long for trustworthy friendship, but Taledes craved an opinion of his kingdom from one whose empire none on earth had equalled.

Pausing at the vessel's side Taledes swept the people with his slow smile.

"Peace and prosperity to Athros. For hospitality, kindness and native wit, I commend ye. Live in peace with one another content with what ye have, not vainly seeking the glory of alien kingdoms. Be honest, O Folk of Athros, and in honor guard well him whose wisdom doth make ye great."

"O King, live forever. Thy name be glorified in Athros!" Taledes bowed majestic acceptance of their plaudits and lifted Theonis for Leon and his Lady to kiss. The child wept bitterly at parting from her newly-found playmates and clung to her father as he saluted Leon and Theonis on either cheek. Then after caressing Daphne, he lifted Theos to the level of his eyes, and smiled gravely.

"Forget not thy kinsman, Taledes, nor the little Theonis." The child returned his smile with one of candor as he said:

"When I am grown to man's estate, I shall have galley of mine own; I shall come to Creta and bring thy Theonis back with me." His little piping voice shrilled it out clearly, and amid the laughter that ensued, Taledes said softly—"Good! I wish for nothing better."

He entered his ship followed by Lumnos and Luelila and Hemora and Delita. The oarsmen loosed the ropes and the galley began to move gently from the quay.

The people of Athros raised their sweet, wailing song of farewell, and with his eyes fixed steadily on that group, Taledes said softly:

"Farewell,—and not farewell. If thou'rt right Theonis, and fain would I so believe!—we three shall meet again, a thousand years hence. Grieve not if thou dost receive word of my passing. Life is an empty mockery, and I am weary of the masque."

Theonis' eyes were filled with tears. In a flash she knew all the misery the throne of Creta had brought him. But as the galley swung about and headed for the open sea, she turned to her husband with the smile she kept for him alone—"O Leon, thou wilt not say that of life?"

"How could I with thee to bless me, O Flower of my Heart? Yet were I as he bereft—should I not speak so?"

Theonis pressed closer to him, as they watched the galleys pass down the bay. In the rear galley sat the Envoy still under guard of the nobles. These gave courteous greeting to the Lord and Lady of Athros—a salutation returned by the people who added—"Perish the traitor Egyptian. To the fishes with him!"

His glassy eyes and greenish pallor bespoke a growing intensity of pain, but as they passed the tower, he looked up with apprehension increased by the presence of a strange object sparkling in the sun. It was only a collection of bronze vessels placed there for that very purpose at Lumnos' suggestion, but it did its work well. The Egyptian called for parchment and inscribed a screed to Pharoah, speaking of Athros, and his growing illness. He dilated on the association of Lumnos with Astrellon, described the tower, and added the word—"Beware." Well pleased, the nobles took this in charge against a time of need.

When the last purple sail had fluttered beyond the cape's projecting rocks, the people went back to the city. The week of rejoicing was over and work once again claimed their attention.

"My faith," exclaimed Leon, as he, too, began to assume everyday garb, "I heave sigh of relief that Taledes came not to grief within our walls, and but for thee, Theonis, such were not true. Unhappy Taledes who hath not Theonis."

"Unhappy Theonis had it e'en been so. Knowest thou not, husband, no man doth measure to thee in my eyes, no love could equal my love for thee, so that I blush at thy caress, and my heart leapeth at the sound of thy voice to-day as yesterday, to-morrow as to-day. For there is in the universe none to compare with thee, husband and lord. As it was in the beginning, so shall it ever be. All I ask, dear lord of my life, is that we may cross the Styx together . . . Behold, Taledes is right, and we meet no more in this life. For Leon if thou hast paid dearly for thy love of knowledge, he

also hath paid for the throne of Creta with all that maketh life worth while. Knowledge is an excellent thing, and progress a noble thing, but in heaven or earth one priceless possession transcendeth all others—Love. What is there to equal love?”

“Thou’rt right as always, Theonis . . . Yet, had I not sought knowledge and thereby lost the throne of Creta, how should I have had thee? I moan no longer for Creta. To Athros and thee, my life is consecrated.”

“And generations yet unborn shall declare thy wisdom,” said Theonis softly, running her fingers through the crisp hair already touched with grey. “One thing only troubleth me—I fear to see the shadow of the Grey Veil before thy face . . . But if we must be parted, we shall wait for each other, as I have belief we wake after the passing. I have eternal tryst with thee, beloved, in that after-life!”

CHAPTER XXII.

ASTRELLON'S SETTING SUN

The season of equinoxes had passed. The snow had melted early that year and the snow lilies bloomed profusely about the edge of the bowl. Delosarian lay bathed in a faint glow but the sun had not yet laid golden fingers on the rim of the horizon.

Semi-circular rows of streets intersected by broad avenues lay on North, South and West. Of stone and native brick, the houses were commodious, even pretentious, but obviously built to withstand much cold. In summer time flowers would toss their gay heads at front and rear, and vines of annual growth cling to the broad facades; but as yet, the trees which careful hands had planted showed only small green leaves.

Early as it was, the streets were lined with people all seeking one destination. Through the open gateway came others to swell the throng—lithe brown giants with serious keen faces, their scarlet loin cloths, and jeweled, feathered headgear lending a note of barbaric splendor to the more sober Delosarian garb.

The erstwhile Atlanteans were older. Threads of grey gleamed in many heads, but the eyes were serene and content, and the carriage gracious and stately as ever. Crimson, gold and grey predominated in their mantles, which were, nevertheless, richly embroidered and tastefully fashioned.

Toward the western edge of the lake they made their way, for there, unhampered by close neighbors and facing the rising Sun across the shimmering waters of that great sheet of blue, stood the Temple of the Sun. No building obstructed its view toward the east, and it was open to the first rays of its patron Deity. The natives lifting awed eyes, never ceased to marvel at the structure, nor to wonder at the huge blocks

that formed its towering sides. Only gods could have built such they reasoned among themselves, gods who had come for a season to dwell among men, and teach them the way of wisdom.

Five shallow steps the full length of the Temple led from ground level to the broad terrace without the lofty pillars that supported the roof. So large was it, that ten times the number of people could have worshipped in comfort in that vast interior.

The people ranged themselves quietly on either side leaving a broad path free from terrace to altar whereon a fire lay ready for lighting. A vast block of marble was that altar, supported by carved figures representing the four points of the compass. A dim roseate light flooded the interior, and from the terrace without came a group of beautiful white-robed children who walked hand-in-hand singing, till they reached the altar, and knelt at one side of it with clasped hands and downcast eyes.

Following them came a young girl, whose delicate blue tunic of finely-woven wool, bore the emblems of star and sun heavily embroidered in silver upon its surface. She too, reached the altar, and stood silently to one side, in front of the young priests who had followed her up the aisle. Then came Astrellon. As his foot paused on the threshold, the children began a low sweet chant and the people sank reverently on their knees.

Years had slightly bowed that splendid frame, but the eyes beneath the broad forehead were as keen and kindly as ever. He lifted his hand as the children finished their chanting.

“O great Deity! Ruler and Creator of the Universe!

We salute Thee and do Thee reverence.

Thou, who from aeons of time sitting upon the
heaven of heavens

Gazing downward upon Thy creations

Wert mindful of Thy creatures.

Thou didst give to our hand, food and raiment in
abundance,
Asking in return the tribute of our worship.
O Deity of Deities! O Lord of Life and Death!
We salute Thee!"

A murmur as of the rushing of a mighty wind
echoed—

"Hail Sovereign Deity! We salute Thee!"

Astellon advanced several paces, and in the growing light the jewels which embellished his vestments began to glow with sombre fire. Once more he paused, and raised his hands toward heaven.

"O Shining Lord of Earth and Sky whose messengers await Thy will!

Who is man that Thou hast remembered him, and hast provided for his sustenance?

The stars of morning bow down and worship Thee;
The moon kindleth her lamp to illumine Thy rest;
The sky doth spread her rich blue mantle for Thy feet;

The clouds of Heaven lave Thy brow with dew.

Still hast Thou remembered man!

We, who are less than the dust upon the hillside,
Smaller than the grain of sand in the mighty deserts,

We give Thee our reverence and our adoration!"

"O Deity of Deities, we give Thee adoration!"

"In Thy heaven of heavens remember mankind!"
breathed the kneeling host.

"Great Lord of the Universe, in whose mighty hand

Lieth seed-time and harvest, rainfall and snowfall,
Seldom hast Thou concealed Thy face from us—
Wherefore shall we have fear of darkness?

Too glorious art Thou for mortal man's contemplation,

Yet as Thou wingest Thy way onward, smile on
Thy kneeling worshippers."

Very sweetly and softly the child voices took up the theme as Astrellon advanced and paused on the great central octagonal slab of black marble.

“O Deity hide not Thy face
But deign to lighten with Thy Sovereign grace
Whose glory groweth greatly hour by hour.
Transmit to kneeling host Thy heavenly power!”
As they ceased the worshippers turned slightly
and gazed expectantly toward the unkindled altar.

“O Sovereign Lord, whose greatness heaven itself can ne’er relate
If Thou hast pity on the people gathered in Thy name;
If Thou hast accepted the adoration we do offer Thee
Which though poor, is yet the best we have;
If Thou dost vouchsafe Thy favor and Thy aid,
Kindle the flame upon Thy altar laid.
That, we, beholding, may be blessed in Thy majesty.”

“O Sovereign Lord, send forth Thy beam of light,
Kindle the altar in Thy people’s sight.”

A hush, a pause. Suddenly through some hidden aperture of the roof the first bright beam of the sun descended in full fervor upon the altar, and rested lovingly on kindling there. A smoke wreath curled upward, and another, and yet another. The oblation was accepted and the fire kindled by the Deity Himself. The people remained motionless while the flames began to dart hungry tongues about the wood, and as suddenly as it had come that altar-transfixing beam was gone. The church was filled with the glory of the risen Sun. So cunningly had that small aperture been contrived, that the first long beam only, streaming through the burning glass which formed the covering of its orifice struck fairly and truly on the altar itself. A great sigh ran through the Temple, and once more the children’s voices took up the strain.

“Thanks unto Thee, O Giver of Light and Life,

Through the darkness of winter Thou hast not
hidden Thy face from us
But Thou hast rested in Thy heaven of heavens.
Now Thou'rt returned to us in all Thy glory.
Thou hast not forsaken Delosarian."

As they sang they moved backward till they were grouped before the altar. Astrellon advanced, and passed behind the altar, while the maiden poured oil and fresh fuel on the fire carefully so that it burned up with steady blue flame. The people rose, and watched the offering of the young lamb, whilst the children's voices swelled in a paean of praise and joy.

When the ritual attendant upon such ceremony was complete, Astrellon lifted his head toward the central dome, whose circular openings now admitted floods of sunlight.

"O Great Deity before whom we kneel in obeisance,

Accept these people, in Thy mercy.
For those who have passed into the long sleep
We beseech Thy tender care,
So that whether they wake, or whether they sleep,
Thou wilt have divine knowledge of their welfare!
For those who shall descend to realms of earth
We beseech Thy blessing and Thy guidance,
So that they may come forth sure and strong
So that they may walk unscathed in Life's pathway.

For those whose faltering feet approach the Gate
of Sleep

We beseech the divine comfort of Thy daily presence.

For those who turn the wheel of life,
Grant wisdom under peace in homely tasks.
To Thee we give adoration—Thou wert from the first,

Thou shalt be when time has ceased to be.
Sovereign Lord of Life and Death! Remember us
In that day we must step forward unattended

Through that Gate whose way leadeth ever forward.

Forever be Thou adored!"

Astellon blessed them as they bowed before him, and turning led the way toward a smaller adjoining portion of the Temple, which, divided from it, formed a place of preparation, and of disrobing. The crowd swayed into the open air, and only the priests were left to tend the altar fires.

Astellon laid aside his sacred garments in a coffer of beaten copper, and resumed his ordinary blue robe, ere he went in search of his family on this first great feast day of the Spring.

A gray-haired vigorous man waited Astrellon's coming at the foot of the stone steps—one arm thrown caressingly about the shoulders of the fair young girl. But Caritas had laid aside her gorgeous robes, and wore one of similar design but less elaborate and costly. Astrellon smiled down on them both.

"Greeting, mine own familiar friend. My heart doth rejoice at thy faithful countenance."

"O Sage of Sages, they will e'en lay the feast in the great meadow, for the sun is high and 'tis pleasant out of doors. Doth not my mother labor many days making savories for our consumption?" Caritas said with a winning smile. Astrellon smiled back at her as he smoothed her hair.

"Well, then, let us go thither by all means. Wilt thou go farward, and tell thy good mother we come?" Caritas turned away, but spun on her heels to say:

"Well, then, finish thy affairs of state ere thou dost come to table, for my mother would e'en not trouble her head with problems, having enough to do to keep my father in order."

"Begone, witch! Dost also seek knowledge of great affairs? Perchance thy brain could compass that which man's cannot?" grumbled Mascallon.

"Yea—woman's wit is ever nimbler. Doth not my mother ever best thee in argument?" She pirouet-

ted, blew them an airy kiss from her finger tips, and sped away.

"Canst thou not teach that child more fitting behaviour?" Mascallon tried hard to frown after that fairy figure.

"Let the child be. Like the flower dancing on the hill she is gay, and pure, and withal a maiden chary of her favors and decorous in temple conduct. I ask no more.

"Alas, Mascallon! The burden of years falleth heavily on me. My feet approach the threshold of sleep and ere I depart I would behold thee crowned King of Delosarian."

"Nay, nay," exclaimed Mascallon in surprise. "Nay! I like not to hear thee speak of—of—sleep! Nor would I be King."

"Son, today, tomorrow, next year, what doth it matter? Though fain would unwilling feet turn and flee that portal, all must pass through, carried by some unseen tide as coracle is tossed upon a stormy sea. Let us think of it calmly and without fear, for if we trust our Deity how shall we be afraid? Have we not sufficient faith to give into His keeping, the life He hath succored throughout its earthly journey? Yea, son, I know in whom I believe, and fear not the passing!" Astrellon's voice was soft and deep as he laid caressing hands upon Mascallon's shoulders, but Mascallon's eyes were full of tears, for he had a tender heart, and loved Astrellon with a devotion that was well-nigh worship.

"Mine own familiar friend," the Sage continued, "On the day thou dost gaze upon outworn body whence willing soul hath fled, remember that I fear to find no foe beyond the Gate of Sleep. When the Clarion Call doth sound in mine ears, my soul shall leap up gladly and follow where the Deity wills.

"I fear not death. I fear only Life. For behold in the tale of years, how many fall beneath the dread hand of life. Take, if thou wilt, the example of Lumnos. Better that he had fallen on sleep, than that he had strayed so far into the darkness, whence he doth

climb with difficulty. Better Caritas had ne'er breathe than that she should e'er be swayed by the passio for blood, which prevaiileth even here.

"When will mankind learn that it cannot rais itself on bloodshed? When it doth put all sacrific behind, save the sacrifice of will and desire, it will hav taken a long step upward toward the Deity. Behold even in Delosarian are those who lust for the horri practices of Baal and Isis in their hearts. Not in th lifetime, nor in mine; mayhap not for many years t come—but 'tis plainly written in the stars. Huma sacrifice!"

Mascallon started back in horror. "What fou fiend seeketh such dread oblation? But whisper th name, and the recreant shall die!"

"Son, that sentiment doth ill become thee, fo thou wouldst shed blood to revenge insult. Nay—we can do little save teach, and by the purity of our ow lives show such dark natures, the beauty of the ab stemious way. Yea, Delosarian shall be great whe Egypt hath passed away, and Creta tottereth to he fall. And in the days yet to be, a proud Pharaoh shal blot out all reference of Atlantis and the people o the world shall say 'Was it ten thousand years back or twenty,' not knowing such civilization did paralle Egypt. Aye Egypt shall fall, Creta shall fall; and a new nation doth arise in the north which doth pre serve much of Altantean culture. A thousand years or more, and the secrets of earth shall be theirs.

"And from the union of our race with this native race shall spring a civilization which doth include Altantean culture with native intellect. The earth shal yield her secrets to them so that their fame shall trave far and shall lure to them robbers. And in the day when Delosarian doth establish human sacrifice, he downfall shall come. If she doth lust for the blood of innocent victims, behold sons of a nation yet unborn shall slay and spare not in their lust of jewels."

"Dost thou behold this in starry firmament?" asked Mascallon in low and agitated voice.

"Yea, Son. Moreover so speaketh the Voice of my heart. For as I gaze about these people brought with us, I am constrained to love them. Yea, mine own familiar friend, if I, being but faulty human, shall love them, shall not the Deity who seeth all, love yet more abundantly.

"I would make thee King of Delosarian, and if I ask it, thou wilt not refuse. For fain would I see thee controlling with firm and steady hand—and they cry out for a King. Who more fit than thee to rule?"

"Most unworthy am I—"

"Say not so. I deem thee worthy, and if in the past thou hast been guided by my judgment and hast not found it wanting, wilt thou not accept my advice in this matter also?" Astrellon said with a smile of singular sweetness. "Come, we draw near thy table. Let us for today banish such speech, and hold rejoicing."

In the meadow the long table had been spread to the full glory of the sun which warmed the still cool air, and made a pleasant place for the hardy Delosarians, who had grown to love the tang of the crisp atmosphere. As of old the children ran to Astrellon, and though he no longer swung them high, he drew them close with tender words and caresses.

Mordena left her place and came toward them. Her dark eyes still sparkled with animation but the once black braids were silver, and a wistfulness hung over her whole air. She wore a gown of gray embroidered in pink poppies by her own clever fingers and Caritas hung radiantly on her arm.

With them came Estrella, one curly-headed child in her arms; and a shy little maid clinging to her robe. Estrella radiated happiness. Her slender form had rounded out into a gracious and womanly dignity, her pale-gold robes enhanced the healthy tan that replaced the delicate creamy skin of the White Rose of Atlantis. Astrellon caressed her, as he took her small son into his own arms, and smiled across that curly pate at Beldenis.

As they gathered about the table to take their places, each eye turned toward the vacant chair at Mascallon's right, and they drank silently to the memory of Pensera who had faded away as gently as the flowers the previous Autumn. How they missed her! No more would Mordena laugh in unalloyed pleasure, or Mascallon romp carelessly with the children. A settled dignity had fallen on each, and all. The majesty of their lofty eyrie had touched their souls and from the eternal silences they had imbibed silence at strange variance with Atlantean chatter. Even the children carried out much of their play in pantomime, and used words as a means of expression when such were absolutely necessary but not before.

"Wouldst thou have thought, my father, that the eagle's nest whither we soared in day of stress would e'en become a city graced by beauty and riches?"

"Greedy one!" chided Mordena, pulling the youngest baby's fist from the honey pot. "Verily for all thy elfin looks, I believe thou dost hunger for the flesh-pots of Egypt."

"Nay—not for the flesh-pots of Egypt. Little do I know of that land, and that which I do know, I like not. Was it not priest of Egypt that destroyed Atlantis? Was it not maid of Egypt that caused the King's downfall?"

"Who told thee that?" her father enquired. "Such chapters are best left untold."

"Nay Caritas!" said Astrellon kindly. "Heed not the talk of freedmen. Know, O maiden, I do verily believe we are all but instruments in the hand of the Deity. And whether the Deity did over-estimate man's moral worth—or did repent the divine gift of the atomic theory, I do not blaspheme to discover. But the Voice within doth ever urge that the Deity wisheth to rescind that gift. Moreover for some great purpose He alone doth know, He did require destruction of that so-fair land. Time's wheel turneth, and civilization is blotted out to re-appear in some new quarter—at one fell stroke did he remove Atlantis, mayhap in His

very love that she should not waste away by gradual disintegration, but disappear in all her glory.

"If this thought of mine be true, then were Fox and Lotus Lily but agents in the hands of the All-Powerful Lord of the Universe,—and it shall not be accounted to their discredit, that, like the villain of the piece, they played their part well.

"Nevertheless, He doth ever preserve a few to hand to posterity the knowledge gathered together. Yea, in time to come, the mantle of doubt, of darkness and unbelief shall compass earth, and hide from the blind eye of mankind the majesty of the Most High, till Truth doth seem dead.

"But Truth doth not perish, though it disappear from view yet a little space. In some less darkened corner a handful of the elect shall trim the Lamp of Wisdom and keep its flame aglow, till the Most High shall lean down to dispel the darkness of doubt. Then shall Truth flame forth a mighty torch to illumine the world. The Deity must prevail."

They hung upon his words with eagerness, as they visioned a new world.

"Yet, my father, thou didst not love the Lotus Lily," said Estrella softly.

"Child, mayhap I was hasty. More sinned against was she, ringed about with hate, sold into far country. Sweet be her sleep—if sleep she doth!"

They began to discuss the old Atlantean customs, dwelling on the lost beauties with sadness mellowed by time into pleasant memory. Looking about him, Astrellon was astounded to discover how rapidly Atlantean features were changing. Less round than long were the faces; lean and sinewy the once soft bodies; broad the hands from actual toil; even the keenly alert eyes told of caution imbibed from constant warfare with nature and its elements.

"Write!" said he suddenly, as he leaned back with one of those prophetic visions that from time to time swayed him. "Write—" his voice trailed away and he sat motionless, oblivious of the low ripple of talk. Estrella glanced at him from time to time, and

from him to her loved husband, who was seldom far from her when he was in Delosarian.

"Write!" he cried again. "Perchance the records shall remain to tell the world of lost Atlantis. But as for ye—no longer are ye Atlanteans. Ye have become kin to your mountain fastness in speech and in appearance. See, O Delosarians, that ye so live that no dark blot shall mar the city's fair story. Build not for today, but for tomorrow—an empire that shall endure. Build it upon the foundation of honesty and of simple truth. Let no evil thought be harbored in your hearts. Let the people be true—a thousand years hence."

There was a brief silence as he finished. Then Caritas began very softly a little song whose burden was the lilt of bird and music of stream. Higher and higher rose that sweetly flexible voice until it rippled away into silence on a note so high, so sweet, so true, it was as the highest, sweetest note of cithara.

Astellon looked at her more sombrely than was his wont. "One regret have I. Would that earth could hear thy matchless voice, O Caritas. But the Voice doth tell me—thou shalt sing in distant lands,—a thousand years hence!" His voice sank to a whisper and rising from his place, he paced toward the shore in deepest thought.

"Seek him not!" said Estrella, her eyes full of unaccustomed tears. "He doth commune with the Deity who hath guided him all the days of his life. But O Mascallon! Be swift to do that which he desireth thee to do, for he doth sojourn with us but a short space longer. It is his will, nevertheless, that we rejoice and be glad, even as he is himself glad. Therefore, sing Caritas! Thy sweet and dearly-loved voice shall bring him comfort in that border land wherein he doth walk. Let us be as he doth wish—brave and gay!" Lifting her head, she dashed the tears from her eyes, and seized her husband's hand.

"Behold, my friends," she went on, "I believe the King of Heaven shall soon summon my father to His court. Shall we who have beheld his grief and his

troubles grudge him the glory which doth await a trusted and honored noble? Nay! Too well do we love him. A little, little space remaineth. Shall we not make his heart glad therein? He loveth thee, Caritas—so sing to him as thou hast never sung before. And we shall be content, for whether he wake, or whether he sleep—but yea, he knoweth he shall awake!—his love shall guide us still.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LAST TRYST

Seed time and harvest passed many times over Athros, caressing that sunny spot with loving fingers. North, east and west had the city spread its expanding wings, pushing back the protecting wall to make room for its growth. The streets hummed with activity that morning in early spring, when daffodil and narcissus lifted laughing heads in every garden, and the flower girls with their trays of violets made the soft air vibrant with their musical cries. Garlands hung from pillar and cornice, and wreaths twisted about the locks of the maidens as they pushed laughingly toward the Temple. No longer was that Temple open on all sides, for like the city, it had been extended and rebuilt. The facade of the new Temple was a colonnade of white marble; the roof was peaked, and the triangular interspace was filled in with figures in bold relief. The tribal flame still burned upon the altar, undimmed since the founding of Athros, but the altar itself had been built up, and remodelled till the graceful curves of its support bore little resemblance to the old stone slab.

It was that morning presided over by fair young girls and keen-visaged priests. For having taken to wife, according to civil custom, Theonis, young daughter of the late King of Creta, the young King of Athros made public worship in the Temple with his bride.

The hum in the streets ceased, as, preceded by a group of children, tossing blossoms, Theos and Theonis, his bride, came from the dim interior into the bright sunlight. They advanced slowly till, pausing on the top step, Theos made gracious acknowledgement of the homage given him by the assembled throng. At twenty-five Theos was tall as Leon had been before

him, with the dark hair and deep blue eyes of his mother. He had been long absent on a punitive expedition to neighboring warlike tribes, and his heart rejoiced to be once more in Athros! Athros, the city which his father had built by hand and brain; Athros, where his father had ruled justly and well; Athros, where he had been crowned King no later than the previous week! His eyes flashed like the sapphires on his robe of white satin, fringed heavily in gold. Leathern thongs clasped with sapphire buckles fastened his sandals, bracelets flashed on his muscular arms, and a coronet encircled his curling locks. Athros looked,—and found him good to look upon,—ere they turned to the slight girlish figure at his side.

Those gray eyes had ever a wistful tenderness in their depths, set as they were in a face of cameo fairness. Such was Theonis of Creta, now Queen of Athros. Her sweeping silver robes fell about her minute form unadorned save for two perfect pearls in her brooch.

A sigh of mingled pleasure and gladness swept the people ere they burst into a loud cheer and began to pelt the bridal pair with hyacinth and daffodil. Theos held his hand out in token of his desire to progress, and led the tiny Queen through the people toward the palace entrance, meeting sally with quip, and pride of the people with pride of the King.

Behind the royal pair came a group, and toward them the crowd swayed as if urged by the voice of love nearer yet, so that many touched the mantle of the woman who centered it as she passed by, and the cheer that greeted her was tempered with tears. Serenely, calmly, they pushed the people apart and reached the palace steps, where the young King made speech to his people and bade them feast in his name and on his bounty.

Then from the pouch that hung at his side, Theos extracted a handful of Cretan coins and flung them broadcast for the pleasure of seeing them scramble madly for the possession of these coveted treasures. With a song on his lips he led his bride into his palace,

and behind him, his mother for the last time crossed the threshold as *chatelaine*. With her old resolute cheerfulness she tried to lay aside her own sad thoughts and enter into the rejoicing that was due to Theos and Theonis. Theos with laughing gallantry, seized her hand and seated her at his left.

Gone in one short month the old customs. Theos had instituted Cretan forms of dining, and of life that rudely jarred his mother's simple tastes. She could not view the two throne-like chairs at the table's head without remembering that feast in the palace of Tal-edes. The profusion of costly ornaments, the rich wines, the extravagance of the whole scene surfeited her and filled her with foreboding. In vain had she pleaded for familiar dishes and old customs. Theos with a hitherto unexpected firmness would have his way.

"O my mother, knowest thou not I am the King? And shall I fail so signally to honor on our wedding-day, one who is descended from the mightiest throne of Creta?"

"Son art thou as well as King. Remember thou that Creta is empire established beyond shadow of a doubt, Athros but the foundation of an empire, which thou canst make or mar."

"Good mother, thy fears are ungrounded. Much experience have I of life, and what was suitable for thee in thy day, is old-fashioned beyond reason. Come—let be! We will have the feast, and thereafter economize if such must be. Why should we worry whose support is Creta?"

And Theonis, the elder, had no choice but to hold her peace.

But the long feast dragged for her, and she gave a sigh of relief when the King rose from the table, and the banquetters began to withdraw to the theatre for the afternoon's drama.

"My mother!" exclaimed Theos following her into the garden where she had seated herself on the old stone bench by the lotus pool. "My mother, what is this I hear concerning thee?"

"What meanest thou, Son?" asked Theonis calmly stroking the head of her small son as it lay against her knee.

"Ione telleth me ye have sent hence your belongings, that with sunset ye go hence yourselves. And wherefore, my mother? The palace is not large, but we shall build yet other rooms, and I shall give thee all thou dost require." Theos frowned down at her.

"Thou hast heard truly, Son."

"Yet wherefore? Behold thou hast raised Theonis as thy daughter. Are not Daphne and she as sisters? Shall we not turn to thee in love? Come, I will send for thy luggage!"

"We will go hence as we have planned, my Son."

"And wherefore—wherefore? Speak, Daphne! Speak, Ione! Speak, Leon! Tell my mother thou dost desire to stay here."

The three children looked at their elder brother with disapproval.

"Thou knowest our mother's wish is our delight, Theos!" said Daphne gently. "Cross her not. Too arbitrary art thou!"

Theos grew very angry. He sent for Theonis, and together they pleaded with the elder Theonis to stay with them.

"It is better thus, dear children. It is your home even as it was once mine. Ye will be happier alone. Besides, Theos, thy imperious nature hath been fostered by long absence from my control. Thou art too like thy mother, Son, and thy nature doth not brook my admonitions longer. I will not rend this abode of love with constant quarrels. Dear art thou to me—so dear that I would lay my head beneath the trees ere I vex thee with a mother's anxious hoverings. Nay. We will come to thee and ye will visit us. Grieve not, son. 'Tis but a turn in the wheel of life!" She smiled at him with a sweetness of renunciation, but Theos, hurt and angry, would not see it.

He stamped his foot. "I say thou shalt remain! I am the King!"

Theonis rose and advanced to confront the passionate man. The amethysts upon throat and breast sparkled angrily with the rising and falling of her breath.

"See thou dost remember that, and conduct thyself in kingly fashion. Little thought I to hear such words from thy lips. So. Thou hast become Theos of Athros, no longer art thou in thy love son of Theonis? Well, then, Theos of Athros, perchance I grow weary of thy extravagances. Perchance my heart is sad with memories. That which I had, I gave to others, and to thee. Nevertheless in the years that remain to me I desire some measure of peace, and an opportunity in these dear children to live once more.

"O Son! Hast thou so far forgotten Leon that thou canst command thy mother's comings and goings? Art thou so blind of inner sight thou canst not behold the gaping wound in my heart? Dost thou not see I seek thy ultimate happiness? And if thou dost fear comment in Athros, remember 'Athros knew and loved Theonis long ere Theos came into being!'"

Very much ashamed of himself Theos dropped on one knee and pressed his lips to the hem of his mother's robe.

"Unhappy that I am! I sought not to offend, but to hold thee near and dear. Go and come as thou wilt, but love thy Theos."

"Why, Theos! Savored my thought for thee of aught save love? For thou wert born of the great love we shared, thy father and I. Thy home is here—yet also in the palace of Lumnos, now empty and forgotten. There shall I find abiding place, and perchance, peace. Knowest thou not the very stones of this place weep with me for Leon? I would withdraw from festivities natural to thy youth and new estate, and in seclusion live again the life of yesterday. Therefore for this little space, leave me alone in the garden with my memories, and come to me at the North Gate at set of sun three days hence. Son, never doubt Theonis loveth thee. Thy people wait for thee! Go, my son!"

She kissed them both tenderly. "No tears for me. Mine was happy fate, for I loved and was loved. Carry on the tradition, my son."

She turned from him to hide her tears, and with an arm about either daughter, and Leon racing ahead, she began to make the circuit of the garden. It was a journey fraught with pain, for each flower and shrub was dear to them. Theonis seated herself at the bench beneath the tree where once the swing had dangled, and looked about her in eyes swimming with tears.

"Daphne, thou dost remember also. Ere we go hence let us speak of him whose face you wear. Ah, the long years alone, Daphne,—shall we have courage to face them? Not thee, my child, for thou'rt young and must find happiness. But each day I yearn for thy father with increasing pain."

Theonis pressed her hand against her heart—a heart that pained her bitterly, and in these days fluttered and paused and fluttered and resumed its work after aeons of anguish. She drew the two younger children near.

"Ye knew not when he left us never to return how I could wander 'mongst these flowers. Children, I came hither spurred by the hope that somewhere, beyond some bush, upon some bench, I should find him again, and hear his well-beloved voice say: 'I cannot hide from thee longer, Theonis!' Alas! Too well hath he hidden!"

"Thou, my little Leon, when thou'rt grown to man's estate, thy baby fingers which moulded in clay shall carve from marble beautiful shapes. Thou shalt give the world divine beauty. In that day that thou'rt great, remember thy father, and be temperate. For though thou wert but little toddler when he went hence, thou must have memory of his loving kindness!"

"Ione—I who would have given thee much have but little of value to give thee!"

"The opals, mother!"

"Yea, thou shalt have the opals of Atlantis, my little maid, willed to thee by Luelila, ere she joined

husband and son in death. They were not separated. Lumnos—Luelila—their son. What golden threads bind our lives together. Kiss me, little ones, and leave me with Daphne."

The two younger ones went to their favorite bench beneath the oleanders of Creta, and began to plan as children will. Left together, the two were silent. Of all her children, Theonis loved best this daughter who resembled her father in feature, temperament and speech. The girl's fingers caressed the heavy braids, silver since the passing of Leon. The face beneath that snowy hair was still young and untroubled, the eyes still violet blue, but shadowed with haunting sadness.

"Five years alone, my child—yet not alone, for I had thee, and Ione, and small Leon! Five years of struggle to keep the ship of empire sailing toward the goal he designed. And now, my son doth make of it Cretan colony. Ah woe!"

Daphne pressed her mother more closely. She was frightened at the strange look in the dear eyes.

"Today the garden is peopled with strange shapes that drift by me like mist—"

"O mother, dost thou believe my father seeketh thee—he whose sunlight thou wert ever?"

"Sometimes my heart doth misgive me, child. Of late I have heard strange voices, yet cannot catch their speech. I know not what doth lie ahead. But we shall be brave, and endure, thou and I. Yea, I wish I could see what doth lie ahead. The voice, the sight, have failed me for the first time in all the years. I know not. But if I should leave thee, Flower of my Heart, go to Hemora the Atlantean. I have made arrangements with him to give thee counsel and aid. Nor let thy too-impetuous brother mar the smooth path of thy life."

"O mother, mother. Speak not so! I cannot bear it!" said Daphne in an agony of tears.

"Sweetheart, Flower of Love, attend my words. See, I shall cup thy face as ever thy father did cup mine when I had need of comfort. Little Flower of Springtime. some day we must e'en part. thou and I.

But we shall meet again, as I shall meet thy father—today, tomorrow—yea, a thousand years hence! Thou canst not stray from me forever. I love thee too well! . . . Grieve not when thou dost lay me by thy father For, behold, I shall have but taken my soul as ransom for his and gone forth to seek him in the Land of the Shades . . .

“Kingdoms flourish, and pass; jewels gleam, and are lost; flowers scent the air, and are soon withered; we wake a space and pass. Wherefore, my Daphne, only one thing doth endure—Love, which methinks is the greatest Deity of all. Love, which like a slender silver cord bindeth this world to that which hath gone before, and to that which shall come after. We may not take with us riches, or robes, or royalty. One thing alone surviveth that last great test. But one force doth conquer that Conqueror of high and low—Love. Love alone is stronger than Death! Ah!”

She pushed away the girl's clinging arms as with an exclamation of joy that smote Daphne's heart with anguish, she turned toward the oleander of Creta. Theonis moved forward, her gait changing to a run as she half stumbled, half threw herself into the flowering shrub.

“O my beloved! Have I found thee at last—at the very moment I must take my way hence? How can I leave this garden if thou art here? Nay, I will go with thee, as ever I did go with thee even to Creta! . . . Stretch out thy hands to me, beloved! My soul be ransom for thine, O King of my Heart, for Love hath triumphed over Death . . . We shall go forth to the Isles of the Blest together! Leon, my King, my Life, my Lord, together, for always and for aye!”

With a smile of wondrous beauty lingering upon her lips, Theonis indeed left the garden of Athros, forever!

EPILOGUE

Three thousand years and more have passed away. Egypt no longer dominates the world. Creta, Greece, have passed by in the triumphant onward march of nations. Yet in those Peruvian heights ringed by solitude and silence still stands the temple by the blue waters of the lake, and still the stupendous blocks of stone defy man's puny strength. Proudly facing its Deity, the Temple of the Sun remains a living tribute to a long dead race. So far above sea-level, so vast the granite blocks! Man asks himself what agent super-imposed them with definite beauty—Here the theory of sand hills up which blocks were dragged with infinite labor ceases to be possible, let alone probable. Awestruck man hurls his question into the silence. "What hand raised this Temple? And the silence gives no answer to the perplexed heart of the seeker.

Gone are the Incas with their treasures of gold and silver, and jewels, their worship of the Sun which they prostituted by human sacrifice, offering each year a fair maiden to be walled up alive as Bride of the Sun. They, whose little gilded images are to be found as far north as British Columbia, passed on, and if they left records of their origin behind, posterity has destroyed them, or they remain buried with their fabulous hidden treasures.

But the love of Astrellon for the people beneath his care, and for the world at large lives on. Such love cannot be lost, for it partakes of the Divine in its forgiving and uplifting power.

Somewhere Theonis and Leon weave a new pattern of life; somewhere Taledes finds that which he missed in Creta.

And as we go about our daily routine, a face smites us with an anguish of loved familiarity, a hitherto unheard voice strikes responding cadences in our quivering hearts. Some small gesture of hand or turn of head causes wells of tenderness to flood our souls with joy. We know not why, and we turn quickly to greet some friend, loved oh so dearly!—When?—ah, who shall say?

“Yet I know past all doubting, truly—
A knowledge greater than grief can dim—
I know, as he loved, he will love me duly
Yea better—e’en better than I love him.
And as I walk by that vast calm river,
That awful river so dread to see—
I say “Thy breadth and thy depth for ever
Are bridged by his thoughts that cross to me.”

Jean Ingelow.

THE END.

