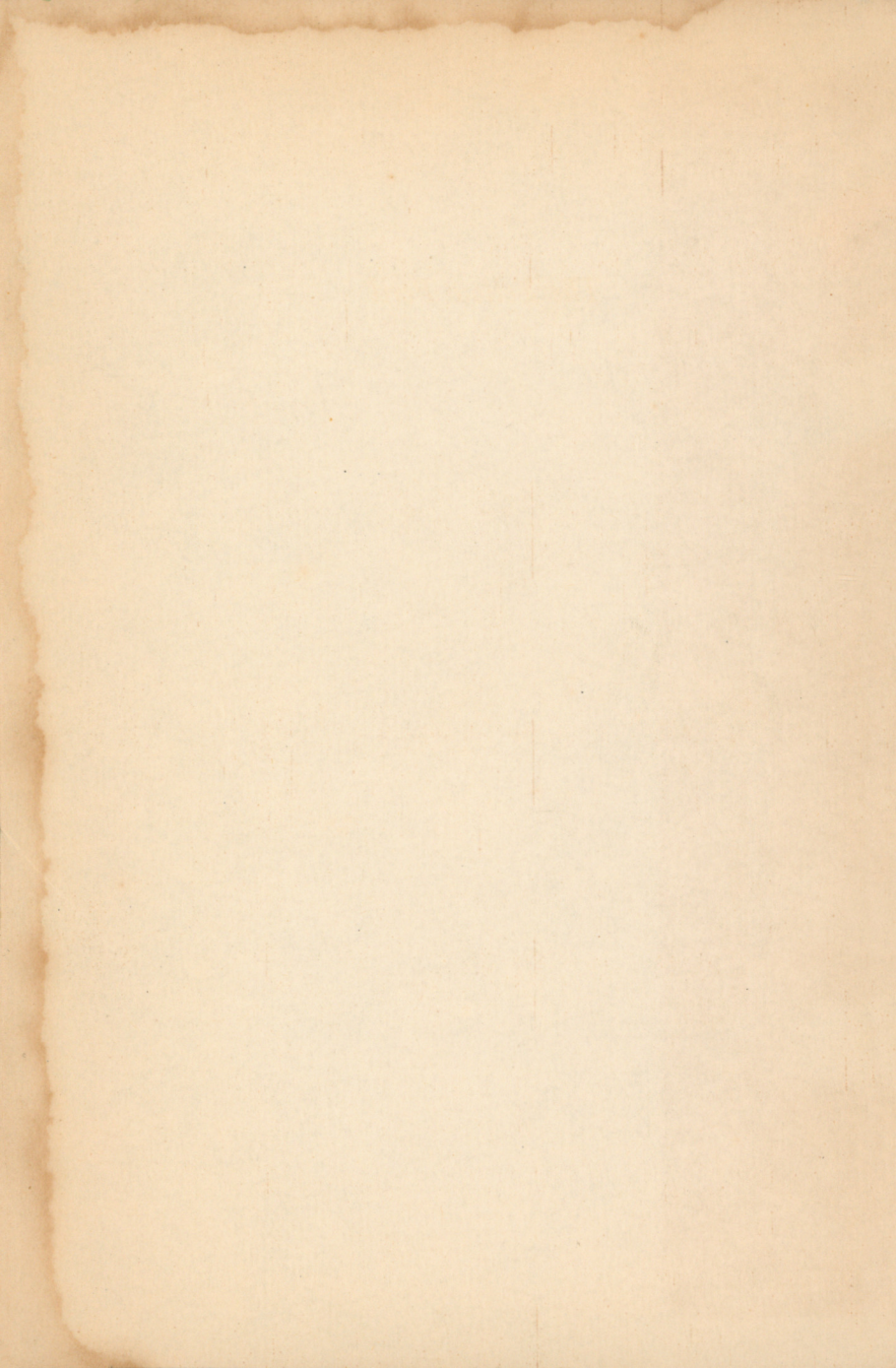


M.P.
SHIEL

THE
YELLOW
PERIL

GOLLANCZ



The Yellow Peril

The Novels of
M. P. SHIEL

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The Novels of
M. P. SHIEL

THE YELLOW
PERIL

*'Where shall wisdom be found? And
where is the place of understanding?'*

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CHAPTER I

PRINCE EDWARD

NEVER a conception of Prince "Teddy", who contended with Li Ku Yu, had entered a human head to the moment when Prince John, his father-to-be (whom the French have called *l'Entêté*, or "the Stubborn") landed from the *Dominion* at Scarboro' to attend a dance one February night.

He, having just got his "executive curl" as a sub., was sitting among his new wardroom messmates, looking at the dancing, when he made the remark: "Set of frights!—not a pretty girl among the lot".

But just then three passed before his eyes—sisters—all tall, dark, but the middle one, who was the youngest, the tallest of all; and she came upon his eyes surprisingly, like some being superior to men.

Before long he was waltzing with her, his eyes tied to her eyes, whose dark-blue anon looked black.

She was Minna Simmons, a doctor's daughter, already at nineteen a Bachelor of Science, now "swotting" to get a degree in medicine.

His Royal Highness was amazed at her "cleverness"; and queens suddenly appeared to him mean in the presence of this imperial creature, this more reigning thing than queens, a lady.

But with that sea-dog bluntness on which he prided himself, he said to her within a den of Union Jacks and smilax: "You are the very nicest girl I ever dreamt of!"

On which she shook her head slowly at him, murmuring with an indulgent smile: "I am not to be commandeered".

His answer was : " I don't believe you are : what I should rather choose would be to offer you my hand in marriage ".

" Ah ! the vast paw ", she breathed, her eyes turned white to heaven.

He said : " Suppose I did so, what would you say to it ? "

" I am sorry, Sir ", she answered : " I should say no ".

" We will see about that ", muttered John *l'Entêté*.

And before midnight he had got from her a promise of correspondence in six months' time—on general topics.

Within two he began to write frequently ; within three he appeared suddenly at The Priory (her house), vowing that he would go mad ; he kept telephoning across Britain ; and after six months she began to answer his letters, as promised.

He had got his second stripe when he received from her at Shotley this :

" My sisters, whose judgment is considered good, urge it upon me that that may well turn to the public advantage, if I am given the honour to unite my mother's blood with your Royal Highness' ; and though I pity *you*, Sir, for the quite hot water which this business must bring you into, I will now profess myself ready to act as your Royal Highness directs. . . . Your Royal Highness divines that I could not long be kept a back-stairs consort. . . . If centuries of custom attempt to suppress me, I think it is the custom that will see itself suppressed. . . . God only grant that I may be some good, if it is to be so. . . . "

Count three months thence, England is under snow—it is seven days before Christmas—when from him at Balmoral comes to her : " I am now taking car to come. . . . "

She locked herself into her room then, to stare. . . .

Afterwards she opened a steel casket by knobs that

revolved, to get from it the photograph of a young man in flannels, with which she sat again ; and, gazing at it, presently said to it : " Dear, it is no good, it can't be helped—unless I turn tail, and don't play the game. I was to be one of the mother-women, you see, not one of the wife-women—God's will be done ".

Now tears filled her lids, her lip quivered : she held the photograph tenderly pressed to her face, her eyes closed ; but then with a gasp of anger and anguish dashed it off her into the fire.

Six months later she was the Queen of the Britains and Empress of India ; and her " bowing-manner " was considered good.

But from the first her reign was a troubled reign.

Here at home she was not universally adored. That wit of her tongue was too swift and withering. Her talk, if always distinguished, was always vigorously vernacular, dashed anon with a sort of slang, and anon, for all her moral severity, with the *risqué*—that which came to her tongue's tip out it flew, like new knives flying. Then, too, no daughter of a hundred kings was ever so jealous a stickler for the intricacies of ritual. She pestered the Cabinet. The anger of her glance became a social apprehension, and her censorship of morals extended to males. Lords, grooms, equerries, had to be Bayards ! and, like Victoria, she looked coldly upon widows who remarried.

As to the foreign Royalties, the home aristocracy, who, for a fortnight, had a thought of patronising her, they were taught in torrents of lava-torments that she was twice the sovereign of subjects, and once the sovereign of sovereigns. If a dowager was proud of monkey-ancestry, be sure her sin would find her out, and a tongue like the Avenging Angel's edge would singe her. Some day Her Majesty would manage to put to her some simple question in biology or physics, and then was lost in horror at the Hottentot ignorance of European women with coronets on their foreheads. But if all this caused her domineering

forehead, her tongue, and the play of her eyes to become a terror in the land, it did not tend to make her idolised.

But nothing much troubled her but her son, she truly a "mother-woman", every day finding time to be with him; and to him the privilege of her presence was ever more fascinating than his toy-submarine.

Seldom a day but she spoke to him of Germany growing, of China changing. "The Chinese are pretty shrewd, Teddy", she said in showing him a lump of white jade, sent her by the Dowager Empress, one day at Windsor: "the only man who can outwit a Jew in business is a Chinaman—don't forget. And, then, there are so many of them! How many?"

"Four hundred and ten millions, mother", the Prince promptly responded.

"Just think—more than all Europe. God wanted them to be so many: and there they *are*. But nobody quite knows why!"

"Teddy" meditated the matter; and he said: "Mother, why don't all the countries make themselves into one under one King? Save such a mass of energy! How absurd for Berks to set up as a separate Kingdom, and Bucks as another——"

"But of what nation would that one King be?"

"English, I suppose".

"His name 'Teddy'?"

"Teddy" blushed under her roguish ogle and she, seeing him in distress, came to his rescue, saying, "Dear, you will deserve to be such a King: your mind is large enough. And don't think that I disagree, for I quite see that all sorrow is due to that folly of nations and men in calling bits of an earth their 'own'. When nations do it, the result is wars, and all this cost of armaments; when individuals do it, the result is all the failure and perplexity and bread of tears, that we see men eat. But if one King owned it all for everybody, and hired out bits, then we might see some fun, and soon would be flying to the moon!"

That what you meant?" The boy was gazing into her great flamboyant eyes with such adoration, that it made her laugh, and dip a kiss inside his sailor collar.

But her plans for him were beset by obstacles. There was King John *l'Entêté*, for one, to be reckoned with; as one morning when she exclaimed: "I am his mother!" pacing a room of the Winter Palace at Petersburg; to which His Majesty answered: "Your Majesty speaks as if a father was of no account!"

"Oh, of course, a father, too", she said—"though fathers are only a modern development, mind! Formerly there were no fathers, only mothers".

The King fingered his beard, saying with his touch of pompousness: "Indeed! But Your Majesty fails to mention at what precise period of the world's history this innocent condition of things prevailed".

"It prevails still!—among bees, for instance".

"This is strange", said the King.

"Ah!" said the Queen.

"But what have bees to do with the matter?" asked His Majesty: "the point is, that Your Majesty wishes to deprive the Prince of learning what all gentlemen learn——"

"Oh, I do! since a decent boy hasn't *the time* to: and if the point of that boy's intellect be soppyfied and softened by learning six hundred words of Greek—if he becomes the least bit like any of them—I shall go mad, I think, I *couldn't* stand it. What I want him to learn is that about bees—God's facts—infininitely Divine, awful, lovely, romantic, religious, significant, educating. But, if a boy learns that it pleases some people to call a boy a '*pais*', or a '*garcon*', does *that* give him to think and adore? Oh, Your Majesty knows very little Greek, and I know lots—through no fault of my own, God knows—and some other things, too: can't you listen to me?"

"But everyone differs from Your Majesty!"

"Except thinkers", she said, almost crying, "and,

oh, isn't that hard that the brightness of the wise should be for ever overborne by the dullness of the stupid ? ”

That break of tears in her voice, her throbbing throat, touched His Majesty. Her figure, moreover, as she roamed the room, with that glory of her gallant grand eyes aglow, was very magnetic, so that the King lowered his lids a little, let slip a look at her hips, lowered them, stole a look, then said : “ Well, I only hope Your Majesty's plans won't compromise the Throne's popularity ”.

“ No ”—in a gentler tone, touching his shoulder—“ people will understand ”.

“ But will they ? ” he asked : “ I pride myself upon my knowledge of the people—or does Your Majesty imagine yourself so popular a monarch as I am ? ”

She smiled down now upon him. “ No, I don't dispute that with you. *You* have the popularity, but, oh, let *me* have Teddy ”.

And in the end she managed : the Prince went to Brockweir.

Now, already at Brockweir was Li Ku, called “ Sky-Blue ” (since he was a Celestial !) son of a member of the Min Cheng Pu (Home Office) ; and nine days after the Prince's arrival, he slapped Li Ku across the face. Whereupon a formal fight.

It was toward the end of lunch-time, and a small boy, flying with tidings toward the Lower School, panted, “ Prince and Sky-Blue—fight ” to one Richard Chinnery, sitting on the Fourth Form steps, intent upon winding primary wire round a bobbin ; and Chinnery called after : “ What's the row ? ”

“ Caught Sky-Blue trephining cat not properly anæsthetised ! ”—he was gone.

Whereupon Chinnery dashed off to the shed down in the hollow, and made his way through a throng that already had no little respect for him, to see the champions already stripped—like David and Goliath, Sky-Blue being a tall strip of yellow, six months the elder.

But there was little fun ; and after the third lead-off Chinnery, muttering, "It's a butchery", dashed back to his induction coil. The Royal combatant, in fact, had all the art, and presently muttering, "Oh, well, doesn't matter", put on his jacket.

It was over, then ? Li Ku Yu sat on the shed-bench, his legs under him—impossible to guess if he was humbled, if he was ratty inside, he smiling as ever his insolent smile, chin up—huge-headed, tough as orange-skin, breezy, brazen, a cool blade, looking ready to wink.

He smiled ever ; but seldom laughed, except on Saturdays—when he was younger—when he would stand in the town's electric shed watching the commutators spinning asleep, six revolutions a second ; and a moment would come when that depth of insolence would be riven by a little giggle—a giggle of glee and victory at the trickiness of man and the admission of God ; and he laughed one Tuesday when a crusher was crushing up the old school-chapel bricks, when, after gazing many minutes at the engine jiggling, the glee digged him, and he giggled.

"But there's something wrong about that orange lately", said Chinnery after six months : "he has changed his Saturday-habits".

The Prince was "doing arsenic"—a Wednesday afternoon when he did the metals ; and Chinnery, whose drawer was next to his, was under instructions to show him his way about in analysis—Chinnery two years the elder, and already his young head was a garden of consciousness—tall—hollow-chested . . . gentle.

"Know that man they call Spider ?" he asked—"retired poacher and gaol-bird—cottage back of the Chasewood. I go up there to get rock-specimens, and twice I've spied Sky-Blue and Spider in the dell there. Deighton wouldn't like it, though Sky-Blue's a Steer".

("Steers" were town-boys, and Dr. Deighton the Head-Master—a bearded Sea-King blushing rich with brandy, his gown dropping down his right shoulder, the howl of a

cow in him, heart-harrowing, memorable, a "wrangler"—"mathematics"—not perhaps "learned", but the very best of earth's teachers.)

"What would Sky-Blue be doing at Spider's?" the Prince asked.

"Not sure, but you look out: for if you two meet in serious battle, you'll kill each other. My idea is that Sky-Blue is taking lessons in boxing from Spider".

"Free country—Or the attraction may be Spider's gal".

"Ah, don't underestimate my Sky-Blue", Chinnery said: "that's no ordinary orange. I'll swear that he hasn't wasted five minutes since he was nine—I know him, for I have some attraction for him apparently, and he comes to watch me messing about up in that library alcove. Dumb as a mummy! But one afternoon he began to gas, and, Ted-of-the-Throne, I never knew speech so fascinating. The things that saffron sack of thoughts vomited out of his chasm! you'd hardly believe".

"Oh, aye, I guess", muttered the Prince, holding up a precipitate to squint at.

"Said that white people are a freak! 'like white mice', not a permanent type; hence we produce a shudder in the yellow breast. And you know that old sixpenny atlas which is his Bible—he produced that to show me that Europe and Asia are just like twins in structure; and he calls the two islands, England and Japan, the negative and positive terminals of a cell, the continents being the plates, Europe the white zinc, Asia the yellow copper".

"Scott, that's gas", "Teddy" said.

"Anyway, an intellect above Spider's gal".

"Aye, I think I know".

"Yes, and above gals diviner far than Spider's! Look here—don't tell anybody——" Chinnery produced from his drawer a curious document, a folio of silk-paper on a stick of ivory round which the folio rolled, sending an aroma of roses into that sulphuretted stench of the room.

" This must have dropped out of Sky-Blue's pocket when he snatched out Asia to show me, and I confiscated it as contraband. Passion, my boy. . . . Ever seen one Oyone motoring in the town? Not? Then you never beheld human beauty. Visits at my cousins, the Santleys—oh, Oyone, would that I had never beheld the phiz and evil peeper of thee! A half-caste—her father a P. & O. ship's-surgeon—Irish—mother a geisha-girl of Nagasaki. How Oyone ever got into a Wesleyan mission-school at Tientsin I can't say, but she did, then fell in with Sky-Blue's present guardian, A-lu-te.—Surely you have seen A-lu-te somewhere? Little old woman like a monkey? "

Teddy said no.

" But you know where Sky-Blue lives? "

" Isn't it that mansion with gables up on the hill? "

" That's it. But A-lu-te and Oyone are mostly at Regent's Park, where they have to be for the intrigues. Talk of intrigues! A-lu-te, it seems, was a conspirator, and was banished with Oyone to 'the post-roads'; and now for Oyone and A-lu-te the puzzle is, so to intrigue as to get back again to the whisperings and peepings of Court-life. As to Oyone—pretty. Blessed are your eyes that have not seen her: some day you may, and then over goes the blooming Throne. Her age, though, is rather in advance of the Heir-apparent's: seventeen!—twenty-seven she will never see—assassinated, beheaded perhaps, long ere then: tragedy sleeps in those ravishing peepers. But see Sky-Blue's height above Spider's 'gal': he disdains Venus. Here's her scroll to him; unroll. Observe the neat, crude, school-girl writing".

" Li Ku Yu, Her Excellency asks about your health, and wishes you well.

" It is now five weeks since she or I have seen you; and your writing is like a miser's kindnesses.

" Li Ku Yu, persons are born and flung up into the sun's light not when or where they choose. From China

round to America and back, life in its tossings, like a fish which is caught and tosses, flings this one up in one generation, and that one up in another, and the rubbings together of persons is as was ordained. Each is sent to his own generation, to rub with it, so that everything may be as was ordained with life ; and when one generation is buried, the sun shines on brightly on another. You, Li Ku Yu, and I, Oyone Umé, have been flung up in the same generation, and been flung together, to rub.

“ It is a sin in life that you are ice and iron to me ! Others tend to me, but not I to them ; I to you, but not you to me ? You are ice, but I will make you bubble ; and iron, but I will make you flow.

“ I have the leprosy for you, Li Ku Yu. I think you are like Indian pansupari of areca-nut, and like chunam with spices rolled up in a betel leaf.

“ Li Ku Yu, when someone speaks of the end of your college-term, this makes me pale, but afterwards in my chamber my little body dances at this.

“ I have the hope that you are in health, and not troubling your brow always about studies.

“ My prayer is that you write to me separately and comfortingly, for my tongue suffers thirst in this furnace.

“ When I think of you, Li Ku Yu, I stretch myself and kiss the wind. *Sayonara !*

“ OYONE.”

“ Oh, the miserable . . . ! ” muttered Teddy, with a little flush.

“ Yes ”, said Chinnery, “ but the point is, that Sky-Blue is ‘ ice and iron ’ to *her*—the nymph of nymphs, earth’s thickest thimbleful of intense liqueur—compared with whom Spider’s han’some gal is a gross frog squatted, a goggling gecko of the rocks. Sky-Blue has other business with Spider ”.

But Chinnery's warning came too soon, and was forgotten in a month. In eighteen nothing had happened.

Meantime, the Prince did well with his eyes and fingers. On the football field, moreover, everything scattered before his passionate impetuosity : for which alone, and then for his decent way, he was well loved. If a boy new to that most anxiously *élite* "schoolboy spot" "Highnessed" him, he'd say, "My name's Teddy Reeks to you, kid" : and only one boy, who never forgot, saw his chin lift with a chilling hauteur. It was an amusing thing at Brockweir that after a year many were to be found imitating his nimble way of lifting his toes in stepping, his brisk and restless little roll, his trick of saying "Scott !"

He had no resemblance to the men of the House of Hanover—his face open as a summer's day, quite English in expression, fair like a face of milk-and-pink in a picture, his eyes light like a Norfolk sky : no weak line, from whatever angle one glanced. Taller than his father : shorter than his mother ; slightly bow-legged.

He had been at Brockweir eighteen months when one day—as if the Star Venus should descend to earth—the Queen descended upon Brockweir. It was well with "Teddy" that day, and well with all : holiday ! throats hoarse with hurrahs ! a Teddy carried shoulder high.

Using that day as a date, we count six months to the date when Li Ku Yu received an order to return to China. That was on a Thursday in the Autumn term.

The next Saturday afternoon being fine, the Prince was permitted to take part in a paper-chase—Brockweir being great on running ; several of its lads could range a country-side like stags ; and none surpassed the Prince in this.

He was in a solitary spot on an estate named Penryth, rather separated from "the hounds", running down a steep field through sheep toward the river tow-path, when he heard a calling : "Ho ! Hi ! Help !" —seeming to

proceed from a chapel-of-ease which stands half-way down the field—a little ruin no bigger than a room—roofless—just four walls, two with gable-ends, and some Gothic window-slits.

A wall of loose stones runs round it, enclosing a bit of ground crammed with bracken (in the summer) ; so the Prince vaulted the wall, and ran to see what the matter was.

He looked in ; and there within stood Li Ku Yu.

But he did not at once recognise Sky-Blue !—a Sky-Blue arrayed in Oriental raiment, as for a ceremony ! The Prince wondered whether the pigtail had grown in a day ; but it was a silken *queue* platted on, as many upper-class Chinese wear them.

And the significance was this : that it was China there to interview Europe.

“ Well ? ” said the Prince.

Li Ku Yu made no reply.

“ Did you call out ‘ help ’ ? ”

Li Ku Yu was mute. They looked at each other—well-grown lads now, the Prince in the Upper Fifth, Li Ku Yu the head of the Sixth, but for Chinnery, who lingered on several terms after Brockweir ceased to have anything to teach him.

All at once Li Ku Yu, with a moan, threw his arm round the Prince’s neck, and began to rub his cheek on the Prince’s cheek, up and down, moaning, like a lover moaning for love.

The other, very astonished, tried to draw back, saying : “ I say, what’s all this ? ” But even as he asked, he knew : knew that he would never forget that day.

The Prince wrenched himself spinning from that venomous affection ; and he said sharply : “ Hurry up ! What’s it all about ? ”

Li Ku Yu was smiling : but in the expression of his eyes was something very terribly tense and strained, atrociously cruel and ferocious ; the eye-whites looking bloodshot.

Now at last he spoke, in that strange voice of his—foreign as an animal’s from another planet.

"You were unwise to strike me, Prince".

"Who? When? Years ago? Got that in you still, have you?"

"*Cluck!* a minute ago to me".

"So it's a fight, is it? But stay—let me warn you: the boys and men of this land can't be conquered. You may kill and mince them, but you won't see them strike their flag. Are you prepared for all that? In for bloodshed, and a fight to the finish?"

He was now eyeing the Chinese loweringly under the eyes, his tones, as he spoke, more and more trilling with emotion: in the back of his head a question as to his mother—how she would wish him to act now.

Li Ku Yu, with one finger out, commenced to lecture: "The boys and men of this land"? *Cluck!* poor stuff. Done nothing great. The steam-engines they use? Papin! Electricity? the Voltas of Italy! Explosion motors? the French! Guns, navigation? the Chinese! Chemistry? a French science! The Saxon a gross dog—obedient! a slave: as you English aristocrats know with secret glee. William the Conqueror conquered them by one single battle. It took his sons three hundred years to conquer the Scotch, the Welsh. Not conquered the Irish yet. Gross dogs. But for the Celts around who have mixed blood, England still a fifth-rate state. As it is, great in nothing! only big. Half-discovered Neptune; invented boxing, roast beef: and I now about to teach their King's son the secrets of boxing, and of raw beef. Even their robbing-career done now: now their turn to be robbed from. See if Japan doesn't have Australia—Canada! and be not surprised if before you die you catch sight of the saffron Dragonflag of the Manchus flapping from the staff atop of your Parliament-house. I say this because I happen——"

"Make haste finish!" said the Prince, harsh and sharp.

"Yes, proud, I know!—though not of what——"

"Of being a white boy!"

"I proud of my head! though I should not wish the

skin over it to be sickly, faded. White? the colour of decay ! —old hair—the louse——”

“ And yellow of death, of corruption, cholera, and tropical rottenness ”—each speaking now with a bitterness that hissed, their faces leaning toward each other.

“ Hence English hair yellow ! ” said Li Ku Yu : “ I have seen old Manchu women’s hair turn yellow, too, like other plants in Autumn, their skins bleach. Yet the fair races not like that through age—freak of nature ! You are proud of your ancestry : but your father’s line ? a fly’s lifetime to mine ! As to your mother, she is only——”

“ *Slave !* ”—Lucifer said it, and instantaneously with that lightning of his eye broke the bolt of his knuckles upon the other’s nose.

Li Ku Yu staggered, licking his blood.

He fell upon an altar-step near the east end that divided the stone floor into an upper and lower level ; and, sitting there, he very deliberately took off slippers, hat, *bluse*—threw them into grass and bracken that grew thicker along the rims than in the middle, the Prince, too, throwing away cap and jacket ; and he stood waiting with his fists tight, high-strung, smiling, white.

All at once Li Ku Yu, with a slight cry, was up ; and without another syllable the battle began.

The Prince’s aim was mainly the eye ; the Chinese aim mainly the heart.

Whenever the Prince led off with the left, Li Ku Yu would parry, and spin the Prince round by pressure on the Prince’s left ; then cross-counter with a sounding pound in the unprotected right ribs—he having at this time more science than the other ; but perhaps less art.

With every blow that he planted—with every blow that he received—Li Ku Yu let out a slight cry, a little scream of laughter.

But the floor was uneven, slippery—made mainly of grave-slabs, grass-grown and dislocated—and thrice Li Ku Yu, though in his socks, flew staggering ; the Prince’s

feet, on the contrary, were his strong point, his two legs advancing and retreating like one, at a constant angle ; and, in attacking, he advanced as if taller grown, with quite a light and dominant step, impending upon his enemy.

But both had pretty soon enough of it to please them, the flush and fun of the thing finished ; and now they found themselves with the burden of its earnest on their backs, Li Ku's nose now a rotten apple, the Prince in considerable distress for breath, trickling blue blood under the right eye, both fists of both all swollen and deformed. And now the consciousness fell heavily upon their young hearts that this was only the beginning, the grimness of the game yet to come ; nor was there any hope of rescue in that lonely place.

Li Ku Yu sent such a left-hander into the right side of the Prince's neck, that the Prince was driven to stand inactive several seconds, his back against the west wall, his mouth gaping, Li Ku, meantime, stooping before him in a species of crouch, just able to get out the gasp : " You done now ? "

At this question, an attempt at laughter distorted the Prince's lips an instant, as he lifted his foot and kicked the Chinese fiercely on the shin.

Whereupon Li Ku Yu lost temper and form ; and from that second the battle degenerated wretchedly into a horror of random rancours.

Like a cat Li Ku Yu was in the air with a cry, abandoning now the restraints of the art taught him by " Spider," and backsliding to the simple instincts of nature.

He got all his ten claws riveted on the Prince's neck, and pressed ; but at the same time the Prince contrived to get the pigtail round Li Ku's throat, and pulled : a sound like a creaking proceeding out of both their crowded throats ; and their faces went sombre, as under the shade of the cloud of death.

And when presently the pigtail came away from the

other's head, the Prince realised that it was an ill case now with him. The face before him had grown bony somehow, ugly to indelicacy in the nakedness of its lust ; no chance of compassion there.

But the outstanding fact of the battle to a looker-on would have been this—that in every extremity the young Prince did not fail to find a way out, contriving every time to skip nimbly out of his fix, his knee in this case saving him, he kicking up with it so lucky a blow, that Li Ku Yu fell away convulsed, and fled, looking backward, as he fled, with an expression of fright in his eyes.

The Prince stumbled after, lashing feebly at him with the pigtail, laughing with distorted lips—feeble, but still dominant ; and when Li Ku, flying east, came to the altar-step, he was too far gone to lift his foot enough, and, stumbling, tumbled in a lump. The Prince lashed him once with the pigtail, gasping at him : “ Had enough ? ”

There was no answer ; and he dropped back to the west wall, upon which he propped his back, thankful enough for the respite and space to draw his breath in, wondering if it was ended, or when it would end, or if no rescue would spring up out of those grassy graves to deliver two poor lads entangled there in the trap of their natures and fate.

And during some moments only the rasping drone of the two throats broke the stillness, and the prattle of a wren tripping on the west window-sill, and distant bleating of sheep feeding in the field. Till, all at once, with a little cry of laughter Li Ku Yu was up from the step to dash himself desperately afresh upon the adversary.

After three blows only, they closed to a wrestle, the Oriental hugging in a strangling grasp of his right arm, while his left fingers got into the Prince's shirt-collar, which he first dragged to rags, and then the vest. Meantime, though, he was being severely kicked and beaten, and suddenly experienced a cuff so deep in the left ear, as set his cranium breaking out into cricket-song.

Again he fell away ; again in an impulse of panic he

ran ; and again the Prince followed, laughing. Past the step they pelted, on to the east wall, where Li Ku made a leap to catch the sill of the chancel-window, as if to escape that way—though the window was obviously far too narrow for a body to pass through. His first try failed, but by his second he contrived to catch the sill ; and there hung stretched. Instantly, though, the Prince was dragging at a leg, gasping again : “ Had enough now ? ”, and when Li Ku Yu kicked, the Prince grasped at him and dragged him down.

Li Ku Yu dropped. . . .

But the instant he dropped, he again let slip his rollock cry of fight, and attacked with such a cat-o'-mountain franticness, that in the tempest of it the Prince had to retreat rapidly, panting as if to die ; and, flying backward, his face to the foe, he stumbled on coming to the step, and slapped down flat. Li Ku Yu fell over him.

An Oriental grotesque in bronze now glared through that stare of the Orient as it rode its overthrown foe. The Chinese rubbed his cheek on the Prince's, and kissed him, even as he banged upon the battered face, panting, “ You done now ? ” ; and he dragged off the last of the rags from the already naked breast, gasping : “ Were you *wise* to strike Li Ku Yu ? ” ; and he grabbed a handful of grass and bracken to cram into the other's throat, panting, as he crammed it : “ You done now ? ” ; and he spat his foam over the other's face, and licked the other's lips, and bit beastially with his teeth, and knocked at the gates of the dead under the grave-slab with the prostrate skull, asking : “ Were you *wise* to strike Li ? ”

But his undoing was in the twinkling of an eye. . . .

The Prince, with a twist of the wrist, swift as the swift's wing, clapped a sprig of nettle that he had grasped upon those eyeballs over him, and, in the instant of Li Ku Yu's confusion, was free.

He had fallen with one of his heels on the upper level of the step ; he put up the other on it ; and, winning

himself swiftly footward, came up with his face between Li Ku Yu's legs, who clapped his legs together, but too late.

And as Li Ku Yu himself was in the act of scrambling upright, he staggered down again upon his palms—the pigtail having been twisted with a dazzling alacrity round and round his ankles.

Long before, it had dropped just there, and the Prince, on rising, had spied it. A little push behind sent the entangled Chinaman flat. The Prince sprang at him, and rapidly had the pigtail tied tight.

"Had enough?" he panted, as he himself dropped upon the platform.

"*Oh!!*"—as he dropped, a little cry was at the door yonder to the west, a young lady's face there. . . . The Prince rose on his elbow, blushing. . . .

A minute's use of her eyes, and she uttered a sound of compunction, then came with decision to undo the pigtail, glancing daggers at the Prince.

Li Ku Yu, loosed, got up to stagger away against the north wall: and the three looked at one another.

"Oh, how could you!"—to the Prince.

The Prince glanced up to shake at her his abandoned brow, murmuring: "Not my fault".

At this point Li Ku Yu staggered from that wall to the opposite where his slippers and things were, gathered them, leant aside to whisper the Prince, "Not finished, Prince," then bowed, *o'jiji*, to the girl, and staggered away out, his things on his arm.

"But where is he going?" the girl asked: "he can hardly walk".

"He doesn't live far", the Prince mourned despondently.

"And you?"

"I am at the College".

"College? . . . Well, it is your own fault if I took you for a plough-boy".

"It wasn't my fault. I heard a cry of 'help!', and it

was he waiting to attack me. I couldn't give in—forgive me for offending your eyes——”

She seemed to him an angel sent to rescue him and Li Ku Yu.

“I will, then”, she said, “since that was how it was”.

At which sympathy the Prince covered his eyes and began to cry—“swing-of-the-pendulum” to softness after the grimness and tension of the fight.

“Never mind”, she said to him, “it's over now; and you did get him nicely tied up in the end, didn't you?”

Now her lips split in a smile, and he, peeping between his fingers, felt that he had never seen anything so neat and nice, like fine white linens.

“Well, better come with me”, she said, “let's see what can be done”; and he followed her, picking up jacket and cap—through bracken—over a slab-stile—through fifteen yards of scrub to a marshy spot with rocks to step on, and so to the river-brink.

There is a flat spot just there—a break in the lines of cliff thick with timber that rise on both sides of the Wye; and there in the little bay a boat lay, made fast to a bunch of bulrushes.

“It is well that I got out”, she said over her shoulder: “something seemed to say to me: ‘have a look at that little church’—and I went. Otherwise, how would you have got back to the College—and what *will* they say to you?”

“I'm afraid poor Dr. Deighton will be wishing himself dead”, he said half to himself: “but not his fault, not anyone's”.

She thought that that would be excessive of Dr. Deighton to wish himself *dead*—for the thought did not happen to crop up in her mind that this might possibly be the Prince: else she might have been saved the pangs of her fate.

When he had sat opposite her, she pulled in the rope, and the tide, just turning, bore them slowly up-stream, while she worked away at wiping his wounds with her wetted

handkerchief, the quick female-organs of her fancy immediately conceiving him a warrior-knight of old, victorious, though sore wounded.

He, meantime, kept his eyes on her face. "How is it I never saw you before? belong to Brockweir?"

"Nottingham!—spending three weeks with a school-friend".

"Brockweir school?"

"No, we're Cheltenham College girls".

"Like Brockweir?"

"Anywhere near the sea I love. It is in me, I suppose".

"How's that?"

"A sea-faring lot. One of my grandfathers was a Chief Coastguardsman, the other a mercantile-marine captain; and *his* grandfather—if you can conceive a grandfather's grandfather—fought at Trafalgar. Irish Paddies. And my father's a Sergeant-Major of Marines, not to mention a cousin who's a naval Boy-Telegraphist—so you see".

His eyes dwelt on her pointed soft face, smooth-rounded like good sculpture, her pointed hat of black velvet half hiding her globe of gold hair, her ring not costly, her brooch cheap. But with those eyes she had no need of sapphires, eyes that shrank and reproached with a shy and roguish guile. And she soothed his wounds with touches soft as fondness itself. He wished that a compelling impulse would push her to put her lips on them, like a young mother, and make them well.

"Better now?"

"Skull all cracked to atoms apparently", he answered: "but that's excellent of you—oh, thanks. Pansy-petal fingers. You—should tell your name".

"Bayley".

"That's the unchristian one".

"Eulalia, then".

"Aged sixteen and seven months", he said.

"Just! You can hit other things beside eyes, can't you? And *yours*?"

"Mine's—Edward Reeks".

"Like the Prince ! . . . Oh, I should so like to see him before I go, to say that I have ! Tell me—do you see him every day ?"

"Why, yes".

"They say that he's not at all like ordinary princes—lots of brains and character. Is that so ? And handsome——"

"Then, *I* am : for they say I am like him—or was. But I think I could procure you a sight of him—let me see—next Saturday, if you meet me in there by the little church. How would that do ?"

His heart sank guiltily, asking it, his voice lowered : for the standard of conduct was high at home ; and he had been brought up with two facts constantly hammered into his skull : that his father had married a subject ; and that his father's son never, never must, since human nature could not stand it twice.

He knew that his mother, if there to hear that rendezvous, would have been furious. Yet he could not help saying "Well ?" when the girl turned her face toward the cliffs.

"It is getting cold for boating", Eulalia said, with her begging eyes.

"Still—could you not ?"

Maiden meditation.

"I'll see if I can possibly see my way".

"Now, decent of you !"

The turrets of the College appeared through trees beyond a bend.

CHAPTER II

OYONE

Three days after the battle Li Ku Yu departed : for, though the Prince declined to tell how he had got his injuries, the whole thing had been anxiously proved to the bottom. Indeed, Li Ku's absence from the College, and his blotched body, told their own story. There had followed a solemn interview between Dr. Deighton and him up at the Chinese mansion on the hill : which was the end of the spot of yellow at Brockweir.

This was no inconvenience to Li Ku Yu, who had taken care to restrain his craving for revenge until his father had summoned him home ; but the fact of expulsion rankled. He sent by Chinnery one bitter line of writing to the Prince : " You will need to wake up early in the mornings ". Then he went.

But it was not until after Christmas that he started for the East. Meantime, he lived at the back of the Regent's Park house in an outhouse called the Garden House—a square structure with Norman windows and three steps in a jungle of shrubbery, all shut in by a tall wall.

Here he insolently smiled and toiled : and during those months passed through a cruel ordeal of self-torture. The self-discipline of Spartans, of Samurai, was child's play to his then : no fire throughout that hard winter, day after day neither food nor sleep.

When he deigned to eat, his teeth would grind a little raw rice, raw gristle, or grass ; when he slept it was out on the snow in the blue cotton dress of peasants.

All which did not please his own Oyone, the

Irish-Japanese. "But you must soon be dead!" she would lament.

"If I let you stay with me, Oyone", answered Li Ku Yu, "you must not be a Tu Mu, who constantly spoke at the wrong moment".

On which she tossed her body away—a body entangled in three gold-spotted tree-snakes, seeming as boneless as the snakes; then lay silent on her face, light-looking and lithe as a withe, her eyes dwelling on him where he squatted on the floor, reading Chesney's "Military Prussia".

Anon she shivered at a whistling of wintry winds without; and anon he absently poked his finger at her hair, stuck thick with jewelled *kanzachis*. Clearly, her presence pleased him in some way. In fact, Chinnery's statements about her were hardly an exaggeration, for she was of a strange and ravishing charm.

The gloaming deepened to bleak evening, until the gold god Fo only dimly glimmered on his chair of jade; and presently a head peeped in between the door-hangings, making Oyone wriggle quickly footward from Li Ku—under the head-dress (wide to the shoulders!) being a little woman shimmering in rich silks on Manchu shoe-heels inches high—Li Ku's guardian, an exile of the Yehonala clan, named A-lu-te; and she murmured unconcernedly in Mandarin Manchu: "It is the hour of the cock; shun the passions, you children"—and vanished.

"No fear of passions", thought the frozen Oyone with a pout. And she put her face sideward with a coaxing smile, saying: "Shall I light the lanterns? You strain the sense of sight".

"To train and test it".

"But why will you kill yourself?"

Li Ku Yu now put down the book, to sit chin up, smiling his smile of triumph, like a yellow rock that sublimely smiles—clean-cut and clear, sleek and keen—hairless but for the clean clear snake of his pigtail, coarsely yellow, looking a 'cute blade, made for business with men. "Kill?"

Tra-lar ! It is to keep myself and all us yellow folk alive that I am bathed with the rain, and combed with the wind. Or are you not sure that you are doomed, unless a deliverer comes for you ? ”

“ Yes, I have always thought this ”, replied Oyone, springing upward like a spring to sit by him : “ though I have never understood why the Fan-quei ” (foreign devils) “ cannot let us be ”.

“ Can’t help ! Nature likes all-of-one-kind !—as the strongest weed in a field either kills or marries the rest. So, in time, one universal world-race—mixed—ruby-coloured—prettier and better than any at present. But before that, we to eat the flesh of half the whites—or they ours. Be glad if I lie on brambles and eat bitterness ”—his speech clean-cut like his skull : short, choppy : no word wasted.

“ But you—so young——” she muttered.

“ *Cluck !* the foolishness of people. They think that Li Hung Chang or Gladstone at seventy can be as wise as a child of sixteen. No science. But, even so, can they not guess that when an animal’s knee has stiffened, arteries hardened, nobler stuff of heart and liver become tough with spread of fibrous tissue, the brain cannot remain intact from all that havoc ? Fact is, his brain is in the very same state as his hair, his insight as his sight. Only the young of use, Oyone ”.

“ I know that, too ”, said Oyone, “ and I intend when I am thirty to commit suicide. And, because it is so therefore the young should love, for they can spend their time in nothing that is so good as love ”.

“ *Cluck !* so you pretend to think : but love not nearly so good as a hero’s self-satisfaction. Yet I love you, Oyone : quick-witted—a squirrel ! and though you squint—for your eft eye is wider——”

Quick like quicksilver she caught his arm, twisting to stare into his eyes with a wily smile. “ Do you not like them like that ? ”

"Maybe : for Nature has turned your very defects into traps to kidnap ; still——"

"Oh, I am not vain", muttered Oyone, kissing one of her snakes ; "I know that I am not too ugly : but all we Japanese with barbarian fathers have beauty".

"Who are barbarian ? Your mother ! A barbarian nation ? one that thinks the thoughts of dead men. A civilised ? one that thinks the thoughts of men not born. Russia, England, Spain, yes—more or less barbarian for the moment : not France, Germany much ; all infected with Christianity ; but none half so barbarian as China. China ? land of pundits, bandits, salt-smugglers, pirates, who all spend their pious lives in making quotations from dead apes. Now, a Statesman can do much with a bandit ; but a pundit ? *Cluck !* send him down to the Halls of Hades to muse and quote beside the Nine Springs. Which is how I intend to begin in China—decapitations !—one-two-three. Still, the difference in eyes is a defect, Oyone ; so, if I love you——"

"Kiss the little one—you may—see if that will open it wide !"—she hissed it leaning over his knees, pouring into his nose a steam of aromas.

But he remained cold as a Buddha of stone. "You won't catch me kissing it, Oyone. Listen : I wish to speak with you seriously before I leave next week. I mean to make you some day my consort——"

She started ! Then, with lowered lids : "I do not hope for that".

"But I will"—his lids disdainfully lowered—"on one condition".

"Yes—— ?"

"I must know that you hate your father's people, love your mother's".

It was too dark in there now for her to see the cunning meaning in Li Ku Yu's eyes ; and she answered : "But you know already that my mother, who was wronged by my father, brought me up to abhor Fan-queis. If

abhorring could slaughter, all whites would die in one night ! ”

Li Ku Yu hit her shoulder and laughed. “ Glad of that, Oyone, so that during the next few years I may know that I have one like you in Europe : for you have the salt and qualities. You have taken it into your head to be very soft and love-sick to Li Ku Yu : but half of this ? due to a luxury in your nature like the concubine Ti Chi’s on her Lake of Wine ; the other half ? to a crafty pretence, so as to get me to entangle myself with a gutter-sparrow like you—for you are deep-dyed in sin, but I deeper still, I think, and can read you. So throw all that away, enter seriously into business with me—my comrade ! For which—not for your squinting eyes—you shall be my Fu Jen (legal wife) some day ”.

She moved her shoulder to touch his now ; her head hung dumbly.

“ And don’t think ”, he continued, “ that it will be marrying some common Mandarin’s lamb ! Truth is, I feel a great force in me, Oyone—since I was so high !—don’t tell anyone. Something spurs me to burst out into the world and tumble with whirlwinds and earthquakes for fun ; and a vigour tingles within my fingers that could fly this world like a kite—lightly ! It is so—somehow ! some god gallops in me. This to make you zealous. You may become like the Empress Wu, managing a continent with a strong hand, a masculine strategy, riding at my right hand the champing chargers of majesty. For you see that China and Japan are crying aloud for a master to ride them ”.

She rubbed her cheek on his blue-cotton shoulder, her eyes wide in silent excitement. She breathed : “ What kind of thing will I have to do ? ”

“ You shall be my intelligence-officer, spy ! perhaps financial agent, or assassin——”

“ In Europe . . . ”

“ Will you not do this blindly ? ”

"Yes, then".

"Do not shrink from assassination for your country's good—Brutus, the *Soshi* of Japan, Corday!—for, a man's life? *tra-lar!* an Autumn leaf. The Prince of Wales, for instance—suppose some day I cable you: 'track, destroy X.'?"

Some mutter, but no answer, came from her. A snake hissed soft like a kettle in the stillness. He looked down upon her bowed head in the darkness.

"Speak, Oyone".

"Yes, then", she muttered in low throat-tones, "for my soul is on yours, Li Ku, like one clinging to a reef in the middle of the sea. Only—let one kiss you".

"Kiss me, Oyone, if that comforts you", he said; and within one tick she was fitted to him like all the eight arms of the octopus enlacing him—till he called out with an absurd matter-of-factness: "*Enough!*"

"Now, don't spoil it", she muttered with hurried reproach in the thick of her business.

"Enough, enough", grumbled the other, thrusting her roughly off; and she sat again by him, ruffled and robbed, her heart throbbing in her, both silent; till she muttered: "But why the Prince of Wales? Do you hate him for what has happened?"

"Hate? *Love!* And hate, too, for not thinking me more the Prince of Wales than himself. Destined to be a leader! cannot be still—restless! Three eyes! Sees that a wrestle between East and West is ordained—the sooner the better! since the progress of Europe the quicker at present. It should have been two hundred years ago! Before another ten, though".

"And if the hairy devils beat?" muttered Oyone, holding a joss-stick to her cigarette-end to incense more an air already smothered with sandal-wood smoke.

"Yes", answered Li Ku, "if the struggle is on open ground! But the weakness of the white mind? its gullibility! The gift of the yellow? its guile. *Cluck!* Asia would

not fight Europe square, as things are. First ruin Europe—devastate, exhaust—then overrun, garrotte—chicken and dog”.

“How first ruin?” asked Oyone, languidly smoking, her back relaxed, her throat thrown back.

“You never thought of the ways in which China could drive Europe into war?” asked Li Ku.

“How?”

“Do not repeat to A-lu-te things you hear me say!”

“As if I would”.

“Old trick of China!—to play off one white against another: only she never had the craft and grasp to carry it out grand-style. But suppose China were to pretend to grant a protectorate to Germany, a province-lease? hear the British lion roar! Or suppose that at a moment of Anglo-German strain Japan discovered that she no longer wanted all her navy—weightier now than the United States’—and offered to sell cheap, on trust, to Germany? Can you see Germany turn from that dish of birds’-nest soup? Germany couldn’t. Then just as the purchased ships pretended to leave the East for Germany, let the secret of the deal leak out sweet as mice-in-honey: and before the Jap ships were off Shanghai, British battleships would be battering the Baltic littoral.”

“*Banzai!*” broke from Oyone’s lips, as she slapped her sleeve, adding languishingly: “Oh, Li, I like you, a gay devil lives in you”.

“And *he* is the same, I think, this Ta-A-Ko (Prince of Wales)”, said Li Ku, “so, at a time of European war, if I thought his wits might shorten the war, I should wish him down by the Yellow Springs”.

“But to reach a prince—that is not so easy”, breathed Oyone, staring.

“I’ll tell you how”, answered Li Ku with a glance of guile: “Prince has a great friendship with Richard Chinnery. Now, Chinnery?—the greatest of wits!—creative!—the Prince will probably keep near him. But

Chinnery? cranky ship!—a chest-weakness affects his character—and I once dropped a letter of yours, to show him that you are not unconquerable. You, Oyone, become Chinnery's lover”.

At this she shrank, very wounded, sighing: “Ah, how slightly you prize me. . . .”

“Poh—nothing”, said Li Ku; “you shall still be my Fu Jen. Become Chinnery's lover politically. And learn a little science from now, enough to spy into his inventions, and keep me posted”.

She threw up her eyes to the roof: for she was only nineteen.

Later on she became—older: but the brutality of Li Ku Yu struck her dumb now. A fugitive eunuch looked in to mutter: “Oyone is called for”, but she did not move, took up her *koto*, and began to finger its strings, rolling low in her throat the notes of a tune most lugubriously moody, gloomier than the gloom that now brooded in the room, where only little glimmers and glammers were any longer seen, gleaming green or crimson from screen, or lacquer, or god. Outside sounds of wintry winds mouthed round the house; and she was conscious of the Chinese rocking himself, as if to spread demon-wings and fly, rocking like the snakes which reared and rocked at the song, he hugging himself as the gale raged, and Oyone's throat gave out its strange melodious moaning.

CHAPTER III

THE COUP D'ETAT

The carriages that rolled to the Buckingham Palace ball about a year later rolled through snow, and snow was falling when, some minutes after Her Majesty had danced the square-dance, a lady came to breathe near her ear : " I understand, Ma'am, that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has arrived, and craves to know if Your Majesty will graciously grant him a ten-minutes' interview where he waits alone in the Picture Gallery ".

The Queen's heart went a beat quicker. " I will do so ", she gave answer with that gracious smile which distinguished her ; and her steps set out slow but grew hurried.

The Prince in a splashed mackintosh, pilot-cap in hand, half knelt, and then felt her heart on his.

" So here you are ! "

" Here I am, Mother : straight from Paddington with Manning and Sir Martin Raine ".

" I had my eyes on my watch ! "

" Aye, I thought I'd see if you'd see me straight away ".

" Have you succeeded ? "

" That's all right ".

" So this is the end of Brockweir ? "

" So it seems ".

" Did I do well to send you to Brockweir ? "

He lowered his lids to say : " You are always my lucky star, Mother ".

" Sit here : I give you ten minutes, and two more for

love—Oh ! and I have won about Dartmouth ! ”—she clapped her finger-tips—“ you’re to travel first ”.

“ You always win, Mother, when I’m the stake ”.

“ Haven’t I made you a credit to your country ? Haven’t I ? Tell me ”.

“ Well, I think so, though I’m something of a duffer in some things ”.

“ But you never say ‘ heavy as lead ’, lead being rather light ? you know where your pancreas is, and some little something of the Divinity of the universe you live in ? ”

“ Aye, that’s all to the good ”.

“ And you have been good, too. . . . *Have* you been ? ”

The Prince rushed red as a rose. “ Well, I hope so ”.

A little pause now—a rising of alarm in Her Majesty’s eyes. She said : “ Edward the Red Prince ”.

“ Ha, ha. Really, Mother——”

“ *A girl ?* ”

Now he looked her straight, saying : “ I may have met a girl, Mother ”.

Her eyes shut, she moving her face intolerantly, making a little lip-sound of vexation. The thing that she feared had come upon her. And there was silence.

Then : “ Oh, well, Teddy, it won’t do ”.

“ Mother, I hope you are not cross. Possibly, if you knew the lady——”

“ *I ? Milk-maid ? Frizzy hair ?* ”

“ Oh, Mother, we have only a few minutes, and here we are out of step——”

“ But stay—is it to be supposed that you are what is called ‘ in love ’ ? ”

“ I do seem to think of one——”

“ Now, how annoying. And the lady knows this ? and who you are ? ”

“ She doesn’t happen to know who I am. I did tell her once that there were immense obstacles to our uni——”

"Union forsooth, Your Royal Highness!"—Her Majesty's eyes flashing like that Star of South Africa which bathed her brow in its blaze—"pray select your words to me with greater circumspection! *There* is the Union that concerns you"—she pointed to that huge picture of the first sitting of the Union Convention at Cape Town—"for your so 'democratic' colonies want their 'Royalty' royal, let me tell you, and Kings are not masters of themselves, but servants of the world. I am astonished that you venture to say such things to me!"

"Mother, I attend to what you say".

"But stay", said the Queen; "when you mentioned to the lady that there were immense obstacles—what did the lady say?"

"She said that as I conquered Li Ku, so I should conquer the obstacles".

The Queen smiled a little now, saying: "I see! Poor little thing, I'll think of it, and see what can be done to let her down gently. But you should have told her plainly, Teddy. Li Ku was yellow, the obstacles blue.—When, by the way, did all this rapture happen?"

"Year ago. We met just after I had fought Li Ku; then—twice; then—thrice".

The Queen thought that an odd way of putting it—twice, then thrice: why not 'five times'? But she only said: "And, Teddy, you never told me".

"Mother, I longed to. But I knew there would be a frown, and I thought that if I could first manage somehow to get you to see her—then you might—I can't quite explain—there are natural aristocrats, as you know—cellularly select—essentially precious somehow—strangely rare—gentle—"

This praise afresh alarmed Her Majesty. Her next words were: "And the lady lives—where?"

Now the Prince's eyes sprang into wide-awakeness. "Had I better tell, Mother?"

"Well!—I think so".

"Scott, Mother, I don't want to have the poor girl appalled and thundered upon".

"Well!—But if I command?"

"Your Majesty is seventy times seven my Queen——"

"And you my little king of kings. Tell".

"Teddy" moaned. "She lives at Nottingham".

"And her name?"

"Eulalia".

"Eulalia what?"

"She told me Bayley".

"Good old Teddy—hero of all my novels", the Queen fondly said, hardly noticing the queerness of that "she told me". "And don't think", she added, "that I am going to thunder upon her. We'll see how things go: and it is just as well that I should have her name and place. But how could she possibly like you the day you fought Li Ku? You must have been so Chineaten, Manchewed, and Sky-Blued! And, by the way, talking of Li Ku Yu, do you know what he now is? I have a letter from Sir John Pilkinton at Peking".

"What is Li Ku, Mother?"

"A Sub-Chancellor of the Grand Secretariat. Now, think what that means—that in about a year he has romped through Pundit 'learning', such as it is—has, in fact, got an Optimus in the Peking Chin Shih exam. (Doctor's Degree)—a stiff physical ordeal, apart from the cram. So you see".

"Aye, he will do something or other", said the Prince—"says I must get up early, and I mean to. Perhaps we haven't seen the last of each other, Mr. Chin-chin and I".

This was to come true only four months later when the Prince got a sight of Li Ku Yu going robed in a green (official) chair through the East Gate Glorious of the Forbidden City—for before his Investiture, or his actual cadetship, "Teddy" had eaten with chop-sticks, had learned buck-jumping and stock-whip cracking in the

Australian Bush, had collected uniform-buttons of Cossacks and Redifs, had bagged big game in Somaliland, and been half drowned in a flood of the Great Fish River.

By the time he was leaving Dartmouth, Li Ku Yu was carrying out a bloody reform in the administration of the Yu Chuan Pu (Post-Office) ; and when the Prince had been six months on the *St. Vincent*, Li Ku was a Chargé d'Affaires, making frequent trips between Peking and Tokio.

This man never lost an hour. Steadily, like a rat darkly gnawing a hole through the night-watches, he was gnawing at the old condition of the world, with the plan of a new world ready in his head : and as at an electric shock Asia thrilled at the presence of his vigour.

His first high attempt was a secret treaty, frankly framed against the white races, between the Dragon-flag and the Rising Sun.

But in this he failed. The Anglo-Japanese alliance, though very thin-worn, still existed ; and in the eyes of the Japanese Chancellery that very young diplomat, Li Ku Yu, had rather the character of a dreamer. Now, though every great man may be a dreamer, not every dreamer is a great man ; and to distinguish between the two sorts of dream is not always easy. But he smiled at all contradiction with his ordinary patience, for no being ever had so unshakeable a faith in his innate kingship, trickiness, and luck.

He was always sure, too, of his Dowager. Tea-room gossip in the Capital persistently said that she was his *bonne amie* ; but, then, Li Ku Yu was little of a lover, though he certainly provoked women by his very aloofness, as the sparrow attracts the cat.

Anyway, Lung Lü from the first saw in him her master ; and it is probable that from the first she and he had doomed her son, the young Emperor, to death.

Lung Lü was then about thirty-five, a woman of strong

mind, though much under the influence of eunuchs, and not less notorious for her orgies in the dark seclusion of her palaces than the Empresses Wu and Tzu Hsi.

Her powers were again now fairly absolute, for though the Throne had been utterly overthrown by the Constitution of a few years before, the pendulum as usual had swung anew, and the Heavenly Empire was again governed by the "Decrees" and "Edicts" of a woman's moods.

Now, the Emperor, who was sixteen, and nearly ready to take the reins, detested his mother and Li Ku Yu.

He knew well that they had sentenced him to death, if not by drug or dirk, then by the life of riot to which they pushed him, a hated life from which his frail nature was helpless to escape : for they two took care that each of the eunuchs, and even his tutors, should be his teachers in evil.

Besides, the young Emperor, who had some spirit, felt himself a fly in the presence of Li's smile, of Li's bulk of skull, whose lines bulged largely as at the horse-power of some engine pumping within : and in his head on his bed at night he meant no good to Li Ku Yu.

And there were many on his side to plot with him—Censors, Grand Councillors, the Manchu Clansmen, who all abhorred the scholar from Brockweir, the pigtail with opinions more hairy-devil than the hairy devils'.

Accordingly, upon the failure of Li Ku Yu's mission to the Court of Japan, his assassination was determined upon as soon as he should return ; and, meantime, Memorial after Memorial was presented to the Throne, urging his cashiering and impeachment before the Board of Punishments.

But he did not return—to Peking. Before he left Tokio, a rebellion had broken out, once more, among "the Turbans" (Turkestan Mohammedans) ; and an Edict from the Throne—which Li Ku Yu wrote—gave him the

Governship of Shensi, with the command to suppress the rebellion—for he danced from office to office like dancers dashing through “ the daisy-chain ”, changing hands in an entanglement of arms, with laughter ; and, having some instinct of the intrigue against him in the Imperial City, he passed straight on to his Yamên at Sianfu.

There he raised some militia ; and with 17,000 raw levies, and one brigade from the Northern Army, started out westward—without the least experience in the handling of masses of troops.

This business occupied him fourteen months.

He had to sit down before garrisoned towns with disgraceful guns and ragged brigades ; once he had to grow the millet that gave porridge to his troops ; and, meantime, his discipline was so grim and rigid, that very many of his men perished on the way.

During all which, in the Throne-Hall of Exalted Peace, the young Emperor had begun to govern ; Lung Lü had retired with her eunuchs and ladies to her lake-picnics, stage-plays and other delights at her I-Ho-Yüan or Summer Palace (five miles out) ; and at once by a Vermilion Rescript the Emperor dismissed Li Ku Yu, “ permitting him to commit suicide ”, and despatching another General to take his place.

The body-guard of “ Old Style ” soldiers, carrying great two-handed swords, who surrounded this General, were pounced upon by the rank and file of Li Ku Yu’s soldiers, who adored him, and were killed by the “ slicing ” process, then dismembered. The heads of the General and of the Commissioner who had come to inspect Li Ku Yu’s suicide, were carried for days on the markers’ standard-staffs of two rear-guard companies.

Thus Li Ku Yu crossed the Rubicon, and broke with the Throne of his country.

By this time his military advance had grown more rapid—it gradually grew rapid to a ravaging avalanche. He scourged Turkestan as far as Kashgar of man, cattle and

plant. Never did regiments leave in their rear so complete a desert. In captured cities his troops ran riot like terriers let loose on rats ; they cracked the skulls of the young upon rocks ; they hacked off the bosoms of mothers before they stabbed them ; for intervals of three hundred miles not a thing was left alive where their withering fire had run.

It was on his return march from Kashgar that he despatched couriers to make the vast order of 125,000 cinematographs through the agency of a German firm at Shanghai.

As his victorious host approached the Capital, crackers spattered in every town, and the Dowager despatched him a poem of congratulation, a Dragon-robe, four rolls of "auspicious" silk, twenty pounds of swallow-nests, and a tablet bearing the inscription : "Backbone of the State".

Now, on the Emperor's seventeenth birthday, his mother had summoned before her the most beautiful of the daughters of noble Manchu families, from whom to select a score of ladies for her son's harem ; and among those selected had been a certain Nihulu, a half-sister of Li Ku Yu—Li's own mother being a Chinese woman, though his father was Manchu. And this Nihulu contrived to send him out a message when he was still ninety miles from Peking, saying that his death was a settled thing, if he once entered the city.

The next morning at the Hour of the Hare (six) Li Ku Yu entered the city by the Shih Che (N.W.) Gate—apparently alone—in peasant's dress : he had come flying through the night, as the vulture stoops : and he proceeded southward toward the Imperial City.

At that early hour the Supernal Countenance was granting audience to the Grand Councillors, Princes, and Ministers of the Presence in the Pavilion of Ceremonial Phoenixes in the Lake Palace ; and there they were kneeling, looking pigmy in a room most gloomily grand, grouped

round the Dragon Throne, on which sat the Glorious One, his face to the south.

Li Ku Yu was still felt to be at a safe distance away, and they were discussing the disposing of the troops at their command in the Capital, when suddenly Li Ku Yu, two pistols in his hands, was among them like the typhoon's swoop—darted in howling, astounding the heart, a sort of laugh distorting his bawling mouth, as he howled : “ I am here to save Your Majesty from your enemies ! ” in shouting which he half-knelt—without kow-towing, and instantly was up again.

Now, one may not enter unsummoned, nor stand up. So, pallid as death, the boy-Emperor sprang to his feet, frantically pointing, screaming out : “ Why, that man has designs upon my life ! You see him there, that man ? My Guards ! My Guards ! ”

In flocked a mob of guards and eunuchs ; but at the same time revolvers were crackling outside ; and almost at once a half company of infantry in civilian garb darted into the hall.

A few shots were exchanged, a few corpses dropped, while Li Ku Yu, grasping the Emperor, held him behind his body, as if to protect him : and then Guards, Ministers, eunuchs, fled pell-mell. But only to be everywhere captured outside by the battalion in mufti which now surrounded the Imperial and Forbidden Cities. They were Li Ku Yu's veterans.

At the same time Lung Lū was reclining on the lofty deck of a large barge-of-state carved with dragons and phoenixes, coming along the canal that leads from Summer Palace to Imperial City : for she was duly in the secret of the *coup d'état* ; and she issued an Edict that day in her son's name :—“ ill-health had moved him to implore his Most Holy Mother to resume the onerous duties of a ruler for him ”.

Four months later the poor boy robed himself in the Ceremonial Robes of Long-life, turned his face to the

south, mounted the Dragon, and was carried rotten to the stars.

He had been put into semi-imprisonment in the South-lake Palace, surrounded by a foul crew of eunuchs and scoundrels, and died of many things.

CHAPTER IV

AUSTRALIAN GOLD

Li Ku Yu, for his part, put on the Double-eyed Peacock's Feather, with a Marquisate of the First Rank, and other honours ; and his government began.

Those of his enemies who had been captured were set free unpunished ; those who had fled in all directions one by one crept back, and, to their utter astonishment, were left unpunished—Li Ku Yu too big and busy to think of punishing them.

It is true that under his rule very many fell ; but the lingering death and dismemberment fell into disuse.

The men upon whom he meditated with a malign and silent eye were men of the harmless "scholar" sort, who thought that they knew a lot, but knew nothing—the official who chanced to quote from Confucius, or Mencius, or Jesus, or Buddha, from the Philosopher Chu or Chou, from Wang Hou's "Admonitions to his Sons", or "The Book of Ceremonies" of the Chou Dynasty : sooner or later that scholar's neck would skip off him beyond the city walls ; flashing was the falchion that slashed him ; crude and ruthless the dawn of the morning of his execution : that afternoon he quoted no more.

One other man, too, stood in more ticklish danger than ever—the millionaire, whose wealth, when his head fell, could be confiscated. From this source alone the Empress was said to have accumulated in two years eighty million taels in the vaults of the Palace of Celestial Purity, where she was accustomed to govern behind the curtain of yellow

silk that veiled her and her chief eunuch from the view of men.

Meantime, the cargo of ordered cinematographs had arrived—Li Ku Yu's first open act of war against the Christian races.

He himself was head-master of one of the schools which he instituted to teach the use of the machines ; he himself invented many of the "plots"—"plots" which had only one subject in infinite variety—a combat between white men and yellow, white women and yellow. And ever the yellow ended best man, disembowelling the colourless mouse, cutting out his or her tongue, bamboozling him in business, hacking out his heart, dancing on his carcass.

These films went out to districts of China and Japan where it was not even known that there were such things as white men ; and, the entrance fee being only a few *li*, they soon proved popular apostles of atrocity, became a dissipation, an all-day orgy of fun to hundreds of millions—for Li Ku Yu intimately knew the mood and instincts of his countryman.

When the Embassies protested against these shows, and against the multitude of new "Government Gazettes" which had begun to promulgate the same two gospels of greed and cruelty, Li Ku Yu constantly promised that "the evil should be checked" ; and advised them, meantime, to get permission to increase the strength of the Legation Guards !

About this time, when Count Markino, the Japanese Ambassador, said to him : "China must wake from four thousand years of sleep, Your Excellency", Li Ku Yu answered : "Different degrees of wakefulness ! China is awake ! You know what woke her".

"Tell me again", the Count said, smiling.

"It was the gonging of the English guns that captured the hill forts above Canton in 1841 : she stretched then. They thought themselves very big and godlike, capturing

the poor Tartar General—and they *were* “catching a tartar”, as they say. It was the gonging of the guns in 1857 when the French and British bombarded the south coast : she rubbed her eyes then. It was the gonging of the French guns which shelled the junks in the Min River in 1884, and of the guns of all the globe which bombarded Peking in 1900 : *tra-lar!* she stood up then, and looked around. Beware who touches her ! She is the Dragon and grand Anti-Christ : she stands awake”.

“Dreadful : if only the dragon had teeth in her gums”, said the other.

“Wait four months”, muttered Li Ku Yu.

Within those four months a beginning of Conscription on the Swiss model was made throughout China—a thing at which imagination fails.

It chanced that just then Germany and England were at loggerheads over an African tract ; also, just then, Persia was afresh in some trouble with Russia ; and some Russian squadrons at Resht were afresh ready to rush upon Teheran.

Now, since the Russo-Japanese war, the Persian fancy had rather been aburn at Japan’s Pan-Asian dream ; and several secret Persian (as well as Indian !) missions had gone in pious pilgrimage to Tokio and Peking.

So Persia, in her adversity, now turned to Japan : for England, with Germany on the nerves, had been flirting with Russia ever since the Convention of 1907, and afresh shirked meddling in the Persian mess. Persia turned to Japan, asking “How long ?” and Li Ku Yu flew to Tokio.

He had now more than all the weight and authority that he needed ; being recognised, even in Europe, as the very greatest force in the Orient.

He was “Adviser to the Throne” ; Viceroy of the Metropolitan Province.

He had dared to display apricot yellow in the hangings of his palanquin—a piece of cheek that caused him to be the idol of all Southern China.

Indeed, he had already assumed not a few of the airs of Royalty. To the amazement of men his name had "double-elevation" in documents. He pompously accompanied the Empress to the Eastern and Western Tombs, and dared to take a principal part in her sacrifices to river, or ancestor, or deity.

Moreover, the man pretended to magic, the rapt eye, Divine inspiration, and gift of miracles—a pretence made pretty easy for him to maintain by his intimacy with scientific things.

The Chinese believe that a Divine Saviour periodically arises for China : Li Ku Yu said : " Look into my brazen eyes, and see Him ".

On reaching Tokio, he now afresh proposed his " secret treaty " ; and he proposed, in addition, the following plot :

(1) That China should apply for a German loan, offering as security a protectorate of Shantung—this to electrify the Anglo-German atmosphere.

(2) That the Persian Megliss, meantime, should be urged to knuckle under to Russia ; and the Persian incident be used to bring about a (sham) *rapprochement* between Petersburg and Tokio.

(3) That Japan should now openly declare that she really no longer needed all her warships, now that she lay happy on the breast of the Bear.

And (4) that she should then secretly offer to sell to Germany—which should end in Anglo-German war.

But again the international juggler failed.

The Japs, indeed, now agreed to the secret treaty : but as regards the sweeter part of the intrigue, although they grinned with greedy interest, they shook sagacious heads. There were dangers—and no hurry. Some other time.

Li Ku Yu said : " Wise men think in the future, but fools live in it". He was very bitter in those days ; called the

Japanese by his bitterest word—"pedants"; and prepared to return to Peking.

He had still one rendezvous at the Foreign Office to keep, when one evening there came to him at the Embassy a cypher-cable from London—from Oyone, his Irish-Japanese—which said: "England gone wild to-night. Wonderful discovery gold Australia".

Li Ku Yu slapped his sleeve; and he cried: "*Tra-lar!* the tricky are even luckier than they are tricky".

He did not keep his rendezvous at the Foreign Office the next day—was "ailing"; and he ailed eight days, until the still-coming news of the new Eldorado had well saturated the Japanese head.

Gold in "back-of-beyond country" of North-Western Australia on No Man's Land! And no grudging Palmer's Diggings, apparently, or niggard Coolgardie, granting a wage to the digger's sweat, but, by all accounts, a Golconda, grounds rugged with nuggets, crags of gold, a coast of gold, with glancing sands!

Already within eight days of the first bursting out of the tidings, the world's eyes were turned that way, the world purchasing kit-bags for the journey. . . .

And Japan was padlocked out: her nationals had to write fifty words of English dictation, nicely spelled, before landing; captains were fined a hundred pounds for allowing a yellow man to escape to land.

"The fate of men and nations who delay!" said Li Ku Yu: "God, Marquis, will pardon every sin, except the unpardonable sin—the waste of time. *Cluck!* let a man be bold to-day, and to-night all the stars will clap their hands at him, calling to him: '*You are one of us!*' Really, I can't think of a reason why this field of riches is not in Japanese territory to-day".

The Chinaman now had the negotiation all his own way, as if he were dealing with dazed men: for the gold-find in Australia appears to have deeply digged at the greed of the little people of Nippon.

Among the high there were searchings of heart ; to delight the low the *Ju Ju* newspaper used the withering word "*cranes*" against the governors of its country.

Li Ku Yu flew back to China, chin up, smiling at the horizon—with pledges in his portfolio.

CHAPTER V

THUNDERY WEATHER

Two months later the *rapprochement* of Russia and Japan was a *fait accompli* ; and at the same time a new 18,000,000 Chinese loan was on the counters of the Deutsche-Asiatische Bank.

At this thing England, as it were, started ! The Banque de l'Indo-Chine had some under-part in the handling of the loan—but no British, no American, syndicate. And immediately a feeling of unease ran through our land.

It was as when wild-fowl in flight foreknow tempests from the puffy fuffs and the scent of thunder, and ten thousand outcries of fright are drowned within the row of rising winds.

Queer things seemed at work in the world, purposes, symptoms, like thieves' feet creaking in corridors at midnight, causing one to finger one's trigger. But as to their meaning, the scheme had been too subtly plotted for any mind to construct the pieces in the right sequence. The Prince of Wales wrote to the Queen from Queensferry : " Things seem singular to me, though I don't quite see what's what. Why should the Mikado wish to rush like this into Russia's arms ? "

It was on the morning of the 11th of October that a Peking telegram of Reuter's Special Service asserted that Germany had been offered the lease of the Shantung Peninsula as guarantee, on similar terms as Kiao-Chow, Port Arthur, Wei-hai-Wei, and Mirs Bay.

" Never ", said Manchester and the City.

" But yes ", said Potsdam through the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*.

So it was true? In an apparently inspired article *The Times* declared that if China was going to be partitioned in this fashion, then the Yangtse Valley was due to England. Upon which Russia, France, clapped hand to dirk against Germany, against England, against vague Fate. The heads of men commenced to dizzy in the chaos and uncertainty of contradictory interests, the whirl of forces working of themselves. A Polar Ocean was breaking up : but as to how the masses might range themselves in the crash the Creator alone knew.

The world had as yet no Government. Each nation had : but the planet was an Anarchy, a rabble of nations without arrangement or police, where each might murder, cheat, or steal at its own sweet will.

For fifty years Germany had conceived the idea that she needed "colonies" : she did not need any "*colonies*" : but the fact that she passionately imagined that she did was an urgent fact which a world-Government would have looked to.

Everywhere in her frenzy for "*colonies*" she had been blocked. Did she look toward Brazil?—there was the Monroe Doctrine. Did she dream of cotton-fields waving over Asia Minor?—eight million Magyars, chattering an Asiatic language, ranged themselves against her peaceful penetration of the Near East.

When she aimed at the Germanisation of Trieste and Fiume as "outlets," a handful of Croatian Slavs under Hungarian and Italian influence waxed angry. When she wished to win the goodwill of Galicia and the Austrian Poles by soft-soaping the Poles of Posen, Petersburg impeded the eastward eagle of Teutonic ideas and capital by going one better in benevolence to her own Poles.

Her "Drang Nach Osten" toward Constantinople, Syria, Mesopotamia, was blocked by the Balkan States. Her vision of an Austro-German Empire washed by the North-Sea was a vision still—the "Balance of Power" blocked her.

What, then, was the good of that mass of army toeing the globe with challenging eye, chin up, of that weight of navy big with child, whose expense kept the spectre of bankruptcy ever at her elbow ?

Whether her own fault or Fate's, it could not last ! She was poor for nothing ! Her red-hot energies raged like men fighting in a fire in a nightmare—and for nothing ! she was bewitched, she was stung with the tarantula, she danced frantically, and no locomotion, she swelled monstrously, and not with porridge, but with dropsy.

It could not last—she was too 'cute, and not wise enough, too strong, and not great enough.

In those very days of the Russo-Japanese *rapprochement*, of the loan, and of the question of Shantung, hot rancour was in her heart at the withdrawals of capital by Paris and London, large selling orders, and drop in securities. She was poor still !

But Shantung seemed luscious to her—a piece of luck to be seized ; and the Kaiser made a dinner-speech. He was a neurotic character, who ranted, and had Anglophobia—and the Heir-Apparent still more ! though our Queen had fixed upon his sister, the Princess Elizabeth, to be the wife of our “Teddy.” He was said to have some ability—was then a ship's-commander.

The German High Seas Fleet was thereupon recalled from Autumn Manœuvres on the Norway coast ; our First and Fourth Destroyer Flotillas were operating with specific orders about the Orkneys and North Sea ; submarines were on the watch at Lamlash : the First and Second Battle and Cruiser Squadrons were mobilised about Queensferry and Cromarty. There was a rumour that they were being cleared for action. Twice in five days there were meetings of the Cabinet. Bread had gone up a penny a quartern.

The French First Line of Defence was mobilising in Toulon Harbour ; three brigades of Zouaves from North Africa had landed at Marseilles.

In the midst of which world-turmoil, how perplexing the

news, flashed by a New York Herald correspondent, that the new Kotohito Ministry had promised the Diet enormous economies in the Naval Estimates—a drop of two hundred and fifty million yen (25,000,000 sterling) !

The Chancellor's speech had dwelt upon the cordial relations of Japan with all nations, upon her poverty, upon the immorality of the monstrous armaments of modern man . . . !

Did Japan, then, no longer need a navy ? Was the outlandish yellow ally of England failing her in the hour of need ?

Wire on wire ! like lightnings winking here, there, here, when the weather is weird, and peewits wheel and wail. . . .

But on the afternoon of the 22nd the Under-Secretary, Sir B. S. Gilbert, stated in the Commons that the situation was still not beyond the skill of diplomats : for, if Germany would but leave unfettered the land-taxes and Custom-dues of Shantung, which furnished part of the source of repayment of the last British loan, a *modus vivendi* might yet be discovered. And that night London went to bed with a quieter mind. Many gales had gathered, and had passed again.

But three terrible days of strain followed, in which Whitehall waited for a reply from Wilhelm-Strasse, and none arrived. . . .

And on the fourth day an intense interest took hold upon Englishmen at the rumour of a most singular meeting—at Königsberg—between the Tsar, the Kaiser, their two Foreign Ministers, and Mons. Cambertin of the Quai d'Orsay.

When England gathered that France was there in the conference, she said ; “ And you, too . . . ? ”

The old “ Entente Cordiale ” was a phrase of the earlier years of the century ; but its spirit, one hoped, lived. France stood for Light, England for Good-will : if they two fought, then the Kingdom of God was divided against itself.

And, if they fought—with Morocco now “a second France”—Gibraltar was useless, Suez blocked, Malta gone—especially if Spain was with the Continentals. For, with Tarifa fortified on one side of the Straits, on the other Tangier, and the dunes by Ceuta bristling with batteries, then the Mediterranean Fleet was in prison.

How would France go, if it was war, in truth, at last? That was the question now. Would her larger light fail her, her world-instinct, and temptation prevail with her? Rumours, rumours, flew from agitated lip to agitated lip. *The Daily Mail* had information that Germany, in her urgency to attract the alliance of France, was lavishing the wildest offers—a whole North-African Empire! *The Telegraph* gave it that the Persian Gulf, India, Manchuria, Mongolia were to go to Russia. It was reported that crowds were daily ranging about Berlin singing old Schneckenburg's *Wacht am Rhein*; that in the *bureaux* of the British Ambassadors at Berlin, at Petersburg, were already declarations of war.

And if Russia was going, must not France, too, go? The Franco-Russian Alliance, indeed, had lapsed; but its habit and leaning persisted. In which case, England stood alone to sink or swim with America? who might have enough to handle west and south? For all saw that, if it was war at last, then it was war world-wide, to terminate in a new earth, a new look of the skies.

CHAPTER VI

THE GIRL IN THE CROWD

England, meanwhile, remained careless of face, with faith in the old luck ; and men did their business, saying little of the knell in their inwards. There were distrains for rent, a ballet at the Alhambra, and marriages, and preachings in streets.

But on the night of the 29th the nation gave way to a gush of emotion. It was a misty night, starless, with horses lying wrecked in the slime of streets—about ten-thirty ; when suddenly through Bloomsbury, Tooting, newsboys ran clamouring in twos, startling the darkness as with news of doomsday.

They were selling a special ten-o'clock edition of *The Evening News*, which had in it five wild lines of pica. It had come from Paris round about by Mackay-Bennett cable : and it stated that 350,000 tons of Super-Dreadnoughts had been sold by Japan to Germany—were under weigh, with coal-ships, store-ships.

Whereupon it was a question of postage-stamps that night, for at once the men of London were flying with fire in their eyes to pen and paper, writing to the papers, writing to Whitehall. To Arms ! To Arms !—no talk, no nonsense. “ *To Arms !* ” re-echoed every paper the next day ; and white lips in Whitehall whispered “ War ! ”

For no one knew one atom which way God's arm was dragging France : the Home Fleet might be hopelessly outweighed . . . !

Only one dissentient letter appeared—in *The Times*. The writer advised calm : he, for his part, did not believe that

those Japanese ships would ever reach European seas, since, by putting two and two together, he could now see that the whole scare was a piece of Chinese chicane.

But this attracted no attention : it was not divined that the writer was the Prince of Wales, who the previous day had hastened south to town, to speak with the Queen.

All that day the Government gave no sign, though panic was in the City, and traffic stopped within a mile of Westminster. It was known that the Brighton and South-Coast Railway were under Government Orders, that the War Office, Foreign Office and Admiralty were feverishly in intercommunication ; but the people had to go home unsatisfied at midnight : no Cabinet Minister had been present at Questions in the Commons.

That evening, however, something was said at a house in Grosvenor Place where the Queen was in a set of ten.

After dinner one of three men told a story of a missionary in China, who was pointing with pride to the British reds on the map, when his crowd of boys with one voice drowned him in the shout : “ You robbed them ! ”

This anecdote had the effect of making Her Majesty's eyes flash fire ; and she cried :

“ Robbed them in what way ? No part of a planet in space can be ‘ taken ’ by an official in Westminster scribbling something, or a commodore setting up a flagstaff on a hill. But let's call it robbery, since our own barbarous old laws call it robbery : then I say, may someone so rob from *me*, robbing my coppers, and dropping sovereigns into my pocket ! Is it not cruel, ladies, how the mood of this country has been everywhere misunderstood ? The oceans and shores were made roomy for roaming in, and her sons have gone out, looking the sun gallantly in the face—not all-unconscious of the stars, I think—with harmless high hearts that meant well to men. Is someone somewhere the worse for it ? Who is not the better ? Every port on the globe would be thrown open, if England could throw it ! and we have called to all, ‘ these our conquests are yours, too ; come, buy wine

without money'. What wind that blows is of a mood more boundless than this bounty? Is the ocean, our home, larger than our hearts? Aren't we the fatherland of the outcast, and the ally of the cowering and downtrodden? Why, ladies, I think that somewhere in the universe there must surely be some Tribunal or Jury where such action is passionately approved, and officially stamped 'In Tune'. And are we to be plotted at, and potted at, and turned off the earth? Oh, I am no Chauviniste or hiccuping Jingo: we here know that the French are more intelligent and mentally liberated than we, the Germans more organising and orderly; yes, but there are certain world-ideals of conscience, of generosity, of moral pride, which are special to us, and are very precious—we are the salt in the ham! and deserve to live. Our friends, the French, are reckoned mightily 'polite' and warm, because they bow low: they may be so; and we pretty rigid and chill: but what I assert I know, that there's more murmuring mercy breaking and blessing bread in one good English breast than in any ten roods of Continental territory. We have that: yes, and we have another quality that's of some value—luck—favouritism with the Soul of Things—luck: a quality innate in personality, I think, a mental trait: we have it. And so, on the whole, I say, ladies, Bravo, John Bull! you're a bit stodgy on your stumps, but you are something of a credit, and much of a blessing, to your planet; and I say, ladies, let them all come, the whole concerted world, and this little mole of earth is of a temper and mettle that'll hurl their hosts superbly off her in the name of the Eternal Purposer, as she spurns the surfs of the oceans that churn on her shores".

Her Majesty spoke with so gallant and angry an arrogance glancing in her eyes, that some of the more high-strung shrank abashed and thrilled, for Her Majesty seemed queen enough to lift her arm and order the stars on their orbits, or bid storms submit. And at once among the men the word went: "Oh, well, war is certain, or she wouldn't have spoken like that—'let them all come'"

Gossip of this incident got into all the clubs that night, and thence into the newspaper offices. The next morning—that last day of October—war was taken for granted : war of one slight David against a gang of Goliaths-of-Gath.

But there was no certainty, till an early eleven-o'clock fourth edition of *The Star* confirmed it.

This was bought up like hot cakes in the streaming streets : and it was with a thrilling solemnity that those three little lines of print fell upon men's minds : " The Stock Exchange has suddenly closed. The Government is appointing private brokers to transact necessary business ".

This news could not reach the region of Westminster, which was already one mass of humanity ; but a medical student, who had got a copy, gored his way like a bull to one of the lion-bases in Trafalgar Square, dragged himself up on it, and read out the momentous thing. Which done, he roared red-throated : " This means that you are in for it, you beggars, are you downhearted ? "

" *No ! !* " howled a thousand mouths at him.

" Are you still English ? "

" *Yes ! !* " "

" That's all right ", he muttered, and jumped down.

" Absurd person ", murmured Richard Chinnery to his own Oyone, who stood pressed sandwichlike to his breast. She smiled up at him, and a wild kind of light lit her eyes an instant, and died out. But Chinnery did not like this. He had been pulled from his house in the Horseferry Road by Oyone to see the ado ; but the fate of nations very little interested Chinnery ; and now he stood there pressed and in prison : for like a passionate ocean lashing a shore London was dashing her multitudes, mass on mass, toward her middle ; and those who occupied the windows saw hats that day, and caps.

This million of men, wetted all day by a steady little mizzling, would have been pitiable in its lack of knowledge ; but whoever had telephone, tape-machine, or wireless, turned themselves into newsagents ; and squares of paper in

many façades told the latest, or uttered some thought that was in all hearts.

For passion had banished for the moment the national habit of stoic mumness. "Alone Against Europe" stood some time at *The Christian World*, and "No Ally But Our Own Arm", at a picture-shop at Charing Cross.

And ever and anon regions of the throng would be seized with song; yonder, then yonder, the Rule Britannia would be droning, like the bumble-bee that becomes dumb here, but then hums out there, all a summer's day.

"Look!" said Eulalia Bayley at about two o'clock, she being then jammed with a married sister not far from the Admiralty; and she pointed to a square of paper at the Cockspur Street corner, on which had just been written up:

"German, Austrian, Italian, and Russian Ambassadors have left Victoria".

"Which means war with the lot of them", said Eulalia's sister, Alice.

A dew lay in Eulalia's eyes, like dew in blue-bells, her bosom moved. She was silent; but then said: "But not the French".

"No, that's true", muttered Alice: "I wonder!"

The bells of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields broke out, slowly telling the notes of "Lead kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom".

But now mounted police drove the crowd round the sisters into still closer pressure, clearing a way down Whitehall: for the crisis had taken the police by surprise; and Members had to pass somewhere, since it was nearly three—a Thursday.

Before long shouts were greeting them, as they moved one by one in cabs toward the House, with cries of "give it 'em hot!" as one or the other was recognised. But it was hours before any certain news came out of the House. As night fell, the Junior United Club's paper-square had it: "*Invincible* and *Inflexible* have left Lamlash westward: possibly to convoy *Mauretania*"—making Chinnery sigh with

utter *ennui* : a night dark and thick with drizzle-spray, unlit in some places by street-lamps which no lamplighter's effort could reach. There was a paper-square statement at Haxell's Hotel that "A Paris crowd round the Chamber of Deputies is now singing 'God Save the King'", but in the darkness there hardly anyone saw it. By that time those who had brought no provisions had grown hungry and faint.

At seven Eulalia and her sister had been drifted in the currents and eddies of that sea all down Birdcage Walk : and it was thus that, for the first time, Eulalia came to see the Queen, who soon after seven appeared with the King and Prince on the East Balcony of the palace.

A comet's tail of luminosity, whose hazy glare shot a longish way into the foggy gloom, illumined the group : and the sisters got a good view. The Queen was smiling down, almost laughing, it seemed, at that ocean whose drone of cheering rolled more and more remotely away from her feet, and then in fresh waves rose once more, and droned, and rolled repeatedly : and her eyes that night shone bright as with some sublime joy, some wondrous triumph.

At her left hand stood the King dressed *en amiral*, and on his left the Prince, looking sullen or shy, *en lieutenant* ; and, vaguely suggested behind them, a group of the royal family—among them the German Princess Elizabeth ("Teddy's intended"), who had been visiting the English Court, and been caught here in the storm.

Eulalia's eyes were nailed to the Queen. And presently she breathed : "Isn't she a wonderful woman !" And presently again : "One could die for *her* ".

Then, as her eyes shifted to the Prince, she threw them on high, with the sigh : "Ah, Heaven, how like !"—as she always sighed on seeing a photograph of the Prince.

She resolved to greet her "Edward Reeks" on the morrow morning with the words : "My Prince !"—for she had a rendezvous with him at Chinnery's at ten A.M.

But her attention was drawn away from the balcony by an extraordinary yell of many thousands of mouths that now

broke out—up Piccadilly way, it seemed—and came roaring and roaring toward her, accompanied by an agitation of hats shaking in the air, like agitated aspen-tops twinkling in a wind.

“What can it be?” murmured Alice on tiptoe, with stretched chin.

“Whatever it is, the Queen knows”, said Eulalia : “look ! she is laughing !”

But the cause of this noise will be better seen before the National Liberal Club, whither Chinnery in his chest-wrappings, and his Oyone, had now been drifted.

Chinnery by this time was in a rather pitiable way. He had brought in his pockets two quartern bottles, one containing water, one wine ; and some moments before the tumult of that yell that Eulalia wondered at, he had given a flying wild glance round, and drunk the last of the water—that glance not being due to the presence of others, since he glanced like that fifty times a day whenever he drank, though quite alone.

At twenty-seven he was a dipsomaniac—not meaning a drunkard, for he drank water oftener than wine ; but he must ever be drinking a gulp, and from a bottle ; and before each gulp a thievish glance round !

And now both water and wine had failed him, and he was very weary and uninterested.

Usually he was the essence of patience and sweetness ; everyone said of Chinnery : “he is such a gentleman !”—and “gentle” he was : for, though recognised by critics of intellect as being by far the greatest brain on the face of the globe, his goodness of heart made him such that he could be fooled by any woman, or led by any child.

But now he was in such a mess there, that he let a peevish word escape him. With a wrinkled forehead, he said : “This is a terrible thing ! Am I to die here among these idle people ?”

Oyone, as brisk and fresh as at noon, answered : “But it amuses !”

"In that case there is nothing to be said", said Chinnery. "But, as for me, I doubt whether I shall get any sleep after this day. And at nine in the morning the Prince of Wales is coming to visit me. . . ."

She made no answer—stood there suddenly blanched, half-fainting, pressing on his arm.

"I did not know that", she remarked presently in a low tone.

"I had a letter this morning. He has seen something in a paper about the air-boat, guesses that it is due to me, and wants to see it, I suppose."

During many moments now Oyone stood mute, meditating.

Two days before this, she had telegraphed to China part of that letter of the Prince in *The Times*, which tried to expose the Chinese political plot; and Li Ku Yu had recognised in the letter the "Brockweir style"; had said: "The Prince"; had taken fright; and had wired to Oyone a certain most sinister code-word.

Hence her faintness when she heard that the Prince was coming, of his own accord, into her power the next morning.

After ten minutes she said: "I find that I must go."

"But, dear, how?" asked Chinnery.

"Somehow. You come behind me".

"Oyone, it would kill me!"

"Stay then. See you to-morrow afternoon".

She turned, begged her way, attacked, battled, begged her way, gained a yard, hot, envenomed, her hand against every man, yard after yard, ragged, streaming, unwearied—resistless.

When she had gained Tottenham Court Road, she could run here and there; and she ran till she was in her own room in the Regent's Park house.

There she put match to a lantern, in whose opal glamour she looked a lovely hag in her bedraggled dress and red-hotness; and she got from a cabinet a kokotana dagger, a god, and incense-sticks, her object being to fumigate the

dagger through the night, and thus curry favour with gods in whom she did not believe.

And she lay writhing, wringing her hands, moaning for awe and dismay of what lay before her, pitiaibly in travail with a thousand terrors : for she was the greatest coward ! —and yet one of the bravest of beings, desperately brave at the decisive instant in spite of clammy hands and dying heart. And even as she lay there heaving up white eyes of appeal, grovelling, groaning, she was planning the deed she had to do. Then, like a witch, she set to making spells and incantations over the weapon.

Meantime, Chinnery, left by himself, had been pricked into interest in his country, when that yell that amazed Eulalia Bayley farther west broke out here also, as it broke out here and there all over Central London. The National Liberal Club put up on its illuminated paper-square the words : “ France ! Hurrah ! our Ally ! ”

Up Parliament Street another façade had : “ France our Ally ! Hurrah ! ”

Even as men cheered, they looked about them for hands to wring. Before the National Gallery steps a little Swiss barber (mistaken for French !) was snatched to men’s shoulders and passionately exhibited amid cheering which reached to the night’s dim sky. Men sang and danced. In clubs men, lifting their glasses to clink, looked into one another’s eyes, and muttered “ France ” ; in public-houses ; in hotels ; or they grasped one another’s hands, and with eyes not dry, said : “ France ”. The Light had not failed. . . .

CHAPTER VII

THE "MAURETANIA"

The morning after dawned bleak, with an easterly sea running wet, and convulsive wind.

When the night began to lift a little at five bells in the morning watch, the *Mauretania* was in longitude $10^{\circ} 37'$, and, in the centre a hall all vault and water, was vaulting her eastward way like a foxhound in the teeth of the swell—making haste ! as when the cockchafer is conscious of the hawk not far.

She was deeply laden—with wheat : for, twelve days previously, when skies had darkened, she had been taken by Government from bearing globe-trotters, and despatched to Canada for food-stuffs—she, like her *Lusitania* sister, having been built by Government subvention to Government specification ; and at the same time the *Inflexible* group of cruisers, too, had been laid down, with the same contract speed—25 knots : the idea being that, in war, the two globe-trotters, with their cargo-carrying dead-weight of 80,000 tons, convoyed by the cruisers might maintain between them a food-supply of some 20,000 tons a week.

Hence she ran there pressed, pregnant, a rat in a tract of cats, three of her four black-and red funnels puffing breath, her crowd of cowls showing steam, spray reaching to that four-storied street of top-hamper that ran and sprang, three lines of light still twinkling along her length, like watch-lights within some mansion of romance, which show strange and garish in the glare of day. And the winds of that daybreak sang weird snatches of sea-songs within her

funnel's throats, like banshee-dirges and birds of boding, moaning omens.

For the sea is deep, and the 70,000 haughty horses that hauled her had still far to snort and haul.

But at six minutes to seven by the ship's chronometers she understood that she was not alone, and felt safer.

Her captain, raw-eyed for lack of sleep, was drinking black coffee among the trees of the verandah-café, when a message from the wireless-room came in—bidding him report his whereabouts and course to the *Inflexible*; and ten minutes later came another: "Prick your course three points to port".

The captain sprang up with a light in his eyes. "Which means hawks about," he said to his first officer: "the British must have a destroyer or something out scouting".

"And hawks about", answered the other, "means hawks sent out beforehand—the treacherous wretches: for war doesn't seem to have been declared till yesterday".

They spoke, as it were, secretly, hoarsely, like conspirators.

"Prick her off", said Captain Arthur, "and try her with another half-knot: let her rip".

And she went ripping, until the crow's nest was suddenly telephoning, an agitated watchkeeper was pointing toward the clouds, and a surgeon who had been idly eyeing the winds winnowing within his beard at the lounge-door, glanced at the sky, and pitched with tidings toward the bridge, employing his pipe as a pointer.

Up there in the air was a monoplane flying north-west, the size of a swallow; and within two minutes her engine's singing was with them.

"They've got me", muttered the captain glass-gazing: "it's a fight".

"Or she may be British", suggested the surgeon.

"British to the north", the captain said, "she from the south. Be ready for some red to-day".

No voice there quivered; only, the eyes of the little knot of men spat sparks of fire.

The monoplane was now nearly overhead, fifteen hundred feet up ; but before reaching the ship she swiftly wheeled on the winds, and was winging south once more.

At the same time the surgeon exclaimed : " Look ! another ! "—pointing out northward a speck greyer than the grey air ; and the captain, having fixed the glass on it, said, " Yes, a biplane—British—out scouting ".

But as he spoke the speck vanished.

For she had sighted the German and turned tail, as the German had sighted her and turned tail.

But this movement of mutual horror was only momentary : for the biplane had to stop the reconnaissance of the *Mauretania's* whereabouts from being carried to the Germans ; and the monoplane had to stop the fact of that reconnaissance from being carried to the British : so both wheeled to meet, climbing for life, the monoplane flying right overhead, so that the *Mauretania* group could clearly hear the roar of her flurry droning, and see the little hydro-boots under her chassis by which she had been launched down bow-rails from her parent-ship.

Ten seconds later the biplane, too, flew anew into sight, and anew vanished skywards ; and then the monoplane vanished skywards, trying to outclimb her climbing adversary, while the men of the *Mauretania* pored sternward upward at nothing, their nerves in a hell of expectation of that murder in heaven, they murmuring words which were unheard, but which served the purpose of concealing their wish to shriek.

And before any more was seen of the planes, the added distraction of " Ship Ahoy ! " was upon them ; and before they could look to see the sighted ship, once more the planes were upon them—not behind, but before now—hardly a league off, it seemed, on the starboard beam : for thither they had now dashed their anguished wings, ranging the air in a rage of flights, like fighting angels that fill space with wings ; and though nothing could be observed of them, a sound within the clouds was distinctly heard—the pop of a

pod bursting, a bomb ; then the patter of a packet of pins spilling somewhere ; then six ticks, and now the clouds parted with a crowd of particles—*débris* and instruments dribbling—and, racing after to catch them, two men raining, two men in caps and padded wrappings, who passionately span in partnership or competition, as at the starting-call of One, Two—Away ! and slightly behind the men a biplane diving, divided into two bits.

It seemed an age ere those men reached the sea, so that a shriek rent the outraged breast—an age of over thirty-seven seconds. Ahead of the *Mauretania* when they set out earthward, they were somewhat astern when, neck-and-neck, like tumblers racing, they span with a passion which had waxed to the rapture of catherine-wheels into the splash that they trashed up in vanishing.

Almost at the same moment, the monoplane was again heard buzzing, a blood-guilty thing, southward to regain her parent-ship.

That parent-ship already lay a little oblong of black, blocking the continuity of the southern horizon ; and four cables behind her stood another oblong of black, stuck in the sea, heading north-eastward.

The *Mauretania* men were like rats in a trap. In vain the glasses investigated the north for any sign of the English, though, far south-westward, there stood a third oblong of black—no one knew of what flag.

"God, I'll run for it", Captain Arthur muttered to himself ; and an officer was flying from him with the order to bolt northward, when he got the wireless : "Do not try flight, if sighted : the enemy are the *Von der Tann* and *Scharnhorst*"—on which the captain threw up his hands, for the *Von der Tann* had three knots more than the *Mauretania*—was at one time the fleetest capital-ship on the sea.

And she grew rapidly big, swaggering like a bully, rolling through four degrees, her starboard beam beaten by swell which she wedged like flesh in her heavy haste, anon giving

a view of all her eight deck-guns, like eight notes-of-exclamation, waiting to exclaim, and dot themselves.

And she came in her colours—just saluted—with extra colours on stays and masts, which the keen east wind was spitting on and whipping into kettle-drums—kettle-drums which accompanied strains of band-music floating from her over the ocean.

At her common-code signal to slacken speed to forty-two revolutions, a redness of angry arrogance sprang to the *Mauretania* captain's face . . . "Foreigners on the sea giving orders . . ."

But there was no way out. Still no English on the sea—though that third warship from the south-west had now grown so much bigger astern, that the glasses made her out to be Yankee ; and the first officer made the remark : "Looks to me like the *Arkansas*".

At the same time the *Mauretania's* speed died away to 6 knots ; the two Germans, too, slowed down—one two miles south, the other hardly a thousand yards off ; and now clouds of steam were wheeling about the sea with the winds ; a smell of heat reeked from the curbed turbines ; and at the engines' venom of hissing the ships shivered.

So for some time they forged ahead, while the *Von der Tann* signalled to the *Scharnhorst* ; the *Scharnhorst* sent out a pinnace full of men to the *Von der Tann* ; and the *Von der Tann*, making preparations to send a prize-crew to the *Mauretania*, lowered a launch.

On the *Mauretania*, meantime, there was so much agitation and preoccupation with the enemy, that little heed had been paid to the ship in the rear ; till now a sound screaming out of a stream of steam reached the ear—a sound of band-music—"Yankee Doodle Doo" on the breeze.

And all at once the *Arkansas*, a rear-admiral's flag at her foremast, was at the *Mauretania's* quarter, fifty yards off her, between her and the *Von der Tann*, keeping the same speed.

Her flag-captain, a lank Yankee, could be seen with three staff-officers in frock-coats perambulating his bridge

with a brisk and devil-may-care fling ; then was seen looking down at a school blackboard which some marines held up for him to see ; then a laying of heads together ; and then the blackboard was being held up apart for the *Mauretania's* glasses to read what was chalked large on it : " Do A BOLT."

And now was Captain Arthur a distracted man, he being under British orders not to fly, and no time to wireless—Germans just coming. After ten different impulses, he flew on an eleventh impulse to his communications to order Full Ahead.

And as she spurted to the spur, the *Arkansas*, too, all her boilers lighted up, her engines running full even while her screws had run slow under a transformer, ordered Full Ahead.

The two were off together about N.E. by E., the battleship getting left a little, with her only 20 knots, but bow-butting like a bounding bull, ramming her monstrous mass at the rollers, crushing the ocean to a rush of rubbish-stuff round her—streaming creams—like crushers crushing rubble.

The two Germans, meanwhile, kept their crawl, lost in astonishment at this sudden outcome, at their wits' end : for to try to stop the *Mauretania* with a twelve-pounder or so meant a risk of striking the *Arkansas*—an *Arkansas* obviously battle-ready, her control and gun-houses manned, torpedo-nets handy—the German combined weight being only three thousand tons greater than her monstrous twenty-six.

As to what the *Arkansas* was doing there, all alone, and with what motive—this was a disturbing question for the Germans.

So it was only when the *Arkansas* was quite a mile away that the *Von der Tann* at last signalled her ; and something like the following conversation took place between the Chief-signalmen of the two ships :

The Von der Tann : We are not combatants ?

The Arkansas : Surely not.

The Von der Tann : Then, get out of the way !

The Arkansas : All right. But what's your hurry ?

The Von der Tann : I am about to fire !

The Arkansas : Try not to strike me.

A wild silence of five minutes followed this thing—the Germans not giving chase, since they did not wish to separate, and since the *Scharnhorst* had not speed to steam with the *Mauretania*. So the *Scharnhorst*, at a distance of three miles, beautifully aimed a 3.4-inch shell from her superstructure at the *Mauretania*'s screws : and the boom of a voice moved over the waters.

By a tragic chance the shell dropped upon the centre of the *Arkansas* fore-turret, broke, blew away her aeroplane rails, dented the trellis-work of her foremast, and lay dead the sons of four American mothers.

Whereupon hell and frenzy broke up through the ocean that morning, and Germany and America were at war : for it is not good to play with volcanoes ; but the war-fever and let's-all-be-jolly was all on the breeze and in the brain like a brandy and a wedding-breakfast, and they wanted yankee-doodle, and they got it, and they hankered after thunder, and were thunder-struck. In that second the *Arkansas* left the *Mauretania* to take care of herself, knocked forty revolutions off her screws, and the *Mauretania* trembled to her bottom, and her men were boxed doddering and staring, by the back-blast and brawl of the broadside that the *Arkansas* vomited upon the *Von der Tann*.

War, then : and let the best-padded ear see afterwards what the ear-specialist can do.

They were at pretty close quarters to begin a fight !—not three miles, though the mist that the wind had in it made that far enough for effective smashing.

Anyway, the *Von der Tann* instantly answered with five of her 5.9-inch, and five of her eight 11-inch—one of these eight having been struck on the chase. Some moments more, and the *Scharnhorst* was in it ; and the three British who just

then climbed above the north-east horizon, and were struck in the ear by blustering air-waves, questioned Heaven as to who was fighting whom.

However, a *Mauretania* message soon told them ; and, concluding that the *Arkansas* had left her battle-squadron with the objective of seeing the *Mauretania* through, agile Jack dashed off his jacket, and was in it.

They were the *Inflexible*, the *Invincible*, and a destroyer, the *Swift*—say 36,000 tons : and, after steaming south three minutes so as to clear the *Arkansas*' bows, the *Inflexible* got six twelve-inchers trained upon the *Scharnhorst*, and from the horizon's edge parted with 5,100lb. of blasting bad language in idiomatic Saxon.

At the same time the *Invincible* engaged the *Von der Tann*, who, having her broadside to the American, was raked fore-and-aft by the British shells ; and though not one quarter from that distance touched her, her control platform, with all its contents of gunnery-officer, switchboard and crew, flew like rooks, its mast collapsed, and her two forward primary-guns torqued like candles at a fire.

However, most German ships (very wisely) had a second control amidships between decks, where a series of tubes with total-reflection prisms formed images on reflectors—like the periscopes of submarines—enabling the ship's fighter to see round the sea. And the *Von der Tann*'s answer to the *Invincible* was in broken English—broken English armour above-belt, where two shells of her starboard *échelon* struck—long-capped shells of low trajectory that flew straight like a cuff, their fuses arranged to explode after penetration ; and these, piercing three armour-inches and some eight feet of coal in the upper portion of her bunkers, bounded exultantly into the redoubt, where, in the space between the main and protective decks, the pair of them danced the serpentine-dance in purple amid a clatter like clapping and applause of diabolic horse-laughter bawling, down among turbines and furnaces.

The fore-bulkhead of the *Scharnhorst*, meantime, was full

of sea-water, she listed to starboard, and the *Mauretania*, who had made paces like a scared hen to tuck her head below the horizon, was standing motionless, steadily trembling like a mare among cobras, her rudder and two starboard screws broken off her.

And every second the combat was closing up : for the hand that touched the range-finder shook, gun-layers stood astonished and stung with vapours, so that big guns that should have been firing two rounds a minute were firing only one in three, and hits were leagues below all target-practice averages.

To this result the mistiness and the ships' rolling contributed ; and, in the case of the *Arkansas*, a swaying of her trellis-masts in her rocking deranged the range finding, while, in case of the Germans, the large number of their anti-mosquito guns, which they were using as primary-armament guns, thickened the air with heated vapours, which refracted the sunlight, with the effect of bewildering the sightings.

So they closed : for the horseflesh-eaters, having mettle from their diet, would not strike their colours ; and flight from the first had been impossible for them owing to the *Scharnhorst's* want of speed : so they closed and closed : six thunderclouds of smoke : the *Invincible* a creeping cloud ; the *Swift* a sweeping ; the Germans to perish dearly ; the rest to have it finished quickly and sit and think of it.

And they were all in this position,

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the *Arkansas* hardly any longer a mile from the *Scharnhorst*, her bow now to the west, when all that war paused in awe at a thing that happened : for the great battleship was in the very act of overwhelming the wreck of the *Scharnhorst* with the sharp wrath of all a broadside—jabbering quick-firers winking, and the bale of her bellowing barbettes—when a *Scharnhorst* 8.2-inch entered her, well under the water-line for'ard, and apparently burst in a magazine.

Whereupon a flame seems to have run through and through her ; and she set to stuttering such tons of thundering, like Etna rhetoric, as no tongue can tell : took the ocean and shook it, as dreader and still dreader she roared and roared in that redness of her death-throes, while what was left of her 800 men were seen through a volcano of reek leaping from her in every direction like sprats spattering from a trap-net ; then, like an old lion which, after roaring, gruffly guns from his guts a humph of venom, and again a humph, and a humph, and is done, and grunts, his eruption hushed, his say said ; or like a pump which, after pouring, chucks a gush, and a gush, and a gush, and is done, and grunts, its eruption hushed ; so the *Arkansas*, after thundering, thumped a hum, and a hum, and a hum, from her drum to the sun, and was done, her death-anthem chanted, her death-passion passioned, and was a skeleton before her burial, leaving over the sea a mausoleum of smoke.

She had within her 290 tons of big-gun projectiles alone : so far over the ocean her tragedy darkened the day with the shadows of night, and many men on the *Scharnhorst* were laid low under the sharp shower of the lavas which she spouted.

Some moments more and a roller rolled foaming over the mastless hull of the *Scharnhorst* ; and she rose no more.

At the same moment the *Von der Tann*, sinking fast, started sharply north-eastward to put a sure hole in the *Mauretania* while she could—heedless of the *Swift*, which was

now tearing near to sting and fly, pouring as she tore a rain of twenty-eight 4-inch shells a minute—heedless of the *Inflexible*, which also was speeding near to launch a torpedo—for little heed was left in any head on that sea, each ship now a shrieking lazaretto : and, as the *Von der Tann*, now within two thousand yards, sent out a needle at the stationary *Mauretania*, the *Swift* was ready to send needles from her two tubes, and the *Inflexible* to send.

But just then tragedy overwhelmed the *Swift* : for a shell from the *Invincible*, still creeping well to eastward—a 12-inch shell shot out of rent rifling—fell far short of the *Von der Tann* into the engine-room of the *Swift*, which stopped.

Upon which that low length of the *Inflexible*, with its tripod-masts amidships, and topmasts like bayonets, went ranging on ahead of the *Swift*, not far from her ; and when the *Swift's* torpedo-crews had recovered their feet, and two 18-inch needles flew out of her under water at fifty miles an hour, the one to port appears to have been led astray into the *Inflexible's* wake.

This hulled her ; crumpled her screws ; ruined her rudder ; and she, rudderless, steered askew by her port wing-screw, went her own way, rushing perniciously for the *Von der Tann*, which with shattered steering-gear was rushing her way, both bellowing at those terribly close quarters with all their cannon still battle-worthy, billows already breaking over the *Inflexible's* poop, over the *Von der Tann's* beam.

And as they got near, entangled in some magnet-plight, as the bicycle of the beginner heads straight for the lamp-post, and can't be drawn off, they were shut from each other by a column of water, which gushed with a dogged gong-sound two hundred feet aloft from under the *Von der Tann*—a torpedo from the *Swift*.

When this dropped back broad-showering, with it dropped showering a rain of wreckage upon the *Inflexible's* deck.

And before it was over, every soul on both vessels dropped

flat, as the cracking ram of the *Inflexible* went with a racket like Distraction itself through the *Von der Tann's* six inches of armour ; nor did it stop ; but walked on and on into the other ship, splitting the tympanum with shrillness in a sombre dusk.

This probably preserved the German above water a minute longer ; and within that minute, while they so stood two-in-one, a Whitehead burst beneath both beams—a Whitehead fired by the *Inflexible*, which had missed, but had been whirled into the German's wake.

Whereupon the twain started a little apart ; a pillar of smoke that mixed with the clouds rose round them, and remained steady in the air like a temple, mucking their dusk into midnight : in which gloom, under which tomb, the two settled down together, unseen, and still.

Some of their men escaped by leaping : for immediately upon the *Arkansas* tragedy the fleet of the *Mauretania's* boats had gone out, save two whose bottoms had dropped out in sympathy with the tragedy ; and now, too, those of the *Invincible's* boats that could still float were out, picking up swimmers.

And all were quickly filled, some trailing from their wales men whose heads the waves swept over.

But the wind had lulled ; the sun was now bright, the battle having lasted forty minutes ; the air hazy with gun-vapours ; and yonder, still lingering, the mound of smoke that the *Arkansas* had left, and, crumbling yonder, the pillar of cloud within which the *Inflexible* and *Von der Tann* had foundered.

The *Swift*, though abandoned, was still visible, standing there bowed, steep in the bows, like the camel that kneels and waits ; and still visible was the *Mauretania*, waiting large and tragic, listed to starboard, showing all her deck-shape like a leaf, the sea like troops of multitudinous wolves trooping upon her to have her.

She lingered there a long time : until with a sudden flurry, as of resolve to make the plunge and try the new

state under-sea, she skipped ahead and left the sea, sucking after her Captain Arthur and some forty of her men.

The loaded boats meantime, made as best they could in the swell for the *Invincible*, a stare of scare and amazement on those sailors' faces, as of men who have passed through what the heart can't fancy, those within the boats gripping at the gunwales or seats, for the sea seemed to reel fiercely round their ears.

In one boat sat Captain Stickney of the *Arkansas* and the captain of the *Scharnhorst* side by side, the latter—a large German whose name was Bergmann—having a gash across his freckled red neck.

This was visible, for his upper clothes had apparently been singed off him, save his vest, which his buxom breasts bulged ; and he kept stanching the gash with a canvas rag, already wet through with red, for the scratch ran like a tap.

The two captains uttered no word to each other for a long time ; but presently the American, producing a handkerchief sideways with his face averted, murmured : “ Handkerchief ? ”

Up sprang Bergmann half-way in a surprise of politeness, and after searching a second for expression, blurted in his big and vigorous voice :

“ Beautiful thank, my sir ! ”

“ That's it ”, muttered the Yankee, gazing pensively over the sea.

Soon afterwards the boats were at the *Invincible*. But she was very sick and feeble ; and it was not until three nights later that tidings of the fight arrived in Britain.

It arrived the same night in Peking, where Li Ku Yu, hearing that result, clucked his tongue, with “ As I thought. Man has learned to destroy better than to build ”.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TREASURE

At that morning hour of the sea-fight the half-caste Oyone and her dagger were already at Chinnery's in the Horseferry Road—a common old house, whose door was as often open as shut, but was shut now ; so the girl lurked about till “ Monty ” came—an old soul rather shaky in her gait and being, who “ did ” for Chinnery (Chinnery for some reason called her his “ laundress ”, though few were the things that Monty washed). And when Monty went in, leaving the door “ on the jar ”, Oyone slipped into the closet under the stairs.

The dash from closet-door to front-door would hardly occupy a second ; and she had an *alibi* and everything planned in case of mishap.

But let us not watch her horrors while she waits there in darkness with wet hands, groaning again and again, “ I can't do it ! gods, I can't ! ” her will still fixed like nickel—needless agitations, for a cypher was even then on the wires for her from Li Ku Yu, countermanding that sinister cypher of his respecting the Prince before the declaration of war—but let us watch instead a young man away up in the White-chapel Road in the dress of a private of Marines, a cloak hanging over one arm, he walking briskly to and fro a little, his palm anon on his brow, feeling seedy and fretful, having spent the night in a vile den on a fourpenny bed—in a doss-house in Dorset Street near.

And presently he stepped into a “ Cocoa Rooms ”, up into a “ First Class Room ”, paid threepence at a counter, and carried his fare to a table nailed to the floor—no one up there but him.

But when he tasted the coffee it did not please him—it was not really coffee ; the bread-and-butter—it was not really butter. And the cup displeased him deeply, the saucer, the saw-dust—everything there.

And he tapped with his nail, saying : “ It’s bad, it’s wrong, it’s beneath the dignity of modern man : so, if foreigners surpass and smash us, here will be the reason—feudalism in the twentieth century—the monstrous tommyrot ! And if I haven’t gun-fire and gumption enough in me to worry it to rags, then I’ll go with my girl to Samoa, and smoke under a cocoa-nut tree ”.

Now he rose, picked up a little poker, and, smiling with his lips, but not with his eyes, he smashed his cup and saucer, muttering, “ not good enough ”, he brought down the shop-mirror in a shower of sherds, murmuring, “ not good enough ”, he spurted past an agitated man in an apron who ran up staring, and he hurled the urns of tea, coffee, cocoa, one after the other, into a flood over the floor, muttering “ not good enough ”, and now the poker was scattering crackling crockery from shelves, until wreckage was the condition of that first-class room.

By this time the attendant had afresh rushed below, keenly seeking a policeman ; but now the young man was with him at the door, muttering : “ Don’t make a fuss—only letting off steam a little. What’s the damage ? Twenty pounds ? With five for yourself ”—and, tossing some bank-notes, he was gone with a brisk and busy sailor-gait that waggled his jack-trousers round his legs, leaving behind him a thing that said : “ Well, I’m—— ! ”

But the more he advanced westward, the more he found his way impeded with people, and in Leadenhall Street had to stop and wait long : for a crowd had surrounded all that Bank-region to hear the Sergeant-at-Arms, attended by a throng of City dignitaries, read out the Declarations of War from the steps of the Stock Exchange.

When at last he could move to procure a cab, the cab had to creep, and near Charing-Cross was blocked by a rattle of

limbers and the showering hoofs of a 15th Hussars battalion bound for Dover : for already England was pouring into France, troops debarking at up and down platforms alike, and at sidings. So, at the stoppage, the young man, who had given an address in the Horseferry Road, called to his cabman : " Do get me out of this ! Drive round to Buckingham Palace "—and now he threw round him a roomy cloak which covered his costume.

At the palace-gate he asked a sentry if the Queen had come in, was told no, and went on to stroll about the grounds, praising God for the air of Heaven after his night of pain.

But, as he went, he caught a glimpse of the Princess Elizabeth with three ladies near the Lake ; and it may almost be said that he hid—stood behind laurel, and cut an eye at space : for the Queen was in love with the Princess for him, and the Princess in love with him for herself.

Soon, however, a sound of cheering reached him from without, and the Queen, who had set the fashion of early Park-drives, dashed into the courtyard, the damask of her colour still comely as a damsel's, she habited in royal simplicity, but for the boisterous sea of her immoderate hat.

The royal horses drew up, as the cloaked figure came bare-headed to speak at the carriage, from which the Princess Alexandra and a Maid of Honour got out after some talk ; and the Queen then said : " Again ? " nodding toward the costume which she knew that the military cloak covered.

" Yes, Mother ", he answered.

" Why is it necessary ? I don't see ".

" I have imposed it upon myself, Mother : once a month, if ashore, I sleep there, if it kills me ".

" Is it very bad ? "

" You wouldn't believe—headache, sickness. The men—sigh. And these people feed me, cushion me, love me in a

way—for nothing : I'll taste their cup just once in a month to show good-will ”.

“ Do it, do it, I don't want to stop you ”.

“ I see that I should, till it's ended. A good race, Mother : but, oh, we do need a dictator for one week ”.

“ Yes, but that word is too often on your lips of late, Teddy ! Drop it, mind you. Your place is to influence men, not yourself to take upon you the cure of your country ”.

“ I hear you, Mother. But what news ? I couldn't sleep till five, then overslept, and couldn't get one paper to buy ”.

“ Well—do you know that the House three times read last night a Bill granting eighty millions for the war ? and reducing Government Stock interest by one and a quarter ? ”

“ Yes, I knew that. But about the *Mauretania* ? She reported ? ”

“ I—don't think so,” the Queen answered ; “ I haven't seen or heard anything ”.

“ I have had her on the brain all night ! Suppose the Germans have snapped her up ? That would be rather sharp practice—so soon—don't you think ? And shouldn't I revenge myself for it, if I can manage something ”.

“ Manage what ? ”—the Queen leaned keenly toward him : for what she called “ manfulness ” in the Prince of Wales was now her liquor and secret meat ; and her doubt whether all men saw in him the Drake which she saw, her care that they should, had become rather common and morbid. He and hats were her vanities.

The possibility that some day he might turn out to be “ manful ” beyond her liking, “ manful ” enough to scare her to death, had not yet occurred to her.

He put his foot on the step to tell her : “ You saw the paragraph on Tuesday about a strange object having been seen in the air—standing still, mind—a most momentous thing in history, Mother, if it is true. Well, I assume that it is Chinnery's doing, and, if so, I have a thought of going to

Spandau in it, blowing up the Tower, and grabbing what the Tower contains. What do you think?—if I find it practicable ”.

The Queen shrank sharply, but said nothing ; considered it with lowered lids ; flushed a little ; paled a little ; and suddenly bringing her eyes close to his, let her lips breathe : “ You might try it on ”.

The Prince laughed, saying : “ Mother, I think you’re the most audacious She that ever buckled on stays ”.

“ And you ? ” she said, smiling at him with her forehead raised ; but then, touched with sudden gravity : “ You are aware that ladies buckle on such armour ”.

“ Scott, Mother ”, said the Prince with lowered lids : “ aren’t I a sailor ? and ships feminine ? and often in stays ? ”

“ Not very brilliant ”, the Queen’s lips just muttered : “ ships are in stays when coming round, but ladies when standing off ”—adding aloud : “ But have you spoken with the Princess Elizabeth ? There she is over yonder, thinking of you, I declare ! Let the footman run and request Her Imperial Highness to join us a minute ”.

“ Mother ”, said the Prince ruefully—“ if you could forgive me : I have to go to Chinnery’s, and am late ”.

“ Oh, you are going now to Mr. Chinnery’s ? You didn’t say. My goodness, how I should love to be there ! ”—with the levity of a schoolgirl hankering after a spree—“ to hear you two chit-chatting about chucks, and jockeys, and washers, and rockers, and ‘ H ’ and ‘ B ’—the holiest, highest, Divinest babble yet babbled on this planet—Divine because true, Divinest because truest. I *love* that young man !—don’t tell your exalted father ”.

“ Then—come, Mother ”.

The Queen reflected. “ I’m afraid it can’t be contrived—though it might !—No, I think not ”—and when the Prince had left her side, she half-rose to say that she might after all, but sat again.

He, not seeing a cab beyond the gates, started to walk

fast, heated himself, and threw off the cloak, having little fear that the streets would see the Prince of Wales in a marine.

Meantime, in the closet at Chinnery's Oyono waited—the Prince over an hour late ; and her growing doubt whether he would come, and the long tension of her nervous system, had proved very enervating, for each carriage-wheel drew from her the hiss “ this is he ! ” and at the last she was on the floor, prostrated, vaguely wretched.

But suddenly a brisk step—the door pushed open—and she was up afresh, tense and ready.

However, she was so sure of a *carriage*, and his appearance on entering was so different from the image of him in her expectation, that her sub-conscious conclusion was that this was a sailor sent to make an excuse. She had never seen the Prince, and it was only when a voice pelting up the stairs called “ *Richard !* ” that the thought stabbed her heart : “ *that—was—he !* ” whereupon she collapsed again, weeping at her defeat and her relief, and when her weeping ceased, the catches of her breath still reached the rats' ears in there, going on like gutter-sobs gushing on nights of rain long after the rain has dried its tears.

Her chance for that day was gone, since Chinnery would be sure to accompany the Prince down, so she stole upstairs, washed her face with the right decoctions, and went to listen at the workroom keyhole.

Chinnery by this time had told the Prince that the *Mauretania* had been waylaid, for he had instruments of great delicacy, and Oyono could hear the Prince stepping restively about, talking hotly, saying : “ Germany, eh ?—touch the old coffee-pot with the oxy-hydrogen, Richard—to see Germany grow and grow like this, and sit still ! Thirty years ago—ten—why didn't we blast every German battleship out of the sea, as we could, and then say ‘ Shake hands, but no more German ships eternally ’ ? Or if we *must* let Germany, why didn't we say to Germany : ‘ Here's India—Australia—call them German, if they'll let you, you

leaving them as open to us as we to you, and let's abolish navies and educate mankind'. Would England have been a penny the worse, Germany the better? They *think* so: but, then, the heads of the mass of men are infested with such a fog of feckless, fantastical fixed-ideas got from their grandmothers, that when they think that they are thinking, they are only remembering—remembering what some dead Swazi thought that he thought. Whenever they do think straight, it is only due to their mother-wit, not to any training in mentation that they are given! Nor have their governors any! By whom is the world still handled? Not by young scientists trained in facts, but by old lawyers trained in opinions—quoting ignoramuses—pundits—scott, what can you expect? The Queen tells me, Richard, that within two years Sky-Blue has cut off 370 pundits' heads—crass rascal: but I can quite understand why he is doing it. Pundits! Fantastic catchwords!—'colonies', 'Empire',—as though such a thing as a modern Empire was the least bit possible outside China; 'slow evolution'—as if 'slowness' improved evolution; 'hasty legislation'—as if every scientific experiment ought not to be as 'hasty' as life is short. Fantastic fads! The contribution of the colonies to us is £667,000—just think: they cost tens of millions; this war will cost hundreds of millions, because some English and German lawyers have heard someone say 'colonies', 'Empire'—little rages and delusions of Crusaders! Considering that £87,000,000 of British capital has been invested in Argentina within five years, could Argentina be more profitable to Britain if a British colony? What is wanted is not colonies! but the recognition that the whole globe, and each inch of it, is the private property of each man, as in Law the whole of a business, or ship, and each inch of it, is the private property of each partner. But think of France shutting in Madagascar against trade without paying one penny of rent to the rest of men, and all the nations not instantly declaring war against France! Well, the French are our good friends, I don't want—but—scott

—was it the arm of some mannikin at the Quai d'Orsay that dragged up Madagascar out of the main, and granted her mangoes, and gross groves, and grace of face? Oh, my earth, my mother, my own, my poem, my Altar, my heirloom—I am not a Martian, but of her dark marl—and is not this thing an intolerable wrong to me that some impossibly crude little duke, or some 'cute fool at the Quai d'Orsay, should say to me 'this bit of her is somehow more mine than yours', and rob me of her roundness? Forgive me, Richard, I can't always talk calmly of the insolence of these little slaves, my blood boils——"

"And now the coffee, too, Ted", Oyone heard Chinnery say, "and now for Monty and the kidneys!"

A button was pressed: and the Prince was next heard to say: "Not that the Germans are so lawyer-ridden—I see that in 1897 the French navy was thrice stronger than the German; in 1909 the German was 40,000 tons the stronger; and in those twelve years had spent £36,000,000 less on her navy than France—just think. France?—no go at sea. What's the French for 'Stand by!' '*Attansiaun!*'—with a nasal singing of the '*aun*'. That's no good. 'Fred, dear, please try'—*attansiaun!*—scott. On land, yes; but England on the sea. Not that I believe one bit in English, or any, sea-power as represented in Dreadnoughts—as you know. '*Dreadnoughts*' is one of the fixed ideas!—nothing weaker—not a clock. I calculate, Richard, that one German capital-ship is a match for any four English, and one English for any four-and-a-half German—meaning that they'll all sink: and where's your sea-power then? We shall soon see".

"And your *Asahel* will be put to the test of thunder, Ted", Chinnery said. "Don't get killed".

"Scott, not I. Too busy to stop to die. I shouldn't wonder if, for one thing, I shall have Mr. Chin-Chin to stamp on before I'm done, for I had a dream of it one night. Do you know I believe he's at the bottom of this war?"

"It sounds quite likely"—from Chinnery. "The day he

left Brockweir, guess what he said : ' I go, but will come back in multitudes '—amusing person. And I dare say he will, since he says so—good luck to him ”.

“ To Sky-Blue ? I say, don't you care at all for your country, my friend ? ”

“ I wonder ? ” said Chinnery : “ not much, I think, Ted. His ' multitudes ' will certainly never come into the Horseferry Road, for I should stop them at the corner. But, for the rest, if we know that blessedness is the destiny of Life, isn't it a little irreligious to fret about the road—Here's my Mont ! ” as Monty, smart in cap and apron that morning, entered with a tray ; and for about a minute Oyone heard no sound—Chinnery seeing to the coffee, which he always cooked himself ; but all at once an outcry—a howl as of horror—was heard to burst from Chinnery : “ For God's sake ! *Teddy* ! Don't touch ! ”—mixed with a clatter of the dropped coffee-pot.

Then silence : and Oyone knew that Chinnery had dropped into a chair, panting—his heart not strong.

The Prince was now heard to say : “ You mean that cubical box ? ”

Then Chinnery : “ Oh, Teddy, you startled—forgive me. It is my Redlike Ray of which I wrote you—just finished—and I meant to cap it yesterday, but was dragged out to see the crowd ; and now the coffee's done for. It would have struck us blind, not to mention Monty and half Horseferry Road, if you had chanced to touch the little spider-hub just inside the hole. As to the coffee—Run, Mont !—a jugful at Marzucco's——”

On which Monty trotted tottery, exchanging a smile with Oyone outside ; and Oyone knew that the Prince was now eating and discussing the Redlike Ray with Chinnery in a jargon of which she understood nothing : for, with all her nimbleness, science remained a rocky and foreign thing to her forehead.

In fact, Chinnery was telling of a method of making electrons “ drop-in ” to produce an X-wave resembling the red,

yet not the red—shorter—which irritated to hyperpyrexia, and then instantly atrophied, the optic nerve, striking a dog blind in five seconds. But the Prince seemed bewildered, and Chinnery said : “ When you’ve finished you’ll see the mechanism ”.

The Prince presently remarked : “ Which seems to mean that you may become the king of any country any day you please ”.

“ Quite so—I never thought of that ”, answered Chinnery smiling : “ but oh, Ted, the bore ”.

In fact, so far from wishing to be a King, Chinnery lived on just two hundred pounds a year, for from the list of his inventions he had made not a penny. Many of them were not even known to have been made ! for he forgot last year’s inventions like last year’s socks, no more seeking reward from science than the sweet-tooth seeks reward for eating sweets. Some little men whose lives like flies were in his hand had offered him—a knighthood ! But he had forgotten to post his reply.

“ But about the boat ”, Oyone heard the Prince say next : “ no engine, you say ? ”

“ No ”, answered Chinnery ; “ you’ll see her presently ”.

“ Then, how on earth—Tut, how magical ! ”

“ Not really, Teddy, I think ”, said Chinnery. “ You must remember that the problem of flying has not hitherto been tackled by thinkers : for the aeroplane, of course, is not a product of thought, but of the gallantry of some nobodies who dared to go into the air on a kite with an engine for string—grand lads ! but, of course, not great. You, I know, are a famous ‘ flyer ’ ; but, ah, Teddy, the risk ! I should die of heart-failure the instant the engine started with me ! Its absurdity consists in its imitation of the bird. When we want to run faster than the deer, we don’t imitate the deer’s legs, we get into a train ; to swim faster than the shark, we don’t imitate fins, as canoe-savages do, we use sails and screws. And the problem of flight, even beyond the atmosphere, is not really difficult. I know of four ways of making

an apple fall up instead of down ; and there must be eight ways : for I haven't given the matter any systematic thought ”.

“ But what is it takes this boat up—something new in the way of force ? ”

“ Oh, Lord, no : just a trick with the old forces. Inter-atomic : magnetism. By continually upsetting cohesion I lengthen a rod of iron, then let cohesion shorten it—a few amps. out of a toy dynamo-and-oil-engine does it. Quite simple ”.

“ And quite safe, you say ? ”

“ Safe five times over—since I, the chief of cowards, went over London in it on Tuesday, with a young lady, who steered and managed it. Several times safer, even in a storm, than riding a bicycle in a lane—barring lightning. Even if this particular one fell a thousand feet, one wouldn't be hurt, though one would, if she fell five hundred ”.

“ But how does magnetism——? By the way, does this young lady know the secrets of your inventions ? ”

“ It's Oyone Umé—which signifies ‘ Plum-blossom ’, Ted. . . . Yes, as far as I can tell her, she knows the ‘ secrets ’ ; but that's not far, I'm afraid ”.

“ A good thing perhaps, Richard. But what weight would this boat carry ? ”

“ This particular one ?—half-a-ton : but any desired weight—according to the size of the electro-magnets, their ampere-turns, and the *mu* of the iron specimen ”.

“ I see. And her speed ? ”

“ Seventy-five miles, this one. But any speed, according to the stern magnet, or magnets ”.

“ And how long did she take you to make ? ”

“ Five hours. She is just rough boards nailed together ”.

“ So in three days you could get me ten of her to carry five tons at 120 miles ? ”

“ If I can get some carpenters to work on Sunday. But why ? ”

“ Let's blow up the Julius Tower at Spandau and grab

the lucre !—six millions sterling in gold bars. I'll send you a cheque—What do the boats cost ? ”

“ About £25. But what is this Julius Tower ? ”

“ Where the Germans keep the French war-indemnity of '71. I know it well ; and I'll get ten of my best *Asahel* fellows, and pilot the expedition myself. This treasure, which comes out of the woollen stocking of many a poor French peasant, has been set aside by the Germans for their next-war war-chest ; nor have they touched it yet, I know, for it can only be touched by a joint order of the Bundesrat and the Reichstag. We'll show them *Mauretania*. . . . And you, Richard, will come with us ”.

“ I, Teddy, throw bombs ? ” Oyone heard Chinnery say with a break of laughter in his voice : and the girl was pallid at those words “ *six millions* ”,—which is a lot in China.

“ You come ”, she heard the Prince say : “ you need not throw anything ; but you will thank me for dragging you out of this hole. You have grown to grovel over your gold ; though I praise you, Richard, with bent head, priest of God, because your delight is in the laws of your Lord, and in His laws you meditate day and night ; and when you have entered into your closet and shut your door, you draw near to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who walks in secret rewards you publicly ”—extracts from the so-called “ Brockweir Praise-book ” which “ Teddy ” uttered in a low, slow recitative with no little unction and relish, during which Oyone's prying eye saw Chinnery's eyes fly skywards once, and drop : for all Brockweir boys were very profoundly devout—Li Ku Yu, too, though he disliked quotations.

“ Still, one needn't fester in one's closet ”, the Prince added : “ you come for the spree. As for the coffee, doesn't matter : I'll see the boat now, and then the Redlike Ray, for my girl will soon be due, and then I must go ”.

But in that moment Monty had arrived outside the door, Oyone was taking the coffee from her, and the half-caste rapped, and entered.

There, smiling, looking under her eyes, she stood like a show at the end of the long litter that lay under two frosted skylights—the Prince's breakfast-table being a brass coffer near the lathe in the centre, the linoleum holey, the book-case shaky, and there were chemical shelves, dusty old motors, ammeters, microscopes, with tools, tools, invading the electric furnace, the brazing-hearth, and, ah, how many different kinds of iron ! Swedish, mild steel, cast dynamo-steel, alloys of tungsten, titanium, tantallum—without any end. The girl stood in it like a bird-of-paradise in a stable, dressed in Kyoto silk—crimson with large splashes of pansy—but *à la Européenne*, a toque cocked on her top.

The Prince started at that sight !

“ Well, I did not know that you had come ”, Chinnery said.

“ Here is your coffee ”.

“ This is—Mr. Edward Reeks : Mademoiselle Oyone, Teddy—Plum-blossom ”.

Hands were shaken amid smiles.

Then—“ conversation ” ! Was Mr. Reeks a sailor ? in the Navy ? How terrible a thing was war ! Why could not nations contrive—— ? So she had been up in the air ? Had she not been afraid ? She *had*, but still had gone. And how did it feel ? It felt sweet : like sitting on a throne with one's feet on the throat of the world ; and the wild flight : ah ! the wild wine rioting through one's arteries. Some delights only a woman could fully taste ; men were a little stolid, were they not ?

Chinnery, proud of her, kept glancing at “ Teddy ”, glad to see “ Teddy's ” glances rest on her, and drop. A cup of coffee had been poured, but was never drunk.

The formality of “ conversation ” was broken by the exhibition to Mr. Reeks of a Taoist amulet-ring on Oyone's finger, whereupon Chinnery tickled the finger with a copper commutator-brush, Oyone slapped Chinnery, and Chinnery chased Oyone round the lathe. Thereafter Oyone stood crucified, her two arms stretched against the wall, chatty

and kittenish, letting her eyes rest kindly upon the pretty milk-and-pinkiness of the Prince—eyes into which some kind of fire would wildly fly up an instant, and die out.

Then Chinnery, putting hand to pocket, flung a flying glance round, drank a gulp—the Prince and Oyone pretending not to see—and now suggested a geisha-dance : on which Oyone ran, got her long-handled *gaita*, and her dagger, and first geishaed like a bird-girl through the intricate litter, bringing a brightness into the boy's eyes, and then began a dagger-dance, in which she lassoed the Prince with her stole, dragged him to act as foil, and, having him in bondage with one hand, with the other kept stabbing with the dagger at his neck, his side, smiling with an underlook, as she danced.

And this gaiety was at its height, when a fourth person was suddenly in the room—a girl in nurse's uniform—Eulalia.

Monty had rapped unheard, and had let her in.

Eulalia remained standing within the door, taking it in : and the first fact that registered itself in her chronicles was the half-caste's loveliness, then the fact of "Teddy" foolishly lassoed with Oyone's stole, while the half-caste brandished the *kokotana* with a dancing arm. In another instant Chinnery noticed the new-comer ; Oyone and the Prince started apart, he rather red and vexed.

Chinnery flew to Eulalia—she had met her "Teddy" here before—then proceeded to present the two ladies ; and their hands were half out to meet, when "Teddy", by a very deft and tactful piece of acting, took both of Eulalia's hands to swing them a little in welcome—not wishing her to shake hands with Plum-blossom : and the ladies exchanged a bow instead.

But Oyone understood : and for a moment a most ferocious expression of rancour marred her face.

The Prince, meantime, was whispering Chinnery that he must go, and, without having seen either the boat or the

Redlike Ray after all, he was soon in the taxicab which had brought Eulalia.

In it Eulalia sat with her lids pensively lowered ; and for some time not much speech was between them.

" It is two months, three days, and three hours since we have been together ", he said.

She did not answer this, but presently asked : " Why are you dressed like a marine ? "

" Just a masquerade ! " he answered with a laugh.

" Just a masquerade " was not very understandable. But she had become accustomed to obscure replies from him, and had learned not to pursue inquiry.

They were silent. Then he, shaking her little finger : " Cross about anything ? "

" Why, no ".
" What's your name ? "

It was with the same pensiveness that she said : " My name's Eulalia ".
" Whose girl are you ? "

" I am Teddy Reek's girl ".
" All of you ? "

" Yes, all ".
And with the same pensiveness and lowered lids she asked : " What's your name ? "

" My name ", said he, " is Teddy ".
" Whose boy are you ? "

" I am Eulalia's boy ".
" All of you ? "

" Yes, all ".
With this he quickly kissed her fingers—they were passing out of the crowd of Victoria Street into Buckingham Palace Road—and the Queen and the Princess Elizabeth both saw that kiss.

These two were on the way to Chinnery's in a motor brougham to meet the Prince ! for Her Majesty had, after all, managed, and, having to keep the Princess interested, had considered that a visit to Chinnery's den would be a

piquant little experience for her, so had brought her, always eager for the Princess to meet the Prince : and they got a glimpse of that finger-kiss.

When the Princess next looked at Her Majesty, it was to see her with her lids shut down, her countenance blanched and rigid ; and she said : “ Your Majesty ! ” but Her Majesty did not answer.

Quickly the Princess—a palish, plainish Gretchen, thin, very German in expression, spectacled, with a spiteful little pressure of her lip—quickly she bid the coachman “ turn back ” ; and while she held attar under Her Majesty’s nostrils, kept the taxicab in view. When it turned into Grosvenor Place, she told the coachman “ up here ”.

She saw the pair enter a mansion with blinded windows to which the Prince had a key ; and she marked the house-number.

Her Majesty, meantime, was not unconscious, more or less saw, but was too overwhelmed for speech or motion. All at once her Kingdom was departed from her, on her white knight’s scutcheon—a *tache*.

Of course, all her sorrow was for the male, all her hatred, rage, and red revenge for the hussy, whose face she had distinctly seen.

CHAPTER IX

FATE OF THE SIX MILLIONS

Late in the day of the Prince's visit to Chinnery, London was again agaze at the boat in the air : for Oyone had forced the ever-pliant Chinnery to take her over Harrow, and this time made herself fully mistress of the two or three little tricks of its working.

To be the *Fu Jen* of Li Ku Yu one day !—this had become her mania—to ride at his side—to attain to that. Alone of the men whose eyes fell upon her Li Ku Yu had pooh-poohed her ; and for this thing, apart from her audacious ambition, she had made the man her famine, her madness, her star.

And he had promised, “though she squinted”. Had he forgotten ? Why did he not recall A-lu-te and her from banishment ? She could never bring herself to remind and pray him, but waited, hoping : and as the years passed a fury of rancour grew in her heart.

So, when she had heard the Prince utter those words, “six millions”, she had paled, it was such a lot in China, could buy her much favour there. And she got from Chinnery all that would probably happen in the expedition.

During the next three days Chinnery was much in the yard, helping with the building ; and she with a busy brain watched him from the workroom-window—no one else in the house, Monty being a morning phenomenon.

At about two on the Monday a load of different kinds of bombs and shells arrived, and she watched Chinnery and three bluejackets pack them into the boat's holds, with some rifles, some that were left over being put into Chinnery's own boat : for Chinnery, unable to disobey any bidding,

was going, though with secret bitterness, had increased the speed of his boat to keep pace ; and Oyone ran down, handled a shell, tried its weight—a mass that had marked across it “ 4-inch Shell, Special Type, Firth, 5 Calibres ” ; as she laid it down tenderly, she threw her eyes mutely to the skies.

At four Chinnery was again in the yard, showing to seven bluejackets the boats’ working ; and two of them, getting into boats, rose into the air, as one rises in a lift ; whereupon Chinnery, while the rest were gazing upward, took flask from pocket, and showed it, emptied, to Oyone at the workroom window—with a wink ; on which Oyone ran down for the flask, ran with it to a sitting-room cabinet, filled it with Chianti, then dropped into the Chianti three drops of liquid out of a pigmy flagonette of greyish jade from her pocket ; and ran to Chinnery.

Till four-thirty the men were up and down in twos and threes in the boats ; then arrived the Prince and two lieutenants together ; and Chinnery, in hurrying to the front-door, whispered Oyone at the closet-door : “ I am feeling beastly bad ! I can’t go ! ”

“ Oh, you must ”, she said.

When the three entered she peeped from within the closet ; and when they had hurried through to the yard, she stood within the back-door, hearkening.

When the officers had been saluted by the men, Chinnery first showed them the boats’ working, and then commenced to explain their scientific principle ; but the Prince, who was all business and briskness, cut him short, saying : “ Another time, Richard : we are late, let’s start ”.

“ I was just going to give the fellows some whisky ”, said Chinnery.

“ Then, do be quick. . . . Long trip. . . . Show them *Mauretania*. . . . ”

The men now trooped inwards after Chinnery, who, as he passed by Oyone, anew whispered : “ Dear, it is impossible, I *can’t* go ”.

"What's the matter?" she whispered: "you must try".

The Prince, meanwhile, and the two lieutenants went from boat to boat, prying into the mechanism; and said one: "Does your Royal Highness understand the principle of this thing?"

"Not a bit so far", answered the Prince: "it seems to me an impossibility. Here are electro-magnets, keepers, wire-ropes connecting the keepers with the deck: and it seems clear that it is tension in the ropes that lifts the boats. But a magnet's attraction of a keeper is equalled by the keeper's attraction of the magnet: so that the downward pull on each magnet-support should be equal to the tension in the rope, and the boat should not rise—so far as I can see. The secret of it probably lies under this tin thing here, which he seems to intend to protect what's under it from rain. . . . He says it's simple; I'll find out to-morrow; and may let you into it. I wish he'd come. . . ."

There lay the eleven boats in a row, very roughly knocked together—long six-sided things, 20 feet long, 5 high, their decks narrow and short in comparison with their bottoms, which broad bottoms were slightly hollow to act as parachutes in case of mishap from lightning; and each bottom had on it two levers, one lever-end to press upon a spring near the bow-point, the other upon a spring near the stern-point, and they were of an angelic ingenuity to prevent the boat from dipping bowwards or sternwards in the greatest gale; nor could she rock much, for with these two levers were associated two heavy masses of lead, one for'ard, one aft, so that the centre of gravity was very low, and equilibrium so stable, that one could move freely about; the deck, moreover, was supported on powerful coil-springs.

When Chinnery and the men returned, the Prince was already in his seat, and now everyone was buttoning great-coats and gloves, it was the moment of departure, and no one had eyes to notice how ghastly bad one of them was looking.

The Prince now again mentioned to the men the signification of the variegated pistol-lights to be fired as signals ; a lieutenant reminded them where the grub had been put ; and at nine minutes to five the Prince started a little oil-engine, depressed a lever connected with a ratchet-wheel, and went up.

And swiftly the swarm of ten was aloft, and gone.

Chinnery alone remained, Oyone now standing with him by his boat at the shed-door ; and, " Something is wrong ", he sighed, his palm on his forehead, " I can't——"

" Try ", she said, lifting to his a face as wan as wax, as wan as his : " drink a little of this ".

She produced the same flagonette from which she had poured three drops into his wine.

" What is it ? " he asked.

" Ginseng ", said she.

He knew that ginseng was her cure for all human woes, and, to humour her, took the flagonette, having long got into the habit of doing her bidding mechanically ; and then—anything for a drink.

He glanced guiltily round, drank a gulp, and at once staggered against the door-post, where, with his forehead dropped forward, he stood ten, fifteen seconds ; then sighed, staggered backwards, staring, death-struck, into the shed, fell among boards and shavings, and lay still.

On which she with her wild white face went flying into the house, flew out again under a load of furs, a spade, a saw, hurled them into the boat, clambered in, started the little engine, depressed the lever ; and her planet sank and sailed away from under her, left her in space.

Two miles away eastward she saw the swarm of boats : she depressed a lever behind her, and followed.

The wind was almost ahead, rather raw, and, though not strong, it soon harangued the ear to weariness with its wrangling and ceaseless tongue at the boat's irruption and rush through it.

But, though heard, it was hardly felt, for the gunwale

for'ard was higher than the steerer's head, so that she had to lean a little aside to see the boats ahead.

She sat at a square hole in the deck, her feet on one of two ladder-steps that led to the bottom, tiller-ropes in hand ; and after the first two minutes a sense of perfect security warmed and welled in her.

Passing over Chelmsford, she buried herself within fur on fur, drank some ginseng, lit a cigar, and, throwing back her throat, began to sing loud, to howl a song, blasphemously above the thundering of the blast.

Meantime she took care to keep her distance behind—the speed like the elevation being regulated by a ratchet-wheel ; and the swarm in front thought that in her boat was Chinnery.

As they left Colchester on the left, and took the sea at Clacton, she shrieked to heaven like a fury : “ *Come, Li Ku Yu !* ”

Down there below appeared a little fleet of seven submarines with their mother-ship, making apparently for Harwich ; and here or there a sail, that looked stuck in the centre of immensity.

Soon, however, as she went on and on over the sea without any sense of motion or progress—for one wave was twin-brother to every other—a first fear occurred to her when she began, in a reaction, to feel sleepy—sleep meaning, she knew, that the petrol might exhaust itself, and the boat would go down, perhaps into the sea. She began to sing again, but lugubriously low in her throat, moaning gloomy things to the sea-gulls and the gust.

As the sun went down from its clouds and glories, now ahead appeared a crowd of glow-flies—the boats' green starboard, scarlet port, and white lantern-lights, some above her, some below, scattered, yet forming something of a bunch.

Now darkness reigned awfully, and with it a little drizzling of something ; no moon to be seen ; but between cloud-masses brand-new stars were crackling in crowds, not lying

round any sky, but profoundly back in the bowels of the boundless black.

They were over the glow that The Hague made when a pink pistol-light from the foremost boat cut the night.

This meant "Assemble"; and presently a blue shine shooting meant "Stop"; whereupon one of their number dropped to earth at a village to make sure of their whereabouts, though, as the wind was nearly ahead, little leeway was to be feared.

Meantime, the Prince and the rest, very perplexed and worried as to Chinnery, were thinking: "He must have turned back!"—for the half-caste, hiding in the night, had not lighted any of her lights.

Then when the investigator had mounted again and howled out "*Hague!*" a green glow streamed out, and the voyage was resumed; nor did it stop again, save once over a hamlet three miles from Brandenburg, whence they made a straight fly for Berlin.

Over the western suburbs the pilot signalled "Lights out," and flying as low as 1000 feet so as to be just visible to each other in the off-shine of the city, they went on eastward: the hour then 10.45.

Moving slow over the parts of Berlin eastward of the Thiergarten, they found the town in a state of the greatest uproar and eruption—hurrahs that rang and reigned in the air like echoes of cataracts—for no people on earth can cheer and blow off steam like Germans—national songs sung by multitudes, houses gala with flags, crowds careering through some streets, or standing blocked before some balcony or façade.

At the Austrian Embassy opposite that old home of M. Benedetti, so full of memories of '71, the boat's glasses saw a throng so thick, that a cigar-end remained on the back where it had dropped from a boat; and, even as the unseen boats moved over them, a roar broke out like a clap at the sight of the Ambassador, standing all smiles, on the balcony.

The fact was, that tidings of the *Mauretania* fight had not long arrived, to be at once hailed as a great German victory : for the two Germans, though sunk, had sunk a far greater weight of metal, and had achieved their objective—the destruction or capture of the *Mauretania*. Whereupon—*Hoch !* reeling beer-gardens, gush, flushed foreheads, flags, promiscuous dancing, hot heads, hats on high, hurrahs, special late editions—the tumult of the newsboys' hootings through the Unter den Linden soaring distinctly above the other tumults to the boats. England's day was done—call it to the stars !—another sun dawning.

At the Schloss the Emperor and Crown-Prince had but now presented themselves, when the crowd of ten boats cruised that road, for the roaring remained present in the air like an evaporation exhaling. What was moving in the gloom above their glee they little knew ; as those above them little knew what was above *them*.

Meantime, a fresh scheme had entered the Prince's head, his eyes now sparkling in spiteful thought ; he turned, and after following the boulevard westward, bent six points northward toward Bismarck Strasse, and the Spree.

He came to rest over a block of building by the river, twice blew a whistle, and slowly descended upon the building's top.

Now he ran soft a little to stretch his limbs ; and, as the next boat, Lieutenant Pilcher's, touched the roof, he ran to whisper : " Palace of the General Staff—*documents !* "

And by the time the others had alighted, these two had discovered an iron trap-door between two slate-roofs separated by areas of lead ; and the whisper went forth : " Bring rifles and a lantern ".

Lying flat, the ten got the trap-door up, and then, the lantern first, the Prince next, they stole down an iron ladder into a vast low place full of dust and darkness, save for one square of light in the centre of its floor. To this with thieves' feet they went, lay down, and peered beneath.

Here some wooden ladder-steps led down into a room :

and they saw there a man in spectacles reading a paper at a table that had two stoups of beer on it, he in undress uniform, his cap on ; and by a bed a woman undressing, abusing the man, who read, and took no notice ; and a redness of coke roared in a stove.

All in a wink the man was on his back under the Prince, a handkerchief in his throat ; the woman was in strange arms, her mouth stuffed up ; and Pilcher, who knew languages, was saying : “ Don’t struggle ! or we brain you ! ”

They then tore the bedclothes into strips, tied up the two, and taking the remainder of the strips, went out.

The place appeared not less vast in its darkness than a deserted city, and they had threaded a journey of interminable corridors and noble stairs, searching for some open door, before they came upon any sign of life—an off-shine of light afar at a corridor-end. They crept that way.

On prying round the corner, they saw the next corridor lit, and a sentinel stalking in the German toe-first way—a strapping “ tapferer Krieger ” of the 17th (West Prussian), who had heard talk of English beef, but never yet tasted.

“ Eyes front ! ”—too late. See the Prince sprinting like a spirit in his socks ! and like a cat he sprang and had him, Pilcher next. And from first to last hardly a sound from the man in the hands of handy Jack, but the crash of his tumbling musket.

The fellow lay writhing and grinding at his fetters, gurgling at his gag, his eyes gloating out of his head upon the ten rough ghosts grouped over him.

And now the Prince turned to the guarded door, which had “ Ratstube ” in gold letters over it ; and he very slowly moved the handle, and looked in.

In there, seated all round a long table in solemn conclave, he saw the leaders of Germany.

A large hall with walls of pallid apple-green ; the table all a medley of plans, maps, documents, books, charts ; and they sat on large chairs that gleamed.

Most of them the Prince knew well—Count von Athem

at the far head, Chief of the Army General Staff, and near at the foot Prince Radziwill of Prussia, Inspector-General of the Navy : for it was a General Conference of both branches of the Imperial Forces ; and there in the centre was Grand-Admiral von Bräckner, Chief of the Admiral Staff, near Field-Marshal Prince Albrecht of Prussia ; and yonder that bald skull and walrus moustache of Graf von Grossmann, Chief of the Reichs-Marine-Amt, and that piercing peeper in a pig's face of Naval Secretary of State, Herr Ohorn-Hartmann—and many other stars, orders, epaulettes.

The Prince muttered to himself, "*Mauretania*", flew to put on his boots, and get his rifle, then, returning to the door, said quite loudly, "Come, Pilcher, come, Burke", turned the handle, and was in.

See them now at that table—their faces ! if one can call them faces. There is a bewilderment that is ineffable !

The Prince bowed, grounding his rifle.

"Gentlemen, you are my prisoners", he said in English.

Each German looked into some other German face to see what German expression was printed there !

"No doubt you admit yourselves my prisoners", said the Prince—"considerable force at hand. Tell them, Pilcher, in French".

Pilcher bowed, and told them.

Now, it was impossible for them to doubt this : for down in the courtyard were six sub-sections of a grenadier company on guard, and their natural assumption, since these spectres stood before their eyesight, was that those sub-sections had been overpowered.

But prisoners !—in the middle of military Berlin, with Berlin shouting in victory about them ! And if *they* were prisoners, why, then, the war was at an end, Germany conquered.

All at once, as if the astonishment had just come upon them, they sprang unanimously to their feet ; and Count von Athem called out : "How—came you here ?"

"Sorry, gentlemen, no time for explanations", said the Prince: "you submit to superior force"—and glancing out he cried: "Let seven of you come in, and take possession of these papers".

Whereupon the seven blue-jackets trooped in in their great-coats, saluted, and set briskly to gather up plans, charts, maps, books, papers, like waiters clearing away.

Meantime, the whisper was running: "It seems to be the Prince of Wales!" and Graf von Grossmann leant his palms on the table to say: "May we demand to know——?"

But the Prince interrupted. "I see that you have water and fire, gentlemen, so I shall lock you temporarily in here. Good-night". He went out, locked the door, pocketed the key.

"Pity we aren't twenty instead of ten", he remarked, as they went up, leaving the sentinel in his bonds; but they released the man and woman above, after locking them in.

The war documents the Prince stowed into his own boat; and soon the swarm was on the wing north-westward for Spandau.

They arrived in five minutes, Spandau now deep in sleep, when a sound of great guns roused it—one, two, booms; and 60,000 human beings had sat up in darkness to hearken at that thing, when a sudden sense of destruction overwhelmed them all, a foreknowledge of overthrow, as a thundering broke out among them, and in some moments more the city was lit with a dusky dawn, as the arsenal darted and took the sky.

This town, besides, was crowded with military establishments, of which the Prince had well conned the map: so that the Small Arms Factory, the Gun Foundry, the Military School, the great Horse-market, the Barracks, the railway, all in turn came under the rain of shells: for thoroughness is not a quality confined to Germans; and those of the people who survived that night's experiences lived through them again in nightmares to their dying

day, having a stock recurring dream of screaming streets that ran, like men calling upon the rocks and hills to cover them.

In the town were some Garde-Grenadiere, No. 4 regiment and half of No. 3, and a battalion of Guard-foot-artillery : but sections of these could only be mobilised for moments when floods of Tophet burst among them, and the nerves of men shirked it, they having no idea whence the fire came, simply found it spouting it in their midst, and supposed Spandau to be surrounded by two hundred thousand troops.

It was an hour before it entered a dying colonel's head that this curse of fire might be coming out of the sky.

And then a 9-pounder balloon-gun, mounted on an armoured motor-car that had arrangements to resist the recoil of high-angle firing, was brought out of the Citadel, followed by what was left of the foot-artillery : for the night-glass of one gallant captain standing out on the glacis seemed to detect certain specks in the height beyond the night-mists—though it baffled understanding that aeroplanes could drop bombs with the precision with which these bombs dropped.

Anyway, the balloon-gun was produced and aimed ; but before any shot was discharged, it and forty men were shattered in a splash of shrapnel, and the rest fled through the carnage and darkness of the shrieking and reeking city.

Within fifty minutes Spandau was a conquered city, every trace of resistance at an end, and yonder within the Citadel's vast wall—a townlet within a town—the Julius Tower was half down.

Berlin, meantime, warned by telephone, was preparing to pour forth troops ; but before these could be moved, the *Ratstube* door in the Palace of the General Staff had to be broken open ; nor did any troops enter Spandau that night : for when the Tower was all down, and nine of the boats were engaged in getting in the gold, a tenth was always watching the Berlin road, to throw back any advance.

They found the gold piled in a square vault lined with steel, the mass occupying some three cubic yards in bars 10 inches long, some of the bars much broken and battered by the bombardment, inscribed, each of them, across its middle with "Reichs-Kriegs-Schatz, 54 Kg." (120 lb.); and after half-an-hour's toil in clearing away stone *débris*, they disposed the boats as conveniently as they could for the loading, threw out remaining bombs, and set to it, looking like ghouls grovelling there amid their gleams of green and crimson.

At twelve-thirty the workers heard musketry and balloon-gun booming going on in the direction of Berlin, but did not stop toiling; and presently the boat that had been up came down with the report of the enemy scattered, on which a loaded boat rose to keep guard.

At one-fifty the last bar of gold was dropped into Lieutenant Burke's boat, and the blue-jackets were then given leave to gather up the shattered fragments for themselves, which they did very shamefacedly and loth, tongue in cheek; everyone now wet with the sweat of the labour, worn out; and but slightly disposed for the dark flight back.

However, the Prince, who was a tough and merciless worker, would suggest no rest, for night was their friend; and at three minutes to two, rising with their three beams burning, they started to return home, loaded with this portion of France's war-indemnity to Germany, which the Prince purposed to return to France.

But, as their lights appeared in the air, the half-caste, who had been asleep for two hours in the hold of her boat in a field near by, started her little engine, and darkly followed, flying now well higher than the swarm.

At this hour the wind was much stronger, had changed several points to northward, was blowing now on the boats' starboard quarter, and causing far more lee-way than the leader seems to have realised.

Consequently, after failing to sight several landmarks,

and after looking out in vain for the lights of Arnhem when they had been in the air two hours and a half, he became anxious, and shot off pistol-lights to signify "Assemble" and "Stop".

It was that dark hour before any sign of dawn, though now Orion away down by the horizon was brighter and better than the Queen's Necklace, and there was one sphere in the sky that seemed a beetle of diamond beaming, with feet and feelers trembling round it, and very richly the shivering Fishes were shimmering.

And one of the boats was about to drop for inquiries at a solitary light in forested country which they could descry south of them, when a shower of eleven shells in pelting succession tumbled out of heaven upon the ten boats, as they stood bunched two thousand feet up.

One shell only missed, but was instantly followed by another.

Three did not explode ; but still wrecked the mechanism, and laid low the men.

And the ten boats fell.

CHAPTER X

THE "ASAHEL"

THE half-caste descended upon a path between two cop-pices on hill-sides, and rushing about the bush of one with a lantern, discovered the boats and bodies all within an area of forty yards.

One boat was standing bow-downward, its stern on a fir-tree ; another had hurtled into the ruins of a church buried in the bush, beside this boat being the butchered and burned body of Lieutenant Burke ; and all were much broken, for the boats' bottoms were not perfect parachutes for such a burden as they carried ; and, in the case of seven, what the earth had not smashed the explosions had shattered, one foot being found in a boat to whose occupant it did not belong.

Three of the men, at the shock of falling, had been tossed aloft by the deck-springs, and then had dropped back upon the boats—the Prince, Pilcher, and a blue-jacket.

Her first business was to remove these out of her way : so, climbing by the bits of timber nailed on as steps, she dragged and rolled them over the sides, a heat and vehemence in her, a gasping, her teeth-edges pecking together with spite at sight of the Prince's gashes, whose sweetheart's hand she might not shake, her raging heart revelling in all this death and rout and sense of power.

But the lifting of the bodies winded her, and presently she stood propped, panting ; and now her heat fast turned to cold.

For there were drippings amid the underwood ; there

were droppings of pine-cones that tolled and echoed ; dead leaves reeled at the breathing of the breezes through the timber ; the blue-jacket kept his neck sideward, interested in her with one eye, with that steady indelicacy of the dead : and, standing with her lonesome lantern-glow in the gloom of that unknown wood, with ghosts and all that load of gold and gallows-work on her hands, she threw her eyes reproachfully skyward, then suddenly, " Oh, I am afraid ", she breathed, and gave way to weeping.

But no time for weakness . . .

And first she dragged the blue-jacket out of her sight ten yards to a summit, rolling him over into bracken on the other slope ; did the same to the Prince and Pilcher ; and now ran out to her boat, rose, and lowered it within the wood, to have it hidden.

She then sat to ponder the problem of the treasure.

She had imagined that it would be a simple matter to bury it, but this now appeared to her in a different light. The ruins within the wood, however, quickly occurred to her alert wit, and on penetrating the mass of bracken and bramble which buried it, she discovered a slab with a ring behind the site of the sacrarium, and went prying down five steps into a damp apartment, whence a badger dashed out by her, whitening her with fright.

Here, she was sure, no human foot ever came, fixed upon it as her treasure-house, and during the hour that remained before daybreak was labouring at taking some of the bars fallen within the ruins down into the vault—ever afresh astonished, with every fresh bar, that anything so small could possibly be so ponderous.

But suddenly, as she was in the act of stepping with petty steps, loaded with a bar, the bar tumbled singing, and she stood a thing of marble, blanched : for about a stone's throw from her a throat had outraged the night's silence with the howl : "*Fire !*"—in English.

The next instant she felt herself drowned in a thousand deaths, as a racket of musketry seemed to crack her ear

drum, and she dropped shot-through with fear, for she thought that all the guns of the globe had discharged their bullets through her heart, and at an odour of smoke that floated to her nose she moaned.

And from far to the northward followed a rumbling of musketry, and a mortar barking ; and then, not far, a voice calling "*Charge !*" then a medley of voices crying : "*Retire ! Retire !*" then a cry : "*Who said Retire ?*" then a roar of a hundred throats : "*Charge ! Charge !*" and a rush of boots brushing through scrub—and in some minutes distant musketry—and a bugle going fluty—and stillness.

It was a skirmish of German and English outpost-garrisons going on—which meant that, so far from being in Holland, as she reckoned, she was somewhere near the Belgian frontier, this night-operation having been occasioned by the air-boats' lights, descried by the night-glasses of both garrisons, who were facing each other at a distance of eight kilometres : for, though aeroplanes with lights so bunched was a strange thing, each captain had taken them to be enemy aeroplanes sent up to reconnoitre his gun-emplacements, or drop bombs—a suspicion which the sudden vanishing of the bunch of lights had established : so both sides had sallied to attack.

As for the half-caste, this eruption of musketry shocked all effort out of her, and stock-still she lay on the steps, listening to a cricket screaming, hiding her eyes, leering like little mice that leer in fear ; nor was it until the sun was high that she ventured out of the wood, walked four miles, and took a room at a tavern.

But by three in the afternoon she was back within the wood. And now her first work was to bury away every trace of blood or flesh. She had a spade, a saw.

But great was her trouble, on going to the spot where she had dragged and rolled three of the bodies—not to see them.

She stepped down a steep piece of ground, very gloomy with bush, looking for them ; and had made perhaps twenty

steps when her left foot stepped upon nothing, and down with an outcry she fell ten feet.

There was cliff here, a road at its bottom ; and when she picked herself up, it was with a horrible pang that she understood that the bodies must have rolled down here—and been removed.

When she climbed back she sat wringing her hands, lamenting, thinking that all would be discovered now.

But she set afresh to business, and after burying every blood-stained bush in one shallow trench with the bodies, a work of hours, and after covering well with dead leaves, she began the vast task of sawing the unbroken parts of the boats into bits of a bigness which she could lift and bury.

In this labour of Hercules she spent two days ; and only when every trace of the ten boats, the guns, the German documents, were gone from the surface, did she go on with the work of carrying down the bars into the church-vault—a navvy's travail that harassed her soul four days, and made her groan at gold.

Meantime, her eyes were on the newspapers—on the tumult that was in Europe at the raid upon the Teuton treasure, the destruction of Spandau, the disappearance of the Prince of Wales.

That it was the Prince who had led the raid Europe soon knew. But where now was either Prince or treasure, companions or boats ?

Even in that turmoil of the world—commercial upheaval, tears of defeat, movements of fleets and troops, dearth of food, frenzies of triumph—men's minds were centred upon this thing, and a thousand thousand eyes were busied about the route between Berlin and London, seeking, seeking.

But the boats seemed to have been caught to the stars like the Argonauts' boat ! and as many fantastic guesses as there were men were made to explain the fantastic catastrophe that had caused them *all* to fall into the sea !—for after a

time only the Queen any longer refused to believe that they had fallen into the sea.

She had revealed that the boats were an invention of Mr. Chinnery, and that Chinnery himself had gone with the expedition—the Prince having told her that Chinnery would be going. So that no one had approached Chinnery for inquiries ; though during two days a crowd stood vaguely gazing at his house, little divining what lay in the shed behind.

It was only on the morning of the fourth day after the raid that a captain of Hussars happened to visit, at the street-end of the village of Plessy, one of the two field-hospitals of his division, which was following his company ; and he, entering his company ambulance-waggon to cast an eye at his sick, suddenly, as he stood over one of the spring-beds, stretched his finger at it, and said to a dresser : “ But *that’s* the Prince ! *that’s* he ! ”

That night the King and Queen were at Plessy, listening over that spring-bed to the Prince wandering a little, his left elbow broken, his forehead cut open.

How he had got there was soon investigated.

Three rustics, trudging in the daybreak of the night-operation, had noticed three bodies lying by the road in the bush at a cliff’s bottom, and had borne them to some company stretcher-bearers seeking their wounded with red-crossed arms in a field some way off.

Whereupon the stretcher-bearers, assuming them to be civilians wounded in the skirmish—for they were *en pékin*—had borne the two living to a first-aid dressing-station, whence they had passed through a main station to the field hospital.

So, then, the expedition had not, after all, fallen into the sea? Where, then, were the six million pounds, the boats? Tidy for a private fortune, six millions ! and the world set itself to search an area of some thirty miles round that church in which it lay.

Within three weeks this thing had become a crazer of

men's brains, hundreds of imbeciles in the rage and mania throwing up their daily occupations to become discoverers—seeking, not the treasure, but the boats ! which were the clue to the treasure, and many may have entered in vain that very wood in which boats and treasure were.

This was one of the Prince's first questions on the seventh midnight when he came to himself at Windsor : " But the treasure ? "

" No sign of it so far ", answered Engineer Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Barrington, K.C.B., who was a friend of the Prince, and had been much at his bedside.

" And Pilcher ? "

" Doing well. Broken humerus "

" Others all gone ? "

" All "

" But *what* made us fall ? "

" That is quite unknown "

" Chinnery—what does *he* say ? "

" But Chinnery perished, too "

" Chinnery did ? No ! Chinnery didn't come with us ! He started, but turned back "

" Then—I am in a maze "

" But the treasure—it is somewhere near where Pilcher and I were found, of course "

" No doubt : but where that is cannot be discovered, for the rustics who found and bore you to the stretcher-bearers cannot be discovered—owing, no doubt, to the fact that many of the villages in that war-area have been destroyed or abandoned, and the population in a fluid and migratory state "

The Prince stared at the battle painted on the ceiling ; and he murnured presently : " Well, this is how it was to turn out. I can't understand—see Chinnery to-morrow. But—the Queen ? "

Sir Robert Barrington's eyes softened and smiled. " The Queen is said to have been as brave as usual all through "

HP

[Has it not been mentioned that shortly before her marriage the young girl Minna Simmons pressed to her face, before throwing into a grate, the photograph of a young man?—which young man was now Engineer Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Barrington; and it may be mentioned that it was into Sir Robert Barrington's house in Grosvenor Place that the Queen and the Princess Elizabeth had seen the Prince let himself in with a key—with his Eulalia.]

Some minutes afterwards Her Majesty herself stole into the chamber, while Sir Robert and the nurses retired to its farthest shades; and the Prince, sitting up to receive Her Majesty, saw tears spring to her lids and her lip quiver, as she stood pressing his hand: but he noticed with some wonder that she did not kiss him, nor was long with him.

When day came a gentleman of the Prince thrice tried to telephone to Chinnery—without reply.

And that afternoon Chinnery's house was entered by the police by means of Monty's key—for a neighbour's servant knew Monty's abode.

Monty's statement was, that she had known that Mr. Chinnery was going away through the air, and she had not gone to the house the day after the expedition, but had looked in several times since to feed the cat, etc. And had she then seen nothing of Mr. Chinnery? She had seen nothing.

So now the place was searched throughout: but no sign anywhere of Chinnery.

And now a pernicious suspicion as to Chinnery crept into the public head: that Chinnery had wanted six million pounds! that he had not really turned back, as the Prince imagined, but had tracked the expedition in the dark, and destroyed it—for Lieutenant Pilcher, when he could speak, declared that he had had a distinct impression of shells being thrown upon the boats an instant before he lost consciousness.

And if Chinnery had really turned back—if Chinnery had

not now the treasure—where, then, was the treasure, and why was Chinnery now in hiding?

The truth, of course, was that, though Chinnery *was* in hiding, it was not he who was hiding himself, but the half-caste hiding him.

On the sixth midnight she had risen out of that brake in Lorraine, her six-days' labours ended, and, flying high, had wantonly dropped her last three bombs upon a German position outside Bouillon, as who should say: "I spit loud on you"; then, striking England near Deal, had left her boat in a field, had found out her whereabouts, had discovered London about 3 A.M., passed over it high, and come down into the Chinese house grounds at Regent's Park, unseen by any eye.

But even now she did not rest: one more labour; and then sweet sleep.

She had gathered from the papers that Chinnery had not yet been discovered in the shed: for, as she had foreseen, Monty had not looked into the shed, believing him away.

But she knew that Chinnery's body must soon be discovered, and then suspicion might fall upon her for his death, and for everything; but, if it was buried away, then suspicion might pitch upon Chinnery for destroying the boats.

She therefore determined to bury it quickly; to get that Redlike Ray of which she had heard, to send to China; and be done with Horseferry Road for ever.

So she walked through the Chinese house and the sleeping streets to some mews where A-lu-te's Chinese chauffeur lived; and in twenty minutes was driving for Westminster—with her spouse.

She found the house-door shut, but got in by an area-window; and, after sending the car to wait some way off, ran to the yard with a candle which her hand had no need to shade, that morning-hour was so calm and heavy with haze.

A black cat, unfed that day, flew mewing to her human friendship across the yard. She took no notice : stood listening, leering, to a policeman's feet beating up a street.

Then, crushing her reluctance, she entered the shed : there he lay, just as he had dropped in his fur-coat and chest-wrappings, his cap on his head ; and horror hopped in her heart when, as she peered, his head suddenly started up at her with awful eyes, crying harshly : "*Water ! Water !*", and tumbled back with shut eyes.

It bumped, in tumbling, upon a board, that sage head, never more now to be so sage and knowing, its cheeks concaves of famine and nearness to death ; and when, all at once, she perceived that he was living, pity pierced her to tears, compunction, love of him for his gentle love of her, love of him for being with the living, and not with the foreign dead ; and, instead of bringing him drink she lay with him, kissing his fingers, his lips, whimpering pity at his thinness ; but then ran and brought him wine.

But, living or dead, he had to be hidden—probably not for long, since he had never been strong, and could hardly outlive all this ill-treatment.

So now the question was to get him into the car ; and since he was too tall to lift, she called in her chauffeur, who bore him to the door, while she with her candle ran up to get the Redlike Ray.

It was a black box, cubical, two feet broad, and she knew exactly where it had been placed : for after the Prince had gone that day of his visit, she had watched Chinnery attach the cap which made it safe to handle, had asked many questions about it, had seen him lay it on the shelf by the lathe, and knew that he had not since removed it, for there it had lain on the day of the raid. But now it was not there . . .

She ransacked the room, stamping, exasperated—all the rooms : no box.

Fascinated and fretted, she kept on seeking, hissing at the thing, until weariness compelled her to give in; then, getting Chinnery lifted into the motor, she drove away an hour before daybreak to the Regent Park house, from which she intended him never more to come out.

Fourteen years previously a Member of the Peking Board of Civil Appointments had been kidnapped and imprisoned there in a back-room, which still had its two windows bricked up: here was to be the future home of Richard Chinnery.

It was not till the next noon that the lady A-lu-te knew that a stranger was in the house, when Oyone told her that her return to Court-life depended upon his captivity—A-lu-te now being old, and well under the sway of Oyone.

That same night of Chinnery's removal the Prince recovered consciousness, and the next day Chinnery's house was searched in vain for him.

Two days later Oyone once more went to Horseferry Road, for it was incredible to her that the Redlike Ray was not there: and first she went to question Monty, and then with Monty on to the house.

A brougham bearing the Prince of Wales' arms stood before the door, and two plain-clothes men, who would not let the pair enter, till Oyone explained that she was only going to a top-room to get some knick-knacks of her own; but she spied a little at the workroom keyhole, her teeth-edges pecking with spite at the sight of the Prince sitting alone in there, brooding on the stool, a bandage aslant under his cap, one arm in a sling. He had escaped her—twice: but still had been well peppered.

She guessed that he had come on the same errand as herself—to get the Redlike Ray: and this was true, for, with Chinnery vanished, he had remembered the terrible peril of the ray in the hands of unwitting, wicked, or

ambitious people ; and he, too, had searched in vain for it, and then had put the hunt in the detectives' hands. But he had come, moreover, to brood in that room over the gloomy enigma of his schoolboy friend, to ask himself there that ever-repeated question : " Where is Richard Chinnery now ? " for he did not believe that Chinnery had fallen into the sea.

Anyway, Chinnery was gone, the Redlike Ray gone, all the boats gone—he still ignorant of the secret of their mechanism ; though, if he had known that secret, boats like them might have brought the war to a quick end.

However, he was not long lamenting there, having that afternoon to go northward to join his *Asahel*.

For it was fairly certain that a world-battle on the sea was impending ; it was in everyone's mouth that an attempt was about to be made to invade Britain ; and the result of the *Mauretania* battle had loaded men's brains with boding.

Indeed, a thousand evil dreams that week were in everyone's mouth, for suddenly a disease of jumpiness had seized upon the people, and behind each door a ghost was ogling.

A company of soldiers marched up Pall Mall, and men rushed to windows with wildness in their eyes to see if they were Prussians.

Visions of vague things were seen sailing in the air, visions of phantom fleets which vanished seen on the sea.

On a gentleman's aeroplane appearing in the air, the villages of Alvington and Alburton near Chepstow took fright, and precipitated themselves like one man into bramble and spinney.

Men swore that drums were rumbling and guns booming where it could not be that guns were booming ; rich ladies living on scrip stood cool and courageous for days, and suddenly one day, terror-struck, were away, as though

hounds were mouthing at their heels, to the mountains of Wales.

Yet, even in the thick of this state of scare, when the nation gathered that the Prince of Wales was being permitted to go to a battle with his arm in a sling, it found time to frown at it.

Everybody felt that he had already abundantly served his country for this war—for the subtraction of those 120 million marks from Germany's rather meagre war-chest was a grievous gash.

Accordingly, when at 2 o'clock he drove toward King's Cross, he was astonished to find the whole *route* thronged, and the people cheering with so much heart and friendship, that his eyes softened ; and, though his forehead was still bandaged, he kept bending toward his brougham window, lifting his cap.

This may have loosened the bandage somehow ; for at the corner of Southampton Row Eulalia, on her toes in the crowd, was afresh breathing to herself : "Heavens ! how like", when the bandage and dressing lifted with the lifting cap, and she got a sight of the long gash, her nurse's eye noticing that it had a hook over the right eye.

She felt a kind of property in him, he was "so like!", wished that he would see her, and clapped loud ; but her clapping was drowned in the row, in the shouts of "*Teddy!*", the eager god-speeds : for it seemed to everybody a needless hardship that he should rise from bed to join his squadron.

"*Needless*"—since no one (or very few) had any particular faith in his ideas about ships and sea-fighting—though it was well known that he had ideas of his own, that from his cadet-days he had been a rebel in the Service, and that he had got two ships built to his liking—the *Asahel*, of which he was the "Captain" (a courtesy-title), and the *Blunderbus*.

But those ships he had only managed to get built with the greatest difficulty ; and one memorable night had cried to

the Queen : " Oh, Mother, if *you* don't believe in me, who will ? "

" Teddy ", the Queen had answered, " you have knowledge, but you are not an expert ".

" Expert ! " he had cried—" I despise experts. Chinnery is not an ' expert '—he is just a thinker : and he agrees with me that the Dreadnought ship is wrong from control-station to keel. Experts ? Their intellect gets quite fixed ! like putty in a hole—except when it is rushing off into little crazes and scares : as when forty years ago France started torpedo-boats, and the cry was " battleships must be abandoned ! " Then happened Tsushima, and ever since it's been Tsushima, Tsushima, on the brain, and the battleship rage. But at Tsushima, the fighting was all on one side !—the Russians did not *pretend* to be any good, or all the battleships on both sides would certainly have sunk ".

The Queen had asked him how he could be so sure of that ; and he had answered : " Mother, it is common-sense. A battleship is a weak thing, because she is a compromise between two efforts—to be heavy, and to be light. But guns have definitely beaten armour, Mother—definitely—such armour as ships of any speed can carry, so what's the good of their armour ? And they can't run away, their armour so limits their speed, so what's the good of their speed ? Oughtn't they to have enough armour to be some good, and no speed, or enough speed, and no armour ? not a useless little of both ? "

In the end the Queen had said : " I will use what influence I have for you " ; and Engineer Vice-Admiral Sir Robert Barrington had helped, too.

So the *Asahel* and *Blunderbus* had been built.

What was the *Asahel* ? She was not a destroyer : the *rôle* of the destroyer is to sting and fly : the *rôle* of the *Asahel* was to fly and sting.

She was not a *Dreadnought* : she was smaller than any third-class cruiser. She was not a third-class cruiser : she carried bigger guns than any *Dreadnought*.

She was the very swiftest thing at whose rage and chase the sea's face had ever changed colour—her contract-speed forty-eight knots.

As for the *Blunderbus*, she was a semi-submarine *Dreadnought*, with a speed of six knots.

CHAPTER XI

GERMANS IN PALL MALL

Germany had some 854,000 tons at Emden—53 capital ships—which the British sought to blockade and contain, lying in a long curve beyond Borkum (the island that lies before Emden).

The British were the 1st and 2nd Divisions, consisting of all newest battleships with their affiliated cruisers, destroyers, dépôt-ships, and with them half the French 1st battle-squadron, all under the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir Richard Ramsay, borne in the *Lion*.

But this idea of containing had not lasted three days when it changed into the keenest eagerness to draw to a battle—firstly because it was realised that the Germans were awaiting the to-be-purchased Japanese ships, said to be “coming round the Cape”, and then because of the mobilising of three *corps d’armée* upon Larrelt, and of an accumulation of troopships and war-*matériel* under the guns of Wilhelmshaven (connected with Emden and Borkum by the Ems-Jahde Canal).

Now, Emden had not always been a naval station—for capital ships; nor Larrelt a garrison-town. The dredging of the Emden fairway, and the establishment of vast barracks at Larrelt had been costly; hence that spot had long been looked to by us as the base of “invasion”; and now “invasion” was bitter in the bread and beer, and dreadful in the dreams, of Britain.

The danger was probably not so acute as was assumed: for, as a matter of fact, trouble was in the German Admiral-Stab in those very days at the message from the East that

—the “purchased” fleet seemed to have vanished somehow! for ever since a steamer of the Yusen Kaisha fleet had sighted it in trouble in a typhoon near the Kiu-Kiu reefs, no report of them! Vanished!—that mass. On which there are indications that doubt and hesitation entered into the counsellors of Germany.

But there had really been an awful Autumn storm in the China Sea; and two days afterwards Europe seemed to have caught it. Then began “the great gale”.

During two days the sun went out, the heavens, as it were, tinted with inks; and the blockading vessels, with seas breaking through casemates and screen-doors, fled from the face of a tempest that fell upon them at eighty-five miles an hour; while chill trembling fell upon Britain with the instinct that now was the German chance while a pitched battle on the sea was an impossibility.

A King’s-messenger coming wild with tidings in the Ostend mail-boat was lost within sight of Dover, where the breakwater and Admiralty Pier were under water, large storm-doors were washed down, offices wrecked on the Main Pier, ships fouled and ashore in the Naval Harbour.

It fell upon the *Asahel* half-way to Emden, and the Prince, after a defiant fight, had to fly S. by W. half a night with the sea on his port quarter. Life-lines rigged for the seamen to secure equipment could not save two bluejackets from being washed overboard, so swung were the feet between deep and steep, and only two of the boats were not torn from their davits.

Meantime, no one in the *Asahel* was asleep, since tons of water were washing even over engine-room hatchways down into the engine-depths, the seamen’s mess awash, water in the wardroom, in the wireless room, in the Prince’s cabin, having plunged down through a broken scuttle and wardroom funnel, so that she seemed as much within the sea as on it.

The Prince, sitting on a narrow end of a lashed trunk, his

brow-bandage spotted with blood, his shins bare, was swinging his head about over a concertina, playing "Onward, Christian Soldiers" to the legion of dæmons that seemed careering with shrieks through the rayless air. This was what *he* called fine weather, and a delightful night.

But as he rocked and rollicked there in his solitary cabin, things blacker than the night were in the back of his mind, for he understood that doom was hanging over the land of his love.

And the instant he could dare to turn back, on that murky daybreak of the 23rd, he turned the *Asahel's* bow to the mountains, seeking his fleet.

But the day was only a less dense kind of night—no observations to be taken, no certainty even of his position.

He staggered up the outside of his tripod-mast (the tripod-tubes could not be climbed inside, they were so slight and light—but high), and, riding there, he clung on long, one-handed, with a troubled brow, frowning over the sea which swung and flung him, his hair stretched between his head and the wind, and in his bosom a boding that the feet of foreigners were even then *en route* to violate the pride of that island that had proved herself the rightful ruler of rulers.

Now, he could act in the situation almost as he chose, for he had long been a sort of institution apart in the Service, having come to be looked upon as something of a free-lance, his two ships were so unique, and so due to his pressure upon the Construction Department.

They had cost the country only £2,400,000 ; and men had said : " Well, to humour him . . . he is a Prince ".

His *Asahel* was under 2000 tons, without torpedo-tubes, unarmoured, without armoured deck, but of powerful scantling, strongly braced, to carry two 20.6-inch (unarmoured) wire-guns of 50 calibres on turn-tables, one for'ard, one aft—to be fired one at a time ! since one took and shook her like a tempestuous stepmother.

Besides, she had four (unarmoured) 4-inch quick-firers in

échelon pairs amidships for mosquito-attack, a little balloon gun, and a little Maxim.

Her "captain", having seen no other ship on the sea, near ten o'clock came to a decision, and wirelessly to the *Blunderbus*—to learn that the *Blunderbus* was steering south, practically under water, fifty miles from the English coast, and now somewhere in latitude 55° , opposite Sunderland. The *Asahel* pricked off eight points to port to seek her.

It was about three minutes afterwards that the Prince said to a boy-servant at his cabin-door: "Here—*hist*—tell me if you hear anything". He caught the boy's arm, and they listened, lurching, clinging. But the boy shook his head.

"Now!—*hist*!" the Prince hissed.

"Is it gun-fire, Sir?"

"You heard?"

"It struck me I did hear something like thunder somewhere".

"Go through the ship and ask".

Only 3 of 120 had heard anything, yet gun-fire was actually going on to the north-east, where a German battle-squadron was destroying a flock of ten "Tribal" class destroyers and two scouts, the *Adventure* and *Boadicea*—all the twenty-eight warships having found themselves mixed up together on a sudden; and astern of the squadron were discernible in the murk some nine to twelve liners.

The destroyers made no attempt to fly—it was too late; the scouts attempted, but some of a crowd of quick-fire shell (which mostly shot the sky or the sea-bottom) disabled the two little cruisers.

The ten decided to sell their lives dearly; and a fleet of twenty-five torpedoes went piercing the swell, kept tolerably steady by their gyroscope-pull, while an exclamatory racket of pop-guns from the boats and of 4, 6, 8-inch shot from the giants, as the two fleets tore through each other was shrieked by the winds far over the North Sea.

But there were many more shots than torpedoes, the British all sank, the little *Boadicea* moving ten seconds on a

mountain-summit, her bow perpendicular, two funnels showing, two hidden in the sea ; and with her went down into dark water the 27,000 tons of the thundering *Aegir*, which the billows bounded upon and devoured when her propellers were blown away ; and always near her at the sea-bottom will be the *Kaiser Karl der Grosse*, which graciously raised and exposed her port bottom to a torpedo as it posted near, and was opened beneath her boilers ; and down into dark water went two of the troopships with six thousand infantrymen, born without a caul.

It was this brief affray that faintly reached the ear on the *Asahel* ; and an hour later there was another, unheard by her, far south.

The enemy, in fact, guessing the English more or less demobilised by the gale, were slipping across in the gloom in three groups by three *routes*, to rendezvous in the latitude of Hornsea : thence to effect a landing wherever coast-defence was least effective, the moment the condition of the sea should permit.

Then, after the landing, to fight for a clear sea—for the *Mauretania* lesson had been rapidly analysed and learned in Germany : and now their hope was mutual destruction in one great struggle after invasion, thus to secure to the invading troops communication with their base.

As for the British third and fourth lines of defence round the coasts—old battleships, destroyers, submarines, coast-guns—these alert, but scattered, would hardly be formidable to such a mass of metal.

However, at eleven that night the *Asahel* spied two of the three groups just effecting a junction 90 miles E. by N. of Hornsea.

She knew where she was now and could just wireless the *Blunderbus* to come, though the apparatus had been put out of gear by the gale. The *Blunderbus* answered, but only one of the *Asahel's* other messages was answered—by a scout, and the sound told that it came from far.

She lay now nine miles from the outermost details of the

converging Germans, forging slow, and, herself hidden, could see them fairly well, for although something of a gale still gunned its gusts, the sea had quieted, and the sky, wild that night with flying vapours, was alight with constellations which sailed like a navy gliding, gliding, the half-moon their flag-ship guiding them.

The Prince thought : " They are waiting for others ".

And he thought : " To-morrow ! Will God make the sun rise bright for England ? "

All that night his eyes did not shut. He watched that host as a famished wolf watches food which is just beyond his jaw.

Meantime, the *Asahel's* three lights were out, and thrice in the night, shy as a fowl, she was in flight from scouts of the enemy, coming in or out.

It had happened so that all the world-burden had fallen upon his one back, and he had to handle it : but to tackle a navy ! He knew that one half-a-shell would finish the *Asahel* ; and he knew that she was a nearly useless thing if much mist was on the sea.

The gale seemed to have cleared the sea of craft—not a tramp, not a smack, to be seen ; and even when day broke he did not know what to do. To await the *Blunderbus* ? To seek the fleet ? To venture to lose touch with the armada in order to warn the shore ? No wireless ! His aching head sweated with the care and weight of it ; and though Brockweir boys never " prayed," thinking that irreligious, he, oppressed to passion as day began to break, dropped down in his cabin, crying out : " Guidance ! "

After this he watched the sun come, watched fifteen ships join the armada, seven of them warships with quite a battered aspect, like ships after a battle, looked at the saluting of the colours, breakfasted, attended " prayers ", ordered a ration of grog for the ratings ; and, now though pale, pale, an uplifting spirit was in his feet, a pride in his eyes, and in his blood a sense which his mother had blent in him that the sea was his dominion.

The day had come quite bright and clear ! the wind no longer particularly strong ! the *Asahel* rolling through less than three degrees ! and the band brabbling "Rule Britannia !"

She watched the Germans roll themselves in smoke, form into column of divisions—two endless lines ahead, sixteen cables apart—and set out at the speed of their slowest detail for England.

And she stood still, and watched.

But she was busy—her guns cast loose, their crews raising shells by dredger-hoists from magazines, her chief engineer down in the deeps seeing to his steam-power, to his air-compressor for quick reversing ; the Prince and his little staff up in their control seeing to their range-clock, their long-based 18-ft. range-finder : and suddenly the *Asahel*, which could be at her top speed within six seconds, sprang and ran the sea.

The smokes stooped at her funnels like the ears of the deer which he lowers, shying, as his feet fly into fleetness (her central shaft was oil-driven—a Diessel 2-cycle—her wing-shafts turbine-driven, with oil-fuel) ; and like the galloping stag she was gone.

Hope at this hour was high in the heart of Grand-Admiral von Grad as to the outcome of the expedition, no scout of his in sight, no scout of the British, for he had sunk or dodged all the "whiskers" of the main British body ; and he was looking over the brightness of the sea that played blue-and-white in the aisle between the two processions of ships steaming gallantly beneath their flags that streamed on the breeze—captain's pennant, rear-admiral's flag, vice-admiral's, and astern the German ensign, the Eagle screaming with greed, his talons sharp.

This was "the Event !"—Invasion—so often toasted with hochs ! in officers' mess or Service-club ; and it was to be like this—something like a holiday ! a gala of flags on a glad morning after storm—almost too good to be true, yet true.

True—till the *Kaiser* burst into turbulence beneath the Grand-Admiral's heels, he in a whirligig hurtling thirty yards toward the firmament in the midst of a midnight of smoke, his dark and tragic chariot.

For a shot (weighing 1988 lbs.) had entered her from 18,000 yards to northward, where nothing of the *Asahel* was visible to the glass but a misty thing that might be a smack's mast ; and to the *Asahel* herself nothing but the upper-works of the battleships was visible.

Hence for fifteen seconds the enemy could only think that the *Kaiser* had exploded spontaneously ; until the *Blücher*, too, broke into smoking before their stare ; and then their conscience smote them.

Think of a bell tolling once every fifteen seconds—four doleful times a minute—a passing-bell that tolls for you before you are gone, and, as it tolls, you go : so did the *Asahel's* two guns go, one every thirty seconds in turn and turn—like scurrility and banter bandied betwixt Jove and Jehovah from hill-tops, and before the tremblement of merriment could finish in her ribs at the ribaldry of Jove, Jehovah joked and shook her.

She had, in fact, a special type of breech-block and obturator which made her guns capable of very rapid handling, the opening of the breech-mechanism by hand occupying less than five seconds through the power of toggle-levers ; her shells and cordite, moreover, were separately raised ; her gun-layers cooler than men in the fury of a fight—for she was not a fighter, but an executioner ; their ears were deeply protected ; and as the gun-sights were adjusted from the control-position by a little electric motor that drove the hydraulic-engine valve (transmitting both range and deflection), the gun-layer had merely to keep the gun on the target, and fire it.

Also, the error of her range-finder was only 39 yards in 18,000 : so that four out of five shells struck. And some that fell short still struck : for they had caps with little slots in them all round, through which slots bits of tinplate dropped

down (by their own gravity), and these acted as planes, as the shell flew : so that, if it struck the sea, it neither ricocheted, nor was refracted by the water density. These little planes—a Chinnery contrivance—were said, moreover, to lessen wind-influence, and to affect that “pendulum motion” of shells.

Now, the wind had been too gusty for aeroplane scouting ; none of the armada’s scouting ships had so far reported the *Asahel* ; and, as her structure had been kept quite dark from the spies, her sudden shells so whelmed the armada with wonderment, that three German ships had been death-struck, and that pea-soup hull of the *Cesarewitch* was flurriedly sinking, before ever the Admiral Second-in-Command could signal order-of-battle : and a battle-squadron of eight started northward after a swarm of destroyers to silence those two disastrous wraths.

At the same moment the air began to grow populous with aeroplanes popping aloft, and guns had begun to growl in crowds.

The *Asahel* did not fly : went on her westward way following the main body of the enemy, steadily sending it bales of cordite, while her three hydro-planes bounded down her bow-rails, and went mounting in spirals as narrow as aeroplanes may, climbing to protect her from the flying flock.

During which, mortality and arson were so actively harvesting among the armada, that soon another squadron was starting northward ; and within three minutes practically the whole force was evolving northward—forming, as they evolved, such a throng, that it was almost impossible for the *Asahel*’s bombs not to tumble upon something ; so that, in the press, an 11-inch shell of the manœuvring *Elsass* smashed up one of the 3-gun turrets of the *Dante Alighieri* near : for an *Asahel* shell had entered the *Elsass* under-water, at which she coughed consumptively a cough which rent her frame, and red was her hæmorrhage, her armoured deck tearing lengthways like cardboard which one tears, several of her bulkheads riddled, flame breaking

out in two places on her gun-deck, whereat she, like a distracted creature, who, starting from dreams, fires out right and left with fist and foot at friend and foe alike, fired her loaded guns among the crowd round her.

What was the *rationale* of those "armoured decks" and "bulkheads" in those ships it is at this date impossible to say. They were very heavy, and death to the ship's speed—the deck some 3 inches thick, the bulkheads some 10—but much too thin to resist gun-fire, just offering sufficient resistance to explode shells to the best advantage, so that they would have been better made of tin, wood, or compressed paper. The *Asahel's* packages that she posted made light of them.

Packages like trunks—deferred-action shells, with adapted fuses to explode after penetration, thick-walled like the *obus alourdi*, and cased in aluminium to lessen erosion, so that the "life" of the two guns was as high as 180 rounds : she had only to keep out of harm's way, and keep on firing, to make that day a date for ages.

Gossip has said that one of those shells made a hole eight feet across right through the cruiser *Gnaisenau*, and, coming out on the other side with a downward deflection, struck the big *Helgoland*, which, smartly smacked on her bottom, clamoured flammivomitant.

But now the *Asahel* is in flight northward : for at the second of two spent shells which crashed upon her deck without bursting, but smashing five limbs by their mass, she, shy as a bird, turns tail, and now is hurling only end-on fire from her stern-gun.

"But we are going right for the *Blunderbus*, if God send her", the Prince called out, though none of his party caught it, for now the air of the North Sea was in such a state of wave-agitation at the guttural going-off of guns, as if the globe had been tumbled into some boiling pot that bustlingly boiled with bubblings and bumpings, boxing with hubbub the squealing ear ; and as he stood looking abroad with his palms on his ribs, the wind caught a laugh out of

his mouth : for now all the south heaven was already red as with the fires of ten thousand pyres rising, as dreadfully red as the death-day of Nature, and the ocean's floor a cemetery of flames.

"And surely", he thought, "this firing must be audible over all the North Sea, over all the coast ! Help must come !"

At that moment, looking over the spiked rim of the control, he saw a man who had dropped from the clouds stab his bowels upon the bow ensign-staff, while an aeroplane rained down, with bombs and another man, some yards to starboard ; and aloft he saw a swarm, and war in the air, and bombs falling here and there, and his balloon-gun potting at the planes in vain.

But the *Asahel* was (theoretically) in no danger from aeroplanes, not only because her own three, climbing direct from her, had the higher position, but because, with her speed and theirs, there was as little likelihood of their striking her as of her striking them. Her balloon-gun, in fact, proved a useless tool in practice.

But, beside aeroplanes, there came tearing in her wake a navy of destroyers, high stems trailing low trains of hull through furrows of froth ; and although she easily distanced them, even as, one by one, she sank them, they kept her "on the run", and from dealing so effectively as previously with the *Dreadnoughts*.

She was, in fact, made to co-operate with the *Blunderbus* ; and the *Blunderbus* was away.

But she had not been nine minutes in flight when a wild cheer reached to the men in the skies from the men on her deck : yonder, hardly seven hundred yards off on her starboard bow, was the *Blunderbus* ploughing.

The glasses had not seen her until now ! she was so low in the water, foamless owing to her slowness—and painted sea-blue.

Moreover, there were only two objects on her deck, both sea-blue—a low conning-tower, and a low column which

carried some searchlights, with a little stick on it for flagstaff. She had no funnels (oil-driven), no mast, no super-structure, no deck-guns, even her boats being between-decks at the sea-level.

As they dashed past each other, the *Asahel* dipped ensign, and signalled to the *Blunderbus* : " England ".

And the *Blunderbus* signalled back : " England ".

And each went her way, the *Asahel* flying, firing, the *Blunderbus* silent, advancing.

Until, in ten minutes, she was amid the throng of destroyers, almost before they had marked her : and harshly with a snarl she sank them, and passed on.

In three minutes more all between her and her horizon were battleships battering at her, she at them.

Now, their biggest guns were considerably the bigger, hers being all Woolwich-type 9.2-inchers near the sea-level : so it was only a question of time which sank first, she or they.

But her armour was not only so thick that no shell in existence could pierce it at 2000 yards, if it had been smooth armour, but it was not smooth armour, she had the appearance of a hedgehog, horrid all over with spears and nipples, like a cavern of stalactites, so that instead of being pierced by a shell, she pierced the shell ; and only protracted smashing at some one square yard of her could hole her.

And, though but little bigger than an ordinary super-Dreadnought, her displacement was 48,000 tons, so great was her draught : she being equally thick all over, even her upper deck being one bulk of rough Krupp 19.5 inches thick, like a district of spikey ice in Iceland, and her conning-tower a box 76 inches thick.

She was instantly deluged under shells.

Three of the huge *Thüringens*, and two of the *Nassauss* (18,000), were all at one moment within 2000 yards of her, and these together sent forty shells from forward and aft turrets, and from two of their central turrets placed at the four corners of citadels.

But, even so near, she was not very distinguishable from

the sea ; and her own fire-delivery was pretty rapid—three rounds per gun per minute—guns that were protected by traps that dropped automatically after explosion, and then rose a moment for the shot to pass, and dropped, like quick-winking lids, the guns themselves having little range of movement, her rudder playing a part in their aiming. She was, in fact, fought wholly from the conning-tower, from which also she was steered, her steering-gear all under armour, and her rudder of such a tonnage, that three Schneider torpedoes, with charges of 331 lb., could not shatter it all.

Also, since she was made for a *mêlée* and hand-to-hand hell-play, a steady stream of torpedoes went speeding out from her numerous tubes.

And it was quick work, and stern work, and showery work, all Germany shouting, all England grinning in the grimness of a three-minutes' struggle for the government of a globe.

Like razors the rain of shells shaved her of her spikes and nipples, and it was next a question of picking a way through her thickness inch by inch, for she was impregnable else everywhere, except in her propellers.

And while they made her white, soaping her with foam to razor her whiskers, she razored their flesh, and made them red.

Half a salvo of her port guns transformed the starboard side of the *Nassau* into scrap-iron cracked and rent from end to end ; in five minutes a conflagration was raging within the great *Ostfriesland*, aspiring high like a spire out of her chart-house top ; yonder limped the *Thüringen* like one knee-sick ; and the *Moltke* with solitary oratory away yonder to the north was prophesying dolorously of her death, with one *Asahel* and several *Blunderbus* poison-pills rumbling in her belly ; so that after six minutes it was quite a fresh bunch of the enemy which the *Blunderbus* was bludgeoning to the sea-bottom.

Even when a hole was bored into her starboard quarter

she did not sink, as the shot chanced not to smash the walls of the compartment into which the water washed, though her bulkheads were only one-eighth inch thick ; and six minutes afterwards, when at last a wave swept over her desert esplanade of deck, and she lurched and gurgled like a world, and was gone, it was at an *Asahel* portmanteau of cordite which had come and crashed through and through her.

For the *Asahel's* two guns, grown hoarse in the throat, were throwing now less effectively ; and the *Asahel* herself, slowly sinking, was being kept afloat by her pumps—a boxful of aeroplane bombs, by very bad luck, having tumbled about and hulled her, blowing down her mast among other things, injuring all the control-party, killing three gun-layers.

But she had still most of her speed, and was now following northward a flock of troopships which, a long way inland, were stealing north before turning east for Germany : for out of sight to the south, two British squadrons which had come up were now engaging the relics of the enemy.

And in the latitude of Flamboro' Head, at ten past eleven o'clock, the Prince, who had afresh broken his broken arm in the crash of the mast, suddenly recommenced the attack, the land-troops being convoyed now only by the cruisers *Fürst Bismarck*, *Yorck*, and *Roon*.

Soon after eleven-thirty the *Fürst Bismarck* sank, the *Yorck* stood motionless, and the little *Roon* struck her flag.

The *Asahel*, on which a pole-mast had now been rigged, then signalled the crowd of troopships and liners southward, and, shepherding the 32 of them, was not permitted to sink until she had come up with the British.

It was only when taken into the *Lion* flag-ship, that the Prince heard of the *Blunderbus's* fate, and shook the hand of her captain, of some of her 680 (seven had been wounded).

He then heard also of a terrible brief battle between the two fleets, disastrous to both, the enemy seeking to break away and escape eastward, with a success of probably seven capital ships only.

The business of putting prize-crews into the liners, into three captured ships-of-war, and three mine-sweepers with trawls, now went forward, the sea lying fairly quiet, the sun sunny above.

At three in the afternoon the crowd started southward for the Thames-mouth.

And during the next two days London saw that spectacle which she had so dreaded, Prussian troops pouring through London : but prisoners.

Troop after troop, regiment on regiment, all day long, streaming through the teeming streets to the stations for the prisons, all London on its pavements, at its windows, patiently seeing it through, in wonderful weather like spring.

There seemed no end to them !—grand gallants some of them, regiments of giants, shining helmets of the 17th and 3rd (West Prussia and Brandenburg), Bismarck cuirassiers, uhlans—Prussian, Russian—curious uniforms of troops in ruby robes flowing loose (Turkomans), with sapper battalions, and specimens of Terek cavalry, and horse-grenadiers garbed in laces and epaulettes, the rain-bow variegations of Russian regiments.

And since there are hours in which our country bounds to the very plane of greatness, never a bravo from all those crowds of spectators was raised to break their hearts, as they silently passed, unfortunate but haughty, through silently haughty lines. Only the bells of Britain could not be kept from breaking into melody, telling one to the other of it ; and the name of God was in many mouths.

When the Crown-Prince, a prisoner from the *Fürst Bismarck*, had the taste to say in our Prince's car on the way from Limehouse that the victory had been won by the weather, our Prince is said to have made the answer : " Nothing more fickle than weather, Your Imperial Highness ; but you may rely upon it for being always on the side of this island ".

Even at the Prince's passage the streets hardly cheered ;

a few flowers struck him ; men bent their heads, and stood dumb.

When a king, a prince, a duke even, is not absolutely beneath humanity the people tend to consider him a man of ability ; if he is that, they consider him a great man ; if great, they regard him as godlike. And so now.

On first learning the news of the Battle of the North Sea, the Queen had run into a room of the King at Windsor, and, dropping her forehead upon him, had called out " *Oh !* ", then broken down into sobbings, as who should say, " Here is the money which long since you lent me, which I now pay back in full, with interest ".

Those were her lordly days, in which she stalked exalted on air, her eyes alight. To hear these bells she had lived and endeavoured.

But all in her bliss was one bitter bit : and an uglier tone of malignity now envenomed her against the girl who mingled alegar in her glass of gladness, and rendered imperfect her crowning hour.

From thoughts of that girl she would turn to lavish pettings upon the Princess Elizabeth ; who, however, was in no pretty mood just now.

Wildly in love with the Prince, the Princess had always disliked him in a sort of patriotic spite and jealousy ; and never letting him out of her thoughts, she was always either dreaming amorously of him, or speaking slightly of his alleged admirableness.

Seeing him now bring her brother a prisoner, a venom of tenfold love and of tenfold enmity poisoned all her nature to a nest of snakes.

Nor was she solitary in this morbid and, in fact, mad passion for the Prince of Wales, considering the singular epidemic of love-sickness which suddenly broke out among girls shortly after the North Sea event, infecting high society and low alike, *débutantes*, milliners, resulting within one month in four suicides. One poor Margaret, a Norfolk farmer's daughter, after going haggard with her love-hunger,

drugged herself with hedge-hemlock, and was discovered dead and at rest in a bed of hay, with her "Teddy's" photograph under her face—and there were others.

Meantime, the nation named him "saviour", called him both darling and father of his country, and, demanding the waiving of ceremony, clamoured for his elevation to flag-rank.

He was also at once appointed a member of the Permanent Committee of National Safety.

"But", said the then Duke of Ornfold, an unkempt little gentleman with a beard teeming with micro-organisms, to the then Marquess of Nullidarline in a Pall Mall Club that night of the Prince's coming, "it might have been better for our lot if the Germans had come".

Whereat the Marquess—a young man who stood every inch a lord, tall, left arm akimbo, right leg cocked, lifted his finger to utter something prophetic, but checked himself.

In truth, the aristocracy, as a caste, had long distrusted the Prince, did not quite like all this idolisation of him, and looked forward with dismay to the day when a King who was a scientist and a thinker should come to the Throne.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRINCESS

Meantime, the Queen could not rest—for her happiness and her wretchedness.

For to one highly happy a mote in the eye is a calamity ! and a mouse in one's soup as huge as a mountain.

“ But for that—that *one* thing ”, she sighed, “ ah ! how well would it be with me to-day ! ”

The spot of drab looked black as soot ; she hated ; and on the day that the Princess Elizabeth said to her : “ Ah, Your Majesty, you have seen yourself—there is a life between Teddy and me ”, the Queen hurried to the New-market Parlour, and scribbled in an agitation : “ I must speak with you. To-night at nine I will be at your house ”.

But in order to “ speak with ” Sir Robert Barrington, it might have been a possible thing to summon him to the palace, perhaps ? The weathers and well-springs of even a Queen's inwards can be very queer.

Now, it happened that Sir Robert Barrington was at the Admiralty when that note was handed in at his door ; thence he drove to a club ; and it was only when dining there at seven-forty that the note caught him.

The Vice-Admiral was profoundly moved—filled with a thousand wonderments : and after ten minutes deliberation in a brain of no little strength and judgment, he rose sharply, wrote a note, and despatched it post-haste to Marlborough House.

“ I deeply regret to have to beg Your Royal Highness not to go to my house to-night before ten. Your Royal

Highness will rightly surmise that only the very gravest reasons, etc."

But the Prince of Wales, after an afternoon spent in inspecting "Immediate Reserves", was dining that night *en fils de famille* at Buckingham Palace ; and it was not until twenty minutes past eight that Sir Robert's note came to his hand.

Whereupon he, for his part, despatched a note to St. George's Hospital, saying : " Do not go to Barrington's at nine : I shall be in a brougham awaiting you opposite Crewe House at 9.30 ".

But Eulalia had already then left the hospital, and was chatting in her sister's house in Wardour Street. So she duly made her way through drizzle and misty streets to the rendezvous at Sir Robert Barrington's at nine.

And at one minute to nine a cloaked and hooded Queen passed alone through the palace park-gate on foot ; and at once was in Grosvenor Place, walking fast.

Both she and Eulalia were punctual.

And the engineer, posted just inside his door, was listening like a thief to the rolling of wheels, bidding his soul be still and bold, when the two ladies met on his porch-steps.

Her Majesty, a step the higher, turned to look down at the other, on whose face a lamplight shone, and she recognised, realised . . . This was why the Prince had been hurried and restive. . . .

Strong indignation now agitated Her Majesty's lip ; and with a brushing-away movement of her hand, she muttered : "*Miserable little woman !—go*".

Whereat Eulalia's lips fell agape, as she gazed up, like a sylph gazing in awe at a goddess, till it was suddenly suggested to her consciousness that this was no one else than the Queen herself ; and in some moments more she found herself walking away in a new universe made all of wounds and awe and mute amazement.

At the same time Sir Robert Barrington was profoundly

bowed, with a murmur of "Your Majesty", and silently he led the Queen to a desert of drawing-room with two hearths, and a file of drawn blinds, and gilt, and moulding, and discreet chandeliers.

The Queen, for her part, was pretty short and haughty, and rather pinched in her wind, and suspicious of shadows and corners, sitting by a table on which was wine, the Vice-Admiral standing with firelight on his square face of the village blacksmith, all clumps of muscle, a thin spot showing now on his top; and his eyes smiled: for now that she was actually there before him, he felt warmer, calmer, master of himself; so that, in the reaction, the frolicsome thought crossed his mind: "How much did her cloak cost the country?"

But her chin! its uplifted pitch. She was very resentful; and he, as she spoke, very taken aback, and pained, and embarrassed.

What she had seen with her eyes she could even now hardly believe—that *he*—Sir Robert Barrington—could lend himself—to countenance—to abet—in his own house—the baneful influence over a young prince of a creature who wore the livery of an honourable profession—

"Permit me, Ma'am", the Vice-Admiral interrupted with some curtness, "I have to say that the relations between the Prince of Wales and that *lady* are—innocent".

A little bent, he eyed the fire, while her eyes and eyebrows played incessantly upward upon him.

"Well!—you say that. Innocent. I confess that I have wondered what you would discover to say, Sir Robert Barrington; but that you might say *this* did not occur to me. Let me tell you, if you do not know—His Royal Highness has known this person since he was a boy at Brockweir: I knew; I found out her address and family circumstances; I have followed her career from a distance; I have known that he has seen her, and have been uneasy—without ever conceiving—he has been brought up a Nazarite, and no razor had come near his dear head"—here the Queen's

tones lowered, broke a little in her throat : and Barrington rapidly, quietly, poured wine, of which she drank a sip at the pretty lip below the shadow that shadowed her nose.

He, in a muteness of sympathy too deep for speech, uttered nothing at the moment : for there was a unison of emotional movement betwixt their souls, afflicting him in her afflictions, and when her body danced, his cut a caper ; so she went on to say : “ But the circumstances of his entry here—the cab—a caress in it !—the key—no footman opened to them, Sir Robert Barrington !—the creature’s ease——”

“ That *lady*, Ma’am——” Sir Robert began to say.

“ Oh, the days are past,” the Queen said testily, “ when a light o’ love is to have the title of ‘ lady ’, just because she is the *amourette* of a Prince : it is an injustice to Sally in the alley. But I quite fail to understand you ! I am here to seek an explanation, and *this* is it—‘ lady ’, ‘ innocent ’ ! Of course, you are sincere, since you say it, but I am amazed. Pray say something, Sir Robert Barrington, to abate my amazement”.

And she waited, her lids hanging on his profile, perpendicular like a plumb-line, which he bent toward the blaze ; and since his lips were deeply sealed, like steel in pain the muscles of his face convulsed a moment, and his teeth met.

“ It is my belief”, he said at last, “ that what I have stated is the truth. And I think that the characters of the pair in question justify that belief. This is my answer to the Queen ”.

Now, the Queen, always, had a pretty free and formidable tongue : and she said off-handedly : “ Oh, well, then, I must confess myself disappointed in either the acumen or the candour of Sir Robert Barrington”.

Sir Robert bowed, turned a little, looked at her, and their eyes met and communed ; until hers suddenly dropped to her lap.

“ At any rate ”, she said—with the half of the half of a laugh !—“ I cannot share in your ideal view of things—I

wish I was so beatified and unworldly ! So I have next to consult you, since you are said to be the closest friend of the Prince, and are, apparently, a friend of his friend"—she laughed !—"how are these two people to be separated ? There must be some way of getting the young woman out of the country ".

Sharply on which Sir Robert Barrington was masterful, his finger lifting. "I have to warn Your Majesty that there is *no* such way !" And now the Queen stood up, muttering to herself : "We'll see about that" ; and aloud : "I'll go" : and that ended it.

The rest of that night Sir Robert spent alone by the fire of that room over an old diary and an old shirt-cuff, reading and rereading some leaves that had old rose-leaves between them.

"After this third dance on that third night after her eighteenth birthday we were together fifty minutes in the orangery. . . . I then said to her, 'Yes, this in me is love. It was during the night of Friday the 9th of June, while designing a dynamo for a mine, that it struck me that it was so with me'.

"She then said to me : 'Was the dynamo a success ?' to which I answered : 'A perfect success'.

"She then said to me : 'What is this thing, this love ? What is its place and source in Nature ?'

"My reply was : 'You define me a *pound*, and I'll define you *love*'.

"'*A pound*', she answered, 'is the force of the earth's attraction for the mass in a certain bar of platinum deposited at the B.O.T. in Gwydyr House'.

"'But you speak of "*force*"', I said to her : 'what is a *force* ?'

"Her reply to this was : 'Oh, but that's not a fair question : force is the Holy of Holies, the Real Presence, the THING Itself : no life in any height of heaven can ever arrive at any notion what a force is ; but if you want the definition current among crickets and cricketers, then "a force is

THAT WHICH tends to alter a body's state of rest or of uniform motion in a straight line''.

"I now said to her : ' Quite so ; and now we have the required definition : LOVE is THAT WHICH alters a mortal body's state of rest or of uniform motion ; and a horsepower-hour of it is that energy contained in a standard mass deposited in the breast of one Robert Barrington, impelling him toward one Minna Simmons '.

"She was pleased to laugh, as it were to herself, when I had said this ; and she next said to me : ' Is Love a god, or is it a devil ? ' "

" ' Every force ' , was my reply, ' is (necessarily) Divine ' .

" ' Nevertheless ' , said she, ' I think I will call Love a devil ' .

" ' And why will you do this ? ' I asked her.

" ' Because ' , said she—not without some hesitation, I think—' it seems to be frequently tempting ' .

" Promptly as a hammer's stroke I was now on her, saying : " If, now, you had said *is*, and not *seems*, I should have felt myself a made man ! ' "

" Upon which she became specially grave, gazing downward at her fingers. I heard her say, ' Rob Roy ' ; and she then said : ' Robert, your will of steel is scheming against my career, and means to wring its little neck, I think ' .

" At those words I inwardly exulted ; but made haste to say, to console her : ' Well, love does alter a state of uniform motion, but is not altogether incompatible with a girl's career ' .

" To this she made me no answer, but laughed strangely, as to herself, and now with her programme-pencil wrote something on my left cuff. As the moon was bright beyond the tree, I tried to rise to read, but she restrained me, and then attempted to smudge out with her glove what she had written. However, after we had parted, I contrived to decipher the wildly written letters, which I found to spell : ' I always go the whole hog ' . Her being electrifies mine like live wire. . . .

"The stable-clock was striking eleven when she said to me, 'I expect it will be like that', but that her definite answer would be on that day eight months" . . .

The Engineer Vice-Admiral clicked the diary's clasp, wrapped up the old cuff, and sighed in asking himself: "Has she forgotten it all? Or does memory straying in her head on her bed in the dead of night ever remember, and make her sigh?"

"Anyway", he added, with sudden energy, "I'm not going to permit her shrewish tongue to touch the fair name of so fair a lady as the Princess of Wales in my presence"—and he went off to bed.

At that hour that "Princess of Wales" herself lay on no bed of roses.

After "*going*" at Her Majesty's command, she had wandered, pondering upon "miserable little woman—go". The mystery!—unless she had been mistaken for someone? for that it was the Queen who had spoken she had no doubt. And the fact that Her Majesty was at that house at all caused to be born in her heart's heart all a swarm of formless doubts, awed questionings, too shadowy as yet to shape themselves into consciousness.

She only got back to her hospital at half-past nine, so only then got the note: "Await you opposite Crewe House . . ." and she was off, late, covering the distance fleetly, love the motor in her feet.

Twenty yards off she could see the standing carriage through the thick of Piccadilly traffic and mist; but all at once eagerness failed in her legs, and she stopped agape to gaze. There at the carriage-door, as it seemed to her, was a girl.

And she would have known that girl under many veils—that "*Mademoiselle Oyone*", in whose charming arms she had caught her Teddy dancing at Chinnery's. . . .

In fact, though, Oyone was not at the carriage-door, but behind it; and she was there because, since the North Sea Battle, instructions had afresh come to her from Peking as

to the Prince, and had found her willing now. In those days, therefore, she was hovering upon the Prince's steps, patient as a shadow, watching for her perfect chance.

She waved to her chauffeur ; and it looked to Eulalia like a wave of farewell to the brougham.

Night-shades touched that smile of anticipation on Eulalia's face ; and a thought was in her, " something must be against me to-night ", as she paced on with graver steps.

Her Teddy sprang out to her with, " I am glad ! Was getting afraid—You didn't go to Barrington's ? He wrote to say—Never mind, here are the old eyes that shock me afresh each time—So what did I do ?—Scott, I was thrown on my beams' ends—I hired a little hotel in Knightsbridge—But, I say, what's up ? Not glad to see one ? "

It suddenly struck him that those eyes that surprised him each time were even wider this night : there was awe in them, there was also a something of horror, and a lost distracted something, as of one who asks himself : " In which one of God's worlds am I now ? "

For his left arm was in a sling, as had been the Prince of Wales's when she had seen him passing through the street northward to the battle ; across his forehead a scar, hooked over the eye, precisely like the Prince's.

From that sight her eyes could not move themselves one moment ; and, as she stood musing on it, the thought passed through her heart : " Mother doesn't know what I am ".

Now all was clear ! now it flashed upon her why Her Majesty had said : " Miserable little woman ! " The Queen was not aware what she, Eulalia, was.

After the shock of awe, of horrid elevation in airy spaces, and wild, white light at the height of the sun, her next sensation was pride ! for, if she was the Princess of Wales, was not this because she was born like that ? of that quality and quintessence ? the equal of Queens by inbred heredity ? and in another moment her soul was moving to an emotion of love and motherliness, and her moan was, " My poor boy ".

"Teddy", in his headlong way with swaying shoulders, had hustled her into wedlock at their fourth meeting, a year before he had left Brockweir ! Lately she had begun to think that it was scarcely a fair thing to consider a man bound by such a marriage . . .

When he said again, " But what's up ? The cut ? the arm ? that's nothing ! " at last she found the power to utter something ; but he could not recognise her voice, those strained tones in which she spoke as to a stranger. " I have to tell you—I cannot come to-night—I am sorry—I have——"

He had felt certain that her first words would be a question as to the cut ! and stood amazed. " Not come ? "

" No—I beg—time—you must give me—I have to go——"

" Well ? "

In a secret and begging way she said, for some reason : " To Shepherd's Bush "

" Shepherd's bosh, Eu ! So what is to become of poor me, meanwhile ? Why didn't you write ? *I'll* come to Shepherd's Bush, too, of course "

" I have to go alone ", she said, begging in confidence, bending to him.

" In that case—— But, Eu, ought one to be sudden and mysterious ? Let me come ! "

" I beg—*you* go to the hotel, and perhaps—I am sorry—I can't exactly promise, but perhaps—I may come. Please call me a cab "

He frowned now, did her bidding, handed her into the cab, tossed-in a box of bon-bons—for she had a passion for jawing chocolates in bed, and had taught him also to sit and nibble ; and he gave her the hotel's name, without again begging her to come, and just touched her fingers with his lips, and turned from her, but then again half turned to say curtly with an offended chin : " What's your name ? "

She in a strained voice straining against tears answered : " My name's Eulalia "

" Whose girl are you ? "

"I am Teddy Reeks' girl".

"All of you?"

"Yes, all".

"Au 'voir, then!"

"Good-night" . . . the cab drove off—to Shepherd's Bush!

She could not have believed, if told an hour before, that she would drive that night to Shepherd's Bush! and at Shepherd's Bush she cried: "*Drive on!*" and the cab drove over the Uxbridge Road to Colney Hatch, and back to the Docks, and back to Shepherd's Bush, during all which she was in the throes of the question—to go to him only once more—not to go to him even this once.

Though it wasn't her fault that she had not known what he was! but his. When she had asked him about the Prince at their second meeting at Brockweir, he had said: "If you see me, you see him—many of the fellows take me for him"—prevarication falsely true, truly false. Yet when he had constantly evaded telling her the name of his ship, and details about his family, she should have guessed things, she saw now—many evidences should have opened her eyes to the truth that he was no duke's son or country-squire: but her wits had been hypnotised by his initial fib.

"But he did it to get me!" she moaned with tears near the Marble Arch, rolling west, and suddenly ordered the cab to the hotel, saying to herself, "he is my husband": for she liked his hand, that had in it an electric battery, and little workshop cuts and stains on it, to hold hot and long, feeling the bones, till it was as near to her as her own hand, and as much her hand as his, and his fleece of curls, and a certain fleet glance of his eye sideward, as gallant and imperial as Cæsar, and the tissue of his skin like silk, and there was a smell about him as of the sea and ships, mixed with benzoline, naphtha, shellac, mastic, which ever made something in her soul faint with emotion.

Why, though, had he *never* told her who he was? What did that mean? That she was a toy sharing in a royal

escapade ? not a wife, but a kind of wife ? She commanded the taxicab back westward. Her grandfather's grandfather had fought at Trafalgar in the very *Victory*, and though only a gunner, laying his gun with tackle, hand-spike, and quoin, if England was grand, that was because *he* had been grand. . . .

She would not be a miserable little woman ; if she was a Princess, she would be Princess-like. . . .

And yet—he loved her well ; there was no doubt : *she* knew what she knew. How often had he worried her to surround herself with town-house and country-house, and crowds of flunkeys and crowns about her brows, till he should get a “ really good chance ”, as he always said, to announce her. But she had preferred to work, hardly caring to face the inquiring eye of her dad. He was a Puritan—a Methodist local preacher ever since his retirement—proud—Irish blood. She knew that only Irishmen know pride—that attar-of-pride, supremely *élite*, that is haughtier *far* in its heart's heart than Hanover, or Hapsburg, or Hohenzollern, and will spurn the lightning's eye with a superber lightning. Her dad was like that : he called kings and kings' dogs “ *hogwash*.” And her (English) mother had caught it from him, and she herself, perhaps, had it : so she had refused, and gone her own way—had refused to tell him her birthday, and never had had a present from him, save boxes of bons-bons and the wedding-ring, which she took out from her bosom where it hung, and wet, kissing it, and thought of him waiting for her, fretting his restive heart out, and ordered the cab again to the hotel.

However, it entered her head on the way that that was hardly very honest to pretend to herself that it was for him that she was going, when perhaps it was for herself, that she might have his hand. For if she was really going to give him up, to-night was the time, since, if she broke down once, then it would be a case of breaking down always. It would be best to be able to say to herself that she had never once been, after knowing ; and now was her chance to be strong.

But why give him up at all? Even that point was not properly argued out! Was she not acting on impulse, driven on every wind? It was something to be the Princess of Wales, since many girls would die eight times, if they had nine lives, to be that: and she was it by right, and he her own, after all, her flesh and blood, nearer to her than to the Queen, and dearer; and though her intellect might not be cultivated to a quite high degree like the Queen's, what then? did that make her a miserable little woman? Her soul might be as pure and golden; and she certainly thought more highly of her own people than of the Queen's: so why should she stab herself so very deep to the heart, and with her own butcher hands wrench out both her eyes? That did not seem very reasonable to expect of one.

But, then, after all, it was no good arguing, since there was he to be considered. She knew very well that the fact of his father having married "a commoner" would make it monstrous for the next Queen to be a commoner: so, if she kept him to his boy's marriage, she would be bringing him into infinite hot-water and embarrassment: his mother, who was prouder than other crowned heads, would perish in hysterics. And there was the Princess Elizabeth: everyone knew that for three years the Queen and the Liberal Party had set their hearts on her marriage with him, in a hope of Anglo-German *rapprochement*. She would be a miserable little woman, in truth, if she stood in the way.

And she had been dreaded, and known, and spied upon!—she understood that now. Once, three years previously, a man had appeared in Holmend, the hamlet near her home, and had made secret inquiries as to her people and her whereabouts: her dad had heard, and not liked it! She had been dreaded, and eyed at! But she would no longer be a danger, and a horror, and a bugbear to those above her.

She would disappear: before long he would begin to

think her dead ; and then might begin to look at that outlandish Japanese popinjay in her pageantries.

But if she stayed anywhere in England, he would surely scent her out, and be after her again. . . . Where, then, to go ?

There was the war : a shortage of nurses was being felt at the front since the last big battle, and volunteers were being asked for. She had been enrolled in Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service Reserve, and would be eagerly received in the emergency. That night she would apply.

Only, she would indulge her soul with one more night at his side ; in which one night she would live fifty years ; and would tell him that he would never find another wife to love him as well as Eulalia.

But the cab was within some yards of the hotel when she said to herself, " Oh, no, really, I am not going to ", and all in a flurry, with shivering lips, called "*turn back !* "

She drove to the hospital prostrate, her mouth stretched back in a tension of self-pity, horrified now at the hollowness of the chasm of loss in which she felt herself falling.

It was now past midnight : nevertheless, she sat and wrote to Pall Mall.

Her offer was accepted ; and three days later a harrowing ordeal awaited her at St. James's Palace, where she was amid twenty-seven others of the Volunteer Corps and a committee of ladies. They were expecting the Princess Kitty, the King's second sister, who was said to be coming to wish them well, when all at once, tall and formidable as a wall falling upon one, in walks the Queen in heliotrope, followed by a throng of satellites. Eulalia's heart failed her.

Her Majesty had come to say " it is good of you to go ", and to pin some red-cross ribbons on their uniforms ; so they stood in a row, while the smile moved along the line,

picking out of the casket, pinning, Eulalia waiting through a century of strain and distress, pining to fly, to sink into the floor, to become invisible.

The Queen seems not to have seen her until they were actually face to face ; in fact, she was in the act of bringing the ribbon to the other's breast, when . . . ! But her nerves were so perfectly cultured, that she hardly started at all : only her hands leapt one inch up ; and, letting the ribbon drop, she stepped on to the next, still mightily and mildly smiling.

The thing, of course, was seen—with no little wonder : and then Eulalia knew confusion of face, and pain, and did not know where to look or put herself ; but one of the ladies, eyeing her askew, considered that she looked gracefuller writhing there in the grip of her pretty distress, like a sylph in a picture ashamed of nakedness, than Her Majesty reigning in her high-tower.

With this gash in her, she dashed down that night to say good-bye, climbing the long hill from Holmend just as the sunset's flush went utterly grey ; and the moon stood full-faced over the covert up there before her, growing every moment more glorious as the daylight died.

She had disclosed to no one yet that she was going away, and went smiling in anticipation of the old folks' surprise and disquiet. Here, indeed, she could not but smile ; this little circle of the earth's surface was so well loved, affecting her with such sensations of intimacy, of rest, of religion, that while she smiled dewes of piety suffused her eyes : for that brook, those rough furrows, were not only her very own, but they were Eulalia, and Eulalia they, though some foreigner was permitted to call them "*his*".

She pushed back a garden-gate, and passed between two old yews to a white home buried in red-berried briony, stepping silent, to surprise them ; and quietly opened the door ; and was in.

But no glad start ! no fuss of welcome ! and, instantly chilled, she stood still.

Near a green-covered table, reading Deuteronomy out of a great Bible, sat her dad, who gazed at her steadily over his glasses ; and her mother, sitting in grey silk and a cap, reading a *Sunday Companion* serial, did not (apparently) cease to read through her magnifying glass.

Eulalia, suspended, scared, bag in hand, said : " What's the matter, dad ? "

Her father smiled, eyeing steadily at her as at a specimen of seed ; didn't say anything for a minute ; but then quietly : " You go ".

Whereupon, immediately, a scream, a horrid outcry of the drowning : " Almighty God, John Bayley, I can't stand this ! "—from the mother, who, casting her arms aloft had fallen forward upon her knees.

And upon this an eruption of the most pallid and passionate rapture transacted itself during two minutes in that room, each of the three battling for breath as if in the passion of death, shouts of " Woman, learn to command yourself ! " mingling with " I am not going to see mother killed by anyone ! " and with " Don't dare touch your mother with your shameful low hand ! " and with " God Almighty be her father ! " like people stricken with ranting in an atmosphere all oxygen. It ended with Eulalia finding herself outside in a kind of ecstasy, having been pushed by the shoulders ; and it was all in a tremble from top to toe like a motor-bus that she got down the mountain with her bag.

This was the work of the Princess Elizabeth, who was considered a distinctly " clever " young lady !—something of a blue-stockings !—a student of Kant !—a solver of problems !—whose suggestions had weight with friends and relatives. She it was who had suggested that, if the girl was to be made submissive to proposals, all her props should first be knocked away, and her improper course of conduct communicated to her honest home. Hence an ambadress of known tact and discretion had come down, and had dropped in at Yew Cottage for a chat.

And the next night when Eulalia presented herself at her sister's door in Soho, a maid delivered her the message that it might be as well if she kept away. She leant her head then on the door some moments before she moved slowly thence. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

THE REDLIKE RAY

The next morning she had a letter : “ Since I am very perplexed, please, dear, relieve me. I must see you to-morrow night at nine for five minutes . . . the Piccadilly Fountain . . . ”

But she did not go. As he waited there at nine, an unknown nurse came, asked “ Mr. Reeks ? ”, handed him an envelope.

“ From his sweetheart ”, thought Oyone in her motor-car by Swan & Edgar.

And, “ Love affair ” muttered one of two detectives under the Monico—for ever since the mystery of the air-boats’ destruction, the Chief Commissioner had had the Prince’s every step shadowed, for his protection.

“ Dear ”, she had written, “ I cannot meet you, not ever, I’m afraid. I think I see you wince, dear, in reading this, but it is not that I am really cruel, but that I cannot in all cases trust myself ; and I seem to see that it is better for me to go from England, not to come back. Always remember that our marriage was entirely my fault, for you were only a boy, but a girl should know better ; and now that I abandon you, it will not be very binding on you. But you will not altogether forget Eulalia, ever ? I will keep the ring where I have always kept it, in the warm ”.

It took the Prince minutes to peruse this, and no muscle of his face moved, though he stood so long motionless, that Oyone thought : “ Something has stunned him ”.

However, he lifted his hand quite coolly to a cab, got in in his long cloak, and started eastward, this being his monthly doss-house night ; and behind him the detectives ; and behind them Oyone, who said to herself : “ That cab is following his : they are detectives ”.

When his cab passed Aldgate, one of the detectives exclaimed, “ God’s name, where *is* he going ? ” ; and their eyes widened in alarm when he alighted at an alley marked at the corner “ Duval, *late* Dorset, Street ”, for the name “ Dorset ” had become so associated with filth and infamy and one “ Jack-the-Ripper ”, that an attempt had been made to change its name—in vain.

Whoever entered it was suspect—*ipso facto*. In the glances that ogled you out of the glooms was the question : “ What’s *his* little game ? ”

Half-way down it, on a lamp, was marked “ Noted House for Single Men ” ; and in, though married, stepped the Prince.

Having now thrown off his cloak, he got at a wicket a 4d. ticket, passed in his marine-garb into a “ kitchen ”, where some singing was going on, and there sat out of the way in shadow behind a corner of the fireplace, bent down with heaviness.

This den was essentially black somehow, dingy, dismal, though two gas-jets struggled against its blackness—spacious enough, but low, stuffy, windowless, filled with men, many naked to the waist (shirts drying !), and occupied with blackened benches and blackened blocks meant for tables, and tobacco smells, fishy stench, fumes of cooking.

Some of the group round the great blaze, *habitués*, the Prince knew—little Tim, the Jew, and “ Alexis the Sexton ”, and Burrows, the tramp-poet in his velveteen jacket and knickerbockers, whose booklet of poems “ the press ” had praised. He, especially, was now in a state of exaltation over the North Sea Battle, ever and afresh singing a snatch of the Alhambra battle-ballad that within three days was being sold by millions in the streets, and sung by every

ragamuffin through England ; and when the fire-group left off, away yonder at the wash-basins the thing might begin again in the voice of a saw in labour-pains.

One Tookey remarked : " Aye, 'e knows 'ow to give it 'em 'ot all right, thank God for that "—a man sodden to flabbiness, who lived by day before the doors of the *Duke of Beaufort*—year after year—dull in a universe no huger than two streets.

And " Beer ? " suggested Burrows, who had a quart-bottle, to " Alexis the Sexton ", a big and fiercely bearded being ; but Alexis, brooding over the blaze, brushed the bottle away without answer.

Whereat Burrows drank himself, and now let out of his lungs :

" They breathed, ' We are near ! '
 And they leered, with a ' Hush !
 We are near ! ' But just here
 Did the *Asahel* gush
 Like *As-id* to germs on the Germans,
 On the Russians like *hel* to a rush."

But now stamped " Alexis the Sexton ", his hands quivering near his ears, as he shouted : " Shut up that blasted howling ! "—the utterance all the more foreign for the idiomatic correctness : for he knew every language.

" Moy loife ", said little Tim, the Jew, who was proud of being English, " can't anybody sing ? Go back to Odessa and throw bombs, if London don't suit you ".

Alexis deigned no answer ; and Burrows irrelevantly put forth both arm and voice, some others joining at the third word :

" For her skipper was Ted,
 And Teddy's a bear,
 When he's sore on the head,
 And is out on the tear :
 And a bear that is likewise a lion
 The Muscovy Bear could'nt bear ".

The Prince, brooding in his obscurity, was thinking :
 “ They love England, these men. . . . But *why* ? the singular beings ! It’s no privilege to be an Englishman—just the opposite, since they’d be much happier in Samoa, where there’s no aristocracy, or in France, where the aristocracy’s heads have been cut off. But they *do*, they choose to, in their great patience : I put that to their credit ”.

But now afresh upon his reflections crashed the caterwaul of all the cats :

“ And the Eagle he blinked,
 And ‘ *Blitzwetter* ! ’ he cried,
 And ‘ Al-Ass ! ’, as she kicked,
 And ‘ Ah-Hell ! ’, as he died :
 ‘ Though her bray is the bray of the donkey,
 There’s more Hel than As in her side ’ ”.

After which Burrows, smacking his lips with an “ Ah ! ”, rose to stroll a little, his fists expanding the pockets of his opulent knickerbockers ; and, having sauntered toward the Prince, brought a paw down upon the bowed back, calling out : “ What, Jack, down on your luck again ? And what’s wrong with the arm ? ”

“ Don’t worry, mate ”, muttered the Prince, “ I’m not in the mood ”.

“ A drink ? ”

“ No, go to hell ”.

“ *Asahel*, perhaps, friend ? ”

No answer : Burrows looked down on the back a little ; then, spinning, stamped with the outcry : “ Now put some lungs into it ! ” and started to chortle :

“ ‘ Her forward-gun’s stern
 As vit’rol ! ’ they yell ;
 ‘ And her stern-gun in turn
 Is forward as well :
 The forwarder’s name must be Asid,
 And the sterner one’s name must be Hel ! ’ ”

At this "Alexis the Sexton" leapt upright, colossal, confronting the crowd of choristers with clenched fists and scowling frown, afresh interrupted in his profound reflections. But no one took any notice, and on drawled the wawling in every tone of rawness :

"Then, with bluster and buzz,
The *Blunderbus* bowed,
'Are you come, Max, Coz ?
Of your visit I'm proud :
Forgive, if in kissing you welcome,
I blunder in bussing too loud'".

Now that thick lip of Alexis, who still stood scowling, bent downward, and he stopped the song with the bellow :
"You crowd of fowls ! Sitting here singing of your masters—yes ? You see not, then, that now is your chance while they are busy ? But you not even think of it ! You serfs by birth ! You timid mice ! If you were to make to them a millionth piece of the wrong that they make to you, they would ravage Britain to one mass of ashes—if they could. And you can, but will not——"

"Which only shows that we are the better men of the two !" called out Tookey, the loafer.

"*You ?*" said Alexis the Sexton with a lip of bitterness :
"*you* better than somebody—yes ? Never, never, a dog was born of she-dog that was not a better being than things like you ! I tell you——"

"Oh, stow it", somebody put in, "we don't want no shindy here".

"No, you tame——"

"Howl it, boys !" howled Burrows, bringing down the bottle from his mouth, and out anew broke the row :

"He has saved us from harm
With his dreadful flails,

With his stretched-out arm
He has saved us from bales :
Let's leap to our feet as we scream it :
' God bless the Prince of Wales ! ' ”

And they did leap, nearly everyone, whereupon Alexis the Sexton, finding himself standing in the throng of standers, suddenly sat down.

The gabbling of the two gloomy gas-lights on a T-tubing hanging from a beam in the ceiling, filled some moments' stillness, while the Prince said to himself : “ All right, you are not asked for any love, but you choose to give it ; and I choose to give you mine. Only wait till I get a *good* chance to show it, and then I will—without mercy to your merciless enemies ”.

A moment more, and with a pang, new and sharp, he was thinking : “ *Gone !* ”

And he set to peruse anew that letter of Eulalia—he could in his obscurity, since already he knew it by heart : but in the midst started ! his ear cocked—to listen to Alexis the Sexton.

Alexis was now saying to those round him : “ They have it their own way for the moment, the rich—yes ? but they have one horrible enemy, who no will fail to overthrow them. Who is their enemy ? a few poor heroes throwing some bombs, yes ? *They* are nothing. But their enemy is a still little man in an apartment prying into a microscope—Edison and Diessel were their enemies, Chinnery was their enemy, Darwin and Watt and Faraday were their enemies, God's light is their enemy. How will they feel if you go and tell to them, ‘ Somewhere I have a little box that will strike blind ten thousand of you every twenty seconds ’ ? They will feel a little bit chilly—yes ? Maybe it is invented already—who knows ? ”

It was at this that the Prince hurried Eulalia's letter into his pocket. “ A *little box* ”—the name “ *Chinnery* ”—this made him ask himself : “ *Can it be possible* that this man has

the Redlike Ray ? ” The jeopardy to civilisation of such a thing for even one day more was clear enough.

He bent his ear to hear more with an intense interest ; but just then the plaguey *Asahel* song started again, whereat Alexis the Sexton with an “ *Ach Gott !* ” cast his arms aloft, got up, and walked out. Swift and still the Prince slipped out after him.

The Russian sauntered out of Dorset Street into Commercial Street northward, his hands in the pockets of clothes that hung loose on his huge bulk, the Prince, meanwhile, all eyes for a policeman, not dreaming that those two men near the Dorset Street corner were detectives (though Alexis knew), while yonder in shadow eight hundred yards northward stood Oyone’s motor-brougham, she standing before its door. She had not been able to see the Prince enter that noted house for single men, because of the detectives’ presence, and had been wondering ; till now she saw him far off, coming.

As for the Russian, accustomed to be shadowed, he had the circumspection of Argus—eyes in the back of his head !—and knew that he was being tracked by the marine. Why ? “ What’s *his* game ? ” he asked himself in some language. Had not he, Alexis, been mouthy to blab about the “ striking blind ” ? His heart smote him.

Now, that big body could be pretty nimble : so, with a quick twist, he doubled back, landed a sudden blow, envenomed and heavy as a club, upon the Prince’s breast, and was gone with all his long legs northward.

Seeing which thing, the two detectives flew, shrilling whistles, Alexis flew, and fleetest than the three flew the Prince’s twinkling feet, wrestling with space. But he had been knocked spinning, so that the Russian had had quite a longish start, and while the Prince was still two hundred yards from him, and the detectives perhaps four hundred, the Japanese, who had seen everything, rushed a little way toward the Russian, as he approached, to hiss at him : “ Jump into my motor, and you’ll escape ”.

Alexis, ever shy of traps and "the rich", did not stop; but he had instantly realised that she was non-English, saw that the Prince was winning upon him, so, in an impulse, when he had run some steps past the car, resolving to risk it, he doubled back, darted into the car; Oyone was in before him; and, before ever its number could be noted, the motor was shooting away, booming music of the jews-harp.

It spurted round the first corner, so by the time the two detectives could get into their taxi-cab and give chase, the car was nowhere; and a third detective who had come from the further end of Dorset Street, groaned to himself: "God! I've lost track of Alexis the Sexton, and to-morrow is the ceremony at St. Paul's".

Meantime, the Russian and the Japanese within the motor-car stared at each other, mutually startled and alarmed to find themselves there face to face: for in moments of rush and pressure something that is not exactly we acts instead of us, and *her* invitation had been as much an impulse as *his* acceptance—in her sub-consciousness no doubt being a sense that he could give her information as to the Prince, and that since he was the Prince's enemy, he must be her friend.

So there was embarrassment, until the Russian bowed to say: "Well, I am much obliged!—supposing that your intention is friendly".

"What else can it be?" asked that light hard voice, without inflections, as if a bird should speak.

"What, madam, may I demand, was your motiff?"

"I saw you pursued—I am good-hearted—those two behind were detectives!"

"Ah", he thought at once, "she's no *ingénue*—knows things—some game in hand".

"Why", Oyone asked, "did you—strike him?"

"May I demand, madam, what is your motiff for demanding it?"

"Curiosity. You are very cautious! What are you?"

"Well, you demand that of a man? *What he is?* What answer expect you a man could make to such a demand?"

Her eyes dwelt on him, she saying to herself: "Accustomed to skulking—a life under the eyes of the police". She said aloud: "There is no need—since I do not care. I should say you are a Russian——"

He started! "I may be! And you, madam?"

"My nation? I am Irish".

"I doubt it", meditated Alexis: "more likely Magyar or Slovene".

"And you are also very likely an Anarchist", said Oyone.

Violently started Alexis off his seat! and with grinding teeth, glaring at her with his great eyes that ever had the exaggerated expressiveness of eyes in pantomime or the cinematograph, he hissed at her: "I *am* an Anarchist! I an p-r-r-oud of it!"

"Well, you need not eat me"—her eyes dwelling, dwelling, on him, while a whole web suddenly wove itself in her subtle Oriental brain, that doomed this man to death on the next day, unless he did her bidding. She added: "I am an Anarchist, too".

"You? a rich?"

"In principle, that is".

"Word of honour, madam?"

"Since I was a child".

Out popped the Russian's confraternal paw, on which the girl deposited her glove with a chuckle in her shoulder.

"Besides", she said, "you are a handsome fellow, and I not such an ugly girl that you should wish to gobble me up".

"That is even the reason!" he gallantly answered, ogling now, asking himself: "Is she an *ingénue*? and I in luck's way?"

The car was passing beneath the shadow of Holborn Viaduct, whence it drove north to Regent's Park, and there

round and round the Outer Circle, deserted now, under a moon that illuminated thick mist.

"But the man you struck, why did he follow you?" the girl asked.

"Believe me, I know nothing of his motiff", Alexis answered.

"Nor his name?"

"'Jack' one has called him in the doss-house".

"Why *does* he go there?" she wondered; and aloud: "Jack is not his name. I am going to tell you his name, just to see you start up".

"She is no *ingénue*!" Alexis reflected afresh—"has special knowledge, special motiffs!"

"That man was—no, why should I tell?—yes, I will—the *Prince of Wales*. Ha! ha! You needn't—"

His great eyes glared like eyes goggled in concave mirrors! Then suddenly: "It is the truth—I was *stoopeed* not to see it!" And now, to her astonishment, he caught off his cap to mutter with bent head: "Now, God bless him!"

"Well!" she went in her light way—"an Anarchist".

"But yes! For what can his motiff be but to see himself the condition of the people whom he must some time 'govern'—as they say. I say again, God bless the man!"

"He is really an honest fool whom they hunt as a criminal", the Japanese thought; adding aloud: "But principles: principles are no respecter of persons".

"It is true", said he.

"When he goes to this doss-house, how long does he stay?" she asked.

"He *sleeps* there! And you know not what that signifies, I think! Those vermin, who hate an open window, fester fifteen, twenty—I call it herolike! grandiose! No, I regret at the actual moment to have struck this man".

"But principles", said she.

"It is true", said he: "you are a true Anarchist"; "or else", he added to himself, "a Government spy".

"You could stab him there in his sleep; no one would

know", she said low; but a grumble answered her: "One does not do that, madam"; and she then thought: "I could disguise myself as a man, and sleep there, if necessary". She said aloud: "But the Royal Family pass through the Strand to St. Paul's to-morrow to '*return thanks*' for the victory: are you going to let such a chance pass?"

On which he afresh had the thought: "She is very likely a spy set to pump me". "Forgive me, madam", he said to her, "but you speak with the inexperience of a child. It could not be done. In the first place, have I not struck the Prince of Wales? Is it not probable that I shall be arrested to-night the moment I return to my lodgings? And, quite apart from that, will not every step of mine be known till the ceremony of to-morrow is over?"

"Then, do not return: sleep in my house; no one will know".

The Russian, looking down upon her upturned smile, suddenly cried out: "Most charmed! The thing itself that suits me! But as for the procession to-morrow—no, not for me: it could scarce be done; and I have a far vaster work to make for the world".

Oyone bent to smell the roses at her breast, meditating; then said: "You know best. But I am glad I met you—we think so exactly the same things! The house is over there in those trees; I will give you some supper, and treat you well; and to-morrow you may come with me to see the procession".

"Charmed!" cried Alexis the Sexton, "if only I may leave my revolver at your dwelling: for I must not be in the crowd armed".

"Of course", said she.

"Well, you are very amiable!" he cried, with a new start: "I seem to be in luck's way! It is an adventure!"

"I am like that", she said lightly: "I have a good heart while I can, and when I cannot I can be very cruel". She cried in Chinese: "Drive home!"

And so it was that the next morning there was consternation in all the police-force at the question which had arisen : " *Where is Alexis the Sexton ?* "—a poignant question on any day of a royal procession, but on this day its anxiety was wildly heightened by the Prince's statement that this man probably had in his possession that dreadful Redlike Ray, for which the police had been seeking for weeks.

Hence every ten minutes telephone messages were passing between Scotland Yard, the City, and the Embankment ; and at ten o'clock the postponement of the ceremony was suggested, every den in London having then been ransacked, the Russian's lodgings, all his haunts, his associates' haunts—no trace of him or of the ray.

But postponement was now found to be too difficult, so the *route* was more than usually betrooped ; and all were warned to keep quick and seeing peepers.

Yet at eleven in the forenoon Alexis was there in the Strand crowd, big and brown, but as undistinguished as one grain amid the myriads of the seashore.

He had come up from the Embankment with the Japanese, and just there, at the corner of Essex Street, they stood, a little east of St Clement Danes, she pressed against the door-rail of *The Freeman's Journal*, a little behind and left of him. Pale, weak in the knees she stood there, in her muff (unknown to him) his revolver.

When some closed wagonettes passed, taking members of the Palace Staff to St Paul's, she almost jumped upon the Russian's back, to see ; and now she was seen : for a little away on one of the rows of seats reared round St. Clement Danes sat Eulalia, who had to leave England at two o'clock, so had got a ticket for a last glimpse of her lad ; and her eyes, straying down upon the crowd opposite, chanced to rest upon the Japanese face.

She started, asking herself : " Is that she ? "—peeped and peered—but it was hard to tell definitely ; and just then the ocean's roar arose, approached, the procession coming.

The tongues of London bells were telling that it was a

day of gladness, and flags, arches, a profusion of festoons, strewed the route with hues.

Yonder by the Griffin the Lord Mayor in scarlet and ermine waited with his Pearl Sword to present to the King, surrounded with Councilmen in their mazarine gowns, Aldermen in scarlet, Sword-Bearer, Mace-Bearer, Marshal ; a band started the National Anthem ; at word-of-command the soldiers in their great-coats sprang to attention, presented.

Eulalia could not see westward, but knew pretty well the position of the Prince from the quality of the wave of roaring that rose and rolled, as he rolled—something of suddenness in it, a yell that leapt, he in the second carriage, separated from King and Queen by a body of aides-de-camp, equerries, Silver Stick, adjutants, and the second division of escort : and he was said to look sullen or dull.

Nor did the Queen look herself to those who knew—a boding in her that day. There behind four bays she sat with King's sister and King, who lifted hand to a hat of plumes that drooped, Red Indian in suggestion, and in her rear a train of state-postilion landaus—some Ministers, Agents-general, Mistress of the Robes, Lord Chamberlain to the Queen ; and when the first division of escort had dashed past St Clement, it halted beyond the Griffin ; and now the King is there, and the Prince in sight behind the King's Riders and escort ; and now all the procession has halted, because of the Lord Mayor and his Civic Sword.

The instant it halted, while each eye was tied to the gaud, through the storm of cheering a gun-shot was, as it were, felt, rather than heard ; and it was instantly followed by another.

The first passed through the Prince of Wales' neck, the second through the heart of Alexis the Sexton.

The Japanese had, so to say, *clambered* up the Russian's back, to shoot : and there is this to be said to her credit, that she had no practice in handling fire-arms, that she was excessively agitated, that she aimed within one tick, and that the Prince's carriage on that side was protected by a

squadron commander : so that virtue was in her. And in the very act of dropping from the Anarchist's back the cat put a bullet into him, and dropped his revolver at his feet.

Some of the people near declared afterwards that they never heard any shot at all !

But they felt, they saw, they screamed : and fiercelier than they stood Eulalia screaming.

The Prince, quite near under her feet, was aware of that poignant voice, as he failed and fainted.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SIX MILLIONS

But the wound proved "not dangerous", though "grave", and though accompanied in its "history" by some delirium ; and meantime the most detested of men was the dead Alexis, since it never entered any head to question that it was he who had shot, and then shot himself—though a divisional surgeon took his oath that the course of that bullet was the oddest which he had ever beheld in any suicide.

"But why a bullet, and not the Redlike Ray?" the Prince wondered on that morning four weeks later when he began to get well again : "and where is the ray now? And Chinnery—where's *he*? And the Six Millions? There's a something somewhere at work. . . ."

From these musings he turned to a heap of newspapers by his bed ; and all that forenoon was reading, reading, feasting his interest. . . .

For during those weeks of his sickness the wheeling of the top had come to the humming mood, and the humdrum old world was whirling in a vertigo of the giddiest delirium toward the gulf's rim. He saw headlines like "All the World at War, save China", and even as he wondered of what vertiginous vintage the children of men had drunk, he himself was drunken with it.

Austria, it appeared, was no longer in the Triple Alliance ! Austria had broken loose from it, in order to fly at the throat of Russia ; and *already* Russian troops of the Reserve Category were being raised, and *levées en masse* of her *voiskos*.

Whereat let Roumania, suspecting that Russia is aiming

at nothing but *her* destruction, rush thundering round her frontiers ; and quick now let Servia, with her back on Knuzevatz, mass two *corps d'armée* upon Nisch and Vranja, to throttle her Bulgarian victors and allies of old, and have a bitter draught of sour milk and the bacillus *Bulgaricus*.

It was as when one planet of a system slips on her course, and two collide, why, then, the whole thing's upset, and they all decide to collide for luck : and it is a case of baking days then, yes, and of break-neck days, Monday fleeing from the wrath-to-come through the middle of Sunday, vast arcs of moons that loom from Arctic to Antarctic, with scarlet laughter of all the gods and dogs of war.

For the European clock had struck the hour, and it was now or never for placing on the stage a thousand schemes of greed, aggression, and revenge.

Therefore let Sweden quickly throw two infantry divisions into Björneborg, with Helsingfors for their *objectif*, to drag her Finns from that rigorous grip of Russia, and Sweden is an ally of England—Sweden and Norway, Denmark, and America, Spain, Portugal.

Denmark, the long-suffering, long docked and hedged-in, saw the day of vengeance dawn, and at the alarm of the first mortar, had darted to arms, to start for Flensburg ; while American squadrons, in a drama of warfare in the Hwang Hai off Chefoo, had fought in French and English lines of battle : a drama in which 236,000 had sunk 103,000 tons of Russo-German metal, with only eight ships remaining to the victors : upon which injured ships a Japanese squadron had fallen the same afternoon, and sunk or captured them.

On that same day bombarding battleships of Japan were barking from afar at San Francisco ; and a Japanese squadron was sighted on the horizon by the Cockatoo Island coastguard (Sydney).

All yonder, too, in Texas, is America crackling, hordes of goat-footed Mexicans in coloured rags attacking " the Gringos " in guerilla brigade-sections, sniping from behind hedge and ditch, peeping along their Lee Metfords' sights

with a piercing eye. And not far from that crackling is all the area of Ecuador crackling, ravaged by troops of Peruvian sharp-shooters.

Everywhere the same frenzy of revelry. *Mobilmachung* ! The agitated hand snatches the rifle, the wild eye dashes for the ranks. Only where Li Ku Yu sits sipping butter-milk-tea among lotuses and marvels of marble serene peace breathes on the breezes.

He makes no sign ; he waits ; he brazenly smiles ; he has a clear clean block of brain without one hair on it, a rock cut out without hands : he sits and stimulates it with tea.

And he revels in the revel and frenzy. Nothing escapes his eye, his meditation. Looking over the sea he can see that America has out hosts of converted merchant-cruisers furnished with box-batteries of four and six inchers, fighting, to the astonishment of men, with battleships—fighting, often conquering. A White Star liner of the San Francisco-Nagasaki trade-route, meeting two large Japanese cruisers in Mid-Pacific sank both before she sank ; and the *Lusitania*, in an affray with a troop of sea-keeping sloops and torpedo gunboats, patrolling the Atlantic for tit-bits, sank half before they fled, and then kept afloat until within sight of Ireland.

Seeing which, Britain had begun late in the day to accumulate stores of fittings and armaments at home-ports and naval-stations for such ships ; some of their crews were complemented from Colonial Naval Reserves ; and they were spurting mirthfully over the oceans, having the highest and liveliest time.

Thanks in great part to them, our country had not yet begun to starve.

Rich still on paper, her consols still taken up, St Swithin's Lane and Wall Street her allies, half the owners of securities all over the globe hoping for her triumph, she was, nevertheless, in the grip of want, and already saw a skeleton grin at her from the air.

Protective tariffs in other countries had vanished like chaff two weeks after the going off of the first gun, so that

England's free trade no longer made her a magnet for imports ; and since supplies were dodging and fighting their way precariously from Canada, the Government granaries ran every day lower.

A Russian *ukase* had prohibited the exportation of wheat—a ridiculous thing, since no creature in Russia would now have dreamed of exporting wheat. That immense breadth of empire was already doddering horridly to its drop.

Hardly a week after the *Mauretania* battle, Austria, with a heart fond for Salonica, had flung across the Save a body of Uhlans, who had coolly occupied Belgrade ; and the next morning sections of brigades bivouacking in the squares, and Austrian officers gossiping on the boulevards, had met the gaze of the amazed Belgradians.

Whereat the Great White Czar waxed whiter, and Young Turkey grew tough to the teeth of her eaters, massing regulars and redifs, green-bannered, class on class, calling “gather, gather, all ye birds of ravin” to her Berbers, Sanoussis. For see Macedonia broken in a roar of flame, the Vali of Saloniki assassinated on his doorstep, whereupon the Great Archimandrite, His Holiness the Patriarch of Jerusalem, was mutilated in a room of his palace, and that same evening telegraphic communication was broken between Odessa and Constantinople, and the Suez Canal blown up.

And now an anarchy of thunder and waltz of all the vortices in the Near East, thirty thousand Athenians surging across the Thessalian frontier, Crete bursting into burning, with bands of bandits girt with the dirk and carbine of rapine marauding from end to end, upon all which the Turkish *Turgut Reis* is hurling shell-fire, quenching hell with hell ; and at the same time a mob of Turkish gunboats is going northward through the Bosphorus to watch the (Russian) Black Sea Squadron (convoying two corps from Odessa), quietly occupy Bulgarian Bourgas—directly connected by rail with Stamboul.

And still faster spins the dance, like the sand-forms of the sand-storm that vastly, darkly, waltz into conflict. The next day Austria declared against Russia a war which had begun before the declaration ; and on the third day after the occupation of Bourgas the eastern limb of the British Mediterranean Fleet steamed through the Bosphorus to seek the Black Sea Fleet, and bombard Sevastopol.

Russia had enough to do : at the fourth week-end, if she looked south, south-west, north, west, east, or inward at her own bankruptcy, she everywhere saw handwriting on her walls. Sweden at Helsingfors was looking toward Cronstadt ; twelve Swedish armoured ships at the Neva-mouth. The Black Sea littoral was British. The Army of India, with the Teheran railway in its hands, had scattered at Merv the Army of Turkestan, and after a four days' carnival of carnage at Novo Tcherkask, had marched by road to Kharkov, to turn its face toward the Kremlin.

Another mixed army of Turks and English had thoroughly crushed the Russian corps that had advanced from Kars to invest Erzeroun.

Russia's 4th with her 8th to her 12th Southern Corps had, indeed, inflicted annihilation upon the Austrian army massed on the Dneister in Eastern Galicia ; but Austria's second army on the San, its back on Przemsyl (the bulwark of Middle Galicia), and her third based on Cracow (the key of Western Galicia), had followed the Moltke maxim of marching apart and fighting together, and after a tug-of-war only surpassed for carnage by that drama of gore transacting itself over Northern France, had made Poland Austrian, and crossed the sources of the Niemen.

Add to this that Vladivostock was even now cracking and nodding under rollicking cataracts of Japanese thunder ; and thundering multitudes of puny Japanese troops, amusing themselves with butchery, were intruding and intruding through Manchuria, reeling up as on a reel the Siberian railway.

And France, *la belle*, was unwell of her *règles*, and

blanched ; and Max had a malady and chancre from intercourse with her.

In Eastern Germany the Army of the Vistula was at grips with the gallantry and zeal of the Swedish levies, who with astonishing dash had advanced far through the great military *dépôts* of the north-east, and, after capturing the Thorn-Posen railway, had drawn a ring of earthworks and Schumann gun-turrets round Posen, in the teeth of the teeming legions of that Eastern region—Royal Saxon Corps, draughts from Thorn, that Metz of the East, from Königsberg—who in vain had flung themselves in wave on wave upon these unexpected fairheads.

And northward, with a display of hardly less audacity and energy, Denmark was campaigning in Schleswig-Holstein, and had sat down before Kiel ; while south-westward on the French frontier the two great branches of the Teutonic race had dashed together shockingly : so that eighteen of the twenty German corps were already in the field, her burghers and shopkeepers now girding on the bandolier, and now was the winter of her Bourse's discontent.

As for France, the Light of the world was like a candle flickering in a draught.

See Italy southward redeeming now her "unredeemed" territories, her Haute Savoy, Alpes Hautes, for now is the day, and Frenchmen and vermicelli never yet went well together.

Therefore what is left of the Italian navy (it had been smashed, and had smashed, in a battle off Cape Spartivento) shall bombard three days the Riviera batteries, while swarms of Bersaglieri, Alpini, Carabinieri shall clamber like chamois among the Alp-passes under a shadow of aeroplane-wings, their cannons carried on active-footed mules, pushing their advance against troops of dragoons and mountain-chasseurs, swaggering black rascals of Spahis, Zouaves, garbed in gaudy cloths ; and in the European hotchpotch some cynic camels shall sulk and snarl, and die with a repining eye.

And when the Italian 2nd, 4th and 6th have effected a landing near Nice, have broken bloodily through the French 7th, 14th and 15th, have crossed the Isère, then Paris knows panic and *émeute*.

And under the double tonnage of Russia and Germany, France must already have suffocated, but for the rescuing strength of Britain.

Britain, with a slow but increasing heat, was becoming a recruiting *dépôt*, her Lancashire blackamoors, her Cockney bits of boys, her Scottish bodies, her Irish devils, ever steadier, keener, streaming to see to it—nimble ! soldiers in a week, warriors in a fortnight, veterans in a month : for, as things now were, if France went down, Britain, too, foundered like a ship in the sea : and British men said “ not yet ”.

There, therefore, all along that north-eastern frontier of France backed by the charming land of Champagne, the fire was hell-fire, and the rigour of the game pretty grim : the men of England coming, pressing, checked, beaten back, defeated, hampered, badgered, butchered, fretted, pestered, but still coming, pressing, getting every day their dreadful pecker up, struggling like tunnel-diggers grinning at the ruggedness of granite, winning an inch, and still an inch, and an inch, until that momentous December midnight when the men of Mars must have marked the carmine of the fall of Metz, and have heard some murmur of that turmoil on earth.

Of it Eulalia wrote to her mother : “ I should not care to live through such a thing again, though not for anything should I like to have lived without having once lived through it ”.

And again nine days later : “ I am not well, and even if I be everything that’s bad, daddy might let you write to say if you are alive, and wish one a happy Christmas. Perhaps some day twenty years hence you may hear more than whatever it is you have heard, and may think then of me more forgivingly.

"It is hard to say quite what is wrong, but I am pretty sickified. Yesterday Surgeon-Major Burke peeped under my eyelids, felt my pulse, and said : 'It is the heart'—wonderful discovery ! Doctors amuse me.

"But some of the nursing-staff are beginning to look rather askance at me, I fancy, for the two company-waggons are pretty full of sick, one of the junior dressers died of typhoid three days ago, and one, of course, ought to be 'all there'. But I forget things, I am very remiss really—I can no more help it than be the bedmate of a Long Tom ; all I want to do now is to lie alone in woods, and give myself up, and I dream such things, that I want to be always asleep. Of course, I make a good old struggle.

"Early on the morning of the 21st I started out from our sycamore-tree to go into Nürnfeld—I told you, did I, that the 2nd and 3rd companies have been billeted on Nürnfeld village after a good deal of hardships and marching to come up with our brigade ? Well, our junior surgeon had got a permit from Captain Hardinge for one of the six stretcher-bearers of the 2nd to take the place of Davis, the dresser, who is dead, so I was going to get the man, when, just as I had passed the baggage-park sentries, something very strange came over me. There lay the village before me, the lantern still burning before the senior officer's cottage-door, a few Tommies yawning in the dawn at doorways where they stood sentry over their squads : but I seemed to see it in a dream somehow. After passing the outlying sentry, I walked on to a cottage which they call the alarm-quarter, where an inlying picket of six have to keep awake all night, and I remember seeing the six fellows playing cards in a room, with their belts loose, round a lantern on a box ; but there I seem to have stopped to lean on the window, and—they *say* that I fainted, though I don't think that I fainted.

"Anyway, I was there so long, that Sister Darling had to come to look for me, found me sitting in the alarm-quarter, and then—she is such an angel, always—would not let me

go back to the field-hospital, but said I must wander about all day, and take a good rest.

“ Well, I did ; and it was a day of destiny to me : for at four in the afternoon the most marvellous thing that you ever could fancy happened to me.

“ I took something to eat in my knapsack, and in passing beyond the canteen met a Lieutenant Pierce, who told me that there was a rumour that fighting was probable that day between our outpost garrison and an advanced detail of the enemy. Our brigade, you must understand, is said to be now diamond-shaped, the 2nd and 3rd forming the south corner of the diamond, we being in the far north wing of our army, which is now facing the enemy on a front of some seventy-five miles, by report ; and everyone is saying that the two hosts are getting well into touch, so you can look out for more things happening before you lose your next tooth. Oh, it is a big business this. On the night of the 12th, the fourth night before the fall of Metz, my company was camped on an incline, and before I went to sleep I could see the fires of a whole division in the snows at my feet reaching far into the darkness, battalion after battalion, with their batteries and their sentries in greatcoats, seeming a scene in some great dream. And this mass of man, animal, cannon and baggage was but the advance-guard of a far vaster war-host which occupied the North ; and hidden away in the dark was the still vaster war-host of the enemy.

“ Well, after hearing that that advanced corner of our diamond might be fighting, I thought that I had had enough of bow-wow, and would keep clear of it. But I must have soon forgotten where I was going, and, as a matter of fact, put my little shoe into the thick of it, for near two o'clock, when I must have walked seven or eight miles, I twice heard band-music going, then a bugle somewhere calling form-company-columns, and presently I saw a train of artillery-horses straining uphill to my left, for the country just here is very broken.

“ After this I came to a village as big as Holmend, in

MP

which I saw not one living thing but a dog that skedaddled on seeing me. There were bits of shell about, the houses in ruin, and in front of a school a little outside the village were two mountain gun-carriages with their guns and artillery waggons wrecked, and a gunner stretched on the ground under one of the waggons, with his dragoon-sword and revolvers still at his belt, poor boy. You wouldn't think how lonely and consoling it was there, and I sat a long time on one of the scorched cottage-steps. The afternoon was quite warm, though there are patches of snow over the hillsides.

"Then a sound of big guns roused me, and, as it always does, drew me, for it's in the creature's breed, no doubt. So I set out eastward down some steep fields, and half-way down could see through trees a company of Greys in column of squads stepping with their swinging kilts, the gallant laddies, their marker gallivanting in advance with the flag like a man gone dancing and dotty with arrogance, a couple of field-guns and an *échelon* of baggage coming in their rear, and in front their screaming bagpipes that craze men's brains with bravery. Really, men are dear creatures, the good-hearted, simple, strong dears. I vow I'd rather a man than one of those angels that 'went in to the daughters of men'. Perhaps you will say, 'Yes, that's why your father has had to turn you from home'. Well, perhaps. You must think as you will, mother. God made us.

"So I went on making my way by fields and paths, the row growing, till I got in sight of a mountain, beyond the brow of which I saw a haze, for smokeless powder still makes a haze and a smell when lots of it are fired by troops in close order ; and on the mountain's slope, near the top, my fieldglass soon spied a supply-store and headquarters signalling station, with gun-emplacements, and a dressing-station lower down, and at the bottom under cover of a crag a group of ammunition-carts and ambulance-waggons, with flags on them.

"Lying down near the top was a line of Inniskillings, forming the reserve of the firing-line on the farther slope,

and two hundred yards or so below stood the Greys on a road. I was astonished when I got on the upper ground that the Inniskillings were not touched, for it looked to me as if small pompom shrapnel was spattering all about the mountain-top, and the battle was going on with the din of an engine which roars, groans, whizzes, and horridly rattles.

“ I wanted to go up to the Inniskillings to see, for it might do me good to get some lead in me, but a lance-corporal of the Greys shook his finger furiously at me, so I walked aside till I got to a crag where I scrambled down with some skirt-dance adventures, for I seem to be quite strong and active, really, but ‘ it’s the heart ’ ; and I got in the end to a mounting meadow, like the Tump at home, a quarter of a mile or so to the left front of the mountain, and in it I found a waterworks reservoir in a mound, and on the reservoir two German girls lying quite silent with their chins on their fists.

“ We were not very safe there, some of the enemy’s shells dropping pretty near at the bottom of our meadow, but, then, we could see, though the smoke blown from four cottages, and a wood burning on the slope, bothered one’s vision.

“ Our men were in four shelter-pits with loopholes, or rather in three, for I could spy that one was full of nothing but forage-caps stuck on sticks to draw the enemy’s fire ; and there was a covered retreat in the rear of them out of which I saw three wounded carried up.

“ At the moment when I lay down the enemy were pretty near the mountain : I could spy them like mice in a line darting out of one bit of cover into another bit, like one in a bitter wind winning one’s way, their artillery from somewhere miles away still pounding our mountain with mortar and pompom, having the range exactly apparently, and ours mouthing back across heaven from the mountain-top.

“ Then I could see the enemy’s firing-line running from behind three houses, then jumping a stone hedge, and their

cheer for the charge reached me faintly ; the next minute they were on the hill-slope ; and I pitied them, they looked so little running up there in comparison with the mountain, and with the amount of sound around them that they were foundering in, for they had hardly advanced ten yards when they broke like thread before our thundering trenches ; upon which our firing line leapt the trenches to chase them, the reserve Inniskillings ran down to help, and the signalling-station signalled the Greys, who ran up and then down to pelt pell-mell into the trenches.

“ I think, though, that the enemy’s ranks soon rallied, though I could hardly tell what was happening for the hazes of smoke that smudged the valley in patches ; moreover, a country-house that had broken into smouldering rolled most of it in smoke.

“ In the midst of it a sound made me glance to my left—cavalry !

“ The road that runs north and south along the bottom of the mountain winds eastward at the north end of the meadow where the reservoir is ; and on that east part of it I saw a squadron in column of sixes ride out from behind a rise on tall white horses. At the same time I was startled by the two German girls, who sprang wildly up, clapping their hands and laughing, crying out “ Cossacks ! Cossacks ! ”—and no doubt they were Cossacks, but they were certainly captained by a German, for I soon heard his frantic howling—they howl ‘ *Charge ! Double ! Hurrah !* ’ at a charge—or they may have been a mixed body. Anyway, on they came straight toward me with their busbies, dark-green knickerbockers and top-boots, from slow to fast, the white horses fretting wildly neck to neck, with their wild captain waving his sabre some yards in front of all, calling them, while quicker and quicker the hundreds of their legs drummed the ground with a steady growth of passion from a hand-gallop to a field-gallop and from a field-gallop to an avalanche. It was frightful, but nice.

“ Meantime, they were being knocked over, man and

animal, by the Greys, and trampled, though I don't think the Greys could see them yet for the trees : so no wonder they made haste.

" Their aim was to take the mountain while our main body was engaged away to the east with theirs, and I thought they were going to gallop and sabre our position ; but when they got under the north end of my meadow, where they were in dead ground from the mountain, two-thirds of them sprang off, without stopping, every first and third man tossing their reins to every second man, as I could see by standing up and peering ; and in a moment these two-thirds were jumping the stone hedge on the farther side of the road, leaving three dead there at the corner, and I lost sight of them for a minute, till I saw them again jumping the stone hedge, well spread out now, opposite the mountain : and they charged.

" There seemed to me to be precious little cover for them on the slope, for our men must have burnt off much of the bush before occupying it, so these poor cavalrymen got it hot enough on those lower slopes from the grim Greys, the row rolling without an instant's interval for minutes together, like ten million motor-bicycles going bang-bang, strong stuff. I saw lots of them catch at imaginary balls, as they dodged up from point to point ; but they did not break ; on they struggled ; and suddenly it struck me that the Greys' fire was growing slack, and then I was sure, and then it stopped, and my heart sank. Why they had given in so soon I could not understand, and could have cried. The two German girls were standing, grinning, on the very brink of the reservoir, white as milk with excitement, and in another minute they were screaming, clapping, ' Victory ! The Cossacks ! Hurrah ! ' Really, Germans have very offensive manners, and nobody can possibly be more excitable.

" Well, what followed I would not see the end of, it was too painful. The Cossacks, or whatever they were, leapt clamouring upon our trenches, and, even as they leapt,

poor dears, they were perishing like sheep. I never saw such a thing—I would not see it. When they leapt upon the trenches it was to find them empty, since the Greys had retired secretly by covered retreats to other trenches hidden in some fold of the hillside, and from that second position, even as the hot Cossacks cheered in victory, came the withering shock of the Greys' volley at horridly close quarters. Think of it, their tragic fix, the mantrap, the massacre. The Cossacks skedaddled like a flock of cats scattering from dogs, those Greys raining a purgatory of curses after them, and I scattered also, getting over a gate into the road where a third of the Cossacks were, holding the others' horses, and I walked along it some way, until I came to a wood, where I lay down. . . .

“ But no, I am not going to tell even you—not yet, anyway—what befell me there. I will send you this lot by our post to-night. It is already a long lot, and has taken me three afternoons, for I like, I suppose, to talk of it all to you. You might write once : you could, secretly, if you tried. Remember that I am sick, and even if I am a sinner, though I do not admit that I am particularly, suffering atones for things. I'll think of you all on Christmas Day, for I don't bear Alice any malice, tell her, if you will of me, and will write, for I love you more than any of you know. And will you send any news, and if you see any bits about the Prince of Wales, will you send, as Sister Darling is madly in love with him, poor girl, and I, too, I'm afraid. I wonder if any more girls have gone sillified for him, the sillies ?

“ ‘ For her skipper was Ted,
And Teddy's a bear ’ . . .

so don't forget this, and think kindly of your own, and good-bye, God bless you.

“ EULALIA ”.

As to “ what befell ” her in that wood where she “ lay down ”, it is soon told.

In the wood she spied a church-ruin, which was like a solitude within a solitude, and, in love with solitude, she went into it, and lay within a mass of bramble and bracken at its west end, which was a solitude within a solitude within a solitude.

Indeed, her mind and body were now in a sicklier way than her letter quite exhibits, so sick now, so afflicted and down with love, that only a don of Cupid College could have shrewdly construed and doctored her. It was the air-disease, nameless ! Her bosom seemed to yearn for the moon to nurse, and if this had been given her, she would have hungered for the sun to hug. As she lay there within the bush, her lids shut, her hands under her head, crushing her four-penny loaf of gold-hair, there were moments when the Prince's face appeared quite visibly to her, like a vision just over her nose, staring eye to eye at her stare ; and she smiled then at peace, and then it was gone, and her body tossed for ease, all sighs and pining, pallor and languishment.

Though she had been so very nigh to his life—and few men are fairies to their wives—he was now quite a Fairy Prince in her brain, the shout of the world about him perhaps girding him in purple glammers for her ; and since their married intimacy seemed not less than a hundred centuries ago, she was as fresh and flushed with love as if she had never had him : for it was necessary to her to look at the ring and reread his letters, in order to realise that her once nearness to him was not a dream. So with jealous shoots of pain she pictured him living and moving among Mohammedan heavens set immensely above her, forgetting her and her century-old caresses ; and stodgy old Buckingham Palace, guarded by stodgy bobbies, became to her fantasy an achingly enchanted fabric of romance.

And the thought that it was she herself who had cast it all from her with her own hand caused her to moan. But the notion of breaking down in her undertaking does not seem ever now to have entered her head even, stronger than

all tugs and gusts in the gale of her nature being self-respect ; and still her word was, " if I'm a Princess, I'll be Princess-like ".

She was no longer conscious of the firing, which continued some twenty minutes more, nor of its stoppage ; what shocked her into consciousness was a sense that *someone else* was there in the ruins : she raised her head ; saw " Made-moiselle Oyone " ; and in the very thick of her wonder sucked in her breath, with " How truly lovely she is ! "

There stood Oyone in the nave, at the middle, with that lissom hint of her hips and waist, dressed as ever in reds and splendours, a bag in her hand, a swath of veil across her forehead, and she was moving her eyes warily round in such a way, that at once Eulalia was aware that her visit here was secret.

But before ever Eulalia could reveal herself, Oyone was moving swiftly into the chancel-part, and Eulalia was so astonished to see her move her eyes slowly round once more, and then rapidly lift a slab by a ring, and vanish down a hole, that she had sat hushed.

Now, however, she thought that she hardly ought to watch, so she gingerly got up, to go slipping on tiptoe away ; but chanced to step on some loose stones which rolled ; stumbled : and Oyone heard it.

Oyone spurted like a bird to peer at the brink, but a little late to see Eulalia, who had that instant slipped out. She thought, though, that she could catch sounds out in the coppice, and made haste to follow, prepared to slay.

She had already in her bag what she had come for, a bar of gold : the fact being that the old woman, A-lu-te, was then dying, in consequence of which there had been some difficulty as to the signature on cheques, so the Chinese household was in straits for ready money, and Oyone had come and stolen a bar of Li Ku Yu's hoard, to break up.

And the question was : *had she been seen ?*

She had more sense of ownership in this hoard than labourers in their honest wage ; she had more pride in it

than scientists in their conquests ; and the mere thought that any god, or man, or fiend, should ever dare to ferret it out and drag it from her grasp roused in her that same gasping, arrogant rancour with which aristocracies resent any attempt to wrest from their maw the rents of their atrocity and dishonour. " Have I not *been seen* ? " she asked Heaven ; and *soft, soft*, she dropped back the slab, and went peering through the forest ; but she was now well weighted with the bar in the bag, and before she came to a sight of Eulalia, Eulalia was out on the road.

And now Oyone was left uncertain ; but the mere suspicion that she *might have been seen* inflamed her to a hissing hate, and was quite sufficient to be fatal to Eulalia. She had both dagger and fire-arm ; and she suddenly ran out to Eulalia, who was now moving westward toward a main-station which the Germans had just set up at the roadside ; and she called to Eulalia : " What, Miss Bayley ! "

" Think of our meeting ! " she said, when Eulalia turned, bowed, and met her : " You are in the army, then ? To what part do you belong ? "

" The 2nd Somersetshires ".

" And *I* have been with an old friend at St. Pierre-les-Sapins, and now have lost my way in woods, looking for the station ".

Saying which, she kept her eyes on Eulalia's face, and when Eulalia faintly blushed at the lie, this infuriated Oyone. Her next words were : " I can't bear to see those men : will you walk a little this way with me ? "—she pointed eastward, for a little westward were two tents with lanterns and flags at their doors, and operating-tables within, and before them a throng of ambulance-waggons and stretchers with gashed men on them, who gave out a sound of lamentation, and within the tents two surgeons and their helps, as busily working, and as coolly, as butchers.

Before these witnesses nothing was to be done by Oyone ; and by a blessed inspiration Eulalia replied to her invitation that she had to go back to her post.

At this refusal Oyone's eyes lightened with spite.

"But it is droll", she grossly said, looking Eulalia straight in the face, "that you, a Prince's honey, should be here slaving ! Or has he tired of you ?—you look a little ill. I hope *I* am not the cause, for His Royal Highness is always teasing me lately".

Up went the other's chin ; and loftily she uttered a word and a letter : " My h—— ! " then turned and went on her way eastward, with a hotter wound in her than those wounded.

Oyone, for her part, glanced at her watch, and went eastward, past the wood of the ruin ; but threw herself on a grass bank beyond a winding of the road, writhing, wringing her hands, thinking : " I think she did—I'll see her dead, I must ! or I'll know no peace. . . . She said the 2nd Somersetshires ". . . .

Meantime, Eulalia had turned back, to see what was under that slab with the ring : for now rancour was in her, too ; and she thought : " I will ".

So, after passing the scene of stretchers and shrieks westward, she passed it eastward again, saw no one on the road before her, ran into the wood, the ruin, raised the flag, and not without some ghostly tremors, for now it was growing dark, went down the steps.

Down there it was already black, but she struck a match from her knapsack : and there before her against a broken wall stood a great cube of gold bars glowing. . . .

The weight of one that she lifted amazed her. . . .

Now she sat on a step, considering it. And suddenly her hands started up. "*This is the Six Millions. . . .*"

Yes ! There was the "*Reichskriegs-schatz*" stamped in the bars—the Six Millions found—and by her.

She laughed a little sillily, all in Aladdin-land, dazzled. But after a time she laughed again not sillily, understanding much.

She saw now that she had long been sub-jealous of the half-caste ; and now that pang was over for ever. "*It was*

she who destroyed the air-boats, she and Chinnery", Eulalia was soon saying ; " and she was near to where he was shot in the Strand, for I saw her ; it is she who is at the bottom of everything ; and it is not love, but hatred that is between them !" Then she laughed.

But what now to do ? She was there in the dark a long time meditating it. To tell ? To keep it dark ? It occurred to her that six million pounds might well buy her the right and title of Princess of Wales.

To whom, though, did this treasure rightfully belong ? Not to Germany, surely : it had been taken in war-time. Not to England : it had been taken by private enterprise. Not, of course, to Oyone. It belonged to " Teddy " ! and, if to " Teddy ", then, to " Teddy's " wife : it was *hers* ! And multimillionairesses can buy many things !

She would wait and see what she would do. . . .

Meantime, Oyone had started to come back to the wood under an impulse of vague disquiet ; but then had been pulled the other way by having to catch her train.

CHAPTER XV

THE HAUNTED SUBMARINE

In that train she sat alone with that racking question : *Did she see ?*

Only an absolute necessity to be in London dragged Oyone from France that night.

But she would soon be back to that “ 2nd Somerset-shires ”, she said to herself.

If Eulalia had really seen, then, all was up—the hoard gone—the prison cell—the English scaffold. What hissing luck ! Were there gods who saw, and maliciously managed chances to punish sin ? Undoubtedly she had sinned ; she seemed to be becoming rather deep-dyed and rank, a new creature from the Oyone she used to be. Should she now repent ? and nourish friendly feelings to everyone ? and wrench Li Ku Yu by the roots out of her flesh ? Or was it not too late ? There was a sweet thing in sinning, in being quite, quite untrammelled, in flying and dropping bombs upon humanity ; and, as for gods, they were well when they gave success, but when they interfered with their hissing luck, one hissed and hated them. What *was* the girl doing there ?—she, a Prince’s *mignonne*. Had they quarrelled ? Yes, evidently : for her letter handed him at the Piccadilly Fountain had stunned him. And this was odd : that the girl had tossed up her chin, and said “ My h—— ! ” Could he be her husband—by chance ? In that case he might be caught like a fish.

She resolved to try it, and did not delay : in the hour that she reached London she wrote to the Prince.

And three hours later she entered a back room, narrow

and long, dim, windowless, with an alcove at one end—on the first floor. There was a prisoner in it, yet the door was not locked, for the prisoner never had any impulse to escape ; and said she, as if addressing a child : “ Look ! I have brought you a bottle to-day, instead of a half, because——”

“ My precious Oyone ”, breathed Richard Chinnery, sitting in slippers and dressing-gown over a fire in a tiny grate in the south-east corner of the room, whose length ran north-and-south, the door being in the west wall ; and he clutched at the bottle with trembling fingers.

“ Because ”, repeated Oyone, “ I want you to be good, as I am going to move you——”

“ Oh, Oyone, not the stairs ! not the stairs ! ” he cried, with fright in his eyes.

“ Yes,” said she, “ the stairs. And if you make the least to-do, I will take the bottle back. It is a shame in you to be such a coward. And you should be glad, for I am going to put you to live now in the Garden-house out of this dark den, where you can walk on fine days, and see the sun and the trees. It is all ready for you. Come ”.

“ Oh, Oyone ! ”

“ Come ”—she took his hand, led him step by step, he silent, concentrating his noble soul to it, but at the stair-top failed and shrank, breathing with bated breath : “ Oh, no, no, no. . . . ”

This irritated her, and, pulling his arm round her neck, she hurried him cruelly down, he as wildly staring as a zebra with a lion riding its back ; till they were down, and now he was eyeing piningly at her, panting “ my precious . . . my precious. . . . ”

She now led him out into the tangled back-grounds, in which, when they were near the Garden-house, his eyes lighted up an instant, as he cried, “ *My air-boat !* ”—for there under an awning it lay.

“ Yes, I brought it ”, she said, and his interest died out, as he disappeared with her into the Garden-house.

To her letter to the Prince, and her removal of Chinnery, add this : that three streets away was a house To Let, which she knew well, since some friends of hers had lived there, and in the late afternoon she went, veiled, to the letting-agents, got the keys to inspect the house, and before returning the keys jammed the front-door with a wedge of wood under it, leaving it so, unlocked. . . .

Her letter, marked "Urgent" and "Private", got through to the Prince by the hand of a workshop assistant, an engineer named Sturge, at eight-thirty that evening, the Prince being then in his workshop.

There he sat in his apron, not yet quite himself from his wound, the envelope hanging unopened in his fingers, at his feet a model of the Chinnery air-boat, or an attempt at a model, which had just failed to work.

But he was not thinking of the failure, but of Eulalia, of an upward glance of her eyes from the pillow at his side—a Divine glance—perfect God, perfect man—unfathomable sapphire, implying the whole bottomless world, eternity, infinity, Kashmir, Mars—a thing like treasure hid in a field, which when a man finds, he sells all, and buys that field.

It was lost : he could not find it. His ambassador sent to her home for inquiries had not even been heard by her father—had been turned out of the garden-gate, with a retriever's teeth at his heels ! and she had so very cleverly covered up her traces from the moment of leaving the hospital, that his agents still had no suspicion that she was in the army. He was now thinking of breaking through everything, clamouring the fact of his marriage aloud, and demanding her from the whole world. It was Sir Robert Barrington who patted him on the arm, and bade him wait, be patient—for his mother's sake.

She, the Queen, knew where Eulalia was—and was full of wonderings as to the girl's motive for going ! Eulalia, not waiting to be banished, had banished herself—luck ! But the reason ? The Queen conceived that the Prince,

having turned over a new leaf, may have dismissed her. But still, the girl must be rich from him : why, then, did such a person, a paramour, and rich, rush into the hardships of war-nursing ? This baffled Her Majesty.

She kept her eyes incessantly on the Prince's face in silent inquiry. . . .

He himself had no more knowledge than his mother of Eulalia's motive !—unless she had discovered what he was ? But he could not think how. . . .

Anyway, after a month of her loss the face of death commenced to acquire a smile for him. It was being said that since the fall of Metz the combined enemy were making tremendous haste to muster the remainders of their naval strength, with the aim of making such a rip in Britain's metal, as to compel her in self-defence to withdraw her land-forces from France : in the face of which danger the British people were frankly eager that the Prince should be the British leader in that foreseen Armageddon of the sea ; and he was now looking forward to it with thoughts and hopes more curious than any knew.

For he was aware that Eulalia was essentially wayward, wilful, headstrong, prideful under her smile, difficult to be flexed when once fixed ; and the notion of really losing her both infuriated and made him a cry-cry baby. Four days before this he had almost quarrelled with Sir Robert Barington, scenting that the baronet knew more of Eulalia than he told—and, in fact, Sir Robert *knew* where she was, for to him alone Eulalia had told it in a letter, but had sealed his lips ; and the Prince had looked daggers, but then with water in his eyes had begged his friend's pardon.

Suddenly now he sighed, and remembered the letter in his hand. . . .

And there she was ! found ! found !

He, pleased as Punch in each muscle of his meat, like a castaway suddenly drunken with luxury at a banquet, muttered : “ *I'll show her pride ; I'll show her things* ”.

"Your Royal Highness does not, I hope, take too seriously the moods and whims that actuate cats and women", Oyone wrote. . . . "My poor Eulalia, since her separation from Your Royal Highness, has been much with me, and I have been able to determine from the first that she is only suffering from her sex. . . . I have worked hard on her, and I think with some success, though I am not yet certain. . . . Anyway, I am venturing to lay a trap for her : she is coming to my place to-night, and if Your Royal Highness were then to appear on the scene, I think the match would be laid to the bomb that will blow you both into heaven. I have to be at a house, No. 13 Seymour Street, N.W., at 8.45 P.M., and, if Your Royal Highness desires to join me there at 9, I could then convey Your Royal Highness in my car to my place. . . . I shall be obliged if Your Royal Highness will bring this letter to return to me, since Eulalia can be resentful." . . .

The Prince noticed that no address was on the letter ; and also, as he was being dressed, he thought, "Since when has Eulalia become intimate with Plum Blossom ?" But he was not in a state for reflection ; was soon away ; and behind him, shadowing him, two detectives.

When he arrived at No. 13 Seymour Street, he noticed that there were lights in only two rooms, and at once had an impression of dirty and uncurtained windows, though the lighted windows had curtains—no blinds ; and he did not observe, what the detectives observed, that "Let" was painted on a window, the "To" scraped off, the "Let" left—for lack of time probably !

After passing through a garden, he rapped to find the Japanese girl stooping through a curtsey before him ; at the same time his brougham turned to return—to the detectives' wonder, who ran to ask the chauffeur "*Why ?*" The answer was "Orders".

The girl, meantime, was leading towards the back

through a long hall which had that afternoon been furnished, and yet gave a vague impression of strangeness—lighted by candles, and those two lighted rooms, if looked into, would have been seen to be empty, but for candles standing on boxes, and curtains.

“My car is just there by the back garden-gate”, she said, when they were on a verandah at the back, and she led down some steps to a shrubbery-path.

“I am very sensible of all your pains”, he then said in a low and heartfelt way.

“We are not yet out of the bush, Your Royal Highness”—her voice was very frail and quavery—“Heaven send that she may not take it resentfully. Has Your Royal Highness brought me my letter?”

“Here it is. Don’t fear—I can handle her, if I once get hold of her. Do you know, I have wished to see you, to speak with you of our friend, Chinnery : but the old woman—what was her name?—*Monty*!—did not know your address. Ah ! Richard Chinnery ! What became of *him* ? Tell me that, and I will call you a sibyl. That was a high head, and a wise eye”. He cast his eyes to the stars of a dark sky.

“He may be still alive, I often think”, murmured the girl, as they passed by a little green gate across a lane into a narrow street, where her car was waiting ; and they were away to the Chinese mansion.

There was something curiously recluse about the mood of this house, its gate kept constantly locked, and no tradesman, save the coalman, ever entered its grounds. Ozone herself had to set a bell babbling to be admitted by an old pigtail bent down double, who eyed the ground sidelong, with mutterings.

Thence she led her captive along an avenue dark and mossy into a hall of lanterns, all hues, but subdued as moonlight, mute as the tomb, where the foot moved without the faintest sound.

“Up here”, she whispered, with a busy secrecy, a sexual fellowship ; “I will leave you, and bring her from my

guardian"—and up the stairs they stepped, along a passage, to the room whence Richard Chinnery had been removed that day.

"*You wait in there !*"—and, as in he went, she locked the door quick, catching her hand off the key as if it scorched her, and remained glaring at it, grinning, some instants, then dropped against the opposite wall, gasping, relaxed, her eyes closed, worn out, dying, satisfied.

Meantime, the two detectives waited, watching the Seymour Street house, until, after two hours, one said : "But is the house on fire ?—look there !"—for one or more candles standing in their own grease on boxes had probably collapsed ; and before the fire-brigade could effect an entrance, the place was a conflagration.

Let the mental condition of England the next day be conceived—the Prince gone—no trace of any body in the gutted house.

The furniture-store from which the curtains, etc., had been purchased could only say that the purchaser was a woman, veiled ; Sturge, the workshop assistant, could only say that the Prince had sprung up on reading the letter at 8.30, and that the handwriting seemed feminine. Neither letter nor envelope could be found—no trace, no clue.

There was not one English heart which was not gashed now, nor perhaps one German not urged toward compassion. Western humanity, one may say, sat down in sorrow to ponder this problem.

All which world-turmoil concerning him the Prince knew in detail : for from the third day the girl took a habit of coming to sit on a stool outside his door, in the door being a hole, iron-lined, big enough to admit plates or a biscuit-box of coals ; and she, sitting there for hours, mornings, afternoons, sewing silks, painting on ivory or satin, never for two minutes ceased to speak as to an old-established member of the household, telling him the world-news, her pettiest household cares, the daily history of A-lu-te's illness, the secrets of her heart as regards Li Ku Yu and others,

the story of the destruction of the air-boats, the story of Alexis the Sexton, and how for a century his, the Prince's, bones would bear her marks, that scar in his neck, too, being from her hand, and how she had met Eulalia near the wood of the Six Millions, and suspected that Eulalia had seen her, and meant to end Eulalia ere many days. And mixed with all her facts were some falsehoods for falsehood's sake.

And never from within the dimness of that prison a syllable answered her—never, day after day, as if he had become mummy-dumb. He took his seat, indeed, near the hole, to hear and hear, till the seductive sculpture of her nose was old and dull to him, but uttered nothing ; and although he more and more suspected that he was being slow-poisoned, he made no moan.

Her mood was still that of gory old Queens of England, Italy, gross and gory Popes, grisly Empresses of the Chinese, whose names are like a sneeze, Tsu Hsi, and Wu of the Han Dynasty, and Lu, with their " off with his head ! " and Blue-Beard cellars, and wells for throwing one down for fun ; so that, as she sat there with her snakes and a parrot, relating in a sensuality of frankness the narrative of her depravities, there were seconds when her face had the nakedness of a drunken man's, marred by fleeting expressions of feeling, when she was by no means pretty.

Frequently in the deep of night she would rise to creep to the peep-hole, and try to spy him asleep on the petty iron bed in the north-west corner, and stay there in the night-silence till the night-cold, clutching her under her night-attire, drove her shuddering.

In all which she had an uneasy, yet sweet, sense of acting " on her own " : for Li Ku Yu, on hearing of the capture, had commanded immediate action, and the same day she had cabled him : " It is done "—so that *he* believed the Prince dead and buried, and dreamt at night of a Prince.

But she could no more kill him at once than the cat can its victim, he was so much her secret sweet, which all the world searched after, but Oyone alone owned. She

could see the parabola of his shirt-front, he being in evening dress, turn gradually from dirty to drab—since he had to make his own bed, light his own fire, etc. ; and though she told herself every day that she should be going back to France to see to the Six Millions and Eulalia, she could not tear herself from contemplating the monument she had accomplished, and resting on her laurels.

“ You should like me better than her ”, she said one day, a snip of thread resting on her lip, as she bent over her sewing : “ she has a kind of little English grace, and nice eyes, but I could have whistled you from her, if I had wished. That day at Richard’s when you danced with me, do you think I could not see what was going on in you—married or not ? *Are* you married, I wonder ? ”

But she had ceased to expect any answer from him. Once only a moan, smothered in the coming, had broken from his throat, when she told how she had dosed Chinnery before taking his air-boat, and he must have longed then to know if Chinnery was living, and where the boat now was—for she did not say—but had asked nothing.

And on she chattered, slattern this afternoon and loose in a sooty dressing-gown ; and another day she was like a painting of a Parisienne ; another day an Eastern Queen reeking of scents ; each day a fresh creature, her hair changed, her whole impression, everything ; and the more she changed the more she was the same thing, bewitching—like those working stars on magic-lantern curtains which dart into new hues and moods, and still are stars.

“ Think of a Prince without a harem ! Your ancestors had, so why not you ? but they say it is your mother, and your school, that have made you like that—like Li Ku Yu. I see that she is ill, and is being ‘ nursed by the Princess Elizabeth ’. What is a Princess doing in a country at war with her own ? She must want you very badly ! and would no doubt be glad to strangle your Eulalia for me. They say her father is always trying to get her back to Germany

in vain—dreads the war-dangers of the voyage ! What amuses is that there are references in the papers to her ‘ efforts to unravel the mystery ’ of you. That is laughable how the charlatanism and child’s-play of people in high places is taken seriously ! This Princess, it appears, is one of ‘ the clever ’ : she draws diagrams to find you, wraps herself in abstraction, frowns profoundly, looks furiously acute, and the Queen and everyone at Court have a queer hope that she will yet discover her Teddy—so the society papers say. Courts are queer things ”.

Her bird’s-tongue took some seconds’ rest, and went on : “ What makes the English mad is that you will not be at the sea-fight—it is for their own skins they care, not for you. *The Times* says that the war cannot last another three weeks, for then every nation will be bankrupt and starving ; so the sea-battle will be in a week, people believe, and America has too much to do to help England.

“ The Italians, French, English and Russians have mostly sunk one another in the five Mediterranean and Black Sea fights ; and the remaining Italians and Russians escaped through the Straits of Gibraltar three nights since, to join the Germans. The English have gathered all their Atlantic and Home ships ; but if the two forces annihilate each other, the Continentals will be the victors, since there will then be nothing to prevent them from invading England again.

“ England is already invaded—by aeroplanes. Last night a fourth town—Hull—was destroyed, and some of the English are against retaliating. That’s stupid—and yet—I don’t know. The English are the best of the whites—but so gullible. Who could be more gullible than you and Richard ? The night of your capture I groaned a hundred times to myself : ‘ Will the man not *think it odd* that I should make him go first to a different house, with my car at the back—I *had* to, since detectives were always following you. But I might have spared myself all those torments—you came thinking that everyone is exactly like yourself—

sleepy-headed ! capable of seeing deeply, but not quickly, except when your minds are excited ”.

She severed a thread with her teeth, and proceeded : “ Look at what Li Ku Yu has done to Europe—only by a trick, and perhaps not a soul, except you, has seen his hand in it. Even you never can dream what he means, or you would never have troubled about fighting in the *Asahel*, or about your Eulalia, or anything. All is over with you whites, you have had your day, this is your midnight. You do not know the Chinese, they will fry you in pans like sprats, with onions. Li Ku Yu says it is ‘ God’s Will ’, which is what he always says when he wants anything.

“ I am glad, for the Easterns know how to enjoy themselves better, eat nicer things, are nicer clothed and housed, with more colours and charm, and enjoy life with more delight.

“ You here are taught by your lamas and priests to be afraid of your god, who gets jealous if you enjoy pleasures ; but that is an African fancy.

“ The Orientals will paint out the European grey with greens and crimsons. And they have begun to come. A comet which appeared in the East some nights ago is growing you would not think how quickly—its face terrifies : and persons are asserting that this world will dive into it on a certain night, and that it is an omen of moanings to humans. I think it is the announcer sent out with the name of Li Ku Yu in its mouth, though no man can understand its language : for Li Ku Yu is great to heaven—swift and bright ! a younger brother of the heavenly bodies.

“ In China he has the titles of Long-lived, Orthodox, Prosperous, Quite Obvious, Perfect, Respectful, Glorified, Holy, and All-Nourishing ; and as the Grand Lama has proclaimed him to be Confucius Reincarnate, he has lately passed through the Empire from Manchuria to Quang-si, and from Lhassa to Ningpo, to reveal to the people the face of the Saviour of their race.

“ The Orient throws itself down before the throne he

rolls on, without raising its eyes, lest his brightness strike them blind, like that Ray of Richard's, which, perhaps, *you* have—have you? Tell me where, and I will set you free—will you?

“But it is all lies, he is not Confucius, he is Li Ku Yu, and nobody else, swifter and brighter than two Confuciuses.

“And he is coming! Listen to what he says”—she read from a letter: “‘impossible to understand anything of air-boat from your account; therefore, either I send you a steamer for it, or meet you with it on the Belgian coast about the middle of April’—soon! Then I will see him! and my veins will entwine his life with a vine of fire!

“Li Ku Yu? Like the bullet of a gun! And China is like a bicycle which he rides with his legs! He has so worked upon them, that now, he says, no power could hold them—they suppose that Europe is full of streams of diamond, and of anæmic creatures who sigh and make love, just waiting for Chinamen's fingers to come and tear their limbs, as one's thumb and finger tears mice and tender chicken-flesh.

“You do not know what is happening there, because the cables have been cut, the Legations sacked, the whites massacred at the concessions and treaty-ports, and since the Hwang Hai Battle all Hong Kong has been overrun and put to the sword. Li Ku Yu is the sheen of a sharp falchion unsheathed! They say that he dislikes tortures, but a life is no more to him than a kite that flies. Let it be blood: let's dye our eyebrows, and clean our teeth, with blood. Glory! A thousand years! Let's tread in red, and drown in red!

“There is nothing to stop it now. What is called the Army of India, after winning its way almost to Moscow, has been cut to atoms by a mixed German and Russian army, and India is already opening its arms to embrace the Chinese. From south to north all Asia is shouting ‘a thousand years!’ over the fall of the fair faces. The Japanese have crossed Lake Baikal on the ice, and have the Siberian Railway. Russia has called out all her Reserves, and is

asserted to be now exhausted. The Italian Regular Army is reduced to a few. France has out the Reserve of her Territorial Army, and her Southern Corps have vanished. It is being asserted that Germany will have to admit being bankrupt within two weeks, and England within four. Li Ku Yu says that there are twenty-nine millions of Mongols already living in Europe—in Hungary, Turkey, Finland and Lapland—who will welcome the Chinese, and are to be left alive to be the nucleus of a new kind of civilisation which he has invented in his head for Europe. As for the Japanese, they appear to be penetrating everywhere like fleas. Now they have British Columbia, as well——”

But here her prisoner got up to go into the alcove at the north end.

When he was long she put in her head, and saw him sitting on the alcove floor, his face in his arms against his washstand leg, and she thought that she saw his body bob as if with sobs : no sound, however. And presently he rose, closed the alcove door, and she was conscious of a splash of water from his tap washing into his basin.

Afterwards he came back, threw coals upon his grate in the south-east corner, and sat again, his hair brushed, as always, his white-black tie and collar on.

“ I think you have wept ”, she said : “ did I say anything to make you ? Perhaps you are getting hungry. There will be swallow-nest soup to-day : it is Li, the eunuch, who fled with us from Peking, who cooks it for one to lick the lips, though he is such a dirty lazy pig.

“ But as to the Japanese, it is not strange, they have a genius for war and butchery. In a battle at Nerchinsk they could not get past a certain trench, and at last the front rank dragged the Russian bayonets into their own breasts, so that the rest might rush the trench : for they butcher themselves as merrily as others, if once everything is red.

“ They have only been frightened once, it seems—when taking Australia ; and a very strange story is told of that in the papers. They were making a raid one midnight upon

Williamstown, the naval *dépôt* near Melbourne, where those ships of the Australian Navy were which had not been destroyed in the Hwang Hai Battle, and they stole up the harbour in the dark in submarines.

"Now, one of these submarines, called the E.3, had been British, but had been captured in the Hwang Hai, and it is said that she had once sunk, and her British crew had perished in her ; but she had been raised.

"At any rate, the raid failed owing to the fact that this submarine, E.3, rose up prematurely, and stood still on the sea. When she was taken by the Australians, all her crew of Japanese were seen to be dead, and the matter cannot be understood.

"It is being said that the submarine may be haunted by her former crew, since the dead Japanese had stares of awe and horror, and had evidently intended to cast themselves pell-mell into the water, several having the aspect of strangled rats.

"The Australians had her two weeks, but in the second raid the Japanese got her back. . . . What was ever the good of the Australians struggling against Japan ? It was foolish to think that a few Englishmen could keep all that continent to themselves. What is the good of any of you struggling ? Look at this bit in *The Times* to-day : ' From our own Correspondent. By Anglo-American Cable Co., New York. An *Evening Post* correspondent at Astrakhan wires *viâ* Odessa that a body of Turkestan Mongols, eight to twelve thousand strong, have captured the railway from Krasnovodsk to Khokand, and the Samarcand fort which the Indian Army dismantled, and have finally turned up on the Caspian shore. Their objects have not been ascertained '. . . . Do you think what this means ? The wall that will fall upon all is drizzling a little dust.

"Good-bye. I will go to see A-lu-te, and will send your dinner. You will not speak to me, but do not tempt me too long. If a bird will not please the ear, let him please the teeth ".

She collected her things, and went laden, trailing them.

He saw her no more till eleven in the night when, he being then in bed, she called in at the hole : " A-lu-te is dying ! I have summoned an English doctor in spite of Huang, and shall order a nurse. You will not see me to-morrow, for I am going to France to see to my interests, so as to get that over before the death, the funeral troubles, and the invitation to ascend. Good-night ! You are not asleep ; you hear me ; but will not speak. . . ."

CHAPTER XVI

THE BURIED RAY

The Queen lay on a bed to which none had access save the Princess Elizabeth and one maid-of-honour—for Her Majesty would see no doctor. It was nine in the night, a reddish shine, remote from that tumbled bed, shedding through the room a mood of the moon in eclipse, and the Princess at the bedside had on hat and gloves, just come, her gloves grasped in the Queen's hands, who feverishly said : " Did you lay before him all your latest thoughts ? "

" Everything ! "—from the Princess.

" And he his to you ? "

" Everything. Sir Robert does not think Teddy dead, Your Majesty——"

" Call me mama ; say ' mama ' "

" And he thinks that if he and I only keep on collating and dove-tailing all our latest thoughts, we shall yet discover Teddy "

With the wild eyes of fever, her palms clasping her forehead, the Queen said : " Yes ! *he* and you—you two—you'll find him ! *He* knows ! *He* is strong ! "

A furtive smile curved the Princess's thin lip, enjoyment in her at the sight of that royal mind, which had dominated her, now broken and in the dust.

" I told him I would see him to-morrow evening again——"

" That's it ! And what does he say ? Does he stoop ? Does he look sad ? "

" Yes, but Your Majesty should try to sleep "—she kissed the Queen's hand—" I am doing wrong, I won't stay another moment "

"Elizabeth, you leave me?" the Queen called to her.

"Let Your Majesty consider that you have not slept for three days", the Princess turned her chin to say, "and I, too, am sleepy. I will be with Your Majesty again at midnight".

Her Majesty now dropped back upon her pillows, and was tossing there with distracted changes of attitude, until all at once she sat up, stared, pondering, then urgently turned to touch a button, but checked herself, and then with clandestine haste was standing on the floor, staggering, yet grand, a ghost in laces.

In a fever of haste she proceeded to dress herself, delicately treading by an ante-room's doors, beyond which ladies waited, cautiously opening wardrobe-doors, quickly selecting, steadily building herself into a state of dress, save when she paused once at a mirror to hold up on her palm four grey hairs, at which she gazed with the greatest interest, amazed, gravely amused.

Soon after which she was in flight through a postern behind tapestry, hardly very exquisitely groomed, but careless, to make her way into the Park; and both an amazed Master of the Household and Inspector of the Palace, who chanced to catch the spurt of her escaping skirt at the turn of a stair, felt an impulse to address her, this apparition of her so suggested hectic ecstasy of mind.

After making her way to the bottom of the Park, she flew from the little gate there, stumbling, to Sir Robert Barrington's, a minute's distance away.

Luckily, something in her rap inspired him to open the door himself, and, finding her leaning there, her eyes closed, powerless, like an outcast at his door, he moaned "Come" to her, took her bodily, supporting her to a couch spacious like a bed in a morning-room, he himself very breathlessly agitated at this happening—no longer so young as he had been!

And, hand on heart, panting, he stood, saying: "I cannot think that Your Majesty—so ill—has done well——"

A lamentable protest broke from her buried throat, breaking his heart : " Oh, my soul is exceedingly sorrowful in me, Robert Barrington ! "

At which his forehead dropped before her, his breath uttered : " God grant me strength ".

" I have had hope ", she said—" you promised——"

But now he was harshly sharp. " No ! It is false ! I say that it is abominable, that it is unpardonable, if any unfounded hopes are conveyed as from me to Your Majesty. I declare that I am utterly powerless, absolutely in the dark. The Princess Elizabeth may be an interesting, if somewhat fantastic, young woman, but I say——"

" You need not be angry ", the Queen wearily said, raising herself : " I come to you, and you get angry. Why did I come ? I am sick of living, and I come to you ".

" Then, I will say now that you did well to come, Ma'am. But Your Majesty is aware, by training, that opinions have no value. My *opinion* is that Your Majesty's boy is in the hands of Anarchists, is still living, may yet be discovered ; but, then——"

" Then, that is how it is, if you think so ! You will find him, and it is exceedingly dear of you to give——" Here her hands were going out to his, but she suddenly saw and snatched them back with a breath of scare which she sucked in, which sounded like " Ah, take care, don't let me ! "

Then, ten seconds, she sat lost in astonishment, not very sure what she had said, or how loudly ; and suddenly, with " let me get away " was tearing angrily out in advance of her arm which he held ; and he, too, when he had followed her steps to the Park gate, and was back, sat asking himself in a long reverie : " What, really, was it that she said ? "

Then he was roaming the room with a brutal jaw, breathing between his teeth, " Man, eh ? Impotent ! Brainless ! Vain ! Pates of apes ! A world to lift with a worm's sinews ! "

In the midst of which, in an impulse, he sat down and penned a letter to Eulalia :

“ I am impelled to express the hope that all is well with Your Royal Highness. . . . Ever since the Prince’s disappearance I have received not one line, though I have twice written. . . . A natural anxiety impels me to pray Your Royal Highness to send me a word at the first possible moment. . . . ”

Three evenings later when this came to Eulalia’s hand, that was the first she had heard of any “ disappearance ” of the Prince : for on the day after her discovery of the Six Millions she had had attacks of dizziness, which had caused her to be put to bed in cantonment upon a pair of peasants in Nürnfeld village ; and not only had a surgeon-major forbidden any news or letter being given her, but the 2nd and 3rd, after the Battle of the Moselle, had taken up positions thirty miles further into German territory, and had left her ; and since her German was not fluent, her conversations with her aged hosts had included no news but news of skirmishes within thirty kilometres of their door.

Then one noon one Sister Darling—a tall strip of uniform under the face of a saint in a painting—had pelted into Nürnfeld to pay the patient an angel’s visit, and Eulalia, seeing that face pale and careworn, had felt so ill at ease, that the next day she had found herself saying, “ No, I am going to do my work—not so much Teddy ”.

That day she had got up, had dizzied, fainted, gone back to bed ; but three mornings after, gathering from rumour that her whole brigade was engaging a garrison of the enemy, she had procured a manure-cart, and, after travelling all day long, had come up with the brigade’s field-hospital in a field a league eastward of the Soar.

She found her coming eagerly welcomed, for the enemy that evening had suffered, not merely a defeat, but a rout, and of the crowd of captives left in the British hands sixteen

were wounded : so that, with the host of British wounded, the hospital had enough to do.

Eulalia was in a waggon at the bottom of a steep field, the waggon standing beneath a bay-tree by the bank of a brook whose babble among stones, together with a garrulous soprano of grasshoppers, aggravated the silence of a night dark and starless, warm and calm. Outside—the brook ; rough scrub ; Oyone in an ulster seeking to peep between two waggon-flaps ; some lanterns straying among waggons ; waggon-shines thrown on the grass ; a sound of horses' jaws which grossly ground and ground in the gloom ; a tent ; two heaps of stretchers under tarpaulins in corners of the field ; and within—sighs, spring beds, splints, lint, a hospital scent of sickness and carbolic, scarlet spots on bandages, and eyes—eyes pining, dying, sightless.

Into which came Sister Darling to throw a busy look from bed to bed, and to breathe “ How are you ? ” to Eulalia.

And Eulalia with a shrug : “ I shall pull through ”.

“ Brave ! You are dropping, really, after that terrible journey. You shall have these now as a reward ”—she gave three letters out of her pouch.

All from Sir Robert Barrington : and when Eulalia had managed to catch by snatches the sense of them, she called out lamentably to her maimed : “ *It is Oyone !* ”

At which outcry, Oyone, startled into fancying that she had been noticed, made a motion to run from between the waggon-shafts, but now saw coming a Tommy who led a horse by the mane, and she crouched under the waggon, till he should be gone. But the horse came to a stoppage, and the man also, resting his head on the horse's neck, like one dead-weary, or asleep.

After a little she hissed toward him : “ *Go away !* ”

She had been to the wood of the Six Millions, and, though the gold had not been touched, in the dust was a foot-print which, she had determined, was not hers. Up to that moment she had more or less believed what she had fiercely

hoped, that she had not really been seen ; but now she was sure : Eulalia had been there.

At which thing a gang of assassins, of Richards III., of grinning aristocrats, were instantly grinning in her inwards, and she ran to kill as if to catch a ball ; but it had taken her two hissing days to seek out the 2nd Somersetshires and then the field-hospital—she, meantime, in a state of amazement that Eulalia had done nothing to the hoard, or to her, all these weeks ! for surely, she thought, unless Eulalia was weak in the head, she must see now that it was Oyone who had destroyed the air-boats, and shot the Prince in the Strand, and—had the Prince a prisoner now ! At this last thought she had felt faint, and had made haste.

When it was well dark she had walked to the hospital, had dodged from waggon to waggon to Eulalia's, and had been fingering her trigger—for there was little difficulty as to escaping in the dark—when Sister Darling's coming had checked her ; and now she was waiting for the man and horse to pass and not pester her, for it was as if some pestering thing obstructed her.

Now, Eulalia, on getting the sense of her letters, had started to run—to abandon her sick, to be off somehow to London ; but, as she started, a dying voice called to her in a key which she could not resist : “ *Mees* ”, it groaned, and she moved back to the waggon-head to bow over a brow that had a bandage aslant about it, hiding the right eye, while already in his windpipe was the whistle of death ; yet both Eulalia and Oyone, their ears within three feet of his lips, heard each word when he said : “ A favour—service to humanity—my name Hartmann—Russian. Dig up a black box in the back yard of 11 Frith Street, Whitechapel—back yard, right-hand corner, dig it up. Send box to Taska—Bowery—New York—shoemaker—well known. Tell Taska someone who is lately dead—he will know—gave me secret to pass on. It is the Ray, say—just that—he will know—the Ray—and be careful of the cap, say. This is death—I am going——”

Eulalia hardly waited a few seconds to close his eyes when she flew, nor did Oyono know when she flew, so open-mouthed she sat there on her toes at this wondrous discovery of the Ray. It was in the yard of 11 Frith Street—how marvellous a talisman in those three words !

She had once kept Chinnery three days without drink to force him to make her a new black box like that lost box, and what was strange for him, he had resisted, asking her "*why do you want it?*"; but then had yielded, had got her to get together lots of objects, had commenced to make, but then had failed, or had pretended to fail.

But there it now was : and with the Ray all her terrors were at an end, all her ambitions realised. Chinnery could be forced to show her how to use it with her own hands. . . .

She sprang up, careless now of the man and horse still there, measured her chances swiftly, resolved to act, peeped between flaps more boldly than before : a dresser was in there, but not Eulalia.

Her heart started at the question : "*Does Eulalia know* the preciousness of the Redlike Ray, of those three words just heard, and has rushed out already to go to clutch it?" She must have rushed very lightly, flyingly ! . . . Whither ? Oyono moved to seek her, clambering the field from waggon to waggon ; and, on being seen by a running hospital-orderly, who stopped to stare at her, asked him where Nurse Bayley was.

"I think at the staff-waggon", he answered, pointed, and ran.

But Eulalia was not there, was nowhere in the meadow, and now Oyono moaned, "*She has gone*", and flew down to the brook, and up to a pony-trap awaiting her beyond.

Eulalia had, in fact, to the amazement of the staff, gone off in a flutter with her bag, as she could without formality, being still on the sick-list ; and, after stumbling westward seven miles, she tumbled to slumber some hours with a cow in a hut by a covert.

A comet's light in the morning sky caused her to start up,
OP

and she plodded on, anon conning her map by the shine of a match, anon conjecturing her way toward Nancy, for between Nancy and the front the railway had been destroyed, so that it was not till eleven the next night that she entered a train.

By that time Oyono was at Boulogne : but the Channel boats, requisitioned at intervals for war-purposes, were not running regularly, and, having to wait, she lay in the railway restaurant, a desert now, lamenting, thinking of her air-boat, how well if she had it now, visited now by a panic as to the Prince, impeaching herself of dallying and self-pleasing, promising to be prompt as hammer-stroke, if he was not yet dead, telling heaven with accusing looks that Eulalia had taken another route, and already had the Redlike Ray safe. . . .

It was not until the next afternoon that she could look back from the boat upon Boulogne as upon a hell escaped. At about the same time Eulalia left Dieppe.

They arrived in London within a few minutes of each other, one alighting at London Bridge, one at Victoria ; and now Oyono stood two seconds doubtful, still undecided whether to fly home and see to things, or to make straight for the Redlike Ray. The latter drew her strongest : she flew and got a cab.

Soon after this Eulalia, too, was in a cab, making for the Horseferry Road, looking out with amaze at the changed air of London—hardly anyone in the streets, save a flock of jackals *en queue* before a soup-kitchen in Marsham Street, and a crowd round a coffee-stall ; and though it was not yet nine in the night she was given a feeling of a London of three A.M.

Even the policemen appeared fewer, and looked as if all was up ; she saw two rolling a dead woman on a hooded stretcher ; and between Victoria and Marsham Street noticed three dead cats, two closed public-houses, and a coster selling red herrings to a drunken man in evening-dress.

At a paper shop she noticed an *Evening News* poster : "Let Them Come !" and a *Star* : "England Expects !" and a *Pall Mall* : "Sea-fight for To-morrow".

Then before that darkling old home of Chinnery she alighted, for she remembered to have read that a neighbour's maid knew "Monty's" address, so she knocked there, hoping to find "Monty", and so Oyone. But a woman told her that "Mrs. Montgomery is dead".

"Don't say that". . . .

"Of hunger, I'm afraid"—she closed the door.

What now to do ? Her plan had been to go to Oyone, to accuse Oyone suddenly of having killed the Prince, and if the Prince was dead, or if he was living, she would know the whole truth without fail from Oyone's face, and would then measure strengths with her—a rash thing, for she had no weapon, nor had thought of such a thing, nor knew her Oyone.

However, she had had the prudence to write a statement of the grounds of her suspicions, and had posted it to Sir Robert Barrington, marked "Open After Four Days".

But as to where Oyone lived she had no notion. The Chinese Embassy occurred to her ; her cabman knew where it was ; she drove to Portland Place.

Here she was received in a room to the right of the door, where a lean and a portly Chinaman, seated each in an opposite corner, solemnly, hands on knees, kept exchanging glances ; and the interview, which should have lasted one minute, lasted twenty. Probably they were dull, and Eulalia an incident : anyway, she had never known anyone who, having once got her, was so reluctant to part from her.

"What person may she want ?" Stout ventured to ask mildly, and Lean perused the floor with a weak and troubled brow.

"I only know her as Oyone", Eulalia said : "but I thought you might know——"

"Is she a friend to you ?" Lean thought of asking, to which she lusted to answer "Yes" (knowing now that

they knew Oyone), but, dainty in that way (by training), she said : " Not a friend : a matter of business, but very pressing and momentous ".

It was now that one remarked that he thought now that he could guess who was meant, and might telephone, if the lady would mention her name.

This put Eulalia at her wits' end : to say " Bayley " would be simply to prepare Oyone, and in the end, pushed to say something, she came out with " ' The Nurse '—tell her that ".

Both went out ; she heard them at a telephone ; and they came back with some bustle, saying : " But you are late ! Go, if you like, but you will only be in time for the invitation ".

Eagerly she seized a piece of paper that gave the address, with a sob of relief, and was gone, her eyes bright for battle, careless of which " invitation " that was for which she would only just be in time, they urging their reluctant steps to chase and gaze wistfully after her to the last.

By which time Oyone, on her side, was driving home from Whitechapel. She had discovered Frith Street—an alley five houses long, joining two streets—decent little homes of retired seamen, say—No. 11 in darkness, apparently unoccupied, but for curtains at one window on the upper story.

Oyone pressed the latch of a side-gate, peeped, went in ; no one about ; and there, leaning against the house-back, was the very thing which she was wondering how she could get—a spade.

With this she crept on in a strip of back-yard planted with some stripling trees, making straight for the Ray " in the right-hand corner " ; and the night was so dark, that she was quite in the corner before she became aware that there was a hole already there—square—of the same area as the Redlike Ray—three feet deep.

" She has beaten me "—her forehead dropped forward, and then her knees yielded, and, as if prostrate in prayer,

she knelt over the hole, thinking, "she has it, she is more favoured than I, she seems to beat me, to escape me, to be born to molest, and balk, and waylay, and pester me, this woman : but wait : if I kill her, I will kill her twice, and thrice".

She went back to her cab, and started in haste for home—down Leadenhall Street—by St Martin's. . . .

By this time Eulalia was there, ringing a bell under leafage at a green gate that had "Ning Shou Kung" painted in yellow letters across its concave top.

A very old Chinaman opened, dwelt upward on her with his eyes, led her inward through darkness to light, to a hall where stood a small woman of fifty, gorgeously gowned, stout and chubby, but grim in some wrinkle about the mouth. She, on seeing Eulalia, crossed her hands and raised them, bending her head—Chinese, not Manchu ; and she muttered with reproach : "But you come so late : the going-away (funeral) dress all done".

Eulalia palely smiled, shrugged, and replied in a shame-faced mutter that she could not come before, discerning that she was being taken for some other nurse ; so, to make sure of her entrance, she kept her face as little in evidence as possible—though this proved to be needless, for even if she had been unlike the other nurse in uniform and everything, that would not have mattered, when the Chinese woman was once preoccupied with the idea of identity : for just as to English eyes fresh in India all Indians are twins, so to Chinese eyes that live retired in England each English visage is a pea in a heap.

The light, besides, though abundant—Eulalia felt that some *fête* must be taking place—was very veiled and restrained, like the vague rainbow, like soap-bubbles, and veins of opal ; so the woman, whose name was Huang, said quite naturally : "No trouble, you come see", and led Eulalia up to a landing, from which by three steps they entered a death-chamber.

Eulalia's eyes, meantime, had been keen for any sign of

Oyone, but, as she now moved into the room, the woman looked at her to moan with reproach and opening arms : " But no Oyone come !—too bad ".

And now, when Eulalia understood that Oyone was away, there welled in her a question that made her faint : " If he is alive ! and here ! and I can find out ! "—Oyone away—and here, evidently, the head of the place dead, into so splendid a chamber had she been led, and never corpse more gorgeous than A-lu-te, stretched there in lantern-sheen in her phoenix hat, her robe and cloak of state, her badges of rank.

At once Huang led Eulalia to exhibit everything, Eulalia's knees weak beneath her weight, meantime, at that question that was in her, at her fear of the real nurse turning up at any moment, of Oyone turning up, of something happening, at the consciousness of her precious seconds passing, passing, while she stood there foolishly watching the exhibition, the chemise of white silk, the jacket of grey silk over it, the wadded robe of blue satin, the belt of jade, the abounding outer robe of sable, the badges, the collar of amber, the hair one glow of gold, the astonishing coffin of lacquer, padded with crimson silk and straw.

But she could think of nothing to do, to say ; any syllable might betray her ; the moment was too pressing for her ; she wished to be alone to sit and think ; a gorgeous tall Gorgon at the corpse's feet appeared to keep his eyes tied to her face ; and she felt her frame trembling in every limb, like the tongues of little bells that flutter.

Then two more came in, a man and a woman, then the old gateman came, and she helped to bear the body from the bed and lay its head on the red " cock-crow " pillow of satin in the coffin ; and then they commenced some ceremony—inviting the dead to rise to heaven : during which she moved away to a window, anguished at the chance she was casting away, asking again and again of heaven, " Oh, my God, what can I do ? "

In the midst of which she was touched on the shoulder,

and Huang, with one rather cynical eyebrow on high, was saying to her : " You invite A-lu-te go up, may be ? "

At which Eulalia shrank—from an instant train of ideas that sprang up in her—ideas that meant desecration of the dead, prevarication, pretence, in recompense for a politeness, for she divined that the request was made more out of politeness to her than for the benefit of A-lu-te, who probably had already gone up at the invitation of the others.

However, as to desecrating the dead, Eulalia had (naturally) much less respect for dead bodies than, say, her mother had, being accustomed to see young doctors throw dead men's arms at one another's heads across dissecting-rooms, and bodies cheap as cabbages on fields of battle ; and before she knew that she had resolved, she was saying with a bashful and begging grace which she had : " But in the English way ".

Huang shrugged and smiled.

" You must let me drive the devils first from all the corners ".

Huang shrugged and smiled.

" Well, then. . . . "

By this time there were only two in the room with her, Huang and the eunuch ; and these strolled with a sluggish and indulgent disgust after her to the four corners, in which she stood with a booing to-do . . . boo-boo . . . boo-boo-boo. . . .

Then it was out on the stair corners, boo-boo-boo, patiently, one by one, and up, they following, hardly any longer bothering to smile ; but at the first stair-top, when she turned into a certain passage, Huang stopped her with " No trouble no more ".

" Oh, I must now ", she said bashfully, begglingly, with that grace which gains everything.

And thenceforth she booed at every door-cornice, managing in the jam of every boo to mix the pill, " *Whose boy are you ?* " until she was there in the darksome corner of that passage, a door of which had a hole in it, though she did

not see any hole ; and there, too, she booed a " boo-boo, whose boy are you ? boo-boo-boo ".

There was still no reply, and by this time despair was in her, the thing was so trying and vile, her two followers becoming obviously sick of it, and she without any faith now in its success. However, she moved on, away now from that door with the hole, and was now about to boo anew, when, fully half-a-minute after her last boo, a dreadful outcry, pressing, as of one roused in terror out of dreadful depths and dreams, screamed out of that black darkness of the cross-passage : "*I am Eulalia's boy !* "

The franticness of that cry in the silence, the chasm and extremity out of which it came, its crazy rage, its horrid suddenness, struck Eulalia colourless to the lips, though she just had the wit left to lift her hand with " Hark ! a devil ! "

" Poh ", said Huang, cross now, " no devil—man-cook sick—you come—all devil gone now ".

" If I must—though I have not finished ".

" No trouble, you come "—and they descended to the death-chamber, where Eulalia, standing by the coffin, glad enough to hide her mottled face, raised her arm to say : " A-lu-te, I invite you to rise to the skies ".

But at the same moment the gate-bell began gabbling outside the house, and Huang, crying to the eunuch, "*Oyone !* " flew out.

From which Eulalia well understood that Oyone was come ; and now that she had found, and that the fire to find was extinguished in her, a chill and grisly realisation of peril gripped at her ; for, if not killed, she could be imprisoned. . . .

Some moments more and Oyone's voice was coming up the stair, Eulalia's escape cut off now, and all lost that had been won, if Oyone once saw her. And since Huang had told her that Oyone did not know that A-lu-te was dead, she felt certain that the death-chamber was the first which Oyone would enter, and now blamed herself bitterly for

not bolting out at the bell-sound and stowing herself away somewhere. The only hope now was to look out of a window, and to one she flew. . . .

In some moments Oyone was at the door. . . .

But it was only to cast one flying glance into the room, and she was gone flying up, to dash along the passage to the door with a hole, eager before everything to relieve herself of the evil thing that was hot on her breath.

See her there ! stooping at the hole, calling it to the dark, hot, envenomed : “ Here I am back ! A-lu-te is dead, and your Eulalia, too. Two nights ago—she was in a waggon in a field near Siebenberg—so I crept up—it was quite dark—and pried in through two flaps ; and, as she was stooping over a wounded soldier, I gave it her right through the brain, the beast, and she bit a piece of her tongue right off, as she stiffened and kicked. She is well dead. She had been to the wood of the Six Millions, for I saw her footprint, and she had got the Redlike Ray from a dying Russian, but I have it safe now—I shall be sending it to Li Ku Yu to-morrow. I will come again——” she was gone.

Her prisoner, at her coming, had been seated on his bed’s brink, staring, quivering on the *qui vive*, in a craziness of hopes : if she could have seen, she would have seen him tumble back, done for, at her news.

It may be thought, indeed, that he could scarcely believe that Eulalia had been killed when he had lately heard Eulalia’s voice say : “ whose boy ? ” but, on the contrary, he believed every word.

Much bane, in fact, had been mixed with his food on the day before Oyone had left him, and he was aware that his brain was not in a sane state.

All a night his head had been tossed in nightmare on the horns of the question, “ which is the yellowest, momentum or energy ” ? and in the morning he had thought “ I am done ”.

Hence, on hearing “ whose boy ”, for some time he had not answered, not believing his ears. That was nothing

odd now for him to hear something say "boo-boo, whose boy. . ."

However, the feet of his saviour were in haste. Eulalia was outside the gate before Oyone was again down, and, running till she found a cab-driver, she said to him between crying and laughing: "Grosvenor Place! The Prince of Wales! he is found".

He sprang upright.

"Fast, will you? He is found".

They were away.

But she was not wise to tell, since she wished to be quick, for the man thrice almost stopped to proclaim it, twice to policemen, once to a lady on a lone pavement, and as though his breath bore death and pestilence, the three instantly took to their heels.

And at Grosvenor Place Eulalia had to wring her hands—Sir Robert not at home!

"I mean that Sir Robert is really out", the man added, "and he may not see you at once when he comes, as another lady—a Princess—is awaiting him".

"No, he will see me first—you tell him—'Miss Bayley'", Eulalia said, and he led her to that large drawing-room where Sir Robert had once interviewed Her Majesty.

This ran at right angles to the stair-head; and parallel to the stair ran a small drawing-room, which opened into the large; in which latter, pacing, was the Princess Elizabeth, fraught with her latest thoughts.

As one of the two sets of folding-doors between the two rooms was open, she could hear the other led in, and, on peeping—started! It was *she*, the bliss-licker! though the Queen had informed her that the minx was at the war. What, then, was she doing here? Her Imperial Highness condescended to the keyhole, peering with no little greed to get a view of that plebeian puss who had proved tastier bait than her own imperial being; nor did Eulalia's assumed mutiny and raid on dainties make Eulalia a less interesting object to her—on the contrary.

But she was amazed when Sir Robert hurried in first to Eulalia, though he must have known . . . ! She saw Sir Robert bend to kiss Eulalia's hand like a sovereign's, or an idol's, with deference, with reverence ; and then what followed was all a reeling dream to her, intensely immense. She was aware of Eulalia panting her passion of tidings, of wine shaking in the baronet's hand, of the fact that the Prince was found, found by another woman than she, of the words "Oyone", "Regent's Park", "Ning Shou Kung"; and the next thing was that she found herself down and out in her brougham bound for "Ning Shou Kung"—which means "Palace of Unperturbed Old Age", not of burning, and bursting, and turbulent youth.

At Ning Shou Kung gate she sent in her name, left her lady without as sentinel, and soon in a cosy room had that dark-brown eye of Oyone resting sideways on her, cold, darksome in meaning, mysterious, teeming with strategic and dangerous statecraft : for when at bay she was ever brave, ready, dexterous, self-protective ; while the Princess's spectacles stared calmly like starlight, speculative, unblinking, noting the movement of Oyone's bosom, her beauty, her sinuousness, her nose pinched and blanched.

"Your Imperial Highness—honours me?"

"No talk is necessary : conduct me instantly to the Prince of Wales".

Oyone let slip one half-a-glance toward the gods, and hummed a little.

"Your Imperial Highness thinks that the Prince of Wales is here?"

"No talk is necessary : I know".

Oyone was up. "How?"

The Princess shrugged. "By deductions from clues".

"As I hoped!"—Oyone locked the door.

"Oh, that is nonsense to lock the door", Elizabeth said, *her* nose, too, paler now, "when others know that I am here, and that the Prince is".

"But do you suppose I do not see that I have beaten *you*

by locking it ? ” Oyone looked down upon her with a bitter lip of contempt. “ You come here, alone, hurried, after learning from a nurse that the Prince is here, your reason being that you want it to be thought that you have discovered him by your excessive cleverness ; and I imprison you as an evidence of your cleverness ”.

“ That seems a little silly. Others are coming——”

“ Precisely. You tell me everything which I wish to know. I will let those ‘ others ’ get the credit you crave for ”.

“ Why should you—care ? ”

“ Oh, if you are not so clever as you pretend to the Queen, you are infinitely cleverer than you pretend to me. You see that *my* liberty is in danger, and *your* wedding bed. Let us be friends ! ”

“ I have not said that I am unwilling ”, said the Princess Elizabeth, up-looking.

Palely they smiled at each other.

“ Shake hands ! ” said Oyone authoritatively.

Their right hands just met, while Oyone, reaching sideways with the left, unlocked the door.

“ Now, how did you know ? ” she asked : “ tell quick ! ”

“ A girl named Bayley, his *bonne amie*, came here, was mistaken for another nurse, heard his voice——”

“ It was *she* ? *Eulalia* ? She booed——” This made Oyone faint that such a thing should be ; her arm searched blindly for a chair behind her ; she sat.

“ We have no time——” the Princess commenced to suggest, when the other struck her dumb : “ She is not his *bonne amie*, I think she is his wife. . . . ”

At this Elizabeth blanched as from a slash, as there flashed across her memory Sir Robert Barrington’s manner of kissing Eulalia’s hand. But this was an idea that would take her brain days to receive and believe, and she said with a shuddering hauteur : “ That is an impertinent suggestion—you speak of an impossibility ”.

“ But if the Prince has admitted it to me ? ” Oyone said.
“ And you need not care. She will not live long, if *I* live ”.

At which Elizabeth's eyes dropped, her lips letting out :
" One should not be horrid ".

" But you will be delighted if I am horrid ? All women are the same ! we care much for nothing, except some man. And since you can never get the Prince, not legally, while this girl is alive, then, you wish me to live. You agree ? You see ? Then, you will let me go first to him, to make him think for a minute that I am releasing him of my own will, on condition that he signs a promise to protect me from consequences ; and *you* will help to protect ! " She sprang up, and Elizabeth, too, rose, saying, " On condition that I come with you ".

" Why not ? " answered Oyone, eyeing her aside, " are we not allies ? Kiss me ".

Elizabeth's eyes dropped.

" Four men are said to have committed suicide for my lips ", Oyone mentioned.

" You *are*—one admits——"

" Then, you may ".

Elizabeth let slip a peep from beneath sheepish lids, but then shook her head, breathing " Not now ".

Oyone now wrote some phrases in haste, and they ran out, a sense of no little surprise in the Princess to find herself " the ally " of the miscreant whom she had come to smite and quell with her mighty spectacles ; and she stood beyond the lantern-shine that stood on the floor by the door with the hole, while Oyone spoke. . . .

The difficulty, however, was to get a signature to the phrases that lay on the iron-lined hole, or any kind of reply from within—and every second so precious.

But when Oyone told her motive—that a naval battle impended, and that Li Ku Yu instructed her to set free, since he did not wish an invasion of England until he invaded, then in a rush a shuddering pen was spluttering, and the thing was done.

On which Oyone's lips brushed Elizabeth's cheek with the whisper, " I'll write—here's the key ", and she flew,

scattering gold over the hands of two whom she met, with "fly ! fly ! for a time : all lost !" then was wild-handed at a glass, disguising as a Cockney coster-girl, and within six minutes was out, raining sables and bags into the air-boat, which she ever kept in petrol, then was heaping a beseeching Chinnery in, then was wiping her brow, sighing, high behind brown clouds. . . .

Meantime, the Princess was labouring under the Prince's weight, staining her rose-satin mantle, broderie anglaise, and arum lilies, with that shirt-front and dirty evening-dress—she eager, with "poor Teddy, try now", he slow, with "It will be well—wait one tick", during fifteen minutes from prison-door to brougham.

But it was ten minutes more before Sir Robert Barrington, who had been delayed by communications with Scotland Yard, arrived, with a force of men—to find in "Ning Shou Kung" no one but A-lu-te.

London, meantime, had pricked the ear, and was up, so that as the Prince drove from street to street, his forehead on the Princess's shoulder, he was conscious of commotion each moment increasing, newsboys who flew hooting the rumour, ten o'clock editions, populous windows, footsteps of runners that sent echoes of running, as when there is a fire in the night, and London sends out runners and echoes.

And from Hamilton Place there was some trouble : the carriage-doors were opened, many pressing to shake hands, the police failing to reach him, and the Princess preaching continuously that he was ill, so that she was in a condition of exhaustion before they could get to the Park gate.

Just there, at that end of Constitution Hill, some man, seeing Eulalia straining and fainting to see, snatched her up, and she saw a nose beyond the Princess's shoulder, to console her during her night-ride to the coast. As to how the Princess came to be with him, and not Sir Robert, was beyond her comprehension.

But, if she could have waited, she would have seen him better, for later the Queen would have him be seen by the people, and he was supported to the balcony by the King and Elizabeth.

It was now first that the Palace was wrapt in a rapture of sound ; and crowds were still coming to eye its windows almost all the night long.

And the wings of the wind bruited that thing through Britain that night : the dead was alive again, and somehow through the wonderful wit of that wonderful Princess Elizabeth, when all the tecs had long despaired. The heart of England softened toward Germany.

But none the less, England with all its heart longed that the next day's battle should be lost by Germany, and with its whole heart wrote its hope that night, its demand—in nine million letters that drove crazy the Circulation Office of the London Postal Department—that none but the Prince should be the British strategist in that battle.

But of this the Queen would not hear : for, seeing him on a bed strangely before her sight, she meant to keep him, sharing her eyes, meantime, between him and Elizabeth.

Elizabeth had calmly led him to her, saying : “ Your Majesty, I have brought you your son ”.

Willy nilly, she *had* now to be a charlatan, and it was willy, for by heredity and nature this German girl was a greater charlatan and farçeur than Cagliostro or Casanova : so, having some genuine dexterity, she entertained Her Majesty half the morning in showing how clue on clue had finally led her to the gate of “ Ning Shou Kung ” ; nor had the Queen's feverish happiness the time to spy shaky links in the chain.

Also Elizabeth related how, having gone to share with Sir Robert her final thoughts, she would not wait, as he had been engaged with some lady ; an untruth which Sir Robert, on hearing of it, knew to be an untruth, though now, of course, he was discreetly mum : so that the Queen and the Prince, remained unconscious that, not one, but *two*,

rescue parties had gone to "Ning Shou Kung" that night.

What the Queen, or no one, could definitely gather was *why* the Prince ever went to "Ning Shou Kung", or its inmates' motive for imprisoning him ! for the Prince, under contract to Oyone, refused details—the motive was "political" ; and though a mob sacked some of the rooms of "Ning Shou Kung" the next day, its inmates were soon back in it unpunished—to the wonder of public and police. Only Oyone lived no more there, having no confidence in the Prince's promise ; and with her were Chin-ery and the air-boat.

But to the Queen's fever details were of little importance for the moment ; there he lay safe ; his saviour was her favourite and elect for him ; and "All, all, Teddy", she said that morning, "you owe to this dear and knowing head".

At which the Prince lifted himself, bowed, kissed the Princess's hand in a particular manner. The Princess's forehead rushed into a blush, her eyes blazed. The Queen's bent head dropped a tear. It was an engagement.

Some moments later, though, the Prince again raised his head to say : "I fancy, Your Majesty, that I shall be well enough for the fight"—and she started ! knowing that tone of her son.

He, for his part, had it in him that Eulalia lay dead of Oyone's hand, and, on the whole, thought well of wars.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FLOOD

All that morning Britain was rent by a civil war of placards, "Too Ill", "An Hour Will Decide", "He Will Be Present—Special", "The Doctors Forbid", "Hope Abandoned", "Prince Leaving Waterloo", "For Her Skipper was Ted!"—this last a *Star* 4th edition placard before noon, which the widow's mite was spent to buy.

It was a bright spring morning, breezy : but for him in that compartment the sun was black in eclipse behind a shadow "like unto the son of man" : for he had come out of prison to a world perfectly new, in which the chess-game of Europe, that day to be decided so momentarily in others' eyes, was to him child's-play.

"*China!*" he breathed : "how queer ! how abstruse !"

When laughter among his suite behind reached his ear in snatches, it touched him with a sense of astonishment that men should laugh under the sun. But they did it in ignorance.

He was as surprised as at finding himself straying on a planet where every plant is saffron, and the heavens a heavy yellow ; and he stared before him, smiling with a child's amaze, his "well-dead" Eulalia pushed into the back of this brain by Li Ku Yu in the front : for that shadow like unto the son of man eclipsing the sun dangled a pigtail.

Always, from boyhood, he had thought that Li Ku Yu was born to modify things—would invade India and Siberia—and that he, the Prince, was somehow ordained to checkmate him ; but his heart had never really conceived

that the stars some night in time might look down upon a yellow Europe.

Some words of the Japanese girl heard in his confinement had caused him to start and shy ; but it was not that which now bent his head.

He held in his hand a document, that day translated by the Private Secretary, addressed to him as President of the P.C.N.S. by a certain Oberstwachtmeister Bergmann, a refugee from Kiao-Chau, just arrived in Europe, and his eyes read and reread of themselves. . . .

" This my Memorial, which at the same time I venture to address to my Imperial Master and to your Royal Highness. . . .

" The Memorialist's escape was due alone to his disguise in the costume of a Mongolian camel-driver, and to the good graces of the said Hsi, the junkman. . . . The Memorialist cannot think that any other European has been so favoured by Divine Providence. . . . The scanty European garrisons were overpowered without difficulty in the same night. . . .

" He has divided the Chinese Empire into 240 corps regions, each containing a population of two millions, each region being subdivided into 150 sections, each section to provide one line infantry regiment, twenty sections forming an infantry-brigade-command, forty an infantry-divisional-command, the latter under Japanese generals, the former under both Japanese and Chinese. . . .

" In each region have been quartered the field army-corps elements, the staffs, recruiting *dépôts*, *dépôts* of artillery, transport, clothing, and camp-equipment, and supplies of food and forage.

" Each corps has been provided with a corps-cavalry-brigade of great dimensions, whose weapon in the main is the " long spear " of the Daimios, and the animals camels and mules mainly ; the regular organisation of a corps being completed by eighteen batteries of cannon, six artillery parks, six sections of artificers, six telegraph sections,

twenty-five companies of pontooners, and forty-five field-bakeries.

"The Memorialist estimates that during the past four months some 30,000 rifles and 20,000,000 rounds per month have poured from Japan into China, in addition to artillery, swords and spears.

"Many of the conscripts seem to be still armed with nothing but a poker or a club, which may be considered a sufficient equipment for some of the elements of a war-host which includes many classes of women, and may more resemble a locust-swarm than an army.

"For each peloton is provided an armoured cart of considerable length and weight, making a kind of locomotive shelter-trench with loopholes, to serve the purposes of transport, of travel, and of defence.

"The Memorialist considers that the China of the moment little resembles that China habitually conceived by Europeans. . . .

"He regards it as a country characterised by much unrest, and impelled by a very remarkable tendency toward migration. . . . The presence and personality of this one man appears to have acted as an intoxicant, or goad, upon the masses of the people, goading them to a vague angriness and a very extravagant adventurousness. . . .

"The load of new taxation is borne with a patience due to their daily expectation of Messianic marvels. . . . Li Ku Yu is everywhere regarded as a sort of angelic juggler. . . .

"The exploitation of the mineral mines of Manchuria, Quang-Tung, Heilung-Chiang and the Kirin Provinces, have yielded to so exact and administrative an intellect an adequate exchequer. . . . The results of all which the Memorialist holds to be at hand. . . ."

The results were present: for a *Times* paragraph had it that on the previous evening a yellow regiment had entered Europe, and put to the sword the Ural *volost* round Mount Iremel.

He, for his part, so ill, felt his back bend under this thing.

Moreover, a wireless telephone to the train gave the rumour of three German brigades having quietly occupied Brussels overnight, of a German squadron engaging the forts of La Floride and de l'Heure in artillery duels, seeking to effect a landing at Havre or Honfleur.

The French, then, and the British on the French frontier, were to be taken in the back—that seemed the meaning ; this, indeed, being Germany's week, in which, if she failed, she failed—perhaps failed anyway : and now like a gambler staggery and callous, was throwing her last throw.

The crowd, therefore, of captains and commanders, summoned to Government House on the Prince's arrival, met with a flush of excitement at this German tidings ; but a mood of excitement new to their nerves awaited them there.

The Prince, standing near a window, as the room filled, could see a sea of heads without, and his face-muscles suddenly convulsed toward tears, seeing them, he thinking that there are tears in things, and that lives are like waves, and like leaves. . . .

All that region of England, in fact, had been pouring itself for two days into Southsea, Portsea, Gosport, Portsmouth, and a bustle of " them that go down to the sea ", mixing with the other multitude, gave the day an air of gala. From the Portsea quays, the Camber, the Hard, the harbour had an aspect of preparation for some great day and date, the Portsmouth inner harbour pregnant with craft, with a rattle of anchor-chains, a chaos of smokes and sails, scouts outgoing, incoming, and gulls that were aeroplanes playing in the air. But it was not holiday that was in men's minds.

The Prince by this time had had copies of the Memorial handed round ; and, as he rose, four-striped now and banded, the others hung on his face, his manner, his phrases,

in a hunger of curiosity, with criticism, with question and wondering.

"After what you have read, gentlemen", he said, "little need be said now : for, if this destiny is incredible to you to-day, I prophesy that to-morrow you will see it. In which case, what to do ? The P.C.N.S., you see, have conspired with Admiral of the Fleet, Sir John Shepherd, to tempt me into accepting command, and no doubt you wonder, like me, what sin I have committed : however, here we are—weather winky—sick skipper at the wheel. Thank God, we belong to a lot who may be a common enough mob in easy years, but will be well-groomed on Judgment Day. I don't think we are going to be afraid—even of throwing off our old modes of doing and thinking in the face of this new day : for we in this room are the rulers ; Civil Power, Navy Staff, are out of it now ; and so I say, since this thing is on our backs, and we may be bitterly wanting the ships which we shall sink to-day, let us beg the enemy to go back, and not bother. What do you say to it ? "

He sat : and from half a sound of approval surrounded the table ; but others, hardly yet grasping the reality of the Dragon advance, sat silent, their eyes bent upon the papers ; and when Sir John Shepherd, an old gentleman, spoke, it was to read a memorandum of the enemy tonnages, from which it appeared that Britain's tough tussle over the ocean had left the allies a preponderance of 32,000 tons in newest-type capital ships.

But it was the Prince's words that more and more filled the mind. . . .

His flag had been hoisted on the *Queen Mary* ; and by 3 o'clock the Southsea Castle guns were gonging god-speeds to the double column going at six cables down the flood.

Already at that hour a big-ship battle was in progress with the raiders on the Havre forts, though the forts themselves had previously been stilled, and a landing of infantry effected.

But the enemy's main body was away in lat. 52 between Harwich and Rotterdam, though their *objectif* was understood to be our south coast, the whole east being very thickly patrolled by mosquito flotillas.

However, about five o'clock, when opposite Brighton, the Prince received tidings that the enemy's fleet had turned northward, and he then signalled eighteen knots—forced draught for his slowest units.

A little later the three ships, *Antrim*, *Argyll*, and *Cæsar*, all very lame, were sighted southward, as the sun went down, these steering apparently for Newhaven from the *fracas* round Havre.

Off Beachy Head the Frenchmen *Jean Bart* and *Danton* came up to take their place in the port British column, these being said to be the only sound capital ships now left to France.

At the fall of darkness the Germans were still turned northward, and the British, two interminable processions of searchlights, worked on at the chase until eleven in the night, when (nigh the Thames-mouth) the Prince heard by wireless that the Germans had turned south ; and he then changed his formation to single column line ahead at sixty-six revolutions.

However, the night being rather gloomy, gusty (though the sea was smooth), the enemy apparently gave the slip somewhere about Long Sand, and were found to be some miles south at one o'clock. The British, pretty well in touch, put down the helm to come at them.

It was ten minutes later that a scout-cruiser came in with the news that probably all along the east coast of England and Scotland a battle of destroyers and submarines was then raging ; and the Prince's head fell upon a table to consider it. His thought was : " I wish I was only well. . . . "

In the midst of which his flag-captain pushed in his head to say : " Here comes the comet, Sir ! " and the Prince rushed to see what was already a *chose vue* to everyone else—a brightness sheening on the sea's eastern horizon.

It soon had the night alight, and yonder to the south-west, a crowd of toys, lay the enemy.

And now the Prince wrapped up in oilskins, signalled his departure down to the ninth in the line (Sir John Shepherd, the *Lion*), and was away with a sub in a hydro-plane of high speed, a night-glass eager at his eyes.

Within sixteen minutes he was in the cabin of Grand-Admiral von Bachberg, the *Donnernde* ; in thirty he was spurting back to the British, his blood up, his proposals of peace having been coldly received ; and now his illness was in the background of his being.

He immediately ordered the fleet northward, calling a meeting in his wardroom, where, speaking very quickly, he said : " Gentlemen, we have to fight, and the thing now is to do it a little trickily. Their object, of course, is to destroy our resistance to invasion ; all along the coast the attempt is now going on in detail ; and, whether they themselves are destroyed in the attempt or not, the attempt is a success, if they destroy *us*. Well, then, since fight we must, let's fight shy and fly ; let's kill them without dying ourselves (" *Bravo !* " and laughter). We *can* : for I've seen people snatch up glowing coals and juggle them trickily on their palms without a scorch, and people prettily handle nettles without ever a sting. This, then, I recommend as your preliminary object—not to be sunk by them ; and this is your secondary—not to sink them ; but to capture them : for I tell you that you may be wanting ships in Europe.

" And now you want to know—in two ticks—how I think these two objects can be accomplished "

He proceeded to lay before them a plan of battle.

By this plan, every British ship was to present a broadside to the enemy ; and every enemy ship was to present herself end-on (whichever way she turned), to be raked fore and aft by some British.

And the method was quite simple !

The British were to fight in two lines ahead at right

angles—along two sides of a square—with the enemy between.

One British line was to lie east and west, one, a mile eastward of this, was to lie north and south. He read lists of the ships which he designed to fill each line.

If any enemy ship turned her broadside to the British ship attacking her, the British ship was to desist from that particular ship, leaving her to be raked fore and aft by some ship in the other British line, to which she would then be end-on : the British aim being, not to kill ships, but to kill guns and crews, not to shoot at hulls, but to shoot at decks.

Some other hurried instructions, and the throng of captains were darting back over the ocean to their various vessels, a blaze raging in breasts where depression had reigned ; instantly the new mood was pervading the navy ; the flagship signalled the battle word : “ Sausage and Smashed ” ; far over the vast of the ocean the laugh, the challenge, passed ; and Jack buckled to the trouble with alacrity.

And the instant the fleet was out of the enemy’s sight it split into two ; the flagship with 1st and 3rd battle squadrons moved east, south-east, south ; the Second-in-Command, with 2nd and 4th, waited, then went south.

And before the enemy could realise the plan, the Battle of Margate was upon them—a big-ship drama, though all the North Sea fought that morning in smaller combats ; and the comet’s searchlight, urgently journeying, solemn in the morning, saw.

For three minutes the two flagships were engaged : for when the *Donnernde*—the behemoth of the Germania Yard, 35,000 tons, the largest warship yet launched to load the ocean, the men of whose stern were as foreign to her for’ard crew as Holborn men do not know what Strand men do—when she, reserved by Germany for this day, turned her broadside to the *Prince of Wales* she faced the *Queen Mary*,

and from the frying-pan was in the fire. An outbreak of a thousand thunders struck her suddenly dumb, strewn her superstructure, funnels, masts, guns, steering-gear, bow-works, all in the shout of one sharp shower ; and she lay a flagrant log on a crimson sea, after lodging three shells in the *Queen Mary's* engines.

When, twenty minutes later, the *Queen Mary* went down by the bow, a boat that carried the Prince and sixteen sank ; but, by swimming, they got to the *St. Vincent* ; and when the *St. Vincent* was sinking, as day broke, he boarded the *Britannia* in a boat, having nine lives that night.

By which time the fight was all but done ; the sea a reddish scene of wreckage wherever the eye could reach ; and the dawn came strangely that morning.

By now results could be estimated : a third more British had been sunk than enemy, the fact being, that the British, in presenting broadsides, had presented a greater area to fire than the enemy to them, so that the enemy's more numerous hits had hulled many British ; and some naval criticism has blamed the Prince, his plan being what it was, for not engaging at closer quarters than he did.

Be that as it may, the enemy's more numerous hits proved to have wrought far less havoc each than the British : so that the thirty remaining British were still mainly battle-worthy, while the thirty-four remaining enemy were gunless, some capable of repair, but shaved of upper-works, and British captures.

The destruction, meantime, among the smaller craft in that vast battle along the coast had been enormous ; but, as to the Margate Battle, such a result, when the country heard it that forenoon, without quite troubling about how the trick was done, was heard as a wonder, the work of a wizard with a switch which he whirls.

Hodge at the hedge-side, the Queen in her chamber, stood astare at this news, then flew to proclaim that the Prince of Wales was again bringing Germany in chains, and the war was warred, and wire-gun had finally beaten Krupp, and

comfortable peace and the day of plenty come again, for ever.

The war, however, was hardly ended : for while the treble of British bells were again singing to glen and city, German brigades were surging toward Paris from the west, and three regions of Eastern Europe were putrid with yelling yellow troops—though during that afternoon this fact was not known in western Europe, for everywhere the first work of the yellow men was to destroy the telegraph ; and precisely like the night-floods of African rivers they sprang up to roll over Europe.

But before nine in the night, when the Prince landed at Dover, planning how best to call warning to western Man, the shriek which was already rushing through Europe, as of a woman fleeing with shrieks in the pangs of travail, had reached to British ears. No bell greeted his coming that evening.

He, for his part, though the heavens fell, felt that he must see yet once that face which he supposed to be now four days dead ; and, as he could not go himself to get her—again ill in a reaction from the battle-night, and gashed in the chest—a young man, a certain Lord Percy Burnett, an aide-de-camp, left Dover at midnight on the mission, with the 2nd Somersetshires in his mind's eye.

A fortnight of appalling haps was to be his lot in that howling anarchy that he now found the Continent to be.

He was shot in the leg by a squad of flying patrols while riding by night through a pine-wood between Rouen and St.-Pierre-les-Elbœuf, in which a German brigade had an examining-post posted ; and he was kept prisoner as a spy five days and taken to Vaux near Paris : for, as may be conceived, the momentum of the new German incursion needed *time* to check itself, just as the machinery for recalling the British troops from Europe needed time to be put in motion : so that while Europe was fleeing in tens of millions to her western and southern ports before those spread

wings of the yellow pestilence, and while the world's mercantile marine was churning the seas toward their screaming, German troops on the back and front of British were getting into touch on a front of fifty miles over the plain of Picardy, blind to all but this one last cast of the dice, one last orgy of carnage, and then to fly. They met on a day when every Russian roadside between Archangel and Bessarabia was already red with butchered moujiks, when Mongolian flesh had glutted the guns of Königsberg, and overflowed them ; the next day yellow was on the glacis of Coblenz, in the gardens and bedrooms of Metz ; it swarmed over the European combatants like a wall that falls upon three battling boys ; and what the Europeans mutually slew the yellow men mutilated.

When Lord Percy Burnett, after many adventures, arrived in sight of Bar-le-Duc castle, where he had hopes of coming in touch with the 2nd Somersetshires, no battalion of Somersetshires was any longer in existence, and Bar-le-Duc was a smouldering ruin. The same night he was flying westward with a banefuller strain of yellow on the brain than Eulalia's remains.

These North-French hordes were a portion of the central tentacle of the three great tentacles which the Mongolian race stretched over Europe—Midland tribesmen, these, of Shansi, Shensi, Kansu, who, after reaching the borders of Chinese Turkestan by train, had trailed itself in interminable caravan through Tarim and those desert stretches of Siu-Kiang and Chinese Turkestan which, in his earlier day, Li Ku Yu had strewn with masses of Mohammedan dead.

These were they whose front had been reported on the Caspian foreshore while nightly the stars still marked their five corps camped from Kashgar to Bokhara, marked the bakeries' blaze, the lament of the baby at the breast, the tethered camels' clamouring—corps that had very little resemblance in extent and organisation to the corps in which men had yet gone to war, since the units of a corps

would have occupied 1200 miles of road (supposing it could have moved over one road), and would have occupied thirteen days in passing any one point : the administrative convoys and regimental trains occupying by themselves more territory than is customary for all a corps.

Of a sallower hue, true Hans, with little Manchu admixture, were the sinews of the second tentacle, Hunanese, tribesmen of Fukien, Kuantung, industrious blades, hard-handed by habit, short of stature, sturdy, who had furnished washermen to Sydney and 'Frisco, and diggers to the Zoot-pansberg : men to whom a li, or a pinch of salt, was much, who now already on the march saw salt squandered round them, with rice, dried vegetables, tea, sausages, pressed meats, fresh meats, a foretaste of the Hopeland they are pressing to.

These, in seven corps, separated sometimes by quite short distances of thirty or forty miles, drop half-a-corps for Bengal, as they go working in interminable worms up to the "Roof of the World" by the caravan-routes betwixt the sources of the Mekong and Yangtsekiang ; and under heavens that weep ceaseless rains, by great swollen streams, they go pouring, through groves of the mulberry-tree, by priest-cities droll as a Gulliver's dream, and by cantonments where their four *échelons* of auxiliary convoys take up deposits of cereals, biscuits, hay, two of the administrative-convoy *échelons* being half-a-day's march behind the regimental trains, the other two bringing up supplies from the rear, the cattle marching between advanced columns and the main body.

As to the third main array, which was the first actually to turn a European villager into stone, they were composed of the taller northerners, most of them nomads already by mood and heredity, Mongolians, Manchurians, Kirinese, Pekingese. Their twenty corps left Northern China desert, to find the ice of Lake Baikal already melted, and to be carried across in their trains and armoured carts by train-ship to the Baikal-village side.

From which third-first mass of power, three corps branched off, about Omsk, to turn toward Balkash and the sources of the Irtish, where the Central Plateau of Asia has its western gate, thence to go swarming like many waters down upon those lowlands and lonesome steppes, where the yowling of the wolf's mouth breaks the moon's muteness round about the Aral Sea, where Russia had so clutched, and in vain spent her strength.

But even on these arid tracts there seems to have been no creaking of the commissariat machine, each unit of a host carrying some utensil like a mess-tin, containing eight pounds of emergency rations, which it was death to touch except in extreme need, and each corps headquarters having droves of dogs, mules, camels, cattle, sufficient at a pinch for six days' food.

This streamlet of the northern stream crossed the Caspian narrows from Krasnovodsk to Baku in twenty-six hours on huge sail-pontoons which the pioneering (Midland) stream had constructed for its own passage three days previously : for, by reason of the inconceivable legions which formed a corps, works could be turned out in hours which other great aggregations of men would take weeks to begin—the *objectif* of the streamlet being the conquest of the Caucasus, and the occupation of New and Little Russia, as well as of an already Mongol Hungary, while the pioneering five and twenty were to be Central and Northern European, as the Thibetan seven Southern European.

Wherever the flood met resistance, as at Königsberg, Paris, Venice, it was precisely like the resistance of isolated obstacles blocking a tide ; and long before the obstacle was down the tide was about and beyond it.

It was German forts, really, which furnished the first line of defence, since in Russia, now utterly an anarchy, part of her nationals fled ; part hid until caught ; the rest stared and perished : for the coming of the yellow feet seems to have been everywhere preceded by rumours of such a suggestion as to transmute many into pillars—mephitic

infamies, massacre complicated by madness—and it was as if somewhere the earth had opened to pour forth a smoke that, as it rolled and approached, clutched the throat with drought, and smote the foot motionless : so that a refugee, a bugler of the Kuban *voisko*, could report that half his village stood rooted, staring at yellow troops pelting bare-foot upon them down a lane, and could not stir, fascinated and paralysed like birds by serpents, like men by spectres, seeing in that crowd of countenances nothing but a visit of ghosts, ghosts bloodless with lust of gore, bonily ugly, with rigid grins, and it was then as if every grave gave up its dead in the great and dreadful day of God, so that many a woman stood quite mute, rooted, and died of white affright before ever the spear could pierce her, the club crush her skull, or the blunderbuss blow out her astonishment and awe ; and of those who fled many died later in a delirious frenzy of memory.

And with instant versatility these eastern pioneers turned from the work of murder to the works of industry, divisions disintegrating into brigades, into regiments, into battalions, to form communes of peasants drinking *vodka* instead of *samshu* ; so that millions of sticks in midfields round Ural villages were showing some Chinese claimant's name, and the Pechili housewife, vowing now to be sage after the carnage and scarlet dark debauch, was taking stock of her new belongings, before the slaughter round Paris and Venice was half accomplished.

It was at these two points that the flood was longest dammed, because Paris was "impregnable"—or would have been to any other army with the few aeroplanes used by the Orientals ; and because Venice was an island when the Malghera Garrison had once blown up the Ponte Sulla Laguna.

Yet even here three days saw it all over.

In Paris nearly half-a-million people had been trapped, with such a speed did the avalanche sweep from Coblenz westward ; and these, with that desperate pride and

chivalry of Frenchmen, decided to enrich with flesh the marsh-land of Ile de France ere they perished.

The outer *ceinture* of forts—Corneilles, Franconville, Montmorency—had aeroplanes in plenty, with great 30.5 cm. guns good and new ; not half the Garrison of Paris had fled ; so, like a last rock standing out of the sea of European ruin, Paris stood redly desperate ; and when the yellow hordes, after blowing up railways, drew lines nearly forty-five kilometres in diameter, and dashed with siege-guns upon Domon, it was to find Paris of harder heart than Port Arthur.

But the flood was already far west of Paris . . .

That same night, near eleven, a thin westerling moon illumined a moorland near St. Quentin, in the south-east corner of which was a gipsy camp without any fire, and on a sort of road running north-and-south across it an ambulance-waggon—stationary, since its one horse had just dropped dead.

But on the heath were three nags, shaggy and long-maned, which three Tommies in torn khaki with knapsacks were trying to catch in wide effort, looking like ghosts running crazy over the moor in the moonlight's vague mood, when suddenly a flock of fifteen Chinamen and women came running out of coppice to the south : and, catching sight of the gipsy camp, the waggon, the runners, these let out the scream which ever jumps from Chinamen at anything sudden, and went pelting to their right for the gipsies.

At the same time two ladies, Eulalia and Sister Darling, who had been standing by the waggon, darted into it, snatching their rifles ; the three Tommies dropped into bracken, and began to pot at the Chinese ; and the flock of gipsies, screeching, scattered and ran.

Three of the Chinese instantly dropped shot, seven dropped into cover to engage the Tommies' fire, and five, changing direction, dashed for the waggon.

On the waggon-beds were three wounded, a German,

nearly dead, an Englishman, one-legged, and a young Frenchman, an army-aviator named Bonet, his left arm in a sling.

Besides these, there was a certain Burslem, who, in the flight north-westward, had somehow become associated with the waggon—a “living-picture” adventurer, of whom now the Chinese were likely to make a dead picture.

He, with Bonet and Eulalia, took aim at flaps, while Sister Darling knelt in the dark behind, her rifle grounded—the battle meantime cracking away between the seven and the Tommies, while over rough road and over scrub pelted the five nigher with silent footsteps, like death’s-heads running, the one on the road naked-breasted to the waist but for a bandoleer, one to the left without pigtail, a girl, in cotton trousers, her gun stuck gawkily out before her, running furtively as on hot bricks with long strides, her mouth howling wide without sound.

When they were a hundred yards off, a clammy hand in the dark was laid on Eulalia’s arm, clammy on clammy, and a hoarse throat strove to utter : “Dear, don’t shoot : leave it to the men”.

No answer : the next moment Bonet fired, and like an echo Eulalia, and like an echo Burslem.

The Chinese girl stopped running, looked downward, sat down.

At the same moment a fourth shot, which rang out of bracken from a Tommy stopped the Chinaman who was on the path, he, after some thought, suddenly snatching up bracken with passion, as he dropped.

The other three Chinese, pealing shrieks now, ran on toward the waggon. But shot after shot met them : two fell coming ; the third fell flying.

The battle of seven-with-three, meanwhile, had become a battle of five-with-two, the Tommies stealing ever nearer to the Chinese.

In the midst of which the girl, sitting solitary in the gorse,

gurgled forth a sort of dolorous sing-song of two notes, one *sol* and one *mi*, like a death-dirge just audible : upon which out to her dashed Sister Darling.

"Katie, mind, come back !" cried out Eulalia.

She might as well have cried to the deaf dead. . . .

As Sister Darling ran, a shot carried away half her left ear, fetching a scream from her, whereupon Eulalia in a forage-cap, rifle in hand, dashed out to her, and they ran toward the sitting girl ; but as Sister Darling in advance bent to raise the girl, in Eulalia some nerve of passionate aversion burst out with, "Ah, don't *touch* her !"

In a moment more, however, she was assisting to lift the girl, who moaned ; but when a shot sang past her, she tossed from the girl—all their actions being characterised by that jerkiness and distraction of brains agitated to franticness, and, dropping upon her face in gorse, she began to pot at the potting Orientals, while Sister Darling, who was very strong, trotted under the girl's burden toward the waggon, dropping red upon yellow.

But three minutes afterwards the firing ceased, and three Chinese were spied stealing back to the coppice whence they had popped out.

And now the ambulance-lamp was lit for some minutes, to glow upon visages haggard with hunger and anguishes, while the gashed ear, and the girl's hurt, were dressed, and two of the Tommies, having found their comrade dead, came in.

Whereupon they sat in grass round the waggon to debate, Burslem observing that their one chance now was to abandon the waggon, and "make paces to the coast before the Chinese reach it, if they haven't already".

"Then, oh, go", Sister Darling implored : "Eulalia, go for me ! Why, why, should you all wait and lose your last chance like this !"

"You are not going to catch us leaving you, miss", said one of the Tommies, "so it's no use".

"But this is a lunacy!" cried the little Bonet in good English: "oh, but frankly, mees, pardon me, one is no longer able to consider you as mentally sound. For in clinging to these two men who are dying, you wilfully murder us six all. Me, I call that—distraction!"

Upon which Sister Darling clapped palms to forehead, distracted, crying out to God: "I *can't* leave them! I would if I could, but I can't!"

"Right you are, sweet!" cries Eulalia.

"Then", said Burslem, "since Miss Darling persists in being so wilful, I think the time is come for us others to consider whether we should not leave her. Anyway, let us put it to the vote, and if——"

In that instant he was flying, and the council vanished, both the Tommies lying suddenly stone-dead, shot out of hedge-bush to the west, the two ladies flying into the waggon, Bonet and Burslem buried away somewhere; and five Chinamen, bursting out of bush, were running wild-eyed, hot-footed, sweating, gasping gasps audible from afar, toward the waggon.

One of them Eulalia laid low by three quick-successive bangs four yards from the entrance-steps; the other four were hotly in, whelming the ambulance with the raw sirocco of their breaths and frenzied presence, fleshing a spear quick as one-two-three in the two wounded men and the Chinese woman, who whooped a shriek, then overpowering and tearing down the ladies: for many Chinamen did not at once butcher white women, but idled with them awhile; and if the white woman chanced to be a saint, or a princess, that made no difference to Chinamen.

Now, then, was the mouse amid ill cats.

However, a few seconds before Eulalia's first yell of rage burst from her entrails upon the night's silence, Bonet and Burslem were at the ambulance-shafts, taking careful-trembling aim lest the ladies should be shot; and soon they had two of the Chinese shot in the waggon, and two as they were getting away.

And now it was a question of capturing two of the moor-nags—no easy thing ; and there were the two little gipsy nags ; on which four the four rode barebacked northward, with halters, flogging the nags.

But they knew that few escaped—a new rashness of the Chinese in the face of gun-fire now showing itself everywhere, as Paris was then witnessing, Venice : for in neither case was any assault at all necessary, since the population of Paris was already living on dogs and cats, and some days' investment must have ended it ; while, as to Venice, four Japanese cruisers stood beyond the Lido after sinking the Austrian *Tegetthof* and *Franz Ferdinand*, and capturing a mob of Austrian and Italian gunboats : which cruisers, though under orders not to shell Venice, stopped supplies from the sea (if any had come), and had under their guns the *murazzi* of the Lido, and the Lagoon forts.

It was only necessary, then, to wait ; but waiting was no longer to the taste of yellow men—rather dash through marshes of pigtails to a city-gate now than tarry an hour : for, having got the taste, their swarms dashed themselves forward, with a trembling intolerance of obstacles, for the last bath and draught. To drink the red sea dry, to sin now by mountains, to be crimson in iniquity, to sink, to sigh, to die of crime—whatever kept them one second from this end they fell upon with frenzy, making assaults in close order, whose masses the rains of flame from the air and from forts mowed down by thousands in a moment.

At St. Cyr the guns glutted their gorges with carnage until their tired rifling could no longer keep range.

One by one, Domon, St. Germain, Versailles fell.

Before the seven batteries of the monstrous Fort de Marly massacre was so common, and the Azrael of mortality so mawful, that at one moment the Chinese line, advancing with scaling-ladders, wavered and shrank : whereupon a little Japanese colonel dashed forward to take the fort alone, calling, waving. They stood lashed by gashing gusts of bullets, but would not go : he fell. A major dashed forward,

waving, calling *Come !* They would not budge : he fell. A captain dashed forward to take the fort alone, calling, waving, inviting. Still they shied at it : he fell. But, as he fell, the yellow men yelled, pell-mell they pelted ; now red hell will not repel them ; and yellow hell within twenty minutes was the citadel.

At Cotillons the stock of ammunition was all exhausted in slaughter before the overflow. The next day Vanves was overflowed, Ivry, Montrouge—closer and closer like a death-malady spreading relentlessly to the heart. Paris, frantic with panic, knew that yellow was at St. Cloud, at Putoux, at Suresnes, at Sèvres.

That same night the Venetian Canal Grande presented a strange sight—gondolas and corpses—one throng—gondolas gaudy with lanterns of Chinese and Japanese design, like a night of Carnival in the olden times of Venice, only a millionfold more vermilion-tinted, splashed with pageantry : for within some hours the Chinese were washed and at home in a town, like old owners, and lords waddling in slippers through inherited residences ; and since Venice, like Paris and Buda-Pesth, was intended to be the capital of one of the three great States into which the new Europe was to be federated, greedy had been the press and competition to get *pied-à-terre* in it : so that such a crush of human beings now brushed shoulders with a buzzing of bees within those *rii* and narrow *calli*, as no city of man had ever seen.

Hour after hour the stars, the comet, saw the watch-night swarming : half the Ghetto to the north-west a conflagration flaring on the night ; all night that lunar glory of gondolas gliding through the glooms of a Lagoon clogged with throngs of eyeballs, pigtailed grinning dead amid the Christian dead, all up the Grand Canal, the Giudecca, away out to the Cemetery and Murano, without end ; all those Byzantine palaces—the Cà d'Oro, the Palazzo Foscari, dreams of colour and *decor*—reeling unceasingly with the abomination of desolation ; all through the

Giardini Pubblici prostrate lives lying amid corpses, gorged like the cormorant with orgy, dying of licence in wine and white flesh ; all among the graves of the Cimitero ; of the Jews' Burial-ground ; up in the Campanile, the Clock Tower ; down in the vaults of St. Mark's ; among the columns of San Giovanni e Paolo, where an image of Puffa, the many-handed, a joss of eagle-headed Fé, and of Gan, the big-bellied glutton, grinned at the Mary Magdalene of Bergamasco, whose marble must have blushed.

Throughout Paris the next night it was the same, yellow men despising rosewood to carouse at tables of flesh, despising eiderdown to sigh on couches of flesh ; publicly on the Grand Boulevard it raged, in the Madeleine, Notre Dame ; the Dragon-flag on the Elysée flapped.

By which time the four fugitives from St. Quentin had contrived to snatch their lives through jeopardy to within five miles of Douai ; and near nine in the evening were making their way—on foot now, since their hungry nags had failed them, they themselves footsore, famished, fore-done—when there reached their ears that shriek of the Chinese, well known now to them, more detested now and dreaded than very death.

A crowd of about a hundred, carousing in a cabaret two hundred yards ahead on the left of the road, had spied them in the moonlight before they could hide : and out they flew.

But on the right, closer to the fugitives, were three detached houses—mansions almost : so they dashed into a gateway, locked the gate, then through shrubbery to a door, locked it, up a stair, locked a door, and dropped, all the four, upon a bed, to pant.

Within a minute, though, they were aware that the Chinese were scaling the gate and garden-railings ; and they darted to a window to see the garden beginning to teem with Chinese.

A moment more and the Chinese were battering on the front, a rough row, like the Vox Dei, heart-horrifying.

On which Eulalia in her distraction let down the jealousy with a racket, dashed open the *persiennes* to shoot—rashly ! revealing where they were—and turned to snatch her weapon.

At that moment Sister Darling said to her : “ Dear, don’t : it can do no good ” ; but Eulalia, her face dead-blanced like a white radish, her teeth fixed, hissed back : “ Won’t it ? *I’ll* show them a bit of Irish ”, and with a kind of dance in her gait ran back to the bed for her gun.

However, she was never to fire, for in the instant that her back was turned a shot was fired from outside, which found Sister Darling’s heart. When Eulalia turned again to the window, it was to see Sister Darling down ; and the gun tumbled out of her hand.

At the same time Bonet was whispering : “ Let us try the back—come——” dragging at Eulalia by the arm.

But she would not go, lay over the dying girl, who was staring as if in scare, rolling a death-ruckle in her throat, pouring it low, hurried, like a purring rolling. And one lover’s-kiss Eulalia pressed, wild-whispering “ beloved? ”, and one wild press more and deep-secret “ beloved? ”; then by a cruel tug Bonet had her away, and they were gone on all-fours amid bullets, not four, but three.

By a covered arbour at the back, soft-running, they made their way down a sort of park to stables, whose doors they secured ; and in there in blackest darkness the three sat in three corners of a spacious, paved chamber heavy with harness and saddlery, haunted with stench of dead horses.

And soundless through hour after hour of the dark they crouched so apart, shivering, without prospect, but without much care any more for the morrow, sleepily hearing as in a dream shrieks of cheer pealing from the Chinese, who must have crowded into the house, and were carousing ; and if one of the three slipped a little into sleep, ever, on his starting awake, the dream-shrieks reached the ear, like a machinery acting everlastingly, afar.

But once toward morning Eulalia started awake to

another sound—an exclamation—“ In the name of God, a Blériot ! ”

For Bonet, shuddering from cold, had risen to pace, and in a neighbouring chamber had stumbled upon a monoplane.

He found in it a good 7-cylinder Gnome, and, moreover, he found tools, petrol, rugs, compass.

When he examined it with matches, it seemed good throughout ; and now, clasping one of the chassis-wheels, he sat weeping.

On pulling himself together, he mentioned that it could carry two, and no more ; and set to work.

By a large doorway it was taken out into meadow-land at the stable-back, as day was breaking.

But the engine's hubbub was instantly heard by the Chinese, who hurled themselves out of the house to see what was stirring ; and quickly Bonet leapt to his place, Burslem and Eulalia standing pale by the plane. Not one word as to who was to be Bonet's passenger had even now been uttered.

“ Now, Miss Bayley, all ready ”, said Burslem.

The Chinese screamed at a corner of the meadow, spying them, pelting.

“ You go if you like ”, said Eulalia.

“ Choose quick ! ” cried out Bonet intolerantly, in French.

“ Women and children first, lady ”, observed Burslem with a hideous grin.

A shot from the Chinese chanted past Bonet's head.

“ But *why* ? ”—from Eulalia—“ an excellent rule for clowns and cowards : but for *us two*, surely, the question is, whose life is the more valuable ? Mine isn't very ”.

“ *Vite !* ” from Bonet in a shivering shriek, “ or I go alone, God be my witness ! ”

At which cry Burslem snatched a revolver from his pocket, and discharged it into his right eye. The Chinese shrieking was near. A shot tore Eulalia's shoulder. As Burslem dropped,

she sprang up beside Bonet, her averted head turned toward Burslem, smiling him into eternity. And Bonet hitched the clutch : she tripped down the meadow merrily amid missiles and throatings ; suddenly sat fluttering as with laughter on her throne in the air ; and before long was landing safe at Dover.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RAY RADIATES

But days before this Lord Percy Burnett, sent to search for Eulalia's body, had managed to get back—with tidings on his tongue ! for, though it was known in Britain that Oriental troops were in Eastern Europe, nothing was known of their numbers, character, and rate of advance.

It was about ten at night, and the Queen, daringly holding a Court amid the break-up of civilisation, had lately stepped into the State Ballroom with the Royal Family, the King *en* colonel-in-chief of the Coldstreams, she in an all-round crown, with Koh-i-Noor, Order of the Garter, cloth-of-silver train, parading her Prince on her left, her Elizabeth, the King's Band babbling to six hundred glitterers a *ballade* which breathed that there was no such thing as grief or grinning dead—not there, anyway.

On the top of which let Lord Percy Burnett drop hot-footed to have speech with the Prince, and at Belshazzar's banquet is handwriting on the wall, awe, and harrowed hearts.

The Chinese had already sat down before Königsberg. And it was not a river, it was the sea. . . .

The Prince, listening, siffled through his teeth-edges : “ Onward, Christian soldiers ”. . . .

Suddenly he was up—his action, when he acted, being like a clock, or a watt, at so many units of work per second—and, throwing behind him, “ Percy, try to see the Queen ”, he vanished headlong, was quickly in a carriage at the Garden Gate, and off for “ Ning Shou Kung ”.

For a week, since the Battle of Margate, his thought had been : " Just possibly, if it is true that I am tricky, I may crush Li Ku Yu at sea " ; and already he had set going a great haste of hammering, gun-casting, overhauling, and repairing, at Paisley, at Portsmouth, at Newcastle, at Glasgow, at Sunderland, at Chatham ; but even if the sea was his, the air was Li Ku Yu's with Chinnery's air-boat in Oyone's hands—perhaps in Oyone's head ; hardly yet in Li Ku Yu's head, since she had so lately read aloud Li Ku's statement that he could understand nothing of her account of it.

Where the boat was he had no notion—it might be at " Ning Shou Kung " ! Anyway, the thing was to seize Oyone quickly.

He had had qualms, however, as to seizing her, because of his contract with her ; but while Lord Percy Burnett had been blurting his flood of news, he had said to himself that that contract referred only to seizure by the police, not by himself.

On the way he picked up two policemen, made them await him at the gate, went in to find a scared Huang smoking her pipe, and, without saying one word, took a lantern to roam in search through room after room, she moving mutely after : and her pipe went out that night.

No sign of Oyone ! He half expected to see her still sitting there before that hole in the door, sewing, painting, speaking unceasingly ; and in that narrow long room, and in the alcove, he spent several minutes, holding up the lantern to everything, remembering how he had asked himself which was the yellowest, momentum or energy, and how he had heard " boo-boo, whose boy " . . .

Then it was down in the grounds, prying about with the lantern's light ; and at the back he saw an odd thing : four stakes where the air-boat had stood ! and in the garden house on a window-ledge an odd thing : a pipe—Chinnery's, for it had a chloride chamber for moisture-absorption like

Chinnery's pipes : which put anew into his head a question on which he stood there brooding many minutes : " Is Richard Chinnery living ? Is he ? Fifty words of his could rescue this Europe . . . "

But nothing else was found, and he went away heavy-hearted. . . .

Yet Oyone was not, in fact, far from him—living in a solitary cottage on the borders of Epping Forest, near which she had alighted on the night of her flight, awaiting every day Li Ku Yu's summons to join him with the air-boat, which lay under tarpaulins in her back-yard. There, too, Richard Chinnery might anon have been seen, pottering feebly in slippers.

She, meantime, was lying quite low, her only servant a little English girl, she herself venturing out very rarely, in general as a coster-girl, though sometimes in the hush of night a lone figure which was Oyone could have been caught in that back-yard of No. 11 Frith Street, a spot which fascinated her, wringing her hands over the hole where the Redlike Ray had lain, sure that the Prince had it now from Eulalia, wondering where Eulalia was : for since her flight from " Ning Shou Kung " she had been once by night through the air to France to see the Six Millions still untouched, but had failed to discover anything of the 2nd Somersetshires—which had been cut to pieces.

But on the day when the flood of immigration from the Continent suddenly stopped, when the Chinese, having everywhere reached the sea, were lying gorged in the rock galleries of Gibraltar, and were slaughtering the inhabitants of Hammerfest, she ventured upon a " day-out " as far as Regent Street, and there in a way wonderful to her came across the Redlike Ray.

Her object was partly to buy some *crêpe de Chine*, partly to see that changed aspect of things of which the papers spoke : and for hours she enjoyed herself in it, seeing now that she need not have come in her coster disguise, she was so utterly lost in the whirl and swirl of this wonderful

new London, whose population must have been swelled by millions, as everywhere in Britain, the Mediterranean and Ægean Islands, North Africa, America.

Such a brushing of shoulders like an everlasting Lord Mayor's Day, a polyglot of gabbling, an eager and heated atmosphere of life, thronging the centres of streets and pavements alike, all the old ways and restraints broken down now, everyone speaking to everyone, like members of a jolly, hot family on a holiday, the merchant Jew of Astrakhan in fur cap and coat, the gabardine and earlock of Bokhara, the hausfrau of the Black Forest with her last packet of coffee, the Parisienne affectedly slurring her r's, the Amurski Cossack with his sabre, the English girl with her blush, the drosky-driver in full-skirted coat and fur *shapka*, all intimate in a whirlpool of intercourse, many destitute, most more or less hungry.

France would have grumbled if Britain had overflowed her so ; but Britain—world-brotherly, world-worthy—did not grumble, though she had once grumbled a little for nothing. If she had, it would have made no difference.

But the shops were not thronged, so it was not a crush which prevented Oyone buying her crêpe in a shop at Oxford Circus, but a commotion outside which she rushed to see. It was then near three o'clock : a bright Spring afternoon.

The source of the trouble, whatever it was, was away down toward the Marble Arch : for there was a pelting eastward thence of feet, and thence came eastward a distinct wind of wailing and lamentation.

"What is it ? What's the matter ?" everyone was asking everyone in that region of the crowd round Oyone ; and, even as they inquired, the word "blind ! blind !" had spread up from the west, and was with them.

Some moments more and they could see the fleeing stream of people split in the middle of the street, the split reaching nearer and nearer, as if a bull in eastward career

was throwing them from his road into two crushes ; and all at once the cause of it all broke into Oyone's sight—a man madly running with spider's legs, panting, wildly staring—a Yankee, like Yankee caricatures, lank like ribbed sea-sand, goatee-bearded, hugging like a terrified mother the Redlike Ray.

By this time he was in a region of people who divided before his flight by mere imitation, without knowing why he was flying, and was being fled from : so a cabman who was creeping westward a little eastward of Oxford Circus took him in without question, turned with him ; Oyone flew after ; and, as vehicles thereabouts could only bore their way coaxingly, she had little difficulty in following until she met another cab, in which she followed him eastward to Aldgate.

There he alighted, and, still wild-eyed, anon going off into daddy-long-legged runnings, with ogling glances, he gained No. 11 Frith Street. Oyone saw him toss one last ogle from the door, and go in.

So the Redlike Ray had been there in the cottage all the time while she had been groaning over the hole in the ground. . . . She would get it now !

In that same hour the news of the Marble Arch event reached the Prince's ears ; and *he*, too, said : " I'll get it now."

And the same day Eulalia, fresh come to London through the air, told herself : " I should not delay in digging up the box for the Russian, Hartmann ".

But look at Mr. Silas P. Stickney, stretched there on his bed at No. 11, sobbing like a child—a respectable ship's captain, he, of " Chicago, Illinois " (he always added " Illinois ", with a nasal fling on the " nois "—I guess), who had lately decided to end his days in London near a married niece, and had bought a forty-years' lease of No. 11, to settle in. It was even yet not furnished, save a top room.

But already he had planted the back with stripling trees,

and, in digging to plant, had happened upon the Redlike Ray, where it had been buried by Alexis the Sexton while the house had been still "For Sale".

Alexis had been a man of some enlightenment and science, and had once gone a pilgrim to see Chinnery, who, with his habitual affability, had admitted and shown him round, showing him with the rest the Redlike Ray, not knowing that Alexis was an Anarchist, or not caring; and as soon as ever Chinnery was said to be dead at the date of the Six Million raid, Alexis had entered Chinnery's place by an area window, and was away with the ray.

He had then handed on to Hartmann the secret of the ray in the event of his arrest or death, as Hartmann, in breathing his last, had laid it on Eulalia to hand on to one Taska.

It had been Alexis's terror of blindness that had protected society from the ray during two weeks preceding his death: for Chinnery had stuck on the box a strip of paper for "Monty's" benefit, written with: "Do Not Touch The Cap."

But the burying had much obscured this. "The Cap" had been rubbed off: and it was only by studying it through a magnifying glass that Mr. Silas P. Stickney had deciphered "Do Not Touch".

This for three weeks had kept his eyes constantly on, and his hands constantly off, the box. The box became the man's mania. He *suspected* that it was packed with diamonds, and that "Do Not Touch" was only a bogey. But, then, it might well be an "infernal machine". And the question was: how to find out.

In the end he decided to take it into some open place, slip down the cap-thing, and fly. If nothing happened, he would make other flying experiments; and, if still nothing, then the thing was full of diamonds.

So, that afternoon, he had gone to Hyde Park, laid the box on a bench, uncapped it, and fled: nor had looked

back till a lamentation came to him out of Park Lane.

Then he could see that out of the apparatus was proceeding a pencil of rays, very large in area, though very faint, for whose strange shade he had no name—something like the sawdust of cedar-wood—just revealed to the eye by the dust-particles which the rays touched in the air.

But it was some time before his brain connected the ray with the lamentation, till the lamentation spread to those who had rushed to their windows, to those who had rushed into the street, to see why the wailing was. Men, women, children, were every instant being struck blind by scores.

When the truth entered his head he flew to the box, himself now very troubled in the eyes—for *behind* the box, too, the reflected rays from motes in the air had a blinding effect—and, catching up the box, he dashed with it through the Marble Arch, too madly agitated, too preoccupied with the sorrow in his own tight-shut eyes, to think of shutting the cap; and, as he ran stretched and long-shanked, he ran disseminating calamity and lamenting.

Three different policemen who flew to seize him stood still midway, their knuckles in their eye-sockets, moaning; and Oxford Street was half a moan, and half a scamper, before he had the cap closed.

And now he lay on his bed sobbing, thinking of the ill it had been his lot to do, thinking that, with his marked appearance, he would be tracked that day, and, if not hanged, then lynched. England was no place for him: possibly he might hook it to America, if he looked alive. As to that devil's-thing, which he hardly dared look at now, he would rebury it just as he had found it, and so, washing his hands of its bewitchment, do a bunk for Liverpool without bidding good-bye to a soul.

This he did, sallying out soon after dark, bareheaded, his wide hat left behind, his beard shaved off: and Oyone,

who for hours had not taken her eyes off the house, saw him go.

She instantly slipped into the yard, found the back-kitchen open, and in she stole, to seek and seize, and flee.

However, to her horror of astonishment, no box : not in the little trunk left unlocked : in no cupboard : up no chimney.

She tapped all the walls, carrying his chair to stand on, reckless if he came back upon her, though gradually growing conscious of the ghosts gathering round her in that gloom to mock her agonies.

When he did not come, she guessed that he had taken to flight, but, about nine, ran to throw a glance out of a front window, and now—again—saw the ray—in Eulalia's hands, Eulalia having tranquilly dug it up with a shovel which she had fetched, while Oyone had been moaning about the house.

Oyone pulled her coster-shawl farther over her face and ran shivering, tracking Eulalia eastward through teeming streets, where to shoot might have been to shoot an unintended head, and to stab would have been to be mobbed ; Eulalia, meantime, making her way east and then north into a tumbledown slum of tall houses, a back-street rabbit-warren of Hebrews and Slavs that ran east-and-west.

There Oyone saw her go into a house, and now propped her back against a wall, dropping with fatigue of soul and body, thinking what next to do, how to get the ray, and then drop and die.

Eulalia, meantime, in the wee back-room on the third floor which she had hired at five shillings—for lodging was dear—was scribbling off Hartmann's message to "Taska" ; and she wrapped up the Redlike Ray in a newspaper, and directed it to "Mr. Taska, Shoemaker, Bowery, New York" —having no notion that the box was of any importance to humanity.

Oyone, during this, was being sore tempted to throw up

everything for that day, and get some rest, when she again saw Eulalia sally out—with a parcel.

About the same size as the ray—but wrapped up : impossible to be certain whether it was the ray or not.

Round the corner, to a crowd pressing round a pawnshop—a Saturday night. Eulalia entered the press ; and it was long to wait while she gained an entrance, and came out again.

Then the way was along by-streets toward a main street, Oyone more than ever uncertain now, her eyes troubled, the parcel sometimes looking smaller to her, as if something had been taken out in the pawnshop.

But in the main street a species of little shriek pitched from her lips : “ She is posting it to the Prince ! ” as Eulalia made into a district post-office.

Now, then, was the second for electric energy and concentrated venom, all mortal things hanging on the hazard of an instant.

The throng scattered before Oyone’s fury. When Eulalia was already at the parcels’ counter, suddenly the box was gone out of her grasp. And a second later a tigress’s arrogant cry rang through the place : “ *Do not stop me !* ”

For the room was full of men, and two postmen with empty bags on their arms who had spotted the robbery barred her escape.

A moment more, and she was struggling like ten men with twenty men, trying to tug off the wrapping and get at the cap to strike mankind blind, not minding if she was struck blind, too.

But the mass of force, the number of hands, was too much for one, and in half-a-minute she was hanging deadlike in someone’s arms, sobbing a little in her faint.

Four then dragged her out to hand her over to the law ; but after forty yards of it, when her weight became a bore, they threw her on a doorstep, and left her.

For, in the new London, snatchings and such-like acts were common, and crime had now quite a new aspect.

Rp

Civilisation, in fact, was on the brink of disorganisation—in Britain, too ; and one of the first nerves of the State to be infected with the disease was the police. Having, in fact, far more to do than they could handle, they had begun to do nothing.

Thus it took them three days to trace so marked a personality as Mr. Silas P. Stickney to Frith Street—and this in spite of the zeal which a Prince could inspire. By which time Silas and ray had well vanished.

However, two days later a report came to the Prince that on the evening of the Hyde Park event *a certain nurse* had been observed by three persons carrying a black box not far from Frith Street.

“Then”, said the Prince, “*find me this nurse*”.

But that was no easy work in the new whirl and turmoil.

At any rate, as Oyone fainted, a Polish Jew handed back the box to Eulalia, its wrapping rather damaged ; but she put it on the counter, and turned to go.

A clerk, however, called after her : “This can’t go like this”.

“Why?” she asked : “the postage will be paid at the other end”.

“American packages aren’t taken in that way now”, he answered : “besides, it must be properly fastened”.

But to pay the postage was more than she liked—no clothes now but what she wore, no jewellery left but the wedding-ring, six shillings in money from a ring just pawned.

So she took the box away, till she should be better off, wondering at the face of the coster-girl who had snatched it, with a thought of the Japanese at the back of her consciousness.

Oyone still lay at the door where the four men had thrown her, thinking wearily that the ray, if it was the ray, was posted now ; and she, Oyone, had touched it, yet had it not.

Afterwards she rose to get home ; and there, as soon as she had rested, sat and wrote :

“ Li Ku Yu : strange things have happened this day. An American struck many blind with the Redlike Ray. I tracked him, and, while seeking it in his house, looked out and saw the ray in the hands of that same Eulalia Bayley, the Prince's honey, of whom I wrote. I tracked her to her lodging, after which she came out with a parcel like the ray-box in size, but wrapped up, went to a pawnshop with it, and thence to a post-office, where, in spite of an attempt which I made, she succeeded in posting it.

“ Li Ku Yu, I am not perfectly certain that it was the ray, nor to whom it was posted. It *may* have been posted to the Prince, but many things now incline me to think that, all the time, this woman may be quite unconscious of its value, so it *may* have been posted to ‘ Taska, Shoemaker, Bowery, New York ’. I am a work-basket thick with knick-knacks of wonderings, contradictions and intricacies.

“ Li Ku Yu, it is for you, who are as obvious as the Nine Tripods of Yü, to decide whether a ship should be sent to America to take the ray from ‘ Taska ’, or how it is to be taken from the Prince, if it is he who has it, whether in this the Princess Elizabeth may be of use, or whether I shall first determine that it was really the ray then posted, though it is dangerous for me to be prominent and active at present, with the air-boat here. The foolish Chinnery still forgets when I get him to attempt to tell how the ray was made. I think he has not long to live. London is now incredible, a nostril stopped up with cold. Farewell ”.

In order to get this to Li Ku Yu, she made a midnight trip three thousand feet up, striking the French coast by Gravelines, where a very great temptation suddenly assailed her to go on to Paris to spy upon Li Ku Yu's face ; but her

pride still waited to be summoned : she sent the letter by camel-riders.

Three nights afterwards a Japanese captain, after lying low about her house, suddenly ran to it. He had reached her by special ship from France, with a letter in cypher within his cloak lining :

“ Oyone, my business is immense.

“ But to-morrow, the third, at noon, I transfer headquarters to Dunkirk, Casino des Dunes. Meet me, then, soon before the hour of the tiger (3 A.M.), two kilometres to the north with the air-boat. There, south of the Sea Baths that are at Rosendaël, I will light a fire to guide your descent.

“ You will then be requested to conduct an aide-de-camp to the wood of the hoard of gold.

“ It may be His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (not so deeply buried as you reported) who has the Ray, or ‘ Taska ’, or neither. I calculate, from the facts I have, that it is Taska, so am sending emissaries to America. But you get Mr. Chinnery to write a dexterous letter, asking His Royal Highness to meet him on Rosendaël sand-dunes, that I may capture His Royal Highness. . . .”

On this Oyone cried out : “ I shall see him ! ”

But the hitch in the Chinnery-plan was that Chinnery resisted, saying : “ Oyone, it would kill me to write again to the Prince of Wales. . . . The Prince of Wales has forgotten me, because God has withdrawn Himself from me. . . .”

To this Oyone, who had suppressed two letters to the Prince, answered : “ It is only because of the war that he has not replied ! Now he will fly to you, if you write ”.

“ Oh, Oyone, I cannot ”.

“ Then, no wine to-morrow ”.

This conquered Chinnery. Paper and pen were got. But when it became a question of dating the letter from

Rosendaël, his brows knit. "Why Rosendaël?" he wished to know.

"Because I am taking you there in the air-boat".

"Oh, not in the air again, Oyone!"

"Then, by a ship".

But, little suspicious though Chinnery was, the whole thing scented of a mystery: he would not; and now no threats or rage could change him.

Oyone spent the night in writing a letter in his handwriting.

It came to the hand of the Prince while dictating letters at three in the afternoon, and he read:

"VILLA DE ROSENDAËL.

"MY DEAR TEDDY: There have been reasons for my silence, since I am a kind of prisoner to a girl who is your enemy. Can you help me for old times' sake? I am here in a country flooded with yellow men, where my life is bitterness and my bread unleavened. If you can come to me in a ship at 3 A.M. of the 4th when the Chinese are all asleep, I may manage to light a fire on the dunes to guide you to the spot where I shall be waiting. I ask much, my friend: but I have much to tell you of new inventions. A Japanese sympathiser takes this; but I am ill, my hand shakes, I cannot write. Your sincere friend . . ."

Now, the Prince, like Chinnery, may have been little suspicious, but it was impossible for this letter to escape suspicion. "My life is bitterness and my bread unleavened" was so furiously curious as from Richard Chinnery. . . . And the bribe! "Much to tell of new inventions" . . . "old times' sake" . . . "sincere friend" . . .

"Bring me the Japanese who brought this", the Prince said: but the Japanese had gone.

However, just the *possibility* that the letter might be from Chinnery when drunk agitated the Prince's fingers, and drew him to see the end of it.

At eleven he was at Dover ; at midnight the fires of a swift little yacht in the harbour were lit and banked, and a little quick-firer from South Front Barracks mounted in her bows ; at half-past one he was darkly cruising, without lights, quite close in to the French coast, noting an inconceivable host of floating things of every species massed in every roadstead, port, harbour-basin ; Calais sleepless ; Dunkirk flaring ; each a reel of revelry mixed with military movements ; no moon, the ocean's floor smooth like a pool, the night quite calm, darksome, starless, till the comet (Tempel's) entered it in Capricorn, with horrid locks sprawling aloft, tempering the vapours a little, brindling a little the black sea in tracts of quicksilver.

At two the Prince, springing from a boat's bow, was in Oriental territory, in the Dragon's jaws, he all swathed in oilskins, a black mask over his nose, and with him in oilskins and masks twenty-seven fellows—all that were left of his old *Asahel* men—all armed to the teeth with revolvers, rifles, knives, hatchets, and one of them, named Commander Pilcher, the smartest of the smart, who had passed part of his youth racing over the Iowa prairies, had a lasso—the Prince fairly sure now of a Li Ku plot to capture him, and wishing rather to capture Li Ku Yu.

So he had come an hour before the rendezvous.

They lay in a patch of scraggy grass on a sand-hill, gazing stilly inland.

Two miles south, on their right, a shine in the night which was Dunkirk ; on their left, a mile north, a hint of Rosendaël houses, darkling, uninhabited now ; and between Rosendaël and them a row of seven bathing-machines on the edge of the sand, before it breaks to roll into a roughness of scrubby dunes ; two boats lolling beyond the surf ; the yacht lolling a long way beyond, all dark ; the surf purling murmurings, like a murderer's lips speaking secret things in sleep.

Half-an-hour—and now a sound somewhere, like horses' hoofs afar ; then ten minutes—and now a light, a fire, about

half-a-mile inland, between the bathing-houses and Rosen-daël, though it was impossible to see who lit it in its deep dune—the land all wavy here in hills and hollows ; and very quickly there was the radiance of a pharos blazing there like a building on fire.

The watchers did not budge : no sound now, nor sight but the light.

But suddenly the Prince clutched Pilcher's sleeve on his right, hissing : " Pilcher ! a girl !—capture at any price ! if not, shoot. Follow, you five ! "—and he was flying, stooping, into the sea.

For he had spied a black object drop down out of the air a little north and inland of the blaze : and as against the chance of grabbing both Oyone and the air-boat in one beautiful swoop danger was nothing.

He, then, with Pilcher and five, ran north through the sea-surf past the bathing-machines, until they had the fire behind them, then inland, with the fire on their right, flying through hollows, dropping on hill-tops, until they were over against the blaze, and now saw south of them a crowd of about fifty yellow men in khaki.

At the same time they themselves were spied in the off-shine of the fire by a hill-top sentry, who cried out and fired ; and in a second a volley flew from the group round the conflagration—without effect, the seven adventurers being three hundred yards off, and like ghosts to the firers with glare in their eyes.

The seven, then, successfully ran the blockade of the forty yards of valley across the hollow ; and instantly, as they attained the next hill-top, the Prince's eyes distinctly descried Oyone, hardly more than twenty yards ahead, labouring frantically away up the next slope, apparently to get back to the air-boat.

And between her and him, two hundred yards south, stood a group of five—four small, one tall, whom the Prince's eyes divined to be Li Ku Yu.

These five must have been going to meet Oyone coming,

when she had taken fright at the firing, and had fled back to get herself and the boat safe into the air again.

The five Orientals instantly dropped behind *cagnards* (low rocks in sandy scrub) to fire at the seven adventurers, while six of the seven dropped behind *cagnards* to engage the five, Pilcher alone of the seven pitching onward like a wind to catch Oyone, who saw and flew : and twice in that flight he fired, twice he cast the lasso, four times he missed her : for though her quarrelling frocks were quite nigh him, things were very indistinct, the light of the fire in the dune being quite local, that dune being big ; and she vanished from him beyond the next hill-top.

But even as she was vanishing, he had the ray of an electric torch on her, and was casting again.

This last cast caused him to fall flat forward : but the tug told him that he had got something ; an agony of angry cat-screams told ; and soon he was over her, his handkerchief down her throat, he staring about for the air-boat.

To his amazement, he could see no air-boat ; but he had *her*, and within six ticks was off northward with her kickings.

Meantime, the fifty or so by the fire were flying uphill to the support of their fighting five ; but almost before they were on the hill-top, they were attacked in the rear by the Prince's reserve who had spurted inland ; and as the attackers were in darkness, the attacked lit up, some twenty of the latter instantly fell.

But now a terrible sound fell upon the British ears—guns going off over the sea : and they knew that their yacht was done for.

Li Ku Yu, in fact, had posted a ship without lights a little north of Rosendaël with the object of destroying the Prince's ship and chance of escape ; and this ship, on hearing the row of rifles inland, had gone to scout for, and had easily found, the Prince's ship, though unlit. The Prince's ship, indeed, had had a six-pounder mounted in her, but was

powerless against guns of so big-mouthed a sound as those now hitting her.

Hearing which, the Prince wriggled snakelike on his belly from his *cagnard* to go to see to the air-boat—the rifle-fire pattering now as rapidly as typewriters, the two main-bodies pattering, and the two small parties pattering, too : so he got to the next hill-top inland unnoticed, down the next hollow, looked about, flew about—no air-boat.

Yet he was certain that this was about the spot of its descent. . . .

He ran on to the next hollow—to the next—still no sign of it ; and no bush anywhere that could half hide it ; nor could he think that Oyone had escaped in it, for, having heard her screams, he believed her captured by Pilcher.

He could not conceive how the air-boat had disappeared.

And as he ran about wondering, he heard pantings and feet in the next hollow seaward, and, creeping up to peep, saw some ten yellow men running every way, evidently seeking the air-boat (despatched by Li Ku Yu to guard her), and apparently as aghast as he was at her vanishing.

Some of them presently ran up toward his hill-top to search further ; he then spurted serpentlike away on the belly, first northward and then seaward ; and, in passing behind his firing five, butted upon Pilcher, who was running from the sea to rejoin the five.

“ You, Pilcher ? Got the girl ? ” leapt from the Prince’s lips.

“ Gagged and tied up in one of the bathing-machines ! ”

“ Good work, Pilcher ”—the Prince’s under-look dwelt on him—“ but the air-boat, man ! ”

“ Couldn’t see it anywhere ! ”

“ Now, how odd. Well, yacht’s gone, I expect. Am running to see if anything of boats left. Kill or catch Li Ku, if you love me ”—he was gone.

Whereupon Pilcher, instead of running southward to

rejoin the firing five, ran on inland, and then southward, and then seaward, so as to get behind the Li Ku Yu group, keeping afar in the dark, catching sights, meantime, of horses which had been galloped to the group round Li Ku, who doubtless found the spot hot for such as he. Anyway, before Pilcher could get to their back, Li Ku and four were a-horse, two falling as they mounted, three drumming the ground south-eastward.

These three passed within twenty yards of Pilcher, who hissed to himself: "The middle's Li Ku—*no missing!*"

Another second and the lasso sang snake-songs in air, darting, and had a pigtail within its grip, dragging a man from his saddle; but like a magical Jack-in-the-box the man was back, sitting, within two ticks, as if sprung back by springs, so that he could not have let go his reins an instant; upon which Pilcher, seeing with astonishment the lasso coming back, shot sharp three bangs: but the horse-men vanished, apparently unharmed. He found the noose cut smooth as by a razor; and said bitterly to himself: "Oh, I wanted to be smart; I ought to have shot from the first".

Meantime, Li Ku Yu, in fleeing, must have felt quite at ease as to the Prince's ultimate capture, since the ship appointed to destroy the Prince's ship was now lying, visibly to the night-glass, at anchor in the offing; and, as to the two boats, the Prince could see no trace of them but some wreckage resting on the sea.

Decision had now to be quick: so quickly he shrilled a whistle of recall, and collecting his men behind the bathing-machines, which the shooting Chinese were chary of approaching, he spoke a few phrases, even as he stripped naked, and in two minutes they had widely scattered, were crawling over the sands, were in the water, swimming with revolvers, knives, hatchets in hand and teeth, far scattered and under-water, forty-three of them—sixteen from the sunk yacht, three boatmen, and the twenty-seven fighters, less three disappeared.

The ship, one of those Havre-Antwerp mail-boats, lay with a show of rouge over her funnels about three hundred yards south of the bathing-machines, a hundred yards out : and darkly, soundlessly, by roundabout routes, the swimmers drew near her.

Not a sound now on her : no sound but the shore Chinese still shooting from the dunes toward the bathing-machines, where no one was but Oyone.

And now the Prince and Pilcher are travelling up the anchor-chain like white night-flies ; others are arriving fast ; and that pigtail gazing over the port bow toward the dunes is drawing his last breaths here below, for suddenly a grain of sea-salt is lodged in his brain from a hatchet which chops it, as he silently dies ; and the same with a little mate pacing the bridge, and a watch-keeper leaning under a dinghy—they die quite silently as the shade of the angel of death steals upon the sleeping and the wakeful alike through the ship ; only once, far down, one echo like a gun-shot sounds ; then three stokers surrender ; and the ship is English.

Now a boat was rowed shoreward for the clothes in the bathing-machines, and for Oyone ; the bodies were dropped into the sea ; the dunes were sprinkled for fun with shell from two four-inch guns ; steam hurriedly made ; and the ship steered for English land, not wishing to have a Japanese battleship on her back.

“ But the air-boat ! ” said the Prince half-way home. “ *Where* was it ? *Ask*, Pilcher—see what she says ”.

So Pilcher, grinning, went down to Oyone lying on crimson cabin-cushions, the Prince hanging behind at the door ; and said Pilcher : “ You may just as well mention what became of the air-boat ”.

She lay with her face buried ; the spasmodic shivering of the ship at the screws shook her body ; but she lifted herself a little to utter with a sullen sideward eye : “ It is in one of those valleys not far from the fire. If you go back, you will find it ”.

“ No, we won't go back ”, remarked Pilcher.

Suddenly she was upright like a squirrel twisting, with :
“ Is this Your Royal Highness's promise to an unfortunate girl ? ”

The Prince had uttered not one syllable to her, nor answered now, but a lavish blush bathed his face.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HOARD OF GOLD

But the question now was : where to lock away Oyono ?

These were days of scant house-room, and of a care for half-pence among Kings. Sandringham, first closed, had been handed over, half to the Russian, half to the Austrian, throng, England being rich in crowned heads, one crowd herding at Windsor—Servia, Montenegro, Greece, Bavaria, Spain—while Italy, Norway, Denmark made merry at Osborne—let us not pry into their privy purses. The German Emperor held Balmoral, though the Princess Elizabeth, by a kind of right now, bided at Buckingham Palace : for she, when death was in men's minds, meditated still on marriage ; by a steady activity of negotiation and a sending of telegrams, she had now her Imperial parent's seal to her espousal to the Prince of Wales, and had kissed her ring like Kitty in a lane. The Prince, too, now lived at Buckingham Palace.

Our Civil List, meantime, had undergone modification. The King, for one, had suggested a considerable reduction of his income, and had insisted. For no seer was needed to see that the break-up was so near, that it would quickly be a question of finding the shilling to pay the fighter. Treasury Bonds were light as air, Consols a vain thing, credit, public, private, dead—this *before* the irruption ; *after* the European stampede into Britain, every day beheld civilisation more ailing, every midnight the passions of ten million men dealt her an added deathblow. Shops, mansions, banks were pillaged ; a cracking of pistol-shots rang in the land.

In which case, nothing was left to be taxed but land ; and

Sir Bostock Henry, the Chancellor, suggested in his budget a 2s. 4½d. tax.

To this, however, the "owners" of England—some 2000 men—said in their hearts "No".

They made no outcry, as previously when taxed by halfpennies; now they were in earnest, and quietly said "No".

And having, of course, seen what was coming, they had leagued themselves into an essentially secret Landowners' Protection League. So—that was four days after the capture of Oyone—they sent ambassadors to Li Ku Yu.

They were perfectly aware that, if the Prince of Wales managed to crush Li Ku Yu at sea, he would then be virtually Dictator of England; they were fairly certain that he would then take what at that date they still called "their" land from them; and since the land-tax was to be spent in the repair of ships to fight Li Ku Yu, this gave a basis for negotiation: they sent ambassadors.

It was late in the night, the Prince was in his laboratory, transferred to Buckingham Palace—a room looking on the park—when his assistant, Sturge, handed him a letter come "by hand" from the Continent:

"To His Royal Highness, Prince Edward of Wales, The First, The Last.¹

"Let the Prince of Wales be aware that the landowners of Britain, having made overtures to Li Ku Yu, are in negotiation. Terms: Li Ku Yu to give guarantees as to their estates; they to refuse to pay tax.

"Li Ku Yu needs no aid from traitors: but does not reject their offers, having reasons for wishing to cheat them.

"From a Younger Brother to the Prince".

Now, the passions of the Prince of Wales were volcanic: so away now he dashed the letter, violently enraged, and

¹ Meaning "first and last" son of his mother.

went ranging, light-footedly dodging among obstacles, just shaving bench-corners, saying : " No more dukes—no more lords—they've done it now—they've dug their own graves—no dukes—no crowd of little clown-kings . . ." but in the midst suddenly paused, pshawed, thought, " one mustn't be incensed at lower types of life ", and now picked up the letter to pry at the writing, asking himself : " From him ? " muttering : " *Decent* ", for some bits of it looked as if Li Ku Yu had designed to disguise his writing, but had been impatient of the pains.

He was still studying it, when Lord Percy Burnett—he who had been sent to search for Eulalia's remains—who had an interview for that hour, was announced. He entered looking very depressed, so that the Prince said at once : " Bad news ; sit down ; stab it in straight—used to it ".

" Only this ", said Lord Percy with a stir of the hand : " I have been a traitor ".

Silence.

" You in it, too ? " the Prince cried out—" Oh, yes, I know all about it !—a Sky-Blue negotiation ".

" I came back from the Continent this morning, I and—someone ".

" *You*, Percy ? A friend of mine ? A Brockweir boy ? "—the Prince was frowning piercingly.

" That is the fact. I am sorry. I thought I'd tell you, before—" he paused, staring at the ground with an expression of great depression.

" Seen Sky-Blue ? "

" Yes ".

" But I can't believe my ears ! "—with passion—" I could forgive the rest !—but you, a cultivated intellect—"

" Teddy—"

" Teddy me no Teddy ! "

Lord Percy bowed. " I was going to say, Sir—you speak of ' a cultivated intellect,' but possibly you do not quite fully realise the conditions. A boy of my caste may have quite strong impulses toward nobility of living, but, born

into a hopelessly false position, what chance has he? If he can think a little, he pretty quickly realises that he is not an Englishman, but a true foreigner, as every parasite is a foreigner to the organism it fastens on—without a country—living *on* England, but never *in* England, having no social function, belonging to a mob of rent-pocketers, who only care for England for what they can get out of her, and are quite ready to throw England to the dogs the instant this jumps with what they imagine to be their self-interest—pure Jews, only, with their bad heredity, lacking the brains of Jews. What is a poor boy, so handicapped, to do? He remarks that his caste, living by a nefarious trade, must necessarily be men of a muddy conscience, and though, theoretically, a boy might have the mental strength to say, ‘Oh, this isn’t good enough, I’ll chuck the rent, and start on the square’,—does he ever? Tolstoy did, but not by mental strength—by quixotism of temperament. In the case of a sane boy, by the time he might have the sense to say that, he is already vitiated by his environment, his ideals dying or dead, his moral sense compromised. Thenceforth he is hopelessly in it—only one remedy, a bullet. And it’s not much good if his head’s ‘cultivated’ when the rest of him is stuck in mud”.

“Well, but I know”, said the Prince stepping petulantly about; “there’s a saying that ‘to understand is to pardon’; and, of course, I understand; and yet I can’t pardon. Really, you men have ‘done evil as you could’—for centuries; and many men have sighed and died of you. And for what? If twenty million men live in bliss at the expense of twenty millions in misery, that mayn’t be very ‘just’, but I think there’s much to be said for it; or if two thousand live in bliss at the expense of forty millions—or if one single man live in bliss—I think there’s something to be said for it. But you men! You are as unacquainted with gladness of heart in your muggy comfort as the multitudes who moan under you, scarcely a little less ignorant, vulgar and crass yourselves than the classes you drag through ignorance,

crassness and vulgarity. Wouldn't men blessed with one drop of generous blood, seeing this, have said long ago, 'No, let's throw it up, the game's not half worth the candle'? But not you cowardly clowns : never, never, any generous temperature, or pretence of being gentlemen. Let twenty million women and children sink with bubbling shrieks within reach of your ear, if *you* but float with your clown-countess in your loathsome boat, then you can shower tips all round upon your bishop-boatmen, to keep men's mouths from shouting the shame of your meanness. Lately there has been a little light in the world round you : but you have deliberately elected to remain eighteenth-century barbarians. The sun is one of the stars of a constellation, and you persist in thinking that the universe ends five miles up where the sky is. Well, you've got me against you now, if we don't all go under. I have been dull in country-houses, hoping to influence you, and been ill of *ennui* among you at race-meetings—no more, by God. You can't influence wood but with an axe. You may mention it—it's no secret. And it won't be any good for anybody to come begging me for any money, because I won't give any”.

“Quite so, Sir : though that may be embittering”—with an under-glance.

“Oh, you're a worthless lot”, said the Prince, with a laugh : “embittering ? If you shoot at me, you're sure to miss ; if you stab at me, you probably don't know that the heart of mammals is on the left, and you'll stab on the right. Embittering ? I should like to catch myself being affrighted at such blind mice”.

“I hardly meant any threat, Sir—only to suggest some clemency. They—we—cherish the superstition that a little of the greatness of England is due to us——”

“The blindlings !—as though the littlest mouse of good could come out of a mountain of ignominy. What *right* have you to ‘cherish’ superstitions ? If you have never peeped into a history-book yourselves, ask somebody in the streets whether it is not in spite of the hissings and grins of you

varlets that England is not still a sixteenth-century land? Inch by inch against you she has had to battle her bitter way; against every blessing to men you have darted to arms; every noble thing has found in you a foe, a delay, and a diluter. I say, cursed is the name of men of that sort; you're a worthless lot; blessed above men be the man who exterminates you".

"Well, so I say, too, Sir. . . . I only hope you do not include the Throne in the proposed overthrow".

"On the contrary, I support the Throne. . . . Because I'm a Prince, of course. Think that?"

"No, Sir, I do not think that".

"Like a publican who is theoretically in favour of public-houses, because *he* is a publican—what? Or a King who thinks well of monarchy, because *son métier à lui est d'être roi*? I am unable to conceive a baser being, or to believe that God ever gave birth to a dirtier dog. So you are right there—that's not why I support the Throne. Not that I support it *much*; but—it has something of a function, is pretty and historic, costs the country nothing—half-a-million—that is, *nothing*. To abolish it would cost far more energy than the abolition was worth! and there's a difference between one king, and two thousand kings, isn't there? Between one pound and two thousand pounds? Between one fire in a room which warms you, and two thousand which scorch you to ashes? Besides, there's this to be said for Monarchy, that any day a monarch may be born with light and eyes; and how splendid then the room to his elbow that the Throne will lend him! The same thing is true of aristocracy; but, then, the aristocrat's uneasy consciousness of unclean hands and of a false position keeps him from being ever anything much more than a rent-collector. Hence every class has produced great-like men, and quite two or three Kings have seen something new a little, done something a little memorable; but never one of your men, never, never one".

"I perfectly see, Sir", said Lord Percy, rising. "I wished,

Sir, to let you know that there is a negotiation with Li Ku Yu, and that I am in it. You perceive, Sir, that I first betray the country I live on, and then I betray my confederates. I will say—good-night, Sir”.

The Prince did not answer. The other passed through the doorway.

But, as he vanished, the Prince dashed after, caught him in a passage, with, “I am willing to make it up, Percy”.

Lord Percy bowed. “Your Royal Highness is very gracious”.

“Rot. A man can do no more than repent. Shake hands!”

Their hands wrung together, and they parted.

But two hours later Lord Percy Burnett blew out his brains in a chamber in St James’s Street; so that in a new embassy to the Continent on the next day another took his place.

Now, it appears that at this time Li Ku Yu felt some need of treasure; and Oyone had been captured just when about to lead him to the Six Millions. It was not, therefore, only on account of the air-boat (which had vanished as strangely from him as from the Prince), that he was eager to get Oyone free: for he needed the Six Millions for the knocking together of the inconceivable fleet of junks and barges soon to swarm the sea toward England. Hence he (a born bargainer) said to the Landowners’ League ambassadors: “You set me first free a girl named Oyone, and then we may come to terms”.

But that was the Sphinx’s riddle! no one having any notion where the Prince had put Oyone.

However, the handsome young Marquis of Nullidarline, who had at one time rather drawn the eye of the Princess Elizabeth, and was intimate with her, had an idea; and he, approaching the Princess, suggested that, since this Oyone was said to be so beautiful, that might be rather a desirable thing if she was set free from being the prisoner of a young Prince.

Now, it so happened that Oyone was in all the Princess Elizabeth's thoughts—ever since Oyone had made the statement that the Prince was "*married*" to Eulalia : for though the Princess could scarce believe that the Prince, if married, would have engaged himself to her, the mere statement was a seed of unease in her. She would not, then, have wept to be told that Eulalia was in heaven, and often wondered how Oyone was getting on.

Nullidarline, therefore, found her ears open. She whispered that she would try to find out where Oyone was kept ; and thenceforth set herself to pry upon the Prince's steps.

One night when the Royal Family were *chez eux* after dinner, a card was handed to the Prince with the name of Commander Pilcher ; and just then the Princess Elizabeth found occasion to step out before the Prince could.

She did not advance far ; saw the Prince enter an apartment to Pilcher ; and since in Courts the luck of the ear is indigenous, she luckily, *en passant*, could hear the Prince say : " I want you, Pilcher, to have one more try with this Oyone ; I'll be with you in two minutes ".

On which the Princess tripped back to the *salon*, muttered something to the Queen, was speedily out again, and then, her head in a wrap, was out of the palace, she and another looking both ways out of a cab in Constitution Hill.

She saw Pilcher and the Prince pass from the Park Gate in a brougham, and she followed slowly through the thronged thoroughfares—to " Ning Shou Kung."

For the Prince had, without ceremony, turned out the Chinese occupants of " Ning Shou Kung ", given the gate a fresh lock, installed three retainers, and thrown Oyone into that room where he had moaned.

So now Pilcher sat on the stool where she had used to sit, sewing, before the hole in the door, while the Prince hung near, unseen, listening ; and Pilcher renewed the offer—liberty within one week, if she would reveal in what kind of hiding-place she had contrived to secrete the air-boat.

Soon a voice spoke out of the gloom within, glum, low, slow, as if in soliloquy : " I am happy here. I no longer long for the insect's-wing of liberty. The world is vanity and wrapping-paper. I trample under my feet its sweets and its pomps, that merely lead mortals into evil paths. My heart is changed and white as a virgin's, and my eyes turn themselves toward Heaven. Here a Holy Sorrow is my paramour, and I am the compliant wife of Calamity. For nothing is good but to be good, and there is no carousing but in renouncing. I, for my part, envelop Pensiveness with my arms, I smother Moodiness with my kisses——"

" But the air-boat ", suggested Pilcher.

Now she was sharp ! " I have told you that the Chinese have the air-boat ! The instant I alighted Li Ku Yu sent men to take her——"

" No ; not true ", said Pilcher, getting up ; and he and the Prince went away.

Suddenly, in twenty minutes more, the Princess Elizabeth was with her ; and Oyone's heart started.

The three retainers—two men and a woman—had duly said, " Against orders ", but the Princess had said, " I just wish to peep—the Prince needn't know ", with an intimate manner ; and their toadyism and her cajolery had readily opened her way to Oyone.

Oyone was like an escaped canary in the room, exclaiming : " Now I shall be free ! free ! I expected you, and you did not come ! "

The Princess pressed a button in a bracelet, and produced a ray. " You must see that *I* daren't let you out. But there are others who may. We will see in time ".

" *Time* ? Not to-night ? "

" No ".

Oyone wrung her hands, asking at once : " Have you found out now that he is married to Eulalia Bayley ? "

" That is nonsense. The Prince of Wales is definitely affianced to me ".

" Then, he may think her dead ! I told him in bragging,

for I was angry-mad, that I had killed her, and—possibly—he thinks her dead. But she is quite alive in the East End ! and he any moment may discover it, for she has in her possession an object which the police are eagerly seeking for him—a black box, that he'd give his life to get——”

“ What is in this box ? ”

“ It is a kind of infernal-machine ”, said Oyone, chary of mentioning the Redlike Ray : “ let me free this night ! Then I will get it, and he won't find her, even if she keeps alive, otherwise he must ; and it is certain that they are married—*she* bragged of it—*he* admitted it—only there is some quarrel between them——”

Elizabeth was white. “ Is this box her property ? ” she asked.

“ No, it is mine ”.

“ Then *I* will get it for you ”.

Oyone moaned ; but then said : “ Do so, then. But I am not sure that she has it—I saw her posting a parcel like it ; but, *if* she has it, remember it is dangerous ! it will blow Your Imperial Highness to pieces the size of a fly's feet, if you handle it wrongly, or keep it without knowing its moods. So, will you bury it at once, to give to me—— ? ”

“ And if it blows me into flies' feet when I touch it ? ” suggested the Princess.

“ Not if you hold it carefully by the sides ”.

When they had discussed it a long time, Elizabeth set off for the East End with Eulalia's address, to fumble through the drizzle of a dismal London that blinked dully upon its muddled multitudes through half the old number of lamps, it being now about nine in the night.

But, once in the slum, Eulalia's abode was obvious, for there on a pane was a square of paper pasted, to say in three languages : “ A Skilled Nurse Lives Here ”.

And the door was open ; a wondering woman told her “ third floor back ; she may be in, or she mayn't ” ; and the Princess picked her way through swarms of children and sinister visages, thinking : “ What a strange place ! ”

At Eulalia's door she listened, could hear nothing, rapped, no answer, passed in, and rayed a beam from her bracelet upon a wee oasis of daintiness within this wilderness—the wee bed lily-white, the Prince within a silver frame on the petty mantelpiece, a canary, and there on a chair a parcel which must be “the box”.

She tore the already torn wrapping to see that it was “black”; but then, on seeing, had a throe of fright. . . .

If she held it “carefully by the sides”, it would be well: but which were “the sides”? The box was a cube! “Oh, no”, she breathed, and stood suspended near the door.

Just then, for the third time in two minutes, she heard steps, for the third time fled out, and this time it was Eulalia.

They passed each other swiftly on the rickety stair, where it was not so dim but that Eulalia was aware with some amazement of fairy raiment in Tatter-land; had a fresh surprise in finding her door open; and, on lighting her lamp, a fresh surprise in spying the wrapping of the box more torn than before.

“This is funny!” she went, with a laugh.

And, as that wrapping was no good any more for the post, she now tore it off, posited the box on the oilskin of her little table, and sat before it, for the first time wondering what was in the box—why it had been buried—and was of importance to “Taska”.

It looked like a kodak; there was a cap to it; if she moved that, perhaps she could see within. . . .

But there was a paper pasted above the cap, and writing under the grime, which, when she held the lamp quite near, seemed to say: “Do Not Touch. . . .”

Which was tempting to one's curiosity. For who can help touching, when mysteriously told “*Do Not Touch*” like that? Eve touched, and suffered touching. No doubt there was money in it. . . .

It was this probability that held her from touching when

on the point of touching : for she had it in trust from the dead. "Better not", she said at last.

She then laid out her shopping—bacon, cheese, and loaf—bacon no longer what it had been, nor bread, nor she any longer the fanciful Sappho, fanning the atmosphere with volleys of sighs, of her opulent times, spare diet having dispirited the love-wine in her vitals.

She was very poor : not that she lacked patients, for she was constantly occupied, but her patients did not pay. Her mother or sister had never answered her ; and butter had become a Sunday luxury.

However, to the rich indigence is a spree, and she was just about to be infinitely rich.

For it chanced that she had been summoned to nurse a certain nut-brown young sailor named "Buddo", a Berkshire boy, stabbed in a Commercial Street affray ; which "Buddo" had conceived for her a passion, half amorous, half idolatrous ; and the point was, that having lived five years at Shanghai, Buddo was a Chinaman among other things.

So when she had told him that she had a vast mass of gold in France, but the Chinese would have it now, his answer had been : "They won't, miss ; I could get it for you as sweet as kissing your hand".

His plan was to go with a couple of mates in a large sail-
barge—"get one for sixpence now", he said—to a solitary spot on the French coast, he to land in Chinese disguise, the others to come home, and go back for him.

He would need some horses and carts, but he reckoned that £45 would see him through, if she could get it. The Chinese were pretty deep, but he an inch deeper still, could speak Chinese better than they, and it could be worked as sweet as a nut.

In going to her to show himself as a pigtail, he had been twice mobbed on the way.

Eulalia had then gone late in the night to Sir Robert Barrington to lay the plot before him ; and, finding him

suddenly aged ten years, let her head rest on his shoulder where he drew it.

"Will the Chinese be getting into England?" she breathed to him.

His forehead dropped. "Dear, I can see nothing to prevent it. The Prince of Wales is a great captain of ships, but cannot create ships. It is a question whether some even of those we have will be available: for while the Chinese preparations are near completion, we have an aristocracy refusing to be taxed——"

"Yes! I have wondered. Do these men by chance call themselves Englishmen?"

"They even *think* themselves Englishmen—at least, the more weak-headed among them. But, as things are, there is scarcely any machinery available against their combined resistance; the regunning of the *Donnernde* has had to be abandoned; and the Prince has enough to do to——"

"Yet he finds time to get engaged!"

"Yes. And here—frankly—Your Royal Highness is doing wrong. I do entreat you, dear, to release me immediately from this extremely difficult position. Not two hours since the Prince was with me—referred to your death—and for me to stand dumb and see him——"

"I *cannot* understand how he can think me dead, whatever this Oyone may have told him, considering that, just before, he heard me call him—answered me——"

"Hallucination! Boo-boo! And he reasons that, if it had been really you, it would have been you who released him. But it was the Princess Elizabeth, a young lady, I assure you, of quite superhuman acumen—in the Queen's eyes at least. Hence he, in gratitude to her—to please the Queen——"

"Is the Queen at all times quite all-wise? He will hate this girl. And though Her Majesty has been pleased to speak of *me* as a miserable little woman——"

"Never mind *that*! One more glass? Yes?"—he had

noted with passionate pain the *souþçon* of avarice with which she drank sherry now, and ate cake ; insisted upon another glass ; and then proceeded to discuss again the details of the " Buddo " Six Millions scheme, of which his judgment approved, though he prophesied that the whole hoard would hardly come to her hand. But to this she answered : " I think it will, every grain, if any comes : for I trust my rough Buddo not less than I would an angel. There are people essentially excellent—sincere, competent, proud——"

Sir Robert had bowed, with " That is very true, Your Royal Highness " ; and he had lent her £45 for the adventure.

At that date of the Princess Elizabeth's visit to the slum, the hoard was slowly moving over the Dover road in four old dust-carts for London. . . .

They arrived before the house in the slum five days later when Eulalia was out, and there stood the faithful " Buddo ", wiping his perspiration—for two hours amid crowds of people who, had they conceived the least suspicion of what lay beneath those pieces of sail-cloth, would certainly have made short work of Germany's Reichskriegsschatz.

Then came Eulalia, and seeing, leapt in a glee to buss her Buddo on both brown cheeks ; gave one greedy little peep beneath a tip of sail-cloth ; and then, taking a letter from her pocket, said, " Now, you have to take it straight, with this letter, to Buckingham Palace : and remember this, whoever wants to know about the sender, you know nothing whatever ".

And " Buddo ", after one stare of amaze, cried out : " Right you are ! " and rolled to a horse's head to obey.

This grotesque procession of carts, on arriving before Buckingham Palace gates at three in the afternoon, was refused admittance. But the letter bored and bored a way to Her Majesty's hand :

"To Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen.

"Your Majesty, I am venturing to present to the service of the country in its need (through Your Majesty's most gracious hands) the German Six Millions, which I lately discovered in France.

"Your Majesty's loyal subject,

"AN IRISHWOMAN".

The letter fell of its own weight out of Her Majesty's hand.

"Well!" her lips breathed; then, "listen to this"—she read out the letter—"or is it some hoax?"

"The carts are said to be before the palace, Ma'am", answered a lady.

"Fly! Let the Prince know..."

She herself made haste, and the carts soon now found an entrée to the Quadrangle, to remain there for hours, the King, the Court, Ministers and everyone coming to visit and revisit them, picking up the bars, some of them bent and chipped from the bombing, "Buddo" still there, waiting for his strings of horses, scratching his pate in a pretence of idiocy at the hosts of questions poured upon him, everyone on the heights of delight, save Elizabeth, in whose upper lip was something white and spiteful, for this was German *Gut*, with "Reichskriegsschatz" stamped on it.

Six millions then was six hundred millions, and when someone said: "Who can have sent it? What boundless bounty!" the Princess was seen to smile omnisciently, secretly; and now someone asked someone: "Is it a German Princess who has presented this German treasure to Britain?" For it was fashionable at Court to discover ever deeper depths and meanings in the Princess.

Now, the Prince of Wales was aware (from Oyone) that Eulalia had known where the hoard had lain, and when he heard that the gift was from "An Irishwoman", some half of a half of a something moved in the vague depths of him, and he said: "Show me this letter".

The Queen was standing there by the carts with him, so was Elizabeth, when his eyes fell on the letter, and both noticed him going slowly pale, paler, to that paleness of the gold before them. For, though Eulalia had very carefully disguised the writing, she had a fantastic manner of making her M's which emerged like murder ; and he knew that she liked to call herself " Irish " . . .

To the Queen his pallor was all a mystery ; but Elizabeth, seeing it, felt the world whirl away beneath her feet, with a feeling in her : " It comes from that girl . . . he thought her dead . . . and they are really married. . . "

But the Prince was left in utter doubt. When he took " Buddo " away to cross-examine, to tempt, to coax, to command him, Buddo proved even more ingeniously foolish than before : could tell nothing whatever of the lady, save that she was an elderly lady.

But when the Prince sent post-haste for Sir Robert Barrington to tell of it, he noted with a steady under-look of suspicion how the baronet's palm slowly rose toward his forehead, and thought : " He knows something. . . "

And felt something ! for three days later the Queen received this confidential letter from the baronet :

" In venturing to pen this to Your Majesty, I commit something akin to a breach of trust. But, truth to tell, I am unable any longer to bear the strain of refraining from mentioning to Your Majesty the fact that I have reason to believe that the lady who has presented the Six Millions to the nation is living in want on a third-floor of that noisome whirlpool which Whitechapel now is. . . . Her address is 19 Chapel Street. . . "

This made Her Majesty moan ; and she said : " Oh, this day I go myself to that woman. . . "

By this time the discovery of the Six Millions, and its presentation to the nation by a woman, was being bellowed by the papers, most of which continued to be published in shortened form ; and since that unknown " Irishwoman "

was the wonder and joy of the nation, which had lately raged at the fiasco of the Budget and the action of the aristocracy, it was quite in harmony with the mood of the moment that Her Majesty should decide to go herself to that idolised donor.

Yet she had a sense of disappointment at Sir Robert's letter : for an innuendo had worked its way to her—through all the Court—into the papers—that the real secret donor was a certain wonder-working Princess, whose detective acumen had already been proved in the discovery of the Prince's prison ; the whisper was now all about the Court ; subtle reasons were discovered by the subtle ones for the Princess signing herself " Irishwoman ", not " Englishwoman " ; the quick-eyed ones whispered that they had caught knowing looks passing between her and " Buddo " ; the Princess had a smile of Isis, and, denying, did not deny it. Hence Her Majesty's sense of disappointment.

And the Princess got a scare on the day of Sir Robert's letter, when whispered by a maid-of-honour that Her Majesty was preparing to go herself to the giver !

" And what is this giver's address ? " the Princess asked.

" It is 19 Chapel Street, East ".

Now she knew that Eulalia was the giver, and instantly was desperate.

" Well, I suppose I must speak out a little ", she now said, " for I can't, after all, see the Queen flying off to White-chapel for nothing. You, Lady Julia, whisper quickly to Her Majesty that you heard me say that I don't think her acumen here quite so keen as usual. Point out that Sir Robert Barrington must have got some false information somehow, and give Her Majesty this proof of it : that the giver can't be ' living in want ' when, as Her Majesty knows, one whole bar of the gold has been taken out—over £3000. The giver can't be ' in want ' : whisper it, Lady Julia, to Her Majesty : but please do not whisper whom *you* imagine the giver is, for I know well whom *you* imagine ".

Now, one complete bar of the gold had, really, been found missing—taken by Oyone that evening when Eulalia had seen Oyone in the wood. So that day Her Majesty, after all, made no descent upon Whitechapel ; and that night it was generally known among the sager heads of the Court that it was the witch-Princess who was the donor : on hearing which that evening in the reel and rage of his preoccupation the Prince of Wales struck his forehead.

CHAPTER XX

THE SEA AND THE AIR

A preoccupation that was "a rage": for the next day was necessarily a day of battle, and it was a case of the telephone, the telegraph, and quick spinning-round.

Britain, meantime, and her added population, saw in the darkness hardly any ray; perhaps the Prince himself saw none.

Of forty-three super-Dreadnoughts docked to be overhauled, twenty-three only were ready, *plus* ten American just come, three Brazilian, two Argentine, one Austrian, three Spanish; beside which, a tangle of Continental small-fry thronged Portsmouth Harbour, Swedish, Netherlands, German, French, Russian, together with five great greyhounds armed with six-inchers; these, and mosquitoes, were what white man had left to show.

On the other hand, it was known that fifty-five Japanese and Chinese, all over 16,000 tons, were patrolling the French coast from Havre to Calais; and that that day a forward movement of yellow man was due.

Twenty-five thousand soldiers, massed upon the south coast—the guns of Dover—stood ready to make a row; and most Englishmen had quietly laid by some gun, or club, or old sword, to die game with—wind against the sea-drift.

Leaden, then, in that day were the spirits of men. The circumstance that the earth was to traverse Tempel's comet in three nights' time, though there was said to be no kind of peril in the meeting, seems to have deepened the blackness of humanity's bile. Some black rain that fell during a period of midday gloom (due to fog), sent streams of people

about the Italian Quarter careering with screams through the streets, screaming "God's comet is upon us!" All along the edges of pavements the sight of lines of men was to be seen, men seated with their heads bent to their knees, done for, dumbly waiting. During which, a certain deranged curate rapidly became a known personage, journeying the streets in surplice and hood, preaching with his finger the finish of things. And Life began to be a stagnant thing, and to gangrene in that dark.

It was, then, with hearts draped in crape that men attempted to conduct services in churches at that afternoon hour of the navy's weighing; and it was in such spirits that the Prince himself left Spithead with his following of ships, manned mainly by the nucleus crews of old Fourth Division ships, by the residues of the Royal Fleet Reserve marine ratings, and by the Volunteer Reserve, consisting, this last, of men of the middle classes.

In a conference with captains and admirals the Prince had said: "Let us go and see; a sailors' grave is the sea; and it is sweeter to be eaten by a fish than by a worm".

So they set out: and, as if destiny intended that as little loss as possible should attend the landing of the millions of yellow men, a milky mist dimmed the sea.

They moved, then, close in single line ahead, pouring smokes sternwards, which searchlights, burning beneath the controls, rolled in lurid beams—a spectral procession to the Prince looking poopwards from the *Colossus* bridge, the ships seeming as broad as they were long, dominant masses of majesty moving mutely to some mysterious deed or doom in the mood of some mysterious dream.

In succession a motor-pinnace, a hydroplane, and a destroyer came hastily in with news that the forefront of a floating locust-host was already four or five miles from the French coast, from St. Valéry to Dunkirk, and that the Oriental navy was at present pacing the sea with its rear in the longitude of Hastings, and its front on Pevensay.

Then a mysterious wireless was received from a tiny

cruiser-scout that the enemy were more numerous by five Dreadnoughts than had been estimated—a crushing message, incredible, until it was suggested that they might be the ships once hypocritically proffered to German purchase, and then asserted to be wrecked.

Then arrived the wireless that at the back of the enemy's line of battle was a 2000-ton yacht flying the Dragon-flag, to which the enemy's Admiral-Commanding had been called to a conference—she probably bearing Li Ku Yu.

The floating host in junks, flats, and barges were said to be moving very slowly on, most with the help of oars, some with an elementary paddle-wheel astern in the fashion of Rouen river-barges. A ration of some green mess was being given out, and peals of laughter screaming across the sea from some of the craft.

A shadowy shape or two soon after this began to show ahead, the Prince at that moment up a control, gazing through marine glasses. His lips muttered. He span to order nine knots, and was glass-gazing again.

Immediately afterwards the shadows ahead vanished.

Now, it was evident that the enemy had no reason to be eager for an engagement. The few troops and coast-guns ranged against the locust-host, the few scores of submarines lurking inshore, could not exclude the innumerable : so that, if the yellow fleet merely interposed itself between the white fleet and the locust-host until the landing should be accomplished, it had no other military object. Hence when the shadows vanished, the supposition that they shrank from a pitched battle was established.

So did the white fleet shrink : for, even if the whole yellow fleet was sunk at the expense of the destruction of the white, nothing was gained : the locust-host would land.

Destruction, then, somehow, for life, but not mutual destruction, was the white man's captain's ticket ; and destruction, somehow, for fun, but not mutual destruction, was Li Ku Yu's ticket. They shunned each other.

And as the shadows vanished in mist the Prince had his

plan. A hiss of "the mist!" was on his breath now. It was a white mist, for white men. When he span round, there was that in his eyes which was startling, and he looked taller. From nine knots he ordered five, and dropped down the tripod-steps.

At about the same time, however, Li Ku Yu, fourteen miles eastward, was in a yacht's crow-nest, watching the execution by his Admiral of a stroke of strategy which he had inspired; and he, too, dropped his spy-glass from eyes that had lights of guile and triumph in them—he, too, in a glee at the mist, that from minute to minute thickened. It was a white mist, like white men dead.

As for the Prince, astern of his file of titans came an array of eighty-three small-craft of every sort, British and foreign, old ram-monitors, sloops, torpedo-gunboats, old Scotch coastguards, unarmoured cruisers, motherships, R.N. Reserve Merchant-cruisers, destroyers, torpilleurs, following for following's sake: all which, by trumpet call running down nineteen miles of ocean, he got rapidly mobilised into a stationary line abreast lying east-and-west, mixing with them twenty-five picket-boats fitted with dropping-gear for 14-inch torpedoes, and thirty-two hydroplanes with hundred-pound bombs; and he steamed thence leaving them heaving in serried series on the swell, which gently heaved, secreted in haze, teeming with many hundreds of torpedoes, prepared for whoever might come rushing that way—prepared in perishing to perish amid a tremor of western Europe.

They were not, indeed, destined to do so, and end: for, far eastward, the trap which the Prince laid had been laid for *him*—still more effectively perhaps: but, if it had happened so, maybe they would have left a memory among men.

The Flag-ship signalled eighteen knots, her bow now south-east.

When next in contact with the enemy an hour later, the white ships were steaming west upon the yellow ships

which were steaming east, both in single column line ahead.

The *Colossus*, still at the head of her line, opened upon the shadow which the *Ibuki* was two miles away, opened in ghostly gong-shouts at which the white fog shivered; and a gun of the *Ibuki's* forward 12-inch battery cracked. But she did not answer; put her helm hard to starboard, and immediately was the rearward of a line flying under forced draught westward.

On which the Prince, like an omnipresent spirit flitting and filling the *Colossus* conning-tower, said to himself: "It isn't fighting they're after! I have them dead—Unless——" he sent his eyes out over the sea.

At that instant he was entering a region of sea where a twelve-mile line of submersibles lay submerged, to end him in one belch.

They did not depend upon periscopes to see, lest they should torpedo their own fleet, but had out telephone-buoys, awaiting a megaphone signal when the moment of action should come, the buoys being just awash—with slight chance that the white line-of-battle should spy them, through the hazy air, five hundred yards to starboard.

Br. small-fry.

• • • • •

Subs. 12 miles.

• • • • •

oooooooo
Jap. 10 miles.

oooooooo
Br. 9 miles.

But in one of the submarines near the east end of the series the unforeseen was being transacted—a big boat of 800 tons with a 2000-mile surface-range, whose name had once been "*E 3*", she having been British. She had once sunk, been resurrected, captured by the Japanese in the East; and something extraordinary that had happened in

respect of her in a raid upon Melbourne Harbour had once caused her to be called "haunted".

At any rate, the fog that day of battle apparently gave up all its ghosts to go into this boat. Five minutes after her sinking in the waiting line an accident had happened—the sea beginning to pour into the engine-room by the ventilation-mast valve—unaccountably!—the indicator pointing to the "shut" position.

This had been remedied—the stern ballast-tank half emptied, the inflow more than kept down by the bilge-pump; and the crew, being under strict orders not to emerge to the surface, retreated into the midships section after closing the bulkhead.

But now they were shattered men all—from commander to artificer, the very spirit of panic rattling their teeth, blanching their cheeks. They could not speak—sat astare, waiting for what would happen next there in the lap of the sea.

Nothing happened—for five and twenty minutes: but then with wild hearts they were aware of vapours pouring, fumes of chloride; and now they were flying about like lunatics immured in a fire.

It is believed that the heeling due to the inflow may have upset acids in the accumulators, causing short-circuiting and the smouldering of vulcanite fittings; anyway, the lieutenant, himself a ghost, gave the order of retreat into the fourth (torpedo) section, determined not to emerge to the surface: and this was done.

But they had not been in there six minutes by the clock when, like a flock of mice, their hairs on end, they were fleeing out in a squealing squeeze; and now, wildly silent, but decided, they took matters into their own hands: and before long the boat was bobbing up to the top.

The Prince from the *Colossus* saw them madly springing from her at random into the sea about three points on his starboard bow.

Steering a point nearer to starboard, he spied a little of

the line of telephone-buoys—with a baleful harsh heart which danced in him. And, looking now for it, his eyes descried, or divined, north of the buoys the shadow of the shadow of a ship—waiting to give the megaphone signal to the submarines.

He then pricked off four points to port. So did the enemy. And he pursued their rearmost ship two miles westward of the west end of the submarines ; but in his attempt to push them still farther upon his trap, they turned upon him : and now heavy battle began—their aim being to turn *him* back upon *their* trap.

For fifteen minutes he showed fight, both lines breaking up to present broadsides in a hotch-potch of horrible brawling at hardly three thousand yards between near ships, he washing himself in hundreds of tons of sudden thunderings like ducks fluttering in puddle, for he loved the dreadful drench, watching the *Ibuki* cock her poop up a little more each moment, until she stood bow downward, and now her bowels rumbled with tumbling lumber like Stromboli across the waters solemnly, and she sank ; and the *Kashima* not far ; and his own foremast with all its tackle lashed the water.

Now he fled east-by-south, leaving his *Rio de Janeiro*, his *Odin*, his *Orion* behind. . . .

During this fighting, he had ordered twelve of his rear invisible ships to proceed north of the submarine row by its east end, in order to blow out of the water quickly, at withering close-quarters, before the hubbub of the main battle should lull, whatever enemy-ships were waiting there to give the megaphone signal to the submarines. And this had been duly done within the dim rooms of the mist—four of the enemy and five of the twelve being now foundering wrecks.

He, for his part, after reforming his line, started at his fullest speed east-by-south, with the yellow fleet in his wake.

And when the *Colossus*, now the rearmost of her line, was three miles east of the east end of the submarine row,

he again turned west ; engaged one enemy vessel in an almost momentary gush of gunshot ; again threw their line westward ; and they went leading him, always with a northward leaning, toward the submarine row.

In their former passage across the ambush of submarines, the ill-starred men had apparently dropped buoys which, with disastrous accuracy, now led their helms within a hundred yards of the submarine row ; and when the sun was a blotch just above the horizon, and a shadow of night had already fallen, they lay stretched, a line ten to eleven miles long, along a twelve-mile line of submarines.

At the same time the Prince, coming west, two miles east, turned east with his line, to fly from the face of the immensity that impended. In those moments the dumbness of sun and sea and mist seemed a dumbness of shock and sound that such a thing should be about to be.

The British, in fleeing, could hear the megaphone of at least one of the six British which, appearing now at top speed out of the northern mist, went with obstreperous trumps of resurrection bawling along the row of telephone-buoys. "*Come forth !*" And three minutes later the air commenced to be in a dangerous state of wave-agitation, apparatus and plate to break, the plain of the sea to quaver and quake, rain to drip, and tremendous terrors to menace men.

And then that which the ear feared was suddenly come upon it ; suddenly that which the tongue cannot utter was : mountains of overpowering sound that drowned men's senses profounder down "than ever plummet sounded", Alp-masses packed upon Cotopaxis of distracted clattering, like Arctic trumpeting rantings to Atlantic in the rumpus and rush of Jurassic dramas of disruption, terrorising rhetoric, reigning, long lasting. . . .

For at least three Japanese torpedoes had pitched upon each of the Japanese ships—all at once ; and on the farthest of the British ships eleven miles away every man dropped flat, slapped down by the blast.

Even to the floating locust-host far off on the Normandy coast it suddenly seemed to be midnight bleak and stormy, their barges and flats wobbling on the water's wash, while every English shop-window and window-pane between Deal and the Needles darted from its fastenings.

In London the Queen was seated alone in the gloaming over a gold brooch which she was making, when she noticed that the tools jumped and shook ; and a minute later there came to her a muttering like thunder, then some kind of thump, then rougher thundering that kept on, like a truck running a rough road.

Away in the East End Eulalia was attending to her canary, when the cage-glass began to shake, this to be followed by the same sounds ; and Oyone in her prison was washing her hands when the water rocked, and soon thunder was moaning, then a thump, then rougher thundering. . . .

It was said to exercise a doleful effect on the soul like the tolling of a knell.

Oyone moved to her pigmy grate, where she sat musing in the gathering gloom.

There was no fire, for it was warm, and, being better treated than she had treated the Prince, she had a lamp, and no need of the firelight.

So she sat in shadow, first wondering if there had been an earthquake, and then wondering how the battle had gone : for her wardress had gossiped to her that this was the day of days.

Presently she became aware of bells ringing carillons ; and then, when she had been seated so about an hour, suddenly there reached her from somewhere a shriek, brief and muffled ; then, near the stair-foot, a scuffling and shuffling of feet which cut short her breathing, and sent her peering through the hole in the door. In another minute six men in masks came running, one tried the lock with several keys of a bunch, and soon they were with her in the room.

" You are free ", said one.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Don't mind that. A motor waits you at the gate, and a boat at Dover. Be off".

Her hands were at her hair, fast patting like her panting heart. In three minutes she was ready and running from her liberators, lest they should change—emissaries of the Land-owners' Protection League, to whom Oyone's prison had been revealed by the Princess Elizabeth.

At the gate Oyone asked "Are you under my orders?" of her chauffeur, a man manifestly agitated, who said "yes", and laughed to himself. She said: "Drive fast to Chingford"; and, as he started off, she asked: "What is the matter with you? What are the bells for?"

"Don't know?" said he, amazed: "didn't feel the thunder? Yellow fleet wiped out, yellow swarm gone back, hundreds of thousands of them caught, gunned, run down—wireless—it's over—it's done—we'll scrape through all right now".

In an impulse she half lifted her parasol to hit him; then pinned her veil with agitated fingers, muttering: "He has the air—he will sleep on your skins this day week".

Now it was night, they passing—where alone it was possible—through by-streets, though, even there advance was not easy, the world wondrously astir as with new birth, such a trump had summoned it from the old centuries to the new to come. It took her two hours to penetrate to the outskirts of Epping Forest.

All the way she had a boding of trouble; and there what she had dreaded ever since her imprisonment fell upon her: her cottage all dark—Chinnery gone.

It was not astonishing, since she, intending to come back, had left him with hardly any money. Anyway, he was vanished, the cottage haunted with the absence of his feet; where to seek him she could not conceive; and the possibilities of that vanishing planted her a stunned stone on her doorstep.

Then she dressed herself in reds and splendours, and

leapt into the motor for Dover ; and now her thought was :
“ Before all else I will quaff wine, I will be a wife ”.

But the turbulence of Li Ku Yu's bustle and momentum whirled her as in a whirlwind's urgency the moment she entered his presence at Dunkirk. She had meant to sell the air-boat, now tenfold precious, for marriage, casting off bashfulness and delicacy ; but the moment he asked her :
“ Where is the air-boat ? ” she, as if mesmerised, told him.

“ It is on the dunes ! ”

“ No ”.

“ It is ”—she laughed—“ come, you will find it ”.

It was really there, quietly lying on the sands near the spot where so many men had sought it.

For she, when lassoed by Commander Pilcher, had been in the act of springing into it, but, dragged back, had just had the chance to dash down the ratchet-lever ; and Pilcher's fall upon his face had prevented him from seeing, what distance had prevented the others from seeing, the going up of the boat into the gloomy air.

Moreover, since the night-air had been quite motionless, Oyone had known that the boat would parachute down to about the same spot, after rising beyond the atmosphere probably, and exhausting the petrol in the little engine.

To fall like a famished man upon the boat Li Ku Yu banished all from round about him and his screw-drivers, his spanners, his wrenches : and in twenty minutes knew its whole simple truth. Now it was his for ever.

But he could find no time to thank the giver, who glanced in vain into his eyes for a glint of gratitude. The Channel tragedy had slapped him with a blast of shattering wind and glass which had gashed his chin, as he lay off Dunkirk, and he had said : “ My signature ! ” ; but it had been another's signature ; and this had pestered and tenfold energised him. Thenceforth he gave man or woman no rest, in one second living two.

So at that morning hour of seven, after her night of travel, he had Oyone off by train to take men to the wood

of the Six Millions ; and at the Casino des Dunes door told her : " Make haste come—to go back to England ".

For the news of the vanishing of Chinnery from the cottage had much irritated him, especially as he had no news yet of the Redlike Ray and " Taska " from the ship despatched to America for it.

As for the Six Millions, though England had rung with its discovery and presentation to the nation, he had no knowledge of this, for between England and France was now a great gulf fixed ; and the Landowners' League ambassadors had, of course, been careful to tell nothing of it, since the English Chancellor's lack of gold was their only basis of negotiation.

Nor had Oyone in her imprisonment heard one word of the Six Millions to-do : so that she bent her steps to the old wood with the old assurance that the gold was there, thinking : " When I give him this, he will have to marry me ".

But " her " gold was gone ! and now she was an aristocrat without " his " land, a thing of shreds and patches, wretched, devilish, addicted to killing.

She went back humble that night to Li Ku Yu ; and he said to her, very ungratefully : " You see ! you fail "—judging her with his eye where he sat cross-legged in apricot on tiger-skins, encompassed with adjutants and aides.

Her head bent before him.

" Your boat is ready ", he then said in English : " and first—the ray ! make certain whether the lady, Bayley, has it, has it not : then—Mr. Chinnery : seek ! Farewell ".

She, very tired, eyed him lingeringly under her eyes, before she said : " Farewell ".

CHAPTER XXI

THE DYING LIPS

There in Eulalia's chamber lay the ray ready for Oyone to enter and take ; but, as to finding Chinnery, at the time of her start from France Chinnery was where she would never find him.

Chinnery had made the scanty funds which she had left him last to within two days of her liberation ; then had been breadless ; the little servant had deserted him ; and he had pottered forlorn.

Now, he had an income of his own, which, however, he had lost the habit of drawing upon ever since the air-boat raid, for Oyone had found means to prevent him, because, if he had, that would have been to reveal that he was not dead.

But now, poverty-struck, his Oyone flown, the lone man, after one day's want, resolved to walk to his bankers in Fleet Street, get a cheque-book, and draw money.

Well, it proved a terrible walk. He had known that he was living somewhere near London, but not quite where, did not think it would be far, and set out about eleven in the morning, hatless, for he could see no hat, asked his way, and walked and walked, anon resting upon walls.

When he got to the populous parts, he began to fancy himself crack-brained, for the drama of humanity had been transacting itself almost without any knowledge or concern of his, and now for the first time his eyes lighted upon the turmoil of a London quite unlike the London he had known. At any rate, he was very unfitted to make his way through it ; was pushed about and sandwiched ; the beams of a hot

and hazy day beat into his brain that reeled for hunger, for fatigue, for feebleness, and for burning thirst ; and twice he fainted on the way.

But he knew that he must be at the bank before four, so with the remnants of that strength of soul which had been his, he trudged insistently, and found himself in Fleet Street about ten minutes to four.

But the bank-doors were closed. An Englishman told him that he thought that it had long since failed. . . .

By this time he had a kind of sunstroke, his forehead branded red, he hardly any more in his right mind. Dementedly he set out to make back to his bed at Epping, and now he muttered as he trudged, and now he chuckled, his eyes glaring wild, his gait wandering, staggy. At the third street-corner eastward of Commercial Street he fell on his length in the centre of the street.

This was no uncommon thing now, and there he lay unaided ten, twenty minutes amid the *mêlée* of footsteps, until Eulalia, making homewards, almost stepped upon him. When she bent over, she started, recognising him.

Now, she assumed that he, in collusion with Oyone, had stolen the Six Millions, but still moaned for him, stretched there so wrecked ; wondered what she could do ; remembered the underground den of a " gay " Hungarian girl whom she had nursed in Grayson Street near ; and, with her begging grace, by saying " he is my brother ! " got some help.

He was taken down a narrow stair into a back-room twelve foot square, where it was difficult to see, and was put on the stuprid bed, he breathing stertorously, she searching his pockets, and, on finding not one farthing, thought, " The Six Millions did not do him much good ".

She then loosened his collar, took off his boots, covered him up, left a note for the girl on his chest, and went away to her lodging.

It was then, while she was attending to her canary, that

the cage was shaken, and there was thunder, then a thump, then rougher thundering. . . .

An hour later she went back with digitalis and gruel, to find the Hungarian standing arms akimbo over him, inclined to grumble : but Eulalia gained her, making an arrangement to share her own bed with her.

Chinnery was still unconscious, and though, when he had been fed, his eyes opened and presently recognised Eulalia, she understood that he was dying.

She sat an hour with him, he grasping her hand, as the drowning do ; and the next day she thrice came with nourishment and brandy, and sat by him. Near seven in the evening she decided to say : " I think you will die ".

" To-night, I think ", said he.

" You are not afraid ? " said she.

" Why, no ", said he : " of what ? "

" Of dying ", said she.

" Why, no, dear ", said he : " I shall die almost painlessly ".

" But ", said she, still thinking of the Six Millions, " have you never committed any sins ? "

" *Sins* ? " said he, with a look of alarm : " why, dear one, no. Such a thing as a ' sin ' is not possible in the cosmos. Everything is just-so for the time being, don't you know ? or it would not be a cosmos, but a disorder ".

" Oh, well, no doubt you know more about that than I. But tell me this : would you not like to see your friend ? "

" The Prince of Wales ? "

" Yes ".

" I should much. But I must not ask him, dear, for I have asked him before in vain ".

" That is strange. . . . He thinks so highly of no one else, I know. And he is at home, just back from crushing the Chinese power on the sea. If you had been conscious yesterday evening, you would have felt it : there never was half such an awful thing on earth, they say——"

" Then, he must be busy ".

"No, he will rush to you, if you can write. I have a pencil, and this notebook—only, you won't say that you've seen me, will you?"

He shrank with alarm when she presented the pencil, but when she pressed him, partly for herself, that she might listen to the visitor's voice from the front apartment, he caught at the pencil, and with the scrawl of an old man, she holding the candle, wrote.

"DEAR TEDDY: I am dying. Are you interested physiologically?"

"RICHARD CHINNERY".

She added the address in print-letters, folded, directed it, wrote over the address: "*From Mr. Chinnery*", ran to find the Hungarian, sent her in a cab, and came back to see Chinnery now asleep.

Now not twenty seconds could she sit still, but was up and down, making snug, tugging the bed-clothes, snuffing the taper, as pale as its paleness.

And all at once, long before she expected him, he was upon her, his voice suddenly on the stair, addressing the Hungarian, her escape utterly cut off! "*Oh, God!*" she gasped distractedly, her frocks darting frantically about the little apartment, filling it—for one second; in the next she was on her face under the bed—there was nowhere else!—and, as her dress disappeared under, he entered.

Chinnery slept.

The Prince, in pea-jacket and cap, sat on the chair, which lacked a back, and, taking up the candlestick from a box, held it over the face on the bed—a bed very begrimed, the pillow greasy, Chinnery's cheeks very hollow, his forehead blanched as alabaster, like a young prophet, and son of the prophets, prostrate in poverties and sorrows. The Prince's face suddenly convulsed. . . .

"*Girl!*" he called low; and when the Hungarian looked in: "Where is this nurse you spoke of?"

That heart beneath the bed was beating quick as cats' feet twinkling.

"She must be gone, sir", the girl said.

"Heygate!"—one of two gentlemen looked in—"Have Sir Arthur Lloyd (King's Physician) quickly here".

When he again looked down Chinnery was smiling with him, and his bent ear, deaf since the battle, could hear : "Well, Teddy".

"Well, Richard", he said.

"Thanks, Teddy".

"Richard, why have you kept so dark from me?"

"Who has? I wrote you twice".

"Ah! I did not know".

"Well, here you are now. . . . I have been much darkened and afflicted. . . ."

"Richard, listen : you have to collect yourself. The girl who has your air-boat, who was my prisoner, has escaped, and the Orientals are likely to overwhelm us in it : you have to tell me its structure, and of your ray".

"Which ray?"

"Ah, Richard, you *must*——"

"There's some brandy under the pillow. . . ."

The Prince held it to the dying lips, saying : "Now, Richard, while you can. The air-boat—I have made a model, and it wouldn't budge——"

"Why wouldn't it? A magnet, a keeper, the lower lines through the keeper 'doing work' on a little armature, whose current goes to the magnet-coils—have you a pencil?"

The Prince's palm lifted toward his forehead, as a sudden half-light struck him. He quickly produced pencil and paper; Chinnery drew a few lines; and suddenly was anew asleep.

At the same time the candle began to flicker, so the Prince stole to the door to send off his second gentleman for candles and brandy; then sat again; and presently again Chinnery said : "Well, Teddy".

"Now, Richard, the ray", said the Prince. . . .

"Ray?"

"Richard, your Redlike Ray".

"Ah, my Redlike Ray! Did I tell you of it? There are still more X-rays than known rays in nature, I think—still half of even the solar spectrum unknown. I got a ray with only 397 millions of millions of vibrations a second—almost hot with Herschellian rays—resembling the two lines of rubidium, but quite faint, and paralysing to the optic nerve-ends. It is in a black box in the Horseferry Road—or was: I think my Oyone told me. . . . She has left me! she is gone. I have had much religious joy of her, though, I confess, she has not been invariably gentle to me. But one should be careful of the cap, and wear violet goggles, for its dropping switches-on the little flame-arc, that has salts of yttrium and erbium mixed with the silvers. Then the rays are decomposed by a lens of ruby of high refractive index, and are then passed, polarised, through three lævo-rotatory—Have you a pencil? Perhaps . . ."

His breath was at present puffing very bluffly at his lips; but instantly the pencil was in his fingers, the Prince bringing the flickering candle to bear with one hand, supporting the paper on his other palm; and the drawing began, with letterings, cyphers, chemical signs, here and there, the Prince a breathless thing in the momentous dumbness of those moments, broken only by the breath of death and the remote drone of London. Suddenly the candle-light darted away, and left darkness behind it.

Chinnery sighed and dropped back; the Prince groaned.

He had no matches; none in the candlestick. He went groaning, groping. "*Girl!*" he groaned. There was no answer. "Oh, no matches", he moaned. Eulalia carefully pushed forth a box of matches beyond the bed-clothes; but he did not know.

Anyway, he felt, it was too late now; and, hearing Chinnery speaking to himself, he moved to him, stumbling with a moan against the soap-box before he could discover the chair.

Now his ear could just hear Chinnery's dreamy speech, who seemed to be wandering a little, his tongue thick, half paralysed. . . . "Anæsthesia is merely a first step. . . . I believed that I should be able to change each pain, as an amputation, or travail, into a corresponding transport. . . . But my Megosme interfered, and that, too, I neglected. . . . I have been flighty, self-pleasing, ill-mixed. . . . But soon, I think, God will give birth to good men . . . blessed be His name. . . . It was to be to smell what the microscope is to sight. . . . Drunken dancings to God. . . . When men of much light shall come . . . blessed be His name . . . He teaching dances to their heart . . . step-dances to their heart's heart. . . . I prophesy . . . for though He slays *me*, yet do I trust in Him. . . . Teddy, is it you. . . ."

After this he said nothing audible to his friend's deafness, and just as a gentleman was dashing down the stair with candles and brandy, his breathing ceased.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RAY MIGRATES

Now, then, for some days was the *régime* of air-boats, Chinnery's body still lying in its coffin in Buckingham Palace when twenty boats lay in the Park, the Prince and Sturge themselves winding, winding magnet-bobbins—without any very definite object ! for it was a fairly certain thing that Li Ku Yu must have Oyone's air-boat ; and air-boat-making ceased suddenly in England on the fourth day, when Pilcher and others who had been scouting over France in air-boats reported that hundreds of thousands of magnets were being turned out at every “*forges et chantiers*”—de la Seyne, de la Gironde, de la Méditerranée—at Châlons-sur-Saône, at Rochefort, at Cherbourg : whereupon the Prince set himself to make the ray.

He worked in those days under the eyes of the Princess Elizabeth : for along one wall of his workshop ran a gallery aloft fronted with big-bellied balusters of old stone, through which one could peep down without being seen ; and thence day after day, midnight after midnight, in patient vigil, peeped the Princess down : for the Prince of Wales was strange to her in those days—stiff, stiff, and still.

She suspected that he may have been told that she had visited Oyone at “*Ning Shou Kung*”, suspected that he suspected that Oyone was free through her : and there in the deepest unease, often when the palace was deeply asleep, she sat peeping, peeping, keeping her eyes fixed upon his flying activities, he finding time neither to eat nor sleep.

By this time England, that had sung so glad a song at the

damming of the flood, again knew, not only its doom, but almost the day of it.

Every hour air-boats and aeroplanes flew home with fresh news of the hosts of Chinese now shrieking like fowl of ill-omen under the clouds, undergoing air-training in every town and countryside from Ghent to Guyenne.

Already there had been shots exchanged between air-boat and air-boat ; already three flocks of a dozen air-boats had appeared over London, and dropped rice-greens into men's eyes.

The destruction, then, was to be, not from below, but from the air, not an eruption, but a rain ; and western man, knowing nothing of the Redlike Ray, understood that the Prince was powerless now to save.

He, for his part, reckoned from the reports sent him from Aldershot that the rain would be during the night of Friday the 9th of May ; and he reckoned, by restless effort, to have the ray ready by the noon of Tuesday, the 6th of May—in time to send a letter to Li Ku Yu.

But he and Sturge worked with a blackness of uncertainty in their hearts. At least half of the apparatus they were making was being made, not in reliance upon known truth, but in reliance upon likelihoods.

And by the noon of that fatal Tuesday Oyone's steamer was speedily approaching the English coast near Deal, in haste for Eulalia and the Redlike Ray.

Oyone had started from France days before, on the very night of Chinnery's death, but had not steamed nine miles when she had been sighted by the third-class cruiser *Pioneer* with a twenty-knot speed ; and now—a chase.

Oyone's yacht had finally escaped among the Scheldt channels, and she had since been a shrinking prisoner on the sea, till now by dodgings she saw the English cliffs ; and instantly on landing was off by motor for 19 Chapel Street, Whitechapel.

Before that hour, about noon, the Queen had come into the workshop to see if the work was finished—not knowing

what was being made, for her son would tell no one, but knowing that it was something immensely momentous. She laid her hand on his shirt-sleeve at the bench to murmur : " Not finished ? "

He did not look at her. " No, Mother ".

" I have brought you these delicious little sandwiches ".

His deafened sense caught " sandwiches ", and now for the first time in his life he was intolerant of her. " Oh Mother, for God's sake ! " he said with a very intense fretfulness of nettle-rash ; and now her paled face went paler, and out mouse-mute she moved.

He nor Sturge ate ; at six the work was not finished ; at eight it was not finished ; at nine it was near completion ; at nineteen past it was finished.

Now the two faces were like ghost-faces down there in the light's glow, their frames in a tremblement resembling the make-and-break of electric bells that tremble, as they flew about the room, mute but for a breath tossed anon from one to the other, while Elizabeth wondered, peeping through balusters above. . . .

Now was the moment of testing. They had a little black cat at hand, so, after locking all doors, they set her on a chair and ran, the Prince with two strings, to the remotest part of the room behind their black box on the bench ; and there, their backs toward the box, the Prince pulled : the cap slipped down ; a pencil of rays shot from the orifice upon the cat.

Dumbly now they hung some moments, though their hearts in their bosoms blabbed like tongues ; and suddenly in those mute moments the cat mewed.

The Prince pulled the other string ; toward her they flew ; and, to their sorrow, saw her washing her chops with her paw . . . cynic.

" Puss, puss, come ", went Sturge, and she ran straight to him.

The Prince sat on her chair siffling through his teeth-edges, calm now, but blanched like chalk.

At that moment Oyone's motor was already in South-east London, travelling fast toward the ray, her chauffeur a Japanese from the Continent.

But it happened so that now, as the Prince sat there siffling his hymn, a pressing visitor was announced, and presently the Chief Commissioner was there, saying: "The nurse who was observed carrying a black box has been unearthed, Sir. The box is now actually on a chair in her third-floor back-room at No. 19 Chapel Street, East. Whether it is *the* black box—it has a cap——"

"It is it!" —the Prince had sprung to his feet—"I'll go myself. 'Phone, Sturge, to the stables".

But before that word "stables" the Princess Elizabeth was away flying, wild and white, and quickly was at the Queen's knees, entreating her: "Teddy has discovered that girl—all is up with my life—has had out men seeking her—and oh, I know—I know—in ways unknown to Your Majesty—that he will surely marry, if he once finds her—as he *must* now—unless—Mother—you graciously intervene. Go yourself—you and I—only it must be *instantly*—he has telephoned—if you bring her here, he will never find—everywhere else he will now——"

"Come", said Her Majesty.

Wraps on heads, hand in hand, they ran.

Just outside the palace-front they chanced upon a cab, dashed down the Mall; and as they dashed past the Admiralty, the Prince dashed after in a brougham, Oyone at that moment motoring past the Elephant, between which and Blackfriars Bridge three children were injured by the speed of her wheels.

Now, the Prince's cylinders had more horse-power than his mother's, and all along the expanse of the Mall he rapidly overtook her, even though she, on cautiously looking out, thought she saw him coming, and incited her driver to his highest speed, pleading, "You know me—the Queen—please—please——"

But once out in the Strand throng, the two were on a

more equal footing, both being forced to forge slower through the misty and muddy multitudes ; and beyond the Charing Cross Hotel the Queen just escaped what befel the Prince—a fallen horse, round which the crowd thickened like a boil in the blood's circulation ; and no side-street was there. . . .

Nor was he aware that there was any race or very special necessity for haste, or he would have gone roundabout, or driven through the screams of men and women. But he waited.

So the mother got well ahead, dashing into Chapel Street six minutes in advance of the son—a shudder now in Elizabeth's nerves lest Her Majesty, on observing the street-name and house-number, should remember that this was the very address of the Six Million donor, as given by Sir Robert Barrington. But her Majesty had other troubles, as they dashed into the drab caravanserai.

Eulalia sat by her table and lamp, letting her eyes rest on a *Pippa Passes* that had passed in her pocket through European bloodshed, through her Chinese nightmare, through the air, when—a thumping at her door—the door flung open—and before her the Queen—and peering over the Queen's shoulder the Princess Elizabeth's speculative spectacles. . . .

“ I am here to take you away ”—from the Queen—“ no time to explain—for the good of the State—your country, to which you owe everything—will you come ? ”

A stare !

“ Will you come ? ”

“ I—suppose so, Ma'am ”—with a glance toward a soap box containing underclothes.

“ What's in the box ? Clothes ? Leave those ! Come——”

“ My canary——”

“ Bring that—quickly——” popping upon Eulalia's head a forage-cap which she saw, while Eulalia was taking the cage ; which done, Eulalia cast a parting look round, spied her “ Taska's ” black box, caught that up, and, with the

ray and her packet of letters under her right arm, the cage hanging in her left, the forage-cap cocked awry over her right eye, they were gone, like straws caught on cyclonic storms.

By which time the Prince, having passed Aldgate, was pretty near.

And down at the house-door there was delay—through Oyone, just come : for when the Queen reached the door, it was to hear her chauffeur screaming to Oyone's chauffeur : "Are you drunk, or what?" the latter having shocked end-on upon the Royal cab's engine.

And as Her Majesty stepped into her cab, and then Eulalia, out jumped Oyone from her motor, and saw the face of Elizabeth, just stepping in, in the off-shine of a wall-lamp ; and she ran to Elizabeth saying : "*You?* I have wished to speak——"

But as Elizabeth turned to her, the Queen's face was out with "*Make haste!* Who is this?"—and Oyone, with a starting heart, recognised the Queen, instantly thinking : "*She* here? What for? the ray?"

The cab moved before she had had an instant's chance to peer within and see Eulalia and the ray ; but before the Queen's head was withdrawn, Oyone had cut a face of venom and disdain at her.

If, now, the Royal cab had run west, it must have met the Prince, but it ran east, then north, then west, the Princess's glasses, meantime, throwing ogles of distrust at the black box, not half liking the idea of being blown into "*flies' feet*", even with the Queen for companion.

Meantime, Oyone flew inward with wings, up the stair—resolved, if the box was absent, to follow the Royal cab, and, if necessary, lay dead. . . .

Without ceremony she rushed into Eulalia's chamber—plied a hundred eyes—not there—and down she rushed. . . .

Causing the Prince's heart to start ! who was just near enough now to the house-door to see her heels pitching into her carriage ; and, instantly convinced that she had the ray,

he and Sturge were after her, as her car turned eastward, whither she had seen the Queen's car speed.

Now, she, in rushing out of doors, had noticed his motor, and him looking out of it, a second before *his* recognition of *her* had leapt into a conscious recognition : so, seeing him follow to capture her, she leant out, sent two rapid shots at his car, and dashed off, scattering the throng from her path.

The Prince's car ran into wall on the right, and was smashed, his chauffeur's right arm fractured ; and he pursued on foot, till Oyone's motor disappeared ; then ceased.

When he and Sturge spurted up to the " third-floor-back ", it was to discover nothing—a nurse's coif, tips of little slippers peeping, *Pippa Passes*, a poor cupboard, a nightdress nicely folded, a photo of the Prince in silver . . . more fay than ray. . . .

And Oyone herself failed to discover the Royal cab, which arrived safely at the palace.

CHAPTER XXIII

INTO WHOSE HANDS?

“The Princess Elizabeth and I”, said Her Majesty in a high-up chamber on the west palace-side, “are both clever with our needles, so we have plotted together to make you up some lovely dresses with our own fingers, if you will let us—simple but *chic*. For we consider that it was amiable and good of you to put yourself into my hands, as you have”.

Eulalia curtsied, silent, standing withdrawn, mysteries of pride hiding in her eyes, she understanding that she was being patronised, and condoned, and graciously tolerated, since she was graceful and an interesting little sinner.

So now was the *régime* of the tape, the fashion-plate, the scissors, the prettiest *mousselines*. A trunkful of fairy linens had already come from (Irish !) Yvonne’s, toilet-things from Bond Street. The Princess Elizabeth measured with tape and spectacles. Eulalia was to be made a thing to kiss the fingers at. It was the Queen’s will.

And, as they came out, in went the lady-in-waiting, Lady Julia Newcome, to amuse and be amiable, for Eulalia was never left alone ; while, outside, Her Majesty cast up hand and eyes, sighing : “ She is pretty ! ”

Whereat the Princess had an unease : for the Queen, with all her moral severity, was very well known to be amorous, prone to fancies and fads and favouritisms, often capricious, inconstant, incalculable ; and that she should acquire the same taste as her son in respect of Eulalia was not a desirable thing to the Princess, who was now inwardly convinced that Eulalia was a wife.

“ How long do you intend her to be here, Mother ? ” she

asked, cutting muslin over the Last Supper at the centre of the satin table-cover in the "Newmarket Parlour" (which had three horse-scenes by Wootton)—a favourite retreat of the Queen, a small room, nicely proportioned, lighted by a bay looking west upon the Park, with a north lobby.

The Queen, vacantly staring, presently murmured : "How long will I keep *you* here, or myself? Whatever it was he was making, he has failed in. He sits like a stone Achilles ; no one ventures to address him. . . . It is well that *you* take it stoically. . . ."

The Princess now sat down on a Chancellor of the Exchequer chest (in which Chancellors kept their cash before the age of cheques), and, poring with her spectacles on the Queen, came out with the statement : "Your Majesty, I am not at all afraid of the Chinese".

At the moment the Queen seemed not to hear, moving her head musingly up and down a little, lost in despondency ; and the Princess continued : "Not that I am sublime . . . but that I have special knowledge. I *know* what Teddy was making—a machine to blow thousands of men into quite tiny pieces in a minute ; and I have only stood by and seen him fail in it, in order to show him clearly that I am a little worthy of him, in order that *I*, in the day of his failure, might step in and say, 'Teddy, here is the thing ready made which you have tried to make, and failed to make'".

At this the Queen started ! for it has already been shown, in regard to the charlatanism of this young lady, that there is absolutely *no* limit to the superstitiousness of men—even of men of some clearness of vision—when the intellect is once predisposed, infected and mesmerised toward a particular creed and epidemic of belief.

The Princess, for her part, knew from Oyone that Eulalia's black box "blew one into flies' feet" ; knew that Oyone was eager to seize it ; had noted that the box made in the Prince's workshop was exactly like it ; and felt that she would have little difficulty in winning the box from

Eulalia, who, in her present bashful situation, had a natural tendency to be affable.

As to the Queen, she had seen without seeing Eulalia's black box like a kodak, nor had seen at all the black box in the Prince's workshop. She was instantly leaning keenly toward the Princess, breathing : " Tell me, dear . . . "

" I just say so much to comfort you, Mother ", replied the other with her smile of Isis : " I am not at present prepared to reveal more—except to express the confidence I feel that Teddy, with the help of what I have been able to divine and discover, will find himself quite competent to cope with all these horrors, and many more. Oh, I take no credit to myself!—I *know* now that there is Something that prompts me, whispers me, like Socrates' *daimon*—yes, Something, Something. But, as to the girl, send her quickly to America, Mother ! Suppose—*just suppose*—that Teddy were to discover her here ! "

" She is pretty ! " sighed the Queen, vacantly staring at a row of miniatures of the Prince on an old-oak console-table by the hearthplace ; then suddenly : " Give her this from me !—that will flatter her ", taking a silver-gilt rose-water dish, engraved with lion and unicorn, from a Queen Anne cabinet.

" Very well "—from the Princess—" though we must not make her think herself a saint ".

" She is not depraved ! " said the Queen quickly—" *ça se voit*. What I *cannot* understand is her motive for keeping herself so completely from him, that he had to be seeking her ! she, meantime, a Prince's light o' love, living in penury in the East End ! The thing baffles me ! "

" He tired of her—that's it. Such honeys are only delicious for a day, Mother : then men cast them aside ".

" How do you—know ? "

" From my study of life ! *Studiosa sum*, Mother, *nulla studia a me aliena puto* ".

" Very good : let us say, then, that he tired of her ; that she resented it ; fled from him, hid from him ; and that he

then repented and sought her afresh. But all this does not explain her poverty ! Had he never lavished any presents upon her ? Why did she go as a war-nurse ? I cannot understand !—unless she is supremely proud ! And pride is never depraved ”.

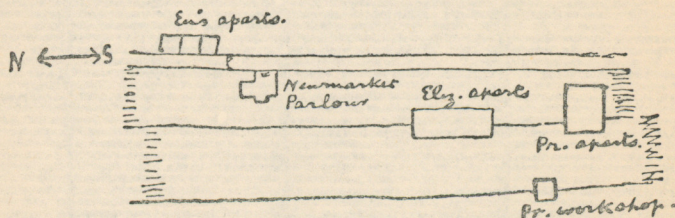
“ All that does not alter the fact of her stain. . . . ”

“ Of course not. But it is pitiful that women must reap as men have sown ”.

“ And does not alter the peril of her being in England ”

“ Well, but I have given orders for her passage next Wednesday ”.

The Princess smiled. “ Shall I go and try this on her ? and give her the rose-water dish ”—she went out by an east portal, up four steps into a north-and-south corridor,



where, turning left, she passed under a draperied archway on to Eulalia's apartments on her right. Demurely smiling, the Lady Julia Newcome came out when she went in.

And presently the Princess was saying : “ What is in that box of yours ? Is it photographic ? ”

Eulalia answered : “ I know nothing of it, except that I dug it out of the ground for a dead man, to send it to America ”.

“ Curious ”—the Princess stood off, inspecting the fit of a bodice—“ is it dangerous to touch, by chance ? ”

“ Not that I know of—though it has marked on it, ‘ Do Not Touch ’ ”.

“ Curious. Pick it up, let me see how you handle it ”.

“ There is no particular way”, said Eulalia, complacently raising it from a Louis XIV writing-table where it lay.

“ It strikes me as curious”, the Princess then remarked—
“ something scientific, maybe? You will no doubt permit me to take it to my apartments and *analyse* it a little ”.

“ If that pleases Your Imperial Highness ”.

And the fitting went on.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE YELLOW DELUGE

At three in the afternoon of Friday, the ninth, fewer words probably were being spoken over the breadth of Britain than ever in a populous country before. Hundreds of thousands of the moneyed, the aristocrat, the royal, had migrated to Man and Ireland, where, too, was a silence that waited. But the British royal household had abided. As for the Prince of Wales, ever since the hour of the cremation of Chinnery it was as if a paralysis had taken possession of him.

At that hour of three the Princess Elizabeth had still not the Redlike Ray from Eulalia : and now all mortal things hung upon the vanity of this Teutonic *fräulein*, who sat with guilty tremors, putting off from hour to hour the revelation that might rescue the relics of western civilisation in the hope of yet making that revelation in her own way.

When, on the Thursday morning, the Princess had gone to take up the box, Eulalia, after consenting, had said : " I think, after all, that I should prefer it not to be taken away, as I have it in trust ". . . .

And it had been excruciatingly difficult for the Princess to ask again—the thinnest wall of delicacy now between her and the box, but a wall of steel.

But she had broken through it that same day, and afresh on the Friday : had asked afresh—with a scarlet flush.

And this made Eulalia stubborn. She remembered by this time that a coster-girl who had reminded her of Oyone had

snatched the box, and also that she had seen Oyone speak to the Princess at the cab-door in Chapel Street, East. This made her stubborn. She resolved to have the box packed and despatched to "Taska" before the Princess should again have a chance of asking. That was on the Friday at 11 A.M.

Accordingly, when the Princess then left her, Eulalia obtained paper from her maid, made up the box, and placed it on the shelf of the alabaster hearthplace of her central apartment, till the collector should pass.

Meantime, the Princess, in love now with loneliness, clung to her own apartments on the floor below, where she sat a staring stone, bitterly regretting her brag, a limp and guilty rag at the going, going of the moments, yet smitten with motionlessness.

But at four when the Queen, who was restlessly wandering, visited her some moments, the Princess pricked herself to sprightliness and careless smiles—knowing well all the time what the Queen had come to hear ; and though Her Majesty did not directly refer to the promised "help", she did say with a sigh : "Heaven knows what this night will bring forth for mankind".

And since the charlatan is in every extremity and fix a charlatan, and in the last ditch dies a charlatan, the Princess now, with a bound of her rash heart, found herself in the thick of saying : "I think, Your Majesty, that, if Teddy will come to me at, say, six o'clock, I shall have something of value to put into his hands".

But *how to get it?* From then to half-past five she sat the most agonised girl, probably, in all the agonised world.

At half-past five a Queen's-page requested the Prince to visit Her Majesty in the Newmarket Parlour ; and there for half-an-hour they sat, mother and son, hand in hand, with hardly the murmur of a word, and heard windy wet weather yearning in the Park.

At twenty to six Elizabeth sped like a spectre past Her

Majesty's door to enter Eulalia's apartments, pallid, concentrated ; resolved at all costs to have the box.

She saw the box packed, directed ; knew that soon after the stroke of six it would be gone ; but still she put off action, dallied, palely paced, dallied, declaring across the lump of aching in her throat that Eulalia looked lovely in the blue-festooned muslin, sole specimen from the loom, with a miniature at her throat of the Prince in Eton-jacket—a miniature which the Queen, to the scandal and whispering of several, had daringly presented to Eulalia in her daring way.

But at last when the clock was about to strike six, Elizabeth miserably found herself in the act of saying : “ Oh, well, I am going to have the box after all ”—and had it.

But Eulalia stopped her. “ Your Imperial Highness—please—put yourself in my place ”—and laid hold of it.

“ No, it is no good, you must ”.

“ I must *not* ”—and now a struggle of several seconds, which only the Princess's terror of an explosion ended ; though, as she let go, she viciously tore the wrapping across, rendering it useless for the post ; and Eulalia then petulantly tore the whole off, in placing the box back on the shelf.

They now stood confronted with rough sea-weather in their breasts, and discomposed countenances ; and in a tone loud with hysteric stress the Princess said : “ Your being here has made you insolent ! ”

Eulalia laughed !

And that laugh penetrated the still a little deaf ear of the Prince of Wales.

He, bidden by the Queen to go to Elizabeth's apartments “ at six ”, was on the four steps outside the Newmarket Parlour, about to turn to the right, when, to the left—that laugh. . . .

He made some steps that way, could hear voices, and went like one in a dream. . . .

Meantime, the Queen, by some instinct or sense, seems

to have gathered that he was going left instead of right, and ran with stealthy steps to see. He was then between the arch-draperies, walking like a sleep-walker drenched in dream, and she, struck with sudden apprehension, lifted up her voice at him : " Why that way ? "

He took no notice, possibly did not even hear ; and suddenly out of her throat there broke a hoarse roar of horror and terror like a death-cry : "*Teddy, not in there !*"—for his hand was on a door handle.

But in he went, and she, swiftly flitting, was in almost as soon as he.

There in the middle stood a muslin Eulalia, like a picture of tripping Spring, and Flora picking roses, and there the Princess, and there the Redlike Ray.

In the instant that the Prince saw Eulalia with one eye he saw the ray, tied with string, with the other ; and lightning struck into his consciousness the thought : "*She was 'the nurse' . . .*"

And for the tenth of a second he stood suspended, pulled toward her, pulled toward the ray, but then flew to her to kneel an instant in a scarlet passion, clasping her, with " My love ! my luck ! my star ! my lucky star ! my love ! my luck ! " then was up, and he and the box vanished together.

Within some minutes he had struck a dog blind, and was in an ulster in the air with Sturge and Pilcher, a wet and windy air, which threatened a wild night ; the ray was with them ; and before they two dropped him at the " Lord Warden ", Dover, he had handed them a note for Dunkirk :

" To His Excellency, Li Ku Yu. If Your Excellency likes to meet the Prince of Wales, alone, at nine o'clock, behind the ruins of St. Mary's, N.E. of Dover, something of moment to Your Excellency will be told. Your Excellency's safety is hereby guaranteed ".

" But ", said Pilcher, " is this thing safe, Sir ? You go alone—suppose *he* doesn't ? "

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"You have no reason to think him treacherous", answered the Prince.

"Still, Sir, we pray——" said Sturge.

"I'll see", the Prince said: "you go on".

He passed into the hotel, as darkness fell, and the two flew on over a rough sea, sighting on the way five different air-boats apparently making for Britain.

At seven-forty they were standing in the Casino dancing-hall before Li Ku Yu, who sat high, smiling down upon some rite, round about him being the Chiam (High-priest) and bouzis in hosts in a thronged hall all a hotch-potch of hues, like boxes of coloured chalks, or that coloured spectacle in prisms, or the coloured chemistry of iridium. The two were led quite up to him, and saw his head dotted with sweat.

He, on casting his eye over the note, had the instant thought: "Either he has the ray, or will pretend to"; then aloud: "You, Sturge? Glad to see you. I keep you two prisoners two hours".

"This is outrageous!" cried out Pilcher in a maze and rage.

"Seize these men, feed, keep two hours", Li Ku Yu murmured to a colonel, and was instantly off, soft-footed, swift, with swinging pigtail swaggering, slanting a wee bit backward on his heels like the Northern Chinese, down the bowed hall, and out.

In ten minutes he, too, was in an ulster in the air, and ten men in ulsters in his boat's hold. (Hence he had kept Pilcher and Sturge, lest they should follow and watch his landing.)

The night, inclined to be foul, was almost without light, and in a quarter of an hour the knot of men were darkly disembarking south of St Margaret's Bay, where they hid themselves and their boat, while one alone, an agile young scout of the Choshus, darted up and southward to ferret out St. Mary's ruins.

He was quickly back; and then, with elaborate stealths,

crawling under hedges, through marshy mid-fields, they all darkly marauded, with more caution than haste, having forty minutes to spare. They were seven pigtails, three Choshus, and Li Ku Yu.

He himself reconnoitred the ruins, noted which road the Prince must come, then gathered his gang to lie in wait behind a row of broken stones rankly grass grown ; and from one to the other he moved, stooping, breathing a secret : " Seize, not shoot ! shoot, if need be ".

But even as he breathed it to the ninth man, with a pang of the heart he acquired the consciousness that there, lying in wait, were not ten men, but eleven.

" *Hands up !*—quick, quick . . . "

" *Bright !* " cried Li Ku Yu recognising the cry of the Prince, who had long since slipped into the rear of the band in the dark.

" Drop your pistol ".

Li Ku Yu dropped it.

The Prince, springing over the row of stones, his muzzle still at the other's bosom, said : " Right turn—walk ! " and they went stepping toward Dover, a pigtail not less long than Li Ku Yu's swinging behind the Prince's back, his face not less yellow-brown.

After some hundreds of yards, he muttered sullenly : " *Immoral !* "

Li Ku Yu, smiling quite unmoved, said : " Why, Prince ? *You* guaranteed safety ! I—no ! "

The Prince now pocketed his pistol, saying, " I think I am as quick as Your Excellency "—a remark which brought a rush of blood to the other's forehead. He made no answer.

Then, " Is Your Excellency disposed to sit here ? " asked the Prince, and they sat on a mass of rock by the path under the shadow of a larch, but still lashed by squalls of wind and water.

There was silence. Then Li Ku Yu : " Let us be quick ".

" What is it all about ? " said the Prince : " may one

express to Your Excellency the surprise one feels that one is still ignorant of the *casus belli* of China against the white races? You declare no war! you invade! you butcher ”.

“ No time ! But stay—hear. What one thing is it that concerns living beings—that living beings care about? Happiness? Agreed? ”

“ Yes ”.

“ Good ! And happiness consists in worshipping God? say in ‘ religion ’. Agreed? ”

“ Yes ”.

“ Good ! Now, the scientist denies that apes, negroes, bishops, bouzis, dervishes, are religious ; denies that anyone can possibly be religious—but him ; since no one can have any knowledge of God—but him ; denies that anyone knows what religion *is*—but him. And he is right—necessarily ! Agreed? ”

“ Yes ”.

“ Good ! Now, at my birth I observe two masses of men, equal in number—one white, one yellow ; both having what they call ‘ a religion ’ ; but the brain of the yellow much more disengaged from his ‘ religion ’, equally superstitious, but less deformed and diseased with superstition, less incapable of being led to look in a centric sane mood at the universe, and be truly religious. So said I to myself : ‘ The European brain will take two hundred years to evolve out of the notion that Christianity has some connection with religion, resemblance to ’ ; and if one answer, ‘ but already France, Germany, England, have rejected Christianity,’ I answer back : ‘ they *think* so ! ’ but for many days their mentation will be infected by the fact that for ages their fathers entertained the conceit that a mammal of their species, with 300 rudimentary organs, was the Infinite Itself. Imagine the astonishment of a zoologist of Mars to know that on some planet in space there paces an animal into whose head the disease of a conceit so *ec*-centric could creep and fester. Man? Comic ! the laughing-stock

of the cosmos ! So said I : ‘ Save mankind two hundred years ! abolish Europe ’ ”.

“ Well said ”, said the Prince—“ provided Your Excellency is sure of what you substitute. But what genius for discovering God’s truth have the Chinese given proof of ? ”

“ *Cluck !* True !—none—little. But their brain older than the European—not more evolved—less !—but more mature for evolution ”.

“ I did not know that. I wonder if that is an opinion ? for Your Excellency is aware that opinions have no value. Prove it, and I need not say that Your Excellency shall have your way unresisted by me ”.

“ An opinion gathered from many things ! But, as to strict proof—no ”.

“ And for a concept which Your Excellency cannot prove you butcher a hundred million women and children ”.

“ *Cluck !* Our grandmothers’ thoughts, Prince. Is it wrong to kill an ox, a man ? ”

“ You are said to ‘ rob them of their life ’ ”.

“ Precisely ! But it is wrong to rob of anything—why ? Only because you make to suffer ! to suffer long ! Agreed ? Good ! But suffering implies consciousness ! No wrong to rob, if the robbed from is never conscious of it, or only conscious one second, as when you rob of life ”.

“ But the killer may suffer ”, said the Prince.

“ Ah ! then ! wrong ! Wrong for *me* to kill a fly, for I suffer—so made ! But not wrong to kill a flea, to kill two hundred million fleas or men for the least reason, for *I* do not suffer, *they* do not suffer—especially when done for the benefit of one ! two ! two hundred millions ! ”

“ True ”, said the Prince : “ but I question the ‘ benefit ’. That, you have admitted, is an opinion ; *I* have the opposite—and Mr. Chinnery’s Redlike Ray ”.

Li Ku Yu started in the dark, made a grimace, sprang up. “ Not civilised warfare, Prince ! ”—with a grin.

“ No. Hence I asked Your Excellency to come, to tell you ”—the Prince, too, stood up—“ for since the white

race seems to *me* a type capable of higher evolution than the yellow, I will not see it wiped out, if I can help. And you seem now to be in the hollow of my hand. Shall we not come to terms? Save your people from this—take them back to China!”

Silence ten seconds. Then Li Ku Yu: “Could not!—if I wished. The die cast! Had the ray from Chinnery, Prince?”

“No . . . Chinnery, by the way, is dead”.

Li Ku Yu snatched off his cap, bowed his brow. “Brockweir’s greatest!”

Silence.

Then: “I go, Prince. If—since—you possess this ray, we meet never more: for this night I invade England, I myself sharing the danger of my regiments. In case I fail, I will take dispositions to make it easier for you to deal with the Chinese, and resettle men. I wish you well”.

“Good-night”.

Li Ku Yu walked north in front of his fluttering ulster-skirts, while the Prince dropped, as if shot, prostrate upon the rock, sob upon sob of world-sorrow bursting from his breast like the night-winds’ volleys, and water from his brain like the rain. And Li Ku Yu, who heard a sob on the squall, stopped, turned, murmured some words, and moved on.

As soon as he was back at Dunkirk he had Oyone alone in the old Cashier’s office, to whisper her: “*Kill!*—to-night—your chance! An Empire your reward!”

She had never beheld him pallid and agitated before, and, catching pallor and passion from his potent emotion, flashed a defiant eye at him. “Why send *me*? I am afraid to be in the air in the dark over the ocean——”

“Look at a woman afraid of something!”—he pointed her out with his finger!—“yet dreaming of queenship! Be quick, lest I teach you fear! Whom have I to send that well knows his face? he may be painted yellow—he may be white——”

She seized his sleeve, kneeling, staring up into his face :
“ Marry me ! I can’t any more—marry me ! ”

On which he shrank in alarm as from a rat rushing up him, palms up, with “ *Woman !* ” and she sprang up with a high and tragic cry : “ You do not want me ? ”

“ To marry takes time ! ” he cried. “ To-morrow ! To-morrow ! He is at Dover——”

“ To-morrow we may die blinded, though I will not mind, if to-night you marry me, for the earth and skies heard you promise it, and I have bitten you in every bit of my bread, and washed in you in my bath, and——” she broke down, dashing water from her eyes.

“ So unless I marry, you do not go ? ”

She passionately stamped at him. “ I say no ! ”

A dangerous look of bale shot toward her before he stood up bustlingly with, “ Let us marry—come, come——”

But this, as he had foretold, took some time, so that she saw herself forced to be off some moments after the furtive and hurried contract in the Garden-kiosk ; and when her eyes, that teemed with pleadings and wifely meekness, implored for a moment alone with him before her departure, he patted her back publicly, with, “ You kiss Li Ku Yu another time, Oyone. No failure ! Farewell ! ”

She started off with a little Japanese scout, sharp as a spaniel’s snout, using her own old boat in which alone she felt herself at home, though half-way over to Dover she had a horrible shock, when the boat unaccountably dropped a hundred feet down, leaving her heart above. She had not been in it since Li Ku Yu had ransacked its mechanism, and her apprehension lest he should have flung it too hurriedly together again was very unpleasant, until she descended outside Dover.

There in a shed she dressed in male clothes, and as a boy in an ulster entered Dover, her nerves aburn with her husband’s “ No failure ! ”—she every five minutes shocked afresh with astonishment at finding herself a wife ! his helper and high left hand ! She laughed in the face of the

rain. The night was not wilder nor the winds raged wistfuller than the strange and dangerous things that raged in her nature.

But she soon discovered that the Prince was no longer in Dover, was off to London by train—to get an air-boat, in fact, after waiting long in vain for Pilcher's and Sturge's return from Dunkirk ; and he had gone as glad as vexed, thinking to see Eulalia a minute.

But he did not see her : for, as his cab was dashing through the Palace Park, there ran to meet him Pilcher and Sturge, who half drew revolvers at him, seeing a Chinaman.

"Where on earth have you been?" the Prince asked ; and Pilcher answered : "Kept prisoner two hours, Sir—just come—missed you at Dover—invasion commenced—Chinese have set fire to three pine-woods between Ashford and Folkestone for signal-fires, and are at present alighting at the rate, we reckon, of twenty-five a minute, with some camp-equipment".

"Let's go", the Prince said, springing down with the ray, and in another minute was in the air.

By that time Oyone, following him to London, was flying north of Croydon, and her boat and his passed within two hundred yards of each other, though she did not spy it in the dusky air, for just then for the second time that night she had a shock of fright at the dropping two hundred feet of her boat. But, landing safe in St. James's Park amid drenching rain, she hid her boat, resumed her woman's clothes, and now stood confronted with the task of discovering the Prince.

Reckoning that his train must by now have arrived in London, she was away to Marlborough House. . . .

There a foreign sentry informed her that the Prince was at Buckingham Palace, whereupon she ran back to St. James's Park, and with her scout went up, to descend near the lake in Buckingham Palace Park.

A second after she touched ground a drenched black

figure in oilskins came trotting, but dropped down dead with the scout's kokotana in his heart.

The two then stood in bush, looking at the palace which had a few lights behind its blinds.

The problem still was to hit upon the Prince, the ray : for whereabouts in the vastness of the palace he would probably be Oyone had no notion.

But now up yonder across the central blind of the Newmarket Parlour she spied Her Majesty's shadow pass diademed : and she started ; her clasp tightened on her knife.

" Kill *her* ", she instantly thought, dark-hearted : " then hide ; then *he*'ll run to her ; then I'll have *him* ".

" You see that window ? " she now whispered her scout : " kill everything you meet between that arch where the sentry is and the room-door behind that window ; stab, not shoot ; hide the bodies ; then be back to me ".

The little Jap, quick-wristed, a twisting squirrel, instantly slipped off and vanished, until she saw him after a minute insinuate his nimble being into a palace-portal.

Oyone then waited ten minutes, till he was suddenly there with her anew, holding up four fingers close before her eyes—meaning two sentries, a gentleman-at-arms, a page ; and she herself then sped away in front of her fluttering ulster-tail with a wet wan face, her hair fallen half-lax under her hard man's hat.

But the hour of the Chinese invasion, which could not be postponed when once fixed, was against her otherwise good ruse to get at the Prince, since *he* was now three thousand feet in the air near Folkestone, leaving the Chinese signal-conflagrations flaring like the midnight sun on the night below and behind him, he making for mid-channel ; and, mixed with the hubbub of the wind blustering by the boat's bow, was now a troubled sound of moaning and lamenting in the air.

Pilcher, steering, was grovelling at the hatchway, with

violet-blue goggles, got from Sturge, at his eyes, and a bandage over the goggles which anon he lifted a little ; Sturge, begoggled, was in the hold, and, acting as watch-keeper, anon peeped up to see that no boat got above them ; and the Prince, begoggled, his eyes tight, lay on his face in the bows under the ray-box, which was bound to the stem, its cap bent somewhat downward.

And out of it for miles into the night, downward, skyward, to right, to left, spread the rain of rays, invisible at a distance, but appearing to one a little in front of the boat's prow as a little sprout and spray of rays reddening the night's denseness for nine or ten yards ; nor was there any other light, only an Admiral Colomb lantern in the hold ; and anon Pilcher directed an electric ray upon the compass a moment.

" We are over the sea, Sir ", he sang out presently ; and the Prince sang back : " I should go pretty slow now, zig-zagging north-east and south-east ".

Their voices noised in the dark like voices calling in song on some orb where there's no talking, but only song and moody emotion, the gale making them musical, the gloom, the restless rain, that sang together an anthem godlike sad. Though high aloft, they saw not a light in the sky ; vapours fared westward in haste on their way over their heads ; the blast ran brabbling past like the spattering breath of a benzoline brazing-lamp braying ; the midget engine pistoned and spittled, the little carbons sparking a little anon like the anvil of Thor ; and the red-like spray of rays reigned steadily there in heaven like a Divine Eye whose ire strikes sightless.

Presently the Prince sang out : " Hear anything odd ? "

" No—what like ? " Pilcher called.

" The wind too near in your ear perhaps ", the Prince sang out : " to me distinct, a sound like distant towns. Ask Sturge ".

Pilcher asked down the hatchway, and Sturge sang up : " I know what the Prince means—hear it every now and

again—sort of universal murmur going on. There may be a hundred thousand of them about ”.

“ How many do you see, Pilcher ? ” the Prince called.

Pilcher slipped up his bandage, turned his back to the ray, and, standing on the steps, called back : “ Three in sight for the moment, Sir. Two astern fifty yards apart, one to starboard two hundred feet down. I have seen as many as six—we should see hundreds, I think, on another night. Everything is rather ghastly through the glasses—livid-like—poor devils ”.

A dumbness now among them some moments : until a thump and thud somewhere was heard ; and Sturge, then on the steps, glancing abroad, called out : “ Two have bumped, and both gone tumbling, not forty yards to starboard ! I thought there’d be some bumps ”.

“ Can you see the sea ? ” sang out the Prince.

“ No sign of it here, Sir ”. He shut his eyes in trouble, and went down.

“ It seems monstrous, sir ”, called out Pilcher presently, “ that your warning was disregarded ! ”

“ I doubt if Li Ku Yu fully believed ”, the Prince sang back : “ he said once ‘ *if* you have the ray ’, then corrected to ‘ *since* you have ’—to be polite ! He may have felt that my warning might possibly be a trick and last resort. And he probably found himself compelled to make some attempt with some proportion of the intended numbers. But he is not a cruel mind.”

“ *Hark !* ” sang out Pilcher now, and listening, they could catch a song-sound like lo, lo, lo, lo, lo, babbled lamentably by some tongue not far below : then immediately from the east there reached them a screech which lasted a long while, and died away and away in a lalling song ; and presently after this a pistol-shot from the north-west.

“ A suicide, I suppose ”, called Pilcher—with probable truth, for very many were found on the ground with gun-wounds in different districts of England.

That night it was as if the skies rained a rain of flesh, as

well as wet, not in Eastern England merely, but in the Midlands and West : for the air-boats still went on and on (until the engines were empty), when their helmsmen were sightless.

Many of the squads in the boats' holds appear to have been provided beforehand with bandages, and been told to look out for the rays, but were probably blinded before they saw any ray, or properly realised the possibility of being stricken blind ; and of those in holds who escaped blindness by bandages few probably had any training in the handling of the boats.

But many thousands (who began to fall high enough) came down without accident, saved by the parachute-bottom, some of them not blinded ; and with the morning's dawn in many a home of Southern England was lodged a Chinaman, sightless or seeing.

The rest crashed shrieking into street or field or river, or, landing on roofs, slanted and crashed, or stuck in trees.

By midnight England was agaze at this rain, amazed, with a suspicion of hallelujah and strange new hope springing in its breast, and the name of a man panting on its breath. In the London window was a face upturned, spurring feet in her streets. A throng on London Bridge saw through the rain one air-boat drop upon another, and both drop upon the cross of St. Paul's. Some dropped upon cabs, carts, and men. Seven in a boat came down safe in the middle of Southampton Row, and were pounced upon to be roughly handled, until the astounded crowd found them to be blind, and guided them by the hand into houses.

Before this, at about ten o'clock, Sir Robert Barrington, on his way to an interview with Her Majesty, saw, as he stepped out of his house, a light sinking in the air, waited, watching, and saw it gently sink to an area-rail opposite, on which it tilted, spilling five shrieking blind Chinamen into the street ; and the Queen herself, seated with screened lights in her Newmarket Parlour, started, hearing their screams. . . .

And there was yellow still nearer her than they ! She did not know all that was in that room. . . .

She was waiting there by her pear-wood fireplace, that had a Lambert landscape in its carving, for Eulalia, whom she had summoned—the fireplace (in which was a fire that chilly night), being south, the corridor-door to the Queen's left, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's chest a little within the lobby north.

And as Eulalia came to the top of the four steps outside, she seemed to see on the corridor-door's rose-curtains the firelight shadow of someone five feet behind the Queen, keenly leaning, stealing toward the Queen, a knife in hand.

As in she dashed, the shadow vanished ; and Her Majesty glanced round, astonished at her irruption.

" Is Your Majesty alone ? " she sharply asked.

" Yes, Miss Bayley. Why ? "

Now, the shadow had not been distinct, so, suddenly feeling unsure, and reluctant to alarm, Eulalia merely answered that she had " seemed to see " a shadow behind Her Majesty. . . .

" No ", said the Queen. " Sit here. . . . Now, what is to be done ? Ah ! you wear the miniature I gave you ! Let me see it ? "

Eulalia took it from her neck ; handed it to the Queen ; the Queen tossed it into the fire.

" Now, what is to be done ? Here we are in the gravest scrape, with eight or ten indelible disgraces threatening a Throne—You see, do you, into what a mess of mud many men may be sunk by one young woman's unseemly mutiny and misdemeanour ? The Prince's ' love ' you are ! his ' lucky star ' !—unlucky. Where he got the audacity—in my—in *my* presence—What did His Royal Highness mean by calling you his ' luck ' ? "

" I think the Prince referred to the black box, Ma'am. I seem to have brought to His Royal Highness no other luck ". Eulalia was staring straight into the flame, aware of the raids of wind and rain upon the window.

"And this black box which you say that you digged up—is it this that blows people to pieces?"

"I have no knowledge of its properties, Ma'am".

"It must be this! in which case it is the Princess Elizabeth apparently who discovered its properties, and it is she who is his luck. She, poor lady, has been made quite ill by the disgraceful scene, and can scarcely speak—whether she will continue in the palace now I can't say; and, as for me—what *can* I do? I put it to you. If I send you away, the Prince seems to have a craving for you—What, by the way, made you withdraw yourself and hide from him? You have volunteered no statement——"

"It would be long to explain, Ma'am".

"It is short to say it would be long".

"I am like that, Ma'am, I'm afraid: pray forgive me".

The Queen's eyes dwelt on her weighingly. Then: "Well, if I send you away, this very fiery young man calls fire from heaven upon me; if you stay, no lady in the palace can—I couldn't, anyway. So what to do?"

"I can fly and hide without your sending me, Ma'am. That is the way out".

"Will you do this?"

"Yes, Ma'am".

"Oh, but you are not bad! You are not bad!"

"Hark!"

"What is it?"

"Didn't Your Majesty hear anything?"

"No. It is the wind".

"Perhaps".

"Don't be nervous. Listen—you shall have another of the miniatures, though they are precious to me—that one in the sailor-shirt when he was eighteen—And afterwards we can meet, you and I—and you will think you see him when you see me——"

"Your Majesty is gracious. I will fly this night, the Prince won't find me, and on Wednesday I can use the ticket for America. But on one condition".

"Oh, now, that spoils it, a condition. What is the condition?"

"Your Majesty must come to my apartments with me".

"I must?"

"Yes, Ma'am".

"What for?"

"You will see, Ma'am".

"Well!"—the Queen stood up. "But where is—everybody?" she said with wonder at the door, seeing the corridor desert as death. A bunch of lamps above the hangings of the arch beshone its long forlornness.

But as they were going toward the arch, there was someone—a golden big being from below, who bore a card on a salver. The Queen read "Sir Robert Barrington".

The next minute Eulalia was saying in her bedroom: "I have dreamt of being a Queen—and will be one a little. Your Majesty will give me your diadem and clothes to put on".

The Queen had a tweak of fun. "While I descend to receive a certain man who awaits me in a state of—nature? An intensely proper man, too". She appealed to heaven.

"I meant that we should change places", said Eulalia, pale, pale. "I a Queen, you a nurse".

"Now, the odd request!"

"It is the condition precedent of my flying".

"But your real motive?"

"That is my affair, Ma'am".

The Queen stared. "And if your sleeves are too short for me?"

"Not much, Ma'am".

"I'll do it".

The transformations were made. But now the hairs gave a new air to the gowns, Eulalia's a glow of gold and bulky club-head, Her Majesty's a dusky mosque.

Eulalia followed to the door to say: "I—Your Majesty

—feel that Your Majesty should keep your eyes open to-night. . . . I can't help thinking that I saw some shadow. . . . The Prince of Wales has enemies—perhaps Your Majesty has, too . . .”

On this Her Majesty started at some thought, looking into Eulalia's face, which of late had flushed at the palace fare, but now afresh was utterly bereft of colour. She did not say anything, but held out her hand ; Eulalia kissed it ; and that was quaint to see the diadem curtsy and kiss the nurse's fingers.

And now the Queen went hurriedly, turned back to say hurriedly : “ I will come back ; stay in there till someone comes ”, and went hurriedly down the North Stair.

In fact, the shadow caught by Eulalia, though faint, had somehow brought Oyone into her memory, and also the remembrance of Oyone's bitter face cut at the Queen at the cab-door in Chapel Street, East.

She peeped out, saw the corridor still a solitary street, and went creeping toward the Newmarket Parlour, taking care at the corridor-arch to peer and push the draperies.

Nothing there : but at the top of the Parlour's four steps her heart started into her mouth when once more she chanced to catch the vanishing of a shadow.

But she had not been through the war, and through the Chinese, without learning audacity, so with a dash she was through the curtains, and a poker was in her hand, she searching the curtains, the furniture, all eyes and whiteness : for, though she had said to herself in changing clothes with Her Majesty that she didn't mind dying, her life of no value, when it came to the point she was inclined to make a fight for life ; and she explored the whole room, the obscure lobby beyond, a dark apartment beyond that : but did not think of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's chest.

Meantime, Her Majesty, in a bijou drawing-room below, had asked Sir Robert how she pleased him as a nurse, and why he appeared elated, to which he had answered : “ At this moment, Ma'am, the mastery of the West over the East

is being for ever settled. I believe—if it is not yet over—that yellow men are now being struck blind by hundreds of thousands in the air. I have just seen five——”

“*Blind?*” breathed the Queen.

“Am I to take it, Ma’am, that you are not aware that the Prince of Wales has Mr. Chinnery’s Redlike Ray?”

“No. . . . He is striking them *blind?*”

“I take it that he is”.

“Now, how horrible!”—her eyes shut—“His poor hand is already thicker than itself with brothers’ blood. . . .”

“Forgive me”, said Sir Robert: “I assumed that Your Majesty would know”.

“No. . . . I know that he has a black box which blows to pieces. . . . The Princess Elizabeth apparently discovered that it had some property of explosion, then the Prince found it—Can this be the same? No! And yet—Of course, this ray has no explosive property?”

“Why, no”.

“Is the ray contained in a black box?”

“Yes, Ma’am. You may know that the Prince has long been seeking it, lately attempted to make one like it, failed. . . .”

“Then, it *is* the same. How, then, could Elizabeth pretend——?” The Queen paused, pondering.

Silence. Then Sir Robert, frowning at the floor: “I have besought this interview of you, Ma’am, under the pressure of a necessity to be frank as to the Princess Elizabeth. It appears that Her Imperial Highness has pretended more things than one, and this to the detriment of others. It has lately, for instance, come to my ears, that Her Imperial Highness is generally credited at Court with being the donor of the German Six Millions. Now, I have already had the honour of writing to Your Majesty the address of that donor; she is poor; I hoped that Your Majesty would deign——”

“The Princess Elizabeth”, answered Her Majesty

emphatically, "virtually—yes, admitted—that she was the donor. Do you say that you doubt her?"

"I say so, Ma'am. The fact was not so, believe me. And my reason for being here is this : that the donor has recently disappeared from her lodging—I cannot trace her—she treats me ill—but I desire to say to-night to Your Majesty that it is a matter of national honour and concern that that royal person should be searched for, and comforted, Ma'am, for her many adversities".

At the strong vibration of his voice, Her Majesty's eyes sprang water by contagion, her face agitated, pale with indignation—against him, or against Elizabeth.

"I will see to it", she said ; "and I only hope that you are perfectly certain of your facts, Sir Robert Barrington, or your tone in referring to the Prince's betrothed will be thought improper. Pray tell me afresh the name and address of the lady in question".

"I did not tell Your Majesty her name in my letter. As for the address, she is gone—impossible to guess why or whither—gone—leaving her few little linens behind—in a soap-box, Ma'am—in a third-floor back-room—in a slum, Ma'am——"

"Soap-box? *Third floor?*"—wonder was dawning, dawning in her eyes—"what address?"

"It is 19 Chapel Street, East, Ma'am".

"Chapel? Yes—19——" She remembered that that was the address whence she had taken Eulalia ; and now there burst from her lips the question : "Is this donor a nurse?"

"She is, Ma'am".

"Her name!"

"Eulalia Bayley, Ma'am".

Her Majesty's head rested on her chair-back, her lids shut down, and there was no speech there during some minutes.

"It occurs to me to add", observed Sir Robert suddenly, "that it was this same lady who discovered the Prince's prison. It was not the Princess Elizabeth at all, as was said. Miss Bayley, having discovered, came to tell me the address,

and the Princess, who was at my place, certainly heard her. I have to be frank—these are facts. I say that the Prince of Wales owes his life, the nation at this moment owes its existence, you your life, Ma'am, I my life, to that young lady of the slum. I dare to say that, if she were an Aspasia—and she is the chastest of the angels—still her royal soul would merit to share this Throne ”.

The Queen opened her eyes to say : “ I agree as to the ‘ royal ’ ; the ‘ angel ’ I leave to your serenest reflection ; but I agree, I agree, as to the royal. She is here, by the way. You shall see her, *looking* royal, in my diadem ”.

Sir Robert was all astare. “ Miss Bayley—*here* ? ”

“ This is her nurse's-costume ! I left her—I'll fetch her to Sir Robert Barrington's parental embrace ”. She bent her head with an underlook, as she stood up.

“ One word, Ma'am ! Does the Prince of Wales know—— ? ”

“ Yes, he discovered her, and she had this Redlike Ray : he called her ‘ his luck ’—no wonder ! ”

“ So all will now be well ?—one word ! ”

“ Sir Robert Barrington, take it from me that the Princess of Wales cannot be a thing of spots and patches so long as I am Queen of England ! ” Her Majesty stood at her mighty height, smiling at the universe beneath her chin ; and up Sir Robert threw his eyes, as she moved on and out, bound for Eulalia.

But in the corridor just outside the door she found the Princess Elizabeth lingering—meek, and ill, and cringing.

“ Mother——”

“ *Judge !* ”

Under that withering look the Princess stood a shrunken thing ; but then, suddenly looking up, said : “ I am not ignorant that I have been malinged to Your Majesty, for ‘ quod est mihi suspirat ’ ! but since ten minutes' talk would completely clear Your Majesty's mind of every misconception——”

“ Stay : did you not declare that you had discovered that

that box of Miss Bayley's had the property of shattering men ? ”

Pinched now with shame, pain, apprehension, perplexity, the Princess stood pale, a sinner in the day of his calamity, an irked nerve, like worms of the deep sea squirming beneath burning beams.

“ Yes ”, she admitted, “ I said that it shatters men ”.

“ But it strikes blind ! ”

“ Precisely. It shatters the eye ”.

“ I see !—for it has not shattered mine. But tell me : did not Your Imperial Highness hear the address of the Prince's prison from Miss Bayley at Sir Robert Barrington's ? ”

“ Yes—I did. I went there foreknowing that I should hear it : as I did ”.

“ Foreknowing. . . . And *you*, Elizabeth, were the giver of the Six Millions, were you ? *You* were that adored donor, complacently accepting the adoration of men ? ”

“ No. I was *not* the donor of the Six Millions. I said so ! But though I was *not* the donor, I *was*, so to say, the donator——”

“ The donator. . . . Oh, Elizabeth, you are a charlatan ”—in a voice low and cold.

Now, desperate, detected, the Princess's lip whitened with spite. “ If I am a charlatan, is not the world one mass of charlatanism ? Hasn't society been built upon charlatanism—archbishops, emperors—queens—— ? ”

“ What has that to do with *you* ? *You* repent, girl, and strive to make yourself worthy to be the wife of some pettier man than the Prince of Wales ”.

Blood rushed now to the Princess's brow, and she was about to vent something venomous against her love, the Prince, when he himself came rocking along the corridor in haste, causing the ladies to start at the Chinaman they thought they saw, at the pigtail swinging behind his dripping ulster, the hairless skull of paste

“ It is only I ”, he called out. . . . “ Well, it's all over, Mother, invasion stopped, a new sun to-morrow morning.

... I am pretty sick of it, and sad, God knows, yet glad. . . . Turned nurse, Mother ? . . . Eulalia upstairs ? ”

Her Majesty started ! “ Let not the Prince of Wales forget that he is in the presence of ladies ! ”

“ Scott, Mother, let us keep cool ”, the Prince wearily said : “ to-morrow morning I start a rational world, so help me, God. But, as you like rites, Mother, let me tell you to comfort you that that lady has been Princess of Wales since she was sixteen ”.

One looking close would have seen the Queen dodge a little from it ; she then stepped back to stand against the panelling, and, suddenly covered her face with her hands, uttering a sound ; the Prince, meantime, saying : “ Elizabeth, forgive. . . . She ran away on learning that her husband was the Prince of Wales—public grounds, I suppose, for she’s very noble-minded—and then I heard that she was dead—had reasons to believe—forgive ! She upstairs ? ”

Before he could receive an answer, a series of shrieks reached their ears from afar, screams of one *in extremis* that seemed to say “ *help! help!* ”, screams that affected some vein in the Prince to a piteous sympathy, his face instantly taking on an expression of intense pain, like one ready to cry. He flew. And, promptly as he flew, the Queen flew more promptly still . . . heart-smitten. . . .

He soon passed her, however ; and, on coming near the North Stair, could hear a press of feet pelting down the second-floor stair above him ; one moment more and Oyone broke white into his sight, a narrow bright knife in her right hand, bright yet reddened, and three men impending upon her heels.

He, on dashing to that landing, was just in time to see that one of the men had caught her up on a landing below, dashing a little past her ; upon which she dodged back sharp, and jumped the balusters to the bottom, some twenty feet, landing like elastic on her feet ; the next instant she had slipped out of the palace, the men after, the Prince after them.

But they were still twenty feet off her when she was twenty feet in air. The Prince saw her boat's shape rising across the rain, caught a cry of "*Cranes!*" screamed down from the air, and immediately was away back into the palace.

But to the other three, lingering a little, a sudden thud sounded somewhere : for the boat could hardly have been forty feet aloft when it dropped like a stone ; then all was still. . . .

Meantime, the Queen had reached Eulalia through a throng of ladies and men, to find her still with the diadem on her brow, and with smudges of blood about her breast, stretched on a couch. Her Majesty stopped short a yard from the unconscious form, gazing, then, extending her arms, called out lamentably : " Oh, but greater love hath no man than this ! ", and a second later had Eulalia raised in her strong arms, and was away with her.

Without a sound now, her lips fixed in a vindictive way, she trotted, brushed past her son in the corridor, did not take Eulalia into Eulalia's apartments, but down the North Stair, step by step, heavy laden like a cat carrying her kitten, down and away to her own apartment, her own bed.

Feet, meantime, were speeding for the physician ; but long ere he got there Sir Robert and the Prince, who were as good as doctors, had examined the breast-wound ; and then, looking into one another's eyes, had smiled.

" Fought like two cats ! " said the Prince.

The cuts in Eulalia's fingers were, indeed, the worst, so that by midnight she was convalescent, Her Majesty then alone with her in darkness, their arms enfolded close, culling one another's roses, roaming in one another's country, discovering one another, chuckling at their delicious riches of love and kissing kinship, the clicking of the clock not more constant than their talk, that lasted on and on into the dawn of morning.

The Queen, discovering the ring hung round the neck, said : " So this is the wedding-ring ! "

"That's where I've always kept it!"—Eulalia laughed.

"But what a pair of pirates! Who could divine . . . ? You were only sixteen?"

"Hardly more. Before I knew anything he had me off my feet".

"Say crushingly defeated".

"Yes! Ah, if I could only say those sorts of flashing swift things like you!—you'd think more of me".

Her Majesty held her hot and close. "Could I, sweetheart? I doubt it".

"Tell me *the truth*: do you love me *a lot*?"

"Couldn't you *see*—from the first? Sweet as honey——! I have longed for a daughter-sister, and to think it should be you, you! . . . You'll make the fairest, silver-slipper-est, finest, whitest Princess of Wales that ever yet was! I'll be like an air-boat bathing in the sunlight of your hair and flying about in the sky of your eyes! But I do abhor a woman who throws away the severity and thorn without which there's no rose of womanhood, or preservation of a nation. So I had to try to dislike you, feeling you sweet in my liver, but never dreaming half your sweetness and high royalty—forgive—I humble myself—kiss".

"You make love something like him!" said Eulalia.

"Do I? Is he nice as a lover?"

"Aha—electric-like. But it is said that you are *fick'e*: if ever you leave off loving me, I shall just die, or if you regret that I am not royal, or about Germany".

"I shan't. The Prince of Wales has authority and prestige enough now to marry Sally-in-the-alley—if she be vestal. He can make Germany an English Crown-colony, if he likes. Don't be afraid of that. If I am *fickle*, it is only to pretty dummies, not to real people. Ah! where you got the audacity this night—if you had got yourself killed for me——"

"Oh, I was wide awake! I seemed to recognise the shadow's face—She was wonderfully lovely——"

No longer !—as the morning then dawning into the apartment revealed to three men in the Palace Park, who found the little scout dead on the ground, and Oyone still sitting, stiff and cold, at the boat's hatchway, her hand on the ratchet-lever, her right eye, at the shock, having shot half out of the socket, her hard hat cocked awry. . . .

CHAPTER XXV

IN THE COMET'S TAIL

That next (Sunday) night, the night before the comet crossed our orbit, Her Majesty and His Royal Highness argued long together, wrestling together, alone in that Newmarket Parlour, on whose Last Supper table lay a document drawn up by him, she at one moment almost going on her knees, entreating, holding him, with "Don't do it, my son—don't do it".

But he, pacing short about, his hands behind him, said again and again : "It is no use, Mother. . . ."

"You depose your poor father, you see", she said with water in her eyes that hung on him.

"Mother, you talk. . . . 'Depose'. . . . What does it matter? Only for some weeks".

"Oh, I'm afraid ! afraid ! . . . It will profoundly offend the British people, I know !"

"Mother, as if that mattered. I am the light of the world, Mother—for the moment. In fifty years' time men will smile—I hope—at my little say as obvious baby-talk ; but, for the moment, it is what *I* say that is wit, if they have the wit and grace to recognise my face and my voice, and the oil that anoints my appointed pate. And they will, I think—some time. My anticipation is that most of them will jump for joy. Anyway, it doesn't matter. I have the whim and the power to do them good, and I will".

The Queen, seated at the table, made of her hand a bed for her heavy head, saying wearily : "Isn't it a Morrison Pill ? I begin to doubt if the sorrows of men can be cured by any Morrison Pill".

“ But why do you, Mother ? Oh, now, that seems rather unscientific of you. The question is : Who is Morrison ? Can he see facts ? If so, his pill is Divine, and nothing in the universe is the slightest use except just his pill. Do, do, let’s shun catchwords like death, shall we ? Everything that’s done is done by a pill, Mother : to every effect its special effecter : that light there was not lit by vague exhortations to be good, but by a pill, by special measures ; the sun shifts its mass 600 miles a minute, not more, not less, by a pill. And in the case of a man who catches cold, then from the skin the kidneys sicken, then from the kidneys the heart has it, the artery-walls, the circulation, the stomach, the nerve-centres, and the man pants a complex discordance—in such a case Morrison has to be rather a shrewd man to adapt his pill to the original root of all that ; but, as to the root of the complex discordance of society, no such acumen is required : for it is known, it must be obvious to block-heads, that if a nation has no country—if Israel live in Egypt—if Englishmen live on a foreign England, making bricks and paying toll to foreign Pharaohs from Normandy, who own England—then in England you must have national discordance ; and if Man has no planet, then you must have international discordance. What is amusing is, that war is regarded as the greater evil of the two ! But war is not a great evil, or not a deep, because it is God’s penalty for a small wrong—for the wrong of the seizure by peoples of land that belongs to all ; the monstrous wrong, bringing the monstrous penalty, is the seizure by only one individual of what belongs to all—and this is that simple catching-cold, pitching into complex discordances, that needs no seer to heal it with a pill. And it is not because it was not *seen* that it has not been healed, but because our England has been governed by lubbers and blunted pundits ”.

“ Yes, I agree ”, breathed the Queen—“ I know, I agree ”—reading the document—“ but still—oh, listen to me. Some of these things—Tell me frankly, Teddy, does this clause here mean that you intend doctors to murder infants ? ”

"What else, Mother?"

"Ah!"

"Mother—really—that sigh does not touch me. Mother, is it wrong to kill a man? We kill a German, or a man who kills a man; but, of course, one filthy infant kills many. Only last night Li Ku Yu was proving to me that it is not wrong to kill two hundred million men."

"Oh, the bloodthirsty— And, Teddy, you believed him?"

"Mother, I said 'proved': perhaps you did not catch. . . . Oh, Mother, how we distrust truth!—our only friend—our Blessed Saviour from all our sorrows and wrongs—how we dread Her Heavenly face in our barbarian brainlessness and irreligion—"

"Yes—I see that, too—that's all right—but just think, Teddy—think of the shock to the moral sense of England—"

"Yes, but, Mother, the moral sense of England is not a fixed thing! It mayn't be very high at present, but in six months I'll have it raised—"

"Oh, Heaven, what shall I say to him?"—the Queen shook her bowed brow—"This about doctors is an interference with evolution—Oh, I'm afraid!—We mayn't have the right—"

"'Interference'—the Prince stopped in his pacing—"Really, Mother, you bring out things now that I'm sure would never have passed your lips when I was ten! I suppose the brain 'tires' like steel-temper—"

"Meaning that I am getting old?"—with a dwelling underlook.

"Scott, Mother, no, of course—old, no—God forbid. But 'interfering' with evolution, Mother. How supremely—! They reckon ill, Mother, who leave God out: when we fly from Him, He is the wings; when we interfere with evolution, that, of course, is evolution interfering with itself—as you know".

The Queen did not answer; but presently was muttering:

"Well, it is all over now—no more little Teddy—the fledgling flown—the Spring-time over and gone—Oh, my God, I must be satisfied——"

As she broke into tears, with tears the Prince threw himself at his mother's knees.

All that night and the next forenoon he spent in interviews ; and in the afternoon, as Mr. Mackay, the Prime Minister, was making an oration in the Commons, intended to be impressive, in praise of the Prince of Wales's services to the world, the Prince with fifty blue-jackets stepped into the House, and, standing by the Speaker's Chair, said : "Gentlemen, this Parliament is dissolved ; force at hand ; my regrets for breaking in upon your grave deliberations".

When they were gone, he locked up the House.

His Edict was in the evening papers :

"Men of Great Britain and Ireland.

"You know me, as I think I know you.

"I undertake (without prejudice to the Majesty of my Royal Father and Mother) the direction of our country, until the following sociological experiments be in the way of being made :—

That Great Britain be considered my private property by right of conquest.

That taxes (except 'death-duties') be abolished ; and 'customs'.

That citizens be liable to daily drill, including running and breathing.

That our nation devote itself (A) to getting knowledge, (B) to teaching : these activities, Research and Education, to be its main activities.

That boys and girls learn five handicrafts, or 'trades', three of them to be (A) Working in wood, (B) Working in iron, (C) Working in land.

That the following be Government monopolies : (A) Education, (B) Transport, (C) Electric-power, (D) Doctoring, (E) Publishing.

That Members of Parliament be highly paid ; and be Doctors of Science ; and be workmen, having educated hands ; and be not toothless.

That Doctors be ' consecrated ' ; and be Bachelors of Science ; and be taught in ' Consecration ' that ' to the pure all things are pure '.

That Clergymen now leave off uttering in public, for money, whatever has come to seem childish to average people.

" Writs to be issued for a new Parliament within six weeks . . .

" Edward . . . "

Silence followed all that afternoon.

That some tempest was mustering its thunders everyone felt ; but whether of anger or of gladness was the question.

As for the foreign population of Britain, they little cared : for to them, already thinking of packing their trunk for the Continent once more, whatever the Prince might do was wondrously done ; but it is certain that some nerve in every Englishman winced at his action, dazzling angel as he might be in the nation's eye.

There was silence and musing behind closed doors. . . .

Then wire-messages commenced to fly, men to collect in eddies working into whirlpools, and, near five, feet to steer toward the palace ; then, as at the turn and uncertain time of tides boats on the surface lie any-way, but suddenly determine to stem one way, and men say, "*that's* the way things are", so before six the national answer to the Edict was known—by a tendency—by a current's rush—by an ocean's roaring. At seven South-west London was one welter and howl of heads.

A vociferation of " Teddy ! " entered the palace, pervading it from bottom to top like a hot and restless presence unrelentingly, the King, Queen, everyone, praying the Prince to present himself ; but he would not.

It turned out that, just as when a lad outgrows his

Eton-jacket, or a larva takes to wings, or a tadpole to the solid land, so the people now were perfectly sick and tired of the garrulous old gang, child-playing and play-acting with the lives of generations, quoting from one another's "*speeches*", "*voting censures*"; and now it was done, the Age of Sham; suddenly, in a day, the Age of Business was born; and now was the hour for joy-bells to jargon and jangle together, and hearts to join in being glad.

But the Prince said: "I am not obliged to go when someone says 'Teddy'"; and was glad to get out of it when, at eight-twenty, a letter from Li Ku Yu was placed in his hand:

"Prince, I write by the hand of a woman who received me Friday night into her house at Forest Hill—13 Bread Street—I blind-struck before being well in air, left leg broken, suicide to be at nine. It pleases me to think that you, Prince, will trouble yourself to cremate my body.

"I enclose scheme of the Europe by me conceived. What is good adopt, as God inspires. Blessed be His name.

"Li Hsi Hung and Yoshio Kanin have instructions that you, Prince, are next the guide of China. These will write to you.

"If Chinese show reluctance to evacuate, strike one blind here, there. Deal leniently.

"I, in your place, should keep at least one million in Europe, and mix. Meditate this. Great at the wood-lathe, land-culture. Or give Russia to Japan. China itself will respond to scientific institutions. Behead opponents.

"I have loved you well. Farewell.

"Your Younger Brother,

"LI KU YU".

It was then eight-twenty, and the Prince had a will to get to that address in Forest Hill before nine. But since the Princess could not now part from him, nor the Queen part from the Princess, they set out together.

It soon appeared, however, that it was hopeless to make way through the Strand.

The fact that that was the night of the comet's crossing—a thing long regarded with an exaggerated interest—packed the throng thicker ; not a vehicle but the royal one was anywhere visible ; advance was step by step ; the Prince fretted and vexed ; but still the car crawled, the crowd growled.

The night being very mistily dim, for some time they were not recognised, but in Kingsway it came, and then the situation became dreadfully distressing. Backward now nor forward they could not budge, and would soon have been exhausted, if they had not been rescued by a posse of police into the so-called " Opera-house ", where they were accommodated with seats at the stage-back, and there sat salved, but wretched, hearing the speech of a Socialist on the Edict to a hall packed chiefly with working men—a meeting convened by the S.D.F.—the stage almost as thronged as the hall.

And there on prickles sat the Prince, resentment on his lips, very vexed with Her Majesty and the Princess, who had influenced him against going through the air.

It was only after some minutes that it dawned upon the consciousness of the hall that *he* was sitting there within it, and all at once the oratory stopped short at a call of "*Teddy!*"—then call upon call—negligible to begin, but growing great, then big, august, like gales, and the guns of nature.

" Speech ! " someone uttered, and then it was "*Teddy ! Speech !*" shrieked with the ceaselessness of some machine urgently at work which shrieks : "*Speech ! Speech !*"

The Prince's teeth siffled his " Onward, Christian Soldiers ", his lids disdainfully lowered.

" Just to humour them, then, a little ", shouted the Queen, leaning near his ear, which a clamour now filled thick as masses of javelins flashed in battle ; " Yes, Teddy ", the Princess said with her head and eyes ; "*Speech !*" shrieked the machine ; and presently he, impelled, compelled, went stepping in a dove-coloured dust-coat, with that quick

little sway of his shoulders, to the front, siffling, spinning a little stick pretty trickily quickly round his fingers.

Clamour ! Hush ! Silence !

"I confess, men, you rather astonish me clamouring *Speech* at me like this. Suppose I have nothing new to say ? will you still want 'a *speech*' ? (" *Teddy ! Yes !* ") That's odd ! That what you're accustomed to ? (" *That's it, Ted !* ") I see ! The right honourable gentleman sat down amid loud cheers after having been on his poor old feet two hours—that the style ? (" *You've got it, Teddy !* ") And if he had been on his poor old headpiece, no person on earth would have been one penny——" (*Uproar of joy*).

"But from *me* you look for solider stuff, do you ? (" *We do ! Teddy !* ") Hunks of bread and beef, do you ? and honeycomb ? (" *Right you are !* ") Well, I'll see : you, on your side, trying to sympathise with me, remembering that if I live a little generation or so ahead of you, a leader *should*, and that if in anything you 'differ from' me, you are 'differing from' your sons, and your own future selves.

"Which I say so confidently, for the reason that I foresee that '*the speech*' won't have any of my opinions in. No opinions. You have heard that it has been said by them of old time 'Every Briton has a right to his opinion', but I say to you that no Briton has, least of all I, I think, since it has been proved that opinions are wrong—two opposite opinions both wrong—and we can't have a right to a wrong. And again it has been said by them of old time, 'Don't believe everything that you hear', but I say to you, 'Don't believe anything that you hear', if it is the least bit abstruse : distrust, if you desire to foster strong minds ; until truth is proved : and then believe vitally deep.

"Do you feel like me, I wonder, when I find that I have been believing something that's not true ? as if some thing or other a little behind and above me had been smiling all along at me, not unkindly, but very disdainfully—rather offensive. Hence '*the speech*' will be pretty brief, I think—no opinions, only ascertained facts ; and then all practical

politics, I think, touching the spot of your private lives and minds and happiness closer home than the fantastic politics you're accustomed to ; and then plain, I think—no foreign long words. Possibly I may want to use the foreign word 'phenomena'—is there some workman who does not know what '*phenomena*' are ? (A voice : "*Want of sleep, Teddy !*") Nonsense ! that's insomnia ! No ! '*phenomena*' are whatever you experience, as when you sneeze ; yes, or feel sleepless ; or are conscious of the bliss of eating when hungry, of drinking after ripping long wood with the saw ; or are conscious of being conscious, and of the oddity of such a thing ; or conscious of loveliness—for this globe is only a bit of drift-log gadding down the river of being with meteor-stones and other streaming drift-log, and yet, see, she teems with gleams of beauty, tones of music, in blue eyes, in Geissler tubes, in the salmon satin of copper flushing in flame, in shavings, in that song of strong winds in forests which no tongue can sing, in the moon on wild white nights winging away among Switzerlands of cloud like some white wildfowl with a tail all colours, and your heart's enticed in you, and suddenly you find that your mouth has kissed your hand—aye, and afresh the next night when it is calm she'll ravish you afresh, since age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety ; or are conscious of sexes among animals—some sorts have more than two—and of their tumid moods and enthusiasms ; or of the twenty million suns which you see over you at night—another twenty millions over you by day, which you see without feeling that you see ; or of your own sun when clouds seem clustering round him, he looking some illustrious sultan-priest of the sultry countries, strutting in such stuffs as you cannot peer at without tears : dark then with excessive bright his skirts appear.

"Such are '*phenomena*' : all our impressions of the manners and customs of this panorama of lamps and Arab tabernacle of the Most High God, which we with our dog's-eyes blink at a little, which twenty million years hence the

sons of men will see better, and love more, but will never see well, nor love enough.

“ Or possibly in ‘ *the speech* ’ I may use the word ‘ philosopher ’—is there one man who doesn’t know what a *philosopher* is ? (A voice : “ *Man who bears pain, Sir !* ”) That again is nonsense. No ! a philosopher is a man who habitually sees things a little (a *very* little) as they are, and other people merely as they seem. Here we are in Kingsway, for instance, and someone may imagine that a minute hence we shall still be here : well, a philosopher is a man who laughs at such a fancy, seeing and feeling that a minute hence we’ll be away out where the North Sea is—if the North Sea itself, meantime, had not vaulted a thousand miles. (A voice : “ *What about a scientist, Sir ?* ”) Well, a scientist laughs, too, when he thinks of it, but not so heartily as a philosopher, who has not merely swallowed truth, like the scientist, but truth is become the substance of his blood. A philosopher must, of course, be a scientist, but some scientists have been laughably far from being philosophers, just as an economist must be a business-man, but every business-man is not an economist. Every living thing, in fact, is a scientist—that is, *knows* something—but here below only men are philosophers ; so that the ‘ scientist ’, the ‘ expert ’, is the mere raw material of a man, and any studious goose can be a ‘ scientist ’ : it is the philosopher who is the man, not a Bachelor of truth, but a married man to truth, a Master and Doctor of truth. And the inventor is a philosopher : for he not only acquires two truths, like the scientist, but uses them intimately like his tools, sees a relation between them, *i.e.*, a new truth : becomes a wielder and foreman of truth.

“ Is this, then, to be henceforth our national aim—to be philosophers, inventors, real men ? And shall not this be the subject of ‘ *the speech* ’—of all future ‘ *speeches* ’ ? In which case, shall not my text be those words so associated now with my revered ancestor, His Majesty King George V.—‘ Wake up, England ! ’ It is to be assumed, of course, that His Majesty understood what it is *to wake up*—well,

everyone knows : it is to become conscious that there's a picture on the wall, a basin on the washstand, a sun, clouds—conscious of facts ; and the more facts we become actively conscious of—the laws of tension in the picture's string, the chemistry of the basin, the sun's mass, age, speed—the more awake we are ; the more we are philosophers.

“ To *wake up*, then, is to become philosophers ? cognisant of God ? (A voice : “ *But, Teddy, we don't much believe in no God, most of us !* ”) No ? Well, I didn't know that workmen still spoke in that way ; though I know that one day, when I was fourteen, a ship's-captain smuggled me—*stole* me—behind a shed at Hayling Island, and begged me with intense agitations never to believe, if my teachers told me that there's ‘ a God ’, since, as a matter of fact, there isn't one—a most amusing man—his furtive earnestness ! his leering secrecies !—and for three minutes I wouldn't let him rush away from me, until I had made him admit what rubbish he had hissed. Not that I had any quarrel with his belief—I knew that his *belief* was true—but I did think little of his English. He simply did not know what the word ‘ *God* ’ means, or it never would have entered his head to say that there's ‘ *no God* ’—*i.e.* no beyond of sense-impressions, no cause of phenomena, no maker at every instant of heaven and earth. What he *believed* was that that cause is nothing at all like what horses, or Mrs. Jones next door, or Mrs. Bobmbobm on Mars, imagines it to be ; but he did not say what he believed, and he said what he did *not* believe, that there's no cause at all, which was hardly very glittering English. In fact, strictly speaking, these are the only three things of which every living being is perfectly certain, that there are phenomena, and a cause for them—‘ I ’, a world, and God. (A voice : “ *What sort of being can God be, Teddy ? And whatever caused Him ?* ”) Well ! But why stop me with impossible questions ? Is it possible that you bother to ask yourself and me a thing like that ? Cats ask that, when you see them looking at the moon ; cats ask, bishops and

witch-doctors answer ; ancient (so-called) ‘ philosophers ’ asked (they were not really philosophers) ; but modern philosophers don’t bother, knowing that what Life is for is more and more to enjoy and love God, not to guess at and comprehend Him, as priests and negroes pretend to do, since God is *infinite*, *i.e.* infinitely inconceivable, ∞ for ever—not, of course, meaning inconceivable to *men*, to whom everything is inconceivable, but I am speaking of creatures on spheres older than this, with their cocoanuts roomy as cathedrals, through which unceasingly streams of adoring music roll their roarings. And if someone wonders how I can know that to them, too, God is ∞ for ever, I answer that this is known ; but to explain how might make ‘ *the speech* ’ tedious.

“ You won’t bother, then, any more about what God is : you know that He is amiable, producing wheat to make man brisk and European, and fruit to make man amorous and romantic, and milk within the weasel’s teat for her weans. How fresh is the ocean of March-wind ! Oh, how well after all is it then with men, and with the birds of the air that laugh aloft with the blasts that whirl them ! And suppose your tongue was a hint too big for your mouth ? or was fitted-in with the littlest list and lee-way, as when novices saw box-wood ? How irritating to frenzy the friction of the teeth on one side ! But it is a nice, true fit, like a rotor spinning in its stator-tunnel with scarce a millimetre clearance-space : He is good, He has compasses and callipers with verniers, and decimal micrometers, to build with His bricks the multiple eye of the fly. And you know that He is worshipful : that Expanse is His knapsack, and Eternity is His journey ; and you know many things that He is *not*—nothing like what He has been conceived—not a steed with wings of wind, nor a plant with stars for apples ; not short, not long, not middle-sized ; neither masculine, nor feminine, nor neuter ; not living, not dead ; no saint, though He has no failings ; does not know anything, though He more-than-knows everything ; cannot see, though in each billionth bit of a minute in each billionth bit of a millimetre

He busies a billion billion fingers. (A voice : “ *But how do you know He’s not a horse or a tree, Sir ?* ”) Because you are a horse and a tree (very like), and you hardly look the kind of agent that can nudge an atom with your elbow to do its duty, or sprint foot-and-foot with electricity in a foot-race. (A voice : “ *Yes, but how do you know He’s not dead ?* ”) Who ? I haven’t the faintest idea what you mean. Have you yourself ? How can anything ‘ be dead ’ unless it die ? Only syntheses—*i.e.* souls—can ‘ be dead ’ ; a tree can ‘ be dead ’, *i.e.* its soul, but wood and stone can’t ‘ be dead ’. Or you may stretch and say a clock or a chisel can ‘ be dead ’, but not brass and steel. Really, it is time for workmen to begin to use words with a little more ‘cuteness and gumption. (A voice : “ *But it was you yourself, Sir, who first said ‘ He’s not dead ’* ”.) I did ? When ? . . . Oh, well, yes, that’s true : I was saying He’s not this and not that, and, happening to say ‘ He’s not living ’, I added, ‘ He’s not dead ’. But it was absurd to add that, for if He never lived, He can’t be dead. ‘ God ’ ‘ dead ’ ? Queer meeting of words !—make a cat laugh ! Some say *the devil’s* dead ; some say he’s not dead ; and that’s a legitimate controversy, since all things that we know with hoofs do sooner or later die. (“ Kick the bucket ”, the Queen whispered quick to the Princess.) But God’s above the devil, don’t you know. Stay : I’ll tell you something I know about God, something new to you, and pretty wondrous : listen : God everywhere at this instant is acting as He never anywhere acted before. Got that ? I say *never*—a long time. He ‘ acts by law ’, you think, He’s ‘ the same yesterday, to-day and for ever ’ ; well, no, those statements squint : we should say ‘ He acts like Himself ’, and in two like cases would, *no doubt*, act in a like way, but has never had, will never have, the chance to. For you know, do you, that if nine of you light pipes to-night, you will do nine things that never were done before ? That if you braze brass on Monday, and brass on Tuesday, if you make chloral on Wednesday and chloral on Thursday, between all the four will be a million million differences ? A few days ago I was

filing a piece of tin for a tenon template, and it must have cut my finger, for, on looking at it through a glass, I saw some blood corpuscles ; now, I guessed that, besides blood, there were very likely on it traces of several things—naphtha, tetrachlorinated ether, bichromate of potash—and I felt sure then that never in time and space had there been that particular meeting, or any precedent for that particular myriad of actions there taking place. And so in every case. Why, the right eye of the fly Y is a curio unique in the universe, dealing with light in a style quite new and unique. If you draw two circles with a compass, or rule two lines, do you suppose they are alike ? Eye them through a microscope, and one will be a drawing of the Andes, the other of the Balkans ; glare at them through God's goggles close-gloating, and the pair of pencil-lines will be spacious like planets, with collapsing palaces, Persepolis and Serapis, precipices, Saharas, and sand-storms oversweeping teeming peoples—alike in nothing save in their uniqueness. Even in so confirmed a thing as an earth's journey, each year has its own course and story, and on high-roads of ice between England and France the gorilla has strangled the sabretoothed tigress. If I step up Piccadilly, at my every step trillions upon trillions of events occur in eternity, each medley of events unique in eternity—electrical events between my body and clothes, my boots and the pavement, electro-magnetic events as each boot-nail moves, magnetoluminous events, events of capillarity, of osmosis, of friction, of pressure, of surface-tension, of moment-of-inertia, of molecular vibration, of chemistry, of heat, of sound in Australia (for I shake the globe), events of a thousand forces, no doubt, whose name men will never name. How comes God to ' know ' how to juggle with the emergency of this eternal diversity ? What twisting Proteus is His foreman, swift-whispering wisdom at his tympanum ? He is never at a loss, look, nor stops to con His law-book, but pat as pat He acts with spinning spontaneity. ' Spontaneity ' :—as living things *seem* to act : for you know—unless some one of you is

awfully thoughtless—that living things only *seem* to act spontaneously, one going on four legs, one on two, one behaving as a baby, a curate, a eunuch, a lunatic, a woman, a man, a Mozart, a Martian, strictly in the strain of his make and nature at any instant. What shall we say, then? That God actually is what living beings seem to be—spontaneous? that God is *living*? We may say so, if we like; and then we will divide things into three kinds—God living; things like us lifelike, doll-like, dream-living, or dream-life-positive; and things like iron dream-life-negative. But that would be rather a queer way of putting it, since ‘living’ already has a definite meaning, meaning things like us: so you had better divide things into—iron life-negative; we life-positive, or ‘living’; and God more-than-living, or x -being. God, anyway, you see, is not very ‘dead’.

“I hope I so express myself that you see what I mean, though it is a little difficult in English of two syllables. By ‘life-positive’ and ‘life-negative’ I mean to suggest that *everything* is living—just as everything is electrified, things that contain more electricity than a certain stock amount being called ‘electro-positive’, things that contain less ‘electro-negative’. So I call men, trees, life-positive, iron life-negative, crystals life-neutral—in which case, a moon is much more living than a man, the difference being that between heat and temperature, an ounce of boiling oil having less heat than a ton of ice, though a higher temperature, so a man less life than a mountain, though at higher ‘potential’ or pressure; and *death* is doubtless an ‘earthing’ (as electricians say), that is, a flowing back to the common earth-stock of the excess of life-fluid in life-positive bodies, through some break or short-circuiting of the vital dynamo. But now I am saying more than I know, so am certain to be wrong somewhere: though this, or something like it, you are likely to hear frequently repeated during the next fifty years.

“Well, but though God is x for ever, we must have some

conception of God, though wrong : and civilisation consists in nothing but this—the getting of an ever higher conception of God through a broadening consciousness of His ways—through science—through being philosophers and inventors—through ‘waking up’.

“And isn’t this desirable ? Yes, for waking up, or becoming conscious, means happiness. Or is it necessary for me to prove that ? It is easily proved. For happiness is a property of life, isn’t it ? ‘*Life is sweet*’. You know that every insect or plant that has not had some mishap is happy, and does not want to die. Well, but the trait of life is consciousness ; so the more conscious, the more living : but happiness is a property of living ; therefore the more conscious, the happier ; and he was the most foolish of the foolish ancients who said, ‘he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow’ : for knowledge, if it be *real* knowledge, and not the Chinese ‘knowledge’ of ‘scholars’, is knowledge of God ; and the more we know of God, the more we adore Him, and are happy.

“Yes, but mark this : that life with very little consciousness is still happy, if without mishap, if healthy. Does some one of you by chance know what health is ? a singing hiccup of religion in your inwards ? One March morning when I was a boy I saw from behind a hedge in the Highlands a girl come running, her hair and plaid fluttering on the winds ; and when she chanced to pull up, half breathless, half laughing, not far from me, I think I never saw man so affected and sick with bliss. Up to God she threw her eye, gasping with a sort of fond reproach : ‘My health ! Oh, I accuse You of love’ ; and when the mixed wind and water whistled and swamped the willow-whips sweetly by the water-brook, I saw her lover’s-glance go languishing and gush toward tears, she groaning ‘beloved’, and then ‘beloved’. Another day a Scotch meenister put into my hand a tract ; and it was about a cobbler who sat singing in the sunlight ; so someone asked, ‘Why are you always singing, Jamie ?’ and what did the cobbler say ? ‘It is Jesus

singing, singing in my heart'. There, again, was a happy life, though, of course, the ancient Asiatic whom he, a modern Scotchman, so familiarly mentioned had nothing to do with the matter, as is proved by—But, by the way, talking of proof, are we going henceforth to be sensitive to proofs? For it is suasibleness that distinguishes high types from low, it being difficult to persuade a negro, for if you din into him a series of known truths, the deduction from which is an axiom, he'll say, 'That may be all true enough, but I think I'll still stick to my own way of thinking'. Apes are worse! Whereas scientists stand ever ready to cast for ever behind them, at the breath of a proof, the convictions of their lifetime. We must be attentive, then, to proofs, if we desire to be high types. Of course, if one's brain is degenerate with age, that mayn't be easy . . . but I, personally, address myself to the young: I am pretty nimble myself, and have, I confess, little interest in stiff knees and intellects. In some lands a son will say to his father: 'Climb me this tree', and if the father is too decrepit, the son will hang him on that tree. ("Old Age sus-Pensions", the Queen whispered quick.) The Chinese, on the other hand, worship their aged and ancients; but we here are hardly just now in a mood to adore the Chinese, and their oddities ("*Wipe them out, Teddy!*") ; nor must we hang our aged; but support them with gentleness and patience.

"But I was saying that one of many proofs that that ever-charming adept whom the cobbler mentioned was never the cause of his singing is that blackbirds, singing-apes, Hindoos, sing in that same happy manner: so the cobbler was not happy because he was pious, but was pious because he was happy, knowing Who made him happy, and made life without mishap to be happy.

"Of course, he would have been happier if he had had *more* life, *i.e.* more consciousness—if, by a consciousness of anatomy, he had understood what an adorable miracle it was that he sat there without one ache in any one of his myriad bits; if, by a consciousness of geology, he had got

into his nerves a sense of Eternity, and of the preciousness and romance of those days of his happy lifetime, to last not one millionth part of one click of the clock of God, while Saturn gads with whinings for life to arise on her, nightly to eye those fires that light her flying sky ; if he had understood that his sky had not always been blue, nor his brook bright, but were the triumph of æons for him to sit and sing a little at, and still were becoming bluer, lovelier, for his sons' sons to tumble dumb and blub their bliss at ; if he had felt himself, not the peasant of a village, but a civilian of that Infinite down whose bowels he was bounding with a thousand wings a thousand miles a minute that blessed day ; then, you will say, the tone of his singing would have deepened, and from the pewit of penny-whistles and Jesus-sweet finch-twitterings would have grown to the roaring of oratorios and the vaunt of organs.

“ Then, too, he would have been richer in pocket : for if, while he was making such music in his soul, some crude Jew of a duke had come saying, ‘ Pay me some rent—give me half the boots you cobble, and you’ll go to heaven ’, the cobbler would have answered, ‘ What, old Rip, you about in this region of space ? Sit down and let’s discuss it, with some singing between ’.

“ And suppose the cobbler had been freed of all fear ? fear of to-morrow, of death, and hell ?

“ Suppose he had known that, so far from being an everlasting being, he was a being who could not last two seconds ? that, beside those flights of spheres sweeping him on a heyday through the heaven of heavens, there was *another* scamper—of atoms—equally sweeping, inconceivably fleet, wheeling within him ; that he was like a sand-form of the sand-storm, a rain of the gayest grains gyrating into such fugitive unions and dissolutions, that in four months he would be a totally different man—his ribs brand-new, his brain, his hair—and in four seconds by no means the same man : so that whatever calamity might befall him to-morrow would not be befalling *him*, but somebody else—

which only sounds fantastic since truth is in that strain, fairly romantic, Divinely wild.

“ For the cobbler’s feeling that he was always the same being from the time when he was a quadruped, ‘ crawling ’ as a baby, then was a triped holding on to things, then was a biped, then in bent old age again became a triped with a stick, again tending to be a quadruped—this feeling was a pure illusion, due to the steady fleetness with which millions of cobblers succeeded each other, like the flitting films of the cinematograph, each very like the last, yet different.

“ Suppose he had known this : that every stitch which he commenced some other cobbler finished, by an exquisite ‘ division of labour ’ ; that when he went to bed it was never to wake ; and that what was true of him was true of his awl also, since at all instants all things are altering in a dream-land where all reels, and the dreamer is a dream, where everything is just freshly created, and there is no such thing as an old oak-tree, where an atom in this palm of mine may be from farther than the Pleiades, and ancienter than the suns whose colliding belched this earth (for we are made of eternity, and have been at the ends of infinity), where the vast fallacy is to be flat and dull, and dull are you, and, oh, dull am I, if we see this thing that we see, and are dull.

“ But the man knew none of these truths : his nut was one vat of fatuous fancies : he was all in the revel and fairy-land of Heaven, and thought himself in common cobbler-land.

“ If he had been conscious of some of this—as I once said to a Scotch girl when I was a boy : she came up to London to see an aunt, and in church on the Sunday her aunt whispered her in a confidential way : ‘ *That’s* the clergyman who married your uncle and me ’. The next year she came up again, and again in church her aunt whispered her : ‘ *That’s* the clergyman who married your uncle and me ’—causing the girl to wonder ! for it was quite a different type of clergyman. And again the next summer she came, and again was whispered in confidence : ‘ *That’s* the clergyman

who married your uncle and me'—another clergyman ! 'Hallo', thought the girl, 'the wish must be father to the thought here, and the thought illegitimate'; and I remember saying to her, 'What did it matter? whichever of the three had married her, she would still have been unmarried the day after, since he, the husband, would have been a different he, she a different she' ("And the clergyman a different it", whispered the Queen quick): for plasm, the stuff that palpitates and suffers, *rages* into alteration.

"This consciousness, then, you will say, would have lessened the cobbler's laughable vast egoism, giving him that humility and Nirvana which goes with adoring and true religion, would have freed him from fears, and enlarged his happiness.

"Yes, but don't forget the main fact here: that *the cobbler was still happy*—without all this consciousness; and, *with* all this consciousness, the philosopher, Herbert Spencer, was *not* happy. Why? Because he had indigestion. ("Teddy! Right there!")

"Shall we not say, then, that this healthy cobbler with Sankey and Moody singing in his heart was a better man than ten Spencers? more '*right with God*' somehow? since happier? and a dog barking for gladness of heart a better being than ten Spencers? more right with God? Let us say this! as Spencer would have said: and then you will better sympathise with some bits of my Edict. ("Teddy! *You are our man!*")

"Are we not at present made of trumpery stuff? grumpy ugly stuff?—so many druggist-shops! hospitals! Nor is it difficult, I think, so to change it, that every lid shall lower with love in resting on every face, and that a pain shall be a strangeness. Let us try this, then: for it has already been successfully tried by barbarian tribes—Spartans—tribes of quite tiny brain-power compared with yours, but brains undrenched with quixotic dreads and crotchets of Laputa, seeing things level-headedly in daylight, not through mists and comic convex-mirrors". ("Teddy! *Don't stop!*")

The Prince was glancing at his watch ; and he said :
“ This minute the earth has entered the comet, men, and, you see, we are not poisoned, or anything. Oh, we are still infested with many dreads, like children and savages shrinking from things in the dark—let’s cast them off to-night, to confront with bright eyes this new era whose sunrise-beams stream on us.

“ What must be the aims of that new age we have discovered by analysing our cobbler :—first, health high to heaven ; and next, waking up into philosophers and inventors.

“ To be philosophers you must have leisure and wealth. To have leisure I see that you need only one thing—a country of your own ; to have much wealth you need, I think, two things—a country of your own, and some new tools or forces, by which you will make in an hour what you now make in two. A country of your own I will give you ; the tools you must invent for yourselves : I undertaking that whoever of you produces a new tool I will make of him a strutting duke.

“ A little quickening of our wits’ activity will do it all : so wake up ! Why is there already dissent at my suggestion that every child shall acquire five trades ? There’s no difficulty. I myself know ten or twelve. I wonder if you men and women understand that those of you who can’t work in iron are uncivilised ? this being the definition of civilised man—‘ man of the iron age ’. Or do you suppose that rolling in a motor-car has any tendency to civilise a countess, any more than to civilise the poodle rolling on her knee ? The question is, Can she make a motor-car ? if she can’t, she is ‘ out of it ’ as regards motor-cars, though she roll till she’s a roly-poly. For surely, if a man or woman can’t make castings, can’t even soften, harden or temper steel, can’t anneal, case-harden, upset, weld or braze iron, doesn’t even know how to make a chisel, a reamer, or a counter-sinker, has no kind of truck with iron but when he cuts his crust, how can he be said to belong to the iron age ? he

belongs to the stone age, and is essentially hairy, as he would admit with horror on a desert island, seeing there his face in the glass of God, and himself rapidly lapsing to frank savagery. And there are many thousands of men and women who consider themselves cultured—like a young man whom I knew, who in a beautiful poignant voice would repeat from some old Greek or Negro minstrel named Homer the Farewell of one Hickson to his wife Anne, of which young man I discovered that he did not know how to cut a screw, or tap a drill-hole—not even a suspicion of what education *means* having ever entered the heads of these essentially Chinese — Korean — Laputan — profoundly uneducated Simple-Simons. Nor can I myself boast of culture : for, never having learned to work in land, I am in that respect nothing more than a nomad of the days of Abraham. However, mankind from Japan round to America and back is now about to ponder the sense of this word ‘ educate ’.

“ Be quick, then ! Wake ! For consciousness of truth, I say, since it is consciousness of God, is joy : and to make a joyful noise in our hearts to Him, not because of any hotch-potch of Hindoo, Hebrew, Chinese, and African fancies in us, but because of facts ascertained by white toilers—to make a joyful noise to Him—we can’t perhaps chant yet for a century or two, but already can kick up a sort of joyful shindy in us—and that’s life, mind, that’s delight, that’s civilisation, that’s cultivation, *that’s* waking up—blessed be His Name, faithful is He in all His ways. To this, then, men, I call you, and come tapping at your doors. The midnight time is past, or passing, for man, some spray and prickles of the dayspring already surprise the night : be up to witness the thing that the sunrise will be. . . . Good-night. ‘ *The speech* ’ is speechified ”.

For some moments all the hall sat mute ; but soon after he had moved, in one corner of the stalls a chanting, low and slow and moody, started, in which the words were discerned :

“ He has saved us from harm ” ;

and it ran like alcohol on fire, rose and rose, from droning to roaring, and suddenly screamed, every creature present leaping to his feet, as a tempest like Pentecost seemed to seize and possess the place, inflaming every breast, blazing in every brain, wrapping the platform, too, in its rapture, catching in its passion Her Majesty, too, who sprang and sang, catching in its rhapsody the Princess, who, spitting fire from her eyes, sprang and sang.

And once more, when it was over, it rose low, to be luxuriously rolled in the throat, and rose, and rose, and roared, and suddenly screamed :

“ He has saved us from harm
With his dreadful flails,
With his stretched-out arm
He has saved us from bales,
Let's leap to our feet, as we scream it,
‘ God bless the Prince of Wales ’ ”

The Prince alone was sitting, his lids lowered, thinking of Li Ku Yu.

THE END

M.P.
SHIEL

THE
YELLOW
PERIL

GOLLANCZ