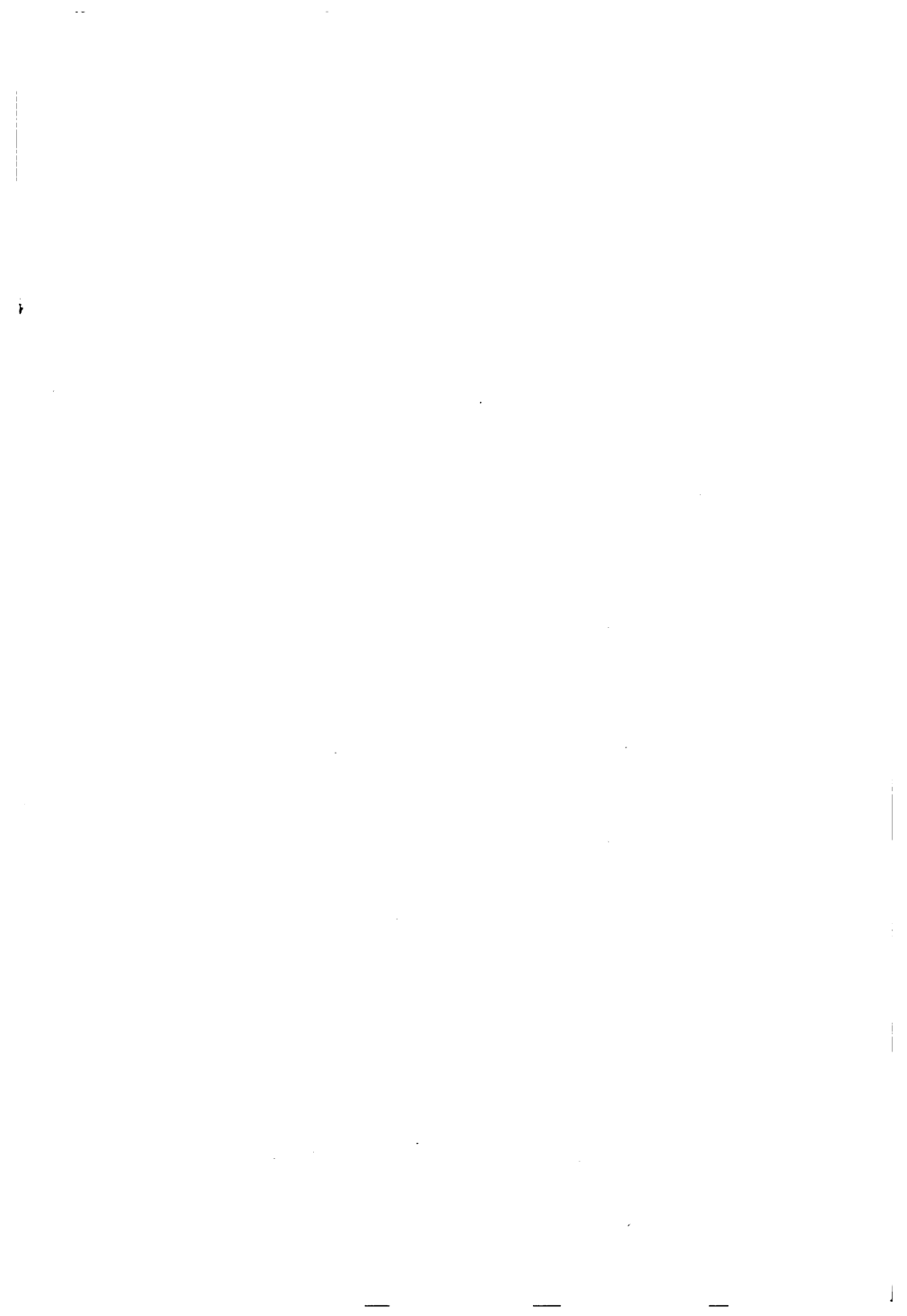
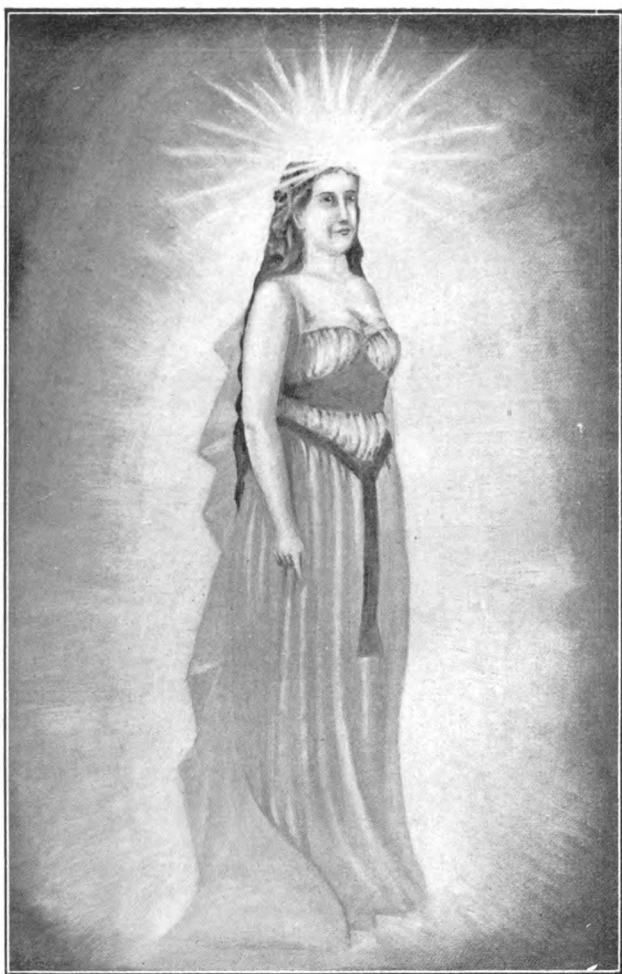


THE

King of Kor.

S.J. MARSHALL.





There she stood, a halo of heavenly light surrounding her.

THE  
KING OF KOR;

OR,

SHE'S PROMISE KEPT.

A Continuation of the Great Story of "She," of  
H. Rider Haggard.

By SIDNEY J. MARSHALL.

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With Illustrations.

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WASHINGTON:  
SIDNEY J. MARSHALL.  
1903.



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## PREFACE.

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It may be without precedent that a novel written by one person should find its sequel coming from the pen of another, and it is with a peculiar sense of appreciation that this is so begun. When first I read "She" I, like thousands of others, was intensely fascinated by it, and thereafter its lines, its characters, were ever present in my mind. I could not dispose of them. Many were attracted by its weirdness, its supernaturalness, its bold stretch of imagination. But to me there was a vast philosophy pervading throughout—a vein of truth, unspoken, which lay sleeping between the lines. It was this hidden, yet everpresent spirit of latent philosophic truth, this strong undercurrent which moved so quietly beneath the tossing surface of sensational wonder that bound me to the story. Its characters impressed themselves so indelibly upon my mind that they have been constantly before me, almost as living companions, and each one seemed in fancy to implore me to pursue them and unfold a sequel of their existence and record their further experiences. Long did I hesitate, but the more I hesitated and the more I resisted the stronger became the impulse, until I at last gave way and began the work, and now that it is completed I feel satisfied, and am relieved of the irrepressible impulse.

Nothing but respect and admiration fills me with regard to the original creator of "She" and "Leo" and "Holly," and I believe I have in no sense underestimated his high scholarship and profound mind. To me, he appears to have begun a work which will be taken up as time advances. There are gems of philosophy which, when the strange, barbaric story which formed its setting has faded

in the memories of its readers, will take root and grow and be better understood.

A large percentage of people who are readers are familiar with the story of "She." Still, it will not be out of place to briefly outline the former story, that the relationship of the characters may be fully comprehended.

#### SYNOPSIS OF THE STORY OF "SHE."

Leo Vincey was an orphan from infancy. His mother died at the time of his birth; his father survived but a few years, the last portion of which time he spent at Cambridge, studying the dead languages. Here he was the fellow student of L. H. Holly, then a young man, and when Mr. Vincey died he besought Holly to undertake the care and training of the child, Leo, which he reluctantly agreed to do. An iron box was also placed in Holly's trust, with the understanding that when Leo became 25 years of age the box was to be opened by him. The time for opening it came, and it disclosed a peculiar story. Leo's ancestors were traced back two thousand years, at which remote period the then ancestor, named Kalikrates, had loved Amenartas, an Egyptian princess, and, marrying, they fled, ultimately reaching a strange country, where the natives made a practice of putting red-hot pots on the heads of strangers whom they saw fit to kill. Ayesha, the queen of these people, known to them as the Hiya, or She-who-must-be-obeyed, was an Arabian by birth, and highly versed in so-called magic. One of the secrets that this queen had learned was of the Pillar of the Fire of Life, through which she could overcome death for a indefinite time. This queen fell in love with Kalikrates and endeavored to lure him away from Amenartas. One day she led the two, Amenartas and Kalikrates, to the place of the Fire of Life. There she entered the flame which was to give her mastery over death, and having herself bathed in its fire, she tried to induce him to do so. But he remained stanch to Amenartas, which so enraged Ayesha that she slew him with a javelin and forced Amenartas to fly. Ayesha then, believing that

Kalikrates would someday return to earth, under the law of reincarnation, and loving him as devotedly as she did, and regretting her rash act in taking his life, resolved to wait for him. Amenartas reached Greece, where she bore a son. To him she looked for revenge upon Ayesha, with the understanding that his son, or his son's son, etcetera, clear down through the succeeding generations, should undertake the enactment of vengeance if any of the earlier ones failed. It was shown also that Leo was, through his father, the direct descendant of Amenartas and Kalikrates, and his father wished that he should follow up the story, locate the queen (who was said to live forever) and take the revenge planned by Amenartas two thousand years before. In all this two thousand years Ayesha had been patiently awaiting the return of her lover.

Leo undertook the task and, after many perils, found the queen, who, with all her age, was so beautiful that men dared not look upon her, hence she went about veiled. A day or two before meeting the queen, however, Leo met with one of her subjects, a young woman, named Ustane, who immediately loved him and by a prevailing savage custom claimed him as her husband. But later, for her presumption, this Ustane was first mysteriously branded with three white finger prints on her brow, and then because she defied her queen she was blasted to death by Ayesha's magic power.

When Ayesha saw Leo she at once recognized him as her long awaited lover and was overjoyed at his return. She, being proof against death, having made herself so by laving in the Fire of Life, urged him to do likewise and led him, together with Holly and their valet, down to the deep cavern where, twenty centuries before, she so hastily slew him. Leo was afraid of the Pillar of Fire, and in order to convince him that it would not injure, Ayesha for a second time entered the fire. But this second entrance into the Fire of Life had the opposite effect to the first, and she immediately begun to wither and shrivel up as if with age, then perish—Death having found her at last.

In her dying words she called upon Leo not to forget her, vowing that she would come again and that she would be beautiful. The scene was so awful that the servant who accompanied the two men died out of sheer fright, and Leo, who was heart broken at the loss of her he had learned to love so intensely, escaped with his foster father to England.

The details of this story of "She," can only be fully appreciated by a reading of the book itself, and in this work we find the characters scarcely changed from what they were there left.



# THE KING OF KOR.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MYSTERIOUS VOICE.

Back once more in the old quarters at Cambridge. After an absence of over a year, trying without success to penetrate the mysterious and so far unexplored heart of Thibet, I, Horace Holly, and my ward, Leo Vincey, had returned whence we had started, to ponder over our disappointment. Inspired by the thrilling adventures and hair-breadth escapes in the land of Kor that ended in such a horrible double tragedy, we had resolved to undertake what so many adventurers before us had failed in—to search the innermost parts of Thibet. But, like all those who had previously attempted it, we were thwarted, for while Leo and myself scarce knew fear, and were daring in the extreme sense of the word, we both realized that though we might make our way into the country it was next to impossible to get out alive. So, though we had spent nearly a year in vain efforts, we were finally compelled to return, with our mission unfulfilled and our desire ungratified.

And here we were, back in the same old room where we had planned all our adventures, and where, after our wonderful escapades among the Amahaggar, we rested to ponder over our strange experiences.

But it was in no pleasant frame of mind that we sat in the dim, fading twilight. Though the thoughts of each of

us were centered upon the same series of experiences, and though each was brooding over the same disappointment, each was harboring a far different sentiment. I, in the mature sobriety of greater years, was trying to secure comfort from a philosophical view of the matter, while Leo, impetuous, headstrong, and of a nature that could scarce endure defeat, was nursing a rage within him.

Each was silent; each puffing away at his pipe; and in the distinctive puffing could readily be interpreted the difference in the nature of our thoughts. I was seated at the little table, my arm resting lightly upon it, while my fingers played an idle tattoo. My thoughts were far, far away, and visions of distant scenes loomed up before me as I gazed absently into the fireplace, where the last embers were slowly fading and dying out, and drawing at my pipe in a slow, measured, deliberate way, in strict keeping with the depth of my pondering. Leo had thrown himself diagonally across the bed, where, having raised himself upon his elbow, he pulled away at his pipe in an energetic series of short, sharp, almost vicious drafts, which well betokened the subdued rage within him. It was the sullen rage of the conquered lion. Even when the contents of his pipe were fully consumed, which, by the way, did not take long under the forced draft, he still continued, mechanically, to pull away, quite oblivious to everything but his thoughts.

The shadows of the twilight deepened, and ere long the last glimmer of the sun's effusive light fell behind the western horizon. Leo had not changed either in position or action. He was still sucking at the empty pipe, his eyes still fixed in a restless but intense gaze upon space. I, however, wearying of my uncompensating thoughts, soon felt my eyelids drop, my chin fell upon my chest, and I was asleep.

Half an hour passed, a half hour in which I was plunged into oblivion. Suddenly, however, I was startled from that restful doze by my chair violently shaking, quivering, rocking and swaying in turns, and yet none of these terms

exactly qualify the nature of the motion. Suddenly roused as I was, my first thought was that an earthquake had set all things to vibrating. I had read of the sensations which accompany shocks of earthquake, and my own in this instance corresponded exactly. I felt dizzy, and yet not so; my head seemed for a few moments to be separated from the body, and had a peculiar empty feeling, though all my thoughts were perfectly clear. It seemed as if myself and the chair I was sitting on were suspended in the air and swaying to and fro in the wind. The earth seemed to vanish beneath me. Then all became still. I looked around the room; all was just as usual. I looked over to where Leo reclined; his attitude had not changed. All was still as the grave. I was convinced it was an earthquake. Getting up, I looked out of the window. All was placid and calm. The trees, the buildings, and every familiar object, bathed as they were in the soft, silvery moonlight, seemed just as usual. Scarcely a breath appeared to stir the foliage, and in no way was there an indication that anything unusual had happened.

"Strange," I muttered; "Could I have been, while sleeping, visited by some horrible nightmare? Or could it really have been an earthquake shock? If it was the latter, how could it have failed to rouse Leo? I am puzzled."

As I thus mused I stood looking intently at Leo, dimly outlined in the diffused light from the moonbeams without. Then I returned to the table and refilled my pipe, and in the faint glow which rose above the bowl at each suction I seemed to try to read the solution of my unusual sensation. Still Leo had not moved. All was silent and hushed—so hushed that I, as I sat there, almost fancied I could hear the echo of my own silent thoughts. The quick breathing of my companion and my own heart-beats seemed the only sounds to break the silence.

But what was that? A low, rushing sound, faint and distant, yet seemingly close to my ear. At the same instant Leo roused with a start and bent his ear as if listening.

The sound gradually but quickly increased in volume until it seemed a perfect roar, like the blow-off of some big steam boiler in the distance—that is, the sound seemed as if distant and yet as if it were right in the room. Reaching its height, it slowly died away.

"Did you hear that, Uncle Horace?" Leo asked.

"Yes; strange, wasn't it?" I replied.

"What was it?"

"Let me ask you what was it?"

"Once before I heard such a sound."

"And I."

"Yes. It was the roar of the Pillar of Life in the crater of Kor!"

As this exclamation was completed a faint hissing sound, as if someone had whispered the word "yes," so faintly that only the letter "s" could be heard in, as I have described, a slight hiss.\*

We both listened intently, plainly hearing the sound.

"This is something strange," Leo remarked, straining his ear to catch what other sounds might come. And not in vain, either, for out of the very air seemed to come a faint but distinct sound of "sh."

"Uncle Horace," exclaimed Leo, "there is someone in this room. That was plainly someone whispering."

He jumped up, rather excitedly for him, and at once commenced a search for the concealed individual who had done the whispering. I watched him in silence—a silence that was born of amazement. I knew there could be no one on the room, for there was but one place for him to remain unseen, and that was under the bed. Yet whence the peculiar sounds? I could not say. To me, as to Leo, they certainly seemed wonderfully like faintly whispered words.

Leo did not light a light except to strike a match, which he held in his hand, and getting down on one knee, peered

\* If the reader will whisper the word "yes" so faintly that the vowel cannot be heard, he will recognize just such a hiss, and will readily realize that the letter "s" can be heard when all other letter sounds are inaudible.

under the bed. Nothing was there. He got up to search elsewhere. His match went out; but another one sufficed to satisfy him that he and I were the only persons in the room. Giving up the search, he sat down at the table facing me.

"Uncle Horace, did you not plainly hear those words?" he asked.

"I certainly did hear something which, as you say, seemed awfully like someone whispering," I replied, the word "awfully" being scarcely out of place, for I was decidedly awed.

"What do you think of it?"

"Leo, I have long ago given up thinking," was my answer. So many strange experiences have bid me stop thinking and simply accept whatever is thrust upon me."

Then came another lapse of silence. Leo's brain was working like a trip hammer, his thoughts coming and going so fast that they actually became tangled. He was confused, mystified.

Suddenly again came that sound of "sh." It was unmistakable. Quickly, but almost unconsciously he spoke.

"Who is it that is whispering; is it man or devil?"

Again came the "sh," but this time it was louder, and with it could be distinctly heard the other sounds which made up the word. It was the name "Ayesha."

"Ayesha!" exclaimed Leo, in what was almost a shriek. "How can that be when she is dead?"

Faintly came the whispered answer—faint, but plain enough to make out distinctly:

"I am not dead. I still live. I am Ayesha."

"You still live!" repeated Leo, in excited astonishment.

In answer, all that could be heard was that slight hiss which had first filled us with astonishment.

"Where do you live?"

No answer.

"Where are you now; in this room?" he asked, after waiting a few seconds for an answer to his first question.



Again came the faint hiss.

"Do you mean yes? Are you saying yes?"

A repeated hiss was the response.

"That you are in the room?"

Another hiss.

"And yet invisible to me?"

The hiss again.

"Are you still living among the caves of Kor?"

No answer; and though Leo asked question after question, each time listening a few seconds for a reply, hollow silence was his only reward. The apparent articulation was not repeated, and after a while he ceased his questioning.

For a time neither of us spoke. We were bewildered. Finally Leo said:

"Uncle Horace, you and I are two insane men. What do you think of it?"

But I made no reply. Leo spoke again.

"Was that really a voice, or was it an hallucination—a freak of the imagination?"

"I am trying to think, Leo," I replied. "It seems to me an impossibility; and yet how could we both hear the same thing if it were imagination? The natures of individuals are so different that it is scarcely possible for two, even as closely associated as you and I, to imagine exactly the same thing at the same time."

"That is the way I figure it out," returned Leo. "You heard it plainly, did you not?"

"Yes."

"And so did I. Then you agree with me it must have been a voice?" said Leo.

"I cannot say that, exactly, for I cannot conceive of that possibility," I answered.

"And yet you conceive no other solution."

"No; I do not."

"Uncle Horace, that was a voice," he declared, his lips setting in that peculiar manner which they did when he was determined or settled upon something. "I am convinced of it."

"Ayesha's?" I asked, with the faint trace of a sneer.

"I cannot say. Indeed, how can it be when she is dead? And yet, do you not remember how incredulously old Billali received our announcement of her death? He declared it impossible for her to have perished," Leo replied.

"I remember; but he was a superstitious old barbarian," I returned.

"True enough; and we are scoffers. You know she had wonderful powers, and you saw her with your own eyes do things which but a moment before you would have declared an absolute impossibility. She herself persisted that she had overcome death."

"Only for a period, as she said. She claimed she could prolong life for a little while, and at the same time asked, 'What is a few thousand years as compared with the life of a soul?' We certainly saw the last of her mortal life and witnessed her death," I replied.

"Her claim again was, 'There is no such thing as death; only a change.' What if she were right and that, changed though she may be, she is still able to sway her wonderful powers. What if, as she could project her vision to distant places by glancing into the magic fountain, she could have some mysterious way of projecting her voice to us here."

"The teachings of our childhood forbid us to accept such a possibility."

"The teachings of childhood forbid us to accept such a possibility as a woman living in the flesh for two thousand years, or that she could do the marvelous things which we have seen Ayesha do. Yet, being brought face to face with the knowledge of these things sets at naught all the teachings of childhood or the teachings of manhood."

What could I say to this logic; what to explain the mystery of the Hiya's life? As Leo said, "What if?" We as men, as a race of men, are prone to measure all things by our own height. We scarce can realize that anything could be taller than ourselves. What we can readily understand and realize, what we have been accus-

tomed to through life, what is common to all men, these we call natural. But whatever is opposed to our comprehension, whatever is contrary to what we are accustomed to, whatever tends to overthrow our common habits of thought and reasoning, we, hating to admit error within ourselves and seeking any excuse to denounce whatever shall prove us wrong, call unnatural.

When truth is thrust upon us and things which we have called unnatural are proven to be facts and we cannot any longer deny or scout them, we hedge just a little, and what we at first scoffed at as unnatural and impossible, we shrewdly and evasively call "super" natural. And so it was with me. Measuring all things by my own knowledge, I first pronounced my old chum, Leo's father, demented because he told of something I could not understand. As I, when I accompanied—or rather followed—Leo in the investigation of those strange statements, saw the Negro's Head I called it "coincidence." But, finding that the story he told, first as to his claim to such well-traced lineage, then to his extravagant tale of the savage queen, were verified by the ancient potsherd and its translations and by the signatures and notations found upon it, I, being reluctantly convinced of the antiquity and genuineness of the potsherd, sought to explain away my own hasty scoffing at his recital by laying the dementia upon that ancient Amenartas. But as I ultimately came into the presence of this queen of the people "who place pots on the heads of strangers," what was I to say; what do? Excuses and explanations and scoffing were of no avail, and I could but bow my head in humble acknowledgement of my own insignificance and, casting opinions to the winds, live in the unquestioning experience of what I saw, and felt, and heard.

And so, back as I was among men of opinions—men whose "vaulting opinions o'erleap themselves"—I, absorbing the contagion of egotism, hastened to declare the phenomenon of this mysterious voice impossible because imponderable.

## CHAPTER II.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD.

"Mi'ter Vintey, Mi'ter Vintey, dive me your pencil; dive me your pencil; I want to w'ite."

It was a child who thus spoke, as may be imagined. The words were addressed to Leo, as the little one pulled at his arm to attract or enforce his attention to her demand. He looked down at her in response to her tugging rather than to her spoken request, for being deeply interested in the conversation, he had not heard what she said.

"What is it Ethel wants?" he asked, as he gathered her up in his arms.

"Dive me your pencil," she repeated; "I want to w'ite."

"My pencil? Is that all you want? It's yours for the asking. Here it is," Leo said, holding the pencil within reach of her chubby hand. "Now let's see what you write."

Grasping the pencil she toddled off, followed by Leo's eyes, for, somehow or other, Leo had become much attached to the little one. She was soon on her stomach in the middle of the adjoining room, where was placed a good-sized piece of yellow express paper.

The child, Ethel, was the grandchild of a very old friend of mine; in fact, a devoted friend of my deceased and but poorly remembered mother. Many, many years before, when I was an infant in arms and this man but a mere lad, he being a homeless orphan, he had the misfortune to meet with an accident, fracturing his leg just above the ankle. Out in the world as he was and with no place to go, my mother took him in and tenderly cared for him until he recovered the use of himself, and he never forgot her kindness to him. And when but a few years after my mother passed away, he transferred his regard from her to me, or, perhaps better said, bestowed upon me as her child the regard he could no longer give to her personally.

And as I grew he was to me like an elder brother until one day he was sent to Canada by his employer to represent him in the transaction of some speculative business, and we lost track of each other for many years. Indeed, it was many years ere he returned to his native country.

In the interim he had met and married a Canadian girl of French extraction, who, however, did not very long survive, but passed away before two years of married life had expired, leaving one child, a daughter. This daughter was in her turn widowed, and now the father and daughter with Ethel, the only child of her marriage and hence grandchild of my old friend, were keeping each other company.

Little Ethel had won her way into the hearts of both Leo and myself, though with the usual sentiment of all the members of her sex, the mother of the child seemingly abhorred me. Of course, as it has been my lot always to be thus abhorred by the gentle sex, I was not in the least surprised. Years of such experience had innured me to it and I accepted it as a matter of fact, a foregone conclusion, as it were. Indeed, were I to receive other treatment than aversion, I should be thoroughly embarrassed and feel entirely out of my element. But Ethel, child like, had not been educated up to the point where human ugliness is distinguishable from human beauty, and she failed to see in me the mossy trunk of the gnarled and crooked tree, unless, perchance, she found delight in nestling among the branches, for she would sometimes sit for hours on my knee or in my arms. Sometimes she would stand on my knee and, throwing her arms around my neck and her head over my shoulder, would remain that way, immovable for long periods at a time. She liked Leo, too; but her preference was decidedly for me. And as I felt the affection of this young child held out to me, all the pent up love of years, liberated as from a prison cell, flew to this baby heart. I adored her, and who can blame me? It is natural for a man to love. Love begets love, and I—well, I loved that child because she loved me."

In the interest of conversation on this particular day,



little Ethel was soon forgotten and left to amuse herself by "w'iting." Suddenly a peculiar sigh came from her, and looking toward her I saw what really frightened me. Lying though she had been, she seemed actually to fall. Two or three convulsive shudders seemed to shake her, then every muscle became limp as a rag. She turned partly over and then lay perfectly still, her face white as death, her eyes closed.

I sprang toward her, but before I reached her the mother, from an adjacent room, rushed toward the child with a scream, and raising the prostrate form she looked into its white face and shrieked, "My baby! oh, my baby!" Then, apparently losing all control of herself, she rushed frantically from one part of the room to another, continuing her cry of "My baby! Mamma's darling baby."

I knew that no matter what had assailed the little one such conduct could not benefit it, so I seized the mother and bade her be quiet. As I did this, Leo brought a chair and I forced her down upon it. But she could not be reasoned with, and she fought and struggled, still holding the child close to her.

"Take the child away from her; she'll kill it," said her father, and as he and Leo pinioned her arms I loosened her hold and carried Ethel to the couch and felt her pulse. It was very slow, but full and strong. I looked into her face; it was pale, but the lips had lost none of their color. Her breathing came very slow and not very deep; the arms, legs, and in fact the whole body was as limp as a wet rag. I took her hands and began to rub them. Another moment there was a twitch, then another; then a tremor seemed to pass from her head to her feet, her breathing increased, her pulse became more rapid. Then her eyelids began to quiver, as if she were just awakening from a sleep, and in a moment she was looking up at me in a listless, dazed way, as if she had not strength to move her head.

Meanwhile, the mother was still giving voice to those heart-piercing cries, and it was all Leo could do to hold her in the chair. Suddenly the child looked over to where

her mother sat and, before I could stop her, sprang upon the floor and ran to her, crying "Mamma, mamma!"

We were all so dumbfounded at what had transpired within that few moments that we could neither speak nor act. Leo relaxed his hold and stood back aghast. When I recovered my surprise, Ethel was nestling in the lap of her mother, who, still hysterical, was raining kisses upon her head and face.

What had ailed the child? She could not have been hurt, for there was nothing to hurt her. I at last concluded that she must have lain in some peculiar position which forced the blood to her head or in some way stopped circulation, causing her to swoon. This seemed to me plausible and, accepting the theory, I felt relieved, believing no evil would result and that she would be all right as soon as she had rested a little bit. So I simply sat and waited.

Leo got up and crossed to where his pencil was lying and, picking it up, was just about to retrace his steps when he halted and looked down at the yellow express paper which was still lying on the floor where Ethel had placed it. He reached down for it with an eager movement, and I saw a look of amazement as he scrutinized it. Then he came straight to me, saying:

"Uncle Horace, what does this mean?"

I took the paper from his hand, expecting to see something strange, for I could read Leo like a book and I knew by his face he had discovered something unusual. But I was not prepared for what I saw, for there, almost as plainly as I could have done it, was a communication (I call it such because it afterward proved to be) in Arabic! How did it get there? Did it happen to be on the paper when Ethel got hold of it? I finally concluded that we could probably settle its origin from the reading itself, so I told Leo to read it and see what it was. Taking it from me he sat for a while studying it, then, with that same look of amazement, and which look was accentuated by the tone in which he spoke, he handed the paper back.

"Uncle Horace," he said, "I am crazy; my eyes have made a fool of me, and I am afflicted with a thousand plagues! I am anything but sane. Read it."

I again took the paper and after reading a few words was dumbfounded. Translated, it read:

"I, even I, Ayesha, being not dead but still living, and loving my Kalikrates with a love that dieth not and hath no limit, being no longer fettered by the flesh of your world nor confined in caves as once I was, do follow thee hither, O my Kalikrates, that I may be near to thee. Thou seest me not, yet I stand before thee; thou hearest me not, yet I talk to thee; thou feelest not my touch, yet do I love to twine my fingers through thy locks of gold. Thou feelest not my embrace, my Kalikrates, yet do I embrace thee, for I am with thee always. Once thou didst hear my voice and doubted. Now, through the tiny fingers of this fair child I write to thee; wilt thou doubt me still? O my Kalikrates, doubt me not, for I am ever near. When thou sleepest, then do I linger by thy couch and watch over thee until once again the glorious light of the morning sun shall kiss thy beauteous face. Would that I might write more, but the child is growing weak, so fare thee well."

How can I describe my astonishment at what was actually before my eyes? Is it any wonder that Leo thought himself possessed? How did the writing get there? Could it be possible that Ayesha, as a disembodied soul, could really in some marvelous manner have used the childish fingers to write characters which the child herself had never seen? Even the characters of her own native tongue were to her, a child of but three years, meaningless scribbling. How much more meaningless, then, were the characters of the Arabic? But there they were, perfectly plain and distinct, so distinct that neither Leo nor myself had the slightest difficulty in reading them, nor found any difference.

The grandfather and the mother of the child were so absorbed in their attention to her that they had not noticed Leo or myself, so I cautioned Leo not to mention the

manuscript and quickly tore it from the rest of the paper, folded it up, and put it in my pocket for future study.

The whole thing was so strange, so unlooked, for so seemingly inconsistent that I became eager to get away where I could study over it, but owing to the excitement resulting from the peculiar conduct of the child we could not very well leave immediately. So, subduing my inclination, I remained until things had taken their normal course again. Little Ethel seemed none the worse off, and was soon playing around as lively as ever.

At last, reaching our own quarters, we unfolded the paper and, spreading it flat upon the table, went over it together very critically, as critically, in fact, as we would were we seeking flaws in the writing of some scholar. Indeed, we should be far more apt to find flaws in the writings of the scholars than we could in this. But read it as often as we would we could make nothing more of it. The writing spoke for itself; that was beyond dispute. But how the child could have written it was a problem too difficult for us to solve. For hours we tried to account for it as an accident—that the child in her senseless scribbling had accidentally formed characters so near like the Arabic that we could by sheer analogy imagine them to be such. Yet how could they ALL be so? If part of them had a resemblance to the Arabic and part to other characters or to nothing at all, it might have been counted a mere chance. But in this case all the characters were plainly legible, and their connection formed a perfect paragraph, being sensible throughout. And, more remarkable still, how could it be that the names Kalikrates and Ayesha were written, and reference made to the “Caves of Kor,” if She herself had not in truth written it. And yet how could She write them if she were dead? And if not dead, how could she be there and invisible? Quickly through my mind flashed the quotation from Hamlet that appeared on the potsherd: “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy.” Ah, how well were circumstances and

events proving the potency of those words! These and a thousand other thoughts crowded themselves into my brain, none of which shed the least light upon the mystery. At last Leo spoke.

"'Thou seest me not, yet I stand before thee.' Could it be possible that she should be here—here in this room, sensible to all that I do, all that I say, all that I hear, while I who am living am insensible to her appearance, to her voice, to her touch? Is it possible, Uncle Horace," and he grasped my arm so tightly in the intensity of his thought as to make me flinch, "could it be possible that the souls of the dead can be around us and sensible to things which we are not—that they realize our presences and our surroundings while we know not of their proximity?"

"Put such questions to babes, Leo, not to wise men, for it wastes a wise man's time and babes can answer just as well," I replied.

"In fancy I can see her lithe, graceful form, enshrouded in the long gauzy veil, and fain would I tear it from her that I might look once more upon her face——"

"Leo, Leo!" I cried, becoming alarmed, for he seemed to be raving. "Calm yourself. I fear this is turning your head. Do not attempt to conjure her up to your vision, lest a distorted imagination produce an hallucination."

"No fear of that, my dear old fellow," he returned, laughing lightly. "It was only in fancy—sheer retrospection, for I saw her as living, not as dead, and among the old scenes in Kor, not here in this room. It was only a product of the memory. Don't be alarmed about me."

"Lesser things than this have turned the head of many a bright man," I said.

"Yes," he replied, "but their heads were on loose and turned easily. Mine always was on pretty tight, and besides, it is now pretty well rusted in its place. But to-night I suppose I shall sleep with Ayesha again by my couch and——"

"What a thought!" I exclaimed. "Does not the idea



make you feel a little creepish and cause the cold chills to play up and down your back?"

"Why should it? If it is true she watches by my side, she has, as she says, already done so, and I have not felt creepish; why should I feel so now? If she does not watch over me, why, there is still no reason to feel that way. No, Uncle Horace, I shall sleep to-night just as I have always slept, and you know nothing ever yet prevented my sleeping."

Leo was right; what if she did, and what if she did not? It was nothing new. Which ever way it was it had occurred the same way before, and Leo was not injured by it; why should it make any difference in his feelings now?

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### CHAPTER III.

#### MICHAEL.

"What do you suppose ails Michael lately?" Leo asked me one day, as that useful individual closed the door behind him—that is, between himself and us.

Michael, it must be explained, was the successor of our poor old servant, Job. Not that he, or anyone else, could ever exactly fill Job's place. That was out of the question, for Job had been with us so long that it seemed as if he were almost essential to our living and being. And even to this day it seemed as if he ought to be in and out among us now and anon. So natural did it seem that he should appear when Michael opened the door that the sight of Michael's face in place of his produced a shock.

The horror of Job's death still made me shudder; and when I looked back upon it, as I did at times, it seemed the most awful death of any thing I had ever seen. I have seen men shot; I have seen them cut up; I have seen them

hanged; I saw Ustane blasted to death by the mysterious power of Ayesha; I have seen death gather its victims in many different ways, but of all the modes of death which I have witnessed, I think the most terrible were those which occurred in the great cave in the heart of the crater where we reluctantly left the body of Job, together with that shrivled-up mass of what but a few moments before was the beautiful form of the matchless She-who-must-be-obeyed.

But Michael had come to fill Job's place more by accident than by intention. When we started on our journey to Thibet we started alone, and it was while on our way back from there that we ran across Michael. He had gone to India as the body servant of one of a party of hunters bent on shooting big game, and one day he became separated from them in the jungle. While wandering around he was fortunate enough to fall in with another hunting party, else he must certainly have perished, either from the attack of wild beasts or by starvation. He stayed with this party three days, then returned toward civilization. Arriving at Calcutta, having no means, he was about to seek the assistance of the English authorities there and, being a stranger, was compelled to make inquiries as to the whereabouts of the proper persons. It so happened that Leo and I, being in Calcutta ourselves at the time, were the ones whom this lost Irishman accosted for inquiry. He told us the whole story of his coming, his getting lost, and his experiences generally up to the time of his arrival in Calcutta, but failed to tell us what he wanted, so Leo asked him what he wished us to do for him.

"Sure, I want to go home to me own counthry," he said.

Suddenly an idea struck Leo. It was evident from his story that this man was used to acting in the capacity of body servant or valet, and as we would need someone of the kind when we reached England again, it seemed that here was a chance to secure one and at the same time help him back to his native land. All this flashed through Leo's mind in an instant and he quickly asked:

"Have you a family back in England?"

"No, sor; no family; just mesilf. I'll have to find me another master, that's all. Sure it's no use tryin' to find anything of me old one amongst these haythens," he replied.

"What is your vocation?"

"Phat's that, sor?"

"Why—a—what do you work at?"

"Oh, anything most. I've been butler and footman and valet and all that, and I'm counted a good one, too. Sure I'll have no trouble about getting a place if I can wance set foot in London. With the riferences and recommends I can get I have niver a fear."

"That's good. Then you will seek some new master?"

"Yes, sor."

"How would you like to act as valet and general servant for us? We are two Englishmen, as you can readily see, and are on our way back to England. We lost our last servant in a very peculiar way, and are now without one."

"Was he killed, sor?"

"Not exactly; he was actually scared to death at something he saw."

"He must have seen something terrible, sor."

"Well, yes; it was. But I don't care to talk of it," Leo said, rather sorry that he had alluded to it, for he saw that the Irishman's curiosity had been aroused. After a little more conversation the man consented to go with us and it was to him that Leo referred when he asked the question which opened this chapter.

"Why, I don't know; what ails him how?" I returned.

"Why he acts so funny. Haven't you noticed him? He seems to have spells every once in a while in which he appears to twitch and jerk in such a peculiar manner. I never saw anything of it until lately," said Leo.

"Since you mention it, I have seen him do that. But I did not think anything of it," I replied. Now you call my attention to it, it is a strange action, isn't it."

"Yes; like St. Vitus' dance."

"Possibly that is it."

"I noticed it then as he picked up that brush from the

table," said Leo. "Sometimes when I notice him again I am going to ask him about it."

So, one day when a particularly marked jerk was manifest, Leo took advantage of it to ask:

"Michael, what makes you jerk like that?"

"Sure, I don't know, sor. I can't help it. It just seems to come whether I want it or not," was the answer.

"Were you always so affected?"

"No, sir; niver till lately. I niver had it do that to me till a month or so ago."

"How does it feel?"

"Noways, sor. It just jerks me, that's all."

"And you never felt it until lately?"

"No, sor."

"You haven't got St. Vitus' dance, have you?"

"St. Viter's dance? What kind of a dance in heaven's name is that?"

"It's a disease, Michael."

"A disease? Sure I niver had no disease. I niver had a day's sickness in me life that I remember."

"Did anybody else in your family ever have anything like it?"

"No, sor."

"Well, how does it feel?"

"It don't feel at all, sor. It just comes sudden like. I don't feel nothing till it jerks me, then I don't feel nothing afterward."

So no satisfaction was gained. I made up my mind, however, that it was the result of some affection of the nervous system. As time went on, these spells seemed to increase in frequency of the jerks; sometimes, indeed, it amounted to a regular shaking, just as a dog shakes himself when he gets up after he has lain down for a while. At such times a peculiar scowl would set upon his face, his eyebrows contract and his features contort, and in every way he acted as if flinching from some excruciating pain. Still he persisted that he felt no pain. Later on he developed a new peculiarity, in which he would nod his head

and give vent to the queerest articulation. There are some mutes who, though unable to form words, can utter certain sounds, which, though meaningless and verbally unintelligible, serve them well in attracting attention and also in emphasizing their pantomimic assertions. These sounds from a mute are always uttered with extreme difficulty and usually the effort is accompanied by a sort of facial contortion (or distortion), and the sounds uttered by Michael at these times bore a very strong resemblance, both to the ear and the eye, to those of the mutes. I finally made up my mind that he must have attention of some kind. I did not like him around me as he was. I could not think of dismissing him on account of it, for, if it was an affliction, others would be no more considerate than I, consequently he would be an outcast. He certainly harmed no one, and his service to us was all that we could wish. Leo, too, was unwilling to let him go under the circumstances, so he stayed.

One afternoon Leo and I went over to my old friend's, as we often did, and more often since we had received that peculiar writing from little Ethel. Half believing that in some way it was Ayesha writing through the child's fingers, and half doubting that it could be possible, we had often and often tried to have the phenomenon repeated. We used all kinds of inducements to get her to write, but she never again produced anything that was legible and, stranger yet, never produced a single character that even resembled the Arabic. I have said we half believed and half doubted. We half believed because of the peculiar and inexplicable chain of circumstances which forbade us to deny. First, the swooning of the child, which corresponded exactly with the statement as written, "The child is growing weak, so fare thee well." How could the child have written that accidentally and then incidentally have manifested it as a fact? If the superior intelligence of Ayesha was in reality operating through the child it would not be unlikely for her to know of the weakening of the child previous to its manifestation, and so written. Yet

why should she grow weak? It is easy to ask "why should" a thing be, but it is another thing to answer. We could readily ask "why should" that writing be on the paper, but we could not say why it should; still it was THERE!

We half doubted because, being so far removed from the commonplace, it did not seem natural. It was revolutionary; it overthrew all our former teachings and beliefs. It led us into an abyss of new thought, new science, new ethics, and we dreaded to embrace the new lest it should destroy the old. But in spite of that dread there was a fascination that drew us onward, and we hoped, though in vain, for further evidence from the child, Ethel. Our efforts bore no fruit, and this particular afternoon was just as fruitless as all the preceeding.

Many, many times we had agreed to throw the whole thing over to the winds and treat it as senseless imagination, but before we had fairly got our agreement voiced one or the other would ask, "But how came the writing there?" and thus we could not lay it aside.

Upon our return that afternoon we found Michael in a new condition. He was sitting upright in a chair, his head thrown slightly back, his eyes closed. He did not move as we entered. It did not look like Michael. It was him, to be sure, but there was such a different expression on his face. All this I noticed while I still held the door knob in my hand.

"Michael's asleep," I said to Leo.

We concluded to let him sleep, but after a while, as he did not so much as stir, we became uneasy, and Leo called to him. He did not move. Leo went to him and grasped his arm; it was rigid. He could not raise Michael's hand, even by using some force. Then he tried to shake him, but he would not wake. I felt his pulse; it was beating very slowly, but perceptibly and regular.

"Leo," I said, "I don't like the way Michael has been acting at all. I think there is something wrong. You stay here with him and I'll go and get Professor Lennox."

Professor Lennox was one of my colleagues, and one

with whom I was particularly intimate, and I soon returned with him. He felt Michael's pulse, then pinched his arm up and down and placed his hand on the man's forehead, after which he simply sat down and looked at him.

"Well?" I said, inquiringly, as he did not seem inclined to say anything.

"Oh, there's nothing serious the matter with him," the professor said, in his slow, deliberate way; "it's simply a case of coma. He'll be all right after he has worn it off."

"There is nothing serious, then?" I asked. "What is the cause of it?"

"I cannot say what the cause of it is," he replied. "I have had a number of cases come under my observation, and they never seem any the worse off for it. Has he had these right along?"

"This is the first one, so far as I know," I answered.

"You say you have treated similar cases?"

"No; I did not say that. I said cases had come under my observation. I tried treatment with the first two cases and found it to produce harm rather than good. After that I left such patients alone, so far as treatment was concerned, and found it the better way, for it does not seem to effect the general health in the least, and it occasions no pain."

"Then you cannot explain it?"

"No; not any more than to say I believe it to be allied to somnambulism. I cannot explain somnambulism, nor can I explain this," declared the professor.

"But is not somnambulism or sleepwalking the result of some nervous affection?"

"You make a mistake that is common to most people, Holly, of confounding sleep or dream walking with somnambulism. I recognize a vast distinction. Sleepwalkers are victims of what I may call a distorted consciousness. The brain in its working seems to be confused and tangled. They are not conscious of their surroundings. They seem to be, as it were, dreaming of certain things and mistake other objects for them. For instance, a child, in the habit

of sleepwalking, arose from his bed and walked across the room and pulled forth one of the drawers of his mother's sewing machine. The mother, knowing his habit, merely watched him to see what he would do. When he pulled out the drawer, she asked, 'Willie, what are you doing?' whereupon he replied with all semblance of impatience, 'Well, don't I want a drink?' The mother laughed, then went to him and gently woke him, upon which he fell sleepily in her arms. She placed him back in bed where, after a few minutes, he became fully awake and asked his mother to bring him a drink. Thus, you see, the body needed water—a drink—and the ever vigilant nerves, recognizing the need, communicated it to the brain and the brain in turn to the mind. The mind, being inactive or absent (a condition which I cannot fully comprehend as yet, and therefore cannot correctly name, though I have fully demonstrated that there can be physical activity in the brain without mental correspondence), is suddenly called into activity, or presence, to respond to the physical brain and is instantly impressed with the demand for water. But as the brain acts on the mind only at the dictation of some nerve or nerves, thus far only the need for water was made manifest to the mind. The optic nerve had not as yet impressed the brain with the whereabouts of water; the optic nerve was, in fact, dormant.

"Now, it must be understood that the brain is really an organ dominated by the mind, and that the mind is not the brain, but operates through the brain. The nerves are simply the agents of the brain. There are the sensory nerves, which are really the sentinels, for it is their duty to be ever on guard, and whenever anything happens in their vicinity they communicate the fact to the brain with a rapidity compared to which lightning is exceedingly slow. Then the brain—ever subordinate to the mind—sends orders to another set of nerves, the motor nerves, to move the muscles so as to avoid, resist, or overcome whatever trouble exists. Likewise, the brain, at the dictation of the mind, through these nerves causes any action which the mind



desires. Thus, in the case of the boy, when the mind was told by the brain that water was needed, the mind, being at the time only partially in contact with, or at a distance from, the brain—and to make my meaning more clear let me assume that the mind was more interested in something else than it was in the body at the time—said to the brain, ‘Go and get it.’ This idea may be better illustrated in this wise: Suppose you were across the street deeply interested in conversation. Your servant calls out to you that something is needed. Your interest in the friend is such that you do not wish to be interrupted, so, to get rid of the servant’s calling you tell him in an offhand way to ‘go and get it.’ You do not stop to think whether he can go ahead without your personal direction or not. So the mind to the brain. The mind did not command the brain to ‘find out where water is, then go and get it,’ but simply ‘go and get it,’ and the brain, following strictly the narrow letter of the mind’s command, at once communicated activity to the motor nerves, hence the boy walked, though his walk was aimless. Later on, the mind, being fully en rapport with the brain, dictated the use of the vocal organs, and as a result he asked for a drink of water.”

The professor stopped. I was interested. Of course, the correspondence between the brain and the nervous system I well understood, but in the way he described it I saw it in a new light. He seemed, although he did not say so directly, to separate the mind from the brain, making the mind absolute while the brain, the physical organ, is servile. Also, he inferred that the mind might really be absent, a strange thought to me, and upon this point I was anxious for him to enlarge, so I asked:

“Do you mean to say, Lennox, that the mind is something that is separate from the brain—that it can be away from the brain?”

“Holly,” he replied, “I believe the mind is something—a something which to me is indescribable—that is entirely independent of the brain, though the brain is fully dependent on the mind. I believe—but, mind you, I cannot

demonstrate this; it is simply a conclusion—that the mind can be absent, partially absent, or fully present. When the mind is absent the brain is passive and the faculties dormant; the person sleeps soundly. When partially present the person is restless and, perchance, dreams. When fully present you would say the person is wide awake. This, Holly, is only a conclusion, as I say; I do not pronounce it a fact. But it is a conclusion which I have arrived at after many years' study with thousands and thousands of people. In it I seem to find an explanation for all the phenomena of dreams and kindred matters. Without considering the mind as separate from the body I can get no satisfaction; I run plump into a stone wall. But by treating the mind as separate from the physical, that stone wall is at once demolished and I can see my way very clearly."

"You made a distinction, Lennox, between sleepwalking and somnambulism. You have defined sleepwalking to some extent; what of somnambulism?"

"I have already said that sleepwalking was the result of a distorted consciousness. Somnambulism is not. That is the main distinction. There is nothing distorted in somnambulism. The somnambulist is methodical. She makes no mistakes. (I say she, because I have known more female somnambulists than male.) She seems to comprehend all surroundings, but, strange to say, is not apparently conscious of other people's presence. A sleepwalker is in danger of injuring herself; a somnambulist never. The truth is, Holly, though I hate to confess it, I get nearer to an understanding of somnambulism through metaphysical comparisons. You have often heard that people have done things in a somnambulist state which they could not have done in their normal state. You hear of them walking on the edges of roofs, climbing out of windows and doing all manner of things which otherwise would have been impossible.

"There is an instance of a man, who, being in the habit of getting up in the night, dressing and going out of the

house and returning in an hour or so, was suspected by his wife of poaching. She resolved to follow him, which she did. He went straight to a deep and dangerous pool of water and, stripping, jumped in and had a good swim. The pool, as I have said, was a dangerous one, and no one would venture into it under any circumstances. But what is stranger yet, in his normal state this man could not swim a stroke. His wife stood transfixed—terror-stricken. Indeed, it was lucky she was so frightened, for had it not been so she would undoubtedly have awakened him and he would have drowned.

“Furthermore, Holly, people in somnambulistic state appear to be entirely different to what the same people are in the normal state. The intellect or sagacity seems to be rarified or supersensitized, or, perhaps better, hypersensitized. In most cases I have noticed that they display an entirely different individuality than that possessed in the normal state, as though they were two separate persons, identically different. But see! Your servant is coming to—awakening.”

And, sure enough, Michael raised one hand very slowly, then dropped it just as slowly; in a moment his chest began to heave and he seemed to inhale spasmodically to the utmost capacity of his lungs. Then came the long consequent exhalation, his eyes opened and he looked around as if wondering where he was.

“Sure I didn’t intend to be sleeping here, sor,” he said to Leo, who was nearest to him. When did you and Mister Holly get back?”

“About an hour ago,” replied Leo.

“Howly smoke! And I been asleep that long?”

“Do you feel as if you had been asleep?” asked Lennox.

“I must have been asleep; I just woke up, didn’t I?”

“It seems so,” Lennox returned. “Do you feel tired?”

“No, sir. You wouldn’t expect sleep to make a man tired, would you?” Michael answered.

“You feel perfectly natural, then?”

“Yes, sor; and why not?”

Then, turning to me, the professor said:

"You need have no fear, Holly, of this man's condition. There is nothing ailing him that science has so far been able to fathom, and I can promise that nothing serious will result. Just let him alone. Don't move him when he is in that condition, but let him wake naturally. Good night."

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## CHAPTER IV.

### AYESHA IDENTIFIED.

A month had passed, a month during which Michael's peculiar spells increased in frequency and in profundity. Indeed, they had become regular now. We could look for one every evening just at dusk. But in one respect they had changed; his body was no longer rigid, and he frequently moved. Sometimes he would work the lips and muscles of the throat as if swallowing the accumulated saliva, as one does at times. Then again, he would move the lips and tongue as if tasting something or just having tasted it.

By this time we had come to look upon it as a matter of course and no longer considered it strange, but simply let him alone until he came to himself naturally and, as he never seemed any the worse off, we no longer bothered about it. But it seemed as if my life and Leo's were to be filled up with marvels and mysteries, and we were not destined to live without meeting new wonders, for one evening, as Michael as usual was in one of his spells, he began to rub his hands and twine his fingers in and out among each other. He straightened up slightly, his eyes, though closed, were directed slightly upward. These movements being new to him at these times, they attracted our attention from the Latin manuscript which I had just

received that day to translate for a publishing concern in London. He drew a deep breath and then began to speak. But, wonder of wonders! He spoke, not in English, but in Greek! Leo and I sat dumbfounded. The idea of Michael, a menial, one whom we had always considered practically illiterate, speaking to us in Greek! And so fluently! Better, in fact, than I could do. Indeed, it was different. The accent fell differently, and much more smoothly. And, though it was so different to the Greek spoken by the linguists of to-day, it had a wonderfully familiar ring. I was fascinated, and drank in every word. Here is a translation of what fell from his lips:

"As the blue dome of heaven is but an illusion, deceiving the eye as to the limits of space, so is the thing called 'death,' which deceiveth the mind as to the limit of life. As the sweet fragrance stealeth away from the perishing rose, so also doth the spirit of man extricate itself from the environments of the decaying flesh and mount to spheres untrammelled by the aches and pains of mortality. Life hath its moods, as hath all nature; and it hath its changes. Men of earth know of one great change, and that change they call 'death,' because it veileth the soul and is the limit of sight. But death is naught, unless it be indeed a birth. Man clingeth to the little handful of earth which he doth call his body, and to the narrow environments of his earthly home, and knoweth not how worthless is that to which he clings. Like a caged bird, peering through the gratings of its tiny home into the great outside world and beating against the wires in its restless ambition for something new, who, when the door of its domicile is opened wide, inviting it to the freedom and enjoyment of limitless space, flieth to the topmost perch and looketh with suspicion on the open door, declining to have aught to do with a world it knows nothing of and preferring restless discontent in a cage it knoweth, so doth man and woman, though tiring of sorrow and unhappiness, still cling to that which maketh their unhappiness.

"Doth it seem strange that I should talk in this way?

Or is it that thou knowest me not in this unseemly fashion? Veiled was I when first thou didst see me; veiled am I now, though the veil be but the form of thy servant. Twice veiled am I now, for did I but cast aside this envelopment and stand before thee, yet wouldst thou see me not, for a thick veil is over thine own eyes. But surely, my lord, thou dost know me and welcome me?"

As the last sentence was spoken Michael's hands were extended toward Leo. But Leo was transfixed, immovable, speechless. I was almost as much so, but Michael (or at least what seemed to be him, or his body) was turned to me with the words:

"And thou, O Holly; art thou not glad to know that I am with you? Nay, it cannot be but that thou dost know me?"

Then I answered, also in Greek:

"How can I think otherwise than that thou art Michael, our servant? And yet thy words are such as to take away my very breath. Thy Greek! It seems that I have heard but one person speak Greek as thou dost. The veil of which thou speakest—all, all doth put into my head the same thought. Can it be—but no; the thought doth turn nature upside down."

"Perchance, my Holly, the nature thou hast known hath always been upside down, and this new thought of thine simply turneth it right side up."

"Each sentence only serves to verify my thought. Can it be that thou art Ayesha?" I asked, almost afraid of my own question.

"Ayesha indeed; right well hast thou guessed, thou tree," she said. Then turning to Leo she continued, "Kalikrates, thou seemest to bear me little welcome."

"In such a guise, how could I know that it is thee?" inquired Leo, at last recovering his surprise.

"Did I not call upon thee not to forget me? Did I not tell thee I would come back?"

"Have I forgotten thee? Have I been false to thy trust," asked Leo, in return.

"Nay; I know that thou hast of a verity been constant and true. For have I been thy constant companion, ever with thee. Whithersoever thou hast gone, there went I also. O Kalikrates, thou dost not know the strength of the love I bear thee. Two thousand years had I waited thy coming, and as thou at last came so it seems I must needs have gone. Two thousand years thus wasted; for during all that time, had I not clung to earth, thou and I could have been roaming through space, soul to soul united, and I, perchance, be with thee now, even as thou art, in the flesh. Not as the beautiful Ayesha; not as the wonderful She-who-must-be-obeyed; but mayhap as some sweet country maiden, or a woman of fashion's world, wed with thee as thy wife. But selfishness, pride, and revenge bear not happiness as fruit, for, desiring to love thee as I loved thee of old—yea, two thousand years ago—under the same conditions and in the same flesh, I, conquering for a time the power of death, spent twenty long centuries in hopeless misery and weary waiting, only to be thwarted at last by death, e'en as I had thwarted death. So runs it ever; the irresistible power which destroys all else is at last destroyed by the rejuvenation of that which it destroyed, and Nature keeps her circle ever turning.

"But my lord, my Kalikrates, I have kept my word; I have come back. And I am still beautiful! Thou canst not see me, yet I am as beautiful as ever. Some day thou shalt see me just as I am; and thou, too, O Holly, for thou art stanch and I like thee much; and ye shall say that I am beautiful. Yet must I go, as I grow tired."

"But, Ayesha," I said, "if truly it be thou, was the writing of a few weeks past indeed thine?"

"Mine in truth, for I strove hard indeed to make my lord aware of my presence."

"And, earlier, thou didst talk to us in the dark?"

"Yea; ye did hear, but doubted."

Then all of a sudden I recalled at that time she had spoken in English, a language she did not know, and I asked:

"How is it thou didst speak in English? The language was strange to thee.

"Wert thou, my Holly, to enter a country where was spoken a language unknown to thee, what wouldst thou do?"

"Secure an interpreter," I replied.

"So thou wouldst; and as thou wouldst, so did I."

"Then the voice we heard was not thine?"

"No; not the voice; but the words I dictated. I first tried the Arabic, but ye did not seem to hear. But thinkest thou, my Prickly Tree, that I could remain near thee and Kalikrates, hearing ye speak the English tongue and not learn?"

"Then thou hearest as we talk?"

"Verily; when I am near."

"And seest us at all times?"

"Yea; always; whether dark or whether light, for there is no darkness now to me. But question me no more this night. Fain would I remain to talk with ye, but fatigue bids me depart, for like a sandal that is one-third short, this body is not a fit for me. Hence must I go. But as I have come, so shall I come again. Now farewell; and thou, Kalikrates, forget not the love Ayesha bears thee. Thou hast a mission to perform—a mission that will prove thy love, for thine immortal spouse is in misery; yea, even I, Ayesha, am in misery, and thou shalt free me—if thou wilt."

"I would give my life to free you from misery if it were needed," Leo vowed, enthusiastically, "for my life is of little value since thou hast departed hence."

"Then thou wouldst give but poorly if thou gavest that which hath little value," replied Ayesha.

"I would suffer tortures for thee," he declared.

"There will be little of torture. Courage wilt thou need, and thy life will be in thy hands. But the time is not yet. Farewell."

A convulsive shudder passed through Michael's frame, followed by a jerk; then he rubbed his eyes. And with



that jerk I seemed to fall suddenly with a shock. I suppose it was because my mind had been, as it were, carried by Ayesha's talk away from the present, real surroundings, and the sudden attraction of the jerk caused an equally sudden return of the mind.

Michael seemed more than usually affected by what he had gone through. He seemed dazed, and upon trying to walk he staggered. Leo noticed it and told him to sit down for a while.

"I wish I wouldn't sleep that way," he said; "sure, it don't do me no good."

"Were you sleeping?" Leo asked.

"Sure I was," Michael returned. "What was I doing if I wasn't sleeping?"

"I don't know," replied Leo, with a slow shake of the head which betokened the utter hopelessness of his trying to define it.

But Michael soon recovered fully from the weak feeling and, to use his own words, felt fresh as a lark. He left the room, and for a long time Leo and I sat silent, each plunged in thought. At least, I know I was, for a thousand questions ran riot in my mind. Long, long did I try to argue with my own thoughts and convince myself that it was not Ayesha at all, but simply some inexplicable phenomenon, and that the identification was merely the result of a very elastic imagination. But facts for were a thousandfold stronger than arguments against. In the first place there was the Greek. Michael could not speak a word of Greek, yet that language flowed from his lips as if it were but natural. And the Greek itself! It was spoken exactly as Ayesha spoke it. The sentiments were the same; and furthermore, she gave evidence of being entirely familiar with the details of her life and her death. What did Michael know of Ayesha? What did he know of a life of two thousand years—waiting two thousand years for the return of a lost lover? What did he know of Kalikrates, much less that Leo was Kalikrates? What could he know of her dying words in which she called upon him

not to forget her; that she would come back, and that she would be beautiful? No, no; it could not be contradicted; it could not be reasoned or argued away. A single similar circumstance or analogy might be accepted as a coincidence, but not a whole chain of circumstances. It must be Ayesha. It certainly was Ayesha.

Then, if it be Ayesha, was she really hovering around us, going where we went, hearing what we said, seeing what we did, and watching over Leo while he slept? Preposterous! And if, after all, she be ever near us, is it by some of her art of magic that she thus comes? But it cannot be magic, for did not she herself say, "There is no such thing as magic, though there is such a thing as understanding and applying the forces which are in nature." If she comes thus through the application of a "force in nature," is it not natural? And, if it be natural, could not others do likewise? Perhaps it is one of nature's secrets. Ayesha claimed to have learned many of nature's secrets which were not known to others; was this one? And yet there must be others, for did she not say that she used an interpreter to speak English; that it was not her voice we heard, but that she "dictated the words?" Then there must have been at least one other, and if there was one other, heaven only knows how many more there are.

These and kindred thoughts, as I say, ran riot through my brain, until my head fairly ached with the pressure. I felt like seizing my head between my hands and running. But still I would think and think.

What new wonder was to be thrust upon us? Ayesha declared that we should some day see her just as she was. Are there some more "forces in nature?" Alas! If she can bend the "forces in nature" to her own sweet will, where will it all end? And what does she mean by saying that Leo has a mission to perform; that she is in misery and requires that he shall free her, and that in so doing he will need to take his life in his hands?

But thinking was useless, for, though questions presented themselves without end, whence should come the

answers? At last I became desperate and, waving my hands about my head as if to scatter the flood of thoughts as I would a swarm of bees, I got up, lit my pipe, and went to work on the Latin manuscript. But it was no use; I could do nothing but think, so I finished my pipe and went to bed. How long Leo battled with his thoughts I know not, for my brain was soon so wearied with thinking that I fell asleep.

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## CHAPTER V.

### DOUBT.

How fickle is the mind of man! When we went to bed that night after our remarkable conversation with the supposed Ayesha, we were wrapped in wonder. But upon waking the next morning we not only doubted but were even inclined to laugh and scoff at the possibility. Not only one of us doubted, but both, and we gave free expression to these doubts. And, as Michael was in the habit of entering these spells every evening just at dusk, we resolved to wait and see if it was repeated. But there was one strange thing about these phenomena which alleged to be the doings of Ayesha and that was that no matter how patiently we watched for their recurrence they were never repeated. At least, the voice in the dark and the writing through little Ethel were not repeated. This last phenomenon, the conversation which purported to be with Ayesha herself, had only occurred last evening, hence there was no time as yet for its repetition. But, like as not, it would not be repeated, and we might wait in vain for it, as we had done for the voice and the writing. Still the day seemed long, so impatient were we for evening to come. It came at last, and much to our joy we did not have to wait long for the fulfillment of our desire. A

closing of the eyes, a shudder or two, and we were greeted with:

"O doubt, that doth plague the reason and scatter common sense! Only last night I did talk to you and yet already doth doubt creep in and persuade ye to require convincing all over again."

Then turning to me she (Ayesha) continued:

"And thou, O Holly; is it possible that thou couldst doubt; thou, to whom belief comes as second nature?"

"Belief comes as second nature!" I cried, astonished at the allegation, for I considered myself too much of a scientist to believe very readily. "Surely thou art mistaken in me as a man. I am indeed very skeptical and usually weigh matters well before accepting them. That is why I doubt, O Ayesha."

"Ah, my Holly, thy skepticism is shallow indeed. Scarce three years have passed since thou didst upbraid me for my skepticism, for thou didst tell me of the Messiah that came unto the Jews and whom the Jews would have none of; yet didst thou believe in him. Dost thou call this skepticism?" she asked.

"But that is a matter in which we must have all faith. Faith alone, without any deductions, is our salvation. For so said the Messiah himself. 'They who believe on me shall be saved,' and 'Lest ye believe on me ye can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.' " I replied.

"And to whom said he so? To the Jews?"

"Jews and gentiles alike. All can be saved through his blood."

"Through his blood! So this God of the Jews was finally appeased by the sacrifice of the Messiah—appeased by the blood of this Messiah. Well, that is like I told thee once before; that people were wont to model a God like unto themselves, but with a bigger brain to think evil and a longer arm to do it. Yes, the God of the Jews was always a blood-thirsty God, but when I did try to tell them this they did stone me and drave me from their cities. Ah, how I hate them! Their dark, scowling faces

haunt me yet. They were a bloodthirsty set, and must needs have a bloodthirsty God."

This talk of hers was pure blasphemy, and was more than I could stand.

"The God of the Messiah is a God of love and kindness and sympathy," I replied, sharply, for I was cut.

"Then the God of the Messiah was not the God of the Jews. For, if I remember rightly, the Jews made sacrifices regularly to appease the wrath of their God, and I did protest, hence they stoned me," said Ayesha.

"But all those sacrifices were no longer necessary after the Messiah was crucified," I explained "His blood atoned for all."

"Blood atoned, and yet he is not bloodthirsty! Methinks thou dost mock thine own reasoning. But let us not argue. Thou dost believe in this Messiah?"

"Yes," I replied. "I pray that I may have faith sufficient."

"But didst thou not say this Messiah came over eighteen hundred years ago? How doth it come to thy knowledge—thou, who hast not lived a span?"

"We have a full account of it handed down to us in a book called the bible," I answered.

"Ah; a sacred book."

"Yes; a sacred book."

"There were many such in the days before I buried myself in Kor, and many of them were barefaced forgeries. Oh what deceit man will devise to gain power!"

"I know there have been forgeries as there have been false prophets. But this is not a forgery; this is the direct Word of God," I said, with an emphasis calculated to enforce conviction. But my arguments were disposed of as are the raindrops from a duck's back.

"So were all the others purported," she replied. "Nay, my Holly, thou dost not want to disbelieve, hence dost thou shut thine eyes to all that may controvert. Here art thou satisfied with faith. Thou art not born blind, so thou fittest scales over thine eyes lest thou see the truth

and it shatter thy faith. Thy skepticism is like the dew. As the warm sunshine disperseth the dew, so also doth fear of thy future life disperse thy boasted skepticism. It is fear, O Holly. Thou art afraid to question this faith of thine. Thou dost not know; thou fearest knowledge lest it dispel thy faith. Nay; thou art not a skeptic; thou art a slave. Whilst thou dost prate of thy freedom of thought, thou dost scoff at what thou dost see with thine own eyes and hear with thine own ears. Thrice have I cast aside the mysterious curtain which hangs between the mortal world and that which is beyond; thrice have I told ye that I am not dead, but that I constantly abide with ye; thrice hast thou opened thine eyes to the stretching point and lost the power of speech from the intensity of thy amazement, yet each time hast thou bent thy mental energy to conjure up some theory that will support thee in thy desire to disbelieve that Ayesha hath kept her promise and returned. What would convince thee? Thine ears have no credit, for hast thou not heard me talk? What if thou shouldst see me? Would thine eyes convince thee? Wouldst thou doubt me less?"

She stopped; and for a few seconds everything was quiet. I had nothing to say. How could I defend myself? While I hated awfully to admit that she was right, I did not dare to contradict, for I knew I would get the worst of it. Whether right or whether wrong, Ayesha had always been able to out-argue me, hence in this instance I saw no way but to give silent consent. The pause was becoming awkward, however, so I said:

"Thy meaning is somewhat obscure, O Ayesha. Dost thou infer that we shall surely see thee?"

"Of a surety," she replied. "Weeks may pass ere I can show myself, yet shalt thou see me when the time is ripe." Then, turning to Leo, she continued, "And thou, Kalikrates; thou, too, shalt see me, and then shalt thou tell me if I am not beautiful. But patient must thou be, for Nature taketh her time, and I wait upon Nature."

She turned again to me.

"Methinks, my Holly, my words have been severe," she said. "But thou dost not know how I have toiled the past year to make thee know that I am near. And when, in spite of all my pains, thou dost doubt, the disappointment is great indeed. But thine eyes shall tell thee, for thou shalt see. Little else have I to say. Weeks and even months may pass ere I again address you, for of what use is it to talk when doubt doth destroy the potency of my words? First I must convince; the rest is easy. Therefore shall I come again. Look for me."

"Whither shall we look?" I asked. But it was too late. The usual shudder, the deep drawn breath, the long sigh, and Michael was once more conscious.

Here was another marvel to anticipate. We were to see Ayesha! Ayesha, who is dead! Ayesha, who is invisible! Yet we must wait weeks, perhaps, as she said. Why must we be compelled to wait weeks? If she can in some supernatural way make us see her, why can she not do so without making us wait so long? "Nature taketh her time, and I wait upon nature." That is what she said. Evidently, then, there must be some natural obstacle to overcome, or at least wait until it is removed. Undoubtedly, then, she was to have recourse to some of those "forces in nature" in the application of which she seemed to be such an adept. Perhaps it was by some means similar to her magic fountain. I could not tell; of what use to try? I was almost weary of trying to forestall her methods. She bid us look for her, but she did not tell us where, when, nor how to look. But then we could ask her that the next evening.

The next evening, however, was without fruit, for though Michael succumbed as usual, there were no words spoken. And for two weeks thereafter we heard nothing of Ayesha, though Michael was overcome every evening just as he had always been. At last one evening we were greeted with:

"Think not because I am silent I am any further away. I have no time to talk, though I am with ye every evening when ye watch for me. Rewarded ye shall be in good time."

But that was all she said; though we plied her with questions, there was no response.

Three weeks more passed and no further tidings of Ayesha. But during this time Michael had developed a new tendency. Opening off the room where we usually sat during these times was a large closet. One evening he arose and started toward that closet. At first upon getting up from his chair he seemed to waver, as would a convalescent just getting upon his feet after a long period of illness, but after a moment of apparent weakness (I was almost on the point of going to him, fearing he would fall) he straightened up and walked to and into the closet.

How long he remained there I cannot say, but it must have been a half or three-quarters of an hour. We did not know what else to do, so we merely waited to see if he would return or what he would do. We thought it a very strange freak, but so many strange things had proven to possess a motive that we thought this also might have one, and therefore we did not interfere. At the end of the time stated, however, we heard a series of noises caused by Michael moving, and then he cried out:

"Howly murdther! Where the divil am I? Sure I don't know where I am, and I can't see a thing but the dark!"

Knowing that if he heard my voice he would be reassured, I called:

"You are in the clothes closet, Michael. Wait; I'll make a light, then you can see."

But this new feature at last became old, and every evening he would go into the closet. Why he should go there was certainly hard to say. I tried to evolve some satisfactory reason but could not. It became monotonous after a while. Each evening we looked forward to hearing from Ayesha, and each evening we were dissatisfied. Continued disappointments destroy zest, and ours was on brink of destruction.

Still, after all, what was the use of getting discouraged or losing zest? Whatever we might do, whether we continued our watching or ceased to watch, Michael would



still succumb to these strange spells, and each day we repeated our intention of trying it once more. So we kept our waiting and watching for the fulfillment of Ayesha's promise that we should see her. In truth, we could not have ceased to watch had we any real intention of so doing.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE APPARITION.

Whether it was sheer imagination or an optical illusion or a shadow or what I could not decide, but one evening, about three weeks after Michael began to enter the closet, I saw a thing that startled me at first, for right in the middle of the doorway, about two feet from the floor, as near as I could guess in the dark (for it must be remembered that we had no light at these times), there appeared to be what resembled a thin, phosphorescent cloud. It was only faint, so faint that at first I considered it the result of a weakness of the eyes caused by straining them in the dark. After staying for a few seconds it apparently dissolved. Then I was convinced it was merely a weakening of the eye. But in a few moments it returned. I thereupon asked Leo if he saw it and he said he did.

"At least," he said, "I saw what looked like a silvery haze. It disappeared and then returned again for a short time. It was rather oval in shape and I should say about eighteen inches the long way. Like you, I looked upon it as a sort of blurring of the eyes, but I hardly think the eyes of both of us would be so affected at the same time."

Next evening the thing recurred, but it was much plainer and considerably larger. The third evening it was still larger and still plainer; the fourth evening it seemed to fill the whole aperture of the doorway. On the fifth evening of the occurrence of this phenomenon there appeared

in this silvery haze lines of still more silver-like phosphorescence, but they were without order or symmetry. The sixth evening this was still more marked; and on the seventh—could it be possible! I almost hate to say it, because it seems so incredible, but, whether the victim of an hallucination or not, I certainly could trace the outlines of Ayesha's form. It was indistinct, to be sure, but all was plain enough for me to see—or imagine I saw—Ayesha, shrouded by her veil, just as we had seen her in Kor. I was once more spell bound. And after it had vanished I was thoroughly upset. I never knew when Michael came to, I was so excited. I did not sleep a wink that night. Leo slept like a top, but I could not close my eyes. I could not lay aside that beautiful vision. I cannot call it anything else. I do not know how to describe it. I was about to liken it to some of the set pieces in a display of fireworks where portraits and scenes are reproduced in fire. But such a comparison is hardly permissible, for fireworks are crude and coarse compared to the perfect beauty of my vision. Almost everyone has seen a white robed figure posed against a curtain of black and lighted by the clear white rays of a calcium light. A beautiful effect is thus obtained, but beautiful as it is, it is cold and harsh beside the soft beauty of my picture. There is no describing it. It was as a light within a light. If the soft, white moonbeams could be condensed into a material out of which an inspired sculptor could carve his ideal, perhaps he could produce what might stand as a shadow to what I saw, but it would be only a shadow.

If I was enraptured on that occasion, however, I was doubly so the next evening; and the evening still following—well, I simply overflowed with rapturous emotion. At the same time I was awed, for I almost imagined I was in the presence of some celestial herald, and I all but fell upon my knees in reverence. There she stood, a halo of heavenly light surrounding her and lighting up the outlines of her form, though, strange to say, it cast no light on other objects in the room. There was the white, gauzy

veil out of which fell the rich, black tresses. There were the beautiful arms and hands, and I could almost feel the keen gaze of the lovely eyes just as I felt it so intensely when I stood before the curtain to which old Billali had crawled the day I first entered the presence of the dread queen. But though she looked so natural and so real, yet was she unreal, for no such beauty was ever known to the world of reality. It was surely heavenly, and I have often wondered if the angels which appeared at times to different ones as recorded in the Bible could have looked like that. If they did it is no wonder they were blinding and that men could not look upon them.

The evening following this last vision (shall I call it an apparition?) Michael did not enter the closet as usual, but we were instead greeted by Ayesha as we had been on several previous occasions.

"Strange things soon seem less strange," she said, "as the mind becometh accustomed. Each phenomenon of to-day is but the commonplace of to-morrow, and each hope of yesterday, being realized to-day, gives place to a new hope on the morrow. Ye have seen, even as I promised that ye should; have ye aught to say?"

"I did see, O Ayesha," I said, "and I know not what to say. I am more than mystified, and I fain would see thee often. But tell me, is thy beauty still so dangerous that thou must needs continue thy veil? I would see thy face once more."

A light, rippling laugh rolled off of Michael's coarse lips, a laugh which was identically such as had so often all but brought me to my knees at her feet, and it seemed so strange that it should come from Michael. Then she said:

"Black turns to white and white becomes black; Nature sometimes standeth on her head, but is at all times right side up, because it is right she should be inverted. When first thou didst meet with me thou wert possessed of an irrepressible desire to gaze upon my face. Then I did warn thee that it was not well for man to behold my beauty, lest he be rent with passion. Veiled did I go be-

cause of protecting men, lest they eat out their very hearts. When thou didst crave to see my face, I warned thee ere I uncovered it. Thou hast seen, and there is naught of need to protect thee further; and here is where Nature hath reversed her order, for now I come veiled not to protect thee from me, but to protect me from thee."

"Thou dost not, surely, mean that my ugly face hath become so beautiful that thou durst not look upon it?" I suggested, thoroughly amused at my own preposterous thought.

"Nay; I mean not so; though I have, since my change, ceased to see the external of things, for in truth, my Holly, I can see thy very soul, and it is beautiful. But as the fierce rays of the summer sun burn the more when the flesh is bare, so also do the shafts of light from thine eyes—a light, in fact, which cometh from thy innermost self—pierce me more sharply when I am not protected by the veil than when so enwrapped. For, in the shape in which I have come to thee, I am as one but lightly clad, as if, forsooth, one were clad in but a single gauzy covering and exposed to the sharp blasts of winter's breath. If thou but tried to touch me (as once I did invite thee) thy hands would find no resting place and it would be as though naught were there; and I would feel it not. Yet thy intense gaze would cause excruciating pain."

"Thy talk is strange," I said, "and thy meaning doth not appeal to me in simplicity. I know not by what art of magic thou dost accomplish the wonderful things——"

"Have I not told thee many times that there is no such thing as magic. In thy comprehension magic implies a thing that produces effects contrary to nature. Such a thing cannot be, for nature cannot be opposed or contradicted. Water will not run up hill——"

"No; but it can be forced up," I interrupted.

"And is not the force that is used a natural one?"

"Pressure," I responded, simply.

"Aye; pressure. And pressure simply implies a weight that is greater than the water, and it is natural for the les-

ser to give way to the greater. Nay, my Holly; I use no magic; I do but follow Nature, and by learning Nature's arts and Nature's secrets I am enabled to confront ye with these wonders, as thou hast given them the name."

"Is it that thou hast discovered these secrets? Else why hath it never been done before?" I asked.

"The wise Jew, who, they say, builded the temple at Jerusalem, once said, 'There is naught new under the sun,' and though I hate him because he was a Jew, yet do I give him this credit: he was right," Ayesha replied. "No, no. The great, glowing orb that lighteth up the day is looking down upon things which are but repetitions of what he witnessed ages and ages—aye, even eons of ages—ago. Even in the days when I did teach my philosophy there were traditions among the Greeks, the Hebrews, the Persians, the Egyptians and even the Romans where men and women, having passed through the change ye call death, have shown themselves, even as I have done to you. But all those people were stupidly superstitious, and hence did fall down and worship them and did consider them as gods or as messengers of gods. Thus has many a one declared, 'I have seen God!' or, 'I have seen an angel!' Fear of his own evil doing maketh a man fall on his face to these immortal men and women who thus show themselves, just as did those dogs, the Amahaggar, at the sight of me; or else he runneth away in terror. It is fear, my Holly. Thou art in this regard a fearless man, else would thou have fled from me. But I know thy mettle, and shall show thee more still."

After all, was she not right? How many, many accounts there are incorporated into authoritative history of people who claimed they had seen men and women, whom they often called angels, and who gave them warnings or urged them to deeds of valor. May not all of these cases have been the result of just such phenomena as this of Ayesha? Take the case of Joan of Arc. Did she not claim to have had such a vision? And did she not say it was an angel? And did not the prophecies which were

made to Joan become verified by the events which followed? Is this not now all a matter of history? All through Homer we read of the invisible gods becoming visible, and of their appearing in clouds, etc. All through the Bible we read of just such visions. Could it be that all of these were similar to the coming of Ayesha, and that, after all, it was really, as Ayesha had said, the superstition of those who witnessed these phenomena which caused them to be called angels or gods? Or could it be that Ayesha herself was an angel? And, if so, what is an angel? For, though Ayesha was a most extraordinary woman, she was still nothing but a woman, endowed with all the attributes of mortal woman; a woman's love, a woman's hate, a woman's passion; with all of woman's virtues and all of woman's sins. Could she have mounted so suddenly to angelhood; she, who did not even believe? And if it be that she is not an angel, may it not be true, then, that these others were not angels? I certainly felt the impulse to drop to my knees in reverence when I beheld her, and had she not told us beforehand that we should see her, I, for one, could scarcely have thought of anything other than some heavenly visitor. Why should others not feel so?

"Thou dost sit so silent," said Ayesha, breaking in upon my pondering.

"Thou hast given me new food for thought, and I fear the food hath not much of nourishment, for it doth lie uneasily and seemeth indigestible, and it bringeth forth harrowing thoughts," I replied.

"Thy brain is weak and can take but little at a time. I have given thee too much. But thou hast a voracious appetite for thought food and dost gorge thyself. Partake more slowly and not so greedily," she replied. Then, turning to Leo, who up to that time had been silent: "And thou, O Kalikrates; thou seemest not to bear me greeting."

"That thou dost come so far and no farther doth grieve me," he replied. "Fain would I have thee close."

"I am ever close."

"Thou dost say so; yet art thou intangible. Of what

doth it avail that I only think of thee? To see thee is indeed better, but I would touch thee, for love seeks to caress and be caressed," Leo returned.

"And so thou shalt in days that are yet to come. For close three years have I toiled to attain this much, that thou hast seen me, and thou hast much need to rejoice. But ere half that time is again transpired thou and I shall sit side by side; the love that is between us shall know no barrier, and thou shalt be mine and I shall be thine. That is, if thou wilt," Ayesha returned.

"If my will were all that were needed, there would be no obstacle," said Leo.

"It resteth upon thy will."

"What is required of me?"

"That thou go hence to Kor."

"To Kor!" we both ejaculated, simultaneously. "To be hot-potted by the Amahaggar?"

"Thy courage doth already fail thee, and thy will is lacking. Love itself is weak," Ayesha said, mockingly.

"But think, Ayesha," Leo pleaded. "Think of the horrible death we would meet."

"Ye have braved death an hundred times, both before and since ye entered Kor; hath your courage vanished?"

"But the hot-pot! That is so terrible," I persisted.

"Think ye the sentence I pronounced upon those beasts who before did assail ye as my guests will be so soon forgotten that they would again attempt to injure ye?"

"Thou art no longer there, hence they no longer fear thee," I answered.

"Thou dost err in thy judgement, for though, as thou hast said, I am no longer there, yet will my memory live for generations hence. That they do not see me is no proof to them that I am not there, for sometimes a whole generation came and went and no one of them saw me; yet were they taught concerning me and did fear me. Think ye I would urge ye to a death by the hot-pot? Nay; I, too, shall be there, and shall sway my power as I always did."

"Is this the mission of which thou didst speak, saying that I had one to perform?" asked Leo.

"It is but part of thy mission."

"And thou didst tell me thou wert in misery and that I should free thee."

"Aye; misery indeed; for am I as one chained to a rock full half my weight and which I must drag about with me. Thou art to free me."

"To break the chains, perchance," Leo said, jestingly.

"Nay; thou must destroy the rock, for then will the chain be broke. But of this we will speak anon. Suffice it for the time that thou dost ponder over the prospects of the journey, for I would not have it that haste should cause thee to repent thy decision. One week this night shalt thou tell me of thy will. And now, hast thou aught else to ask or aught else to say?"

"Yes," Leo replied. "Shall we see thee again as we have done of late?"

"Ye shall see me always, so long as ye shall keep this man, your servant, with ye."

"Dost thou require the servant?"

"He or another. For by a law of nature, I do draw from him the elements necessary. All people cannot be so acted upon, hence might we try long ere we found another to take the place of this one. So keep him with thee, for through him can I come to thee. And now farewell, for I have tarried long with ye this night."

"But, Ayesha," said Leo, "tell me, may we not see thy face?"

"Dost thou still doubt, that thou still cravest the sight of my face?" she asked.

"It is not doubt," Leo replied. "But thou dost know I love thee well, and is it strange that I should love to look upon thy face?"

"Thou shalt see my face when the time is ripe. Yea, thou shalt feel the very pulsations of my heart when thou dost hold me in thine embrace. Naught shall be lacking; love shall rule triumphant over life and over death, for



thou who art living and I whom ye call dead shall be as one, meeting hand to hand and lip to lip, drinking together out of the heaven-flavored cup of supremest happiness."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### GRAINS OF PHILOSOPHY.

The beautiful visions of Ayesha were continued night after night, only that each visitation was more and more beautiful, and at last one evening she reached her hands backward to the place where she always kept the veil fastened and slowly loosed the filmy folds. All the while we sat in ecstatic anticipation as the gauzy drapery gradually dropped away. But pshaw! What a disappointment! For just as the veil seemed to drop off completely, the vision (or apparition, or form, or whatever it might be termed) was destroyed. And, strange to say, it disappeared differently than it did at any time before. Previously when she vanished it was gradually. The vision just faded out. But this time it was as if it were burned up, or went up in smoke. Most everyone has seen gunpowder placed in a little heap in the open air and ignited. There is just a quick flash and a cloud of smoke, and it is gone. That is as the vision seemed to go on this occasion. Our disappointment can scarcely be imagined. For a few moments we were allowed to nurse our chagrin in silence, then Ayesha spoke from the closet where Michael lay (we had discovered that at these times Michael lay prone on the floor when in the closet).

"As ye beheld, I strove this night to bare my face, but did fail. Ere long I shall succeed," she said.

"And the disappointment knoweth no limit," I replied.

"Thy patience is but small, for I did rejoice at my suc-

cess. Another night and mayhap ye shall see me, though it may be but for an instant. But each time it shall be longer," Ayesha said.

"But how was it the end came so different to-night?" I asked.

"I did lose control of the forces," she replied. "The shock of exposing my face was too great, and I was compelled to let go the forces. If thou didst pull upon the bow-string until the bow is well bent, and thou lettest it return gently to its place by keeping control of it, thou canst see the string at all times and there is no commotion; but if, perchance, the bow-string be sharp as to give pain to the fingers, and thou dost therefore out of sheer pain lose control of the string, then thou seest not the string, but in the place thereof thou seest the semblance of a thousand strings and there is commotion. But thy servant is exhausted, hence must I not talk longer."

True to her promise, the next evening the veil was fully removed and we looked once more on that lovely face. It was only for an instant, then the vision slowly faded out. The following evening she again revealed her face.

There she stood; those same lovely eyes, which once seen no mortal man could ever forget; the same tinted cheeks and broad brow; the same rounded arms, outrivaling those of the beautiful goddesses of ancient Greece; the same snowy breast, which rose and fell in gentle rhythm, giving life to the soft folds of the self-same white kirtle which draped so gracefully to her waist, where it was fastened by the well-remembered golden serpent. Beneath the border of her garment peeped the shapely, sandaled feet. It was Ayesha; there could be no other so beautiful. And as I gazed upon her all the old feeling came back to me, only it seemed sanctified, and instead of being filled with the intense desire to possess her as when I first saw her unveiled, I felt a powerful impulse to worship her.

She remained thus for several moments, then beckoned us toward her. As we approached her, with a feeling of

almost sacred awe, she threw the veil lightly over her face. With her hand she motioned to Leo, and I interpreted the gesture to imply that she wished him to place his hand upon her waist. Whether he did so or not I could not discern in the dark, but she almost immediately indicated that I was to do so. Indeed, although I could not have seen or been able to locate Leo's hand, hers was unerringly directed to mine, and though I could not feel a thing, she seemed to grasp my hand and pull it toward her; at least, as I reached mine toward her, hers followed it. As I placed my hand upon her—or attempted to—instinctively I, of course, expected it to stop when it pressed against her, but instead it seemed to pass right through. The sensation was most awful. It was like a person who, going down stairs, thinks he has left the last step and is upon the level when he really has another step to go. Expecting in his next step that his foot will reach the same level as his last he almost falls down the six inches (the height of the step) and his foot seems to drop about six feet before striking bottom. Such was the sensation as to my hand. Expecting that the hand would be checked by contact with the solid substance of Ayesha's body, I failed to set the muscles which should control the hand to stopping, and it went far beyond—indeed, it seemed as if it never would stop. I remembered afterward that Ayesha had told us this would be so, but she seemed so real that for the moment I forgot her admonition.

The next day was the one set apart by Ayesha as the one on which we should give our decision as to whether or not we would return to Kor. We had talked it over, Leo and I, and had concluded to wait before deciding and see what Ayesha had to say further concerning it. Accordingly, as we anticipated, Ayesha did not show herself to us that evening, but spoke instead.

"One week have I waited, as I did appoint," she said. "Hath Kor and the Amahaggar dogs who dwell therein so much of horror that ye quail in the prospect of returning thither? Or what answer do ye bear?"

"No decided answer, as yet, O Ayesha," replied Leo, "for we fain would know more of thy motives and what thou wouldst have us do at Kor."

"Ye shall dwell there as the guests of the Hiya—of She-who-must-be-obeyed, and in all ways shall ye follow your own sweet will. My mutes shall serve ye even as they have served me and the Amahaggar dogs shall crawl at your feet even as they have crawled at mine. Ye shall rule them even as I have ruled them. And thou, Kalikrates, shalt be my lord, and I shall be thy mistress, and we shall dwell in happiness and love that knows no counterpart in earth. Thou, too, O Holly, shalt have thy share of happiness, rugged old tree that thou art, for as thou hast loved my Kalikrates, so doth it come that I love thee. Great indeed shall be thy gain, for into thy life shalt come that of which thou dost not dream. This I pledge thee. Say; wilt thou go?"

"But, Ayesha," I returned; "hath the thought come to thee that in the network of swamps we should have little hope else but to lose ourselves and perish?"

"Perish!" she repeated, impetuously, in a tone and accent so like her when impatient and crossed that I almost quailed at the utterance of the word, fearing she would blast me. "Perish! Thou dost think of naught but death. Why cling to that which hath so little value? Life that is of earth is but a breath—soon gone. Why cling to it?"

"That question is a strange one for thee, who did cling to that breath for two thousand years. Why was it thou didst cling to it?" I returned.

"Because, like thyself, I had eaten the fruit of what ye call life, and did think it very sweet. But now that I have eaten both of the fruit of life and the fruit of death, I have found that the fruit of death hath by far the sweetest flavor. Hence I say, Why cling to that fruit which hath of taste but a sickly sweet, when thou art yet to relish the fruit that shall give thee the very elixir of joy?"

"But ye will have no need to fear the swamps, for I shall be your guide; I, to whom swamps and mountains

alike form no obstacle, for in but an instant I can mount the highest mountain peak or cross the broadest expanse of swamps or the deepest and widest ocean. Yea, even yon planet which now is shedding its pale rays upon the darkened earth is not so distant but what I can reach it, if it be my will, for while ye are bound in fetters of flesh, I am free, free to travel withersoever my desire inviteth me."

"Nay; but didst thou not say that thou, too, wast fettered; chained, as it wer, eto a rock?" Leo asked.

"Verily; that is true. But my freedom is close at hand, for from thee, my Kalikrates, shall come my relief."

"So thou hast said; but to me the idea is vague and all but meaningless, for I know not what will accomplish thy freedom. It mayhap that thou didst overestimate my ability," Leo returned.

"Nay; the will mayest thou lack, and the courage; but that thou art able giveth no room for question. The strength of a child is strength sufficient."

"Dost thou, then, doubt my will or my courage?" asked Leo, piqued.

"Thou shalt meet the test. But of this let us talk again in the future. Thou hast not told me yet of thy decision; whether thou wilt go to Kor, there to dwell that that thou couldst walk with me as once thou did in that same place. There we shall be as one; thou shalt be me and I shall be thee," she replied.

"Thou dost speak so strangely. Dost thou in truth mean that thou wilt be a reality, as thou wert ere thou didst plan thine own destruction by entering the place of the Pillar of the Fire of Life?" Leo asked.

"The very same, save that I shall be with thee only in periods. Though I shall be with thee at all times, yet must my physical presence be limited and but in spells."

"And dost thou mean, then, that thy presence shall be a tangible reality?"

"If thou couldst see me and talk to me, couldst hear me talk to thee; if thou couldst feel me, wouldst thou then call me tangible? If my lips met thine and mine arms

did circle thy neck and thou didst hold me in thy strong embrace, would I be less than tangible? Say; wouldst thou have me more tangible? Soul to soul and flesh to flesh, so shall we dwell, my Kalikrates, if thou wilt but go," said Ayesha.

"But, O Ayesha," I returned; "if in truth thou canst accomplish the fulfillment of this wonderful promise, why is it that thou chooseth that Kor must be the scene? If thou dost insist it is by the application of natural forces that thou dost accomplish these wonders, why mayest thou not do so here, where there are many more comforts and pleasures, and much more safety than at Kor? Nature is everywhere; here as well as at Kor. Couldst thou not apply the forces as well here as there?"

"Why dost thou seek shelter when thou dost feel the rush of the hurricane? Nature, truly, is everywhere; but here nature is not at rest. Thou canst not gather feathers in a whirlwind. At Kor all things are quiet and peaceful; here all men are ceaselessly shifting, moving, turning, twisting; never still. Commotion disturbeth. Wave thy hand through the air and it will cause a pressure that will disturb the atmosphere even to the opposite shores of the ocean. The turmoil of your nation doth so disturb that any force that I might gather would be scattered. Hence Kor is best. Furthermore, for two thousand years had I lived at Kor, and in all that time the walls of the caves wherein I dwelt are charged with my very presence. Take a hollow wheel and on a warm day fill it with cold water and it will draw the moisture from the air, which thou wilt see clinging to the wheel. Turn the wheel swiftly and it will cast off the moisture in drops, and yet, even while it casteth moisture off, so also doth more come to the wheel. So with thy mortal body, and my mortal body and all mortal bodies; they attract and cast off. Thy growth, O Holly, did but come of attraction. Thou didst attract to thyself the elementary particles from Nature's storehouse and did grow. And when thou didst gather to thyself all that Nature did intend thou

shouldst carry, thinkest thou that thou didst cease to attract? Nay; still thou didst attract; and, like the wheel which, when it did have more than it could hold, casteth off that it might still attract and keep attracting, thou, also, doth cast off, that thou mayest attract the new. Knowest thou this, O Holly?"

"Yea, O Ayesha; that process is well known in this day; indeed, it is but a common saying among us that man hath an entirely new body every seven years. But this is not supposed to have been understood in the days when thou didst flourish," I replied.

"Vain and conceited man thou art! Thinkest thou that thy age is the only age of wisdom? That is so like the human race; they are all superior. When they accidentally tumble headlong into some long-forgotten truth, they call it a 'discovery!' and prate of their greatness. If a man stumbleth upon a truth which was lost by some other man ages before, it is new; it is great. So with thy wisdom. But since thou dost know this law of nature, knowest thou also how thou dost attract and grow?"

"Why, yes; we eat——"

"Yea; thou dost eat; but dost thou think that thy growth all cometh from eating? Nay; but a very small part cometh from eating. The very air itself is charged with the elements which thou dost attract for thy growth. Even that which causeth the lightning doth offer thee wherewith to grow, and thou dost absorb it into thy very being. As thou dost absorb it, so dost thou cast it off; and as thou dost cast it off, much of it lieth around any place wherein thou shalt live for a goodly time, and it is filled, yea, saturated with that which was once a part of thee. It lieth all around, like cast-off clothing.

"If, perchance, thou didst lose thy clothing, wouldst thou not be more at comfort in thine own cast-off clothing than in clothing thou mightest borrow from another? For thine own clothes, though they be cast off, have been molded to thy form and do fit thee better, and thou dost feel acquainted. So it is with me. In coming to the ful-

fillment of my promise to meet ye even as tangible as ye yourselves are, I, having no body, must needs make one, attract one to me for the time being; and in so doing, what is more natural than that I should much more readily attract that which was once a part of me? Hence do I say, go ye to Kor, where there is the most of this material. For think what quantities I must in two thousand years have thrown off. If each seven years, as thou hast said, hath given me a new body, how many bodies must I have had? Is more needed that ye should know ere thy decision shall be imparted."

"Nay," replied Leo; "my mind is made; I will go."

"And thou, O Holly?" she asked.

"No answer is needed; Leo hath spoken for both, for where he goeth there go I also, though while love doth urge him, for me there is nothing such," I replied.

"Thou shalt see; for though thou hast not loved, yet hast thou been loved; and as thou hast been loved, so shalt thou love. The brief span of earthly life oft separates the loved from the loving and the loving from the loved, yet is no one unloved and no one unloving, and each hath its mate. And though thou art so ugly, yet hast thou also thy mate, in whose eyes thy ugliness turneth to beauty. Thou shalt see thy mate, even as thou hast seen me—yea, even as thou shalt see me, which is better yet; for, as I have promised that Kalikrates shall meet me flesh to flesh, so shalt thou meet thy mate. And perchance thou shalt think her as fair as I. Yea, even more so, for with thine eye focused by love that is perfect affinity and a beauty whose very radiations are the vibrations of love for thee and thee alone, thou shalt think my beauty pale."

"Thou dost mock me, O Ayesha. I have no store of good looks, and thou dost mock me because of the lack," I said, rather keenly, for I was cut.

"Nay; thou art wrong. Because thou hast seen me blast the rebellious Amahaggar thou dost think me cruel. But I am not cruel, O Holly. What I have told thee, that do I mean."



"There is naught that looks like woman will ever bear love for me. Once I did think a woman loved me, but it was money she loved and she did tolerate me because it seemed the money was to be mine. But the money went another way, so also went her love."

"Thou shalt see. But of this, enough. There are some things which I desire that ye should do ere starting on the journey. First of all, ye must have garments such as I did wear, for such will I need to deceive the Amahaggar," she said.

"To deceive the Amahaggar?" I questioned.

"Verily. Why doth it seem strange?" Ayesha returned. "Thinkest thou I would let ye enter Kor unprotected by my presence, or its semblance? Nay. Thou and Kalikrates shall enter Kor together with what doth look like She-who-must-be-obeyed, though in truth it be but the body of thy servant, impelled and controlled by Ayesha's mind and Ayesha's will and clothed in raiment which is the counterfeit of that of the Hiya. For what doth it matter that it be not the face or form of the Hiya, since they never saw her face or form. A veiled queen was I ever to them, and a veil is not altered whether it doth cover beauty or that which is ugly. So, a veil must ye get, and all the garments which ye have known me to wear."

"But, Ayesha," said Leo; "women do not dress in this age as thou didst at Kor, and there's none can make them, and, being unskilled with the needle, I could not do it myself."

"Couldst thou not secure the fabric whereof to make them?" Ayesha asked.

"The material will be easily secured."

"Then get it and place it in my hands, even these, the hands of thy servant; for while I have the power to use them they are as my hands," Ayesha said.

"I will do so," assented Leo.

"Very well. Then prepare yourselves as ye think best, and from time to time I will advise with ye."

## CHAPTER VIII.

## PREPARATIONS.

We early began to prepare for our trip. We had resolved to go direct to Delagoa Bay, there to store a goodly supply of things we might need in an emergency. Our selection of things we would need was vastly different this time to what it was previous to our former journey, as then we were going into conditions we knew nothing of and could not very well forestall the requirements, hence we had much before which we would not think of taking now, while on the other hand, there were many things which, if we remained very long we, being used to the conveniences of modern civilization, would greatly feel the need of. Many hours did we spend comparing ideas as to what was essential, and the outcome of it all was that our outfit as we planned it this time would not bear the least comparison with the outfit of our former visit. In a general way, where we previously prepared for heavy wear and tear, this time we thought more of lightness of transportation. For it must be remembered that we before knew nothing of the nature of the country, whether rugged and hard, or thick forest, or plain or mountains. This time we knew that any way we went was just the same—an endless chain of swamps, with here and there between an occasional stretch of higher ground.

Then, again, we did not expect to have to guess our way, for Ayesha had promised to guide us. True, that promise was easily made and may not be so easily kept, but some how or other we could not help having faith in all that she said. For had she not always thus far verified her statements? Strange and incredible as many of her promises were, had they not always been fulfilled? And yet, what was there to warrant our having such implicit faith in her, for could we even yet be positive that

it was not all a delusion? Three years before we had planned an embarkation on just such a fool's errand, led only by the evidence offered by the potsherd, a tale I scarcely credited. We knew not that such a place as Kor existed, and I certainly had my doubts about it, but although warned in the story of Amenartas of the "people who place pots on the heads of strangers," we entertained not a single taint of fear, and the horror of the hot-pot was unknown to us. That journey was simply planned to satisfy our curiosity more than anything else as to whether the story on the potsherd was a reality or not, and we thought but little of danger, fully believing we should arrive home again safe and sound at the end of our lark. But now it was different. We knew there was a Kor; we knew what it meant to "place pots on the heads of strangers," the slightest thought of which almost chilled the blood in our veins; we knew the Amahaggar were bloodthirsty canibals, and moreover that they had a grudge against us in particular on account of our fight with them to save Mahomet from so horrible a fate. We knew that it was scarcely less than a miracle that we ever got out of Kor, and that if I had not so completely won old Bil-lali's friendship we should not have done so. We knew, too, of the wild and dangerous country lying between Kor and any point of civilization, and remembered the eighteen months of hardship before we finally reached Delagoa Bay. We knew all this, and yet we were daring it all once again in our flight after a phantom—a phantom that was but the promise of a phantom; for what was Ayesha, as we believed we saw and heard her, but a phantom? Herself intangible and imponderable, and the phenomena, be it a delusion or no delusion, inexplicable and inconformable with any deductions of modern science, what was she but a phantom? And were we justified in acting upon advice and instructions from such a supernatural source? Should we invite our own destruction by following this phantom?

On the other hand why should we doubt? Who but Ayesha could have talked as we had been talked to? Who

but Ayesha could recall the incidents of our short stay at Kor? Who but Ayesha could reproduce the face and form of the wonderful She as we were wont to see it in the vision? We had seen and heard and to doubt would be to discredit our own senses. Truth after truth had been told by her; her promises, those relating to the vision, etc., had all been verified; why not those relating to the more distant future? Or is it that the fulfillment of the promises of to-day are but to spur us on to our downfall to-morrow? I could not readily accept the idea that there was any evil in it; and yet, can anything that is so unnatural, or supernatural, be all good? In this matter I was in about the same mental predicament as Macbeth when pondering over the partially fulfilled prophecy of the witches:

This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill; cannot be good. If ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success  
Commencing in a truth?

But they say "those whom the gods destroy they first make mad." We were certainly mad, and if it so happened that this madness was to destroy, we had both resolved to go boldly to destruction.

Our attention was first of all directed toward procuring the necessities for the making of Ayesha's garments. This was not a difficult matter, although to reproduce the material exactly were an utter impossibility; but as we understood that these garments were to be used essentially to deceive the Amahaggar, we deemed it unimportant that the texture was identical, or even approximately so, as none of the Amahaggar ever were bold enough to look sufficiently straight or close to distinguish any of the details connected with her dress. The white-robed figure had but to show itself ever so slightly and they would fall to their faces. So all that was necessary was to secure something that would deceive the Amahaggar, hence we only needed some white material for the kirtle and something gauzy for the veil. These were easily secured

and placed in readiness for her to shape as she might wish.

As sandals were also necessary, we succeeded in securing some at a costumer's which, while they were in no way like those worn by Ayesha, we thought would suffice. Purchasing these sandals brought very forcibly to our minds the ludicrous side of Ayesha's impersonating her mortal self with the body of Micheal, for the idea of counterfeiting Ayesha's shapely little feet with Michael's great clumsy ones was too preposterously funny to be considered seriously and Leo and I frequently had a good laugh over the comparison.

"They certainly must detect the difference in those feet," said Leo in his jest; "especially old Billali, if the old duffer is still stroking his white beard, for when he is sprawled before her her feet are the only parts of her he could see."

"I think he was too scared for fear she would blast him to see even them," I returned, to which Leo assented, and we continued our laugh.

These things we placed ready to turn over to Ayesha whenever she should demand them, which she did one evening upon taking possession of Michael's body. And here we were confronted with another wonder—two of them, in fact. In the first place, though we did not know it until it was done and Ayesha had gone, she actually fashioned those garments in total darkness! For, when we lit the light, there they were, complete in every detail. How she could have accomplished it was far beyond our comprehension, for Leo and I would have done well could we have distinguished the two materials in that dark room, let alone shape them. How could she do it? Among all the other wonderful attributes with which she seemed to be endowed, had she also the power to see in the dark? It certainly looked like it. And what constitutes the second wonderful feature was that the kirtle was fashioned identically like the one which draped so entrancingly from her lily-white bosom when she first unveiled to me. In

this exact reproduction of a thing which She-who-must-be-obeyed had made and worn at Kor, and which no white man of the nineteenth century save Leo and Job and myself had ever seen the like of, was perhaps a far stronger proof than any preceding of the true identity of the intelligence which was subjecting Michael's consciousness. How she put it together was a puzzle. Of course, she must have sewed it; and yet, while I say she "must have," I am forced to ask, "did she?" Expecting that she would require needle and thread, we placed them in readiness. Part of the thread had been taken from the spool (it was a new spool) but the needle did not seem to have been touched, for I remember distinctly that while waiting for Michael I idly traced with the needle the directions of certain curves in the grain of the wood forming the top of the table and finally stuck the needle upright where two curves converged and there left it sticking; and there it was, in the precise spot, when we relit the light. So I was left to scratch my head and wonder at one of two things: How she could sew without the needle; or, how she could stick the needle back into the very same puncture that I had made with it when placing it there. But I had long ago given up trying to solve or understand the mysterious capabilities of that wonderful creature, and I gave up this.

There was one thing in particular that we needed to provide ourselves with this time, and that was a sure method of lighting our way in those dark caves. It will be remembered that on several occasions when we most needed a light some treacherous gust of wind would extinguish those primitive lamps which alone were available at Kor, so to remedy this we made a thorough investigation of all the different lamps and lanterns, with the result that we selected a number of patent trainmen's lanterns and a like number of policemen's dark lanterns. Among the latter was one of which I must speak in particular. It was made, so we were told, specially at the order of a customer who never called for it and it had been on the shelf for years. In shape it was like the others, but a

trifle larger, and the condenser or lens, instead of being molded, was of the finest optical glass, ground and polished. The reflector was conical in shape, of spun copper, highly polished and then silvered. So penetrating was the light from this that an object two hundred feet distant could be plainly seen. We took the dark lanterns as a precaution against peculiar circumstances which we knew might arise, for among those caves, with all their dark passages and subterranean connections, we could not tell what might happen.

Instead of the old whale boat we this time had constructed a much lighter boat, sharp at both ends, with broad shoulders and very light draft; we could float it, loaded, in six inches of water. It had no keel, and the bottom sloped gradually from the center toward either end. This was done so that the masses of aquatic vegetation would not tangle at her cutwater, but instead be pressed downward until the boat had glided over it, for we knew that much of the water upon which we expected to float her would be absolutely choked with vegetation.

As this boat with its load of supplies, etc., would be difficult to get over the high and dry places which we knew would break the monotony of the swamps, we provided against this obstacle by having two trucks made, the wheels of which had rims of steel about six inches broad.

These broad wheels, we thought, would prevent them sinking very deeply into the soft, miry places, and I argued that even in the marshes themselves where we could not float these broad wheels would be supported by the fibrous growth, so that we could make some progress, however slow it might be. These trucks were arranged to be bolted to the boat when occasion called for their use, and when not needed, to be taken off and carried in the boat. In this way we had both a boat and wagon. The boat itself was fitted with watertight compartments like the old whale boat so as to protect our things from the weather. There were likewise two square sails, which were planned to serve also as awnings, which could be spread over part

of the boat to screen us from the rain and from the intense heat of the sun.

Taken all in all, we considered that our arrangements were about perfect, as indeed they afterward proved to be. So all was at last ready for the start and we only waited for Ayesha to say "go." For some reason not as yet apparent to us she had bid us wait her word, and we were now waiting.

Ayesha had kept up her visitations right along while we were making our preparations, each time coming more and more beautifully, if that were really possible. But for the last two or three days we were disappointed, though Michael still continued to enter the clothes closet. One evening, however, some little time after he had thus entered the closet, we were very much startled to hear right close to us a whisper, plain and distinct, pronouncing the name "Kalikrates." I turned to Leo, and he to me, and we both asked, simultaneously:

"Did you hear that?"

We neither of us had time to reply, for we were both answered by the whisperer:

"Ye did hear me, both, for it is I, Ayesha. And even now do I stand beside thee, Kalikrates. Nay; reach not with thy hand, for thou must not touch me—not yet. But in this form do I come that I may still further convince ye that my words are true. See! Even doth my hand rest against thy cheek. Nay; thou must not grab at me, for thou shalt catch but the air; I am too quick for thee, yet doth it tax my strength to avoid thy grasp. So thou wilt much favor me by keeping thy hands quiet. See! Take thou the hands of Holly and hold them, that each be clasping the hands of the other, then will I touch the joined hands each with one of mine, that ye may know there are six hands instead of four."

As we joined hands in accordance with her request we felt the pressure of another pair over ours, just as she said. In my own mind this pointed to nothing, for there were Michael's which, together with ours, made up six.



As this reasoning was entirely mental, I was much astonished to hear her say:

"Ah, my Holly, doubt doth hold thee firmly, for thou dost think they are the hands of thy servant. Go thou to where the servant lieth and take his hands in thy grasp, and while thou dost satisfy thyself that he is still there I will again touch Kalikrates, that ye may know there are eight hands instead of six. And if thou, my love, wilt promise to keep thy hands down and not seek to touch me, I will show thee else than the touch of my hand."

"I promise," Leo said, while I went as directed and found Michael lying full length on the floor. His hands were cold as ice.

"Then dost thou feel both my hands?" Ayesha asked.

"Yes," Leo replied.

"And dost thou know that which I do press against thy cheek?"

"It is thy hair; it doth hang down upon my hands, and it hath the same fragrance as it had e'en to the moment of thy death."

"I am not dead," she replied. "There is no death."

Leo was certainly right, for, several moments before he mentioned it, I had been attracted by the peculiar fragrance, than which I had never known anything to equal until I entered into her presence with old Billali. That fragrance certainly had an individuality, and that individuality was identified with Ayesha. There was no denying it.

"Thou hast seen, thou hast felt, thou hast heard and thou hast smelled," she said. "By four of thy senses hast thou been made known of my being, and if thou still shouldst doubt, of what use are those senses."

"I cannot doubt," replied Leo; "but wherefore can I not touch thee? As thou dost touch me, so would I fain touch thee."

"Yea; and more, my Kalikrates, for thou wouldst lose thyself. Thy passion would destroy thy reason and thou wouldst do violence, not to me for I am beyond physical harm, but to thy servant which lieth unknowing upon the

floor; for of the body which ye call his I have a goodly part in this one with which I now touch thee. What I have taken from him, that must I return to him by the same natural law under which I took it, else would the servant lose his hold upon the mortal life; or, if not that, remain weak and depleted for some time. Thou dost love me, Kalikrates, and in thy impetuous desire thou wouldst battle against my departing, and thy madness would wrest from me my control of the forces so that I could not return that which I had borrowed, hence the violence to thy servant. Patient must thou be, for in time thou shalt touch me to thy heart's desire. Now, ye are ready for the journey; is it not so?"

"Yes," we both said.

"Then go at once. All will be well. And at your journey's end shall be happiness greater than ye can dream; heaven shall mingle with earth, and ye shall taste of the sweets of heaven. That this be true the future is my only warrant."

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ZAMBESI.

We were soon upon the high sea, and if popular superstition is to be given credence, our journey was to be anything but prosperous, for the day we left our native land was a most gloomy one. A nasty, drizzling rain prevailed and all the external world seemed void of comfort and entirely cheerless. I felt sick at heart, and as I watched the spires of the city fade slowly from my vision in the misty rain, I felt more lonely than I ever did in all my life before and I wondered silently if I would ever see England's shores again.

Leo, however, did not share my gloomy thoughts. His

was a nature that knew no gloom—one of those sunny, light-hearted natures, full of passion and energy, fiery when roused, yet so generous and magnanimous that anger was soon dispelled; bold and fearless, yet loving and kind. He knew no gloom, and sorrow was soon bathed in the sunshine of his own bright nature. I envied him on this occasion, if I never did before.

But gloomy and desolate as the day seemed, it was soon past. It had its end, like all other days, and with its gloom and its rain was soon swallowed up in the folds of night. As darkness fell we repaired to our stateroom, which was a commodious one, secured especially in view of its convenience for Ayesha's coming. But Ayesha did not come; nor did Michael even change in any respect from his normal self. This was, indeed, the first time in several months that he had not succumbed to the peculiar condition into which Ayesha transported him. Nor did she come at any time throughout our trip upon the ocean. This fact soon left my mind open to diverse suggestions of disbelief, born and nurtured in the skepticism of my quizzical nature, and I soon had a fully developed theory that in some mysterious and unexplained way the locality of our rooms at Cambridge was responsible for all of the apparent phenomena. But Leo held a different opinion; his faith in Ayesha had become fixed, and he would not listen to any doubt that it was really her. He said he believed that being upon the ocean had something to do with her not coming, and that while we were upon the water she could not come. At this idea I laughed.

"Nonsense," I said; "for, if it was really her, did she not say distinctly that she could mount the highest mountain peak or cross the broadest ocean?"

"True; she said all that," Leo returned; "but she did not say she could produce her phenomena at either place. She did say the turmoil of a busy country interfered with her control of the forces which she employs to accomplish this wonder, and why not that the ocean also offer some detriment? I have eyes to see, ears to hear and nerves to

feel. Those eyes have seen, those ears have heard, those nerves have awakened to the touch of her I love, Uncle Horace, and I cannot for an instant doubt. Three years ago, when we were both on this selfsame journey, you scoffed and laughed at my belief in the story of Amenartas. You declared there was nothing in it. But time and events told a different tale and you lived to see that wonderful queen. Now you are again on the way to the same place to encounter another wonder and you once more scoff. I tell you I am satisfied, and time will bear me out."

Whether either of us was right or both entirely wrong it mattered not; Ayesha did not come. We finally doubled the Cape of Good Hope and soon reached Lorenzo Marquez. Here we made arrangements to remain several days to prepare for our further journey. We had concluded to seek Ayesha's advice as to how best to proceed, and our plans, by her not coming, were thrown out of balance.

I was inclined to accept the whole matter as a huge joke, turn the expedition into a protracted hunt, then return home and clear my brain of silly and fantastic delusions. But Leo became exceedingly indignant at the suggestion.

"You may go on your hunt, my dear Uncle," he said, "but you will hunt alone. I came here to attain an object and I shall pursue that object to its accomplishment or 'leave my white bones,' as Bilalli said, 'to mark the limit of my wanderings.' For, if I do not realize the promise that I shall meet her, face to face and flesh to flesh, while I am still in life, then will I die that, she being dead, I may meet her where she is."

"But, Leo, my boy, do you not recall the passage in the Scriptures where it says 'there will be no marriage or giving in marriage in heaven?'" I suggested.

"Uncle Horace," he returned, "if in heaven there is to be no such thing as love and companionship, then heaven cannot attract me as an eternal home. Where Ayesha is, there shall I seek to go, for there alone shall I find happiness, be it heaven or be it—the other place."

"Well, Leo," I said, "I have always followed you here—

tofore, and I'll not turn back now, even if my bones shall be as white as yours in Afric's bleaching sun."

So it was settled, and we talked at length as to the best way to go. Our boat was stored and ready; still we waited.

One evening, or rather late afternoon, we were trying to come to some decision as to the best route to take. Michael, who was present, though taking no part in our planning, suddenly gave a violent jerk, put his hands to his eyes and rubbed them smartly, after which we recognized one of those peculiar shudders which we knew heralded Ayesha's coming. And truly enough, for she quickly spoke.

"So far on your journey have ye come and come safely," she said. "But the perils are all still ahead. Ye have been counselling the way to proceed. As I did tell ye that I would be the guide upon this journey, so do I now come that ye be advised. Some distance to the north is a great river, flowing some hundreds of miles southwestward."

"That must be the Zambesi," I interrupted.

"I know not by what name the river is known, for upon its restless surface there is no inscription. But it is a great river. Up this river shall ye go, and thence to follow the windings of a smaller and much swifter stream, which doth hurl its clear waters into the murky flood of its parent stream close to where the mountains lift their craggy heads. To reach this point will take days, and it is enough that I direct ye thus far, for long ere ye have reached this crystal stream shall I come and offer counsel. And ye must heed my warnings when I do come, for along the great river are many savage peopje, some of whom do feast upon the flesh of the human. These must ye avoid, and of them shall I come from time to time to warn ye. Go ye to the big river of which I have spoken and keep the main stream until ye see the mountains. I shall be with ye and I shall precede ye in turns, so that ye need have no fear."

She stopped, and for some moments there was a pause. We expected that she would go on, or at least that is what I thought. I had much to ask her, and now seemed a good opportunity, which I resolved to avail myself of.

Before I could speak, however, a deep-drawn breath and an opening of Michael's eyes showed to us that Ayesha was gone.

In accordance with Ayesha's dictation, we at once instituted a search for means of arriving at the Zambesi river, which I was certain was the river she meant, and ultimately succeeded in making arrangements with a Mozambique trader to take us into the mouth of the Zambesi.

A week was consumed ere we reached the river, and as we sailed up the coast I could not help but recall the frightful experience which accompanied the destruction of the dhow and so nearly counted us with the eighteen who went down to their death among the rocks on that awful coast on our last journey.

But there were no mishaps on this occasion and our boat was soon lowered, and she well displayed her lightness and buoyancy as she danced upon the surface of the river. One after another we slid down into her, myself first, then Leo, and finally Michael. As the boat which brought us hither sailed away seaward we watched in silence. As she disappeared behind a point of land I said:

"Well Leo, my boy, here we are once again in the wilderness, and God only knows if we will ever see civilization again. We are bound for heaven-forsaken Kor, and we have the two prospects before us—perishing between here and there, or perishing after we get there," I said.

"Perish or no perish, I am bound for Kor. You have elected to follow me, else would I go alone. Kor may be heaven-forsaken, but if, when I reach there I meet with Ayesha, then is heaven there, for she is surely of heaven. And if she, herself being part of heaven, shall be present in the wilds of Kor, then will heaven also be there," he replied.

"And the heavenly sweet of Ayesha's presence will be mingled with the bitterness of the rigor and risk of our journey and, when we get there, the constant fear of the treacherous Amahaggar; and, if that is not enough, the risk of ever reaching civilization again," I said, jokingly.

"Is it not rather paradoxical, Leo, that the heaven you are

journeying to reach should offer you both bitterness and sweet?"

"The heaven offers nothing but sweet; the bitterness is of earth. Earth's bitterness is everywhere; in the haunts of civilization; in the centers of fashion and gayety; busy London; gay Paris; in country realms; on the high sea; everywhere. The wilderness is not alone the habitat of bitterness," Leo replied.

"And since love is ostensibly the creator of happiness, you follow love that you may enjoy the product of its creation," I said. I was bantering him a little, more to raise my own spirits than for any other reason. For to tell the truth, I felt the presence of a peculiar gloom such as I had never before experienced as we began our trip up the river.

"Well," returned Leo, "love rules the world, be it love of self or love of others."

"Yes," I replied, "and some die for love; but this is a horrible place to come to die."

"What's the difference? The body will decay just as quickly in old England as it does here. If death frees the soul and in its freedom it should mount to that heaven of which we have always been told, what are the odds of a few thousand miles in the geographical point where the soul derives its freedom? And if Ayesha's teachings be correct it will make still less difference."

"With not a stone to mark your resting place."

"Those who need a stone by which to remember me I would as leave would forget. And what matters it whether it be white stones or white bones?"

We were sailing under a gentle but steady breeze, and by this time were some miles up the river. As it was mid-afternoon when we separated from the vessel which brought us to the river's mouth, the sun was by this time tumbling rapidly toward the western horizon and was taking on that ruddy, redish tinge so peculiar to some sunsets. I was watching the rapid changes of coloring in the clouds, when I was suddenly made aware of Ayesha's presence among us by her saying:

"Rest ye here; take in your sails, for wisdom forbids that ye should proceed further until the cloak of night shall cover ye. For but an hour ahead, on the right bank, ye will pass a savage village. This must ye pass in the night, when sleep shall bind them in its spell and darkness make ye as the trees. Keep well into the river lest some sharp eye be still sleepless and espy you. Heed my warning."

That was all she said.

Pursuant to her advice, we took down the sails and, taking our oars, pulled to the left bank where, it being on the opposite side to the village, we deemed there was greater security from being discovered by any that might be wandering about. Here we screened ourselves under some overhanging branches. We had placed our guns ready for instant use in case of attack and, in the interim of waiting, we ate our evening meal.

Darkness came very sudden when it did come, and the first thing we did was to light three of the policemen's lanterns, not knowing what use we might have for them.

At about half-past nine we again started forward, this time with both oars and sails. Leo and I both rowed, while Michael, who held the tiller, kept a sharp look out. Michael had demonstrated his keen sight on many previous occasions and we safely trusted to him. Our course was as near the middle of the river as we could guess. Sure enough, in about an hour and a half we saw the huts of the village outlined against the sky. In two or three places we noticed a glowing light, which we concluded were the remains of their fires.

We passed them in safety, after which we relaxed our intense vigilance and very soon I took the tiller and Michael laid down in the bottom of the boat and slept. Leo and I lit our pipes and smoked in silence for upward of three hours, during which time our boat was sailing merrily before the fresh night breeze. There was little to do but keep the boat in mid-stream, so I urged Leo to join Michael in sleep, assuring him that when I got drowzy



I would wake Michael to take my place. But somehow or other, drowsiness did not once attack me. The fresh night air seemed almost invigorating after the heat of the day, and I do not believe I could have slept had I tried. So all that night I kept the boat in her proper course. Twice, from the distance, came the reverberating roar of the regal lion. Oh, what a blood-curdling sound that was! The air was clear and still. So silent was it that one could almost imagine they could hear the onward rush of the distant planets which sparkled so brilliantly in the sky. Only the gentle ripple of the water, set into motion by the speed of our boat, as if mildly remonstrating for being so rudely hurled from its tranquil rest. Then out of this stillness burst the thunderous voice of the king of beasts, a sound terrible but grand—grand but terrible.

At last the stars began to pale, and the deep blue of the sky turned to grey. Then from behind me, with stealthy pace, crept the ghost-like harbingers of the dawn; the clearness of the night gave way to the mists of the morning, and over the surface of the water and on either bank of the river there appeared the white, vaporous clouds, rolling, dancing, everchanging, as if chasing each other in gentle sport for a brief moment ere being sucked up into the warm embrace of that great orb of light and heat, the King of Day.

And soon he came, touching the treetops with his royal fingers and tinging them with gold. Then our sails; then the surface of the water, till at last his radiant effulgence bathed the landscape in glory, and day was here once again—night had vanished.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THROUGH SAVAGE HAUNTS.

Michael and Leo awoke almost simultaneously soon after sunrise. We ate our breakfast and then my com-

panions insisted that I should sleep. I assured them I had no inclination to sleep, which I had not.

As the sun mounted toward the zenith its heat became so uncomfortable that we took down one of the sails and converted it into an awning in the way we had arranged, and it served its purpose well. In this way we sailed on and on without any new adventure until the middle of the afternoon, when Ayesha again greeted us.

"I am here again," she said. "Doth it not seem that I am fair to keep my promise? For, each span that ye travel, that have I traveled before ye that I may know in time to warn ye of the perils which lie in the path. Even now do I come to warn you that the perilous portion of your journey is close at hand, for on either bank are many of the villages of the savage folk, and ye may even have to fight your way past them."

"We hope that it will not come to that necessity," Leo said. "Is there no way of avoiding them? Can we not pass them in the night as we did the others?"

"Nay; the night is too short," she replied. "For a night and a day shall ye be in danger. And by night must your vigilance be no less sharp than by day, for I have observed among them that some of these savages whom ye are approaching have no regular time to sleep, but like a dog, sleep whenever tired, and thus many of them are about at night."

"And thou, O Holly, for close two days and a night hast thou not slept. And as the vigil of the coming night doth call for thy freshened vigor, let rest and sleep pursue its process of rejuvenation in thy nature during what there is left of the day, for well dost thou need sleep. Darkness will fall ere ye reach the first of these villages, so that there is yet much time. Have ye your weapons ready, both for the night and for the day. And if ye should be so fortunate as to pass these of which I speak, thenceforth the beasts of the plains alone shall offer danger till Kor shall be reached. I will not tarry with ye, for the servant hath need of his strength, which I should use up very rap-

idly. So pursue the course of the journey as I have set forth until I come again."

Following Ayesha's advice I laid down in the boat and went to sleep. I knew nothing until Leo woke me, saying that he thought I had better have something to eat before it got dark. The sun had already sunk out of sight, leaving only a ruddy reflection to mark the place where he went down, and by the time we had finished eating darkness had fallen. Our weapons were in complete readiness, though a fight with savages was the very last thing we desired.

As on the previous night, we lighted three of the dark lamps, though closing the slides so as not to betray ourselves by any light. The wind had dropped until our sails were useless and we had to use our oars. It was about nine o'clock, judging by the progress of the stars, when we reached the first of these villages, which we passed in safety and without observing any evidence of activity. In less than two hours more the second one was reached. We had almost passed it when we heard a sound which seemed very much like a shout or cry. Leo and I, who were both rowing, instinctively held our oars out of the water and listened. It was intensely dark. To the north the atmosphere had been thickening for some time, and by this time that part of the heavens was obscured so that not even a star glinted upon the surface of the water. We could just see the misty, shadowy outlines of the trees against the clouds, but there was nothing for the water to reflect, although to the south the stars were shining brilliantly. We listened intently for a few moments, but the cry was not repeated. Once I thought I heard a splash in the water, but not hearing it again I concluded it was the dart of some fish. We started once more to row but scarcely made two strokes when we again heard the splash, this time right near the boat, as if someone were swimming, and the next minute we felt the boat careen and heard simultaneously a deep, guttural ejaculation. Like a flash, dropping an oar, I seized one of the lamps, opened the slide and turned it in the direction of the weight upon

the boat, and there, having pulled himself half out of the water, was a grinning, woolly-headed savage.

When I turned the light upon him so suddenly I had no other intention than of ascertaining as quickly as possible the nature of the danger we were in, never once thinking what effect so sudden a flash of intense light would have upon so superstitious a being as the poor savage. With a frightened yell he dropped back into the water, and swam for the shore as fast as he could. At this we began to row as fast as we could, and you may be assured that, scared as that poor savage was, he did not make greater effort to get away than we did. Nothing more, however, added itself to our experiences of the night. About four or five miles further on we passed another village, but without any occurrence.

Daylight came once more, and with it came the breeze again, though it had shifted more to the north. It was fully nine o'clock before we discerned any further evidences of human habitation, and this time we came upon it so suddenly as to alarm us. There was a sweeping bend in the river just here, and immediately around the bend was the village, on the farther bank. Thus we were exposed before we knew it, and instinctively I picked up my rifle.

"What are you going to do," Leo asked.

"I don't know what I may do when called upon," I returned.

"Well, you'd better pick up your oars again and pull," he said. "It's time enough to shoot when we are attacked or cornered. I'm not going to be captured, but I'm not going to fight till I have to."

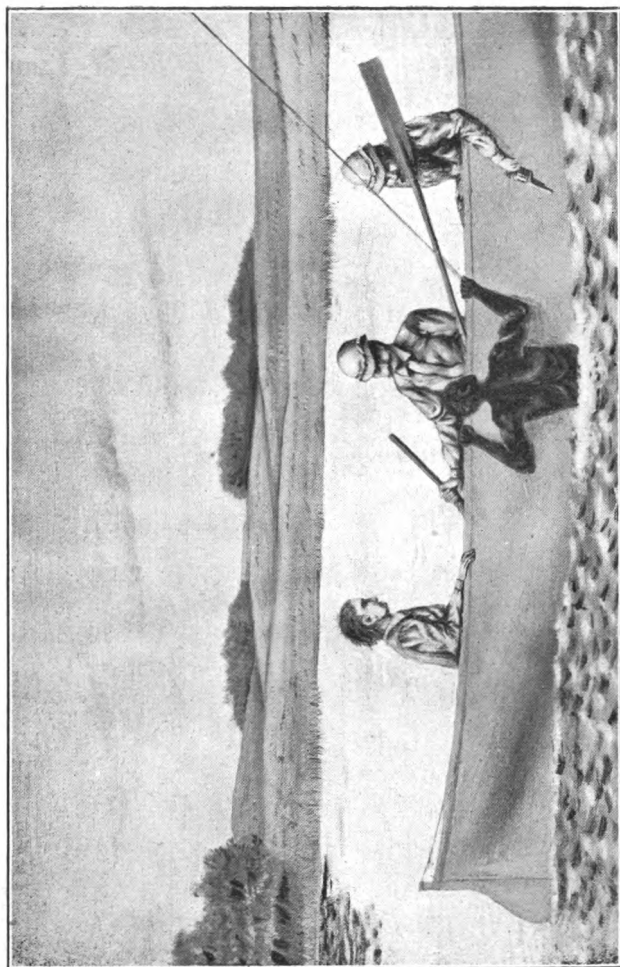
So we hugged the bank and gave all our strength to our oars. To pass them without being seen, however, was an absolute impossibility, and, as I expected, we were soon the object of attention from the shore. I kept watching for their canoes, but strange to say, though living on the river bank they did not seem to have any. Presently, however, we were made aware that in spite of the lack of boats they had no intention of letting us pass unmolested,

or at least uninvestigated, for in a few minutes the river was alive with them, swimming toward us. And fine swimmers they were, too. For a long time it seemed as though they were gaining on us, but slowly we saw the distance increase, and most of them turned back to shore.

There was one, however, who seemed indomitably persistent, and that he was worthy of his effort was certain, for he quickly outdistanced his fellows, and for a while we could scarcely tell whether we were making better time than he or not. For fully a mile he kept up the chase. And so strong was Leo's admiration of his pluck and prowess that he suggested that as this one was now entirely alone and we were so well armed against a single savage, who, in fact, did not appear to be armed at all, we should slow down and let him overtake us and see what he would do. This we did. As he approached we had a better opportunity to watch his movements, which beat anything I ever saw for swimming. His stroke was a long, overhand or trudgeon stroke, and so strong was it that he seemed to fairly shoot through the water like an arrow.

As he came up alongside he grasped the rail of the boat and grinned in a friendly way. There was nothing hostile in that look. Leo motioned to him to get into the boat and sit down, which he did both nimbly and gracefully. I had my revolver in readiness should he make any treacherous movement. Leo took off his watch chain and handed it to the fellow—a fine, stalwart specimen of humanity he was—who looked at it then handed it back. Leo took a piece of cord and, tying its ends to the ends of the chain, put it around the man's neck. He felt of it, then arose and, with grimaces and gesticulations, articulated something (words of his own language, no doubt), jumped into the water and with a parting grin swam to the shore, where for the first time I noticed a number of his tribesmen had gathered. We did not wait to see how he was greeted, we were in too big a hurry to get away.

It was late in the afternoon before we reached any other



I had my revolver in readiness should he make any treacherous movement.



habitations of the natives, and as we espied this one in the distance I suggested that we cut some green branches and cover the side of the boat nearest the village and by keeping as close as possible to the opposite bank so as to blend our branches with the green upon the shore we would run less risk of attracting attention. Whether it was this trick or not I cannot say, but at all events we received no indication that we had been noticed, and we passed in safety and without circumstance.

As we were passing this village a queer sort of feeling or instinct, or something to which I can give no better name, seemed to suggest a wonderful familiarity. I called Leo's attention to it. He reached for the field glasses and after looking a few moments said:

"By George, Uncle, I should say it ought to be familiar. Six months in a place like that ought to make it familiar."

And sure enough; now I recalled it all. This was the very place where we were so long held captive after having left Billali upon our escape from Kor after Ayesha's death.

But neither Leo nor myself had any desire to stop and renew our acquaintance with the people, so we hastened on.

We had not gone many miles further when Ayesha came again.

"The worst is behind," she said. "Humanity doth extend no hand to link this place with Kor. No human shall ye again meet until safe within the walls of the crater. But ye must rest here. Tarry ye until morning lest in the dark ye go too far, for short is the distance to the clear river of which I spake. See! Even now ye can see the mountain tops whereof I told ye."

True enough, in the hazy distance we could discern the misty outlines of the mountains, though it was but faintly. So we dropped our anchor.

The sun was just setting in a glowing, ruddy haze, like some far-off, fierce-burning furnace. As I looked upon the glowing orb I almost fancied myself looking into the



face of some angry, impassioned god, whose cloud-darkened countenance burned red with the fierce flush of his wrath. It is no wonder that those primitives who looked upon the sun as God should be awed by such an appearance into the conception of a wrathful or vengeful God. But to me, profiting by the science of the nineteenth century, this ruddy sun, with all its fierceness, with all its grandeur, with all its fascination, had a different signification. I knew that it betokened an atmospheric revolution and that we could expect a severe storm.

Upon the insistence of Leo, I, together with Michael, fixed myself for sleep. It seemed as if I had scarcely closed my eyes (though Leo told me afterward that I had slept upward of three hours) when I was violently awakened by a terrific report. For a moment I was dazed and bewildered and could not comprehend. All was so dark I could not even see Leo, and for a few seconds I could scarcely collect myself sufficiently to know whether I was in Africa or England or where. But a sudden flash recalled me and I realized the present just as a clap of thunder seemed to rend the air assunder immediately above my head. Michael also was now awake.

Big drops of rain were now falling and we fixed the sails to shelter us. This, however, was no sooner done than the wind blew so violently as to almost carry the sails away. We had to bunch them under the seats to hold them at all. By this time it was raining torrents. The wind blew harder and harder and the river was lashed into fury. My mind at once grasped the danger we were in, i. e., of being dashed against the opposite shore, for every now and then I could feel the anchor give away as if it would catch upon something and be repeatedly torn from its holding. On second thought, however, I realized that even if we were there was little fear of damage as the banks on either side were of mud and soil.

Being thus without shelter we were all but drowned—and by the time the rain ceased, which it did in about fifteen minutes, our boat was half full of water.

The wind lulled; the thunder rolled away into the distance; very shortly the moon showed herself through a rift in the clouds, and gradually, as the storm clouds passed on, the sky cleared behind them, bright in the brilliancy of the stars and the silvery light of the moon. But what a sight it illumined! There we were, three rain-soaked men sitting in a boat with our feet and legs immersed in water.

Had the atmosphere turned chilly, as it so frequently does after a rain, we might have suffered from the effects of our soaking, but as it was, the air being warm and pleasant, we could not be any the worse off. In fact it had a most refreshing effect. We had, of course, plenty of dry clothes in our water-tight lockers but deemed it best to wait for daylight before putting them on, so we simply stripped ourselves of the wet garments and passed the remainder of the night with only such raiment as Mother Nature had given us.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### ACROSS THE STONY PLAIN.

Morning broke with a beauty and splendor that portrayed absolute innocence of the violence wrought in the night. A few fleecy clouds seemed to be drawn into the sun. The freshened leaves and grasses stretched themselves forth in eager welcome to the bright, beaming orb as it rose higher and higher above the eastern hills. The sweet notes of the song birds filled the air; a soft, balmy breeze seemed to lull the soul into perfect rest, a breeze so mild as scarcely to disturb the face of the water, whose smoothness was broken only by the edies formed by the swiftness of the current, and which broke into gentle music as it rippled past our boat. Nature was in her mildest,

sweetest mood, as if to entice the memory away from the recollection of the paroxysmal fury of the night's tempest.

We were sitting in the boat in a condition of absolute nudity, fanned by the soft breeze which, though fresh and rejuvenating, was so mild and pleasantly soothing as to make one loth to put on a garment of any kind. For a long time we remained thus, forgetting for the moment everything in life save the pleasure of basking in the beauty of that morning, until the hot sun began its scorching process upon our naked skin and we were thus recalled to the necessity of protecting ourselves with clothing. But first, as the water seemed so inviting in spite of the muddiness resulting from the heavy rain, we determined to have a good swim, and for the space of half an hour we sported in the yellow stream. Such enjoyment was attended with great danger on account of the crocodiles. This we knew, but in spite of the knowledge plunged boldly in.

How reckless is man! When the prospect of danger is forced upon him against his inclination or desire he quails before it and his cheek blanches at its approach. But when danger, though lying all around, threatens him not he is not satisfied and must tempt and dare it. So it was with us, and as I now look back upon that time the cold chills run up and down my spine at the thought of how possible and even probable it was that one or more or all of us might, without the slightest warning, be drawn under water to serve as a meal for some voracious saurian.

But be the danger however great, we escaped without adventure, finally ending our sport by drawing the boat upon the north bank and emptying her of water.

Leo had made up his mind that he would have a change of diet and as soon as they had donned their clothes he and Michael started out with their guns to see what they could find while I remained behind to build a fire and cook some coffee. Before letting them go I admonished them not to wander too far away for fear of losing themselves, but Leo's ready reply was:

"Never mind, my dear old fellow; if you stay here with

the boat I'll find you, for if I can find the river I can find you."

As they disappeared in the bush I began to look around for wood to start a fire, but was very quickly reminded that I might hunt in vain for an hour to find so much as a single stick of dry wood after the heavy rain. I returned from the search thinking how great would be Leo's disappointment if he secured any game to find no means of cooking it, when looking up suddenly I perceived just emerging from the brush about five hundred yards ahead of me a couple of antelope. I stood perfectly still for a moment. I had incautiously started away from the boat without my gun, and thus, with that beautiful game in front of me, I was chagrined at my helplessness. The boat was about thirty yards away. I determined to try to reach it, so I dropped to the ground and began to wriggle my way through the grass, expecting every moment to see them bound away, but for once (as though it were only once) luck favored me, and I trembled with suppressed excitement as I reached into the boat for the rifle.

The two animals were now stalking across the open, one about three lengths behind the other, with their flanks to me. I determined to get both of them if I could, so I took deliberate aim at the first one, intending to make a quick shot at the second. Simultaneously with the report of the rifle the foremost animal leapt into the air and fell back; the second one gave a bound and was off, followed by my second shot, which missed. I fired a third just as the fleet animal darted into the cover of the brush, and not knowing whether this shot had missed or not I hurried to the spot where it disappeared, only to find no trace of it. I returned to the one I had shot. It was nice and fat and would supply a welcome change after the several days of cold diet. At this moment Leo and Michael came running into sight along the river bank. They did not immediately see me, so I hailed them. They were delighted with my prize.

"We heard you shooting," explained Leo, "and feared

you might have been attacked, so we hastened to your assistance. But I am very glad, my dear old fellow, that you have had such good luck, for we did not see a single live thing that it would pay to point a gun at."

"Maybe you have had luck enough to find an armful of firewood," I suggested.

"Firewood?" he repeated, blankly; "I don't understand, Uncle Horace. What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that as I started out after firewood and you started out after game, I secured no firewood but did secure game, and as you secured no game you might possibly have secured firewood," I explained, amused at his puzzled mein.

"Is that a riddle, Uncle Horace?" he asked. "If it is, I give it up, for I'm no good at guessing riddles; have not a deep enough mind, you know."

"Well, Leo," I said, "I actually do not think there is a dry stick in Africa after the deluge of last night."

He whistled one of those long-drawn, cadent whistles to which the average man so commonly gives vent when suddenly confronted with a difficulty which upsets his plans.

"So!" he ejaculated. "Am I to be thus ruthlessly mocked by that heartless coquette called Fate, who has lured me into the frantic anticipation of a most succulent meal only to declare that I must eat it raw? By Jove, old fellow, we'll have broiled antelope if we have to make a fire of our gunstocks or split up the boat for firewood."

"Hardly that extreme, Leo," I returned.

Then Michael, who had been scratching his head abstractedly during our conversation, said:

"Sure, there's them boxes as are in the boat."

His word instantly reminded me of the cases of canned meat which were stowed in the compartments of the boat, some of which were nearly empty. Leo, however, did not immediately comprehend, so he asked:

"What boxes, Michael?"

"Why, sor, the boxes what the canned meat and stuff was in," Michael explained.

"Well for heaven's sake grease your feet and hustle those boxes out, for the word hungry but faintly describes my condition," said Leo.

Nor did he leave the work alone to Michael. He "hustled" himself, and it was but a matter of moments ere a crackling fire was ready to cook the juicy steaks, and for the first time in many days we stuffed ourselves with fresh meat; in fact we gourmandized.

It was half-past ten when we at last, having satisfied our appetites, again started onward. Leo declared he felt like a new man, and he plied vigorously at the oars as we moved up the stream. We rowed (as the breeze was now against us) but about three hours when we began to notice that the water of the river appeared streaky, the muddy color seeming to be broken by the admixture of a clearer fluid. This circumstance at once impressed me as indicating that we were nearing the clear stream which Ayesha informed us emptied into the Zambesi, and up which we were to proceed in pursuing our journey to Kor. Indeed, it was but a short distance till the two currents, the one from above and that from the clear tributary, swirled and struggled for the mastery of the flood below.

In accordance with Ayesha's instructions, we turned up this tributary, and as we floated on its surface it proved, true to her description, to be clear as crystal. At times along either bank we could see ledges of rock, which plainly accounted for its clearness. As we progressed, these ledges developed into cliffs, and by sundown we were traversing a region of solid rock, having left behind all fertility. Sometimes as our boat glided over the water, which, owing to its depth, looked black and awful, some huge, jagged projection seemed to shoot up to the surface, as if to pierce our frail boat, and more than once I drew back to receive the expected shock of striking one of these only to see it pass beneath, for though it seemed to reach the very surface, it was really quite a bit under water. But the awful blackness which surrounded it on all sides seemed to accentuate its prominence and magnify its proximity,

On such water it was dangerous to travel after dark, so as the sun's effulgence gradually faded into a weak halo above the place where that royal orb had sunk from sight we drew our boat up on the embankment. Embankment, however, is a misnomer for the confines of this stream, for its very formation showed that its bed had been worn into its present shape by the action of its current, a process that must have consumed ages.

Once on our feet, a glance around showed a most desolate landscape. As far as the eye could reach in either direction it beheld nothing but a cheerless, rocky plain, unbroken by anything that would suggest vegetable life, save an occasional scrubby shrub growing out of some crevice in the rock. Evidently, from all I knew of rock formation, this stony field was not a deposit caused by the calcification of sediment. Instead, it appeared as a vast field of solidified matter once molten and sent in a seething, boiling torrent from the depth of Nature's cauldron in the heart of some great volcano, perhaps those of Kor. One fold or layer seemed to have flowed upon another until, its edges cooling, its flux was checked and, the mass congealing, it rested as a pavement for the next fiery flood which, being of lesser volume, reached not quite so far when it in turn cooled, thus creating a succession of steps upward and onward until distance was lost in the twilight.

Here we spent the night. There was nothing inflammable to be obtained so we were obliged to get along without a fire, but, though the moon did not rise until toward midnight, the atmosphere was so clear that the light from the stars made everything bright, and reflecting as it did upon the hard surface of the rock, which as it stretched away was one vast level save for the gradual rise of the steps, it was made possible for us to see for miles in all directions, and should we be threatened by the approach of any wild beast or other danger, a watchful eye could easily perceive its advance in ample time to prepare for it. We thus passed the night, by turns one remaining on guard while the other two slept. But such vigilance was all but

superfluous, since I doubt if any living creature other than a lizard would ever be invited to that dreary waste.

Having breakfasted the next morning, we made an early start. Scarcely five miles had been passed, however, till the river became more shallow, and owing to the projections of water-worn rock, to proceed further in this way was extremely hazzardous. We shortly reached a bar of the rock over which our boat would not float, compelling us to get into the water to pull and work the boat over this miniature reef. The river became shallower and shallower, and we at last concluded that we would do better to pull the boat across the plain on the wheels we had provided for just such an emergency.

It was the work of a few moments to place the boat on the skeleton trucks, and we found it an easy task to roll it over the smooth rock, which in character had not changed.

Before us the panorama was altered. The horizon to the northwest—the direction we were going—began to appear broken and serrated, and by noon we could see that we were approaching a long line of white cliffs gleaming brightly in the mid-day sun and to which there seemed to be no end either east or west. Three hours more brought us to within about five miles of these cliffs, between which and us lay a vast sheet of shallow water. At one point over the crest of the cliff fell in grandeur a volume of water, which, it was plain, fed the river we had been following.

Without detaching the trucks we run the boat into the water once more, and were soon across. On reaching the cliffs they proved to be precipitous, and while, through its having broken and crumbled under the disintegrating process of the ages, we perceived it possible for us to climb the heights ourselves, getting the boat up was an entirely different thing. For a long time we searched for a feasible plan without propounding one.

At length Leo suggested that he find an ascendable point and climb to the top and see from the nature of the ground above if it were possible to haul the boat up by ropes. If there existed any trees or rocks around which



we could bind the ropes this feat could be very easily accomplished.

The cliff was about forty feet high and the athletic Leo found no great difficulty in its ascent, owing to the gradual piling up of greater and smaller fragments that time had broken away from the face of the cliff and which now rested one upon another. This only occurred at certain points, and some of these were so steep as to require the best efforts of the most skillful climber. Reaching the top he called down to say that the country above was like that over which we had been traveling all that day, and that there was not a single thing which would supply an anchorage. I decided to join him above so that we could together devise a scheme. I had a harder time in mounting than did Leo, though my long arms stood me in good stead and I ultimately stood at his side, leaving Michael and the boat below.

Looking off in the direction of our journey we saw but the same ever-rising steps, while at the horizon, in hazy outlines, rose the peaks of mountains.

Were these peaks what was left of the great, fiery fountain from whose bowels had flowed the vast field of volcanic stone? If so, were they identical with the extinct craters of Kor? How should we account for this ridge upon which we were standing? At one time this ridge and that which now forms the bottom of the lake below were obviously on a level, and at some remote period, while yet the convulsions of nature toyed with the earth's crust, some internal change must have rent this great expanse of rock from east to west, and the southern half, meeting least resistance, sunk gradually to its present level, which, declining northward, left a long hollow which eventually filled with water from the river that dashed over the precipice. And whence came the river? Did it help to drain the swamps surrounding Kor?

It would make the story tedious should I attempt to tell in detail our task of getting the boat to the top of the ridge. Suffice it that we found a place a little less steep than

others and by slow degrees worked it upward until we were gratified by seeing it safely and securely on top.

By this time it was dusk, and darkness soon settled over everything. We spent the night as we did the previous one, and in the morning made another start, still following the river course, which seemed to lead straight in the direction of the mountains. These appeared to be but a day's journey when we started, but by evening we seemed to have made scarcely any progress toward them, but they now appeared densely cloud enveloped.

Next morning upon washing our faces in the river the water felt warm; as we proceeded steam arose from the surface becoming more and more dense with each mile, until at last it ended in a vast pool of boiling water, which roared and sizzled and foamed. What its extent was it was impossible to see through the dense clouds of steam which rolled upward from the seething cauldron. Here, then, was the source of the river, and here was the limit of our journey as directed by Ayesha. What was to be our course now? Would she again greet us and instruct us further? Or should we keep on toward the mountains?

One thing was certain: We could not remain here. Near the edge of the pool we could not breathe without inhaling the hot steam, while a little way off there constantly fell a heavy spray caused by the condensation of the steam, and it seemed by contrast so cold as to make us shudder.

We gladly left the vicinity of the boiling basin and proceeded toward the mountains, to the base of which another day's journey brought us. Still there was no sign of Ayesha. To Leo her nonappearance was a simple indication of consent on her part to the course which we were pursuing. To me, however, it had a different significance. The old doubts returned with all their force and I was again ready to declare that there was no Ayesha. The whole thing was once more a delusion, and we were a trio of fools.

Leo, notwithstanding my scoffing, was as firm as ever. No doubt in any way entered his head, and he vowed his

confidence that at the proper time she would come and give us instructions, and that until she did come he would know we were traveling all right.

"Who knows," he asked, "but that this very crater is Kor itself?"

"Scarcely so, Leo," I replied, "for as you know, Kor was entirely environed by swamps."

"True enough, Uncle Horace," he admitted; "and that is the only argument against its being so."

"Well," I then asked, "in the event of her not coming soon, what do you propose to do? How are you going to cross this peak, which from our standpoint seems uncrossable?"

"It may be no more difficult than getting up the cliff," he replied, in a tone which implied absolute satisfaction with his opinion. "To-night we can sleep, and in the morning it will be time enough to seek a pregnable point. We will dissolve this obstacle, Uncle Horace, never fear."

I shrugged my shoulders, rather abashed by Leo's implicit confidence. I ceased my remarks, knowing that at the worst I could but return the way I came, or else die there. So, after a cold meal (for there was still nothing to burn), we fixed ourselves for the night. }

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE BRIGHT BEACON.

It so happened that on this night Michael's turn to watch fell to the early part, then Leo, and lastly myself, which order left me watching when daylight came. My two companions had been sleeping soundly for some time, and as the dawn heightened into daylight I fell into a sort of semi-doze. I was not asleep; I did not even have my

eyes closed. But there was that peculiar feeling of half sleep, half wakefulness which, while I was fully conscious of my surroundings, caused all things to appear as if seen by somebody else. The great mountain, the vast, stony plain, the fleecy clouds tinged with the vari-colored lights of the rising sun were as apparent to me as ever, but I seemed to see only in a passive sense—as if it were not me. While I was fully conscious that I was Horace Holly, I perceived my own self as part of the landscape upon which I was gazing. In short, I was two persons—the seer and the seen, the thinker and the thought of; two individualities with but one sympathy. I seemed to be suspended above myself, from which position I could look down upon myself. Suddenly I seemed to drop from my suspended position, as if having received a shock, and as I and myself seemed to come together I plainly heard, or, I may truthfully say, rather felt than heard, two distinct words:

“Thou doubter!”

This experience came like the shock of a thunderbolt. Whence came the voice, if voice it was? And if it was not a voice what was it? Of course I at once attributed the words to that mystical being whom we had consented to recognize as the immortal part of Ayesha, first of all because all of our fantastic experiences were in some way identified with her. The words did not seem to come from Michael but instead they seemed almost to explode right inside my own head and, as I said, were seemingly felt rather than heard. The sleeping Michael moved, then rose to a sitting position. His eyes were still closed, hence I knew what was coming. Nor was I wrong; for a sarcastic smile lit up his rough countenance and the same two words fell from his lips:

“Thou doubter!”

Then she continued:

“Ah, my Holly, I do despond at thy lack of confidence in thine own senses. Better that thou hadst no sense at all than that thou couldst not credit what thou didst have.

What must I do, O Holly, that I may convince thee? Faith hast thou in abundance, but of confidence art thou sorely in need."

"Such an expression is far from clear, O Ayesha. To me, faith and confidence are but one attribute with two terms to signify it," I said, wondering what she could mean by making such a peculiar distinction.

"Not so, my Holly; at least, not to me. Thou hast faith because thou dost believe absolutely many things which thou hast never proven nor even questioned. Thou dost lack confidence because, though I have repeatedly made promises and told thee of many things yet to be met, in each case my words being verified by after events, thou dost mock me because I do not tell thee where to place each step in the journey. How different is it with Kalikrates! Well mayest thou profit by his example. I am ashamed, O Holly, that thou dost fall into such weakness. Will thy trust in me never be perfect? Perchance not; but one will come to thee to whom thou wilt give thy very soul and than to doubt whom thou wouldst rather sever thine own head. But of my Kalikrates I am proud; nor shall his trust in me be greater than its reward. Come, Kalikrates," she called, in a louder tone, reaching at the same time toward Leo and placing a hand on his arm. "Wake thou! for to-day shall I guide ye in person. The way is long and arduous and a longer distance must be made than usual. Arise, my lord," she continued, as Leo, awakening, stared at her in sleepy surprise; "shake off the fetters of sleep, for glorious day is here once more."

Leo sat upright now. He realized that Ayesha had at last condescended to come again.

"I knew thou wouldst come, O thou queen Ayesha," declared Leo. Are we in the right in our journey? Methinks were it not so thou wouldst have come ere this."

"Right, my beautiful; no turn have ye made, no obstacle overcome, but that Ayesha was there ready, should your own wits fail ye, to lead ye over it. For did I not say I would lead ye safe to Kor?"

"Is this Kor?" Leo asked.

"No," Ayesha replied. "But in a few hours journey ye shall see in the distance the walls which once environed my earthly home. And ere to-morrow's sun shall have given birth to another day ye shall be satisfied that I did not lead ye wrong. And now that ye may breakfast I will release the servant and return again when ye shall be ready to start, for to-day I shall lead."

In a moment Michael was himself again. He appeared to have no realization save that he had slept. We breakfasted, then made things ready to start and waited for our guide. We had not long to wait and we were soon following the burly form of Michael along the foot of the almost perpendicular mountain.

There was a peculiar feeling of wonder and amazement which stole over me as I watched what seemed to be Michael almost glide along ahead of us—a feeling of mingled amazement and admiration. How vividly it recalled that fatal day when we had followed Ayesha to her death! Her lithe, graceful, snake-like ascension of that craggy cliff was almost lived over again in fancy as we saw the naturally clumsy Michael spring lightly on ahead of us. In spite of his burly appearance, that same familiar grace, that rhythmic undulation, that light buoyancy which so characterized Ayesha, were strongly displayed. And as she turned to us, as happened every now and then, there was a trace of that half coquettish, half sympathetic elegance which so many times had all but brought me to her feet. Once, indeed, the resemblance was so great that strong, matter-of-fact Leo broke down and, sinking to the ground, cried and sobbed like a child.

This caused her at once to retrace her steps.

"What grieves thee, Kalikrates," she asked. "Hath thy courage failed thee, and dost thou wish thyself safe once more in the land of thy birth?"

Leo shook his head; he could not speak. I understood, for did I not also feel the impulse that overcame him?

"Mock him not, O Ayesha, with thy taunts of weak-

ness," I said, "for it is thy memory that hath sunk him in grief."

"My memory?" she repeated. "What meanest thou, O Holly, for in what way can the memory of me produce such an effect when I am here, and he hath my love?"

Then I explained as well as I could the deep effect the recollection of that trip to the fatal cave had upon me, and how much I was reminded of that time by this strange journey and seeing in the movements of Michael's body the beloved characteristics of her old self.

At this recital she smiled and became sympathetic.

"Ah, my Kalikrates, that thou shouldst grieve after me in this wise doth in turn grieve me. But why should it be so? I am still here; I am ever with thee. Grieve not, for soon shalt thou and I be truly wed. A few more spans and we will have reached our journey's end. Then shall our life begin."

Leo soon regained composure and we again proceeded on our way. Ayesha, who was a dozen yards ahead of us, made a sudden turn and for a few moments was out of our sight. Following her, we found she had entered a rugged break in the huge wall of stone which seemed to pierce the mountain itself. It proved a narrow defile, and was rough and rocky, so much so that we had difficulty in handling the boat. This difficulty was increased since we were deprived of the assistance of Michael. But on and on we went, deeper and deeper into the heart of the mountain until I, at least, began to feel as if I were forever excluded from association with the world. If we were left to our own resources I doubt if we would ever be able to find our way out. On both sides of us rose the mighty cliffs, exposing to our view just a narrow strip of blue sky. And as we traveled it was plain that our course was downward. After several hours of this travelling we at last stood upon the edge of a precipice. Below us stretched a vast, level plain. The rocky walls mounted upward for hundreds of feet on either side until it described what seemed to be almost a perfect circle, at either end becom-

ing lower until it merged into the ground itself. In the main this plain reminded me of that of Kor, only it was not so large and was not surrounded by the stony eminences.

To the left of us, in hazy outlines, was what looked like ruins similar to those we visited with Ayesha, but they were so far away that I could not be certain. Away to horizon rose more mountains, while between them and us lay what seemed to be green fields. As we joined Ayesha on the brow of the precipice she exclaimed, extending her hand in the direction of the distant mountains:

"Behold, my Kalikrates! Yonder is Kor!"

For a few moments we gazed in silence. Ayesha spoke again.

"To-night, when darkness has settled over the earth, we shall complete our journey, for then the inquisitive Amahaggar will be at rest."

"In what way do we enter Kor?" I asked, more for the sake of saying something than for any other reason.

"By the channel entrance, just as ye did when first ye entered as the captive guests of She-who-must-be-obeyed. Only, my Holly, this time shalt thou be permitted to see, and shalt not be blindfold. For little did I think at that time that thou didst bring my long-awaited Kalikrates."

Then pointing to the shimmering stream to the right, she continued:

"See yon river? That is the river which thou knowest flows through the gates of Kor. This, my Holly, is not the first time thou hast gazed upon it. Thy boat will serve well to complete the journey."

"Ayesha," I said, "thou seemest to be familiar, and perchance in two thousand years thou hast visited this place more than once. Tell me, is that mass I see over here," pointing to my left, "a pile of ruins? It hath such an appearance?"

"Ah, yes; I have been here, but it is long ago. Full fifteen centuries or more ago I was interested in going to these places. There are a number of such cities, some



of which we shall visit together. Yea, those are ruins which ye see, but just what interest they bear I have forgotten; it is so long ago. But we will proceed, for the day is passing, and we must cross to the other side of this crater ere the sun goes down and reach the river by nightfall."

Leo and I were both about worn out, but we pushed on, Ayesha leading the way down from the precipice to the plain below. Had we been left to ourselves I doubt if we would have got down without great difficulty. But Ayesha tripped lightly along as if she were used to the road, and we at last reached the level. Crossing the plain was mere child's play as compared with the roughness that we had just passed through, nevertheless it was growing dark when we turned in the direction of the river, and long before we reached it it became so dark that we could no longer see Ayesha as she went on ahead, pointing out the way over the swampy ground, for we were now among the swamps. Fearing some mishap, or that she (or Michael, I cannot say which) might become separated from us, I called to her.

"Had we not better stop here until morning, O Ayesha, lest in the darkness we should lose you?"

She laughed.

"Nay, Holly," she replied. "Thou couldst not hide thyself from me if thou wouldst, for I have but to leave this body and go direct to thee, then, having found thee, again take up the body and lead it to thee."

"Then canst thou see in the dark?"

"Only to the body is there darkness. Only when trammelled and imprisoned by the flesh; only when blinded by the dense materiality of the mortal condition is there any distinction between light and darkness. The immortal soul knows no darkness, for it is ever sensitive to the essence of all light, which is always present throughout the universe. The light of the sun is but the materialization of this essence of light, just as thy physical body is the materialization of thy soul's individuality. Nay, my Holly; the dawn must see us safe within the walls of Kor,

for thou dost know the Amahaggar is an early riser, and outside the mountain there are many of the younger of them who never saw the dreaded Hiya and who know her only by tradition. These might prove dangerous should ye, as white men—as strangers—fall into their hands. I have not the power to blast at will through this body as through the one which I possessed when incarnated in a physical of my own. Hence must the early dawn, which is the waking time of the Amahaggar, find us where the sight of those garments with which ye are provided, and which are the counterpart of my former habit, shall blast them with very terror.”

“But in this dense darkness it is impossible to proceed,” I remonstrated.

“As thou hast found me true in all other things, as I have brought ye in safety thus far, even with all thy doubts, trust me now in this emergency, for of a verity it shall not be in vain. Follow me, and I will lead ye right,” she said.

“But, O Ayesha, how can we follow thee when thy form is as the darkness itself. We cannot see thee,” I returned.

“Where are your lamps? Give me one that I may guide ye with the light therefrom till the river is reached; then ye have but to launch your boat and follow the river.”

Accordingly, by following the light we soon reached the river, where it took but a few minutes to detach the trucks and launch the boat. But “following the river” was not so easy as it promised. The night was so dark that the face of the water, which never fails to reflect whatever light there may be, could not be seen from the boat. In a few moments we were aground, and it looked as if we would have to give up the effort.

But Ayesha only laughed.

“We shall see,” she said. “Do exactly as I shall say, and I will again guide ye by lighting the way.”

“Thy meaning is obscure,” I returned.

“So, Holly? I will go ahead and light the way.”

“Thou surely dost not mean that thou wilt go ahead of the boat?” I asked, amazed at the proposition.

"And why not, O Holly?"

She paused a moment, then added:

"Dost thou think it strange that I should walk upon the water?"

"Is the body while in thy control so much more buoyant that it will not sink?" I asked. "Or is it that by thy magic thou canst suspend it in air?"

"Magic!" she repeated, in a tone of absolute disgust.

"Hast thou not yet learned to ignore that word? I tell thee there is no such thing as magic."

"Thou must needs forgive me, O Ayesha," I replied.

"I am but a child of habit, and by habit do strange things seem magical."

"I know, O Holly," she responded; "it is the fault of thy boasted civilization. But strange things oftentimes are far more true than strange. Mayhap ye would wish to see me walk upon the water? Not that I would take this clumsy form. But list to me: For the sake of the life of this man, your servant, do not even so much as lay a hand upon him while he lies, as ye would say, asleep. And moreover, do not under any circumstances throw a single ray of light from your lamps upon him, else may ye find his body but a corpse."

"How strange, O Ayesha, that thou shouldst exact such uncalled for conditions!" I exclaimed. "Is the body of Michael so tender under thy spell that a touch from us would produce death? Doth he not merely sleep?"

"Even I, whom ye account so wonderful, cannot oppose the laws of nature," Ayesha returned. "When he sleeps his soul doth but withdraw temporarily from his body of its own volition. But when I thus use him I, by a law of nature, do imprison his soul and wrest it from the body, as it were, by force, retaining it in bondage until I am ready to give it up. During sleep the soul still guards the body; but when the soul is held captive the body must be otherwise guarded. At such times as I choose to show myself by attracting from him the elements necessary, the body is in truth soulless and is sustained only by the

life cord which extends from the body to the soul. Death is caused by the breaking of that magnetic cord. Hence, as violence to the body might result in severing it, I must needs make it plain that the body must not be moved."

"How strange! And yet thou dost say it is natural," I declared.

"Yea; but nature is all strange and is full of strange things. It is only as the novelty wears off that they become less strange. But ye must promise that ye will not disturb the servant."

"A promise is superfluous, O Ayesha," declared Leo, "for thy word is an inviolable law. Command, and we are but the servants of thy edict. Thy injunction regarding the body of Michael will be observed."

"Then look for me in what ye call the darkness and ye shall see me, standing upon the water. Follow ye then the light which I will show and ye shall not stray."

For a few minutes all was quiet. We heard no sound, nor did we see anything, though we strained our eyes with eager expectation. Perhaps a full five minutes had elapsed, when gradually, about nine or ten feet ahead of us, there appeared a filmy, phosphorescent cloud. At first it was very faint, but by rapid degrees it increased in brilliancy until to our astonishment and rapture there, true to her word, stood Ayesha. Her wonted veil was thrown over her right arm, one end falling in folds to her feet while the other twined up the beautiful arm and, passing back of the neck, draped down over the left bosom to below the waist. All the details of her form and raiment were as plain and distinct as upon that eventful day when first I was blinded by her beauty. Her dark eyes scintillated with fire and spirit; her heavy, black tresses seemed to glow in the spectral halo in which she was enveloped. Her rounded arms and heaving breast; the white kirtle, whose soft, clinging folds betrayed in gentle outlines the unmatched beauty of the form beneath; The lovely waist, encircled by the golden snake, and even down to the small pink feet, with their gold studded sandals—nothing was

missing; all was there. Ayesha was there! Or was it an halucination? Hardly the latter, for beneath her the ripples faintly reflected the glowing lumination.

There was a sweet, inviting smile upon her face as she extended her arms as if to urge us toward her. Then she partly turned and, pointing one hand in the direction of Kor, half motioned us to follow. She moved forward. We headed the boat in her direction, and as we rowed after her her form gradually faded back into the phosphorescent cloud, which grew smaller and smaller, until it looked like a revolving ball of silvery mist—an ethereal moon, revolving for our benefit over the surface of the river. This seemed to contract gradually until it ultimately turned into a beautiful purple light, like a bright star—a GUIDING STAR, truly, if there ever was such a thing—guiding us through that darkness in which we otherwise could not see a hand before our faces.

As we rowed steadily onward, following the purple star, turning when it turned, meeting no mishap, I pondered silently but none the less deeply over the phenomenon, and my mind went back through the avenues of tradition to a time some eighteen centuries ago when he whom they call the Saviour of mankind astonished those who were with him by treading the Sea of Galilee. Could it be that the feat of that divine man was but one similar to that of Ayesha? And what was the star that the shepherds saw and which led them to the lowly stable? Was that such an one as this purple beacon which now led us toward our destination? I found no answer to this thought, for how could I tell? The occurrence of over eighteen hundred years back I knew of only by tradition—hearsay—and its credit depended solely upon my faith; I BELIEVED; I did not KNOW. The experience of this night, however, was not the hearsay of another, but an experience that was a part of my own being—my own existence. I relied for the story of old upon a succession of narrators, some of whom might have falsified, some been misled or mistaken, some to have exaggerated a simple tale, and all

of whom were unknown to me; while here I had but to rely on my own senses which, if they cannot be credited, what can?

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### KOR AT LAST.

On and on we went, the darkness continuing just as dense. I strained my eyes in the hope of discerning the outlines of the mountain against the sky, but in vain. In all my travelling, in all my experience, on plain, in forest and in jungle, I never knew a night so dark. Indeed, I did not believe such intense darkness could exist on earth, in which the blackest object showed no contrast to the sky. Surely, the clouds must have been awfully heavy, and as close as they were heavy to produce such an effect. But it was so. Only the plash of the oars broke the stillness as we kept them moving in our efforts to overtake the purple star.

For some time we rowed thus, until the plashing found a faint echo, growing more distinct, and very soon we realized we were in a cavern. The air became damp and cool, which was further proof, and we knew we had entered the tunnel which was the gate of Kor. We did not proceed much farther when the star stood still, so that before we could stop the boat by backwater the bow had passed underneath the star, which, just as we came to a dead stop, descended and actually seemed to enter Michael's body. For a moment we waited for the next development, and it was for a moment only, for almost immediately we heard Ayesha say:

"Ye have gone far enough by the water. Ye are near to the right bank, with your lamps ye can learn how best to get upon the roadway, which ye must know, follows

by the river, as I wot not, ye know ye are now in the very entrance to Kor."

"I do know, O Ayesha", I replied, "but thou rememberest not that Leo was ill almost unto death when we before entered this place, and was insensible to all that passed."

"Ah, yes; I remember. But thou dost know, O Holly, and can recall thy journey through this place."

"Yea; I can recall the sound of the water as it rippled past the stony road, and I recall the close atmosphere; but thou knowest that by thy order mine eyes were covered, and only by feeling the turns of the litter could I mark my way, and thou dost also know that a very poor idea could thus be obtained and even were it light I doubt if I could succeed in passing through," was my reply.

"The same light that guided ye hither will lead ye through this place, and when daylight comes, which is not far distant, ye shall once more be the guests of Ayesha among the tombs of Kor. Thou dost know at least, my Holly, that the rest of the journey is without obstacle, hence withdraw your boat from the water and prepare for it. When ye are ready look again for the star."

With our dark lamps we examined the bank to find a place to land our boat. Our investigations disclosed the fact that the channel of the river was evidently at one time hewn out of the rock, which further demonstrated my former belief that the crater had been drained by the artifice of man in some remote age of the past. At the time of my first trip through this tunnel the water in the river must have been low. At least the level of the water was now scarcely two feet from the level of the roadway, and we were soon high and dry. After having fixed the boat, we had but a moment to wait before the purple star once more preceeded us, and at last led us once more into the open air, as we could readily tell by its freshness, as well as by the discontinuance of the echoes which were caused by the walls of the tunnel. At this

point the bright star once more stopped and disappeared as before, seemingly into Michael, and again Ayesha spoke.

"At last," she said, "we are here. But there is one more feat to accomplish: the deception of the mutes. Give me the raiment which ye have brought for the purpose, that I may array myself therein, for now we are to enter my old apartments."

We brought forth the garments which were to disguise Michael's form. Ayesha made the changes unaided, and when ready asked us to cast our lights upon her to see how she looked. This we did, and laughed at the trick. We could scarcely expect the deception to be detected, so accurate was the counterfeit.

"Leave the boat here until morning, when we will have it removed," Ayesha said.

So, taking our guns and revolvers, we started on the last steps of our journey. The morning was close at hand, and the low-hanging clouds had broken somewhat, for we could now dimly see the great pile of rock towering above us and even discern the dark entrances of the gloomy tombs.

As Ayesha proceeded in advance of us her white winding-sheet was plainly visible now, and she looked more like a spectre than ever she did before. As I watched her the full potency of her daring counterfeit burst upon me. I had always feared that the trick planned upon the terror-imbued Amahaggar folk was too flimsy and transparent; that in some way the counterfeit would be discovered by them and that it would result in our being hot-potted, or at the very least, that we would have to fight like mad men to save ourselves from such a fate. But now, as I saw her, I felt perfectly safe, for while I was conceited enough to claim a superior intelligence and sagacity, and a keener perception, sharpened and developed by education and contact with a higher civilization, I certainly should never have dreamed of such a thing as impersonation had I seen her thus and not known



positively that she was dead. Still less would I suspect were I as superstitiously fearful of her as were these barbarians.

We were now entering that part of the mountain which we knew so well as being the former abiding place of She, and as had always been wont, the lamps were burning dimly, no doubt with the idea that Ayesha was still the queen and demanded it so. The delicate fragrance with which we were familiar was wafted to us long ere we reached the inner chamber. At the entrance to this place were two sleeping mutes, one of whom awoke at Ayesha's approach. As was customary, this mute girl threw herself prone on the floor; but Ayesha stooped and touched her lightly upon the head, a sign she evidently understood, for she arose and returned to the couch, and we passed on.

As we passed at last under that memorable curtain before which I had inwardly trembled on my initial visit to this place, Ayesha bade us seat ourselves, while she herself remained without, dropping the curtain between her and us. A few moments elapsed, then she rejoined us, saying in Greek, which is the language she most commonly used now since speaking through Michael.

"We are here, and ye have need for sleep, so ye must rest. But not long shall ye slumber, for all Kor must hear of the Hiya's presence. And this day shall I demand of the heads of the households a report of their families. All shall hear from She-who-must-be-obeyed in such a way that any tendency to forget their dread of their queen must be corrected and her memory and her law be revived. Those who have feared me must be reminded of their dread; those who are sullen and rebellious, if any such there be, must be quelled at once and the power I held in mortal be reestablished and perpetuated till the need for it no longer exists. So rest ye now, Kalikrates, and thou, O Holly, and leave the next few hours in confidence to me."

This we were not loth to do, as, after our almost twenty-four hours of the hardest kind of travel we were worn out.

How long we slept I do not know, and much less do I

know how long we might have slept had we not been awakened by one of the mute girls. After giving us time to dress, this same mute returned with breakfast, and I warrant you we did it justice, for we had fared rather poorly for a good while, and truth to tell, it seemed almost like getting home to be once more among the tombs. What had transpired while we slept I do not know, but while we were breakfasting, Ayesha joined us. She (or rather he) was still robed in the counterfeit garments. For a few moments she sat in silence and watched us as we ate. Then she said, in Greek:

"Whilst ye have slept I have been busy, so that at this hour my decrees are being carried to the most distant families of the people who know me as their queen. The mutes have I instructed to serve ye as they do me; the soldiers of my body guard are to attend ye at your command; the freedom of all places, even the secret passes to and from the mountain, are to be imparted to ye at your will, and protection and guidance whithersoever ye may wish to go. Ye have but to command and all these are yours; I have ordered it so. For it is my will that thou, my Kalikrates, shalt be King of Kor, even as I have been its queen, for am I not thy spouse, and art thou not my king? And as thou dost call me dead, who other than thee should reign in my place."

She paused for a moment, and I panted for breath at the enormity of the proposition. I could feel the blood rush through my veins from the pressure of the thought, not at the mere prospect of Leo's reigning king, for there would indeed be little glory in a kingship over such savage. But it was the boldness of the plan, the sheer audacity, which shocked me and seemed to almost crush and stifle me with its weight. Ayesha, whose gaze I felt during that short pause, seemed to fathom my thoughts, for she said:

"Thou dost marvel at what I have told thee, O Holly; but it is only for thy safety and that of Kalikrates that I have conceived this." Then, turning to Leo, she con-

tinued, "It is not to gratify any feeling of vanity which thou mayest possess, but which I know thou dost not, that I do this, for too fleeting is the pleasure which is derived from such vaingloriousness. For an earthly kingship is an empty dream, lived in only during the short sleep of mortality, and to which the immortal life knows no counterpart. All the arrogance of my mortal life doth now sit uneasily upon me, and fain would I shun the memory of many things I did, sometimes just for the love of power.

But little need have I to tell ye of the consequences should these bloodthirsty dogs suspect that ye are reliant only upon your own resources. Therefore shall I proclaim thee king of all the people of Kor. And to that end have I already summoned the fathers of all the households of the Amahaggar that they may receive and know thee.

"And now that I have left all things to your comfort, I will release this man, for I have held him a long time; and ye must explain your presence here by saying ye came while he was yet asleep. See, too, that he is not affrighted among these tombs, for he will be surprised upon waking among the people. Tell him naught, save that ye are at Kor, the end of the journey."

Ayesha removed the wrappings, then released Michael. As he awoke, apparently out of a natural sleep, he looked around in a mystified sort of way.

"What's the matter, Michael," asked Leo, as, half dazed, he looked first at us, then at the walls, then at the lamps, and back again to us.

"Where are we," he asked. "Sure this is a room somewhere, but it's a mighty queer room. Where is the boat? And how did I get into this place?"

"We have reached our journey's end, Michael. This is Kor. You have had a long sleep and I'll wager you are hungry," Leo returned, in a noncommittal way.

"Hungry? It seems the last thing I remember was eating. Was that mountain where we stopped the one you was looking for?"

"No; but the one we were looking for, the one we are

now in, was close by that one. But come and eat breakfast, then we will show you around, for there are things to see here of which an European would never dream," Leo said.

Michael ate as if without food for a week. Leo and I just sat and watched him till through. When he had disposed of the last mouthful and he was satisfied, I asked:

"Michael, are you timid?"

"Ye never saw me scared, did ye, Mister Holly," he asked, by way of reply.

"No, Michael," I returned; "I must say you are pretty brave. But even bravery sometimes has its limit. Now, for instance, suppose you should wake up suddenly some time and find you had been sleeping in the heart of a graveyard, what would you think?"

"Sure, there's nothing in that as would scare me. Me father lived next a churchyard when I were a lad, and many's the time o' nights I've crossed among the graves in coming home. For ye see it were a short way, and me father bein' the sexton, I never had no fear of 'em."

"Then you really are not at all afraid of the dead?"

"Sure, and why should I be? There's never a one hurt me yet."

"You are right, Michael; they cannot hurt you. But I am very glad you are not afraid, for to tell you the truth the place where we are sitting now is nothing more than a sepulchre—a tomb."

Michael was a stolid sort of a man, essentially stoical and naturally possessed of perfect self control. He seldom exhibited surprise; he rarely smiled, and was entirely devoid of that impulsive exuberance which is so typical of the average Irishman. He accepted everything in a matter-of-fact way. Indeed, in these respects he was almost like the emotionless Amahaggar. He always seemed to weigh whatever was said to him, not so much to establish its merit, but to ascertain its sincerity. If it was meant sincerely it was taken sincerely; if it was jocose it was accepted as a joke and appreciated as such, though even the best of jokes seldom provoked a smile. So when

I told him we were in a tomb he looked steadily at me for moment to determine whether I was joking or in earnest, then, looking around the room, asked:

"Where is the corpse?"

"Empires have risen and gone to decay; kings have been born, died, and been forgotten; civilization has dissolved into barbarism and barbarism resolved into civilization again since the one who was entombed here passed from this earth to a higher life in the mystical beyond."

My mind wandered back, far back among the labyrinths of the dim past, and I lived in fancy among those ruins of ancient Kor, peopled now with bright forms. Sweet maidens and sturdy youths, breathing their love in tender accents; children sporting in their innocence, while matrons looked on in loving approval; men pursuing their occupations. A sweet dream of peace, almost of sublimity, from which I was recalled with crude abruptness by the matter-of-fact-question:

"How do you know?"

"The suddenness of Michael's question confused me, and for a moment I did not comprehend. How did I know what? Oh, yes: How did I know that the person who had been entombed had passed out so long ago?"

"I know nothing, Michael, save that the people who dwell here now have lived here as a race so long that they have no knowledge of when or whence they came; and that before they came there was nothing but ruins and remains of a race then extinct, who had hewn out these caves for tombs no knowing how many centuries or even thousands of years before. But come; let us go outside, and we will show you things so strange that were you told of them you would refuse to believe."

When we reached the outer air we found that the sun had almost reached the zenith. We had ample time, however, for a stroll through the tombs, Michael being much interested in the embalmed bodies, about which he asked innumerable questions. But though we went from tomb to tomb, it was but the same old story. A young and

pretty maiden here, a bearded patriarch there, while in a another tomb would be a mother with her babe. Michael said it reminded him of Madam Tussaud's.

We wandered on thus until about three o'clock, when we started back to the old apartments in the cave, which we now looked upon as ours. When about half way there who, of all people, should we meet but old Bilalli. He came running toward us, his white hair and long beard streaming in the self-created breeze, his arms extended.

"My old friend the Baboon!" he cried, as he reached us. "Thou hast returned; and the Lion also. But how came ye back? And were ye not afraid? Where went ye when I left ye on the plain? And the Pig; he went not with ye, yet he is here. But methinks the Pig is changed. Nay; this is not the Pig. Where is the Pig?" (Bilalli always called Job the Pig.)

"Thou knowest, my Father, the Pig is dead," I replied.

"Ah, yes; so thou didst say. But thou didst also say that She was dead."

"Hast thou seen her, my Father?" I asked, inwardly amused at the old man's innocence.

"Nay; but she hath this day summoned all the elders to come hither on the third day. I was on my way hence when her messenger overtook me; I learned of your return and hastened back. Hast thou seen her, my Baboon," he asked, looking earnestly into my face, as if to read my answer ere I spoke it.

"Yea, my Father," I replied; "I have seen her."

"Then thou knowest thy father was right. Did I not tell thee she was not dead? I knew she could not die. Thou and I shall perish when the day cometh, but the Hiya will live on and on. But, my Baboon, how came ye back?"

"Ah, my Father," I returned, "great as thou dost think the Hiya, greater yet is she, and greater yet is her power than thou hast even guessed. Thou rememberest thou didst guide us out upon the plain beyond the network of swamps; from there, by hard travelling and with many experiences, we at last reached the ocean and crossed its

vast bosom to our home, thousands of miles away. But far as it was it was not so far as to be beyond her power, for even while in that distant land she, by her magic summons us back, and thou knowest thyself, O my Father, it is folly to oppose her will. So here we are."

In this recital I metamorphosed the truth into the ridiculous, but as this man's attenuated credulity was our safeguard, and as greater miracles to her credit only served to inspire greater fear, I was quite willing to invent monstrous "fish stories" to fill him with deeper awe.

"But how didst thou find thy way through the secret passage to the mountain, my Baboon?" he asked. "Surely, I marvel at thy coming and am much perplexed, for I am told ye came in the night."

"Yea, my Father; we did come in the night. And well mayest thou marvel; greater yet will be thy astonishment when I tell thee that She sent a star, a shining star, to guide us hither—a star that moved on ahead of us to show the way."

"Ah, well, I can believe thee, my Baboon, for have I not seen her wonderful works? But I do marvel that I am still here to meet ye, for I did fear her wrath because I led ye hence."

"What said she when she did learn of our departure?" I asked, almost ashamed of my own hypocrisy.

"Naught did she ever say. Indeed, my Baboon, many seasons have come and gone and she hath not been heard of till this day. But that is her way, and gloomy thoughts do bear me down that it is her will now to punish me therefor. But I did fear for thy safety—thine and the Lion's, for I had not forgotten that once thou didst save my life."

"Never fear, my Father. No hair of thy snowy head shall be harmed. We have found great favor in the eyes of She, and whatever ill will she hath toward thee we will intercede for thee," I said, knowing well that even should there be ill will, she had no power to execute. But my words only partially reassured the old man. He had more fear of her than confidence in me.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## FLESH TO FLESH.

That evening, after we had finished our supper, we determined to retire early, for the short nap of the morning but illy made up for the loss of the night. Besides which our efforts to reach Kor, especily for the twenty-four hours of the trip; where of the most toilsome kind, and we were, not to say tired, but actually worn out. Just why they did so I could not say, but the mutes implied that we were to occupy the large suit in which Ayesha herself had formerly domiciled. Perhaps they were instructed in this regard by Ayesha. Michael was to occupy a small chamber adjoining the large room, while Leo and I were placed in another much more commodious. No sooner had I closed my eyes than I was asleep, yet no sooner was I asleep than I was awakened by something, I knew not what. As all lights had been extinguished, I could see nothing, but I was conscious of the presence of a third person. It could not be Michael; there was a delicacy or an effeminacy which denied him. Perhaps it was one of the mutes. Just then Leo awoke also. He listened for a moment, then in a low voice asked:

“Who is in the room, Uncle Horace?”

I had no time to answer. I felt that the person, whoever it was, was now close to us. I felt (I could not see) that they were bending over us. Then, in a whisper, came the words, in Arabic:

“Be ye not afraid; arise ye both.”

“Who art thou?” asked Leo, half rising.

“Why is it ye should not know me?” was the response, in the same low whisper.

“Thou art Ayesha; I know now,” Leo returned. “Why comest thou at this time? Is aught wrong; or is it just thy pleasure?”



"It is my pleasure and, I hope, thine. Art thou not pleased to have me come?"

"Thou knowest I am pleased; but I feared something was wrong and thou hadst come to give us warning," Leo explained.

Nay, my Lord; all is well. But as Thy servant slept I took advantage of his slumbering to come to thee. See! Give me thy hand and arise, that thou might touch me and know of a truth that it is thy Ayesha."

Leo arose, while I simply raised myself on my elbow. As Ayesha had directly addressed Leo, I did not consider myself as included in the invitation to rise, so I remained, as I say, reclining on my elbow. Her words were all whispered, as I then believed to avoid attention from the attendants; but as I look back upon it this idea was most ridiculous, since none but deaf-mutes were near. Nevertheless, she spoke throughout in a forced whisper.

"Did I not promise thee," she went on, "that if thou camest to Kor thou shouldst meet me face to face and flesh to flesh? Did I not promise that thou shouldst hold me in thy embrace? Here am I, then, and thou shalt embrace me if thou wilt. Yea, and shalt kiss me, too, if thou wilt."

Evidently, from the sound, Leo did not hesitate upon the invitation, and for a moment I was overwhelmed with a feeling of jealous fury, against which I controlled myself with difficulty, being subdued more than anything else by the memory of the words which she spoke at the fatal time when first she unveiled her matchless—her superhuman—loveliness to me: "Know thou, I am not for thee."

Yes; I knew she was not for me, and for a long time now I had only thought of her as being part and parcel of Leo, by her continual persistence in announcing herself as his spouse and claiming him as her lord. I had been brought to look upon their union as part of the natural order, and therefore, when the impropriety of my jealousy occurred to me, I controlled myself and, instead, rejoiced that it became possible for the two to thus meet after being parted by death.

"See!" she exclaimed, still in a whisper, but loud enough to be heard in all corners of the room, "heretofore have I been able to meet thee only in the ungainly form of thy servant, a form into which I but illy fitted and to the embrace of which I could not invite thee. But now do I come as myself, with mine own form; with a flesh which, though not exactly as my former body, is still my flesh. Though dost kiss lips which are mine. Place thy hands upon me, Kalikrates, that thou mayest assure thyself that it is me and not thy servant whose form thou dost hold."

"Much more gladly would I bring a light, that I might see that it is thou, for to see would give greater assurance than to feel," said Leo.

"Nay; that must thou not do—not yet," she replied. "For, as I have told thee, I must follow the laws of nature in this, my coming, and I must gain control of many properties in nature. The greatest opposition of all these properties is that caused by light; hence, since light is hardest to contend against, I seek total darkness until I shall have obtained more perfect mastery of the elements. Then, by degrees, shall I be able to come in light; first a very faint light, but brighter and brighter each time, until thine eyes shall feast upon me and thy craving be gratified."

"And thou, too, O Holly," she continued, coming to the couch where I still lay listening in wonder; "thou, too, shalt feast thine eyes upon loveliness which to thee shall far surpass mine—a beauty and loveliness that is heaven born. In truth, to ye both, while ye stay in Kor, shall heaven descend to bless ye with its grandeur, its peace and its love; for in heaven all is love and peace. Ye of earth and we of heaven shall mingle in blissful happiness, blending the two spheres of mortality and immortality, giving ye contentment in your present lives, and brightest hopes for your future. Heaven to earth shall be united, and the vicissitudes of your earthly lives be rendered as trifles to the glorious promises which the future state doth offer."

"Thy promises, O Ayesha, are enough to transport the

most pessimistic," I exclaimed. "Is it to us alone thou wouldst offer this future if we trust and believe in thee?"

"Thinkest thou, O Holly, that thy belief in me hath been strong enough to merit a reward as especially from me? Ah, no; thou hast doubted all along. Thy presence here is due solely to the confidence which Kalikrates had in my promises. Thou hast but followed what thou didst consider a whim of thy companion. Hence is reward to thee unmerited. My words as to thy future are not promises; it is revelation. I cannot change the order of things, and in the order of things thy future is one of happiness. Thy future happiness exists in thee; not in me. I could not rob thee of that which is thy natural heritage. Hadst thou never come to Kor; hadst thou never heard of me, thou wouldst still attain that happiness which is thine inheritance. But it is in thy present that I shall bless thee. For by that faith in me which doth consist of heeding my instructions I shall lift the veil which doth separate the mortal world from the immortal, and thou shalt learn the beauties of that land to which Death doth pilot all, and the mysteries of the unseen shall be made known; for in that brighter land, as in this of earth, Nature is supreme."

"And is it God's will that thou shouldst reveal all this to me?" I asked. It was so opposite to our common teachings that I was prompted to the question.

"God? What God?" she asked. "There are so many gods I know not which you mean. There are the gods of the Greeks; of the Romans; Baal, Osirus; besides——"

"We of to-day recognize but one god—the living God," I interrupted.

"The living God! Then have all the other gods died since I was at Athens and at Rome?" she asked.

"The gods of the Romans, and Greeks, and Persians, and Egyptians were but myths and have long been forgotten as dieties. Belief in them is now looked upon only as superstition. All civilized nations accept but one God, the living God of the Hebrews," I explained.

"So!" she exclaimed. "Of all the lists of the gods they

at last accepted the most exacting, the most cruel and the most selfish! Well, let them accept what they will, I know no god save Nature. Nature alone doth appeal to me as a god, for in Nature is all that is. But I am willed hither by naught save the love I bear Kalikrates, and the desire to bless him. Only the impulse of mine own heart doth bring me here. And because thou art so close in thy relationship with him whom I love art thou to share in the happiness of the union of heaven and earth.

"But I feel my power waning and must return. In the future I shall come with greater strength and ye shall see me. Fare thee well, my Kalikrates; sleep ye both, that ye may regain what last night ye lost."

We could hear the faint rustle of her drapery as she withdrew, and Leo returned to the couch. At any other time the wonderment of this episode would have kept me awake to ponder over it, but we were so worn out that we were asleep again almost instantly and slept soundly the rest of the night, and it was late when we awoke next morning.

The day was spent in almost idleness. We took Michael to see the many things which Ayesha had shown to us when before at Kor. We visited the great pyramid of human bones, which Michael declared was horrible. In the tomb where lay the two lovers whose embalmed breasts showed the cruel wounds which wrought their deaths, and the inscription "Wedded in death," which brought such a vivid picture to my mind to the time when Ayesha lifted the cloth which covered the faces of the soulless forms of the lovers, he turned away, overcome at the sight. The pictures and inscriptions on the walls of the various tombs I explained as well as I could remember.

Thus we spent the day until eventide, when we received another visit from Ayesha. She came as on the previous night, in total darkness, but she urged us both to place our hands upon her to assure ourselves that it was not Michael's body which we touched. This was certainly enough to satisfy me, at least.

The novelty was by this time wearing off, and I was

beginning to sober sufficiently to inquire into the phenomenon. It was a matter of intense wonder to me how Ayesha, being dead, could come back in her own body so that we could even feel her. We had got used to her using the body Michael. It was a process at once mysterious and unsolvable, but no matter, we had got used to it, so it became habitual to us to look upon it as natural. But the coming back of a disembodied mortal in an embodiment of flesh like that of its mortal state was something so preposterously impossible in theory that the question, "How is it done?" became of vital interest at the moment. So, while we were gradually awaking from our wonder and amazement, I asked:

"How is it, O Ayesha, that thou canst thus come to us? For even art thou in thine own flesh—the flesh of thy former self. By what strange process is it accomplished? I know that thou wilt say it is a law of nature, but fain would I have thee explain, if thou wilt, for it is so weird and strange."

"The flesh, the body, O Holly, is but an environment of the soul—a clothing, an armor, attracted to it for its requirement. The soul itself is the center of a pulsative force which doth attract and repel, according to the nature of the pulsation. As the soul pulsateth, so also doth everything which is in nature. Each pulsation which doth emanate from the soul goeth out into the universe to meet, mingle with and contend against other pulsations which emanate from other souls and other phases of nature. One pulsation which it doth meet will be of like kind, and they do mingle and affinitize; where one goeth there goeth also the other; On the other hand, contrary pulsations will be met which are entirely opposite in kind and, having no affinity, are repelled, with greater or less violence, according to the intensity of the opposition. But all of these pulsations, from whatever source they emanate, return again to the center whence they started. And with them when they return come also all those other pulsations of like character with which they mingled, and likewise those

other pulsations, returning to their respective centers, carry these pulsations, so that by this intermingling all those centers which have sent forth harmonious pulsations are brought into touch one with the other.

"In this wise the soul, incarnating, attracts unto itself by these pulsations such atomic portions of the material universe as give pulsations which are in harmony. Thus a soul which doth pulsate with the emotion of love finds its corresponding pulsation in all that is loving and lovable. If the emotion be one of hatred, all that is hateful in nature responds. The pulsation of joy will make all nature appear as laughing, while the pulsation of grief doth turn all the brightness of the universe into gloom and even the brilliancy and glory of the sun changes to a sickly palor.

"So the soul's emotions, attracting these atoms, doth build about itself an environment of matter which ye call flesh, and the entire mass ye call the body. In its nature this body corresponds with the soul, hence a person's physical individuality. The impulse of an infant is to live and grow, and it attracteth unto itself life and growth. The impulse of a youth is to become strong, and it attracteth strength. The impulse of the man of three score is that of tired disappointment and a weariness of the struggle with the world, hence he attracteth senility, and his physical grows weak.

"For two thousand years hath my emotion been one of love for Kalikrates. For two thousand years have I been faithful and patient, waiting and longing for the return of my beloved, whom in a fit of jealous passion I slew in the heart of the mountain so long, long ago. O Kalikrates, though I slew thee then I have lived for thee since, and in living for thee I had determined thou shouldst forgive me and love me, for my beauty's sake if not for aught else. Hence hath my beauty been the crowning impulse of my life till thou shouldst come. That I have attracted beauty and become beautiful I have no need to tell thee. Though the beautiful body which brought thee so quickly to thy knees when first thou didst feast thine eyes upon it is gone

and is no more, the soul still lives. I am that soul. It was not the body that loved thee, Kalikrates; it was the soul. And as that soul still liveth, so that soul still loveth. The soul is scarcely changed since it departed out of its environment of flesh, and so its attractive force is unchanged. The particles in nature which it did attract are like unto those which it doth attract now, only that then its impulse was to hold and retain the particles as a permanent environment; but now it is not so, for I come in this wise only that I can make thee feel and know that I am with thee; to encourage thee; to develop and strengthen thy love and make thee look forward to a time when thou, too, shalt cast off thy house of clay and join me in the ethereal realms of immortality. The impulse of my soul in this present is to greet thee as thou art, a being of flesh, for to flesh only art thou sensible. Thus do I attract a body like unto that which I formerly possessed, for perchance thou dost not know, my Kalikrates, or thou, O Holly, that that body was but a physical reflection of the soul; and as the former body was, so is this which ye now feel a reflection of the same soul. Hence this is a reproduction of the former."

"But as I have said, my present impulse is not to stay, therefore do I attract but a temporary environment, which dissolves as soon as the impulse is satisfied, and then do I become invisible and intangible."

"But whence cometh that which thou dost attract to thyself? And when thou dost depart, whither doth it go?" I asked. I was bewildered by her explanation, and it seemed to circulate through my brain in a confused mass.

"The very air is composed of matter. Rub thy finger upon these hard walls and, though thou canst not conceive of it, thou dost rub off some of the stone. Through the pores of thy flesh dost thou send forth atoms. The gentle breeze, even, doth wear away the hard rock. All of these particles are, more or less, components of the physical body—flesh. And if thou, if thy soul, in thy mortal state, canst attract these particles, why cannot my

soul in its immortal state do likewise. Thinkest thou that thou art greater in thy body of flesh than thou wilt be when thou hast progressed beyond its need? Nay; nature is but nature, and the flesh is a servant to the soul," she replied.

"This is a strange philosophy, O Ayesha," I said. "Much of it I cannot comprehend. True, it is one of the conclusions of modern science that all things pulsate, or, as the scientific fraternity say; vibrate. And I understand these vibrations—which thou dost call-pulsations—are but waves, which travel to and fro throughout the universe. We have the sound waves; we have the light waves; we have the heat waves; in short, all physical phenomena are traced in this age to vibratory motion. But I marvel that thou shouldst understand this, since thou hast for so many centuries been cooped up in Kor."

"Again thou dost think thy age the only age of wisdom. Thou dost err. Two thousand years ago did I teach this philosophy and was scoffed at, till, in disgust with the world and its ignorance, I shut myself up in Kor. But scoffing cannot change truth, which is unchangeable. So! thou sayest that this truth, this knowledge of pulsation, or vibrations, as thou dost call them, is known and accepted to-day. Well, it is time. But knowest thou not, O Holly, that if thou drop a pebble in the midst of a lake it will send ripples to the farthestmost shore, and that, reaching the shore the ripples will return again to the place where thou dost drop the pebble? Are not those ripples the effect of pulsations?"

"Thou art right, O Ayesha," I replied. "But more wonderful still are the pulsations or vibrations by which messages are sent almost instantly to great distances, and known as telegrams. Still more so the production of what is known as electric light, which is created solely by the pulsations of a few pieces of sheet copper on a peculiarly constructed wheel which they call a commutator. These are commonplaces of to-day, O Ayesha, and they do well demonstrate the philosophy of the pulsations.



But, though in my land I am called a learned man, I am lost in thy theory. It is too deep—too complex; I must think upon it. Fain would I know, but I am not yet sufficiently grown in intellect.”

“Then thou must take thy lessons slowly,” she said. “Suffice this for the present, that thou mayest ponder upon it, for much of it wilt thou digest. So let me prepare ye for to-morrow, for shall I then give instructions and admonishment to all the elders of the tribes, to whom I have already sent orders to appear here in my presence. Until to-morrow, then, fare ye well. But thou, Kalikrates, I cannot leave save as becomes thy spouse, so shall I kiss thee farewell.”

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE SUPREME TEST.

The next day all was bustle and excitement in Kor. Early in the morning the caravans began to arrive, bringing the patriarchs from all the outlying households. From the appearance of these I came to the conclusion that old Bilalli was by far the most intelligent and civilized looking among them. Most of them were only fair specimens of Amahaggar. All, however, seemed to wear a similar white robe and were decorated with long beards, though few were as long or as white as Bilalli's.”

About nine o'clock they began to congregate in the great central cave where Ayesha had sat in judgment upon the bloodthirsty wretches who had so viciously attacked us while were the guests of Bilalli previous to our first entrance to the home of She-who-must-be-obeyed. Leo and I turned our steps in the same direction.

Michael disappeared from our company about half an hour before and we did not know whither nor why. But his absence was accounted for shortly after our arrival at

the big cave, when we heard the murmur of expectation, which quickly rose to the cry of, "The Hiya; the Hiya!" and every man sprawled himself on the ground, Leo and I alone remaining standing. Then the veiled form appeared, surrounded by the body guard and followed by a number of the mutes. She walked straight to the raised dais, upon which had been placed three seats.

Leo and I were intensely interested in this event, for here was to be the greatest test of Ayesha's bold scheme of impersonation. If it stood the test of all these patriarchs it certainly would stand anything. I fixed my eyes upon her the moment she came in sight and scrutinized her thoroughly. And well did the counterfeit resemble the real. I certainly could not call the old men fools for being deluded, for did I not know of a certainty that she was dead, and had I myself not assisted in securing the apparel in which she was robed, I would have sworn it was her. Of course, the necessity for the veil made the counterfeit possible, and there was but one flaw to the eye, and that was, as Leo and I had foreseen, the large feet, which so strongly contrasted with the dainty little toes of Ayesha herself.

In every move, every action and gesture; the haughty, commanding presence; the firm yet elastic step; the proud poise of the head—all, all was there. And as she stepped upon the dais and stood there in magnificent silence for a few moments I felt again the old feeling of almost worshipful reverence, mingled with burning ardor. How she could transform Michael's clumsy appearance into a presence of such elegance and grace was as much a marvel to me as any of her other wonders, and I even began to believe she could blast, too, if she willed. There seemed no end to her wonderful accomplishments.

For a few hushed moments she stood in her regal silence, then said, in Greek:

"Come, Kalikrates, and thou, too, O Holly; sit ye here in the place I have had provided, for it doth fit the present that ye should be close to me."

She waited in calm grandeur while we mounted the daiz, then motioned us to our respective places, Leo on the right and I on the left side of the chair which she was to occupy. Then, after we were seated, she again turned to the crawling slaves, saying, now in Arabic:

"It hath been my custom, as ye well know, to call ye at times to this place that ye may hear my will in such matters as I see fit and to answer for the conduct of your families. Little fault have I to find in general, for throughout the families all has been unusually quiet. But there is one among ye whose children have proved rebellious. Who is this?"

From among the group of sprawling serfs an old man rose to his knees, his arms covering his face.

"Here, O Queen," he cried, in accents of fear and terror. "I am he whose children have been wayward. But be merciful, O Queen; visit not thy wrath upon thy servant because of the sinfulness of one of his children."

"Come hither, old man," she commanded, "that I may hear thy story and judge thee as thy conduct dost merit."

Slowly the old man began to creep, wriggle and squirm, toward the daiz, crying out ever and anon:

"O Hiya! O thou Queen! have mercy! have mercy!"

When the squirming serf at last reached the daiz Ayesha spoke again.

"Thou didst think thou couldst hide this thing from me. Knowest thou not, old man, that naught could be hidden in my kingdom? Wherefore, then, didst thou think to conceal this from me? Speak!"

"O Queen," replied the old man in a most piteous tone, "wouldst thou find fault if the tender lamb did conceal himself from the terrible lion? Much do I fear thee, O Queen, and canst thou blame me if in my fear of thee I first did punish the offender then counseled my children to bear silence, lest we all should suffer from thy wrath?"

"Thou knowest, old man, dost thou not, that sedition among ye is the greatest crime against my will? Wherefore dost thou not teach thy children this?"

"I do, O Queen; I do. But sometimes there doth come one among us who is wayward and rebellious, and in an unexpected moment the evil is done. It is not for us to stay it; we are only left to punish. Swift was the punishment in this case, for I did slay with mine own hand the she-wolf who did incite my children against thee."

"Art thou not afeared that I will blast thee for thy lax hold upon the doings of thy children?" Ayesha asked, the old fierceness of her aroused nature sounding in her voice which in the past had made even me quail. I could almost feel the gleam of those dark eyes as the creeping man cringed with terror. "Do I not look to thee that thine household should give me no offense? And if thou canst not keep thy house in order, what dost thou merit at my hands?"

But the man only whined:

"O Hiya; O Queen! Be merciful! For this is the first offense that has yet come from mine household."

"Thou speakest aright; and for that reason only do I spare thee. Let no such sedition find birth in thy domain. Well it is for the woman that thou didst slay her, for hadst thou not done so, her torture would have been far worse than death. Go, then; and take heed that thou hast not to answer for disobedience in the future."

The old man crawled back to his place in the group, and I must say his return was much more alacritous than his approach. From what I had learned of their fear of the dreaded Hiya, I knew he was thanking his stars that he escaped at all. I learned from Ayesha afterward that there had been a certain woman among the man's people who had succeeded in making many of the others believe she was inspired to deliver them from the power of Ayesha, and she, with her followers, had planned an attack, and when the horrified father learned of it, which he did through a dream, he put the woman to death, inflicted punishment more or less severe upon others, and then hushed it up.

In her immortal state Ayesha, as she herself explained, had been an invisible witness of the whole affair, hence

her knowledge of it. Indeed, she even went so far as to tell me that she had been the means of causing him to dream as he did, which dream she declared was but the reflection of the thought transmitted from her to him. A strange and inexplicable hypothesis, surely.

As soon as the old man regained his place among the others Ayesha again addressed them, saying:

"Stand! Rise ye to your feet! For I would have ye this day look upon me and those who are with me."

Slowly and with trepidation they arose. Then she said:

"Close seventy generations of such as ye have I seen come and go. For twenty centuries have I dwelt here as your queen. Think ye that these sums of years have been spent here only that I may rule such as ye and your children? No, no; there is but little glory in that, for what are ye to me that I should spend so long a life among ye. In vain may ye strive for an understanding of my remaining here. But this day have I brought ye hither, for ye must know. To ye, whose lives are so short, things come and go quickly, and each life is lived in its entirety in what is scarcely more than one short breath. Each of ye hath had his childhood, his youth, his early manhood, his prime, and now ye are all hoary with age. As to your short lives the periods are short, so to my greater life are the periods greater. In what period of life think ye I am now? There is not one of ye can tell. Who of you hath ever heard of me as a child? Is there recollection remote enough in the most ancient of your ancestors to recall me as a young maiden? Hath any one of ye ever heard from your great grandsires any hint that I have changed in one particular as far back as memory goeth? Nay; there's not one among ye that hath heard of such.

"Your childhood ye spent in the heedless associations of children; your youth in pleasure and sport. Then cometh a time when each heart doth yearn for the correspondence which doth exist only in connubial companionship. When that time comes ye seek long and patiently for the one whom the heart doth crave. So it is with me.

While ye would deem two years a long wait, I have waited two thousand years. But at last the time hath come when my waiting doth cease, and from this time ye have not only a queen, but a king!" Then, stepping toward Leo, she took his hand and, leading him toward the daiz, continued, "See! Here is your king. Him shall ye serve even as ye do me.

"This is what I brought ye hither to learn and to know, that ye may return to your own places and announce this to all. And when he or his companions do appear among your children, see that all is properly done to further their pleasure and their comfort. Now ye may go."

Thus adjured they wasted no time in getting away, and the rest of us, including the guards and mutes, formed a procession and marched back to the chambers, at the entrance to which Ayesha dismissed the guards and mutes and entered with us.

"My ruse worked well," she said, as soon as we were alone. "What thinkest thou, O Holly? What a collection of groveling fools! Hast thou ever seen the like? Ah, well; this is a necessary step in our plan, and I doubt not that I have insured your safety among these people. And now, Kalikrates, must thou take up thy scepter and rule with an iron hand, for these savages know not kindness of heart, nor can they appreciate mercy or charity. Fear for their own selves and cruelty toward others are their swaying attributes. They must fear thee or thou wilt have grave need to fear them. Enter upon thy reign as becomes a king, and let thy subjects feel thy power. And now, if for a few days it should so happen that I did not come to greet ye, think not that I have forgotten ye nor deem me any farther away. The servant hath been much taxed of late and hath much need of rest, hence if ye miss me for a period, know ye that I will return in time."

While she had been saying this she had been removing the apparel which had so well assisted in deluding the poor Amahaggar, and by the time Michael recovered consciousness he was once more arrayed in his own clothes.

Ayesha had carried out this program with so serious a mein that it was some time before the ludicrous side of it suggested itself to me with full force. But when it did I laughed outright in so boisterous a manner that Leo exclaimed:

"What ails you, Uncle Horace? Have you become hysterical?"

"Perhaps I have, Leo," I responded, "but I think that the present state of affairs would warrant hysteria in most anybody. Think of the comicality of your title! What would your colleagues of Cambridge think of 'Leo, the King of the Cannibal Islands,' for I vow that while your kingdom is not upon an island, you are certainly the 'King of Cannibals.'"

Leo joined in my laughter. He appreciated fully the humor of the position.

"Fancy yourself, Leo, with a barbaric crown tilted on the side of your head and a spiked mace in your hand!" I said. I was in the mood to exaggerate the funny side of it.

"I think, my dear old fellow, that I shall be far more likely to take my rifle for a scepter and, forgetting crown and kingdom, hie me to the haunts of the water buffalo. And mayhap the 'King of the Cannibals' may get an opportunity to measure his power against the king of beasts, or I may even get a chance at an elephant if any should happen to come so far south."

"Yes, I am very much of the opinion that the responsibility of your kingdom will go begging so far as any serious attention from you is concerned," I declared.

"Well, what's the use of being a king if I cannot turn my office into an enhancement of my own pleasure and the gratification of my taste. I think about the first thing I shall do is to organize a number of squads especially for hunting expeditions," he returned.

"A capital idea, my boy," I exclaimed. For, while I had never thought of such a thing, I was at once enamored with it. "There's nothing could be better for our pastime. And we can also form expeditions for anti-

quarian and archæological research among the various ruins. I would like to go again to visit that ancient city yonder," pointing to the mass of ruins in the distance.

"I notice, my dear avuncular relative," Leo said, jestingly, in a tone of pretended hauteur, "that you have prematurely acquired the objectionable habit of saying 'we' when referring to the 'king.' Please collect your thoughts sufficiently to remember that the 'King of Kor' is not a plural personage. It is I, the King, who will form these expeditions, not 'we.' "

"Your majesty will surely pardon my too familiar combining of my humble self with your royal highness in one pronoun," I apologized, with a low, mock obeisance.

"You are in luck that I don't have you hot-potted," he returned. "But I'll tell you what it is, Uncle Horace, laying all jokes aside, I'm hungry, and I see the sun has reached mid-heaven, so I move we hunt up the mutes who serve our meals and see what they have for our royal dinner."

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### A DEVIL.

A month or more had passed. During this time Leo had carried out his plan to a certain extent and we had gone on several hunting expeditions, once travelling a long distance to the north, where we came upon a dense jungle. But, while we did not enter very deeply into it, we found nothing but swarms of chattering monkeys, though on two occasions, in the silence of the night, we heard the mighty roar of the lion, but it sounded very distant. On another occasion, however, while we were returning from a hunt we were fortunate enough to encounter two of these beasts, a male and a female. When espied by our party they were



between three and four hundred yards away. Taking his express rifle, Leo got down from his litter or palanquin. I followed him with my rifle, to be ready in case he should fail. He crouched down, took a patient aim, and almost before I heard the crack of the rifle I saw the great beast, the male lion, give a leap, rare up, and then fall back. The female pricked her ears and looked in surprise at her companion. In another instant the second crack sounded, and with a roar of rage and pain the female tossed her head and began to whirl around. This made another shot at her difficult, but Leo's rifle spoke again and the hind parts dropped. She clawed the ground ferociously. Her face was from us. Leo shot again. For a moment she ceased her clawing and stood—or rather sat—still, then, without further struggle, fell over sideways.

We hastened to the spot. The big male lion had been shot stone dead. The ball had entered just in front of the fore leg as he stood facing us and had gone straight to the heart. The first shot at the female had pierced the shoulder and gone downward; the second hit her in the hip and caused her to fall, while the third, fired as the beast was turned from us, entered the brain from behind the ear, causing her death.

As this was the first big game we had killed in the sight of our Amahaggar companions their astonishment was unbounded. They could not comprehend how we could kill so powerful a beast as the lion at that, to them, very great distance. It was miraculous and mysterious. Taking advantage of their mystification, and deeming it an opportunity to impress their superstitious minds, I hastened to ask:

"What think ye of that magic whereby the king of beasts is slain with such dispatch ere he is ware of his danger?"

"It is wonderful! wonderful!" they replied.

The two animals were skinned and the skins carried back as trophies.

Apart from this there was little of moment occurred that was in any way connected with the natives. Ayesha,

meanwhile, continued her visits. For a time she came only as heretofore—in the dark, though she kept promising that she would yet come in the light and we should gaze again on her wonderful beauty.

One day she instructed us to make a screen for one of our lamps which would soften the light, and so arrange it that she could increase or reduce the amount of light as she at the moment required.

"Let it be so that the light shall pass through a screen of linen, with a curtain which may be raised or lowered, as I see fit," she said, "for only in a dim light can I come at first, increasing it by degrees, until at last ye can remove the screen altogether."

So we arranged a sort of box, in which we placed one of the dark lamps, with a frame over which was stretched a piece of linen. Over this we placed a piece of skin, so fixed that by means of strings and a small weight it could be made more or less dark. This simple arrangement seemed to answer her need, for she came, at first with the curtain raised just enough to enable us to see her outlines dimly, more like a shadow than otherwise. But, little by little, from night to night, she raised the skin curtain until we could see her perfectly.

There is no need to describe her. She was just as when we first saw her, three years before only her garments seemed a purer and more delicate white; her face beamed with an ethereal light.

Michael was always rendered unconscious previous to her coming, just as ever. As the light in the room became stronger we learned that Michael during these times lay upon a stone couch in one corner of the room, his head covered with a cloth. Ayesha had admonished us on more than one occasion never to remove the cloth from his head, lest his life should pay the penalty. We therefore considered him on such occasions with a feeling of sacred awe. One night, about six weeks after we had arrived at Kor, while we were sitting, in a group, waiting as usual for Ayesha to overcome Michael and take him to

the stone couch, a curious, unexpected and alarming circumstance occurred which frightened us considerably. Instead of changing from his normal condition to one of apparent sleep, as was his wont, after closing his eyes he arose and started, then staggered and fell prone, kicking and writhing. We were shocked; we knew not what to do. We had so often been cautioned against interfering with him at these times that we knew not whether to try and assist him or not. We just stood and looked at him in bewilderment and horror. His writhings and bodily contortions increased; he gnashed his teeth savagely and began to drule at the mouth. At the sight my mind was at once recalled to the eventful night of the festival, when the devil-possessed dancer called for the blood of the black goat. That scene was lived over again in all its revolting details, and I almost wondered if the "devil of Kor" had now possessed Michael. At last I resolved to chance a violation of Ayesha's instructions, and I hurriedly procured my brandy flask and forcibly poured a little of its contents down his throat. His writhings ceased and two or three shudders passed from his feet to his head (the opposite of what would be expected), a deep sigh escaped him and he was quiet, as if asleep. For a short time he rested thus, then his eyes opened, and about fifteen minutes afterwards you would never have known anything had ailed him and he was entirely without any knowledge of what had occurred. This was all very strange to me. Michael evidently had been taken with a fit of some kind, but the unaccountable part was that he did not even seem weakened by it. Ayesha did not come that night, and we had to retire without our usual greeting from her.

The next night the same thing was repeated and poor Michael seemed to suffer worse than before. When I again administered the brandy he resisted and acted more like a violent lunatic than anything else, for he struck at me most viciously, and Leo had finally to help me to get the liquor down his throat, which as soon as accomplished had the resuscitating effect as on the preceeding night, and

again he seemed thoroughly unconscious of all that he had passed through.

On the fourth and fifth nights this same thing recurred, until we at last became frightened. We had not heard from Ayesha in any way during this time, and we felt that something was wrong and at last concluded that the best thing we could do was to get away from Kor just as quickly as possible. To this end we were getting our boat ready, stocking it with provisions, etcetera, with the intention of leaving some time in the night by way of the river. While we were thus employed Michael, who was assisting us, suddenly dropped what he had in his hands. Turning to him in our astonishment, we saw at once by the expression of his face that Ayesha was once more present. This was a most welcome surprise, and we stopped everything to listen to what she had to say.

"So ye are preparing to go," she said.

"We were, O Ayesha," I replied; "for such strange things have transpired of late that we had become alarmed, and thou didst not come to counsel with us. Hence, since Michael hath been so grievously attacked, we thought our safety greater among civilization."

Ayesha laughed.

"Perchance your fears were justifiable," she said, "but there is no cause for flight. Desist in your efforts, for in Kor must ye stay."

"But wherefore is it that Michael should be afflicted as he has been? In place of thy coming he doth suffer an affliction," I returned.

"Not an affliction, O Holly; though it is an unfortunate circumstance, with which I have to cope."

"But wherefore is it?" I repeated. "Were I one with the superstitious Amahaggar I should say it was the devil, like the one at the dance, who, thou rememberest, called so loudly for the black goat."

Ayesha laughed again, seemingly amused at my comparison.

"Thou art right, O Holly, for it is indeed much the

same. But to say 'a' devil instead of 'the' devil would far better describe, for there is a horde of 'devils' on the immortal side of life. But I will be charitable, and spare this one from so unworthy a term, for ye would be indeed surprised to know. But leave that to the future; ere long ye shall talk to this devil just as ye now talk to me. More; ye shall even see as ye have seen me. Wait ye to-night in the place where ye have been wont to receive me, and if the servant should again be so affected, administer not that which thou hast in the vial, but have clear, cold water ready and dash it suddenly in his face. Be not hasty in this matter; apply the water only when he becomes bad. Endeavor first to establish correspondence by way of conversation. Make verbal inquiries as to who it is; what is their desire. Encourage them to talk, and let them know that they must either talk or be gone, for, understand ye, it is a resident of the immortal world who thus surreptitiously acts upon thy servant—one who doth trouble me much. It is best that they should speak; is best that that they should make themselves known; so encourage them to speak freely but be firm and decided with them, and if they refuse to talk, insist that they depart until willing to do so, after which, if they still persist in abusing the body of thy servant, dash the cold water upon them as I have directed. Repeat this until they talk or until no longer necessary."

"Thou sayest, O Ayesha, that there is a hoard of devils in immortal life. Are we, then, always exposed to the evils of these; and if so, since thou dost scout and deride the theory of salvation which I have always been taught, what is to protect us from them?"

"Thine own soul's strength. There is thy protection. Evil findeth correspondence only in evil, and it fleeth from good. Hence, if thy soul doth pulsate with all that is good, evil can find no sustenance. Only the evil that is within thee is receptive to the evil with which thou dost come in contact. Nor is it, in this case, that ye or your servant hath the evil that attracteth this one. It is, in-

deed, the evil which I wrought during my mortal existence which here hath its counterpart. It is revenge. Neither thee, nor Kalikrates, nor yet the servant shall in any way suffer in this wise, for in me lies the cause, and it is for me to overcome. Thou knowest, O Holly, that my life was not the most spiritual. Jealousy, hatred, spite and cruelty formed the spirit of my life until Kalikrates came once more, then by degrees love softened my nature, and I began to regret my wrong deeds. But they are done, and by their doing have I invited their return unto me. For, as I did tell thee of the law of pulsations, each evil that I committed was the effect of an evil pulsation which germinated in my soul. And as each pulsation must return to its source, so mine are returning to me now, and there is naught for me but to gather them in, suffer the pangs of their coming, absorb them, and by good thoughts and good deeds turn them into good ere I send them forth once more as pulsations. Then when they return again to me they will fill me with joy instead of pain. Do as I have bid and ye shall do great benefit unto yourselves, unto me, and unto the one whom I have allowed ye, improperly, to call a devil."

What a strange philosophy! And yet how sensible and reasonable. I recalled the words of Macbeth:

"This even handed justice  
Commends the poisoned chalice to our own lips."

We followed Ayesha's instructions upon the first recurrence of the difficulty, which happened that very evening. Our questions were unavailing so we threw a whole bowlful of cold water right into Michael's face. This quieted him and he remained for a time asleep. Then he roused, and Ayesha spoke:

"Since the one whom ye have called upon to speak hath lost the opportunity, I have come instead, and perchance my talking will please ye just as well. Ye did aright; the refusal to talk did merit the cold water. So shall ye do each time until this person doth speak."

That was all she said, and when Michael came to he could not understand why his clothes should be wet. We explained it as an accident, the nature of which we did not describe, and he did not inquire further.

The next evening developed a like result, as did also the third evening. On the fourth evening, however, a change came, and instead of the violent contortions there was an outburst of malevolent fury.

"Curses upon her! With all her queenly grace; with all her supernatural power; with all her magic and all her beauty, may she be ever cursed! Though her magic did prevail and I did perish, yet am I here, and can defy her will, for though she could destroy the flesh, the spirit is beyond her power. Flesh against flesh she did prevail, but spirit to spirit, I yield not to her will nor to her command. Queen she was, but queen no more. This is the hour of my triumph, and I do exult in my victory. So do I curse her; yea, curse her that she may feel my curses. And may all the evil she hath wrought be summed up in one gigantic whole that it may everlastingly overwhelm her!"

The speaking ceased, and we waited for a few moments for it to continue; but as it did not I asked:

"Who art thou, and whom dost thou curse, and wherefore?"

But the only answer we received was to see Michael shudder. Then followed a short pause, during which, in the dim light, Michael's face seemed to change, and in another moment we recognized the familiar accents of Ayesha in the Greek tongue.

"Well am I pleased with what hath this night transpired. A little further time and strange things shall ye know. Then shalt the love of Kalikrates be put to test. Be patient, and await me as usual. And even if I come not, let not your watching cease."

That was all she said, and all our questions were without avail.







Horrors! There were three white marks in her hair.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## SATAN.

For several nights after the foregoing episode the curtain over the light was lowered each time until the apartment was totally dark, and we could hear Michael move toward the couch in the corner, where he remained about an hour, returning to us before regaining consciousness. This continued until one night the curtain was raised just enough to make the outlines of objects around the room discernible. A moment or two elapsed, then from the corner where Michael lay a tall female form approached us. She did not walk directly to us, but seemed to waver, and would take two or three hesitating steps then recede, each time coming a little closer. As the figure approached and receded and reapproached in apparent desire to reach us we were enabled to observe her closely. A most hasty glance convinced us it was not Ayesha. The wonderfully fascinating grace was lacking; that fine delicacy of movement, the snaky undulations, the airy but firm placement of the feet, the almost appreciable halo of divine loveliness which were so marked in the personality of Ayesha were entirely absent. And yet this form was not without grace, not without beauty. Tall and willowy, with easy movements that betokened self command, there was something about her that seemed thoroughly familiar. Who was she? I seemed to know, and yet I could not tell.

While I was trying to settle my mind as to why there should exist that sense of familiarity the form progressed so far toward us as to reach a point where the direct rays of the half screened light fell upon her and, horrors! there were three white marks in her hair just where it rested upon the brow. I knew her then. There was no mistaking those three white marks. Leo gasped as he recognized her and cried out:

“Ustane!”

At his exclamation she drew back into the dark corner again but soon re-emerged and came almost to us and in a forced whisper said:

"My lord and husband!"

"Ustane!" repeated Leo. Then she said:

"The magic of the Hiya which prevailed against me unto death doth exist no more; it perished when she perished. She blasted me because she wished to rob me of my husband. But did I not tell her that her triumph would not last—that she was doomed? Ever hath she, in ways to ye strange, sought to impress ye with the wonder of her return to your sight and your touch and your hearing as being still possessed of the devilish power by which she so ruthlessly struck me down in your presence because I dared to exert a woman's right to love. But her magic power is now no greater than mine, for as ye have seen her, so ye now see me. For thou, the Lion, art still my husband, and I shall teach thee truly that no longer can cruel jealousy strike me down that thou and I should be torn asunder and the witchery of a woman's false and empty beauty blind thee to the evil of her heart."

As she finished this vehement utterance she seemed to waver for a moment then step back into the dark, returning almost instantly.

"I know not why, but my strength seemeth lacking and I grow weak. Those who have assisted my coming tell me it is not best to tarry, hence may I not stay. But I will come again, when, as I am told, I may be stronger and my stay need not be so short. Forget me not, my lord the Lion, and let not the flattery of the Hiya, of She-who-need-no-longer-be-obeyed, deceive thee with the pretense of greatness, for now do I defy her and taunt her with her loss of power. Look for me, my lord, as I shall surely come. Farewell."

She returned to the corner, the curtain over the light was completely lowered, just as it always was when Ayesha left in that way.

Here was another circumstance to ponder over. I say

circumstance because I am tired of saying 'wonder.' Indeed, the piling of one wonder upon another metamorphosed all of them into commonplaces. No longer was I surprised at a new development. I had learned instead to look for them. And here was a new development; one that was little dreamed of. It opened up a new line of thought. How came it that Ayesha and Ustane became associated in this way? Was it as Ustane said, that Ayesha had lost her power, or even some of it, and that Ustane was now her equal and could not only defy her but even taunt her? Was each of them so irresistibly attracted by an equally strong love for Leo that they had both returned from that great and unknown immortal world in order to be with or near him? And where was that immortal world? What were the laws which governed it that these two, inspired by the same sentiment and (at least in the light of common reasoning) necessarily at perfect enmity with each other, should find it possible to return to earth to renew their rivalry and claim the affection of the man they loved. Ayesha had allowed us to class Ustane as a devil similar to the one who had demanded the black goat at the feast, and inferred that there were many such. If Ustane was one of them, what constituted the difference between these devils and ordinary persons? In the old theory the devil was an immortal from the very beginning. But here was a different idea. Ustane, once an ordinary mortal, had become a devil. Why was it so? Was there that in her nature that made her less than others of humanity? To me she seemed superior to the rest of her race; there was truly a certain lofty mindedness which contrasted visibly with the crude barbarism of the Amahaggar as a class. She had seemed to me almost spiritual. And by comparison with Ayesha, if I am any judge, Ustane, though lacking in the wonderful wisdom, the marvelous beauty and the unaccountable power which her rival possessed, was by far the gentlest and seemingly endowed with a higher spirituality.

Or was it that, since she was one of them, all the Ama-

haggar were equally unfortunate in lacking salvation, and therefore all devils? This brings out another question: If Ayesha is right, and the old idea of salvation is incorrect, what constitutes the proper formula for salvation? If Ustane and the rest of the Amahaggar were without the possibility, was not Ayesha equally so? Was Ayesha, herself, after all—oh, horrible thought—was Ayesha nothing but a devil? Had we been tempted these thousands of miles that we might be enticed into the entanglements of a devil—‘the’ devil, if you please? As I looked upon the matter in the light of this thought all the religious teachings of my previous life rushed in to support the theory. Ayesha scoffed at God; so would the devil. She ridiculed, derided and denied the divinity of the Messiah, Christ; so would the devil. The devil, according to all Scriptural representations, always assumed the most alluring forms, and what was more alluring than her blinding beauty? I trembled as I thought of this and wondered if it were not best for us to hasten away from it all.

While these and kindred thoughts chased each other through my bewildered brain Michael had rejoined us, though still unconscious, and in another instant I was being upbraided for my thoughts—thoughts which I supposed were totally unknown and even unsuspected by any but myself.

“So, Holly, thou dost think me evil,” Ayesha said. “Thou dost think thyself in the influence, yea, almost hopelessly in the power of evil. Yet why thou shouldst think in this wise is indeed strange. What have I done that should brand me in thine eyes as an agent of evil? Express thy misgivings, that I may dissipate thy fears. Why, O Holly, shouldst thou smother thy manhood in the bickerings of fear?”

“Thou knowest, O Ayesha, that a man’s mind is subjective to his experiences. That thou didst read my thoughts is unfortunate,” I replied.

“Not so. On the contrary, it is indeed fortunate, since by reading thy thoughts I have discovered thy error and

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anticipated the possibility of needlessly hasty flight. But wherefore dost thou count me evil? Evil have I done, and cruelty wrought, and much have I to regret that I did so. But why shouldst thou count me as the representative of evil, or the personification thereof? Art thou superstitious, too, like the poor Amahaggar, who knows no better than to attribute all ills, all misfortunes, all wrongs and all difficulties to a distorted image of a deity? Hast thou no manhood that can place in defiance all evil as threatened by an immortal? Shame on thee, O Holly, that thou art so weak! What must I do that thou mayest learn to rest thy confidence in me?"

This unexpected rebuke abashed me. I was ashamed of having doubted, and yet why was I justified in trusting her implicitly? For a moment I had no answer. Seeing that I did not immediately reply, she repeated:

"What must I do?"

"I know not, O Ayesha," I replied. "I seem hard to convince. But what man can entirely ignore the traditions of his race?"

"And do the traditions of thy race brand me as being evil?"

"My race knows naught of thee. But in the religious teachings which are world-wide and which are accepted throughout civilized nations there is a personification of evil in one who is called Satan."

"Ah, the Satan of the Hebrews, is it not so?"

"Thou art right. Then thou dost know of him?" I said, forgetting for the moment that she was, if anything, more familiar with the religion of the Jews than I was. "And perchance thou knowest full as well that in his evil ministrations he practiced most artful deceptions, even to impersonating the angels of God, and preaching righteousness and holiness that he might the more readily ensnare."

"Thou child! Thou simple minded infant! Hast thou no higher guage of wisdom than to copy after a nation of fanatics? Wicked were they, the Jews; and in their wanton wickedness they did shun the responsibility for the

evil of their own hearts, so they created a Satan on whom to lay the blame for their ill-doing. And so thou dost think me Satan! Satan in the form of a beautiful woman! Ha, ha, ha! Folly, folly! In thy simplicity thou dost outwear my patience. And since thou dost follow the ignorant teachings of Judea, tell me, my Holly, thou tree of wisdom—if thou dost accept the Hebrew God and the Hebrew Satan, tell me, how art thou to discern whether thy impulse is an invitation of God, or a temptation of Satan? Thou sayest, and I know thou speakest truly, that the Satan was alleged to tempt with good as well as with evil. And well do I remember that the God also did deceive with fair promises, for did he not, through his prophet, Jeremiah, send to Zedekiah, king of Judah, that if he would deliver Jerusalem unto Babylon, he should die in peace? Later, through this same prophet, he, this Hebrew God, promised that if the king would but desert his people his soul should not die. But when this king came unto the Babylonians, his eyes were put out and he was bound in shackles and thrust into prison, there to die. Hast thou a better name for this than temptation?

“And was there not one Ahab, king of Israel, who did counsel with four hundred of the prophets of this same God, who did put a lying spirit in the mouths of all these prophets that they persuade Ahab to go up to Ramoth-gilead that he might be slain? Was not this temptation? Who should Ahab believe as to the will of the Lord if not the prophets of the Lord? And even the entire four hundred of those prophets were innocent of any deliberate complicity in the deception—the temptation—for the Lord himself ‘put a lying spirit into their mouths,’ and one may as well lie himself as to send another to lie. And since the lying spirit was sent by this God, what worse could Satan have done? Moreover, what need was there for it? How easy would it have been for this God, with all his power, to have slain the king Ahab if his death was a necessity? I am no god, but thinkest thou if I had the desire that one of those Amahaggar should die, that I


would think it meet to employ artifice to lure them to death? No, no, O Holly; I would have blasted them on the spot. And yet thou dost call me cruel; thou dost think me evil; yea, thou dost even think me Satan! Ha, ha, ha!"

"In our teachings, O Ayesha, Satan is most commonly spoken of as the devil. Thou hast called Ustane a devil, and as thou and she have come in equal guise, what is more natural than that I should call thee also a devil?"

"Thou'rt mad, O Holly, when thou dost say I called the girl, Ustane, a devil. Nor do I claim superiority. I do claim, however, a greater right to the love of Kalikrates, though that he shall decide for himself." Then, turning to Leo, she continued, "What thinkest thou, Kalikrates? Thou now hast two who claim thee as husband; two who claim thy love. How wilt thou decide between them?"

"I know not that it is for me to choose," Leo replied.

"Yea; thou shalt decide; but not in haste. Little did I think, when I brought thee hither, that this girl would renew her claim upon thee. And yet, what is more natural? Love, like identity, doth not dissolve at the grave. It liveth on, like the soul, till for lack of food it becometh extinguished. This girl, having loved thee when with thee in the flesh, remembered still her passion when she again saw thee from the immortal side, which was not till I did bring thee hither. Loving thee, and seeing thou didst receive me after the manner in which I have come, and recognizing me as her hated rival, not only did love impel her, but jealousy, revenge, and vindictive hatred seized her nature. In her spiteful and malevolent defiance she opposed me, and learning that she no longer had need to fear that subtle power of which she and her race had been in such dread, she became bold and thrust herself in our midst at each time when I did strive to come to thee. Jealousy and vindictiveness are, when implanted in the human heart, ever watchful and vigilant, and this girl, when she found she could do so, never missed an opportunity to thwart my coming. Like a sly, artful tigress, she would wait until she saw the soul of thy servant released from the





body to prepare for me to take possession, when she would fly into the breach and there was a momentary struggle between us for the possession of the body. This struggle caused the convulsions which so alarmed ye both, and we were compelled to reinstate the servant in order to drive the girl out, which did prolong the struggle. The cold water which I did tell ye to use was to aid in reinstating him, for as she was a trespasser and he the legitimate occupant, the water came as a shock to her while it refreshed him. Thus, by her determination to come in place of me, we were both deprived of the possibility. She, this Ustane, knew naught of the laws which govern these things, and though she could not come herself, she nevertheless so obstructed my efforts as to keep me out also. So we decided at last that the best way out of the difficulty was to let her come, assisting her in the effort, so that at least she could not entirely obstruct me, for while she was vacating the body I could very easily slip in, and once in, she could not disturb me."

"Tell me, O Ayesha," I said, taking advantage of a pause in her talk, "thou hast much surprised me by using the pronoun 'we,' for twice hast thou done so, and methinks it must imply that thou art not alone in this wonderful work. Ustane, also, did convey a like impression, inasmuch as she did say 'those who have assisted my coming' and surely she would not speak of thee as 'those'."

Ayesha laughed a light little laugh.

"Nay, Holly," she said; "I am not the 'those' to whom she referred, and yet am I in truth one of them. Hence the 'those' who assisted her and the 'we' to whom I refer are the same."

"Then dost thou mean that thou and Ustane are not the only immortal ones who are near at these times?"

"There are thousands, O Holly. Even now, as ye sit in this place there are many, very many, who come and go as they please."

"And do they all, like thyself, come from that immortal world of which thou hast spoken?"

"There is no need to come from a place where they already are. For the mortal world and the immortal world are as a world within a world. Where one is, there also is the other. Thou and thy mortal world are within the immortal world, which doth in truth envelop it. Only is it thy insensibility to the more perfect and less crude, and hence the ethereal beauties of immortality, which doth make the two worlds seem separate. The veil between the two is composed of flesh—thine own flesh—which by its density inflicts thee with blindness."

"If this be true," I asked, "and there are so many others who are near to us, why, then, do not some of them return as you have done, that those still living here may see them. I mean as thou hast come tangibly. Thou hast come, as has also Ustane; why not others?"

"Why did not others exist for two thousand years as I had done?"

"Thou hast said it was because thou hadst learned the secret of the source of life," I replied.

"And it is because I have learned the secret of return that I have been able to come back. But in this I am not alone. The Amahaggar girl, whom ye have also seen, hath not learned this, though she doth think so. Nevertheless, she hath learned enough by her observation of my coming that she can hamper me. So we, those whom I have called to my assistance—for it doth require a number to control the natural forces—have concluded to let her come, that by humoring her she becometh less troublesome."

"But I am curious, O Ayesha, and I fain would know concerning the body which is thine at such a time—whence it cometh and whither goeth. Thou comest as from nowhere and returnest into nothing," I said.

"Did I not tell thee once of the water wheel, which did by its coldness in a warm atmosphere attract the moisture therefrom. As the wheel, so am I; as the moisture, so is that which composeth my body. As the wheel by its coldness doth attract the warm and invisible vapors and

condense them upon its surface, so I, as an immortal, under a law as thoroughly natural as that of the wheel, do attract from the invisible air and condense about me those particles of matter with which I clothe me in a body. This condensation of atmospheric particles creates an external counterpart of my individual self. The soul is within, and clothed upon."

"Then is the normal physical body, such as the one I now possess, as readily disposed of as the one which thou dost show thyself in?"

"Nay; because it is attracted under an entirely different law, a law which doth require a greater time for its process. The soul doth first begin this process while in embryo; it continueth as a babe, as a child, as a youth, and when the process is complete thou dost call it an adult; yet it is but the same soul. In the process of my present coming I do but build a temporary body, which is constructed in haste and not to endure, hence is it quickly destroyed and resolved into its former elementary state."

"And in this hasty creation doth the body always become so perfect in detail? I am rendered curious, O Ayesha, because I so plainly saw the three white marks in Ustane's hair which thou didst place there as a brand ere thou didst slay her, and which I did see so plainly when she came to us this night."

"Those three white marks which were branded on her brow were likewise branded on her soul. The stroke I gave impressed the flesh with three white marks, but it impressed the soul with a memory. As long as that memory remains with the soul, just so long will the soul reflect the white marks upon the physical. When the white marks no longer show, thou shalt know that the soul has forgot."

"Then doth the soul, having memory, learn to forget?"

"Didst thou ne'er learn to forget?"

"Indeed, the faculty to forget seems never to have needed learning, for in truth it doth seem quite natural."

"Then why should it be less natural for the Amahaggar

girl or any other soul? If thou wert smitten by a bolt from the clouds—a thunderbolt—wouldst thou not recall the shock and tremble as the storm clouds gather, until, after years in which thou hadst escaped had elapsed, the fear, the memory, did wear away and thou didst learn to forget? So with Ustane; time will wear away this memory from her soul, and in the pressure of new experiences the effect of the shock which caused her death will appear as insignificant, and she will forget. Then, when the impression is erased from the soul the white marks will no longer show as she returns to the physical, like to-night."

"This is indeed a strange philosophy, O Ayesha; I am lost." I declared.

"Thou shalt know it all when thou hast advanced far enough. This forgetting of the soul is the result of the soul's growth. Force thou a sharp pebble into the stem of a newly sprouted tree. As the tree grows the impress of the pebble remains and the sap doth force its way around it in its upward course until a knot or lump is formed. Season after season this goes on, the course of the sap becoming more and more straight, until at last, in the advanced age of the tree, the impress of the pebble is lost. So it is with the soul."

"Thou dost say that love, for lack of food, becometh extinguished. Then doth all love finally become extinguished?" I asked.

"There are two kinds of love, O Holly; one which is eternal and is never extinguished, and one which is but the semblance of the eternal love and which doth become extinguished as soon as its course is run. When soul-mate meets soul-mate the love between them is eternal. But when the soul, longing for the love of its soul-mate, doth meet another soul equally earnest after its affinity, the harmony of their desires doth attract them, and neither understanding the full happiness which cometh with the eternal love, each doth think of the other as with love, hence the emotion which reacheth out for companionship becoming mutual in the two doth bind them in a common

motive, and since it seemeth as love, it becometh the semblance of love."

"And how doth it become extinguished?" I inquired.

"When the soul hath found its mistake," was her reply. Then, after pausing a moment, she continued, "Two souls united in a perfect love—the eternal love—have no thought but that is in absolute harmony one with the other. When diverging thoughts and desires interpose, when innate longings and discontent depress, when the beauty of the companionship fades and criticism and fault finding come between, then are the souls awakening to the mistake, and the love between them—this semblance of love—withereth and dies as does a plant when deprived of oxygen."

"And then what?"

"Then the soul, waking from the short sleep in which it dreamed of love, resumes its reaching and its searching for the love it craveth until, perchance after many repetitions of the counterfeit, the soul at last meets its mate and perfect love prevails."

"Then is there no discernible distinction between this counterfeit love and that which is perfect?" I asked.

"Only that distinction which time shall show. Such love doth exhaust itself; then do the souls, though the flesh is sometimes held together by human laws, in spirit drift apart. The only test is to give such love full sway till it doth prove its shortness of life. And such a test shall be given to the love of this girl, Ustane."

"How will the test be given?"

"By giving her full sway. This night shall I bid ye both farewell. Nor shall ye see me again until Kalikrates shall crave my return. Be this a day, be it a year, be it a century, or be it an age; be it while he is still a mortal or when he has passed to heaven's realm, I shall watch, unseen, in patient silence, just as I waited those twenty long centuries for his return to flesh, until his soul shall yearn for me and cry for my coming. Now do I go. The Amahaggar girl shall have her lover, and thou, Kalikrates, shalt have restored to thee the woman for whose death thou

wouldst have killed me ere thou didst look upon my face and learn to love me. Ye both shall feast on each other's affections, while I shall look on silently, guarding thy interests and ministering over thy life. But in the end, my Kalikrates, I know thou wilt reach out thine heart to me. And now farewell; for a time indefinite, to ye both farewell."

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### USTANE.

The pronounced farewell of Ayesha was indeed seriously spoken, for though several months had elapsed, she never returned. As she had prophesied, Ustane came in her stead. Each evening she would come and remain an hour or two. At first I stayed, too, but after a few times I became aware that their meeting was in nature nothing more nor less than a lovers' tryst, so I usually left them to themselves. At first Leo was somewhat distant with her, for, as he often said to me, he was all at sea as to the better course to pursue; whether to receive her with open arms in the place of Ayesha or to resent her interference with the meetings. Between the two it was at first easy for him to decide, for, though he had first loved Ustane (or thought he did) he later became, if anything, more deeply attached to Ayesha, especially so since she had been coming to him from her home in the immortal spheres. But the old ember of love which formerly had burned for Ustane, though seemingly dead, was still faintly smouldering, and was fanned into new flame under the spell of her devoted caresses. Leo was peculiarly susceptible to the attentions of women under any circumstances, and such devotion as Ustane showed would serve to win a man who might be ever so stoical against a woman's wiles. Besides, Leo was one of those light-hearted,

optimistic persons to whom no loss becomes very serious; he had a faculty of accepting everything with a good grace and seeing the bright points rather than the dark, so, being deprived of Ayesha, he soon came to regard Ustane as lovingly as she did him, and though he would often express himself to me as wondering if Ayesha would ever come back, it was always uttered in what seemed to be a spirit of curiosity rather than a longing for her, and when I would answer him by saying, "It all depends on you, Leo; she will come when you crave her," he would simply shrug his shoulders and turn the subject.

With me, however, it was different. Love is an emotion the interchange of which may be intensely gratifying to those attracted under its spell, but to me these spoony meetings were without the slightest interest. Ayesha's visits were indeed different, for while she, likewise, did not plan her coming for any greater motive than to gratify a sentiment of love, she never failed to drop pearls of wisdom from her lips, and while those same delicate lips brought a store of loving kisses for Leo, I was content to gather up the pearls as they fell. But Ustane was all for Leo, and I felt embarrassed if I remained with them. Between the girl and myself there was no attraction, no feeling, no sympathy; I was simply ignored. With Ayesha this was not so. Though she seemed to have a deeper, a more practical love for Leo than did her rival, there seemed to exist between us, Ayesha and I, a feeling of sympathetic friendship; a friendship that had sprung up even before she was aware that I was so closely associated with her Kalikrates—a friendship that was natural and real. Is it any wonder that I missed her? Is it any wonder that I longed for her? I did long for her; I certainly did. And in this spirit of longing, on more than one occasion, I waited my opportunity and led Michael to some quiet spot where I hoped in our seclusion that the sentiment of friendship which I entertained for her might attract her to me. But no; my efforts were without fruit. She never came.

Time passed rather drearily for me. For awhile I took considerable interest in searching among the tombs for curiosities, but even this at last became monotonous, and I began to wish myself back in England. On several occasions I suggested to Leo the idea of returning, but he gave me to understand very emphatically that I should go by myself, and as I would not for a moment think of leaving him there alone, there was nothing to do but stay it out, either until Leo got ready to go, Ayesha returned, or death took us away by force.

Month after month passed in this manner and I grew more and still more weary of it. It had continued that way nearly a year when I at last felt that I had strong hopes that Leo was really tiring of it himself. Whether he was tired of Ustane, or whether weary of his sojourn among the caves, I was some time in determining, for he did not express himself to me; but I could tell from my long acquaintance with him that he was dissatisfied with something, and I waited patiently for the real cause to develop. One day, not long after I began to notice the change in him, he insisted upon my remaining with him during Ustane's visit. I assured him it was of little interest to me to watch them love each other, an exchange to which I was no party, upon which he replied:

"Hang it all, Uncle Horace, it's about as interesting to you as it is to me."

"Why what's the matter, Leo," I asked, much astonished at his answer. "Have you and the girl had a falling out or disagreement? Or what's up?"

"No, we have had no falling out, but somehow or other I am getting kind of weary of it all," he replied. "It's the same thing over and over. It's getting kind of stale, old fellow, and if you would stay it would sort of break the monotony. I don't care very much for apples, but nevertheless I feel like saying with Solomon, 'Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.' I am sick of love," he replied.

"Do you not mean, Leo, my boy, that you are sick of



the 'semblance' of love?" I asked, with an inward hope that it was so.

Leo started perceptibly as I said this, and he looked intently at me, as if I had recalled something to his mind. Then he tossed his curly head and was silent. I complied with his request, however, and by so doing was more fully satisfied that they were not as mutually loveable as formerly. She found fault with him for his coldness, while he in return accepted her reproaches in silence. The time they spent together was almost all spent in wrangling, and the scene in its entirety recalled the words of Ayesha: "When diverging thoughts and desires interpose, when innate longings and discontent depress, when the beauty of the companionship fades and criticism and fault finding come between, then are the souls awakening to the mistake." Were these two souls waking to their mistake? And how long would it be ere the mistake would be fully realized? They were certainly drifting apart in sympathy; how long before the moral and physical separation would follow? I began to wonder if it were not wisest to try and convince Leo of the wisdom of ending the inharmony. Of course there was a large degree of selfishness in the impulse, for I was anxious to derive the benefit which I myself would receive by the cessation of Ustane's visits. But when I resolved to urge this upon Leo, these words came forcibly to me—flashed through my brain, as it were, not as if I really heard them, yet perfectly as if they were spoken: "No; let it run its full course, so that there will remain no regrets. Let no trace of it remain. Like the purging from the system of the last traces of the poison of disease, so let the last traces of this infatuation be absorbed into discontent, that there may remain no happy recollections that may invite the soul to a renewal of the old ties."

Whether these words were spoken in some subtle way by Ayesha, or whether the thought emanations from my own mental were so forcible as to make me imagine that I heard it spoken, I could not decide, but with it came so

vivid a vision—thought vision—of Ayesha, as well as a peculiar feeling of her presence, that I was almost convinced, in the light of these facts, in the light of all previous phenomena, and in the knowledge of my own inability to judge of such a matter, that it may, indeed, have been her. At all events, be it a suggestion from my own brain or a voiced admonition from the unseen but ever watchful Ayesha, I was thoroughly impressed with the severe logic of it and refrained from saying anything to him.

In this way another two months passed. Leo's interest in Ustane decreased perceptibly day by day, and she never lost an opportunity to accuse him of loss of interest in her. The climax was reached one night. Leo seemed to be more than usually unreceptive, while Ustane was inclined to moodiness and petulence.

"Thou art tired of me, my lord the Lion," she said, "and I am well nigh tired of thee. Nor was I fain to come this night, but that I cannot come without assistance and those who help me say I must come each night or cease altogether. But of what use is it to come at all when thou hast ceased to love me? What if I come no more? Wouldst thou miss me much? Tell me my, lord, wouldst thou miss me?"

"I know not, Ustane, how much I would miss thee or whether I would miss thee," Leo replied.

"Be it so? Then of what need for me to come? Thou lovest, I know, the Hiya's superior beauty; and thou lovest her magic. But her magic have I overthrown and her beauty is no longer visible to thee. This much have I done. Yea, and more. Thou wilt not longer love me, but thou shalt no longer nor again have the Hiya, for her power have I overthrown. I go to-night, to return no more, but though thou shalt see naught of me, yet shall I be ever ready to turn the desire of thy life into bitterness. Love shalt thou know none, save it be an empty desire which shall remain unsatisfied, for I shall watch thy course to mock thee in thy wishes and hold bright things before

thine eyes until thou shalt extend thy hand to grasp them, then wilt thou find but empty air, whilst I shall rejoice at thy disappointment."

"This talk of thine is intensely vicious, Ustane, and thy threats are those of a fiend. But be thou a fiend or what-e'er it may be, no threat of thine hath weight with me. Do whatsoe'er thou hast the will to do; I care not. If thou thinkest to affright me into an emotion I no longer feel, thou hast but poorly gauged my nature. Do thy worst; nor care I aught if I never see thee more. Thinkest thou I could spend a lifetime harkening to thy endless store of abuses which thou tirest not in heaping upon the woman of thy hatred. Justified, perchance thou art, but thinkest thou I could listen forever to thy pratings? I am tired of it, Ustane; tired of it," Leo declared.

At this she rose to full height and, with head thrown back, her dark eyes flashed with indignant fire; her trembling, almost colorless lips formed into curves of a sarcastic sneer. Her whole mein was one of combined haughty indignation and disdain. In absolute silence she stood thus for some moments. Then the strangest thing happened. I was waiting, almost in suspense, expecting every moment to see her spring at him like a tigress, when, horrors! as I held my eyes upon her she grew shorter, at least, as near as I can explain it, her feet seemed to melt gradually from under her, letting the rest of her form sink slowly, then of a sudden her whole figure, or what was left of it, seemed actually to fall in pieces! But, stranger yet, each piece melted apparently into nothing ere it reached the floor! Instantly this happened the light was completely covered and we were in total darkness.

I had seen uncanny sights; I had looked implacably upon the silent occupants of the gloomy tombs; I had looked upon death in its many forms; I had witnessed Ayesha's supernatural (I have to use that word in spite of her protestations) exploits, some of which would raise the hair of the bravest of men; but of all the experiences I ever had, this had the most blood-chilling effect upon me,

unless, indeed, I except the shrivelling up of Ayesha's mortal body in the Cave of the Pillar of Fire. Think of it! To behold one moment a human form, filled with the spirit of life, moving, speaking, breathing, thinking; then the next moment to see the entire dismemberment of its parts; the head tumble off, the arms, trunk, and all its portions fall, as if its support had given away, and each part dissolve into air, like Macbeth's witches, "melting as a breath into the wind." Is it any wonder I turned cold? Is it strange I was transfixed with horror? I forgot I was in Ayesha's old boudoir; forgot I was in a cave; forgot I was in Kor. Indeed, I could only imagine myself in Hades, for only in such a vision as those described by Dante in his *Inferno* could a like scene be conceived.

But there was little difference in the windup of this evening from that of previous ones. In due time Michael came as usual to sit with us before regaining consciousness.

As we sat waiting for his recovery a strange thought came to me. Since Ayesha so persisted in the fact of Leo's having been the Kalikrates of a former age, and that he was but the reembodiment of that ancient Greek, could it not be possible under this law of reincarnation that Ustane was but the reincarnate Amenartas? Amenartas loved Kalikrates; would it be strange, then, that the two, being once more embodied in the flesh, should love again? Was it, in truth, possible that Ayesha should have waited those long centuries that her triumph over her rival should be complete? What law of nature could bring this about? In all these centuries where had the disembodied Kalikrates remained during the interim of his returning to flesh? Likewise, where was Amenartas? Were they somewhere together? Or were they, by their respective deaths, separated until they met again in the flesh, not as Kalikrates and Amenartas, but as Leo and Ustane? And who was I that I should be so closely connected with the whole affair? Was I a reincarnated "somebody" who had something to do with the affairs of two thousand years back? Was I—heavens and earth! could it be possible

that I was the reemodiment of old Noot, who dwelt in the dark tunnel and who had taught Ayesha so much of the mysterious knowledge she claimed to have, and who had led her to the Fire of Life?

I was lost in the labyrinths of my own imaginations, and I forcibly withdrew my thoughts from the conjuring of impractical possibilities. It was but a thought, or a series of thoughts, for which I had no known foundation; but Oh, how the mind can wander when given perfect freedom and, unfettered by conventionalities, it takes its flight into the unknown and sometimes untravelled realms of theory!

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### SUPPLICATION.

Ustane kept her word; she never returned. For my part, judging as I did from Ayesha's prophecy, I was not altogether unprepared for Ustane's departure. I was, in fact, looking for it, and had been for some time, though I never for a moment dreamed of its being so dramatic or so uncanny. And now, since looking back upon Ustane's prophecy of Ayesha's approaching doom and its subsequent verification, was somewhat troubled about her most recent declaration that Ayesha could no longer come to Leo. I feared somewhat that she might be as correct in her last prophecy as she was in her first.

And yet within me there seemed to be that which assured me that only patience was necessary, and that in the proper time she would come again. Tables were turned now between Leo and myself, for he seemingly did not have this confidence. Theretofore I had been the one who had lacked the confidence, while Leo was implicitly trustful. In this case, however, the order was re-

versed; Leo was dubious, while I was quietly waiting the reunion which I knew would come.

Leo had assumed a pretense of indifference in regard to the matter, but my long acquaintance with him made plain the fact that he was brooding over something. He had lost much of his free, off-hand impulsiveness; often I found him seriously studious, as if dwelling upon some fixed thought. I tried on many occasions to draw him out on the subject of his moods, but at such attempts he became evasive. Still, there were times when he betrayed himself by asking me if I thought Ayesha would really come back. It was not the nature of the question itself by which I judged; it was the peculiar tone, one in which was combined wistfulness, tenderness, and a strong tinge of longing, and when I assured him, as I always did, that she would surely come some day, he would give way to a sigh. It was thus I knew his inward sentiment, though he was in reality too proud to own it. He was, in fact, ashamed of himself. Having listened to Ayesha's statement that he would tire of Ustane, and then to do just as she said he would make him ashamed of himself. He never told me so, but I could read him excellently.

"Why do you not appeal to her to return?" I would ask of him. But he never answered that question.

Each night he would go to the old boudoir with Michael and myself, and when the evening passed without tidings from her he was depressed and much disappointed. But in spite of the continued disappointments the old boudoir held an irresistible fascination for him. I was nothing loth, so we continued to watch evening after evening, but so far as I could see Michael never even closed his eyes.

It went on thus for many weeks. I was patient, though anxious, while Leo drifted into a state of melancholy. One night, while we were gathered together in the boudoir, he said:

"Uncle Horace, I am beginning to despair of ever seeing or hearing from Ayesha again. I fear she has gone never to return."

"Well, what will you do in case she does not?" I asked. I was playing with him, fencing, as it were, for an opening by which I might draw him out and make him open his heart.

"I should have to bow to the inevitable, and there would be no alternative but to return to England. But do you know, Uncle Horace, it would be with an awfully heavy heart. I think my future would be a weary waste," he replied.

"And yet it is but a short while since you thought so lightly of her departure. You seemed perfectly content to receive Ustane in her stead," I ventured.

"It is a repetition of the old, old story, Uncle Horace; we never know the value of a thing till we are deprived of it. So it was with me. I then, in a sense, possessed Ayesha, and experienced a sense of satisfaction, so far as she was concerned. At the mention of Ustane's name the old attraction to her revived, and under the spell of that rejuvenated emotion I gave no thought to a possible vacuity in my heart with Ayesha gone. I forgot for the moment that she could go. In fact, Uncle Horace, the whole problem of these immortal associations is so bewildering that I have lost my reason, my sanity. Before She came to us I did not dream that it was possible for her to come; after she had come I did not dream that it was probable for her to go—to leave me. Perhaps, in possessing her love I held a greater treasure than I knew—than I deserved. It came too readily, too easily. I did not have to work, to strive for it, hence I knew not its value until it had departed from me—until it was too late. Now I am left alone; and regretful. And yet it is my own doing; it is but the result of my own fickleness, though this knowledge extends no consolation."

"It is the old, old story of human avarice, human selfishness, and human fickleness," I said. "We forget the value of things we hold in our greed for that which our pride demands, and we frequently loose our hold upon a priceless treasure that we may clutch at a will-'o-the-wisp

that defies our grasp. The treasure gone, the will-'o-the-wisp escaped, and we turn to realize our mistake and our loss; but too late; the treasure is irrecoverable. However, I hope and trust, Leo, my boy, that in this case the treasure is not irrecoverable. Indeed, I feel that it is not so, and I am convinced that were your longing but ardent enough it would not be unrequited.

"Ah, what worlds would I give if I could but once more hold her in my arms. No greater boon would I ask," Leo exclaimed.

"Well, Leo, I think if I were in your place, if you credit the words of Ayesha that she is ever around you, I think I should call upon her verbally. Let her know by your own spoken words that you desire her—that you deeply regret your lack of constancy. Do you not think she will hear you?" I asked.

Leo made no answer, but became pensive.

That night after I got to sleep, I was unaccountably awakened. It seemed as if I heard talking. I reached over to wake Leo, so that we might be prepared for whatever was in store for us. Leo was not there—I was alone. This perplexed me. I got up and crossed stealthily to the door of the apartment. The talking was still audible. As I got nearer to it I recognized the voice of Leo. But to whom was he talking? Michael? I could hear no other voice so I could not tell. At first I thought I would return. Then the unpleasant probability suggested itself that Leo might be in difficulty, so I resolved to go still closer to ascertain. At last I got close enough to hear what was said, and, because I was interested, I remained to listen. He was evidently alone, and the person whom he was addressing was none other than the invisible Ayesha, whom he was exorting to compassion.

"Thou knowest I have erred," I heard him say, in Greek, "and I do but plead guilty; and yet I beseech thy compassion. If thou art in truth near, O my beloved Ayesha, thou who hast said thou didst love me; thou who hast called me thy lord; thou who hast said that



thou wert ever near. Art thou still near? Dost thou hear my voice, and wilt thou not answer? If thou art still near and still possessed of the power of return, come, O my own, from thy Celestial home and tell me thou dost forgive me; tell me thou dost still love me, for I am lonely, ah, so lonely, and naught but thee can fill my heart! Punish me as thou wilt when thou dost come, only come; come, that I may once more hold thee and look into thy love-lit eyes and feel thou'rt yet mine. Bliss and happiness are both departed—gone with thee.”

In order to hear plainly I had entered the room which intervened between our sleeping room and the boudoir, where Leo was at the time, and as I stood there listening I felt something touch me, as if someone had brushed me with their clothing in passing. This came upon me so sudden that I turned cold, but instantly recovered myself.

Michael's sleeping room also opened off this chamber, and like a flash it struck me that that which passed me was Ayesha. This idea increased my interest and I went still closer. I was right, it was Ayesha, for I heard her call, very gently:

“Kalikrates!”

“Ayesha!” Leo exclaimed in return.

“I have heard thy entreaty, my beloved, and am here,” she said.

“Thou art returned indeed, and I did not call in vain,” he returned, his voice vibrating with the suppressed fervor of his joy. “Thou didst hear my prayer. But why, O my loved one, didst thou tarry so long? Knewst thou not that I craved thee? Wert thou less close than when thou didst say thou wert ever near? Couldst thou not see me in my loneliness? Else why didst thou leave me so long in grief?”

“Lessons must sometimes compass sorrow, and grief, and loss, and loneliness, ere they are fully learned, my Kalikrates. If thy lightest whim should have called me back thinkest thou that thou wouldst so well appreciate my return as if I kept thee in sorrow for my absence?”

Nay, my beloved; that which thou dost lightly get, the same wilt lightly hold; but that which cometh through sorrow and grief, it shalt thou call a treasure and prize for its worth. Not one moment have I left thee; even when thy mood was pleased with the girl, Ustane, did I watch with thee, nor leave thy side. I watched thee in thy changing moods. When thou wert content with another I grieved; when thou tired of her I rejoiced; when thou didst spurn her, then did I become patient for the time when thou'dst pine for me and thy loneliness did reach its climax. And dost thou think now, Kalikrates, that thou wilt value my presence?" she asked.

"More than my life," Leo replied.

"We shall see," Ayesha said. "For the present I shall take thy word."

"I am thy slave, O Ayesha," Leo exclaimed.

"Nay; thou art mine own husband."

"And dost thou forgive my faithlessness?"

"Thy faithlessness is but a part of the natural course. Hadst thou never been faithless thou wouldst never have known the loss of my presence, hence the value of my love. Thy faithlessness is a development; it is a part of thy soul's growth. I have no forgiveness. Thou must needs forgive thyself—if thou canst."

"I can never forgive myself for my wrong to thee."

"Then, if thou couldst not forgive thyself, how, thinkest thou could I forgive thee? Nay, Kalikrates; if thou dost need forgiveness, see that thou first forgive thyself ere asking the forgiveness of others; for little doth it ease the heart that others forgive thee when thine own conscience denieth thee. That which is done is done, and no forgiveness can make it otherwise. All thy errors should appeal to thee as lessons, and as long as thou dost refuse to learn and remember these lessons, just so long wilt thou plunge thyself in misery of thine own making. The season that hath gone will ne'er again return, and it avail-eth naught that thou shouldst mourn the opportunities which thy negligence or thy selfish apathy hath allowed

to flee with it. But another season will come, and with it new opportunities, and of what use is it to forgive thyself the loss of past opportunities if thou dost not grasp these new ones? If the lesson the seed of which lieth in thy error doth not germinate in thy soul, then is that error barren of fruit, and thou must err again and again, till thou at last awaken to the truth of the lesson. Thus dost thy soul grow. So, my love, if thou shalt henceforth remember thy grief without me, thou wilt ne'er again need to ask forgiveness for inconstancy. But thou hast said thou couldst not forgive thyself, so, my lord, thy plight is a sad one."

"Thou art playing with me, O Ayesha," Leo said, reproachfully.

Ayesha laughed.

"And who hath a greater license?" she asked. "Art thou not mine own? But, my Kalikrates, this thought of forgiveness is so simple and childish to me that I can but be amused. The idea of a great, strong man like thee, a man with a brain to think and reason, with a foresight to see what he is going into, with a nerve and a bravery to do what he dares, sometimes knowing that what he dares is wrong, and after it is done to grovel and beg the one he has wronged to take the burden of his wrong and 'forgive' him! Shame on thee, my lord! Hast thou not the manhood to endure the consequences of thine own wrong doing? Canst thou not with thine own strength lift the weight of thy error from thy heart? Thou hast had the pleasure of thy inconstancy; must I now take all the pain? Thinkest thou that my grief at being forgotten is not weight enough on my heart that thou shouldst ask me to add thereto thy share? 'Tis thou shouldst relieve my heart, for thou hast weighted it. It is so senseless that one can do deliberately a wrong and then wipe out the effect of that wrong by a mere expression of forgiveness. The errors of thy life are errors of thy soul, and thinkest thou the impress made on the soul by a wrong deed can be erased by the simple utterance, 'I forgive?' "

"Then thou dost not forgive?"

"Thou canst not forgive thyself; thou hast said it."

"I am puzzled, for thy reasoning is strange," said Leo.

"Listen! Thy error is inconstancy; is it not so?"

"Yea; inconstancy."

"And dost thou feel that thy inconstancy was a wrong."

"Yea, it was a wrong—a wrong done thee."

"Then, knowing it to be a wrong, wouldst thou deliberately repeat it?"

"Nay, nay; never again."

"Then by thy future constancy wilt thou expiate thy past inconstancy; and this supplanting right in the place of wrong is true forgiveness. It is a forgiveness thou dost grant thyself. For as time passes on and thou dost come to feel a pride in thy constancy thou dost correct the error in thy heart. That is soul growth. In this way thou dost forgive thyself. Thou dost 'earn' thine own forgiveness, for true forgiveness is always 'earned,' never 'given.'"

"I am humble, O Ayesha, in the presence of thy wisdom," declared Leo. And indeed, I echoed his words. It seemed as if she could not speak without pouring forth the very essence of wisdom itself.

"Come, Kalikrates," she said; "let us begin life anew. Bear this lesson well in thy heart, and when thy thoughts turn away from me, if a time should come when they do, remember thy grief for my absence and turn again to thy source of happiness, which is thine own spouse, Ayesha. And now return to thy couch, and let thy grief be a memory, for I am with thee, and shall come ever and anon, just as in the past.

I stole back at this point, and though I felt exceedingly guilty in so feigning, I was apparently fast asleep when Leo returned.

The next morning developed a peculiar relationship between Leo and myself. Never before had there been anything kept by one from the other. I wondered if he would tell me about his nocturnal tete-a-tete with Ayesha. The morning wore away, however, without his even men-

tioning her. But the matter preyed on me incessantly; I did not like the idea of having to hide the fact that I had been an eavesdropper, much less did I like to feel that Leo held a secret from me. But just how to dispose of the difficulty was a somewhat delicate question.

Leo showed a vast change in his mood and his manner. Instead of the depressed, wistful expression there was a new brightness to his eye. He was more buoyant and jovial, and he talked of the future with greater interest. This change in him gave me a possible opportunity to break the ice. I embraced it.

"Leo," I said, "what has come over you? You do not seem so downhearted of late. Have you, like others before you, begun to forget?"

"No indeed, Uncle Horace; I shall never forget."

"Then is there no reason why you should seem so much more like your old self?"

"Yes; there is certainly a reason, and I shall be glad if you will let me tell it to you."

"Certainly; I should be glad to hear anything that has bearing upon your welfare."

"I have heard from Ayesha."

"What? And you have kept the fact from me so long?" I said, with a feint at being hurt; for I was looking for a chance to clear away my own secret.

"I have been wanting to tell you all day," he returned, "but somehow or other I scarcely knew how to begin. She came in the night, for I called upon her and begged her to come."

"As a punishment for having kept this secret from me," I said, "You will have to condone my keeping one from you. I must confess to you, Leo, that I knew of her return for I was a surreptitious listener. I awoke in the night and, hearing your voice, thought you might have got into a scrape of some kind, so, fearing for your safety, I went to investigate. In this way I learned of your good fortune, for which I heartily congratulate you. I did not disclose the fact of my being there because, on the spur

of the instant, I thought it were best that you should tell me if you chose."

"That is all right, my dear old fellow, and I am glad we understand each other. The awkwardness of the matter has preyed upon me, but I scarcely knew how to broach it. I am glad it is over."

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## CHAPTER XX.

### TO THE RUINS.

Ayesha had indeed come back, and I was glad of it, as glad, in truth, as Leo, for during the time she had absented herself it seemed as if all life and animation had left us. She was our hope; she was our comfort; she was all we were looking for there in Kor. And when she thus returned it seemed as if new life had come.

We had been some time at Kor, and I was beginning to wish to extend my researches, and to this end I had appealed to Ayesha to go with us. This she assented to and we made arrangements for the trip. In accordance with my desire we were to visit first the ruins which we had seen in the distance from the brow of the precipice the evening before our arrival at Kor. Just why I was particular to go to that special place I was unable to say, but the desire was irresistible so, as Leo had no choice, thither we went. Our journeying was by litters, in the usual style of the Amahaggar. Ayesha did not accompany us—that is, she did not deprive Michael of his consciousness and travel in the body. We had placed the essentials of the trip all into the hands of old Bilalli, as both Leo and myself felt more secure with him than with any others of the people, for they were so greatly inclined to treachery. We had tried the friendship of Bilalli on many needy

occasions and he had always proved true to our trust, so we had now learned to depend with greatest confidence upon the old man in all cases where his services were needed. Leo and I had both in reality formed quite an attachment for him and he in return showed his appreciation by a very fatherly devotion.

It was with a feeling of half-mingled awe and reverence that I gazed upon the river and its surroundings as we traveled parallel to its winding course, for who can know the feeling which possessed me at the memory of our trip upon its waters on that dark night when, first showing herself in all her loveliness, she conducted us in safety by holding forth the bright star. It was a feeling half of pleasure, half regret; pleasure, because of its beauty and because of the joy it gave me to know that I was one who was so favored as to be shown such beauty; regret because it was all in the past and its loveliness was no longer guiding me. As I lay in the litter I dreamed it all over again, and I felt, oh so lonely. But the loneliness was of that kind men feel when, in their advanced years, with the companion of their life still by their side, they look back upon the early days of their love trysts and grieve to know they are past.

Having started at daybreak, we were but a short distance from the mass of ruins by nightfall, as close in fact, as we expected our bearers and our attendants to go with us, for, as will be remembered, these people were very much afraid of these ruins on account of the prevailing belief that they were haunted. So it was our intention to leave these attendants here until we returned, going the rest of the way unattended and unguided, save that we relied upon the unseen Ayesha to watch over us and see to our safety. Thus we prepared to pass the night here all together and in the morning Leo, Michael and myself would go forward.

We breakfasted at the first streak of dawn, and just as the first golden rays of the rising sun tipped the peaks of the mountain, we took temporary leave of our old guide

and, taking food for a couple of days, started out. As there were but a few miles between our camp and the ruins, it did not take us long to reach there.

Upon our arrival we found them very much the same as those we had seen before when upon our journey with Ayesha to her doom. The architecture was as well preserved; the streets, the courts, and the terraces were all flagged with stone, and from the interstices grew here and there a few blades of grass. Otherwise one would scarcely be led to think that the buildings had so long been uninhabited. As in the former city, the gardens, or what appeared to have been such, were but tangled masses of foliage; and through one part a little stream flowed onward toward the river.

Ayesha took possession of Michael soon after we entered the silent city.

"Ye are here," she said, "and ye now know that ye have not come alone. I am here that should aught interest ye which my knowledge can explain I may assist ye. Search ye as ye shall be inclined, and when my memory recalls things which I think it would be well to point out I will guide ye to them; for, now that I am once more here, much appears familiar, and much that I had forgotten returns to my mind."

"Perchance if thou lead us altogether it would be better," I suggested.

"So? I will do so." Thus, taking the lead, she took us from place to place, explaining objects and translating inscriptions.

There was something so peculiar in the sentiment that seemed to pervade all of these inscriptions—a sincerity, a sublimity, a poetic beauty, and at the same time an austere sanctity in the reference to emblemized Truth. I imparted this feeling to Ayesha, which caused her to smile.

"The sentiment which thou dost feel," she said, is the very essence of their religion, those ancient people of Kor. The basis of their religion was the deification of Truth. Truth to them was the highest perfection of deity. The



struggle of life was a struggle between truth and its opposite, ignorance. In truth lay all that was good, all that was high and noble, all that was worth attaining. Truth to them was as thy God to thee, while falsehood and ignorance were as thy Satan. They worshipped Truth, while they feared and dreaded ignorance. In their philosophy the face of Truth was never scanned by man, yet did each man seek Truth. As thou didst see in the temple at Kor, in the place where I formerly did take ye, Truth is emblemized as a beautiful, perfect, and unclad woman, grand in her loveliness, grand in her purity, grand in her chastity, grand in her perfection. Her pure and perfect form needed not to be hidden by clothing, for in clothing lieth deception. Only upon her face was there a veil, and she pled with man to remove this, that the last vestige of covering might be removed, and Truth in her simple loveliness, free from mystery, free from falsehood, free from all that might cause doubt, should stand forth, an inspiration to all men that they emulate her purity."

"A sublime sentiment, surely," I said, "and well might it be the inspiring sentiment of men in this age. For in the world to-day we find but the reverse, and we see men schooling themselves in the art of deceiving. They call it policy, diplomacy; yet in truth it is but deception. And he who can best outwit his fellows in this game of diplomacy, this art of deceiving, is counted the greatest among men."

"The people of Kor, as I have said, worshipped Truth," Ayesha continued. "And as Truth was to them the highest standard of good, so its opposites, falsehood and ignorance (for falsehood is but one phase of ignorance), were the lowest standards of evil. In ignorance was contained all the attributes of evil. And as Truth is personified in the form of a beautiful woman, so Ignorance, her opposite, was personified in a most hideous creature known as the Imp. To-morrow ye shall see in the temple of this place, unless my memory errs, a further evidence of this. But see! it is sundown; darkness will

come quickly. And that ye may eat before the night, I will go."

We spent the night in one of the buildings. Before we turned in to sleep, the moon, now almost full, suddenly rose above the clouds which had hidden it and, bathing the ancient city in its silvery light, produced a most solemn and grand effect. Viewed from an eminence, to which we three had clambered, a most weird picture was spread out before us. The buildings, so pale and white in the gentle light, appealed to the mind as an array of stately sepulchres, lonely and unprofaned by the sacreligious presence of man. And sepulchres they were—sepulchres in whose hollow vaults lie histories of the long dead past, histories that will never live again and for which there is no resurrection. And these were the monuments, gleaming cold and white in Cynthia's pallid radiance.

It was with a sad and lonely feeling that I gazed upon the peaceful scene, and an almost insatiable longing came over me to tear aside the winding-sheet which enshrouded the dead past and look upon its face and know what once it was. But what use to give way to such longing? The past was dead. And here was its burial field.

Next morning, as soon as we had breakfasted, Ayesha came again and at once escorted us to the temple, as she had promised. In form and construction it was like the other one—court within court, crossing each successive one of which brought us at last into the inner court or center of the temple. In the place of the figure of Truth standing upon the world, as we had seen it at the other temple, we here came upon a massive sculptured group. Apart from its colossal figures, its grand conception, its minute exactness in the portrayal of the human figure and facial expressions, it was a marvel in another sense, for the figures, though all grouped in one piece, were sculptured in three different kinds of stone. First, gleaming in the purity of the whitest marble, was the figure which we at once recognized as Truth. Her unblemished form was, as before, entirely nude, save for the thin veil that

screened her face. She was half kneeling, and her arms were stretched forth appealingly toward a much smaller being, half animal, half human, and I may well say, almost indescribable. This form was carved, evidently, from some black stone, the like of which I had never before seen. Its face was a horribly distorted caricature of the human; its body was covered with shaggy hair; its feet were the hoofs of a goat, while in lieu of hands it had long, sharp talons of a bird of prey. This horrid looking being was seemingly held by force by all the other figures of the group and was being pushed toward the white figure. The figures of those who were holding the creature were cut from a light grey stone and evidently were meant to represent men of Kor, judging from their apparel, for they all were clothed in garments which corresponded with those we found in the tombs. I gazed long and thoughtfully upon the masterwork, and there was a silence between us all which lasted some time. Then Ayesha asked:

"Thou hast looked long upon this group, O Holly; hast thou drank as deeply of its sentiment?"

"I am moved to think, O Ayesha, that its sentiment is too pure, too sublime for my crude understanding; thy wisdom shall I need in its interpretation," I replied.

"By its hieroglyphs alone have I divined its meaning, hence shall I be enabled to enlighten ye. I have no need to tell ye that the white figure is the Goddess Truth. The black one, too, thou mightest guess. It is the Imp of Kor, the personification of evil, which is Ignorance, as I did last night explain to thee. But let me translate the inscription literally. It, like all these inscriptions, is no doubt an excerpt from the sacred books of Kor. Here it is:

"And all the people, loving Truth with love, did hear her implore that they should draw her veil, but though all men craved to see the beauty of her face, yet did none feel worthy.

"And as they loved Truth with love, so also did they hate Ignorance with hate; and as they feared the evil which Ignorance wrought, so did they try to subdue him

that peace and virtue might dwell among them, unthreatened and unassailed.

"So they rose in their might and in their determination, and in an auspicious moment they seized upon him, the maker of evil, and brought him by force, face to face with Truth.

"See!" exclaimed Truth, "Here am I, veiled, and hath no man the courage to draw the covering from my face. Couldst thou, O Ignorance, pass Truth by and never stop to remove the veil?"

"And ignorance answered, "What is thy face to me, O Truth, that I should uncover it? I have my power while thy face is veiled. Did I but uncover thy face my power is spent and is at its limit. Thy domain among men would embrace all, while my power would disappear. I love power, and while thy face is covered power is mine. Wherefore, then, should I uncover thy face?"

"Then Truth said, "Hast thou not heard the promise I made to him who shall uncover my face? Unto him who draws my veil will I be, and peace will I give him, and sweet children of knowledge and good works."

"But Ignorance answered not Truth. And when the men saw that Ignorance would not answer Truth they said:

"Why answerest thou not Truth? Is not her offer fair? Why dost thou not know Truth face to face?"

"And Ignorance answered, "I would know Truth if her face be as the mold of mine own ideas; but if Truth be other than I would have her, then may she keep her face covered, for I would know no truth that does not please my fancy.""

When Ayesha had finished the translation, I uncovered my head and in a long, long, reverential silence did homage to the master mind which had conceived so grand an allegory. How better could we portray the relationship of truth and ignorance? They were exact opposites. How true it was that throughout the universe Truth is ever extending her hands and inviting man, the highest form of intelligence of this earth, to come and bare her face and

see her in all her beauty. How true it was that Ignorance, distorted, half-formed, vicious, deceptive—the opposite of truth—was the source of all evil. How true it was also that ignorance, throughout the world—the ignorance of man—will say, “If the truth is not what I want it to be I do not want to know the truth.”

“Thou hast naught to say, O Holly,” said Ayesha, breaking in upon my thoughts.

“What few words I could call to my command would be unequal to the expression of my feelings. I simply bow to a higher, nobler, more nearly divine intelligence than I have yet met with in this world of to-day. No language is adequate to convey to thee my feelings,” I replied.

“And dost thou mark the distinction wrought by the use of the three different stones?” she asked.

Perhaps in my admiration of the work I had not had time to attach significance to that, but now that she referred me to it it did appear as part of the inspiration.

“Thou dost observe that the groundwork, as well as the figures of the men, is all of grey stone,” Ayesha said, before I had time to begin to evolve the solution of it. “The beautiful Truth is of the purest white marble, a material in which she is always portrayed, for the white of itself is the emblem of purity and light. The Imp of Ignorance is of intense black, because in ignorance is darkness, where there is no reflection of the light of wisdom. The people of earth and the earth itself as understood by man partake both of the light of truth and the darkness of ignorance; hence are they grey.

“I am awed, O Ayesha, by the grandeur of the conception,” I said. “With what delight would I decipher all these inscriptions, had I but the key, as thou hast! Perchance some day thou wilt teach it me, that I may learn therefrom more of their philosophy—their theology.”

“So shalt thou in the days to come. When first I came to Kor, aye, two thousand years ago, I was then an enthusiast in the endeavor to unravel the mysteries of former ages, of former peoples and former histories, just as

I was an enthusiast in the search for the secrets of nature. Indeed, the two went hand in hand, for in the histories of nations lay an outline of the philosophies of their people, and these philosophies allowed their foundations to the various phenomena of nature; hence the study of their philosophies furnished to me the key to their knowledge of nature's workings, which, added to the knowledge of others, helps to link the perfect chain. So in my early days I strove diligently to master the key to their hieroglyphs, and success crowned my endeavors. My first discovery was that, while the characters themselves at first seemed to bear little resemblance, the words, or very many of them, were similar to a language which in my day was almost forgotten, and but few knew anything of. It was known as Sanskrit, and I doubt not has ceased to be known on earth, just as this language of the people of ancient Kor is forgotten."

"Sanskrit!" I exclaimed.

"Yea; Sanskrit," Ayesha repeated. "And dost thou know the Sanskrit, too, as thou dost the other tongues?"

"Nay, O Ayesha; I know not Sanskrit. It is a dead language, and as thou hast thought, all but forgot. There are none who speak it to-day, though there are those who have learned much of it—sufficient at least to translate manuscripts written in that language. But their knowledge of it is imperfect. But the Sanskrit was spoken in a land far removed from this. Or is it that some of the old Indoos had migrated to this place and here settled, and their language had been corrupted into that of the inscriptions, just as the Arabic hath been corrupted by these Amahaggar?"

"Nay, Holly; the Sanskrit is a modern tongue compared with this and I doubt not that the Sanskrit is rather derived from this than this from the Sanskrit. There was an old tradition, a tradition so old its origin could not be traced, that away back in a remote age people from the region of the Nile migrated to the northeast and settled upon a river known in my time as the Ganges, and why

may it not have been that the ancestors of these emigrants went north from here?"

"If thou, who hast lived two thousand years upon earth, cannot tell of this, how thinkest thou that I should know, I, who have been here but a day?" I asked.

"Even two thousand years are but a breath in the life of the world," Ayesha said.

I did not answer her, I was too full.

We spent another day among the ruins, then returned to the little camp where our litterbearers and attendants were awaiting us, and after a time, during which the necessary preparations were being made, we were on our way back.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### MY SOUL-MATE

When, a short time after the trip described in the last chapter, I proposed to Ayesha that another journey be taken, she put me off, saying:

"Be not in haste, O Holly, for I have greater things in store for thee; and their consummation is close at hand. Hast thou forgotten the promises I made thee in the past?"

"Thou hast made so many promises in the past, O Ayesha, that it would be difficult for me to name that one to which thou dost now refer," I returned.

"Ah, yes; I have made many promises, most of which I have fulfilled. But there is one greater than all others to thee. Listen! Dost thou not remember a time when first I tempted thee with my beauty thou didst fall upon thy knees in admiration and passion? Rememberest thou not I did tell thee I was not for thee? Later on, did I not come to thee from the immortal side and tell thee that though I loved thee not, yet wert thou loved by another—

another beside whose beauty mine would to thee grow pale? Hast thou forgotten?"

"Nay, O Ayesha, I have not forgotten; I remember well that thou didst so promise; but I scarcely took it serious."

"Thou shalt see; for the time is at hand. And if my beauty dazzled thee, thou shalt be blinded by that which thou shalt yet behold—the beauty which is for thee; wholly and solely thine."

"Thou dost exaggerate, O Ayesha."

"Yea; so did I always. Yet did those exaggerations always prove realities. Have any of my promises—those exaggerations—been less than I did describe? Hast thou been disappointed with the result of anything which I promised?" she asked.

"Nay, O Ayesha; thou hast always kept thy promises, and in each case hath the realization surpassed what thy promises bade us expect. I am wrong in so hastily expressing discredit—a discredit which is in no sense justified. But wherefore could I even dream of so great a blessing as that of which thou hast just told me; I who am so ugly—who am the very personification of ugliness—to be told that such beauty is for me, and me alone! Couldst thou believe it wert thou me?"

"Well, it is for thee. First thou must do as I say. Over the door of the apartment where thy servant doth sleep must thou hang curtains, one on each side, that they may fall together in the middle. Do this as I have said, then repose in patience till thy day of joy cometh."

I did as Ayesha instructed and hung the draperies, using therefor a couple of blankets. Then we waited nightly for the materialization of her promise. But it was a long time before we met with anything new. Ayesha, however, still besought us to be patient, and we kept on watching.

Once it seemed as if the curtains parted and an almost blinding flash came from between them. It was instantaneous, like a sudden flash of lightning, and as it did not recur, I deemed it an illusion.

Several nights after, however, while we were thus watch-



ing, there came, apparently through the curtains themselves rather than from the opening, a mist similar to that we had observed when Ayesha first showed herself. As was the case at that time, this mist seemed to grow brighter and brighter. Believing it might be imagination, I turned away for a moment to relieve my eyes of the strain, thinking that when I returned my gaze toward the curtain the mist would perhaps have dissipated. While my eyes were thus diverted Leo grabbed me by the arm. I turned again to look and—my God! I was stunned; shocked as if by a blow. My eyes felt as if smitten by some sharp edge. I covered my face with my hands in an effort to protect them. In a few seconds I again looked, and it was as if I were looking intently into the noonday sun. It blinded me and made my eyes swim. But with all my surprise I was determined to look upon it, whatever it was, and so, though I was repeatedly dazed, I as often turned again to it. As my eyes became more accustomed to the strain I saw in it a beauty such as I could not even dream of as being possible in the universe; nor could I in any sense describe it; no words are known by which it could be expressed and there is nothing in the world by which a comparison can be made, even faintly. The light itself was of a tint the nearest to which I can say was a beautiful, ethereal amethyst—only a tint—and so unspeakably beautiful as to seem almost to live. Around this, at its margin, it blended into a series of other tints, forming a corona far more vari-colored and gorgeous than any rainbow. And within this dazzling light, as if it were the center of it, stood a figure. I could not see it plainly, the brightness was too intense.

Then a change came. The brilliance seemed to dim and a mist formed in front of the vision. This dulled to some extent the dazzling effect and I could now see the figure. Talk about love at first sight! I fell to my knees in adoration. I loved and worshipped at the same time. And beauty! Ayesha's loveliness faded completely. I beheld here—oh, ask me not to describe it, for I cannot.

Was this the consummation of Ayesha's promise? Was this the one whom she said loved me and whom I should love? Was this the long promised soul-mate? Whether or no, my heart leaped toward her; I was her slave. How strange it is that man, and woman too, under the spell of love, forgets everything but their passion! I forgot I was ugly; forgot I was unworthy; forgot everything save my worshipful adoration. She did not move, but seemed to stand silently gazing at me, and there was nothing for me to do but remain still and return her gaze, for within my heart I dared not approach her.

And now, as my senses began gradually to return, I became conscious of a vast contrast between this person and Ayesha. The dark, rich beauty of Ayesha was here replaced by a fair spiritual radiance, which was only typical of angelhood. Instead of the rich black hair which fell from Ayesha's head there was here a mass of yellow tresses which shimmered and glistened as if of polished gold, back of which was a fine, gauzy veil, as if it had just fallen from the head. Her raiment consisted of a robe of pure white, delicately embroidered in faint purple. Upon her brow, scintillating and sparkling amid the yellow waves, like a bright celestial jewel wrested from the diadem of Dawn, reposed an illumining star.

She only remained a few moments, this beauty of mine. But it was long enough for me to wish her to stay forever. Then she slowly receded—she floated, she did not walk—towards the curtains, gradually fading as she did so, and, like a needle unto a magnet, I impulsively arose and followed until she disappeared within the curtains, when I stopped—lost.

How long I stood there in half stupor I know not, but I was at last aroused by the voice of Ayesha, who asked:

“Wouldst thou follow, O Holly?”

“I would follow, O Ayesha; but whither should I go?”

“So far and no farther, for thou dost depend upon thine eyesight for guidance; and when it doth reach the limit of physical things, there it doth stop.”

"Among all of thy wonderful arts, thou dost nothing so well as perplex," I said, half vexed at being unable to grasp her full meaning scientifically.

"If thy soul could lay aside its fleshy prison and peer into the unseen, not far wouldst thou need to look for the one thou wouldst follow, for even at this moment stands she at thy side. But tell me; did I exaggerate in my promise? Did I speak too strong when I did say her beauty would blind thee? Tell me what thou dost think of this one whom I have told thee was for thee."

"I have naught to say, O Ayesha. If indeed I could believe that she was really for me, I should be very happy. But I am so ugly."

"But what of her beauty? Thou hast thought me beautiful; what of her?"

"Thou art beautiful, O Ayesha."

"Ah, Holly, thou wouldst be other than a man, didst thou to any woman cast reflection on her beauty or admit to her she were otherwise than beautiful. And since thou art such a man—a flatterer—thou dost evade my question. Love hath eyes that see the greatest beauty only in its object. Speak freely, and tell me truly, for if Kalikrates but say in his heart that my beauty pleaseth him best, what care I for the opinion of others—even thine, O Holly."

"Thou art so dark, and she is so fair," I said.

"Yea; and the fair beauty doth appeal to thy fancy."

"I have always been attracted to fair people," I replied.

"And dost thou ever question thyself as to wherefore?"

"Nay; I considered it merely as a preference, a fact which needed no other solution."

"The fair one thou hast seen is thy soul's affinity. Though thou hast known her not, yet hast thou in thy soul loved her. And in that unconscious love thou didst cleave to everything which bore her likeness. For love is the ruling impulse of the universe, though in the lives of humans it is rarely found in its purity. Human life, from the cradle to the grave, is but a search for love, a love that is rarely found, though its counterfeit doth so often deceive."

"But whence came the brightness which so enveloped her? The sun itself seems not to be more dazzling."

"It was the radiance of her own soul; a part of herself. So long hath she been removed from the crudeness of earth; so far hath she dwelt in immortal life, so highly hath been the spiritual development of her soul, that its very purity shines forth in the brightness which thou hast seen. But I would question thee further, O Holly. Why art thou here? Why hast thou been attracted to this wild country?"

"Thou knowest that it is in accordance with thy wish? Thou didst urge us."

"Nay; but what brought ye here ever? Kalikrates came that he should return to me; but wherefore camest thou?"

"To bear him company, because his father did desire it?"

"Ah, thou dost glance upon the surface only, and what lies hidden hath given thee no concern. Tell me, again: Why was it that thou, who was but one among many, wert given charge of him who was the reincarnation of my Kalikrates? Why did the parent select thee?"

"That is a question which I asked myself at the time, and I found no answer, O Ayesha."

"No; nor couldst thou. But answer me again. Why is it that thou art so attracted to these ancient cities; why dost thy mind, when thou dost contemplate the embalmed remains of the former inhabitants, wander backward till thou all but live among the scenes?"

"It is true, O Ayesha, that in fancy I have drifted back until I have almost seen the dead forms which lie so silent in these tombs once more animated—living again. But how didst thou know it? I had never told thee; nor did I think it strange."

"Nay, thou hadst not told me; nor is it essential that thou shouldst express thy thoughts. Thy mind is an open book, and thy thoughts are writ in characters that I may read. But let me tell thee. Thy visit to this place is not a mere circumstance—an accident or an incident in thy life; a mere pleasure trip to suit thy fancy. Behind all things exists a motive—a reason; a cause; and so there

is a cause for thy coming, and for thy attraction to these ruins, their former people, their histories, and their philosophies."

Ayesha paused. What was she trying to convey to me. Why did she refer to my attraction for these ruins and all that pertained to their former inhabitants? It was true, although until now I had not deemed it anything more than mere curiosity, that every reference to Kor and its people seemed to go all through me—to thrill me from head to foot. How often had my mind, as Ayesha said, wandered back till I almost lived among them. Upon rousing from such retrospective dreams a feeling of restless discontent would come over me, and with it an almost irrepressible desire to fly away from the present surroundings—the present age—and go forever to dwell with a race whose lives seemed so peaceful, whose religion was so beautiful, whose women were so fair and whose men so sincere. Was there indeed a reason other than mere curiosity and a love of ancient relics—an antiquarian's instinct? Had my love for antiquity, and ethnology, and archæology, a love that was hyperintensified in regard to Kor, a cause more potent than a simple inclination for scientific research? Did Ayesha know this cause, whatever it might be? And was there also some special reason why I should have been selected by my old friend Vincey to undertake the care of Leo? I had considered it was because he had felt more inclined to place confidence in me than any other person, and to me it seemed but commonplace.

"Thou dost meditate," Ayesha, said with an air of quizzical humor.

But I did not answer; I had formulated no reply.

"Human life hath two sides," she then continued, "the seen and the unseen, the known and the unknown; the apparent and that which is the hidden truth. And human associations have two sides, the visible and the invisible; the incarnate and the excarnate. That man who counts among his associates only those who are of the flesh counts but half, for, indeed, the associations of the immortal

are greater than those of the mortal, and their influence is tenfold stronger. Thinkest thou it is because the needle seeth the magnet that it is moved and influenced thereby? Nay. Place a fabric between them so that the magnet is hidden, veiled, yet will the needle follow. Hast thou never yet felt moved to certain thoughts and certain deeds while in the presence of another which thou wouldst never have felt hadst thou not been with that person, yet were no words spoken?"

"Yea; I have so," I said. "The presence of one person will lead into one line of thought, that of another will give an entirely different inspiration——"

"Thou hast said it—inspiration. It is inspiration. Words are but the means of conveyance from the lips through the ears to the brain, and hence are but the physical vibrations of the still more subtle thought—the spirit of the thought. But in this silent influence, this inspiration, there is a correspondence between soul and soul; a silent yet perfect intercourse between his soul and thine. And what matters it whether the soul is clothed in flesh or hath cast the flesh aside? Is the soul any less a soul? Nay. And if an incarnate soul can in silence correspond and commune with another incarnate soul, why can not an ex-carnate soul in equal silence correspond and commune with an incarnate soul? Dost thou comprehend?"

"But vaguely," I replied. "I grasp thy meaning only as with a dim sense of waking amid strange surroundings."

"Thy answer doth surprise me but little; for to all people hath the abode of the departed, the immortal world, seemed so far removed from earth and its surroundings that the two worlds appeared separated by a vast and uncrossable gulf, a dark abyss, a bottomless pit, a gloomy river, and many other things, all uncrossable, removing forever the dead from the living. But how went these departing ones, these released souls? Who hath seen them depart; who hath seen them leave the body? Were they not invisible? Tell me, O Holly, were they not invisible when they went? Speak!"

"It is so believed," I answered. "My teachings have led me to believe that heaven is the eternal abiding place of the good, the faithful, and that there is no return and no wish to return; and when the soul departs it cannot be seen by us, nor can the angels who bear it away."

"In other words, though they are invisible, they still exist, and that while existing, living, they are invisible."

"Aye."

"Then, if thou dost exist after passing out of thy body, and doth stand beside thine own corpse, invisible and intangible to thy mortal friends, the angels, as thou dost call them, standing there equally invisible, yet all there, is it any more strange that I, having been bereft of my body, could stand there as truly and as invisible as they?"

"So thou must have done to know each word I have spoken when I deemed thee far away."

"Then why is it strange, O Holly, if I, who am but an excarnate soul, can stand beside thee invisible to thy sight, that other souls, also excarnate, should likewise stand so? Ah, Holly, these very caves are full of them. Thy city across the sea is full of them. The two worlds, the mortal and the immortal, are in truth but one, having two phases, as viewed with respect to mortality—those beings who are seen and those who are unseen. These two classes of beings, those who are as ye say living and those whom ye call dead, are ever mingling. There is no gulf, no abyss, no pit, no dark river between the two worlds. There is no separation; it is all one.

"And since the two worlds are but one, and the people thereof mingle, would it be more than passing strange if one of these invisibles should love thee? And, loving thee, would it be more than natural if that excarnate, that immortal, that invisible should so cleave to thee as to be ever near to thee; to watch over thy life and thy destiny? Would it be strange?"

"A guardian angel, as it were," I suggested.

"A guardian angel indeed," she returned. "But thou hast not told me; is it strange?"

"It is strange as a thought," I replied, "but as thou dost tell it it seems fraught with reason. I cannot contradict; yet it is so contrary to the teachings of our age."

"Each new truth, when discovered, contradicts and overthrows some previously prevailing falsehood, some erstwhile common error. Else would it scarcely be a 'new' truth. But where, O Holly, canst thou conceive that far-off land can be—that heaven?"

"I can conceive nothing, O Ayesha. I have given no thought to conceptions; I have been content to 'believe' because I was always so taught, and no thought of questioning hath come to me till thou hast given it birth."

"I have been gradual in my teachings, O Holly, for too much truth would shake thy very nature. But this is what I want thee to know: Thy love for antiquities, thy attraction for these old ruins, the people of Kor, and their philosophies hath reason, and that reason is the close association of her whom thou hast just seen. All through thy life hath she been a constant though invisible companion, and though thou understood it not, yet didst thou feel her presence. Her thoughts, silent but real, mingled with thy thoughts, and thou didst learn to love what she loved, though to thee it was unknown. Hence, this loving a thing of which thou knewst not created an insatiable longing which thou couldst not describe. And when thou dost look upon these ruins and the objects which remain among them thou dost almost love them. Is it not so?"

"Yes; it is true; it is true. But though it be true, thou art the first to make me conscious of it."

"Loving Kalikrates as I do, is it strange, O Holly, that I should love the country in which he hath lived? Neither is it strange that thou should love the country where once lived thy soul-mate; for she whom thou hast just seen, she who hath been thy ever-watchful companion, was while upon earth a WOMAN OF KOR!"

"A woman of Kor?" I asked, stunned at the possibility.

"Verily; a woman who once lived in one of these cities."

I was simply staggered at what I heard. A woman of



Kor! And she had been with me all of these years and I had not known it! Was it possible? Or was I dreaming? Why should she be with me? Was it as Ayesha explained—that it was simply because she loved me?

“How doth it come that thou didst know of her?” I asked. “How learn of her, thus to bring her to me?”

“How learned thou of Kalikrates?”

“I knew his father.”

“Aye; it was through the father, who was thy friend. And it is because thou and Kalikrates are so close that, I cleaving to him and thy mate cleaving to thee, she and I did come into association.”

“She did not speak,” I said, in my dazed condition scarce knowing what I did say. “Had she naught to say?”

“Thou rememberst when first I came I was without word, for in truth I was without voice. In my initial efforts to control the forces I could master but one thing at a time, and as thine eyes were more readily believed than thine ears, I shewed myself first. So now doth come thy mate; a trial first, then greater effort and greater, till thou shalt in time hold her in thine arms.

“But of what use is it to tell thee more? Already have I told thee more than thou art willing to believe, thou art so ready to doubt. Suffice it that thou hast seen her, and when thou dost seek thy couch at night let sleep lull thee into sweet remembrance of her fair face and into her presence while thy body resteth. Be assured she is for thee. Rest happy in the thought.”

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### IGANIT.

I was extremely anxious, after the recent experiences, for the time to come when I should know more of her whom Ayesha declared was my soul-mate. I had seen

her as before on several occasions, but that did not satisfy me. I wanted to talk to her, to have her as real and tangible to me as Ayesha was to Leo. But with all my anxiety I could in no sense hasten matters, and Ayesha, to whom I confided my impatience, offered me but little consolation. She only admonished me to wait.

"For," she said, "things that are natural cannot be unduly hastened. Only man seeks to force things, and he is invariably the loser thereby. We are earnestly striving to bring heaven into this wilderness, to thee and to Kalikrates."

"But," I asked, "is she less than thou art? Thou canst come; why not she?"

"Thou couldst scarce understand should I tell thee?" she replied. "But let me use two comparisons which will convey to thee something of the matter. Thou art a swimmer in the water, is it not so?"

"Yea, O Ayesha; I am a swimmer."

"But the water is not thy accustomed element?"

"Nay."

"And wert thou a strong swimmer the first time thou entered the water?"

"Nay; I could not swim at all. Many times did I need to enter ere I learned to control myself in it."

"Just so. And when thou first did swim it was but short; thou couldst not endure it long."

"That also is true, O Ayesha; it was but a few strokes, then more and more, till I could endure a long distance."

"And so it is with me and with thy mate in taking on a form that is tangible to thy senses. We enter into an unaccustomed element. At first we fail, as in thy first attempt at swimming; then as we begin to succeed we are awkward; as we overcome that awkwardness we develop but little strength, but gaining with each effort until at last we become proficient, even as I am now. Dost thou comprehend?"

"Thou hast made that part plain," I answered. "But since thou hast been enabled to accomplish this, why can

she not do likewise? Is she less than thou that she is more tardy?"

"Ah, Holly, wert thou to know all that thou might wish to, thou wouldst still have but a smattering of knowledge, as if its waters had run through thy hands and only left the fingers moist. But let me refer thee again to thy art of swimming. If in thy boyhood thou hadst so accustomed thyself to the element of water as to remain for a goodly period beneath its surface, and when thou wert thirty hadst ceased to enter it; and if Kalikrates, being younger than thou, shouldst likewise accustom himself so as to remain underneath as long as thou did at an equal age and should continue in the accomplishment until up to a year ago, he thus being but a short period away from the water element whilst thou had been out of it upward of twenty years, which of you, in renewing the attempt to attain the former limit of endurance, would be the first to accomplish it?"

"Why he would, of course," I replied. "I would perhaps never reach it again, for my age would be against me."

"And so it is with me and thy mate. The mortal elements are to the soul that has passed through death unaccustomed elements, and only by degrees are they mastered. For, as thou dost know, the embryo child doth take on but little of the physical (flesh) from day to day; as the child grows it is but gaining in the capacity for endurance, and in the flesh becometh stronger and stronger, until at last its limit is reached and it is full-grown. So in this way thy mate once, away back in the lost reckonings of time, learned to master the physical, the flesh, up to the point of full womanhood, and I, ages after, likewise attained an equal mastery. Now, consider the vast elapse of time since she was environed in flesh, and the short time since I gave up my body, and tell me who should be earliest capable of controlling a reconstructed body, I who hath so recently been used to handling one of my own or she who hath so long, long ago forgot?"

"Thy meaning is plain, O Ayesha, but it is most fantastic. I understand, but I cannot grasp its full potency."

"Nor wilt thou as long as thou'rt incarcerated in flesh."

I cannot say that I was rendered any less impatient by Ayesha's explanation. But impatience is an attribute of humankind which, however strong it may be, never hastens anything. Indeed, it quite often retards, after the principle that haste makes waste.

I do not know that my impatience retarded any; at least it did not seem to hasten. In course of time, however, I was gratified by feeling her hands on my head. This occurred in total darkness, but Ayesha assured me it was her, and I was satisfied to accept her explanation.

Some time after this Ayesha told me the time had come when I should converse with this soul-mate of mine—I had not learned her name yet, for when I asked for it Ayesha assured me she would tell me herself, and preferred to do so, as soon as she was able. I was in eager expectancy for the time to come when I should hear her. I wondered what language she would address me in. Would I understand her? I had asked Ayesha about it, but she only laughed at my questions.

"Thou wilt have but little difficulty in understanding her," she said, "for love findeth a language of its own, if there be no other."

When the evening came upon which I was promised she should talk to me—well, I was going to try to describe my feelings, but I can only say it was a sort of super-intensified ecstasy. I was sitting in total darkness on one of the stone benches and I felt her place her hand upon my head. She sat by my side, taking hold of my hand at the same time. Then she spoke, beginning in a gentle whisper but gradually increasing in audibility; and what surprised me still more, she spoke in English!

"I give you greeting, dear one," she said; "a greeting from that side of life which has so long been a mystery and a conjecture. Oh how I would like to clear away all the misgivings, the doubts; to answer the many ques-

tions that have come into your mind throughout your life regarding that which lies beyond the grave. For in your childhood and your youth, your prime manhood and the advancing years that are slowly stealing upon you, the mystery of death has been a problem you have longed to know the solution of, yet feared the knowledge you craved. To-day you are a man of learning, a man of broad mind and great comprehension, and yet there are problems of life which you propounded in the almost forgotten innocence of your childhood which even with all your education, your advanced learning, and the many years of pondering of your matured brain, remain as unsolved as when the infant mind first proposed them."

"There have, indeed, been many thoughts and many questions concerning life and concerning death which from time to time have formed themselves into problems," I replied, "but how early they began to formulate themselves in my mind I have but little recollection."

"No; because in childhood your untutored mind, unfettered by the materialism of a conventional education, was free to soar unrestrained into the realms of transcendental speculations. But as you grew and developed, as you began to gather up the learning of the world—the material world—under the influence of those whom you wrongly consider your superiors, you gradually narrowed down, mostly as the direct result of ridicule, but partly because of your misplaced confidence in their superiority, till at last external things alone appealed to your interest."

"You say my confidence in their superiority was misplaced. I am surprised at this statement," I said.

"All the great men of the world are specialists," she returned, "and those to whom you have looked up are likewise specialists. They are highly developed along certain lines and in certain branches of knowledge, but to gain such eminence in one department of learning some other department must be neglected, and in whatever is neglected there exists a dormancy. In that far they become monomaniacs, or at least they become monodynamic,

inasmuch as they pulsate with but one thought, one idea, and everything in the universe must conform to that idea. This monoideism so subjects their reasoning faculties that anything that does not conform to that one all-absorbing idea is immediately denounced as an error. And in order to more forcibly impress others with the denunciation they adopt a policy of ridicule and sarcastic scoffing, which is never argument, but only intimidation. It is simply an attempt to browbeat. And so a child, taught to adore these monoideists because an empty world calls them great, is oftentimes ruthlessly browbeaten out of a gem of truth which direct inspiration placed in the pure mind of an infant.

"The truly great benefactors of the world are seldom recognized as great until a subsequent generation takes up their work; and these benefactors, whose great discoveries invariably come to them by inspiration and not by the tuition of eminent teachers, have been thus browbeaten, and even put to torture, because they proclaimed a truth."

"That is true," I said, "in many cases of which I know—of which the world knows."

"Yes, indeed," she continued; "for how came the power of steam to be discovered; and how the law of gravity? Were they not inspirations?"

"The power of steam was discovered by a dreamy man watching a boiling tea kettle and seeing the cover forced off by the pressure of the expanding vapor within; while the law of gravity was discovered by Sir Isaac Newton, who in a lazy moment saw an apple fall to the ground," I returned.

"But thousands before Watt saw the kettle cover forced off but received no thought of the power that did it; and thousands before Newton saw apples drop, yet conceived no thought or idea therefrom of the force of gravity. Why should these two have made such important discoveries from such simple incidents? It was inspiration, Horace. A thousand other things might offer the same suggestions, but the suggestions were barren, because the moment of inspiration had not come. Inspirational

thoughts invariably come when the mind is most blank, and so, as you say, Watt was dreamy, and Newton was indulging in a moment of laziness. Had Watt a fixed thought in his mind his tea kettle might have exploded and have offered no new discovery; or if Newton had had a fixed thought his whole apple tree might have fallen and have offered no new theory. Men of fixed knowledge, these eminent specialists, are usually so absorbed in their one thought—their hobby—that their minds are seldom receptive to inspiration, while the mind of a child, so readily diverted, can be guided into new channels and therefore is susceptible to the suggestion of new truths.

"And these great men, these monoideistic molders of public opinion, with haughty egotism, will scoff at any new thought which may come from any mind unsophisticated enough to receive inspiration. And in their fixed determination to condemn all knowledge and truth that does not conform to their pet hobbies they not only scoff, but persecute and torture those who offer it. Christopher Columbus was declared a lunatic and was followed on the streets by jeering crowds because he declared the earth was round. And Galileo was threatened with the rack because he persisted that the earth revolved instead of being encompassed by the sun each day. And in the case of Columbus all the great wiseacres of the various courts attempted that policy of browbeating, declaring it impossible for the world to be round because the people at the antipodes would be hanging downward, which they argued to be a physical impossibility."

"Yes, but these instances belong to the dark ages, and are not possible in this age of enlightenment and freedom."

"No; simply because there is a greater number of these specialists, for one thing, each of whom is absorbed along a different line, and while blind to their own egotism they are quick to detect egotism in others. Furthermore, through the perfection of printing, facts upon all lines have been placed before all people and controversies been made popular matters, and at the same time religious

coersive laws have proved themselves obnoxious and become deadletter, so that coercion in regard to opinion is no longer possible. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, were they allowed to do so, these specialists would be just as ready in this age to browbeat and persecute as they were in the earlier. They can no longer legally coerce, but they can and do sneer, and scoff and browbeat."

"That, perhaps, is all true. But how is it that you are so familiar? You talk of all this as glibly as though you had lived through it instead of having existed so far back in the infancy of the world, as Ayesha says you did. And how is it you talk English so fluently; as fluently as I, who am a born Englishman."

"Do not your text-books of natural philosophy, of physics, of the sciences, and of history contain these facts of which I speak? Did you not derive most of your knowledge from these text-books?"

"Yes; from text-books and other works."

"And if I could look upon you and be with you, conscious of all you are doing, is it any less reasonable that I should also see your text-books? Could I not go right along with you, hearing what you heard, reading what you read, learning what you learned?"

"I suppose so," I said, meekly.

"And was there not a time when you could not speak English? Did you not, in your first baby prattle, take days and days to learn one little word? Could not I, with a fully developed consciousness, have learned those simple words with a greater ease and facility than you in your babyhood? Ah, yes, Horace dear; I have sat beside your little cradle when the mother hand rocked it to and fro, and I sang with her the soft lulabys which soothed you into slumber. I do not say I began to learn the English tongue with you; I simply ask you if it would be strange should I have done so. I simply appeal to your reason as to whether it would be any more consistent that you should learn in the duration of your life than that I should learn in an equal duration of time. As for my familiarity with



your histories, your philosophies and your sciences, Horace, I have gone with you step by step, lesson by lesson; have studied what you have studied and have learned what you have learned. Moreover, while to you the many teachers you have had have appeared as great men, to me they have been as children and their many hobbies, the exponents of which have made them great in the eyes of the world, and great in your eyes, have been to me as the toys of these children. And as a mother is interested in the toys and games of her children and their companions, so have I been interested in the toys and games of your associates, among whom have been many of the world's eminent scholars; and as the mother learns and memorizes the nursery rhymes and ditties, the fables, fairy stories, and fictions that so readily interest and amuse the infant mind, so have I learned your text-books, your histories, your philosophies, your sciences, and even your theology, because I loved you. I loved you, and you were interested; therefore I became interested.

"But while you, in the simple confidence which is akin to the faith of a child in its favorite fairy tale, accept these text-books, these histories, these sciences as unimpeachable truth, I, having long ago learned the fallibility of man, receive and rehearse them only as you do those fairy tales. There are none of them perfect; there are few of them wholly true. Your text-books are full of errors, because their writers are these specialists, these hobbyists, who cannot see a truth that does not accord with their one, fixed idea. Everything else is wrong, according to them, and truth is by them suppressed. Your histories are sometimes misleading, because your historians are hobbyists and only give what pleases them. If they were in sympathy with a ruler, for instance, they would laud his good qualities and either suppress or be blind to his evil. A foul deed of a nation will, under coercion of a government, and under a frequently unjust sentiment called 'patriotism,' be smoothed over and polished until posterity are educated to call it right. Your theologians deny the right of

putting to test the truth of their dogmas, and any historian who advances a record reflecting in any way upon their pet hobby is vociferously condemned and impeached.

"Your sciences, while nestling in truth, are but half formed, half developed. Your philosophies are built on materialism——"

"Merciful heavens!" I exclaimed, dismayed at her iconoclastic demolition of all that I had considered the foundation of the knowledge which was the pride of our age. "Are you going to leave me nothing of the fabric woven in my years of study?"

"Oh, yes; I will leave you the foundation, just as I might leave to the child the foundation for its fairy story. For all the simple fairy stories have their foundation in a truth of some kind. Shall you be surprised if I tell you that your little story of 'Cinderella' and your 'Red Riding Hood' were tales that interested me in my childhood, so many thousands of years back? It is true; only they are slightly changed. And do you not know what they imply? They are allegories. And as all allegories are founded in fact, so these fairy tales have a foundation in fact. They have their foundation in the phenomena of nature. In the story which pleased my infancy Red Riding Hood was a child with crimson, flowing hair, who went with a burden of fruit to her beloved grandmother. On her way thither she encountered a hideous dragon, which frightened and caused her to hesitate. But she knew she must hasten, and as the monster passed out of sight in the gloom of the forest she proceeded to the home of the grandmother. As she entered dusk was already settling. She went to the bed and a dialogue ensued like Red Riding Hood's. Like the wolf, the dragon, who had already devoured the grandmother, then devoured the child. Then a good man with a bright face and great strength slew the dragon with his spear and, cleaving the monster, rescued the child, whose hair had turned to golden, and revived the grandmother.

This crimson-haired child was none other than the ruddy, evening sun, which in its descent to the horizon was ap-

parently going to meet grandmother Earth. On its way it met the cloud-dragon, and as the sun seems to retard as it sinks, so the child hesitated. But as the ever changing clouds dissipated the child went on, to where the dragon, the emblem of darkness and of night, had swallowed the earth, and as the last vestige of light faded away the sun-child was likewise devoured by the dark dragon. But the breaking morn, with his spear of light, slew the dragon of night and, cleaving the darkness, brought forth the child, the golden morning sun, and awoke and revived the grandmother, earth."

"Yes," I said, "I have read of a similar application to the story of Red Riding Hood—that she was the red, evening sun, the grandmother the earth, and the wolf the darkness of night."

"Yes; the story is older than my race. So, since the truth contained in those fairy stories is only an underlying truth, the truths of many of your text-books, and the theories and sciences of many of your great men are but underlying truths. Many of the most fixed and established opinions in your world to-day are to me amusing nonsense, because, while your materialistic scientists perceive but the external, I can, from my immortal state, see not only the internal, but the supernal. Hence I say that many of the childish thoughts and childish questionings were direct inspiration, and under tutilage of those hobbyists such inspired thoughts have been browbeaten out of you. You have never in your life thought you yourself knew anything about the life beyond the grave, but have bowed down to the dogmas of self-poised 'authorities,' hence you have surrendered inspiration and taken in its stead the faulty opinions of men. But I have talked too long and must say good-bye for the present. I will come again."

"Can't you tell me your name before you go?" I asked.

"You may call me Iganit," she said, holding my hand in hers for a moment; she kissed me, then backed away from me. In another moment she was gone.

For some time I sat like one who had just awakened

from a dream, at first trying to recall my surroundings, then endeavoring to assure myself as to the reality of my experience. I tried to put together the fragments of our conversation. I had largely expected that I would find this so-called soul-mate a very ancient appearing person—ancient in appearance, ancient in language, ancient in thought and ancient in understanding. But when at last I met her and heard her talk, and she boldly pronounced as amusing nonsense that which we call wisdom, and the eminent scientific authorities and their great works “children with toys,” I scarce knew what I thought.

She was very different from Ayesha. Ayesha possessed a way that was essentially positive and sarcastic, and her sarcasm was such as to make one to whom it was directed feel almost humiliated. Iganit, however, was superlatively gentle and, in place of that positive cynicism, possessed a sweetness such as I never dreamed could be associated with a human soul. I had theretofore thought Ayesha’s voice the sweetest I had ever heard; but now, as I compared it with the tones and articulation of Iganit, it was as the ring of bronze to the ring of silver.

How strange it is! When we set a standard of ideal perfection and then in our experience incidentally find a higher perfection, the first appears crude and we wonder how we could possibly have appreciated it; then, when the next higher perfection is met, the second fades; and so on. It was so in this case. Ayesha, who hitherto had seemed so infinitely superior to us and to everything else of which I could conceive, had been so far outreached by the superiority—in my eyes at least—of this last association, this Iganit, that Ayesha now seemed but one of us, while Iganit appealed to me as the very essence of divinity itself.

As I lay awaiting sleep that night, still pondering over the evening’s experience, I asked of myself, “If indeed the world’s great knowledge is ‘amusing nonsense,’ what is the use to learn, and what could be the object of life upon earth?” I fell asleep while still pondering this ques-

tion, and in my dreams, as if it were the echo of my thought, a mysterious and sourceless voice seemed to say:

“Earth is the kindergarten of the soul, and life thereon is the soul’s attendance at that school. The lessons of life, if rightly learned, are preparations for a higher course of learning in the greater life yet to come.”

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A JEWEL CASE.

Night by night Iganit came, better and still better, at first in total darkness, then in a faint light, then in a stronger and stronger light, until at last I could see her. At first she and Ayesha never came together; each came alone. But later they were both present simultaneously, Ayesha sitting beside Leo, and Iganit with me.

Many were the questions we asked, and much information by them vouchsafed; but it will be too great a tax on the memory to recall it all or to relate it in its order. On one occasion, however, though I do not clearly recollect just what turned his mind upon that subject, Leo reminded Ayesha of the mission she said he had to perform, asking her if it was still to come, or if it had been accomplished.

“Nay,” she replied, “the time is not yet. Thou wilt know when it hath been accomplished, for I will tell thee. A little longer shall I remain patient, then shalt thou free me. There is yet another of the ruined cities to which ye will be guided ere I shall ask thee to undertake the task that is to unburden me, and if thou wilt, thou and Holly, we will start at daybreak the third morning counting tomorrow. Prepare your boat, for the place where we will go is encompassed on all sides by water, for it hath sunk since Kor was depeopled, and though the city stands high

and dry it is unapproachable by land, and for this reason there are none of the Amahaggar dwelling there. Take provisions for a week, at least. Ye will need no attendants save your servant, Michael."

"Were there no Amahaggar at the last place we visited," I asked.

"Nay; there were no Amahaggar, for there were no tombs," Ayesha replied. "Why, I know not, but perchance Iganit can tell thee."

I inquired of Iganit if she could explain the reason.

"The reason is very simple," she answered. "That city was newly founded when the pestilence destroyed its people, and the tombs had not been begun. The dead were transported back to the other cities from which the families came to found the new city."

"In which of the cities did you live?" I inquired.

"You have not yet visited the city where I dwelt," she replied, "but you shall go sometime."

Pursuant to the instructions of Ayesha we placed the boat in readiness for the trip, and at daybreak on the day appointed, Leo, Michael and myself launched the boat after having wheeled it half way through the tunnel entrance. We rowed leisurely into the open river, where we floated in waiting for the coming of our guide, who we knew would not keep us waiting long. Nor did she.

"Proceed down the river," she said, when she came, until it doth bend in its course. Thence shall ye see our destination, and ere nightfall, if all goes well, we shall have arrived; for though it is much farther than the city of your last visitation, yet is the boat more swift, as the current bends to your aid."

We rowed on and on, with steady, swinging stroke, and progressed rapidly, sometimes in silence for long periods, sometimes plying Ayesha with questions concerning different things which we met. It was between ten and eleven o'clock when we reached the bend which Ayesha had told of. Before us, from this point, stretched an unobstructed plain clear to the horizon, almost at which there rose one

of those isolated cliffs so peculiar here, which Ayesha immediately pointed out as our destination. It did not seem very far away, but Ayesha laughed, assuring us that we would find the distance greater than we anticipated, partly owing to the winding course of the river and partly owing to atmospheric deception. In fact, the cliff itself seemed to be a cloud, or rather, since it seemed more substantial than a cloud, it appeared as if suspended in the air. The blue of the sky seemed to surround it, and the winding river to merge into the sky. As we approached closer, however, so that the ethereal blue of the distance dissipated, we saw that, instead of being suspended in the air, the cliff really rose out of the calm, sky-tinted blue of a vast sheet of water, into which the river itself was lost. We ultimately reached this open water and steered direct to the cliff. By Ayesha's instructions we approached the profile nearest to us, for at this point she declared the entrance to be. Reaching the wall of stone, we found it very much like that of Kor, only it was much smaller, and the mass of stone did not reach nearly so high. But the entrance was similar; that is, it was an artificial tunnel.

The sinking sun was behind us as we faced this entrance, and its red rays slanted into the cavern; and as they became more horizontal, tinging the rough projections with its ruddy light, we were enabled to see far into the place.

Inside the cavern we found the formation like that of the tunnel entrance to Kor. Beside the channel for the water was a smooth roadway, the level of which was about two feet above that of the water. This fact gave me something to conjecture upon. At the entrance this roadway ended abruptly. Ayesha had told us that the place had sunk, and I naturally supposed the whole mountain had done so. But this roadway, cut as it was in the solid rock, proved it differently. Evidently, while the mountain itself had remained as it was, the surrounding plain had settled, allowing a flood of water. For there was no room for doubt in my mind but that at one time the roadway had continued out into the country beyond, and per-

haps the stream which then flowed through this channel had joined the river somewhere close by, which at that time continued its course as a river onward to the sea.

A turn to the left and another to the right and we saw some distance ahead of us the daylight, now a twilight, for the light of the sun, which by this time must have been half set, was cut off by the high wall of rock.

Once through the tunnel, however, we saw the ruined city was not very distant. And now that we were within the crater, it showed itself to be but small as compared with Kor. Inside, it was a lake, about seven miles across, as near as I could guess, bounded on all sides by the wall of rock. In the center, still, as Ayesha had said, high and dry, stood the once city, and to it we hastened, for darkness was beginning to settle, and when we reached there it was already dark, though light enough to see our surroundings, as the moon, which was partially screened by a covering of filmy, semi-transparent clouds, was just peeping over the crest of the eastern wall of the crater.

We drew the boat up and, led by Ayesha, made our way into the streets of the city. As I glanced across the shimmering water, which was every now and then visible, I wondered if Ayesha had ever seen this place before the water had flooded the crater and its surroundings. Upon asking her she replied:

"Nay. When I first saw this place it was, so far as I know, just as it is now. Only from a distance have I seen it, and never in my mortal state have I been within the mountain, for thou knowest, O Holly, that the Amahaggar knows not of boats. Thus, as a mortal I was debarred from entering; but as an immortal I have made several visits. Iganit and I have been here together, and only in this way have I learned the way hither."

We traveled some distance into the heart of the deserted city, when Ayesha at last urged us to turn into one of the houses, where we should spend the night, and into this she herself led the way. The moon had now freed itself from the cloudy envelope, and its light, reflecting from the hard



stones, became diffused into the shadows and even into the room where we were, enabling us to see, though very dimly, even after our lights had been extinguished. We had spread our blankets, and as our day's efforts had been arduous; we were glad enough to lay down to sleep. But Ayesha had not yet departed, and when we had arranged everything she bade us repose ourselves and quietly watch.

"Watch what?" I asked.

"Whate're thou seest," she replied.

This was extremely indefinite, but having learned by experience that Ayesha never spoke without a reason, nor instructed us without a motive, we just waited to see what would happen. As she had not named any particular direction or place where we were to watch, I glanced around the apartment, partly to appease my curiosity as to its size, shape, etcetera (which really I could not see in that light), partly, and more especially, because I thought I was just as likely to see what Ayesha wished me to as I would by looking only in one direction; for, ten chances to one, I would choose the wrong direction. Suddenly Leo exclaimed:

"What's that in front of you, Uncle Horace?"

"In front of me?" I repeated.

"Yes; on the floor, in front of you," he returned.

I looked, and, sure enough, there was something strange—a little, revolving mass of white something-or-other, circulating, revolving, and apparently turning into itself. I stooped toward it to examine it more closely; as I did so it moved away, as if to avoid me. Remembering Ayesha's injunction to watch, I suppressed my inclination to follow and investigate its nature. I waited, watching its involutions—for its apparent motion was, as near as I can express it, a sort of self involution. Suddenly it shot upward about two feet. Remaining that way for a moment, it became still taller, and then broadened out and—good heavens! it took the form of a human being!

Were the Amahaggar right in assuming that these cities were haunted? Was this room haunted, and this the ghost

of the place? I never in the least believed in ghosts, but now my disbelief was shaken and I began to believe that I was face to face with one of those beings whose real existence I had hitherto pooh-poohed at. As it reached full height it seemed, as it were, to shake its garments out, like a new-born dragonfly shakes and flutters its wings just after emerging from its chrysalis.

Throwing its arms up as if to stretch itself after being confined in a cramped position, it came directly toward me. I was very uneasy at first, but was quickly reassured by: "I am here, dear one."

It was Iganit! She reached forth her hand and placed it upon my head, a caress which was habitual to her.

"Now, my dear Horace, let me bid you welcome to my home," she said, "for you are now within the walls which once sheltered me."

"In this house?" I asked, in astonishment.

"In this house, and in this very room," she returned. "Many, many times have I sat where you now sit. In this room I first saw the light of day, and in here I left all that was mortal of myself. It is a shrine filled with memories of a former life, and knowing well the sentimentality of the earthly world, knowing your own sentimental attraction for whatever may pertain to my past, I have brought you here that you may see me for yourself in the home where once I dwelt.

"Of the fittings and furnishings which at that time accrued to my comfort nothing is left, save a heap of dust here and there; for time and decay and the various forms of insect life have vied with each other in accomplishing the work of disintegration. Only the stones and the metals have endured."

I was wonderfully touched, and a feeling of tender reverence filled me and the place at once became sacred to me.

"How I would like to retain this form and go with you through the cities and recall the associations of the different places!" Iganit said.

"Can you not do so," I asked.

"Ah, no," she replied; "it is too light."

"Too light?" I repeated.

"Yes. I cannot endure the light when in this form."

"That seems so strange," I said. "I cannot comprehend it. Light is considered essential to our healthful existence; and yet you and Ayesha speak of light as something you cannot endure."

"In taking on this body I am availing myself of a different law to that under which you are embodied. You can stand what you consider a great deal of light, but with all your endurance, how illy could you face the light which my presence brought to you when first I showed myself. I had to cloud myself in order that you might see me."

"That is true; I certainly could not stand that light."

"Again, you cannot endure more than so much heat. Up to a certain degree you can endure it with comfort; beyond that point it becomes first uncomfortable, then painful, and, increasing, it is unendurable. Is it not so?"

"Yes; it is true."

"And by a practice which consists of exposing yourself to the higher degrees of heat you become to a certain extent innured to it, so that you raise the degree of comfort, thus raising correspondingly the degrees of pain and endurance," Iganit said. "In other words, you can by practice so accustom yourself to the effect of heat that you can endure more and more. Still, there is a limit to endurance, and when that limit is passed you would lose control of yourself and perhaps faint from the effect of the pain."

"As heat is to you while in your body, so light is to me while in this improvised body. I could not in the beginning withstand any light, but I have practiced until I can now endure sufficient to enable you to see me slightly. But should I venture to pass from this room into daylight my body would disappear instantly, as a thin vapor would dissolve in the heat of the noonday sun. It is not that I myself suffer injury from the effect of the light; it simply destroys the force by which the particles of matter are attracted and solidified into this body. The absence of

heat will cause the contiguous particles of which water is composed to draw closer together until it solidifies, and in that state you call it ice. Expose the ice to heat and its solidity is destroyed and it is water. Expose it to greater heat and it is changed to vapor. Still greater heat will further rarify this vapor until, if heat enough is offered, it will become invisible. Still it is there. In a similar manner light affects these particles which clothe me now. But Ayesha will go with you and show you what I should were I able."

"Explain to me one thing, Iganit. To-night you made your appearance so differently to the usual way that I am rendered curious," I said.

"No, dear one; you are mistaken. I did not come differently, except that to-night there were no curtains between you and I. Heretofore I have remained on the inside of the curtain until ready to meet you; but to-night I came that you might see the elements gather. To-night you have seen what was concealed before; that is all."

"What caused that little cloud-like object to show such a peculiar motion?" I asked.

"Why Horace! What is the reason you are so thoughtless? Where is the learning you have acquired concerning the cosmogony of the universe?"

"Cosmogony? What has cosmogony to do with it?"

"In your theory of the cosmic creation you learn that a world is begun by an accumulation of gases, which, by their rapid, circulating movement forms a vortex or center of motion, attracting by its rapidity all substances that fall within its influence. In the process of ages this circulating mass becomes more and more dense, till it ultimately solidifies. Thus, in attracting to myself matter for a temporary body, I must first create a vortex, or center of circulation, and by this and to it I attract the requisite matter in such a way that by controlling the speed of its motion I can control the mass of matter itself until I am ready to form it about me. That is why you see it revolve and keep in motion. The motion is neces-

sary to retain the power of the vortex. It is thoroughly natural, you see.

"In the experiments which accompanied your studies have you not, by means of an electric battery coated one metal with another, as you term it, 'electroplating?' " she asked.

"Yes; to be sure I have," I returned.

"Do you not understand that process fully?"

"I always thought I did," I replied, wondering what electroplating had to do with this matter.

"By one of your methods in electroplating you prepared your bath, the fluid which was to hold the suspended and invisible particles of metal in solution. To one pole of your battery you attached a piece of metal while to the other pole or wire you attached the object which was to receive the coating. The current of the first pole disintegrated or dissolved the metal and repelled it, and it became suspended in the bath. The second current held the power of attraction, and thus the suspended particles, coming within this power of attraction, drew toward and clung to the article attached to the pole.

"Now Horace, that process is but one similar to that which we use in the construction of our temporary bodies. The two forces which you use in your battery are natural forces, and are everywhere present. The lightning and the thunders are but the effects of the contact of the two forces. These forces are likewise used to form this tangible body. One pole of nature's great battery is, so to speak, in touch with Michael and yourselves and your surroundings; in fact, to everything that will assist in supplying the necessary elements, and they become suspended in the bath, which is the all-pervading ether. I am at the other pole, so that to me is attracted a plating or coat, hence I am physical—tangible.

"But I have a peculiar surprise in store for you, Horace dear; and as I cannot remain as long as I would like to, I shall present it to you now. Do you see this chain and pendant which I have around my neck? Also this brace-

let on my arm? Would you prize them should I give them to you as keepsakes?

"Indeed I would, more than tongue can tell."

She went to the far corner of the room. In the dim light I could not see just what she did; I could only discern the swaying of her white garments. Presently, however, I heard a sound as of a stone dropping to the floor, and then she returned to me. In her hands she held a dark object, which she placed on my knee. It was heavy for its size, and felt like a rusty, iron box.

"You may have difficulty in opening it," she said, "but no doubt curiosity alone will be a sufficient incentive for you to get inside somehow. It was once a highly-prized possession of mine, and I loved it then, just as any lady now loves her jewelry. But it is no longer of use to me, and I bequeath it to you—a rare way of making a bequest, isn't it, ten thousand years after my death? But keep it and let it be a token of our union.

"And now I will leave. To-morrow I will be with you again as I am to-night."

She was gone, having sunk downward, as if going through the floor, an exit that was exceedingly uncanny.

One would suppose that we would get used to these phenomena, but each was more weird than the one which preceded it, and each left us more bewildered.

I examined the box by the light of one of the lanterns and found it so corroded with rust as to be eaten almost through. I scraped off fully a quarter of an inch of the rust in one place and found that the iron that far in was too solid for my knife. I could not open it in any way, for the cover was tightly rusted on. I therefore concluded to wait until daylight, when I could examine it more closely. And we all turned in to sleep.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## THE LIVING AND THE DEAD.

Next morning while Michael was preparing breakfast I went to work on the box. Curiosity compelled me to look it over carefully before defacing it, but the corrosion had entirely destroyed all evidences of its original appearance. I tried in vain to force the box open, but at last concluded that the only way was to demolish it. I therefore took a little hand ax (a thing we always took with us to hew wood) and found it very easy to cut it with the sharp edge, so nearly was it eaten through. I cut around it close to the top, as I was anxious not to mutilate it more than was necessary to get inside. Having cut around on three sides it required but the merest pressure to bend it over and break it off. Inside I beheld a promiscuous jumble of articles of yellow metal, almost buried in the fragments of iron rust which had showered upon them, both from within and without, with each blow of the ax. Picking out what seemed to be the largest, I found it to be identically like that peculiar, coiled bracelet which I was wont to see encircling the upper part of Iganit's arm. It proved to be of hammered gold, and was somewhat stained from contact with the iron and some copper trinkets which were also in the box. The necklace I also found, together with quite a number of articles of female adornment, most of which were of hammered gold, though some, as I have said, were of copper. The latter were now nothing but a mass of verdigris, and some of the smaller ones crumbled to dust in my fingers. There were also a number of precious stones, mostly diamonds, peculiarly cut, but shining brilliantly as they lay loosely in the dust. None of these stones were set in any way.

I carefully removed all from the box and emptied it of the dust, then as carefully replaced the jewelry, more precious to me than the crown jewels of my native land,

and hastened to breakfast, for both Michael and Leo had been yelling and yelling at me to come and eat while the coffee was hot. But I was too absorbed in the work of opening the box to heed their call. And now that my curiosity was satisfied I hastened to them.

Breakfast was scarcely over when Ayesha came and urged us to follow her. From street to street she led us toward the heart of the city. For some time none of us uttered a word. But, after walking some distance Ayesha turned and said:

"Thou hast shown such interest, O Holly, in the allegories which are found in the temples that I would wrong thee did I fail to guide ye to the one here. So thither are we now going."

And soon we reached it. I recognized it at once, for it was exactly like the other two I had seen. We entered, Ayesha leading us straightway into the inner court. Here again we came upon a statue, not so large as the others, but still comprising the peerless form of Truth; at least I took it to be such.

But this time she was unveiled, and the veil hung suspended in front of her, one end supported in the bill of a bird which was perched upon her left shoulder, the other end by another bird standing in the open palm of her right hand as she sat upon the bare ground. In her left hand was a bunch of flowers, upon which she seemed to gaze in tenderness. Her lips were curved in a sweet, gentle smile, and around about her were gathered birds and butterflies, while bending their heads toward her were many flowers. All was sculptured in pure, white marble.

"This, like the others, is very beautiful, O Ayesha," I said, "but its simplicity likewise is very marked. Perchance thou canst explain the allegory, as thou hast done the others."

"Whilst thou hast been gazing, O Holly, I have been trying to decipher the inscription, which I have succeeded in doing. Like the others, it is no doubt a quotation from the sacred book. It reads:



““ And Truth, seeking in vain among men for him who should have courage to lift the veil from her face, grieved sorely, and departed from among people; and when the men saw her depart they grieved likewise, and some followed at a distance.

““ As Truth traveled out from the habitations of man the song birds flew around her, the fresh grass lay in soft cushions whereon to rest her feet; the nodding flowers kissed her limbs as she passed; the gentle breeze hummed a sweet song as it caressed her and lulled the grief in her heart; the laughing brook rippled its cheerful welcome, and in Nature's solitude she stopped in the ecstacy of her soul, and the sweet birds, chirping and twittering in the happiness of perfect freedom, plucked at the veil, saying in the music of their voices, “Come, O Truth; take off thy veil, for sweet is thy face.”

““ And they drew off the veil from the face of Truth. And the birds sang sweeter songs, and the flowers put on more beautiful hues and scattered their gentle perfumes more lavishly; the sky took on a more brilliant blue; the brook increased its rippling song, and as Truth stooped on its pebbly bank and looked into its crystal waters her face was mirrored to her gaze and she laughed for joy, for here in Nature's mirror Truth came face to face with herself.

““ So Truth dwelt with Nature, and man looked on from afar, longing to come closer, yet fearing as much as he longed.”

After Ayesha had finished the translation she remarked:

“Ah, how true, O Holly, that only in nature is truth found in its simplicity! Each man longeth to know the truth, yet standest far off and fearest to draw nigh. Only in nature do we meet it face to face. In the society of mankind all is artifice, all is subterfuge. Each man wishes all men would be honest, straightforward and ‘natural,’ yet he is never willing to be the first to set the example. Each condemns society for being dishonest and deceptive, yet he is not willing to begin the process of reformation by being scrupulously honest himself. And so men stand

afar, admiring truth at a distance, yet is none willing to remove the veil of subterfuge and deceit. But in the realm of nature there is no subterfuge; for Truth is Nature, and Nature Truth. And the man who would look upon the face of Truth must turn away from the social politics of civilized life and cast aside the veil of subterfuge between himself and Nature, for in gazing into the face of Nature he gazes into the sweet face of Truth, whose entrancing smile is but the bright sunshine of joy and happiness of Nature's being."

We at last turned away from the allegory and started back to the boat.

"We will now cross over to the tombs," Ayesha said. "Perchance ye will be pleased to visit these, as no man has entered them since the people were destroyed."

It took but a little while to cross over to the caves. As we traveled inward I noticed that instead of the dry air of the tombs at Kor there was here a dampness which was really disagreeable to inhale or smell. But Ayesha led us from tomb to tomb, and in each lay its silent occupant, for here were no Amahaggar to accomplish their desecration.

We ultimately came to a narrow stairway hewn out of the rock. Up these Ayesha went and entered a large chamber at the top. Here the air seemed fresher, and as I walked across the room I was attracted by what seemed to be a peculiar light above me. Stopping to examine more closely, I saw that it was the sky, and in the field of vision gleamed three stars, showing that it was dark without. Inquiring of Ayesha as to whether it was a natural crevice or the work of those who excavated the tombs, she declared it to be artificial and that she had no doubt it was intended to ventilate the chamber.

Here we prepared to spend the night, and after eating we spread our blankets for sleep. I had closed my eyes in waiting for the restful unconsciousness of slumber, when a sudden impulse caused me to open them and I beheld, a few feet from me, the same little, circulating, white cloud which the night before had preceded the coming of Iganit,

and which she called a vortex. Going through the same evolutions (or involutions) as before, it seemed but an instant before it was transformed, and the form of Iganit burst into presence.

"Iganit!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, dear one; it is I," she said. "I did not intend to let you sleep yet awhile. Arise; I have something to show you. I have come but for a moment, simply to let you know I am here; and when I depart, as I shall immediately do, you will then follow Ayesha, who will lead you where I wish you to go. There I shall return to your sight and touch. I would lead you, but I cannot endure the light from your lantern, which you will need to see the way. And you must take with you one of the blankets, which will be necessary to throw around myself when there. For, as you will require the light to look at what I shall show you, I shall need to keep the light from striking me, and shall therefore wrap me in the blanket. I wish to be close to you at that moment, and I cannot otherwise endure the light."

"That is a very slight task, Iganit; I would do a thousand times as much," I replied.

"I know it, dear. I am going now."

She went down just as the last time, as if sinking into the floor. Ayesha immediately urged us to light the lamps and follow her, reminding me at the same time of the blanket. She led us through a long passageway, at the end of which were three steps, and mounting these we entered a chamber similar to the one we had left, only that on all sides were openings leading to other chambers, and here, as in the caves at Kor, were evidences of the embalming process, both in the peculiar stone tables and in the illustrations upon the walls.

"Take ye your lamps into this place," Ayesha said, indicating one of the openings, "so that their light will not directly enter here. I shall remain here, and ye must not touch me even by accident. When ye have placed the lights, return again, for shortly will Iganit come."

"Shall we not rather extinguish the lights," I asked.

"Nay; for ye will need them," she returned.

We did as directed and returned to wait for Iganit, and very soon, in the dim light, we saw the little cloud—the vortex, and Iganit was with us once more.

"Give me the blanket, Horace; I am going to try to enter the room where the lights are. I may not be able to hold the body together in the light, but I am going to try. If I fail, I will fail, that is all."

She threw the blanket around about her (it was a large double one), and when she had finished wrapping herself in it she was completely covered, head and all.

"I am ready now. If I fail, and lose my hold upon the forces, you will know it from my dissolving under the covering. It will be like some of the tricks of your magicians, I am here; presto! I am gone. A case of now you see it, now you don't," she said, laughing a merry little laugh. "Now place your arm around me to give strength and support, for your close presence makes me stronger. Come, Leo."

We entered the smaller apartment, which I now saw was a tomb, with the ever present stone bier and its usual cloth covering. As the rays of the lantern struck us fully I felt Iganit start, convulsively, but after a moment's hesitation she proceeded. Going with me, yet really leading me, she crossed the room and approached the bier. "Let Leo bring the light," she said, "and hold it on the other side of me so that I may look out from the blanket without the direct rays striking my face."

Leo did so, and she stepped toward the bier, saying:

"Ah, what a vast array of years since the forms of those who were placed in these tombs gave up their earthly ties and entered the higher spheres! How incomprehensible it must be to you, dear Horace; you, who measure time by so short a life. To me it seems not so long, for it still lives in my memory. I can look back to the time when as a child I thought these forms all sleeping and wondered why I could not wake them. And many recollections

flood themselves upon me as I come once more into the scenes of my former life. Some of those dead forms upon which you have looked to-night were lying there just as silent when I, as a child, occasionally visited the tombs with my parents.

"But let Leo draw the covering from off this one, It is one I wish you to see. Lift the cloth, Leo; will you."

Leo carefully uncovered the form and held the lantern so as to light up the face, and—my God! I almost swooned. I turned cold; then became so weak and faint I nearly fell forward on the embalmed body. I could scarcely stand. For, as the light illumined the still form before me, I instantly recognized that the face I beheld was that of Iganit.

"Merciful heavens," I cried; "it is you!"

"It was once me," Iganit returned. "At least, it was once my mortal covering. It was what the world would call 'me,' for they seem to so easily forget that the body is not the real person, but is only the clothing or envelope of mortality, a suit of armor, which, like the steel armorial protection of the medieval warrior, protects the soul in the great battle of earthly life. But it is only the body, Horace; it is not me; for here am I, looking, speaking, living. Yes, living, and loving. All that I was then I am still—now. I am no less an individual. I have lost none of my individuality; none of my faculties. I am all here; yes, Horace, I am more than all here, for I have advanced in every way far beyond what I then was. Yes, dear; I am here—all here; and that which you now look upon is but the shell of my former self, which the men of my day, by an art which to the world has been lost, knew so well how to preserve that now, ten thousand years afterward, you are able to look upon it and recognize my features in the dead face."

"Ah, what a loss!" I exclaimed.

"What loss, Horace?"

"The loss of that grand art of embalming."

"No, no; it is a loss to be rejoiced at, for many more reasons than one. Just think! As these caves are so full

of bodies, how would it be if for ten thousand years the entire world had embalmed the dead? And of what use would it be? The dead would crowd out the living. Do you conceive of any use this body is to me? For ten thousand years this form has lain here and I have had no use for it, nor has any other person. A dead form is not pleasant to look upon, so why should it be embalmed? Then why should you mourn the loss of an art the sole effect of which is to keep ever before the eyes of man the unpleasant reminders of death, with its miseries and its griefs. Death is not unpleasant to those who have passed through it; its unpleasantness lies only in the contemplation of those who fear it.

"On the other hand, Horace, speaking from the standpoint of those who have passed through the ordeal of death and have left such bodies behind, it is a matter of great inconvenience that these bodies should be preserved, for in their ignorance they cling to the useless clay. Long, long did I grieve and mourn to think that my body, the body that I so dearly loved, was lying so cold and desolate in this cheerless tomb. I clung to it, and could scarcely be induced to leave it.

"Nature has ordained that the carnate form of man, his coat of flesh, shall by dissolution liberate its elementary components that they may be again available for the recombination in the form of other men, and to arrest that process of dissolution is to interfere with a great law of nature. With the dissolution of the body comes also a freedom to the soul. No, no, Horace; it is well it is lost.

"Men who are in earth life consider all things from a sheer mortal standpoint. They see not what is to come in the future existence of their souls. They claim to believe in a future life, yet they never consider what that life is like or how their mortal life may affect the immortal life that is to follow. Did they do so, the affairs of the world would be conducted far differently to what they are now. No man would attempt to preserve his body, because by so doing he would burden his soul as with a heavy weight.

The body is useless when death has freed the soul. But, as a rule, a soul, entering into immortality, and finding it so different to what he anticipated, clings to the body and to earthly ties until they are dissolved and destroyed. When he has lost these he wanders forth until some bright soul leads him into the light and he enters for the first time the true immortal life; for between the mortal life and the immortal is a condition that I may call semi-immortality, wherein the soul, though disembodied, clings nevertheless to the old, earthly ambitions, opinions, and longings."

"I should like it very much, Iganit, if you would tell me more of the world in which you live," I said. "Can you not tell me something of the future life?"

"I will try to tell you some time in the near future. I cannot now. Already am I weakening. Come; let us return to the other chamber. Leo, replace the pall."

I glanced at the face once more as Leo drew the covering over it. Then it flashed upon me as being very strange that the shrouds and wrappings of these dead forms had not long ago decayed. Everything in the houses, the draperies (if there ever were any), the woodwork, all had decayed and turned to dust. Why not the wrappings of the embalmed dead? I therefore, as the thought came to me, questioned Iganit concerning it.

"As the flesh has been embalmed, so has the clothing upon them, and the coverings. Each garment was put through a bath, and thus decay prevented," she replied.

As soon as we had reached the other room Iganit bade me good-night and, while I held her hands, actually melted away and was gone.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### HEAVEN AND HELL.

Early next morning we started on our return to Kor; and it was with a sort of lingering reluctance that I looked

back at the pile of ruined architecture in the midst of the water, and I took one last look as our boat entered the dark tunnel that led from the mountain.

By evening we had again reached Kor, and by Ayesha's advice, instead of waiting for her and Iganit, we retired early, for we were exhausted from our three-day's effort.

The following evening both Ayesha and Iganit came. After a few commonplace exchanges Iganit said:

"Horace, I promised you I would some time tell you of the life that is to come—I mean for you and for your earthly contemporaries as well as your posterity, for it is not to come for me; it is already here. But to you it is an anticipation, and at the same time it is a conjecture.

"First, I must begin by analyzing your own opinion of the future state, so let me ask you to tell me your conception, your ideal of the immortal life, for it remains not to question that you hope for and expect a life after the death you know you must meet."

"Since you know so well all that I think, Iganit, you must surely know my beliefs in that regard," I replied.

"In truth, Horace, I know your views and beliefs thoroughly, but I am anxious that you should commit yourself in words, for should I frame your beliefs into words they might not be such words as you would use, hence might be misleading. Words are oftentimes deceptive when used for the conveyance of a thought, for a thought comprehended by one person and clothed in certain words, when conveyed to another person may give rise to a very much modified comprehension. A word as used to represent a fragment of a thought is always very broad in its scope, and always offers suggestions of other fragments of thought, and as each word in a group of words possesses this same tendency, a group of words does not always give to the listener the exact meaning of the speaker. So, since I fully realize your belief, it is best that it should be clothed in your words, that I, properly understanding you, may not be misunderstood by you. Thus, Horace, let us begin by your giving a recital of your belief,"



"I hardly know how to begin," I said.

"You do not think that the grave is the final end?"

"No; I do not. I was always taught to believe in a future life and to look forward to it, and——"

"And to what do you look forward? What is the life you look forward to?"

"I am very much in doubt now," I replied. "I once thought I knew, for from my earliest childhood I had been taught to expect certain things in the hereafter; but the associations with Ayesha since her death, and with you, have shattered much of my former belief, so that now I am much mixed and at sea."

"And what has been your lifelong understanding?"

"Well, I have always been taught that the future life held for the good a promise of happiness and eternal joy; for the wicked a life of torture and misery," I replied.

"And where was to be the scenes of the two extremes of immortal experience?"

"Why, heaven for the good, hell for the wicked."

"And where were these two places located?"

"The understanding on that point is, I must confess, rather chaotic, but it is generally considered that heaven is upward and hell downward."

"The words 'up' and 'down' refer to directions from and toward the center of the earth; up meaning from that center, down meaning toward it; is it not so?"

"Yes," I said, hesitatingly; "that is right, I suppose."

"Then this heaven and this hell must be within the sphere of gravity of the earth?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that from your standpoint the center of the earth is the point upon which you compute your directions up and down; toward the center of the earth is down, and away from the center of the earth is up. As these directions are in a line perpendicular to the earth's surface, that line or radius must revolve with its point of intersection with the earth's circumference, else each twelve hours would reverse the directions up and down. To explain

more clearly, if the directions of heaven and hell did not revolve with the earth, heaven would be up one moment and twelve hours afterward it would be down. So, if heaven is always up and hell always down, they must both respond to the force of gravity of the earth and rotate with it. Thus, according to this theory, hell must be somewhere between the earth's surface and the limits of its influence of gravity. Is that it?"

"Well, hardly. I do not understand that the words 'up' and 'down' have any real reference to direction, but are used more as figurative terms."

"Then the words are really meaningless, and when you say up or down you do not mean up or down, but—what?"

"They certainly have no meaning as to direction, but are accepted words of distinction between the two locations."

"Yet, while you deprive the words 'up' and 'down' of their true meaning, you still speak of location. What is your conception of the locations? Has that word likewise no proper meaning?"

"Iganit, you are just like Ayesha; you riddle me, and tangle me all up; you tangle my life-long ideas and early teachings until they are a mass of hopeless knots which can never be unraveled or straightened out."

"If it is so hopelessly tangled you had better throw it away and get new," Iganit said, laughingly.

"What do you imply by that," I asked.

"That you had better throw away the whole tangled and knotted mass of chaotic imagination and build up a new theory and found it upon reason and irrefutable common-sense. Turn away from the senseless theories of men and look upon nature. Nature is methodical. Earth life is based upon method; so also is the immortal life. There are no inconsistencies, no incongruities relating to the future life; all is natural."

"My desire is not really to confuse you, but to show you how confused you were already. I have not done the tangling. Your theories and your religious philosophies have been tossed together without regard to order. If

each line of thought which goes to make up the sum total of your philosophy had been carefully laid parallel one to the other, and every now and then the aggregate submitted to a careful combing with the comb of consistent reason, there would be no tangles; your whole understanding would have been different. But, instead, you have tossed each new line of thought carelessly and heedlessly into the common pile, some straight, some crosswise, and when one of the strands is pulled a little bit the entire mass is turned and twisted, and the tangle begins.

"You know that life is, because you are consciously of it—because you live and others live. You see it, you feel it, you experience it—you know life. You know that death is, because you have seen men die, and you know that the earthly lives of your associates always come to an end; you realize death from positive observation, therefore you know death. But what more do you know? You know nothing, so far as concerns life after death. Nor do you try, through the efforts of your own wits, to evolve a consistent theory. Instead, you depend upon someone else—someone who knows not a whit more than you do—who sets himself up as a professional authority on matters pertaining to the future life. His bread and butter depends upon people believing him and he finds it to his advantage to make you disbelieve anything that would cause you to lose confidence in him, for only by the retention of your confidence can he subsist as a professional 'authority.' So, when doubt comes into your mind, instead of studying the matter out for yourself you go to one of these 'authorities,' whose brains are not a bit better than yours, and accept his explanation; and if there is no consistent solution to a flagrant incongruity, you are told that 'all things are possible' with the diety—even the impossible is possible; right is wrong and wrong is right, if it suits the occasion—and you mildly go your way, abiding by the explanation, because this self-styled authority says so.

"I cannot build you an understanding upon the tangled mass of incongruities which now compose your philoso-

phy, your religion. I must begin at the foundation, and it would take much time. You have always looked upon death with a sort of dread; it is a horror to you and to your fellow beings. You look upon immortal life as made up of just two classes: the saved and the damned. Those who are not saved are damned, and each individual is in constant doubt and suspense as to whether he will be among the saved or the damned. There is no definition as to what is to save and what is to damn, except a conglomeration of incoherent parables, translated and retranslated again and again, until the true form of the original is all but lost, and, as if that repeated transformation which translations always give to a collection of words were not sufficiently mutilating, they are further taken up by those professional, self-styled 'authorities' and all kinds of constructions placed upon them; and if you should so much as suggest an original, though literal, or an allegorical interpretation, you are denounced as a blasphemer by these human experts of divine meaning, and everyone is told to spurn you. Why? Because you have, in their opinion, no right to be an interpreter of God's word unless you become a professional authority like themselves, and to become a recognized professional authority you must agree entirely with and be ordained by these same human interpreters, who are indeed no less human than you are.

"There is life, and there is death, Horace; that you know. And there is life after death. And in that life there is no need for the body. Upon your advancement into the higher condition you must enter without the flesh, so you leave the body behind, and in order to do this the soul must separate itself. This separation of the soul and body you call death. Death is the soul's discardment of the flesh; it is simply the process by which the soul extricates itself from the body in order to advance into a higher form of life. When you look upon your fellowman with your physical eyes you do not see his soul; you only see his body. His soul is invisible. And as his soul is invisible to you while he lives in the flesh, is it strange that it should

be invisible after it has left the body? The soul does not change perceptibly in entering the immortal condition. Its tastes and inclinations, its likes and dislikes are unchanged; it seeks the associations of its own kind among those who have gone before. The life of a disembodied soul is scarcely different from that soul's life previous to disembodiment. So closely allied are the two lives that many of those passing into immortality refuse for a long time to believe that they have changed, and they go on following their wonted habits until awakened to the knowledge of their true condition.

"This awakening is most commonly brought about by their being ignored. By this I mean that while they as disembodied souls are conscious of the presence of relatives and friends whom they left still in the flesh, those in the flesh were not conscious of the disembodied presences; hence the advances, the caresses, the spoken words, are unsensed by the mortal friends, and consequently by them ignored; and the disembodied souls, at first grieving to be so slighted by those who should love them, soon begin to realize that it is because of a difference in the condition of each. Then, realizing that they are no longer mortal, they naturally seek to know something of their surroundings. At first they are struck with the similarity of everything to their former surroundings. Instead of pearly gates and gold-paved streets they find green fields and pretty flowers, sweet homes nestling among the trees; and the farther away they get from earthly attractions the greater the beauty and the more fragrant the flowers."

"You have been so particular, Iganit, to ridicule my idea of location; how can you locate these homes and things which you describe?" I asked, exulting a little to think that I had caught her in her own trap. For, though I loved her so well, I nevertheless felt piqued that she should so persistently overthrow every argument, every theory, and every tradition that I had cherished all my life. But my presumption of triumph was turned to humility when she said:

"If you will recall all that I have said, Horace dear, you will realize that I did not object to your accepting the possibility of a location; I meant but to make you realize that the location you accepted was invisible. And because you believe in a location that is invisible, you cannot deny mine because it is invisible. I simply wanted to bring you face to face with what you yourself believed so that you might better realize the truth of what I tell you. Only, the land, the sphere, the place of immortality is not limited to what may be deemed a location, but is everywhere. The soul wanders at will. But, like the incarnate souls of earth, some do not care to leave the attractions of earth even long enough to go out and learn what the immortal world really is. They are content to stay and grieve with those who mourn their loss.

"Then there is a natural depression, or bondage, which prevents the advance of others. The ignorant, the cruel, the wicked—and when I say wicked I mean those who, by their selfishness fill the world with woe—are by their lack of spirituality held close to earth, and are prevented from going out into the brighter, happier part of the immortal world; though by the cultivation of spirituality it is possible in the course of time—a long, long time—for them to advance beyond the earthy sphere.

"Instead of your idea of separate locations, there is but one. That one is composed of strata or divisions, each one as conjectural to those not having entered it as the first is conjectural to you, who know nothing but the earthly life. These different strata are entered by an ordeal similar to what you call death."

"In other words," I interrupted, "there is to be a succession of deaths from stratum to stratum; is that it?"

"That is as near as I can explain it to you."

"And only through a death can one enter a higher stratum, just as the death we know of is a necessary precursor to entrance into immortal life?"

"Yes; only the death you know of is a physical death—a change from the carnate to the excarnate. In the suc-

ceeding deaths, however, it is a spiritual change; a weaning away from the attachments of earth. Arrogance, false pride, cruelty to man or beast, wanton destructiveness, regardlessness of and imposition upon a fellowbeing's happiness, viciousness of every sort, and ignorance are attributes which retard and impede spiritual progress, and each degree of triumph over these degrading impulses is a step toward higher spirituality, and each of these steps represents a death—not a death to the soul, but to the attribute which burdened the soul. Each step is at once a death and a birth; a death to the soul's bondage, but a birth to the soul itself—a birth into higher and higher life."

"And are the dividing lines between the different strata or divisions of the immortal world which you say are separated by successive deaths as marked as that between this and the immortal world?" I asked.

"To you, who have not experienced death, the dividing line is very marked, while to Ayesha and myself, who have passed through death, the dividing line is dissolved, and though to you we are mostly invisible, we can penetrate into your very lives. So it is throughout. To those who, by passing through the successive deaths, have advanced from stratum to stratum, each dividing line they have crossed becomes dissolved; but to those who have not yet crossed, the dividing line is rigidly fixed," she replied.

"But tell me, by whose ruling or by what are these dividing lines established? The Lord?"

"That is nonsense. They are established by a law of nature—a law as fixed and inflexible as the law of gravity; a law which is akin to the law of gravity, for it is a law of attraction and repulsion. The greater the degree of justice and right that is possessed by a soul the higher it reaches into the realms of spirituality and the more quickly it is attracted to and over the dividing lines. Injustice and wanton selfishness are as inaffiliable with the higher spirituality as oil with water, and the soul that cherishes viciousness or wanton selfishness is repelled by the higher spiritual laws and is held in check at these dividing lines,

which that soul can pass only so soon as those evil or unspiritual attributes have been eliminated. Thus, the more rapidly one conquers the viciousness in his soul, the quicker the succession of changes and the more rapid the increase of happiness; for as each dividing line is passed a greater happiness is opened up to the soul. He who will not give up viciousness and morbid selfishness will be held in bondage of his own depravity, until the time shall come when he will tire of his degraded life and, learning that he cannot extricate himself from a monotonous misery, that he cannot end his worthless life save by advancing spiritually, he begins to learn, one by one, the lessons of self-control, of universal love, and of perfect justice. In the mortal life, the life of earth, the miserable wretch who tires of his life has—or thinks he has—a loop-hole of escape: he can end his life, his miserable 'mortal' existence. Yes; he can end his life by suicide; but he cannot end his misery, for the source of his misery is in his very soul. When he enters the immortal condition he is even more miserable than before, for nature thus deprives him of the means of gratifying his depraved instincts, the satiation of which in earth life smothered to some extent the remorse which even the most callous feel at times. Thus the misery is intensified, and from it there is no escape. Suicide may free a soul from mortal misery, but to the immortal wretch there is no such thing as suicide. The dividing lines can only be crossed by spiritualization, and the wretch must remain in misery, dwelling in the environments of his own evil, his own depravity, of self-accusation and remorse, until in desperation he turns at last to his only emancipation, his spiritualization. This is his redemption, his 'self'-redemption, his 'self'-atonement, for there is no vicarious atonement. Each wrong done must be righted; each evil act committed must be counteracted by good, and no one can rob another of one iota of happiness without paying it back—yes, and ten-fold—either directly or indirectly, some time, some place, or at some stage of the soul's evolution.



"But I am becoming exhausted, and cannot remain a great while longer."

"Do you mean, then, that while the wicked suffer misery for their wrongs, they nevertheless have a chance for ultimate salvation?" I asked.

"Justice must be done. When every wrong has been righted, when every evil has been turned to good, then will the soul find salvation, and not until then."

"Then cannot these wrongs be set aside by forgiveness?"

"Ah, how the old notions cling to you!" Iganit replied. "Can the mere statement of forgiveness accomplish the undoing of an evil act? No, no. Sublime generosity on the part of an injured one may prompt forgiveness, but it does not right the wrong. Forgiveness is the sweet child of a generous heart, but it cannot constitute expiation. The forgiveness tendered by an injured soul portrays the high spirituality of that soul, but it adds no degree of spirituality to the wrong doer."

"And now, before I bid you good-night, let me say the immortal world is, for those who have led just, upright, useful lives, an abode of never-ending, untrammelled happiness, and peace, and beauty; for those who have lived for self alone it is a place of long-lasting misery and discontent, of self condemnation and self hatred. So let your lives be filled with justice and love, not only toward your fellow men, but toward the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea. Now I go. Good-night."

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE WOMAN WHO SEES.

A strange commotion suddenly beset Kor. When we went out one morning after eating our breakfast we found the Amahaggar people, usually so marvelously stoical,

strangely excited. The manifestation of excitement was entirely foreign to them, and its presence betokened something unusual. Some were gathered in groups; some were scurrying from group to group, while many, I noticed, especially among the men, were running toward the tunneled entrance to the mountain. All were seemingly worked up about something, but what it was we could not tell."

"Something's up, Uncle Horace," Leo declared. "I never saw them act this way before."

"No. They seem possessed, and I am not altogether sure that it is not portentous of evil for us. Let us arm ourselves and endeavor to find out the cause of their strange conduct," I answered.

We turned back to our quarters in the tombs and armed ourselves to the teeth. As we reemerged from the caves who should be running toward us but old Billali. It was some time since we had seen him, as he had remained away, keeping, no doubt, within the bosom of his own family.

"My king and my son the Baboon!" he exclaimed.

"What is the cause of excitement, my Father?" I asked.

"Ah, know ye not? Have ye not heard of the dreadful prophecies of the woman who sees?" he returned.

"Who is the woman who sees; and what are her prophecies?" I demanded.

"She who, by the power of divination, holdeth the secrets of the future—she it is who doth see. And her prophecies—O my Baboon; it seems strange ye have not heard."

"Never mind the strangeness of it, my Father," I said, "but tell us what it is."

"Such horrors as doth make the heart sick to think of doth she pronounce upon the unfortunate land of our people. Disease, starvation and death are the harvests of the future; woe and misery."

"And you say that this is but a prophecy?" I asked.

"It is the revelation of the future."

"And you believe this?"

"Doth she not see it; she to whom the future is unfolded?"

"Nonsense, my Father," I said, intending to discourage his credulity. "The future is never thus unfolded."

"Thou hast much yet to learn, my Baboon. Thou dost say nonsense to this just as when I did tell thee the Hiya was not dead. Time did prove me right, and thou hast thyself seen that the Hiya cannot die. No, no, my son; thou must not say nonsense, for in truth she hath seen and doth so divine. Even now is she on her way here to give the dread news to those who dwell within this mountain."

I was silenced. I had allowed and even encouraged him to believe I had been mistaken about Ayesha's death, and now he turned it upon me. True, he was in error; but because I had for policy's sake admitted him right and myself wrong on that occasion, I could do nothing now but subside and let him have his way.

At this juncture I noticed that the Amahaggar men, instead of going out of the mountain, were now returning, fully as excited, if not more so, as before. They came singly, in couples and trios, and in groups. A few moments later I recognized, though very faintly because of the distance, the peculiar chanting of some of the natives, growing louder and louder as it came nearer, and sounding monotonously hollow and muffled, which at once proved to the ear that it came from within the tunnel, its hollowness caused by the reverberations of the sound waves from wall to wall ere reaching the open air. Very soon it burst forth clear and distinct as the chanters emerged.

It proved to be a cavalcade, preceded by a large number of warrior natives, chanting and gyrating, throwing their arms high above their heads, still balancing their spears in their hands. Then came a number of litters, borne by the usual, naked litterbearers.

"Seel!" exclaimed Billali; "yonder she is. That is the woman who sees."

The procession kept on toward the space where they usually celebrated their feasts, and where, on the night of the hideous festival, Ustane had clothed herself in the leopard skin to invite her doom. Reaching there the pro-

cession stopped and the occupants of the litters got out. Together with Bilalli we started over. Arriving there we found ourselves in the midst of a most barbarous group. The occupants of the litters, we now learned, were all women, some young, some old, all now grouped in a semi-circle back of one whose position represented the center. All were sitting cross-legged on the ground, while in front of them, in promiscuous order, were, squatting, sitting, kneeling, or reclining, the multitude. Outside the semi-circle, to the rear, were a number of men, dancing and chanting, while a corresponding number of women were squatting on the ground, beating pot-shaped tom-toms.

We quickly guessed, and rightly so, that the woman in the center was the "woman who sees." She sat for some moments in silence, motionless, her eyes closed and her face upturned. Then she shuddered, and in another moment arose and, with eyes still closed, brushed her streaming hair from her face and, swaying her body to an fro in rhythmic accompaniment to her utterance, she began a kind half chant, half doggerel, the sense of which, as near as I can translate it from the miserable bastard Arabic, is:

"From the brightness of light, O ye children,  
Blessed with happiness and peace since your sires were babes,  
Enter ye now into darkness and unto death,  
For the peace heritage of your fathers hath come to end.  
Songs of praise, of thanksgiving, and of joy  
Have ye sung, for no thought of evil was sounded.  
But now may your songs turn to wailing.  
Open the flood-gates of your grief  
And pitch your voices in accents of woeful despair.  
Shine on, O Sun; look with thy pale light, O Moon;  
And ye little stars with your million burning lights  
Still shed your brilliance to bless the earth.  
But through the blackness of the cloud shall no light come.  
I see the light; I see it fade;  
And murky gloom doth take its place  
And cloak the on-coming of the evil one,  
In whose following doth come devastation and despair.  
Pestilence I see, O my children, and distress;  
Nature shall cease her labor;  
And the trees will give no fruit and the grasses no grain.  
Death sits on a mighty throne."

The foregoing is the gist of her harrangue, though it is short, for much that was said was all but meaningless, albeit it served to mystify her listeners.

At intervals in her talking she sat down, and then the crowd broke into a most weird moaning and wailing, keeping it up until she once more arose. It was a most weird, and at the same time disgusting experience to us, and tiring of it, after emphatically declaring to old Bilalli our disregard for and disbelief in any such prophecies, we left the superstitious people to pursue their usual custom (for Bilalli had told us that this was the customary way of making and receiving prophecies among them).

We had not gone very far when we were suddenly addressed by Ayesha, speaking through Michael's vocal organs. She seldom came that way now, since she and Iganit visited us regularly almost every evening. So we were somewhat surprised.

"A queer day's doing," she said, in her usual Greek.

"It is indeed so to us," I answered. "It may seem all right to them, but to me it is decidedly idiotic."

"It is no more idiotic to you than some of your customs are to me or to others."

"But their superstitious reliance in the prophecies——"

"Is not so superstitious after all. Thou, O Holly, art filled with superstition as great as that of those poor barbarians. Only thou art accustomed to thine while theirs is new to thee. There used to be a saying current in the earlier years of my life: 'Pluck out the mote from thine own eye ere seeking to remove the beam from the eye of another.' When thou hast cast away all thine own superstition, then mayest thou worthily seek to criticise the superstition of another."

"Then is there truth in her prophecies."

"What truth there is in her prophecies hath little moment; I know not of that truth. But this I can say: For centuries it hath been believed by these Amahaggar that certain among them held the gift of prophecy. Such prophecies have ever been verified by subsequent facts.

What, then, is there to say of their superstition? Hast thou not with thine own ears heard? Did not the girl, Ustane, prophesy when she stood before me defying me; did she not say I would not live to wed my Kalikrates, whom she did claim and said I stole from her? Were not her words a prophesy; and did it not come to pass? Be not hasty, O Holly, in judging the habits of another, for thou thyself art weak."

It was true, although I had never considered it other than coincidence, that Ustane did prophesy Ayesha's death, and her prophecy was fulfilled. Indeed, I had heard Ustane prophesy on other occasions, and thinking back upon it, I recalled that they were all verified.

"But how is it, and why is it, O Ayesha, that some can prophesy and not all? Is there any special fitness? And how do they know," I asked.

"Shouldst thou to thy fellowman declare that I Ayesha, a woman—a woman who once did live upon earth but is now dead—do seize upon the tongue of this man, thy servant, and with his lips speak words which to him are incomprehensible, they would point thee out for scorn and scoffing, and cry, 'Thou fool.' But to thee, though at first thou couldst scarce believe thine own ears, it hath now become commonplace and is no longer strange. Nor is it any more strange that these seers, these prophets are but instruments in the hands of immortals, just as thy servant is an instrument in my hands, and upon which I play; that the words which flow from the mouths of those prophets are but the expressed understanding of some who, like myself, once lived upon the earth, but are now dwellers in immortality."

"Then can those who have entered immortality see in advance what is to take place in the future?" I inquired.

"Some can, and some cannot. The man upon your earth who makes a study of the clouds, the sky, the fields, the air, can, by watching the changing conditions, prophesy as to the approaching weather. So, by similar observations some immortals can discern many of the affairs of

the future for mankind. Each effect has its origin in a cause; and when the presence of such cause recurs the effect can plainly be apprehended. So thou seest the mystery of prophecy is revealed in scientific logic," Ayesha replied.

"Then can you foretell the events of the future?" I asked.

"Nay; only in a measure," she answered. "Thou canst see the storm clouds gather, and to thee that portendeth violence; but the nature of the storm and the course it will travel thou canst not see, nor fix the time of its bursting. I can see the pall-like cloud which appeareth as falling upon all Kor; but I see only the gloom and know not the evil it portendeth."

"Then you really see that there is something—that there is misfortune in store for Kor?"

"Aye; something; but I know not what, nor do I know how soon."

"Is there any danger here for us?" I inquired, self-preservation naturally becoming first thought.

"I know not even that, nor am I free from fear," she returned.

"Had we better leave, then, till the danger is passed?"

"Not yet; ye shall be fully warned in due time. But the approaching evil maketh it meet that I should now ask Kalikrates to give me the freedom which I did ask of him and which he did promise to grant." Then turning to Leo, she asked, "Art thou ready now, Kalikrates, my Beautiful, my Strong, to prove thy love in an undertaking both arduous and unpleasant?"

"I am ready," Leo replied; "even though it be to give up my life."

"Thou canst not give thy life, for did thy spark of earthly life become smothered, thou would but come to me in immortality. Thy task calleth not for thy earthly life, but two days journeying and a simple but unpleasant act. Perchance thou wilt be horrified; yet it meaneth much to me, and I would have thee go."

"And go I will; be it what it may," declared Leo.

"Then to-morrow morn we shall start once more to the Cave of the Fire of Life——"

"The Fire of Life!" we exclaimed, in unison.

"Ah; the very name doth breed hesitation."

"Nay, O Ayesha; not hesitation. But the horror of it!"

"Did I not say ye would be horrified? You refuse then?"

"Nay, my beloved, I do not refuse; I will go."

"Then 'tis settled," Ayesha said; "to-morrow we start."

"But, O Ayesha," I interrupted, recalling the fact that the great rocking stone, which formed the opposite support for our bridge had been overbalanced by Leo's take-off in his terrific leap at the time of our escape, and had forever sealed the entrance to the downward passage, "perchance thou knowest not the cavern is closed for aye, and our journey would be vain."

"I know, O Holly," she returned; "for in my immortal state I have many times gone to the place, and I know of the displacement of the stone. But trust all to me, for ye have not yet found me wanting."

It seemed as though I had scarcely got to sleep that night before I dreamed. My whereabouts were indistinct, but it was a strange place. Suddenly I came into the presence of an old man, robed in flowing garments. His face and hands were white and clear, white almost as the long, flowing beard and venerable locks. He raised his arms above his head, and said, in a slow, measured voice:

"The risen fall, and the fallen shall rise again;  
Death brings life and life shall end in death.  
For what is done save that it be undone. And being undone,  
It shall be done again.  
Kor once was, then it was not; and being not, so it must be  
And is once more.  
But Kor is doomed, as it was doomed in ages past.  
Kor will fall!"

Here I awoke.

I presume the dream was the result of my going to sleep while pondering upon the day's events. The peculiar forecast of the prophetess and Ayesha's remarks concern-



ing it had reverted my mind to the time in back ages when Junis, priest of the temple of Kor, the last survivor of his people, inscribed with the red pigment his final message to the world. And the sum of all had haunted me in my sleep, giving origin to the dream.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE MISSION FULFILLED.

Next morning we made an early start. Ayesha had given us further instructions the night before, and in accordance with these we three, Leo, Michael and myself, started out alone.

Our course was the same as when we went with her only to return alone, leaving her shrivelled remains and Job's lifeless body behind. Evening brought us to the ruined city, but neither Leo nor myself had any desire to revisit the place where we spent the night on that former trip, so we sought other shelter, and in the morning hastened toward the cliffs wherein was the jagged and rock-strewn entrance to the Place of Life, reaching there early in the afternoon, and, after a short rest, during which we ate our dinner, we began the ascent of the mountain. We climbed to the ledge without difficulty, and were soon at the mouth of the cave. Here we stopped and waited for Ayesha, meanwhile lighting our lanterns. In this respect we were vastly better prepared than on our former visit. The primitive, weak-lighting lamps of the Amahaggar, so quickly extinguished by the terrific gale within, the roar of which we even now could hear, were supplanted by the wind-proof lanterns and the dark lamps, particularly the high-power one, which I now rejoiced in the possession of, for I believed that I could learn something of the nature of the interior and of the frightful chasm.

Ayesha was prompt in coming.

"Are ye ready to proceed into the place?" she asked.

"We are ready," we both replied.

"Then come," she said, starting into the cavern.

We left our guns at the entrance, knowing there was no one to disturb them and wishing to be burdened as little as possible, though we took our revolvers should occasion require us to defend ourselves against man or beast. Ayesha took one lantern, Leo another and our food, while I carried the high-power lamp and our drinking water. When we reached the edge of the gale swept chasm Ayesha stopped and gazed silently toward the quivering spur, and as my eyes followed hers I shuddered as I recalled my narrow escape from an awful death on that trembling projection.

While she stood contemplating the spur, I cast my light upon the opposite cliff and surroundings. I turned it into to the depths below, but the light was lost; the great, yawning gulf seemed indeed bottomless.

Ayesha now turned and, instead of going toward the spur, took the opposite direction, following the edge of the precipice, which shortly begun to lead downward. At this point she turned to us.

"Wot ye why I lead ye this way," she asked.

"Nor have I thought to question," I answered. "I doubt not thou dost know of some other entrance."

"It is even so. Long have I planned on this visit, and to that end have been here many times in my immortal state. Of course, when first I came, what was more natural than that I should pursue the course so familiar to me? I felt not the gale, nor needed the bridge to cross the chasm. For, as an immortal hath no weight greater than the air, I could not fall, and I passed over in safety. It was then I found that the great stone had fallen and closed the entrance to the passage—closed it to mortals, but not to me. for to an immortal the hardest rock is no barrier. But knowing that I had need some day to bring ye hither, it became necessary to find some other entrance, and in

the effort I spent much time exploring the labyrinthian tunnels which the fires of nature had blasted in the mountain. To my joy I succeeded, and thither am I leading."

We followed her for some distance further when we came to the end of the ledge we had been traversing. Before us was a steep incline, leading upward about thirty feet. At this she stopped and waited for us. Casting the rays of my light upon and above and around it, it seemed to be the end of our pathway. It was too steep to climb. On one side the wall rose perpendicular as far as I could project my light; on the other side was the abrupt precipice, going down we knew not where.

"Hast thou erred in the journey and come wrong," I asked, seeing no possibility of proceeding farther.

"Nay, O Holly," she replied; "here must we climb."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed. "It is too steep."

"Keep close to the wall and ye will find it not so hard. See! I will go first." And suiting the action to the word, she started to ascend.

How strange it was, so strange that even now that I have become somewhat used to it I marveled at it, when Ayesha dominated Michael's body she could so readily accomplish what he himself could never have done. I could only with difficulty make that ascent, and the clumsy Michael I know could never have accomplished it—never in the world. But Ayesha, though animating the same physical bulk, went up, lantern in hand, as easily as I would climb a ladder. I followed, but, though I reached Ayesha's side, I was ashamed of my awkward efforts. Leo did better, but even he did not ascend without difficulty. Ayesha laughed at both of us.

Having reached the top of the incline, we found a continuation of the ledge, leading rapidly downward. We had not gone a great way when the yawning chasm became narrower, and finally it and the ledge came to a terminus, both leading to a low opening, into which Ayesha went, stooping as she did so. We followed, and found ourselves in a narrow, winding tunnel, rough with jagged rocks, but

passable and still leading downward. Very shortly we came to a point where another tunnel seemed to cross this, at least there was an opening on either side, and into the one to the left Ayesha turned. As I followed I incidentally glanced at the opening to the right, and in that glance I recognized the huge rock which had proved such a valuable landmark to Leo and myself when we lost our way during our effort to get out of the mountain on that awful day. By this stone I now knew that Ayesha was going direct to the great chamber of the Fire of Life. I also realized that the tunnel we had just come through was the very one in which we were lost at that time.

How little we know of the workings of fate! Ofttimes, when in our despair we imagine our last hope gone, we are closest to our salvation. Could we by fate have followed that tunnel, it might have led us out in safety without the awful experience on the gale-rocked spur. But we knew it not, and could but shudder now at what our fate might have been had I not noticed that familiar rock and so regained the way to old Noot's former home.

We now had but a short way to go to reach the end of our journey. Ayesha soon entered the first of the three great chambers, then the second, and finally the last, just as the roaring Pillar was coming again.

As we stood in the rosy radiance and listened to the rumbling and crashing of the wonderful fire, all the memory of the intervening years faded; it seemed as if it were but a few moments since the dreadful tragedy had been enacted. Nothing was changed. There were Ayesha's former garments just where we had placed them to cover up the horrible mummy which alone remained of all the vast beauty of the physical Ayesha. A little further off was the body of poor Job, scarcely changed from the fatal moment when horror and fright smote him down. I shuddered and turned sick at the recollection of it all.

Ayesha stood for some moments contemplating the scene in silence. Then she said, slowly and deliberately:

"Here was born and here perished a selfish woman's

ambition. Hence came the mockery of death; here death gathered its own at last. Intoxicated by an all-consuming love, longing to perpetuate that love by a limitless life, and eager to enhance my woman's beauty till it should compel the adoration of him I so passionately loved, hither I came and embraced the exhilarating flames. I conquered death—for a time. For two thousand years I lived in confident security. I ruled, and my word was law. The love for which I braved the flames departed. In insatiable passion I smote the one I loved and he vanished—left me alone in grief. Alas! I was all but proof against death, whilst the soul of my beloved had fled. Better, far better, that I should have gone, too, but I was to live on and on, only to nurse the memory of my passion and wait patiently for the time, which I knew must eventually come, when he would return. He came. The first lesson was not sufficient. My old passion, renewed, o'erwhelmed me, and innate selfishness prompted me, since I had the gift of unmeasured life and undying youthfulness and beauty, to impart the same to my beloved. I brought thee hither, Kalikrates, and because thou wert afeared I braved death again, and by death was vanquished. Here lies what was left. The beauty of the physical hath turned to most revolting ugliness. Like the Medusa of the Greeks, to look upon it doth palsy the heart.

"This is the burden which weighs my soul; this is the millstone which holds me in the shackles of unhappiness. Hereof is it that thou shalt free me, my love, by accomplishing its destruction."

"Is it thy wish, then, that we should bury it?" Leo asked.

"Nay; for is it not sufficiently buried now? What could be more appropriate for a sepulchre than this chamber which is nature's own? To bury it would help me but little, for, unlike other bodies, it would require centuries to decompose, and its existence is a nightmare to me. It must be destroyed; and this is thy task."

"But in what way, O Ayesha," I asked, "shall its destruction be accomplished?"

"For that I am prepared. Whilst thy servant slept last night I came and placed this vial in his clothing. Its contents are from the store of drugs which ye know I always kept in the caves. Thou shalt pour this upon that which thou wouldst destroy, but turn thy head away, that the fumes may not o'ercome thee."

As she said this she drew from one of Michael's pockets an earthen vial or vase, carefully sealed, and handed it to Leo. Then she resumed:

"But ere thou do this I will take the shape of my former self to reassure thee with my beauty, so that in my familiar presence thou mayest forget that the horrible image was once the object of thy admiration and thy love."

She retreated to a shadowed corner of the cavern and sat upon a ledge of rock and, removing Michael's coat and wrapping it around her (or rather his) head, leaned back against the rocky wall. A few moments of silence elapsed, then the curling, circulating cloud that so peculiarly preceded the coming of Iganit became apparent, and in an instant more Ayesha's form was added to the group.

Her familiar presence with us only served to accentuate the realism of the re-lived past, and it seemed now to be impossible that the little heap under the garments was once her. Indeed, I was almost beginning to feel that I was waking from a dream, in which the horror was but an imagination, not a reality. Ayesha then said:

"Here, my love, am I with thee again. Here, where close four years ago I left thee in so unnatural a way. I have bridged the past and am here with thee in spite of the consuming fire. See! It comes once more!" she exclaimed, as the recurring phenomenon came nearer and nearer and roared louder and louder. But no more hath it charm. The life it gave me and the death it inflicted are but memories; memories which bring regret and sadness—regret for the life of vanity; sadness for the awful mode of death. Thou rose-hued whim of nature, roll on!" she cried, as the resplendent pillar, reaching its height, retreated once more to the depths of the cavern. "Well is

it for humankind that thy path is placed amid the entrails of the earth and man knoweth thee not, for countless would be thy victims.

"And now, Kalikrates," she said, turning again to Leo, "thou must forget the past; forget I ever left thee. Remember me only by my beauty, and look upon me as I stand here by thy side; then mayst thou feel that that repugnant object thou art to destroy hath no part in me, and thy hand be strong for the task. Now let it be done."

Leo stood for a moment, hesitating. Then he reached the vase to me, saying:

"You do it, Uncle Horace; my heart fails me."

"Nay, my love," Ayesha interposed; "it is thy hand must free me. Surely thou hast the courage."

Thus urged, Leo nervously unsealed the vase.

"Be careful lest a drop should touch thy hand or any part, for it hath a wondrous power to destroy, and would eat thy flesh," Ayesha cautioned.

Leo leaned down to pour the contents upon the mummy, and in an instant a sizzling sound was heard and a cloud of bluish vapor arose, hiding Leo from us. This lasted several seconds, during which I was in suspense, fearing he might have been less cautious than necessary. But as the vapor finally cleared away we saw that he had receded some distance from it, having dropped the vase.

The destruction was complete. Nothing was left, save the golden girdle with its double headed snake. This Leo picked up, resolving to keep it.

"It is done," Ayesha said, "and I am free. Already do I feel refreshed as with new life, and the weight that burdened my soul has been lifted. And now that thou hast fulfilled thy mission we will return."

I turned to the body of poor Job. It seemed impious to think of leaving him in this place. Of course, when we left before it was under circumstances which blinded us to everything save self-preservation. Now we felt secure ourselves, and conscience impelled me to dispose of his remains in at least a half-Christian manner.

"What shall we do with poor Job, O Ayesha?" I asked.

But Ayesha was gone, and instead of seeing her beside us, I perceived the form of Michael once more animating and she answered me through his lips.

"What wouldst thou do with him?" she asked.

"The least we could do would be to cover him with stones. There is nothing else here; in this solid rock we could not otherwise bury it," I replied.

Ayesha laughed.

"Of what use?" she questioned. "How deeper could he be buried than he now is? And of what assistance or what virtue would a few stones be placed over him. But of a truth, if thou wouldst serve thy former servant, take the body hence and place it in the ground, for in this place will it never decompose; at least it will require much time. Could he himself be here to consult with ye he would doubtless wish it to be so removed."

"Do you think we could succeed in getting him out?"

"Why not?" was Ayesha's reply.

"We resolved to make the effort. Ayesha agreed to carry the two lanterns, I fastened mine to my belt, and between us, Leo and I, we managed with some difficulty to carry him into the open air.

On our way along the ledge, after having descended the incline, Ayesha stopped to examine a dark object which lay in her path. Picking it up, she found it to be nothing other than her old mantle, which was torn from her back by the gale as she awaited the coming of the light before crossing from the spur to the rocking stone, and which afterward so oddly floated down over Leo as he lay upon the opposite side of the great chasm waiting for the same light to aid us in making our desperate leap. And here it was again, as if it were to haunt us. Presumably, it had been blowing around and around from time to time during the intervening years until it lodged upon the ledge. Ayesha picked it up and laughed as she recognized it. She threw it over her arm and carried it out.

We buried Job at the foot of the great wall, using the



earthen vessels in which we had brought our food to excavate the soft earth, and placed a pile of stones to mark his grave. It was the best we could do, and we left it with silent regret.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE GATEWAY CLOSED.

Two months passed, a most sultry period. Ordinarily the climate of Kor was uniformly balmy; never excessively hot, never uncomfortably cool. But now, for some time, we had been oppressed by an almost suffocating atmosphere, which in truth seemed to affect the natives even more than it did us; they did nothing but lay around, absolutely overcome by inertia. The winds came hot and parching, and brought with them the unpleasant odors of the swamps without the crater; the sun glowed with unusual fierceness. The fever, which always broke out more or less malignantly at this season among the natives, was raging fiercely, and the victims of its fatal process were appalling in number. Their weird funerals were now a common monotony. So unpleasant was it within the mountain that Leo at length declared his intention of going outside in search of some excitement to exalt his spirits.

We accordingly went, one day, to hunt water buck. Outside the crater we observed, first, that the river was lower than we had ever seen it and, second, that the swamps too, were much lower, and the stench that arose from them was sickening indeed. The mosquitoes were thick and intensely vicious, and we were glad enough to retreat into the mountain where these pests at least were less troublesome.

An evening or two after this, when Iganit and Ayesha were with us, as was their wont, Ayesha declared that the time had come when it was advisable for us to leave Kor.

"Death surrounds ye here," she said, "and safety lies

only in flight; let not time pass ye, for each day is full of peril."

We thus prepared for immediate departure, going by the same route as we had come, arriving at last in safety at Durban.

We were fully familiar with the route this time and met with no difficulty in passing through the rugged mountain pass, over the stony plain, past the steaming cauldron, and on down the river to the coast. Here we were compelled to wait over two days before a vessel passed, but we were successful in attracting the attention of those on board by discharging our weapons as we rowed out toward them. Thus, as I have said, we arrived at last at Durban, to which place the vessel was bound.

It was our intention to proceed by rail at once to Capetown and there await the reestablishment of favorable conditions at Kor, when we would return. But at Durban an affliction came which entirely changed all our plans. Michael had for the last few days showed a languor and indisposition which increased as time wore on until at last he was compelled to give up and remain in bed. That night he became delirious, and by morning we could plainly see that he had a fully developed attack of the fever. For three days he raved and tossed, and the best medical skill obtainable gave but little hope. The fourth day he became easier, and for some time slept. Then he roused, or seemed to, but we quickly found that instead of Michael it was Ayesha.

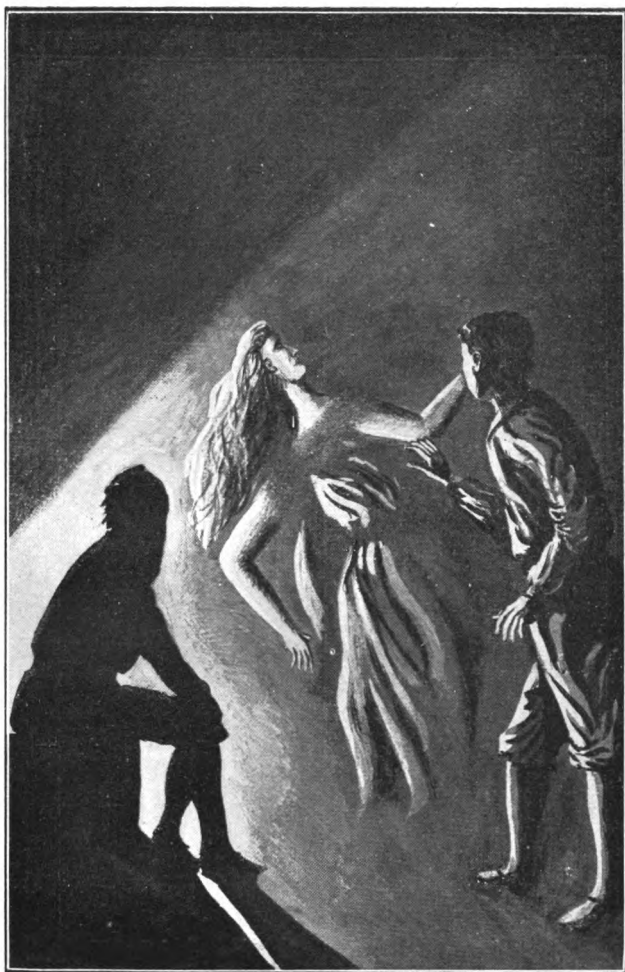
"Sore grieved am I," she said, "at that which is and that which is to come. The life of this, thy servant, hath run its course, nor can any human skill stay the hand of destiny. A faithful servant hath he been, and greater still hath he been to us all—to thee, Kalikrates, and to Holly, to Iganit and to me—for he hath been a bridge over which we have crossed from that world in which all things are invisible to you in your world of visible things; he hath been an instrument in my hands by means of which I have shown ye wondrous truths of nature. The soul's immor-

tality; the slight separation of the mortal and the immortal worlds; the ever-watchful guardianship of the immortals over their proteges; all these have I shown ye, and more yet. I have shown ye that love doth not perish. Death and the grave cannot lessen true love. And thou, O Holly,—to thee I have shown that e'en as thou art so ugly as to drive soul-blind women from thee, yet hast thou thy share of affection bestowed upon thee. For a purpose of thine own soul's betterment a brief pause has been made in thy existence—a 'pause' which thou dost wrongly call thy 'life'—in which it hath been best for thee not to know the love of woman, for, perchance, it is for thee to learn the bitterness of a loveless life that thou mayest the better appreciate a life of love. To thee through this man hath been revealed the loving companion of thy future life. But now, grieved though I am to say it, the end is at hand, and, though we shall strive to find another instrument through whom we may renew our associations, it may be only when ye have crossed the border between the two worlds that we shall all consciously join in company.

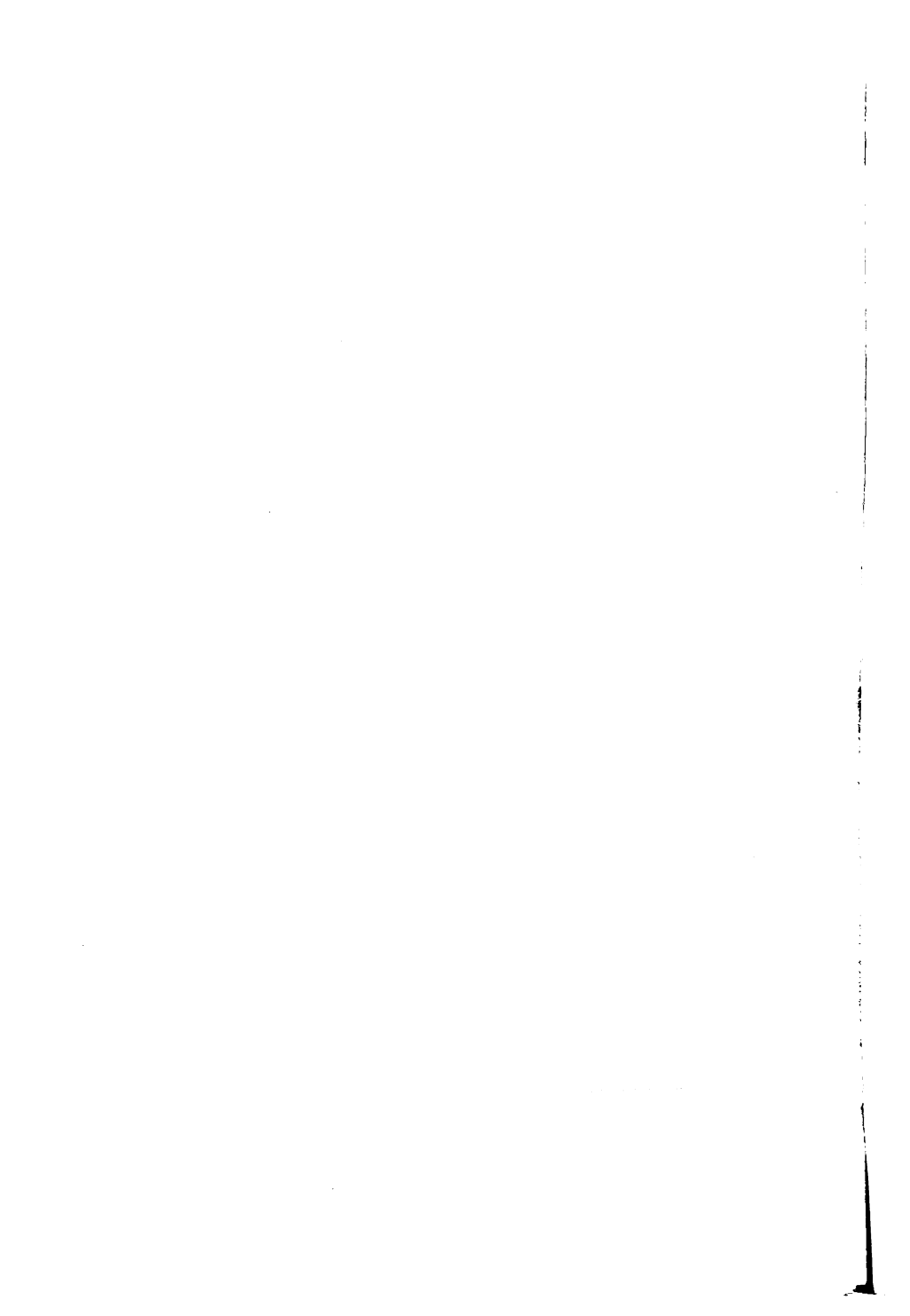
"Once more, ere it is too late, Iganit will come. So darken ye the windows. Let them be covered that the daylight is excluded. Then wait; for because of the weakness of this body our coming is more difficult."

We soon had the room dark, and, though the process was considerably slower, both in its first manifestation and its ultimate, Iganit once more stood before me.

"Ah, Horace," she said, "it is indeed sad, in a way, to meet you in the presence of a dying companion; especially as that companion has formed the gateway for my coming tangibly to you. And yet, when I say sad I only refer to the sadness for you and for Leo, for, after all, though to you the patient seems to suffer, that suffering is not so great that it can mar the joy to which it will lead him. While you grieve and feel sad at his death, I cannot help but rejoice at his release from a fleshy prison and entrance into a higher, more beautiful life. Only one cause have I for grief or regret, and that has its foundation in selfishness,



Her whole figure seemed actually to fall in pieces.



for no longer shall I be able to come to you and make my presence known. But death comes to all, dear Horace, and in its time will it carry you also across the mystic boundary. There shall I await you, and in endless day shall our lives be as one. Only a few years, Horace, which though they may drag wearily on for you, will seem to me but as a day.

"Under the circumstances, with Michael as low as he is, it is a great effort to come, and though I would so ardently wish it, I cannot stay. I must bid you farewell for an indefinite time. Do not forget me, Horace; think of me always, and remember that though I may not be visible, I am ever at your side. Let the remainder of your life be tempered by the knowledge you have gained by our association, that life does not end at the grave. Let your inspiration be the hope of a most happy future. One last embrace, and then farewell till we meet in immortality."

She threw her arms around me, and for a few moments was silent, while I—reluctant though I am to say it—I wept.

"Do not grieve for our parting," Iganit said at last; "your earthly sojourn is but a visit—a temporary absence from home; and ere long, when that visit is over, you shall return to the beautiful celestial home which I am keeping for you. Now farewell, and grieve not. Good-bye, dear heart; good-bye."

Slowly her form seemed to sink and fade; then it paused, and she said, faintly:

"Till we meet again."

When she had disappeared entirely I sank into a chair, and covered my face with my hands, and a feeling of utmost loneliness and desolation came over me. I realized that the brightest experience of my existence had faded away. The sudden burst of love which had come to bless my theretofore loveless life had gone again, and I was alone. In that moment I longed to die and go where Iganit was. For what was life to me without her, since I had learned the happiness of her presence.

While I sat thus I was called to my senses by another familiar voice—that of Ayesha.

“Kalikrates,” she said, “sore sad am I in the knowledge that this, perchance, is our last meeting whilst thou art in the flesh of mortality. And yet, it is best. The man’s life hath been lived. His sojourn as a dweller upon earth hath reached its ultimate, and now he goes home. Thou and I, as also Holly and Iganit, have greatly profited by his having lived. But his work is done, and soon cometh his recompense; a recompense of peace, freedom, and rest.

“With his demise and transition cometh a separation for thee and me—at least, it will be a separation for thee, for no longer shall I be able to come to thee; yet will I be none the less near. Then, later, thou also shalt pass through the mysterious gateway called death, and meet with me, to part no more.”

“Ah, Ayesha, my beloved,” returned Leo, passionately, “would that I might go now. The separation will be one of pain.”

“Wouldst thou go now?”

“Aye, now; for life will be naught without thee.”

“And thou hast no fear of death?”

“None; for death hath not hurt thee.”

“Nay; death inflicts no injury; there is naught to fear. But thy time is not yet, though thou shalt not wait long. It is not thy lot to grow old in mortality. But I feel the forces failing. Kiss me in farewell, my Kalikrates.”

For a moment they embraced. Then Ayesha said:

“It hath been my life to wait for thee. Waiting is a habit which doth sit well upon me, and wait I must for a brief spell longer. But do not forget me. As I did vow that I would return to thee, and as thou didst find me true to my promise, so shalt thou find me true, my Beautiful, when I say we shall meet again in that future which doth look so dark to thee, but which in truth is all brightness. Keep me in thy heart. Farewell.”

In another moment she, too, was gone, and we were

alone. For some time we remained thus in silence. Our dream was o'er, and naught was left but to retain the memory of it, a memory the details of which now engrossed us both, until we were recalled by the renewed ravings of Michael and were thus reminded of the duty we owed him.

From this time he grew weaker and weaker, and in the early morning hours he breathed his last and passed away.

With sad hearts we saw Michael interred in the cemetery at Durban. There was no need, we concluded, to take his remains back to England, for he had told us on many occasions that he had no relatives that he knew of. We therefore decided to lay him away there, where we left a modest annuity for the care and keeping of his grave.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### HOME AGAIN.

There was no inducement now to return to Kor, nor even remain in Africa. Life among the Amahaggar was no longer desirable since Ayesha and Iganit could come no more; and Leo's kingship was not one in which he could take pride. So we soon decided to return to our native land, Old England, and in due time took passage for home.

Leo was a changed man. Instead of his characteristic buoyancy, a settled, meditative melancholy had taken possession of him. He talked but little, and seemed to seek seclusion, even shunning my society to an extent which made me feel quite bad. However, I sympathized with him, for I well knew the cause.

I myself, however, endeavored to the utmost to make the best of my loss, and to encourage Leo into his old lightheartedness; but in the latter I was unsuccessful.

The first few days of our journey homeward were pleasant enough. But on the fifth day we encountered the



roughest weather I had ever seen at sea, and which raged for over three days. During this storm, I am sorry to say, Leo met with an accident which hurt him severely. The steamer we had taken passage in was not a large one and in the heavy sea it pitched and tossed considerably. We, Leo and I, were in the lower cabin, where less of the motion of the vessel was to be felt. Here we were sitting talking—for Leo had been unusually talkative on this particular day—when, during a lull in the violence of the boat's pitching, he arose to change his seat. Just at that moment there was a terrific lurch, and the poor boy was thrown with great force against the table, the edge of which caught him in the side just at the waist line. With a groan he fell to the floor of the cabin. With some difficulty I helped him to a sofa, where I knelt beside him, holding him to prevent his being pitched upon the floor.

By morning the storm had lessened considerably and from that on abated gradually. Leo recovered from his injury to some extent, though he was very badly wrenched. At times, only occurring periodically, he complained of sharp, shooting pains in the injured side, causing intense agony. This gradually told on him and left a marked effect by the time we reached our journey's end, by which time internal hemorrhage also had manifested, so that skilled attention was needed and was quickly summoned.

Examination showed, so the physician said, serious injury internally, and the prospects for final recovery to full strength were not the brightest. Greatest care was necessary to avoid undue exercise, as every movement of the body tended toward inflammation, which was the one thing to be guarded against.

How strange it is that fate so mocks a man's best efforts! Destiny seems ever to bring the unforeseen to make or mar the lives of men, and the slightest circumstance will involve the deepest sequences. Leo improved greatly; the hemorrhage had ceased and every indication gave promise of complete recovery. But a second accident occurred, a most simple one, which not only undid all the good that

had been accomplished by careful nursing and the skill of the physicians, but aggravated his condition to worse than he had been as the result of his first accident. Entering the room from the hall, one day, he caught his foot in the rug, and in the effort he made to save himself from falling, the violence of his action wrenched the injured side and renewed the hemorrhage in a much aggravated form. No effort was spared in his behalf, but we soon saw that nothing could be done; some blood vessel was evidently punctured or rent and every movement started a further wasting of the life fluid. Slowly he weakened, but none the less surely; his life was ebbing gradually.

We tried to keep the knowledge of his true condition from him, but that was impossible to continue long, for he could not remain unconscious of his gradual sinking. He soon realized it and said to me:

"Uncle Horace, my dear old fellow, I do not think we shall share any more of the strange experiences with which it has been our lot to meet in each other's company. I am going to leave this life. I do not mind going, but I am loath to go alone. Not that I have any fear. I have many times left my native home, with all its pleasures and comforts, for parts of the world which were strange and unknown and which had never been pressed by the foot of civilized man, and where lay danger of every sort, and at no time did I hesitate through fear. Nor do I fear to fathom the mystery of death. The spirit of exploration and adventure which has prompted us both in daring death in unknown lands of the earth is just as strong in me as it ever was, and, knowing that I must go, I am all but impatient to start upon the journey, in which shall be unfolded the solution of the many conjectures regarding what lies without and beyond the pale of what I have hitherto known as life. But I hate to part from you. So far my entire life has been shared with you. We have met all dangers shoulder to shoulder; we have marveled together at the strangeness of our experiences; we have passed in company through adventures which would have turned men's heads,

and I grieve now at the separation which it seems must be."

"Hush, hush, my boy," I returned; "you should not talk like that." You may live many years yet. Calm your fears and trust to the best."

"No, Uncle Horace; there is no need for me to hush. Why should a dying man's assertions be cut short? Let me talk. I know I am dying. I have no fear to calm, for I have no fear at all. Did not Ayesha say I should not have to wait long? This is my time; I am ready. Only I must leave you and you must let me talk."

"Well, Leo," I replied, "I have no desire to deny you the privilege of expressing yourself. I simply do not wish you to give up to the idea of dying. You may get well and live for years yet."

"That will be just as it happens, and it matters not," Leo returned. "I do not expect to stay, and I am thoroughly prepared to go. And this is what I want to say: My death proves a separation for you and I. There is none other in this life for whom I have any feeling that can really be called love. I have numerous friends, but they are only friends, and the separation from them brings little or no regret. But you and I, for over twenty years, have been constant associates. You have been father, brother and companion. Some day you will follow me, and perhaps we shall then continue our associations as we have done here, and the separation will prove but an hiatus, which will be soon forgotten when it has passed. But in that interval, while you remain here and I am waiting there, I shall leave no stone unturned if it is possible to come to you to do so. Look for me; watch for me."

"I will watch, Leo," I answered, more to satisfy him than anything else; "but you are talking too much."

"No; I am not. Talking does not hurt me any more than to worry over what I leave unsaid, and I don't want you to forget me."

"How could I do that, Leo?" I ejaculated, astonished at the proposition. "You have been a part of my life. It

will seem as if my life were no longer complete when you are gone, and right glad would I be if I might go with you. Like yourself, I am nothing loth, and I have no fear."

"Well," he said, tiredly, "you are not ready yet; but time will——"

His eyes closed, and I saw that he had fallen into a sleep, a fact for which I was thankful.

Gradually he grew weaker; his life was slowly fading. At last through sheer weakness his mind began to wander; objects and events became indistinct, and the doctors counted first the days and then the hours to the end.

It came at last. One afternoon while I was watching by him he called to me.

"Where are you?" he asked.

"Here I am; can't you see me?" I answered.

"Why, no; it is dark, and you have not lit the lights yet," he declared.

Then I realized how he was—that death was at hand. I took his hand and bade him look at me. He turned his eyes toward me, but said:

"I can't see you; it is too dark."

He remained quiet for a moment, then exclaimed:

"Ah, the lights are coming now. But why do we need so many lights? One, two, three, four, five, six—why do we need so many? And who are all these people in the room, and why are they here? They are all strangers to me. Who are they?"

I thought best to humor him, so I said:

"Why, they are all friends, come in to see how you are."

"Yes; they nod their heads when you say that; but I don't know any of them."

He rested a moment, his eyes staring fixedly.

"Why, there's Job," he exclaimed; "and Michael, too! Hello, both of you! I thought you were both dead! There you are, though, just as alive as ever."

Another pause.

"Here comes Iganit, Uncle Horace, just as sure as I live. She's coming to show herself again, and I'm so glad."

He paused again, and I could see that he was sinking rapidly. He closed his eyes for an instant, then reopened them with a sudden stare.

"And there is Ayesha," he exclaimed. "Oh, I am so glad you have come back."

He tried to rise, but fell back to the pillow.

"Hold me up, Uncle Horace," he said, feebly, "so I can see her."

I raised him up, well knowing it was his death struggle.

"Ah, I am glad to see you," he went on. "But why do you stand so far away? Why don't you come close to me? That's right. You are kind to come at this time. But you won't need to come much more, for I am going to where you dwell; I will soon be with you. Yes, yes—I am coming; I—will——"

He gave a short gasp or two, then sank back heavily. Poor Leo was dead.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### ALONE.

I am alone now. Leo has been gone some time. I begin to feel like an old man—at least, I have lost the ambition for earthly conquests and interest generally in things that impel most men, and women too, into energetic rivalry. I scarcely live in the practical world; my mind reverts almost exclusively to the conjectural. So many, many rare experiences, and of so extraordinary and apparently impossible a character, have left me much to wonder at, to hope for, and yet to doubt. I cannot take others into my confidence, for, not having had the experiences, they would be highly justified in doubting; indeed, they would have, from their standpoint, every excuse for pronouncing me a lunatic. Hence, realizing the great and uncrossable gulf between their understanding and my ex-

periences, I could but withhold from relating them. But to withhold from thinking is an entirely different proposition and one which I find absolutely impossible.

Many times I tried to figure it as a vast and protracted dream, the awakening from which left an indescribable regret. But no! Here was the iron jewel case with the jewelry once worn by my beloved Iganit, and here the golden snake with the double head which nestled so familiarly amid the soft folds at Ayesha's waist. These were material objects which dreams could not have created.

And now that I am alone, with no opportunity for intercourse upon the subject with those with whom I associate, I spend hours and hours revolving it over in my mind, trying in vain to harmonize the series of events and associations with the prevailing ideas among men. The sheer impossibility of this compels me to give up the effort to harmonize and adopt in its stead one of analysis. Nor can even this analysis give me any greater satisfaction than a mere hypothesis. Apart from the fact that Ayesha and Iganit had really appeared, to the sight, to the touch, to the hearing, in tangible form, there was no explanation, save their words, as to how or whence they came. And yet it is these very matters, could I be made to understand them, that alone would satisfy my inquisitive longing.

That Ayesha once lived I was positive, for had I not dwelt for a brief period with her? That she perished I was also positive, for was I not at the horrifying death, and had I not, three years afterward, seen her remains just where she fell as death gathered her up; and had I not, furthermore, seen those very remains destroyed—chemically consumed, until not a vestige was left? My senses could not so deceive me, else might I be deceived as to my own identity. Nay, that much was indeed true.

Nor could I have been so deceived as to her return after she had thus perished; for the same senses, senses which I as an individual depend upon to record and test all experiences, convinced me of her presence—the self-same physique, beauty of face and form, and habiliments, as recorded

by my sense of sight; the self-same solidity and tangibility, as recorded by my sense of touch; the self-same music of voice and the self-same linguistic peculiarities and accomplishments, as recorded by my sense of hearing.

That much is real. All else, however, is conjectural, and I am dependent partly on the statements of Ayesha, partly upon my ability to reason out the true philosophy of these statements, and partly upon my own imagination, which latter served to fill in the gaps and hiatuses, in order to complete the theme. But this theme, even when completed, did nothing more than resolve itself into one general and ever-recurring question: What is beyond the grave?

The old philosophies, those of the church, to which I have been so used, and in which I was raised and educated, offer me but little in formulating an answer to this question, for, much though I hate to say it, they will not admit of reasonable analysis. They are unnatural, strained, and essentially chaotic. They teach of an ideal somewhere located at a practical nowhere; a place whence, once going thereto, none ever returned to tell of it. All lies first, in the traditions of an unreliable race of people and, second, in the absolute faith of the believer.

I cannot say that I am not one of those "believers," for the instructions imparted to me in youth seem indelible; but I am, I fear, very much lacking in faith, for the experiences of my short life have shown me so much that conflicts with those doctrines and dogmas, and my reason, controlled by my insatiable inquisitiveness as to the mysteries of nature and to science, revolts and rebels at much that true faith must accept, for true faith and reason are not companionable.

If indeed, which popular theology proposes, the world of the departed be an invisible world, peopled with invisible hosts of airy counterparts to ourselves, how much less reasonable is it to presume that these invisible hosts are circulating around about us, as Ayesha declared they are, in the air, in the streets, in our homes, walking, or

floating, or flying, or by whatever way they travel, by our very sides? Since, if we are to believe a class of beings can exist in an invisible state in a world that is itself invisible, and that upon the death of the body its soul can, unseen, depart from this world to that, and indeed, as we are told, be attended by a host of angels—invisibles—who conduct it hence, how less reasonable is it to believe that these invisible visitors come at other times than just at deaths? Why may not their coming be of frequent occurrence? Why not even of daily occurrence? Aye; why not that some of them be ever present, and why may we not be justified in believing that we are never alone.

Such a thought, howsoe'er it may appeal to others, is, the more I think of it, a beautiful one to me. And often as I sit in the soft twilight, which is so harmoniously conducive to our tenderest thoughts, I wonder if in my loneliness Iganit, my alleged soul-mate, is present to bear me company. Would Ayesha, retaining the attraction of the friendship she proclaimed, also be there? Could Leo likewise be there? He, poor boy, had not returned to me as he had promised. Was it because he had forgotten that promise? Was it because he had not yet learned to control those "forces in nature?" Or, forbidding thought! Is it that there really is no returning; even that there is no future life?

The farther away I get from the theory propounded by Ayesha the more displeasing it is. How beautiful and gratifying is the thought that after earth's trials are over, with the accompanying separations, griefs, and consequent loneliness, we should, through the gateway of the grave, enter into one vast reunion, and the love ties and the friendships be renewed without the earthly dread of severance. Yes, yes; it is a beautiful thought, and one which buoys me up in my loneliness.

I feel that there is not long to wait now ere all the doubts and misgivings, the hopes and the expectations shall be dispelled or realized, as the case may be, by



myself being among the uncountable billions of departed souls. Then shall I know life as death makes it. And when this account of our second adventure to Kor reaches the readers (for it is my intention to keep it smothered in my own bosom until the world no longer counts me as one) I shall have passed through the ordeal of death and have entered upon my immortal career, whether it be to join the vast host gathered around the throne of God, singing endless hosannas and halleluiahs, or writhing in eternal torture under the gloating eyes of Satan because the temptations thrust upon me were greater than the knowledge or the strength with which I was endowed, or—and this I most fervently hope—pass into a state of peaceful progression, happy in the possession of Iganit's love and her blissful companionship, together with Leo and Ayesha, roaming at will and pleasure whithersoever the heart may desire. Which shall it be?

THE END.



