REALMAH



ARTHUR HELPS

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THE AUTHOR



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1813 - 1875

AI-created interpretation after George Richmond drawing, 1858; National Portrait Gallery, NPG 2027.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Arthur Helps

Arthur Helps was an English writer and civil servant, born in Streatham in 1813. He studied at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, before working as a private secretary in government. In 1860 he became clerk of the Privy Council, a post he held for the rest of his life.

His literary work included essays, dialogues, history and biography. *Friends in Council* explores questions of conduct and society through conversation. Rather than presenting every idea as a settled conclusion, the dialogue form allows different judgments to meet, revealing the difficulty of applying principles to ordinary experience.

Helps wrote a history of the Spanish conquest of America and biographies of figures including Las Casas, Columbus and Cortes. He also assisted Queen Victoria with the publication of *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*. His public duties and writing remained closely connected until his death in 1875.

When reading his reflective prose, follow the distinctions made between an attractive general rule and a particular human situation. A small example may complicate a confident assertion. His conversations invite readers to become participants, testing the speakers' claims against their own experience rather than treating every statement as the author's final position.

Biographical references: Dictionary of National Biography; National Portrait Gallery. Portrait source: George Richmond drawing, 1858; National Portrait Gallery, NPG 2027. Full source records retained in the edition archive.

TO
JOHN ROBINSON M‘CLEAN,
Esq.
,
PAST PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTION OF CIVIL ENGINEERS,
F.G.S., F.S.S., F.A.S.
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED,
WITH THE GREATEST AFFECTION AND ESTEEM,
BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND,
THE AUTHOR.
November, 1868.

"*No, Master Scholasticus, I am not one of those academick eremites who think that they can apprehend great matters, by taking refuge in their book-rooms, and perpending their own thoughts only. But I do mightily affect and desiderate the converse of learned and worthy persons who will obtest against my chaunting foolish litanies before the idols of my own conceit, who will chastise the fondness of my imaginations, and chase away the bewildering humours and fancies which beset me when I hearken only to my poor and most unworthy self. For who, indeed, at one trait, and from his own small treasury of observance, shall veritably depict even the loveliness of these dumb and thoughtless glades, bosques, and rivulets which surround us? This man seeth them when Phœbus is smiling, and that man, when the God of day is obnubilated—not to speak of the various moods of men, which moods, whether they are gladsome or melancholy, fanciful or dull, do enchant or disenchant, for the men themselves, the outward forms and shows of nature. Therefore, always am I desireful to hear what my friends will say upon any matter that doth admit high and various discourse. And though the cautelous tregetour, or, as the men of France do call him, the jongleur, doth make a very pretty play with two or three balls which seem to live in the air, and which do not depart from him, yet I would rather, after our old English fashion, have the ball tossed from hand to hand, or that one should propulse the ball against the little guichet, while another should repel it with the batting-staff. This I hold to be the fuller exercise and the more pleasant pastime.*"—An unpublished fragment from the MS. of "Ane Aunciente Clerke."

CHAPTER I.

“Don’t read any more of that newspaper to me. I will not listen to any more of it. What a world it is! what an ill-conditioned planet! As if there was not enough to do to extract a living from this difficult earth, as if there was not enough to do to manage our private affairs, sufficiently confused by every kind of folly, but we must rush into wars;[1] and, for the sake of dynastic ambitions, sacrifice the lives of tens of thousands of our fellow-creatures!

“What quarrelsome wretches we are! I do believe that if the arrangements of the world were such that we were placed upon separate pillars—each of us being a Simeon Stylites—we should contrive to do each other a great deal of mischief. Our food might be brought to us by benevolent birds. We should save it up in order to make a hard substance of it to hurl at the heads of our neighbours, whom we should hate with a truly neighbourly hatred; or we should make such hideous grimaces at one another, that the weaker brethren would drop from their pillars for fear of the hatred of the stronger; and then the stronger would clap their hands and laugh.

“Here is a middle-aged man toiling away, not grudgingly, for a large family. His life is not too happy in itself, but he is tolerably contented with it, having merged all his own desires and hopes in the happiness of those dear to him. He little thinks, poor man, that the wild fanaticism of some statesman, upon whose mind he cannot hope to have the faintest influence, will be the means of removing him from the face of the earth, leaving his family to the mercy of a world not too tender-hearted to the friendless and the poor. The result is, that such a man is profoundly interested in the ill-doings of all the ill-doers who inhabit not only the regions nearest to him, but those who inhabit what to him are the ends of the earth.

“Then look at government: what a thing it is, even in the best-governed communities! True it is, there are a few nations who enjoy something like constitutional government; but what a wilderness of empty talk goes on amongst them, and how little comes from it!

“There was a poet who compared man to a heavily-laden ass, driven by a brutal owner; and the poor ass learnt the right road only

by heavy blows being administered to it whenever it diverged to the right or the left of the road marked out for it by its cruel master.

"Then there is the vanity of man—that unappeasable, inexhaustible vanity, always longing to be first. Nobody seems to see the beauty of being second or third. As Carlyle says, 'We are like snakes in a bottle, all wriggling about and endeavouring to get uppermost, biting and hissing at one another.'

"Then look at the progress of Christianity. Even the most astute theologian has not been able, in his bewildering tomes, utterly to obscure the innate beauty of that grand religion. It has now been more than eighteen centuries before the world; and when a great opportunity comes for manifesting what it has done, we hear only of 'My rights,' 'My honour,' 'My glory,' 'My just demands,' and every fanatical folly that dynastic ambition can produce.

"The truth is, man is not great enough for the place he holds in creation. If Darwin's theory is right, there is much of the ape nature still left in us, and we are still as mischievous as monkeys.

"Yet I suppose it is all right somehow, and that my thoughts are mere chimeras; but how are we to get over the sufferings imposed upon the brute creation?

"I believe I should not care about war so much, if it were not for the poor horses. If this war goes on, there will be at least a quarter of a million of these poor creatures sacrificed to it, with every variety of suffering. I begin to wish we had never subdued them.

"Well, sir, and what do you say to all this? What answer do you give to all my doubts and difficulties? There is wisdom in the mouths of babes and sucklings. What says my young metaphysician, and most judicious private secretary?"

"Well, sir, I say ditto to Mr. Burke."

"Ah! I wish you would not say 'ditto,' but provide me with some answer to all my ugly questions."

It was the foregoing outbreak on the part of my master that first made me think of writing this story, and therefore I put it at the beginning. And now I shall commence to tell who I am, and whom I serve.

My name is Alexander Johnson. I was born of poor parents. Indeed, my father was the village blacksmith—as good a man as ever

made a horse-shoe, and I was the clever boy of the village, the first monitor at the National schools, who was always shown as a native prodigy to admiring visitors. Kind friends determined that I should have a better education than most boys of my class; and they got me placed in the map-drawing department of a neighbouring town, where in the evening I learnt some Latin. To tell the truth, I did not think a little of myself. The neighbouring Squire, proud of the clever boy whose cleverness had been developed in his village, chose me as tutor to his sons and daughter. The result so common in such cases happened to me. The sons were stupid, but the daughter made marvellous progress; and I, though her tutor, was to some extent her pupil; for, with feminine tact, she taught me the rules of behaviour, and by her shrewd and subtle questions in our studies often taxed my ingenuity to answer.

Need I say that we loved one another, or at least that I loved her passionately, and that she had some regard—who knows how much?—for me; but it was arranged that she should marry the neighbouring Lord's younger son; who, however, had the merit, not always belonging to younger sons, of having a very sickly elder brother. The man was stupid and heavy: at any rate, he seemed so to me. His talk was of horses, and dogs, and guns. Why should I make an ordinary story long? Whatever he was, he succeeded in gaining the consent of her parents; and my Annie—to whom, as an honourable man, I never breathed a word to show what my feelings were towards her—agreed, after displaying the greatest reluctance, to marry this ordinary man.

I could no longer bear to be near her, and went up to London to try my fortune there. I put an advertisement in The Times, setting forth as best I could my poor acquirements and abilities; and, strange to say, my advertisement was answered by a request to call on him, made by a well-known political person—Mr. Milverton.

He told me that the simplicity and directness of my advertisement had caught his attention, and that if I were anything like what I represented myself to be, I should suit him very well.

It was agreed that I should go and stay with him at his country house, to which he was then going for the vacation.

The way in which I entered my new situation was one that caused me some terror. It was arranged that I was to meet Mr. Milverton, at

a town seven miles distant from his residence. It was evening when I reached this town, and we immediately set off for his residence in a post-chaise. Our horses went very slowly, and when we came to a hill, Mr. Milverton proposed that we should get out and walk. He began talking to the post-boy about the appearance of his horses, which seemed dreadfully jaded; he soon extracted from him the fact that these poor animals had previously gone a journey of thirty miles. Upon this, Mr. Milverton became furious. I never saw a person in so grotesque a passion. He explained to the wretched post-boy (by the way, an elderly man) the Pythagorean system, and declared to him that he himself might be a post-horse in another life. And he told the post-boy all this with expressions of the strongest nature. The poor man seemed too dazed to make any other than the most incoherent replies.

When we got into the carriage again, we were silent for a few minutes, till Mr. Milverton turned to me and said: "You are frightened, are you not? You think you have come to live with a tiger; but the truth is, nothing infuriates me like cruelty to animals. Poor creatures, they can't speak up for themselves, and if there were not some one to speak up for them—even to get into a fury about their treatment—it would go worse with them even than it does now."

We had another walk up another hill: Mr. Milverton kept aloof from us this time, and the post-boy communicated to me his grievances.

"We should not have done it to please any one but the Squire; but we were afraid of offending him. I am sure I would rather have thunder and lightning than be talked to by him. He is an awful man, the Squire: he is."

When the journey was finished, I expected that the post-boy would be dismissed ignominiously; but, on the contrary, Mr. Milverton, after insisting that the horses should remain at his place during the night, addressed the post-boy, very gravely and seriously, and gave him the accustomed fee, on making him promise (repeating the words after him), "That never again, not for anybody, not for the Queen herself, should he consent to start his horses upon a journey, after they had performed such a day's work as these poor animals had done."

I must confess I was a little frightened at perceiving the possible violence of the man with whom I had come to live in such a dependent position; but I have now lived with him some years, and he has never said an unkind word to me; and the terms upon which we are, may be well shown by the way in which he half-laughingly appealed to me after he had uttered the foregoing soliloquy.

I imagine in the course of this story which I firmly, believe will be a very interesting one, that I shall appear, though my name is Johnson, to be a sort of Boswell. I do not care. How can a man do greater service—at least, such a man as I am, who have not much originality—than in preserving for the world the sayings of cleverer men than himself under whom he has served? How large a part of all that wisdom has been lost to mankind for want of Boswells!—who, perhaps, are rarer characters than Dr. Johnsons. They say that no man is a hero to his valet; to which, it has been well replied, that that is not because the hero is not a hero, but because the valet is nothing more than a valet.

I have said that I am not a man of much originality, but I think I have one quality in great excess which happens to be very useful now. I confess to being intensely curious about character, and the manifestations of character. My master often jokes me about this, and says, “Now, my boy, you are looking into me, and endeavouring to find out what I think, and what I feel: and you may find it out, for all I care.”

I think I have sufficiently introduced myself to the reader, and may now bring my principal personages on the scene.

1. This work was commenced, as the reader will perceive, some time ago.

CHAPTER II.

We often, especially from a Saturday to a Tuesday have visits here from well-known people; authors poets, sculptors, dramatists, and the writers of leading articles.

I think I have detected something in my master which is very characteristic of him. He loves people who have done something: he often quotes a saying of the First Napoleon: "What has he done?" and I think he has a dislike, which is almost morbid, to mere criticism. He will allow that the critics have their place in the world, but he puts it as secondary, with an immense interval between them and those persons who have done the work which the others merely criticise. He was lately delighted with a paragraph in "Ecce Homo," in which the author pointed out how our Saviour encouraged what was positive in Christian action, taking as an illustration of the contrary the safe man who wrapped up his talent in a napkin. Mr. Milverton was always very hard upon these kind of persons, "safe statesmen," "safe bishops," "safe authors," who never say or do anything but what is sure to meet with general acceptation. He used to quote that saying of Benjamin Constant's about some "safe" person: "Il vient toujours au secours du plus fort." But all this is interruption, and mere comment on my part upon what I ought to describe.

We had met in a summer-house at the corner of the grounds at Worth-Ashton, which commands an extensive view over the neighbouring downs. There were present Mr. Milverton, Sir John Ellesmere, and a great politician, to whom I shall give the name of Sir Arthur Godolphin, a Mr. Mauleverer, and Mr. Cranmer.

The conversation turned upon sleep. Of course, the saying of Sancho Panza was quoted: "Blessed is the man who invented sleep; it wraps one round like a blanket." Sir Arthur then took up the conversation, and related to us the following adventure:—

"You all know how fond I am of yachting: I do not know that in itself it is so very delightful, but one's yacht is the only place in the world in which one is perfectly secure from letters and telegrams."

Ellesmere. The abomination of desolation of the present time; I can only say I wish that we were back in the olden times,—that

Milverton was a piratical baron (as I know he would be), devastating all these peaceful valleys, and levying black-mail upon all travellers that passed,—so that we were not plagued with these modern inventions. Now you all praise Rowland Hill, Wheatstone, Stephenson, Watt, and all those people who have made communication more rapid. I say, that they have been unbounded nuisances to the world. As to the man who invented the penny post, he ought to be put to a disgraceful death. By the way, I quite agree with that man of business who declared that he would only meet the great evil once a day. All his letters were collected for him during the day, and at ten o'clock the next morning he would face them; but as to anything that came in the meantime he entirely declined to look at it, whether it were marked "Immediate," "Urgent," "Pressing," or "Most important." When I was Attorney-General I used to hate the "Urgent," "Pressing," "Very pressing" letters that came from public offices. In general, they merely communicated some calamity which no human being could do anything to avoid or lessen.

Milverton. I once knew a telegram do some good.

Ellesmere. Once! and how many times has it done evil?

Cranmer. If you are serious, Sir John, your words strike a blow at all modern civilization.

Ellesmere. Well, if they do, I don't care. Modern civilization is no particular friend of mine.

Milverton. We have sadly interrupted Sir Arthur; and I am sure he was going to tell us something which would be very interesting.

Sir Arthur. We think we know the whole of the inhabited globe, but we are greatly mistaken. First, however, I must talk to you about yachting. I began in a very small way. I used to have a yacht which was manned by myself and one old man, and our great excursions were chiefly from Southampton to the Isle of Wight. But how delightful they were! You can hardly imagine the pleasure of sailing along on a moonlight night, the most common-place objects being suffused with beauty. All that Lord Byron has said about the Coliseum, as seen by moonlight, applies to the commonest and most ill-formed buildings on the Southampton waters; and then the talk of my old sailor used to amuse me so much. He, like many of us, had gone through a rough and severe life. He had lost children. He had

lost a scolding wife, who, with all her faults, he used to look up to and reverence as a superior being. “My Betsy,” he would say, “knew a mort more than I do. Ah! you should have heard her talk; I wish she were here now.” I cannot say I entirely shared that wish, being contented with the views of life which my old friend could give me in his pleasant simple way.

Well, the great Godolphin case—which you have all heard of—was settled, and I became rich. Of course, on this change of fortune, my old man and I were not contented with our little yacht—not that I ever had such pleasures as in that little yacht—and we bought one which, as he used to say, “was equal to Portsmouth biscuit;” a yacht that did not fear the Bay of Biscay.

After a hard parliamentary session, Spraggs (that was the name of my old man) and I undertook an adventurous cruise. We had always a curiosity to see those islands that had been formed out of coral, and we lost our way amongst them, and came one day upon an island which I believe has been seen by no other civilized men. Menantra is its name. The natives rushed down to see us, and welcomed us with the utmost cordiality. They spoke a language which was a little like Basque, and as I had mastered that language, I was tolerably able to understand them, and to make myself understood. One young man especially attached himself to me. His name was Connarra. One evening I was talking about the chief town of the island with my friend Connarra, when he said to me, “Great stranger, it is nothing for you to see new towns and new people, but for me, ever since I have known you, my life has been a state of wild excitement. Although I am not very rich, I must go to the sleep-shop and spend my money in sleep. By the way, it is strange that you and your men never go to the sleep-shop.”

In my travels I have found that it is never desirable to ask for explanations about anything which you can see for yourself; so, though I had not the remotest idea of what he meant by a sleep-shop, I accompanied him to the shop in question as if it were a familiar thing to me.

Cranmer. There was a town, I suppose, of some magnitude?

Ellesmere. Pray give us some of those circumstances, Sir Arthur, which we know always attend a truthful narrative like yours.

Sir Arthur. The town was in the form of a cross. The constellation of the Southern Cross seems to have made the deepest impression on the minds of those who dwell under it. The town chiefly consisted of well-built huts or wigwams; but there are some buildings made of bricks dried in the sun. The town was always enlarged symmetrically. At the point where the two lines met which formed the cross, there was a square. This also was enlarged by pulling down buildings when the two lines that formed the cross were lengthened.

I will not trouble you with a description of the religion of these islanders and of their form of government, except just to mention that they were governed by a chief, who ruled eight years, having a council to assist him. The only curious thing about the council was, that the united ages of the councillors (there were ten) were always to equal if possible 530. Directly they exceeded this number by ten a councillor went out of office, and a man was chosen to fill his place whose age should make the sacred number 530 right. It was not always the oldest councillor who retired.

To return to the sleep-shop. It corresponded to our chemists' shops. You know what intelligent men our chemists often are; well, in Menantra these sleep-shops were kept by men of much ability, who depended upon the Government, and took certain oaths to administer sleep righteously.

The sleep-shop to which my friend Connarra took me was the large one in the great square; in fact, the shop which had the chief's custom. After that evening I never passed a day without visiting this shop, and also a very low one of the same kind at the extreme end of the long line of the cross—a shop which was much frequented by the lowest classes.

You may imagine what a mine of investigation was opened to me.

Cranmer. What was the sleep-medicine like? I mean, what did it look like?

Sir Arthur. I object entirely to the word "medicine." It was not an opiate; it was concentrated sleep.

Well, what it looked like, or rather, what it was, was a soft, semi-elastic, pulpy substance, of the most beautiful blue colour; and the value and intensity of it was exactly measured by the intensity of

the blueness. To the touch it was more like a sea-anemone than any other thing or creature I ever touched.

There were various kinds of this sleep substance. The lowest could only produce a troubled, dreamful sleep; and, from this degree, it went up to that choice cerulean blue which produced the most profound and absolute repose.

Cranmer. Did you bring any of it away?

Ellesmere (aside). What a literal fellow! just like a Secretary of the Treasury. I do think the man wants to put a tax upon it.

Sir Arthur. It melted away if kept long; lost its colour and its power, and became a white, gelatinous, unpleasant-looking substance. In that state, too, it was originally found in the centre of pieces of stone they called *pompar*. It turned blue on exposure to the air. There were mines of *pompar* worked by the Government, which possessed the monopoly.

But you all want to hear what I discovered from my long talks with these chemists. I will tell you, point by point; and you may depend upon it, each fact I have to tell you is to be explained by some corresponding fact of importance in human nature.

First, I very soon learnt that women bought much cheaper kinds of this sleep, and less even of those kinds, than men. How do you explain that?

Ellesmere. The explanation is as simple as possible. They want all their money for dress. By the way, have they money in your charming island?

Sir Arthur. Yes, called *Saka*, a transparently yellow shell.

Milverton. No; the reason is far deeper than that. A much larger part of the anxiety, vexation, and remorse of the world is felt by men than by women; and therefore the men want more sleep, and of the best quality.

Sir Arthur. That is how I read it.

Johnson (timidly). But love! Do not women suffer as much from disappointed love as men do, or even more?

Milverton. Perhaps so, my boy; but, when you come to our time of life, you will find that there are a great many worse things than disappointed love, requiring much heavier doses of high-priced sleep,—shame, poverty, impending bankruptcy, and remorse. The

middle-aged man, gradually going down in the world—with lots of people depending upon him—who has undertaken some unfortunate enterprise, which, poor fellow, he meant to turn out so well, is a more pitiable object than the desponding or rejected lover. About this love there is always a sustaining power of romance.

Ellesmere. Amelia marries Jones. What consoles poor Smith, thinking over it at night? He says to himself, at first with some bitterness, "Ah, she will soon find out the difference," and in a tenderer frame of thought he exclaims, "Poor thing! how happy she would have been with me; how happy I with her if it had not been for that confounded fellow's property in houses at Mile End. D—— Mile End!" And Smith goes to sleep, not so very miserable. His last thought is, "I should have been a better match, after all, than Jones."

Compare this romantic sorrow with that of Robinson, who dreads rent and taxes, who humbles himself before the butcher, who fears to tell his anxious wife of this loss, and that bad debt; and has to smile and smile, and be a pauper perhaps with a brougham, which he is afraid to put down.

Cranmer. In what latitude and longitude is this island?

Sir Arthur. I will consult my master of the yacht, and let you know some day, Mr. Cranmer.

Ellesmere (aside, contemptuously). Some day! some day!

Sir Arthur. Oh, she was such a yacht, the *Esmeralda*! She would almost talk to you!

Ellesmere. But sleep, sleep, sleep! Go on, there's a good fellow, with the pith of your story. I feel inclined to use naughty words, such as Smith used to Mile End, in respect to those indispensable but tiresome creatures, latitude and longitude, if they are to interrupt us.

Milverton. Ellesmere, who is the greatest of interrupters, is the most intolerant of any interruption but his own.

Ellesmere. Don't get in a rage, Milverton. We shall have to buy the bluest of blue sleep-stuff for you, I see.

Milverton. I must give another explanation of the fact that Sir Arthur has told us. Women enjoy the present so much more than men do, that they are not fond of having it cut short, even by supreme sleep.

Sir Arthur. Now the next fact I arrived at was this, and it appears to me a remarkable one, viz. that the highest-priced sleep was not bought up so much as you would suppose. It was the fashion, however, to buy it; to use one of the slang words of our day, it was the "swell" thing to buy nothing but the choicest sleep; though, in reality, pretty nearly all the young girls, a great many of the young men, most of the widows, and the well-to-do people, generally consumed, on the sly, the lower-priced sleeps. On the contrary, young children almost always wished for an expensive sleep. Now, how do you account for that?

Milverton. Obviously! the young men and the young women, the widows, and well-to-do people, liked to have their dreams. Dreams are frequently a choice part of their lives; whereas children, on the other hand, are often terrified by dreams. Perhaps it is that children have left the land of shadows later than we have; and so they fear the dark, the unknown, the invisible, more than we do. In fact, these terrors by night are some of the greatest sufferings of childhood, and we ought to be very tender to children about their fears, which often seem very unreasonable to us.

Sir Arthur. Good! I say good, because your theory agrees with mine.

Now, I will tell you another extraordinary thing. The doctors did not always use the highest-priced sleeps in their compounds.

Milverton. I don't understand that.

Ellesmere. I do.

Milverton. I know what you mean, Ellesmere. You cannot help having your sneer; but you know as well as I do that doctors are about the best men we have in the world; and that they delight in healing, and not in protracting illness.

Ellesmere. H'm.

Sir Arthur. The explanation is clear, at least to my mind. But in order to work it out, I must talk a little about myself. I once had a brain-fever, brought on by insane application to work. By the way, was it Baxter or Bunyan, or some other considerable theologian, who spoke of "the lust of finishing?" It is a very just phrase; one has sometimes a mad desire to finish what one has once begun. Well, the doctors told me to be quiet, and especially to avoid all thinking. To

give impossible prescriptions is the foible of doctors. I tried not to think; but, after a thoughtless day, my unwholesomely active mind would not be quiet. It even revived all sorts of mathematical work done at Cambridge, which I had long forgotten. I had not the least idea that I possessed, down in the depths of my mind, such vivid reminiscences of mathematical lectures. After an ill-spent night of this kind, I came to the conclusion that some new course must be adopted. The doctors had ordered me to travel, and a dear friend, who is one of our best linguists, had agreed to travel with me. I said to him, "Let us learn a new language," and he readily assented. We will call him Bopp, because he often reminded me of that great grammarian. We set out on our travels, and this new language occupied a good deal of our spare thought without exciting us. Bopp, perhaps to look after me, generally slept in the next room. I would call out to him, in the middle of the night, "Are you asleep?" "No," he would reply. "Well, after all, don't you think there is something in this language like the Greek aorist?" Bopp would say, "Not at all," and give reasons for it; and then he would turn upon me and say, "I should like to hear you go through that irregular verb which we learnt to-day, and which I maintain is not irregular at all, but the real old form of the conjugation." Then I had to go through, as best I could, the irregular verb; and it is astonishing how soon it led to a comfortable sleep. So I think the medicine men in Menantra knew that they must give nature some play in the way of mental excitement, and therefore did not always administer to the sick the soundest sleep except upon urgent occasions.

Ellesmere. I declare that is a very sensible view, and I begin to believe that there is such an island, which we will call Arthuria Godolphinia, and that it lies in latitude 397°, longitude 486°. The minutes and seconds, which I forget, will be sent to Mr. Cranmer, at the Treasury in Downing Street, when the master of the *Esmeralda* consults his logbook.

Oh, Lady Ellesmere! Lady Ellesmere! (Lady Ellesmere was seen coming down the gravel-walk towards the summer-house.) You have lost such a treat (as women say, when one has missed, by pure accident, hearing their favourite preacher's last hour-and-a-half sermon). Oh, such beautiful things said about women by me, and contradicted by Mr. Cranmer: how they want no sleep because they

have no remorse, no shame, no vexation, for, as Milverton and Mr. Cranmer both maintain, they have no consciences. (How I have been fighting your battles, my dear Mildred!) And I say they have consciences, because the existence of the negative proves the existence of the positive, and if they had no consciences how could they be so unconscionable in the article of dress? Here is this young woman coming to take the whole of the summer-house from us, with those atrocious skirts of hers.

(Lady Ellesmere sat down by her husband, pulled his ear, took his hand in hers, and whispered something to him.)

Ellesmere. Speak out, my dear, say your say to this choice company. This young lady has the graciousness and the modesty to observe, that there is only one woman in the world who would ever have believed anything that Sir John Ellesmere addressed to her, and that she is that unfortunate young person.

(Here I must remark that it is impossible not to love this man, Sir John Ellesmere. I always feel I do not do him justice. His sayings seem so hard, sometimes so satirical, so perverse; but the manner of saying them disarms all offence. He has a look of kindness and affection, when he is teasing Milverton, that wins my heart. And that wife of his is so fond of him: it almost makes one cross to see it.)

Ellesmere. But, my dear Sir Arthur, more about sleep. Attend, Mildred! Sir Arthur is telling us about an island at which he arrived in a yacht, that almost spoke to him, where they sold sleep, a clammy blue stuff, like a sea-anemone (lat. 470°, long. 590°, minutes and seconds omitted, to the great regret of Mr. Cranmer), and where women spend all their money in dress, and therefore cannot afford to buy good sleep. Doctors—the rascals—prescribe second-rate sleep: young men, widowers, and widows (young widows, Lady Ellesmere) will insist upon dreaming, and therefore buy low-priced sleeps. Heavy fathers of families buy the real stuff to console themselves against the evils which attend married life. I am sure I want some. Nothing but the best sleep for me, as long as I am plagued as much as I am. Bills again: a cheque wanted! Lady Ellesmere is so loving and affectionate on such occasions; and when she says, “My dearest love, I want to bother you about a little matter of business,” I know it means a cheque of three figures at least. Oh! I have forgotten; in this happy island children prefer high-priced

sleep, because, as Milverton says, they come more recently from the land of shadows. I call that now a clear and sensible explanation, not at all built upon hypothesis.

And now, my dear, I have told you all about it, which these people have taken an hour and three-quarters to elaborate—Milverton perpetually interrupting, after his tiresome fashion. Now drive on, Sir Arthur; never mind their interruptions. I will back you up with judicious silence.

Milverton. This Ishmaelite; his tongue, if not his hand, is against everybody.

Sir Arthur. I come to the saddest part of my story. As I told you, I spent a great deal of my time at the sleep-shop in the grand square. After the sun went down, and the Southern Cross was wont to shine out in all its ineffable beauty (I don't know how my crew felt, but that constellation exercised a kind of awful mysterious influence over me: I was never tired of gazing up at it), there used to come to the shop, in a stealthy manner, a wretched-looking man. His clothes (their clothes are chiefly made of the red and green mithral—a kind of rush) showed what we call genteel poverty, but he always bought a small quantity of the highest-priced sleep—the bluest of the blue. I talked to Alcathra, my chemist friend, about this poor man.

"Ah," he said, "a man of his means cannot afford to buy such sleep. There is crime, or there is horrible disaster there. I do the best I can for him to cheapen it, and I lose by every sale I make to him." (What good people there really are everywhere!) "I know the day will arrive when that man will come no more, and I shall hear that the officers of justice have my poor customer in their clutches. But let us give the poor wretch what easement we can. You know we are sworn to secrecy, we sellers of sleep, and so I am happy to say I am not bound to denounce him. To you, as a stranger, I may speak openly."

I was quite sure that Alcathra was right, from two circumstances which I observed myself. This poor man always walked down the middle of the street, so as to be sure he was not followed by anybody; and just before he entered the shop I have observed him clear up his countenance, and try to look lively; fearing, no doubt, lest his habitual dejection should betray him.

Our surmises proved to be well founded. Two days before I left the port, this poor wretch was arrested on a charge of murder. It was not so very wicked a crime after all. He was a harsh, hard man, the criminal; but, in his rough way, he adored his wife. The wife was false, and he had slain her lover, committing the deed very artfully. It was done at the sleep-mines, where the murderer was a superintendent of considerable authority.

And now I hope you will not blame me when I tell you I saved this poor man from execution. We broke open the prison at night, an easy task to do, as the prison was a wooden building, and I carried him off in the yacht. He died, though, a broken-hearted man, before we advanced far on our voyage homeward, for he believed, whether rightly or wrongly, that his wife had secretly denounced him to the Council, and this thought was his death-stroke. His last look upwards was at the Southern Cross, which they regard with fervent religious worship. I had become attached to the poor man: and he was, in his way, a great thinker. Strange to say, all the most difficult questions of fate, free-will, and predestination—those questions which will torment even the most civilized people to the latest generation—were present in the bewildered mind of that semi-savage. I don't know that it would have been possible for me to have kept the poor man alive, for the sleep-stuff I had brought with me was beginning to fade in colour; and I remember his mentioning to me during his later days, that his dreams were horrible.

I have not told you of some compound sleep-stuff which was also used in the island. I say compound, because I am sure it was mixed with some drug, though my chemist friend would never acknowledge that. It was, however, of a pink colour, and was used by those persons who had to attend public meetings, even by some of those who formed the great Council of Ten. Its effect was this: it put a man into a pleasing kind of stupor, in which state he did not care much how time passed, or what was said to him, and he could be in this state without betraying himself, for he could hear all that was said, and look sufficiently intelligent, and at the same time enjoy a semi-comatose condition, which made the length of speech a matter of indifference to him. There were rumours that the great chief himself was somewhat addicted to pink sleep, but, if so, he must have been very prudent in the use of it, for he always seemed to give

an intelligent attention when listening at the great council, or receiving any of his subjects.

Ellesmere. I never have liked yachting. It is true you get rid of letters and telegrams, but then you are shut up with a few people, and what becomes of you if you quarrel with them? Besides, there is a want of space in all ships, even of the largest size, which does not suit me. I would, however, endure a long cruise in any yacht that would bring me to an island where I could buy pink sleep. You know, when I was Attorney-General, I was offered the appointment of judge, but I dreaded so much having to go through the necessary amount of listening that I refused it. Listening patiently is certainly not my forte.

Sir Arthur. I should not have liked to have stayed any longer in the island, though it was a most instructive place; but I knew that, whenever I should see a poor man buying continually high-priced sleep, I should be sure to suspect him of some deadly crime. Indeed, I had already begun to suspect several individuals who frequented the upper and the lower shops, and who always went beyond their apparent means in buying high-priced sleep.

And now, lady and gentlemen, my tale is told. I am afraid it is rather a sad one.

There was a silence for some time. Even Ellesmere seemed subdued; and over his mobile countenance there passed a cloud of thought, which was full of pity, but he was the first to break the silence.

Ellesmere. How true are Goethe's words, that a man cannot jump away from his own shadow! Sir Arthur introduces us to this strange, sleep-buying people. There his imagination ends. He makes them have just the same motives as people in our lands, who, unhappily, cannot buy sleep, be they ever so rich in Consols. For instance, the poor wretch whom Sir Arthur carried away did but partake the fate of men in well-known climes, and the source of his misfortunes was that which, for the most part, is the source of ours.

I, too, feel the impulse of genius upon me, and must tell my little story; but it will be one that you will all easily recognise.

"Who is she?" Thus spoke the Caliph, supremely wise in the knowledge of men and women.

"Who is she? I say." And the affrighted lords said, "Light of the World, Consoler of the Faithful, Gem of Gems, Centre of the flowing Universe, there is no 'she,' but the poor man, who was working at one of the loftiest windows of your palace, fell down into the marble Court of Leopards, and is dead."

"Who is she?" said the Caliph, wrathfully; "let me know her name."

And the lords went out from the presence of the Caliph, feeling their heads loose upon their shoulders.

And there was dread silence in the divan, while the Caliph played with the jewelled hilt of his scimitar. And one little child, the son of Zobeide, dared to take off the slipper of the Caliph, and run away with it to the further end of the divan. Had it not been the son of Zobeide, the bastinado would have been liberally applied.

The lords returned, and the vizier said, "Efflux of Joy, Wisest of the Wise, Incomparable Master of the greatest of sciences, the human heart; she is Almeida, the Princess Zobeide's favourite tire-woman, and the man said words to her, and she listened and yet would not listen; and he missed his footing, as most men do who dote upon a woman; and he is dead."

And the Caliph smiled a grim smile. He rose, and the lords, who felt their necks strengthened, fell on their faces before him; and the Caliph went to his harem to tell his wives how wise he was, and that nobody could deceive him. For even a caliph likes to be thought wise by his women; whom he finds not so easy to rule, though he is Commander of the Faithful.

And the lustrous Zobeide shivered and trembled while the Caliph told her of his all-pervading wisdom, for she knew that the Christian slave, Azor (who had fallen into the marble Court of Leopards), adored her, and not Almeida; and that he had died for the love of her bright eyes.

But she did not fail to extol the wisdom of the Caliph; and the Caliph was convinced that he was the wisest of men, and that the praises of his lords were not flattery such as had been addressed, to his great disgust, to the late caliph, his father, but that they were the words of wisdom and sobriety, and were as true as the cries of the water-carriers when they cry, "Water, water, from the Fountain of

Desire, in front of the palace;" for, indeed it was water that they had to sell.

And Zobeide mourned for the graceful Azor many days: and when, by night, she stood on his tomb, she said, "My heart is with thee for ever, O my beloved!"

And Zobeide's son did not fear to run away with the slippers of the great Caliph—Light of the World, Consoler of the Faithful, Gem of Gems, Centre of the flowing Universe, Discoverer of thoughts, and Azure Sea of Wisdom.

Milverton. Now has not Ellesmere contrived to darken that story by sarcasm? He told it very well up to a certain point, I must admit.

My dear Lady Ellesmere, do correct that husband of yours, for to the rest of us he is incorrigible.

Lady Ellesmere. My dear Mr. Milverton, I took him only upon your recommendation, as you well know, and not from any merit of his own. Is there not something I often hear you gentlemen talk of applied to horses, the word warranty or warrantry? You know I have something of the kind from you: it is your business to make him behave properly. This is an animal I should have had nothing to do with [here she pulled his ear] if you had not declared that he was safe and good.

Sir Arthur. In double harness? Did Mr. Milverton's warranty extend to that? If it did, he was a very rash man.

(Hereupon Sir Arthur walked away in his lounging manner towards the house.)

Ellesmere. Now, Milverton, I have a very serious word to say to you. As to being beaten by this fellow's invention, it must not be. You are the greatest —— amongst us: or to speak euphemistically, you have the most vigorous imagination. If you cannot tell a story which will beat his—that will require a pull at a more lengthened arc (I flatter myself that is a good expression)—I shall despise you for ever. Recollect the fellow is a Tory. He will go back to his party and laugh at our beards if we cannot beat him in invention. I cannot do it myself. I read a novel; I come to the end of the first volume. For the life of me I cannot see how Edwin is ever to marry Angelina. The difficulties are so tremendous. Edwin is already married: Angelina is about to marry the wrong man: the fathers have quarrelled. Edwin is

a pauper, and is suspected of two murders. Angelina has sworn never to speak to or even look at Edwin; and really, without joking, I cannot imagine how Edwin and Angelina are to be happy at the end of the third volume.

But to fellows like you, who are born story-tellers—otherwise, highly imaginative men—it is all as easy as possible. It goes, as the Americans say, "slick off." Edwin's wife, a poor creature (I am glad to get rid of her), dies. Edwin has only committed one murder—a very innocent one, quite consistent with propriety—while Angelina's intended has committed the other, a foul crime. Angelina's papa finds that Edwin's papa was the man who, when he (Angelina's papa) was going to London to seek his fortune, advanced him 2*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* upon no other security but his saying, "Oh heavens! my generous benefactor. How shall I ever repay you?"

Angelina's intended (a nasty man, that) is the individual who has kept Edwin, by a forged will, out of the possession of Lorimer Court, an old house, with 7,000*l.* a year in land attached to it—no mortgages, no annuities for younger children—which, on discovery of the fraud, comes at once to Edwin without any trouble. At least there is no trouble to speak of. An old woman is to die, the old woman revealing everything that requires to be revealed at the most opportune moment. Angelina "clasps" (is not that the proper word?) Edwin to her bosom, saying, however, that 7,000*l.* a year is a very different thing from 700*l.* Ditto, says father; and all goes on as right as a trivet—but what a trivet is, I should be puzzled to say.

Milverton. And this is the man who says he is not imaginative!

Ellesmere. Ah, but you do not know what an effort this was on my part, and how exhausted I feel after it. In all earnestness, and speaking seriously, if you believe I ever do speak seriously, I am quite bewildered in endeavouring to see my way through the difficulties that accumulate in the first and second volumes of a novel.

I look upon you imaginative fellows with a kind of awe. I cannot think how you invent the things you do invent. I regard you with the same kind of dread that our friend Kingsley says savage men feel for savage women—a dread, by the way, I must own I largely feel for civilized women—if, indeed, there is such an entity as a civilized

woman; and I am lost in astonishment in observing how to you people fiction is, for all practical purposes, the same thing as reality.

I must have my brief to go upon. Now if I had not had the main outlines of my caliph story, I could not have made anything of it. You don't want any outlines. You invent from the beginning. I admire you fellows; entertaining at the same time a kind of disrespect and distrust for you.

Milverton. Complete admiration is not at all in your way, my dear Ellesmere. If I were to find you indulging in it, I should be sure that a serious illness was coming upon you.

But, to revert to our main point: I will have a story ready by the next time we meet—that is, if Alick here will help me;—one that I have thought over for years: a true one: at least one which I know has happened in the world's history. But, if I agree to narrate such a story, will you promise not to interrupt? Such interruptions as you make are, no doubt, very droll; but, I assure you, they do embarrass a narrator. Sir Arthur bore your interruptions nobly. You know he is accustomed to be listened to with reverence. Great authors are not the mere temporary rubbish that eminent lawyers are, and must be treated differently.

Ellesmere. Well, I have heard insulting things in the course of my life, but never anything to equal your last remark.

Milverton (who could hardly refrain from laughing). You see, my dear Ellesmere, one must make you know your place, while Sir Arthur is here.

Ellesmere. And there is my wife following him up and down the lawn, like an obedient poodle-dog, listening, no doubt, to his sentimental nonsense, as if it were heaven-descended wisdom, thinking all the time what a rough pippin her Sir John is. If I once get away from here, no more of the society of authors for me, nothing but that of Masters in Chancery, solid merchants, and Under-Secretaries of State.

Sir, I abjure all vagabonds. But, Milverton, do pound Sir Arthur with a grand story, so full of daring fiction, that his inventions, in comparison with yours, shall seem to be crystal truths. The honour of our side of the House is at stake. Take Sandy [Sir John Ellesmere would always call me Sandy] into your confidence. As half a

Scotchman, he has second-sight at his command. Good-bye: I am going to fish. Now do look at that deluded person, Lady Ellesmere! You see, from that respectful stooping of the shoulders, though they have their backs turned to us, how she is drinking in discourse about the "true" and the "beautiful," and the "absolute," and the "uncouth," with a big U, which means her respected husband. I'll pitch into that fellow after dinner.

[

Exit

Sir J. Ellesmere.

Milverton. Come to my study, Alick; we will see if we cannot tell them something which will be new to them, and astonish their weak minds.

I have always been very suspicious about this fishing of Sir John Ellesmere's. I am sure he is up to some mischief or other.[2]

2. I have since found out all about Sir John Ellesmere's fishing, by consulting my little friend, Jemmy Veck, who haunts the river that Sir John pretends to fish. "Well, Jemmy," I said, "and so a great London gentleman comes here and catches a good many fish; more than you can catch." Jemmy grinned, and said: "A' never caught a fish as I seed; a' gets his line fuzzed up in the bushes many a time. Lor! a' can't fish at all! A' drags his fly far under the water. A' went and caught two or three little ones for un t'other day, but a' didn't seem to want 'em at all. 'Well,' he said to I, 'why couldn't ee have thrown 'em into the water again, poor things!' The big trout under the wooden bridge knows un by this time, and seems quite pleased to see un; and they look at one another for ten minutes together without moving. Oh! the trout is very fond of company, when it knows there is no harm; and I don't believe that gentleman ever caught a fish in his life."

So it is evident that Sir John makes his fishing a mere pretext for getting a few hours to himself, during which time I suppose he thinks over his speeches. But the fuss he made about those little trout that Jemmy caught for him, was something to have seen. He insisted upon their being placed upon a separate dish by themselves, and taking upon himself the helping, giving each of us a little bit as if it was some sacred food: declaring there was never anything so good

brought to table. He also informed us that to catch a big trout was no difficulty whatever; but that the real piscatorial skill was shown in catching small ones, as he had done for us. I declare he so overpowered us with talk that we thought we were eating something wonderful.

CHAPTER III.

In two days after the last conversation we met in the summer-house.

There was no addition to our party but Mrs. Milverton.

Before Mr. Milverton commenced his story, there was a short conversation as follows:—

Milverton. Before I begin, Ellesmere, I must insist, as I told you before, upon having no interruptions from you. I have thought over this story for many years of my life. It is, as I told you, a real story, and a very serious one; and I have not the patience and good temper of Sir Arthur, to bear your interruptions.

Mrs. Milverton. Leonard, dear, I am sure I wish to hear your story without any interruptions; but don't ask what is impossible. Lady Ellesmere and I pressed Sir John, when we were last in London, to come and hear with us that great preacher, the Rev. Mr. ——. I will never again ask Sir John to come to any sermon, for he behaved abominably:—"What does this prove?" "This is the third time he has made that statement, and nothing has come of it." "Here, again, he is arguing in a circle." And so he went on, worrying us in whispers with all manner of objections to the sermon: and even his wife could not keep him at all quiet.

Ellesmere. I hope you see, Milverton, that your wife (wives can say most uncomplimentary things) infers that your story will be very like a sermon. But now, let us make a bargain: let us enter into a contract. You are to prose on for one hour and a half, and during that one hour and a half I am only to interrupt twice, each time by a single sentence which is not to exceed fifteen words.

Milverton. I close at once with your proposition.

The events of the story I shall have to tell will have occurred at a period of the world's history when this very spot on which we sit was far down in the ocean, from whence it has been raised by gradual upheavings.

Ellesmere. My goodness, what an opportunity that will give this man for inventing things which cannot be contradicted; and it will be no good showing that he can know no more of those times than we do, for, of course, the imaginative man—the egregious inventor (I

suppose I must not say a short, sharp, true word)—declares that he knows all things by the force of his predominant imagination. I, poor man, know, for certain, nothing that has not happened in my own time, and before my own eyes.

Sir Arthur. I would not advise you always to trust your own eyes.

Cranmer. But let us not delay; let us have the story at once, Mr. Milverton; only do not let it be placed in impossible latitudes and longitudes, for to me, a plain practical man as I am, that a story should have some semblance of reality is a great comfort.

Milverton. Mine is all real, and must have happened: in fact, I know it did happen.

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAKE CITY.

"How lovely is water!—on a flower, bedewing the grass, rushing down as a mountain torrent, rolling on as a mighty river, expanding itself into a vast lake, like this, kissed into ripples by the shimmering of moonlight."

Such were the words of a young man who stood out upon a balcony connected with a low, long range of buildings, stranger in aspect than any which have met the eyes of the inhabitants of this earth for many ages. He was one of the dwellers in a lake city in the south of Europe, similar to such as have been discovered in recent years at the bottom of the lakes in Switzerland.

The young man resumed his train of thought. "Surely," he muttered, "water is the woman of the inanimate creation: versatile, fluent, lovely, untameable, and dangerous."

The youth who spoke these words was not stalwart, like most of the men of his nation, and he was evidently unused to hard labour of any kind. The cause of this was manifest when, rousing himself at last from his reverie, he paced up and down the long wooden balcony. It was then perceptible that he halted slightly in his walk; and, indeed, he had been lame from his birth.

The description in words of such a wondrous thing as any human countenance cannot be otherwise than very poor and inadequate. But still it is better than nothing; and so I will here endeavour to portray the outward appearance of this youth. His was a very

singular face, from the strange admixture of daring and softness which pervaded it. He had beautiful melancholy eyes of a deep blue colour, which seemed to promise the greatest tenderness of character; but these were surmounted by dark eyebrows which nearly met. In the centre of his forehead, even now, while he was a young man, there was a deep vertical dent, formed probably by the contraction of the brows by thought. In each part of this remarkable face there was contradiction. The nose was slightly aquiline, and most delicately formed from the upper part to the nostril, which, however, was wide, and even somewhat coarse. The lips again were well formed, except that the lower one was very large, and what is called sensual. He had a sweet subtle smile, and there were dimples beautiful as those in any woman's face. Though a very crafty man, he could not quite command the lower part of his countenance; and, to a refined observer, it was sometimes but too visible what Realmah was really thinking about. The chin was decided; and the whole contour of the lower part of the face was square and massive, like that of the First Napoleon.

He was rather under than above the middle size, and he stooped slightly, generally looking down on the ground, as one immersed in thought. His hands were very small and delicate, and he made great use of them when speaking. His gestures altogether were like those of an Andalusian, having such a combination of gravity, dignity, and vivacity as, perhaps, in modern times, is only to be seen in that part of Spain.

Such is the portraiture, as near as I can give it, of one who was destined to play a part greater than that of any other man in the south of Europe at that period of the world's history.

I have omitted to mention a very characteristic thing, his hair, which was extremely fine and delicate, and gave signs that he would be prematurely bald. Like Cæsar, he endeavoured to conceal this. It may be noticed that the most refined persons are wont to have this kind of hair. It was of a light brown colour and formed a strange contrast to the dark and somewhat fierce eyebrows.

Of his dress it may be mentioned that it was rich and careless, even slovenly; and that he little heeded the prevailing fashions of his country. Altogether he was one of those men, whom, if you met accidentally, you would involuntarily turn to look upon again; which

attention on your part he would have construed into an observation of his lameness, and would accordingly have been somewhat disconcerted.

Realmah-Koonah (for that was his name) had been unable to join heartily in the sports of boys, or the labours of men; but, in compensation for this enforced inactivity, his intellect had been brightened and his thoughtfulness developed by his painful isolation. Of all the men in that strange city Realmah was the wisest; and at that moment, excepting the guards at the drawbridges, he was the only watcher who was looking out upon the wide expanse of waters, and upon the reflection in them of the unclouded sky.

"I mistrust," he said to himself, "that smooth-spoken ambassador; but how shall I dare to make known my suspicions to the assembly of the grey-haired warriors; I who am but a youth, and who have no spoils to show, wrested from the enemy, or from wild beasts; I who cannot even win the love of a woman, and upon whose suit the graceful Talora looks with gentle but unmistakeable contempt?"

CHAPTER II.

THE RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE SHEVIRI.

The government of the Sheviri, to which nation Realmah belonged, was an exceedingly curious one. It rested with four chiefs, who were named from the four points of the compass: the chief of the East, the chief of the West, the chief of the North, and the chief of the South. In any ceremonial the chief of the East had the first place. Each chief ruled over that quarter of the city which corresponded geographically with his title. The name of the city was Abibah. There were councils consisting of men of high rank attached to each of the four chiefs: there was also a council of four hundred which was partly nominated by the chiefs, and partly chosen by election from among the people. This council met only on very great occasions.

The criminal laws were very severe, as is generally the case in nations of imperfect civilization; and the punishment of death was almost always inflicted by strangulation.

There was one very singular custom. If a man had been injured by another in the way of slander, or petty theft, or calumny, and this was proved before one of the judges, who were always members of the council of one of the four chiefs, it was allowed to the injured

man, or to one of his immediate family, to build a little hut close to the dwelling-place of the injurer, where he abode day and night, watched his enemy's incomings and outgoings, and on seeing him perpetually repeated the sentence of the judge. For instance, if a man of the name of Adolmah had spoken falsely, and slandered his neighbour, Barru; the injured man, Barru, having built his hut close to the dwelling-place of Adolmah, when he saw Adolmah come in, or go out, would utter the words, "Adolmah is a liar and a slanderer: so says the righteous judge, my lord Corah, of the council of the East."

It was found by experience that no man could long endure this persecution; and Adolmah was sure to make reparation to Barru to get rid of his hateful presence, which was like an embodied conscience sitting for ever at his gate.

The religion of the Sheviri was simple. They believed in a Supreme Being unapproachable by gifts or offerings, and whose name even was to be rarely mentioned; but there were other gods, some malign and some benignant, to whom sacrifices were to be made on special occasions.

There were five lesser gods and goddesses.

First, Rotondarāh, the god of thunder and of storms.

Secondly, Paravi, the goddess of fertility, answering to the Ceres of the ancients.

Then Kalatavēe, a very noxious divinity, who was the promoter of all accidents, disasters, and illnesses. Death, however, was not in his power: he could only maim, and infect, and blight. Many were the prayers and oblations made to him by anxious mothers.

Then Koomrah-Kamah (literally the heaper together of shells), the god of riches. The men of Abibah prayed to him very frequently, and very sincerely—men who paid very little attention even to Kalatavēe: for what are accidents and diseases when put in comparison with the loss or gain of wealth; and who would not be rich and diseased rather than poor, healthy, and despised? At least thus thought the Sheviri; but then they were, as some think, poor ignorant barbarians, living at an age of the world when the principles of wisdom had not been fully worked out by mankind.

Then Blastessa-Kooli, the goddess who ruled the affections, answering somewhat to Venus, only being more general in her

domination, for she influenced all forms and phases of love. She was not a divinity to whom much attention was paid by the Sheviri, for they were not wise enough, as it appears to me, to see that upon her influence the greatest part of domestic felicity depends. Now we know that even without such a comparatively small adjunct as politeness love will often altogether fly away. In those rude times, however, the altar of Blastessa-Kooli has been known to be without a single garland for two days.

In addition to the gods and goddesses whom the Sheviri worshiped, there were nymphs who played a most important part in the affairs of the Sheviri. Each man supposed himself to be protected by a nymph, who watched over him from birth to death, and to whom every thought of his mind, every aspiration of his heart, and every one of his actions, was a matter of the deepest interest. It was a rule of high politeness that when any man in the city of Abibah seemed to be absorbed in thought he was not to be interrupted in any way; for, said the bystanders to themselves, "He is communing with his nymph, and she is giving him heavenly advice; therefore be silent."

Of the greater gods, some were benignant, and some malevolent; but the nymphs were altogether friendly to mankind. Each man of the Sheviri was a Numa, having a superior being who was more devoted to him than Egeria was to the Roman monarch. One great merit of these nymphs was, that they required no altars and no sacrifices; and nothing would have shocked a citizen of Abibah more than to suggest that he could win his nymph by gifts and promises. For was she not his,—a Being bound up with his being, and, indeed, more devoted to his welfare than his own erring and unwise self?

This strange notion greatly favoured politeness and respect in the social intercourse of the Sheviri. The stupidest man in the community might, especially in matters that concerned himself, be speaking and acting with a wisdom not his own, and therefore demand the most implicit respect and attention from the greatest and the wisest personages. This belief threw around each man the halo of a present divinity. The poor women were not so favoured; and, whether in consideration of their more divine faculties, of their sharper wit, or of their comparative insignificance in human affairs, were left to the unassisted guidance of whatever measure of intellect

they were supposed by nature to possess. This is, however, no new thing in religion. Men, having the larger power of imagination, and therefore being the chief inventors of false religions, are not likely to indulge in any religious fancies, which do not assure to them their masculine predominance.

The name of the whole body of nymphs was Akairah-Douli (the soothers of thought): the name for each attendant nymph was Amala.

What seems to have been rather a weak point about these gracious beings is, that they were always more ready to be present and to assist their votaries in cloudy than in sunny weather; and, indeed, the Shevirian word for cloud (*amalasti*) is but a variation of the word "amala" or nymph. But men's imaginations generally have some thoroughly earthly touch about them. However, such as they were in men's minds, these nymphs played a great part both as regards individuals, and as regards the state, in the city of Abibah, and throughout the adjacent country subject to the Sheviri.

The laws of marriage which prevailed amongst the Sheviri were very peculiar. For instance, as regards the marriage of the princely families, their young men were compelled to take three wives, lest there should be default of issue in those families. One of these wives was to be taken from among the family. She was chosen by the head of the family, and was called the Varnah-Varee, which means the cousin-wife; the second was taken from the great body of the common people, and was called the Ainah-Varee, which means the alphabet-wife. I do not exactly understand how this choice was regulated; but I believe that it depended upon the number drawn out of a vase by the fortunate maiden, corresponding with the number of letters in the man's name, or being some multiple by four of that number.[3] The third wife was chosen by the young man himself, and was called Marah-Varee, which means the love-wife.

Antiquaries have divided the ages during which these towns on the waters flourished, into three periods: the stone age, the bronze age, and the iron age.

Mundane affairs, however, have not always happened as the antiquaries have pictured them. In Abibah, for example, had it been submerged that night, there would have been found in after ages

many bronze ornaments and implements; but in reality the nation had not got beyond the stone period.

The truth is, that in the town of Abibah the stone period had reached its highest development. At the same time the bronze-period was also very far advanced in some parts of the world, for the bronze ornaments and implements in Abibah were of the highest quality and beauty. These bronze articles had been gained in commerce with distant tribes; and it was in consequence of the known superiority of these distant tribes, that the chiefs of Abibah were entertaining a proposition brought to them from a neighbouring tribe, by the ambassador whom Realmah so much mistrusted.

The iron period, too, had commenced, and was flourishing in other regions, as will be seen in the course of this narrative. It may be mentioned that flints were not the only stones out of which the implements used by the Sheviri were made, for some of their best workmanship was executed in nephrite, or jade, or even in obsidian. There must have been commerce even in that remote age, for some of the inhabitants of Abibah possessed ornaments made of Baltic amber.

The pottery at Abibah showed that the potter's wheel was in constant use among them; and they had spindle-whorls of earthenware, which proves that the art of weaving had made some progress amongst them.

Their buildings were of the kind which has been called Pfahlbauten, or pile-buildings, in which the groundwork for the city consisted of platforms supported on innumerable piles, as distinguished from those in which the support consisted not of piles only, but of masses of mud and stones with layers of horizontal stakes, resembling the Irish "crannoges." The distance of the bottom of the lake from the platform of the city was about fifteen feet. It is a remarkable fact that, amongst such a community, boat-building was an art very little developed. Probably all their skill as artisans was devoted to the building of their houses. They found fish in abundance in the shallows of the lake: there was, therefore, not much inducement for them to put out upon its deep waters. One general remark I may here make, which will require to be very deeply considered by the hearers of this history: it is, that we must be very careful not to confuse under one general head all stages of

civilization that were different from our own. The common use of the word “savages” has misled modern men very much as regards the estimation in which they should hold their ancestors. The word “savage” cannot be applied with justice to a people who knew the arts of baking, of carpentering, of pottery, of weaving, and in some respects of government; who had indeed established polities which lasted in some way or other for long generations.

It is almost unknown, but it is not less a fact, that great judges of literature (the scornful Voltaire being one amongst them) have pronounced that the third great epic poem of the world was written by a man who dwelt amongst what is called a savage people, and who has depicted in vivid colours their valour in war, the great ideas they had of religion, and the extraordinary splendour of their eloquence, of which he has preserved the record.[4] The language of these so-called savages was often in the highest degree refined. And so it was among the people I am describing. They had two words for the verb “to be:” one meaning constant being, the other a temporary state of being. For instance, if one of them said, *stea varug*, “I am ill,” it meant, “I am ill of a temporary ailment;” if, however, he said *kamaya varug*, it meant, “I am ill of a permanent disease.” They had also two sets of words for sister and brother, so that if, without seeing the person or recognising the voice, you heard the words, “She is my sister,” you knew if it was a man that was speaking, because a man’s sister was represented by a different word from that of a woman’s sister. But perhaps the greatest refinement of all that was known in the languages that have perished of so-called savages, was that they had a way of expressing the result of conjoint but not unanimous opinion. For example, if a chieftain came forth to the people, and said, “It is our opinion that the war should be prosecuted with vigour,” the words used might convey, without any explanation, that it was the conclusion come to by a majority of the council, and not the unanimous opinion of its members.

Such, as above described, were some of the most salient points connected with the religion, the laws, the manners, the customs, and the language of the Sheviri. Descriptions of this kind do but faintly reproduce the life of a people. Perhaps there is no greater effort than to reproduce a faithful and vivid picture of past men,—of their ways of life, and their habitations. How hard it is even to imagine what the

lives of our immediate forefathers were like! But the difficulty is enhanced tenfold when the mode of life to be reproduced before us is that of a people who have left no records, and whose ways are only dimly to be described by antiquarians searching, in the mud brought up from the bottom of lakes, for any relics that may enable them to form some conjecture about these sunken cities and forgotten generations of mankind.

[During Mr. Milverton's narrative it was curious to watch the expression on Sir John Ellesmere's countenance. It was profoundly attentive; but, at the same time, he had a bewildered look, and he did not make a single observation.]

Sir Arthur. I think the story promises to be most interesting. There is a very happy choice of subject, which I wonder has not been seized upon by some one else. You may know how interesting it was, for Sir John Ellesmere did not interrupt once: did not even take any advantage of the bargain he had made. The story, therefore, must be a very good one.

Ellesmere. I deny the inference. I was dazed, if you like. I felt out of my element. I know nothing of these fishy, half-under-water people.

Yes, the choice of subject is very skilful—that is, on the narrator's behalf. If you say anything about the manners and customs of these people, Milverton would answer you with all his superior knowledge of wretched details. If you were to comment about the main current of the story, he knows for certain all about it: his nymph has told him. How, my dear fellow, do you invent all this?

Milverton. I do not invent, as you call it: I see how the things happened. I can hardly describe to you how distinctly the whole story arises before my mind: I do not invent; I merely describe.

Ellesmere. Oh yes, he evolves out of the depths of his self-consciousness, as the Germans would say, all he tells us. I do not see that it is made out to be more true on that account.

Lady Ellesmere. I don't quite like the part about the three wives.

Ellesmere. That is the only part I am quite sure I do like. With this odd number one might always get a majority of one's wives on one's side. 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, are the numbers I shall aim at in another planet; and I mean always to have a majority on my side.

Mauleverer. I daresay it is all true. It is evident that men were as wretched then as they are now—the same low intrigues, jealousies, hatreds, and malice. So far the story seems to me perfectly consistent.

Ellesmere. Yes: so far indeed I am with you. Modern inventions have done but little, as I always maintain. Boring has become a fine art; and, somehow or other, in our highly civilized communities, it is so contrived that one never has a moment's peace. You teach the people to write! What is the consequence? Innumerable letters of the most detestable description:—

"Sir, I have not the pleasure of knowing you, but from your general benevolence of character——"

Cranmer. Is that how the letters begin to you, Sir John?

Ellesmere. Yes, Mr. Cranmer. "From your general benevolence of character, I know you will not consider it intrusive if I venture to lay the following circumstances before you, and to ask for your assistance and advice." Then comes some difficulty which it would take you an hour or two to write justly about, and the man, though he has said he is intrusive, does not think that he is so. I wish, sir, any one of these people would only ask himself the grave question, "Am I the only intrusive person in the world? Is it likely that my letter is the only one of the same character that will reach Sir John Ellesmere to-morrow?" If he did give a good answer to that question, he might perhaps omit to write his letter, or put it in the fire if he had written it; and Sir John Ellesmere would be a happier man.

Will any one of you be good enough to explain to me how rapid locomotion has increased the felicity of the world? For I cannot see it.

You observe that beetle there. He is making for the corner of this summer-house, and will arrive here some time in the course of the afternoon. When he does arrive, he will only be an ungainly, top-heavy creature, not of the first order of intelligence, and much given, as naturalists tell me, to strong drinks.

Now this beetle has wings; and he might take it into his stupid head to fly from the gravel-walk to the corner of the summer-house, and might do so in two seconds; but when he did arrive, I suppose he would still be the same kind of creature—ungainly, top-heavy, and

too much given to strong drinks—prone, therefore, to lie upon his back in a very helpless and foolish manner. I leave you, gentlemen and ladies, to make the application for yourselves.

Milverton. How can you talk in that perverse way, Ellesmere? Do you mean to maintain that our modern inventions have not, upon the whole, been beneficial to mankind? Do you mean to say that having a city lighted with gas is not a great advantage? Do you mean to maintain that painless operations are not a huge solace to mankind? Do you mean to say that we have not improved in judicial matters—that, for instance, having got rid of torture, as a test of truth, is not an immense advance in the history of mankind? Do you mean to argue that there is not much greater liberty in religious matters than there ever was?

Ellesmere. These things you call progress are not all loss, certainly. However, you cannot say that government has so much improved.

Cranmer. I deny that.

Milverton. I admit that despotic governments are just as bad as ever. Thousands and tens of thousands of victims are still sacrificed to some dynastic idea.

Sir Arthur. In constitutional governments there is hardly such a thing as government at all. Nothing is done without such endless discussion; and what is done generally comes too late.

Ellesmere. There speaks out the old Tory.

Milverton. No, no: we are not so bad as that, Sir Arthur. Of course there is great difficulty in reconciling perfect personal freedom with governmental action. But recollect that what is gained in constitutional government, after all this talk, that you so much disapprove of, is gained by the people for themselves for ever, and does not depend upon one man, or one set of men, but becomes a permanent improvement for mankind.

Mauleverer (sarcastically). Yes: the poor are so well housed, so well fed, so carefully instructed, they are so much better off than these fishy people, as Ellesmere calls them, that one must rejoice in the glorious triumphs of civilization.

Milverton. I wish any one of your grumblers could go back for a week to the state of things which existed in England in the

fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries. I think you would soon summon modern civilization back again, and admit that we had made great progress, even in the well-being of the lowest classes.

Sir Arthur. I am not so sure of that.

Milverton. I am sure. I have a firm belief that the general improvement might be measured, by the relation that the cholera of the present day bears to the plague, or the black-death, or the sweating sickness of former days.

Ellesmere. Now, how can he know this? It is all simple assertion.

Mrs. Milverton. And so, Sir John, is your statement.

Ellesmere. Yes: of course your husband is always perfectly right. You would be one of the three wives, I see, Mrs. Milverton, and would always vote for your husband.

Your knowledge of the common people (let us see, what did he say?—in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries) is so complete, Mrs. Milverton, that it enables you to give a final judgment in the matter.

Lady Ellesmere. Don't be so rude, Sir John. We women know, by intuition, a great many things which you men only arrive at by study.

Ellesmere. It is well that you have some way of getting at knowledge different from that of study, for I do not see, after you are once married, you do much of that, any one of you.

Milverton. To go back to the question of government,—that is a question which has always had profound interest for me. That saying of the Duke of Wellington, "How is the king's government to be carried on?" is perpetually in my mind.

Now, if you want to know what are the difficulties of government, I will, to the best of my ability, inform you; and I do really believe I have some experience in this matter: so, too, has Sir Arthur: and I will abide by his corrections in what I am saying.

I think, to put the matter briefly and frankly, that there is not sufficient intellect brought to bear upon the affairs of government. From my earliest years I was very much struck with that admirable work of Henry Taylor's, the "Statesman;" and I have always found that practical conversancy—to use one of his favourite words—with government has led me to think more and more highly of his views.

The truth is, the public offices in this kingdom are undermanned as regards "Indoors Statesmen," as he calls them. Reform has gone too far in the way of retrenchment.

Ellesmere. Oh! oh!

Milverton. Yes, it has; in the way of retrenchment, as regards providing intelligent officers for the public service.

Ministers are worked to death by their double functions—parliamentary and official.

Law officers, and all the other lawyers connected with Government, are also terribly overworked.

The permanent officials of the highest class, upon whom Government for the most part depend, are likewise greatly overworked by the mere routine of their offices; which work, I must confess, has not been diminished by the increased power of reading and writing, to which Ellesmere (I thought he was a Liberal) has so great an objection.

Ellesmere. An elaborate sneer at me! If I had but admired the story of Realmah, the sagacity of Sir John Ellesmere would have been much applauded by the story-teller.

Milverton. I am not judging by my prejudices as an author; and I will not be diverted from the main subject.

I have no doubt millions a year might be saved to this country by an increase of the intellectual power of the official staff. The least instance of injudicious management on the part of the War Office or the Admiralty—a tax unwisely retained, or unskilfully imposed—an error as regards the currency—will produce more outlay than would be expended in twenty years by such an improvement of the intellectual force of the public offices as I contemplate.

If I were despotic—if I enjoyed a mental despotism—the first thing I would persuade the people to do, would be to increase the intellectual power of Government. I have no fear of bureaucracy. We are too free to be led by any set of official men, however clever.

Then, again, look how the House of Commons is overworked. Consider the vast amount of private business thrown upon it, and how some of the best members are necessarily absorbed in the management of that business. Consider what an imperfect thing our modern legislation is: so much so, that an Act of Parliament is often,

at first, utterly unworkable. I despair, however, of bringing men round to my opinion upon these matters, for I know that it requires to have been behind the scenes for many years before a man would thoroughly appreciate the views which I venture to put forward.

Ellesmere. I suppose this fishy government was perfect, for Milverton has had it all his own way there.

Milverton. No; it was not perfect. No doubt it was the best thing they could invent for the time; but I think you will find that Realmah, if he ever gets to power, will make a great improvement in the government of the Lake City.

Ellesmere. What I do admire in authors, and what gives one so much respect for them, is that their heroes always partake so much of their own character. One knows, from the beginning, that Realmah will do exactly what Milverton would have done; which gives one so much confidence as to Milverton's sublime insight into the doings of these past times.

Mrs. Milverton. Why should people be so very different now to what they were then? Is there not a family likeness amongst all great statesmen?

Ellesmere. Yes, Mrs. Milverton, they are all men penetrated by some idea, which they think a great one, and that the course of nations ought to be shaped according to that idea. Count Bismarck is no doubt a great statesman in your eyes.

Mrs. Milverton. No man is a great statesman in my eyes, Sir John, who needlessly promotes war.

Sir Arthur. I am by no means sure, Mrs. Milverton, that your censure will apply to the great Count.

Ellesmere. You will see, Mrs. Milverton, what Realmah will do. You may depend upon it that all his fine sayings and doings will only lead to war. Is he not an interfering young fellow, who I foresee will endeavour to impress upon the great council his own juvenile ideas—probably most preposterous? I wish I had been a member of that council: I would have made that young man know his proper place.

Sir Arthur. It is a great comfort to think that the conduct of this story does not depend upon Sir John Ellesmere. I can only say that I look forward to the coming chapter with the greatest possible

interest; and I do hope, Milverton, that you are ready, and that we shall have another reading to-morrow.

Milverton. You shall. I do not despair yet of making Ellesmere a firm believer in Realmah's valour and sagacity, which I know to have been unrivalled at that period of the world's history.

Mauleverer. To-morrow, then, we meet in the summer-house at the same hour.

The company then separated; but not before Ellesmere had said to Milverton, "You inventive scoundrel; I believe your nymph to be an utter impostor. However, to-morrow I am not going to be so silent as I was to-day. I believe it was understood that my liberty of interruption was accumulative: to-morrow, therefore, I have a right to interrupt you four times; each time with a sentence of about fifteen words. A great deal of truth may be conveyed in fifteen words."

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Exit.

3. For example, Realmah consisting of seven letters, whoever drew the first number 7 or 28 was to be the Ainah to Realmah.

4. The Araucana.

CHAPTER IV.

Dr. Johnson used to say, that a concern for public affairs never took away any man's appetite for dinner. He was certainly wrong, for poor Mr. Milverton has been in the most depressed state lately; and I think his dinners have been seriously affected by the impending war in Europe.

When next we met, it happened to be a wet day; and we agreed that we would have our reading in the library. All about the library were strewed maps of the probable seat of war, showing what had been Mr. Milverton's recent objects of study. Just after we had met, Mr. Milverton rushed into the house, and begged us all to come into the garden to see something. We all came at once. He seldom notices natural phenomena: or, if he does notice them, he does not talk about them, which made us come more readily. He brought us in a minute or two to a spot where there was a pitched battle going on between an army of red and an army of black ants. What surprised me was this: I had always understood from books on natural history, that the red ants were much stronger than the black ants, but in this case the little black fellows fought admirably; and, while we remained, I could not foresee on which side the victory would be.

We re-entered the house, and went into the library, where the ladies joined us.

Ellesmere. There is one advantage of a wet day—namely, that we do not have our meetings in that stupid summer-house. There one sits up, very uncomfortably, on a hard board, leaning against some out-jutting piece of rustic abomination, which is meant to be very picturesque, and which certainly does possess that element of the picturesque which consists in ruin and decay. The whole thing partakes of the nature of a pic-nic; and pic-nics are my abhorrence. A meal is too serious a thing to be treated in that light manner.

Lady Ellesmere. What a hard, sensual man you are!

Ellesmere. Oh yes! women like these foolish things, it gives them an opportunity for fuss and bustle; and, after all, they are sure to forget the salt, or the vinegar, or something or other which is an essential element to human happiness during dinner-time.

Mauleverer. I am quite of Sir John's opinion. No sensible man, after he has attained the age of twenty-two—if he is not in love—cares about pic-nics.

Ellesmere. You look very miserable, Milverton. I know what is worrying you. What is the good of fretting about these turbulent and foolish people? If they will go to war, they must; and I suppose it is necessary, for some good end or other, that they should do so.

Milverton. I cannot get over it. War horrifies me. On all sides, loss, destruction, waste, turmoil, cruelty, sickness, horses slain, olive-trees cut down, bridges blown up, roads obliterated.

Ellesmere. Don't go on. We know all that. It needs no ghost to tell us that.

Milverton. Yes: but there is something you do not know. There is not only the active mischief of war, but all the preparation for war, which is perhaps the greater evil, in the long run, of the two. Did it ever enter into your mind to consider what an unproductive creature a soldier is, and what an immense difference it makes to the welfare of the human race, whether you have all these stalwart men employed in producing, or in merely consuming and destroying?

Ellesmere. Yes: now you talk like a sound political economist and sensible man.

Milverton. Then, you know, it does thoroughly dishearten one to find that Christianity during all these years, has been able to do so little towards the prevention of war. Nobody seems to see the beauty of renunciation. Nobody seems to see the merit of being content to be second or third instead of first in the great game of life. But I am unjust: private persons do sometimes see this beauty and this merit. I do believe that the first impulses of jealousy, of revenge, and of injustice, are constantly restrained by Christianity in the breasts of private individuals; but in nations, never. Honour! glory! rights! claims! balance of power! these are the words which still dominate nations. Statesmen are like lawyers, who often give their clients advice which is harsh and self-seeking, telling them never to give up their rights and their claims—advice which, if the case were their own, they would not give themselves—being more generous, as they think it right to be, for themselves, than for their clients.

Ellesmere. Yes: we lawyers are very good people: it is our clients who make us wicked, whenever we are wicked; which is very rarely.

Mauleverer. Man is meant to be miserable, and he always will be.

Ellesmere. I do not see that. Paley's argument is better than yours; but people who are fond of fishing are always wiser than other men. As Paley justly says, "Teeth were made to eat with, and not to ache." If we injudiciously contrive to make our teeth ache, it is our own fault; and the same thing applies to all our conduct. I have just as good a right to say that men were meant to be happy, as that men were meant to be miserable, Mr. Mauleverer. But do not let us interrupt Milverton: he will not be endurable until he has had his full moan over the present state of European affairs; which, however, are enough to make anybody moan.

Milverton. There is one point connected with this matter that I often blame myself for not having spoken about. It is the use that we Britishers make of our capital. How we send it out to the most distant regions, often to be used against ourselves, and indeed against the dearest and best interests of mankind. I think that upon this subject—to speak without arrogance—I am really an authority. I am the last surviving commissioner of foreign claims,—that means, of the claims of British subjects against foreign nations for injuries done in the wars that were closed by Waterloo. It may appear strange to you that I should ever have held such an office, for I am not yet, I trust, a very aged individual; but there were several commissions before I was appointed, and the commissioners died out, leaving us, the last set, to wind up the affairs. I had, of course, to look into all the old papers; and I found that there was no form of confiscation which had not been adopted with regard to British property. For instance, a foreign merchant owed a British merchant money: in his books it was a book-debt. The Government of the country said, "Pay us that debt which, according to your books, you owe the Englishman, and we will give you a receipt, so that you cannot be molested for the debt in any of our courts."

Well, then I will pursue the subject further. Is it not lamentable that, with the fields of England not half tilled, with the poor people of England not half housed, with every branch of industry that England possesses requiring capital, we should ever send our money out to be invested in Congo Fives or Timbuctoo Seven per Cents., or

whatever other tempting but foolish investment is offered to us by some distant country or colony? I believe I should have fulfilled my part in the world, if I had only persuaded my fellow-countrymen never to invest in anything which they cannot go and see, and respecting which their own laws do not give them a remedy, if any wrong is done them. I know it is of no use attempting by any legislative measures to prevent the efflux of capital. It is only to be done by persuasion; but, really, if men would only look to their own interests, they would be very shy of foreign investments. Now, I would ask the question, has any man ever invested, twenty or thirty years ago, in land on British soil, and has not that investment increased at least forty per cent. in value? However, I have said my say upon this subject, and you may believe me, or not; but I am quite sure that the increased interest never balances the increased danger which is to be found in making foreign investments.

Sir Arthur. To return to the main question of war: you cannot say, Milverton, that we have not gained a great deal of wisdom upon this point—that we are not wiser than other nations as regards it—for we have come to the conclusion that extension of territory is nearly always bought at too high a price.

Ellesmere. This has arisen from our insular position. You must not give us any great credit for being wiser than any other nation.

Milverton. There you are unjust. I would not exactly say that we are wiser than other nations; but I do honestly think that we are more conscientious. There is no doubt that we are a very warlike nation, and that the great bulk of every people delight in war: but we have come to the conclusion that it is a very dangerous thing for our future welfare—I mean not temporal, but eternal welfare—to indulge in any war that is not a war of defence or a war of protection to some oppressed people. I think that the religious movement which commenced in the latter part of the last century and the beginning of this—of which Wilberforce may be chosen as a representative—had a great effect upon the minds of the British people. It cancelled slavery; it improved our criminal code; it made all men, even statesmen, obliged to refer their conduct to the highest religious principles; and, you may depend upon it, it has proved a great check upon our naturally warlike instincts. This is what I think foreign nations do not understand, when they contemplate our sedulous

observance of neutrality. They think it is shopkeeping which restrains us, whereas it is a fear of violating the highest moral and religious principles. I may be mistaken; but I sincerely believe what I say.

Only let some foreign nation attack us, and see what Berserkers we should become. I do not believe that the fighting element has gone out of us, but only that we are terribly afraid of fighting, except upon some thoroughly righteous cause—some cause which we believe would be approved of in heaven, as well as upon earth.

Sir Arthur. I am entirely in accordance with Mr. Milverton.

Mauleverer. I am not. Did you ever know the bulk of any nation ruled by any great, or humane, or religious principle?

Ellesmere. I think you all go too far in your respective theories. I think that, partly from a view of their interests, partly perhaps from religious principles, partly perhaps from their just contempt of the frivolous causes which often provoke war, the British people have come to a conclusion against it; but I am not inclined to give all the weight that Milverton does to Wilberforce, and the Wilberforcians of the last generation.

Milverton. At any rate, Ellesmere, you perceive the great change that has taken place in the minds of the British people about war.

Ellesmere. Well, there is a great change in the French people; and to whom is this due?

Sir Arthur. The French people have received great lessons in political wisdom. Count Daru, I believe, told them that he had made calculations, by which it appeared that the height of men in France had been lowered one inch and a half, or two inches, by the wars of the First Napoleon. You see how this happens; the taller men are perpetually chosen for war, and are carried off to be slaughtered before they have produced any progeny.

Ellesmere. And do you think that the arguments to be derived from such facts as these have any weight against "national glory, national honour, and rectification of frontiers?"

Milverton. I do. Besides, the French are the most industrious people in Europe, and they love to see the fruits of their industry. I may be sanguine, but I believe that the French are rapidly entering upon the same platform as ourselves; and that, if our statesmen

manage well, we might yet have them nearly always on our side for the maintenance of the peace of Europe.

Ellesmere. Well, we have had enough of foreign politics: let us go to the men who, untold years ago, dwelt upon the Swiss lakes. I will bet anything Milverton makes them talk, and think as if they were profound political economists of the present day; and if Realmah does not talk to these fishy men much as Milverton would talk to us, my name is not John Ellesmere.

Milverton. I can only tell you what I know to have occurred. I may use modern terms, and sometimes modern modes of thought in speaking of the lake-men; but what I know is, that I shall give a most true account of the thoughts and doings of the great Realmah.

Hereupon the reading commenced, and was as follows:—

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO WIVES.

At the time when this story commenced, Realmah had already received the two wives who were bestowed upon a man of his rank by the laws of the nation.

The cousin-wife, the Varnah, as she was called, was a plain young woman, possessing sundry good qualities as a housewife. She was regular, punctual, methodical, and a great lover of possessions, not from avarice, but from a desire to have many things to furbish up, and to put in their right places. The heads of Realmah's tribe had given her to Realmah with a kindly wish to compensate in some measure for his infirmities. He would never be able to acquire much property, they thought; but whatever he did acquire would be taken care of, and made the most of, by his Varnah.

The alphabet-wife (the Ainah), was one of those girls whose personal appearance it is so difficult to describe, because there are no general terms which can be applied to it. She was not beautiful, nor handsome, nor pretty; nor was she even what is called interesting-looking. In truth, her whole appearance was at first sight rather insignificant, and nobody would have turned to look at her as she passed. Yet she was worth looking at, if looked at with a loving attention. Her small features were full of subtle mobility, and readily expressed the swift change of her thoughts. Her hair was a reddish

brown, not unbeautiful; her deep-set eyes, of a dark blue colour, were really very expressive when you came to look into them; and there was an air of great resolve about her well-formed lips. She was one of those people in whom dress and distinction of any kind make such a difference. If she had been a princess, one could have made something of her. But she never was well dressed; and, as to distinction of any kind, she had none.

The poor Ainah had never been taught those graceful movements which were carefully cultivated from their earliest youth by the girls of the higher class of the Sheviri.

And then, again, her hands and feet were by no means small.

I wish I could in honesty speak more favourably of the personal appearance of the Ainah; but, to tell the truth, it was unmistakeably plebeian. She had sprung from one of the lowest tribes of the nation—namely, that of the fishermen. After the manner of her tribe, she pronounced some of the commonest words quite wrongly. *Louvarah* (house) she made into *luffee*: *darumid* (people) into *roomee*: *volata* (provisions) into *vlatee*; with a hundred other gross errors of language. Realmah was well skilled in his language; and the poor Ainah never uttered a sentence in which she did not sorely shock his sensitive ears. Yet, in reality, as Realmah was the most thoughtful man of his nation, so his Ainah was the girl of the largest mind and nature in that town. This was totally unknown to him; and he had received her as he would have received any other chattel assigned to him by the laws of his country. It was not in his nature to be unkind to any one; but such an idea as that of loving his Ainah never entered his mind, and would have been received by him from any one else with a smile of derision.

It was on the morning succeeding the night during which Realmah had uttered the soliloquy mentioned in the first chapter, that the young man entered his abode, and began talking with his two wives—not with a hope of gaining any ideas from them, or with much care for their sympathy, but from a natural wish to talk out his own ideas to somebody—to give them, as it were, shape by utterance.

"Have you seen the ambassador from the Phelatahs?" said Realmah.

"Yes," replied the wives.

"And what do you think of him?"

"He is beautifully dressed," said the Varnah, "and his presents are of the first quality. He has given us a vase with heads all round it, and serpents crawling up it, meeting, and together forming the handles: it is quite a treasure."

It may here be remarked that all the nations of the lake excelled in pottery. It was not that they understood the art of burning; but individual thought and skill were thrown into each article, and the variety and strangeness of the designs compensated in great measure for the want of knowledge shown in completing the processes of manufacture.

"Yes, yes," said Realmah, somewhat peevishly, "the presents that will return to the giver hereafter as spoil, may well be handsome; but what do you think of the man himself? For my part," he exclaimed with vehemence, "I believe him to be false as the hooded adder."

"When did you get truth from any of his nation?" replied the Varnah. (This was the general opinion entertained by the Sheviri of the Phelatahs, and was the correct common-place for the Varnah to utter.)

"I do not mind that," replied Realmah; "what I want to know is, whether the story which this man brings us is a mere pretext or not. Is our nation to be the slave, and not the ally?"

By the way, Realmah, in his lordly indifference, had never told his wives what was the pretext upon which the ambassador had come.

"And what do you think, Ainah?"

"I noted him well," she answered. "He looks straight into people's eyes, because it is the habit of honest men to do so, and he knows it is the way to gain credit; but I could see that it gave him pain, and that it was a great effort."

Realmah, who had been looking down upon the ground, lost in meditation, suddenly raised his eyes, and gazed with astonishment at the Ainah.

"And who told you to observe this?" he said.

"My heart," she answered.

"Pray do not say *phonee*, my good Ainah." (That was the word amongst the fishermen for 'heart.') "Why turn everything into that foolish *ee*? Cannot you say *phonata*?"

"*Phonata*, then," said the Ainah, timidly, with the tears rising to her eyes.

"Any one that has got eyes with any power of insight, even the women can see it," muttered Realmah; "but our elders, though they have the wisdom and experience of grey hairs, cannot. I must, at all risks, force my suspicions upon them."

"Do not go now," said the Varnah. "You must come and see my bridal room, which the dear little Ainah" (she really loved the Ainah, because the girl was so useful and unselfish) "has helped me to decorate."

Realmah, who, like most great men, was essentially good-natured, consented to follow the Varnah to the bridal room. She led the way, expecting a burst of applause from him. The Ainah followed; and, as she followed, sighed.

There is no knowing how many thousands of years have passed since those three human beings walked into that bridal room; but, ancient as the time was, that sigh which tells so much about a wounded heart was still more ancient, and had not been unknown even in the primeval Paradise.

Realmah walked about the bridal room, and did his best to appear pleased with the clay vases, the various ornaments formed of feathers, the flint and bronze weapons, and the woven hangings; but his mind was in the assembly of his chiefs, composing a speech which should be endured even from a young man, which should rouse suspicion, and compel a clear and decided course of action.

Suddenly he exclaimed, "If this is truth, then are the ways of falsehood much maligned; if this is policy, then are the ways of children politic; if this is the prudence of great chieftains, then are great chieftains little removed from ordinary men; if this is statesmanship, then are statesmen blind alike to the history of the past, and to the just forecasting of the future."

Saying which, Realmah made two profound bows, one to his Varnah, and the other to the Ainah (for that was high courtesy according to the customs of his nation), and rushed from the bridal chamber into the open air. His wives looked after him amazed. As the hangings closed behind him, the Varnah said, "Poor Realmah! we should live but meanly if it depended on him to provide for us.

But let us look again over all our presents." The Varnah was very skilful in obtaining presents, and had laid all her relations under strict contribution. With her father she was an especial favourite. Ever since the death of his last wife, she had made the old chief very comfortable; and it was with the greatest reluctance, and only from a strong sense of duty, that he had given her up to Realmah. The wonderful flint knives, and many of the bronze ornaments that adorned the Varnah's bridal room, had belonged to the old chief; but, as the Varnah judiciously observed, why could he not glory over them as well in his daughter's house as in his own? And the old chief did come frequently to his daughter's house, and was always kindly treated by the Varnah, for she was not like one of King Lear's daughters, but loved her father and her kindred. Only where she was, the property must also be, that it might be duly cared for, and kept in order.

The Ainah sighed again, and she also said "Poor Realmah!" and only God could know what depths of tenderness, sympathy, appreciation, and hopelessness were contained in those two words; for the Ainah was well aware that she was but the slave of a great man—and nothing more than the slave.

Meanwhile Realmah bent his steps slowly and thoughtfully towards the great council-chamber, where, under the presidency of his uncle, the chief of the East, the assembled chiefs and their principal councillors were considering what answer should be given to the ambassador of the Phelatahs.

CHAPTER IV.

THE COUNCIL.

The chiefs were assembled in a long low room of great antiquity. It had been the council-room of the town ever since it had been first raised upon the waters by a few fugitives who, in earlier days, had fled from the persecutions of those warriors who possessed weapons of bronze.

At the time that Realmah entered, the chief of the East was addressing the assembly. He was an old man, of great authority amongst the people, and of considerable natural sagacity; but his ideas were wont to travel rather in a groove, and to take the form of melancholy forebodings.

Realmah bent himself to the ground. The assembled chiefs looked at him with a cold haughty stare which said more plainly even than words could say: “What, young man, is the need of your presence here?”

Meanwhile the chief of the East, utterly ignoring the interruption, although he was Realmah’s uncle, thus continued his speech. “I foresee the time—I say, I distinctly foresee the time, when from the constant irruption of these barbarians, life will become so difficult and so precarious for us, we shall be so hunted down by these new comers, that instead of building on the waters, our people will have to place their miserable habitations on dry land. They will thus become the prey of every passer-by. No one will sleep in peace. No one will feel secure that in the morning he and his family will rise to pay their devotions to the sun. With this insecurity, will come an indifference to all the arts of life; and the whole race will degenerate into inferior animals.

“My voice is for war; my voice is for allying ourselves at once with the Phelatahs. If the nations that surround this great lake can but remain united, they may force back those enemies, who, superior in weapons, but far inferior in true courage, now, according to the warning words of that noble ambassador, who has just retired from the assembly, threaten the entire destruction of our heaven-descended race.”

A murmur passed through the assembly—a murmur which could not be construed otherwise than into an approval of the sentiments which the aged chief of the East had brought forward with unwonted eloquence.

It was at this inopportune moment that poor Realmah had to explain his unasked-for presence amongst them. After another profound obeisance, he thus began:—“Great lords and dividers of bread, I am but a child, and how shall I dare to address this reverend assemblage? But, while you have been debating upon this grave matter, I have been examining with anxious care the manner of that ambassador. In one word, my gracious fathers, it is not that of a true man. His gifts are everywhere. With whom, when out of your gracious presence, has he been most in company? With the most easily beguiled and the weakest persons of our town. From them, I know, he has ascertained the number of our warriors, the strength of

our fortresses, and the extent of our hunting-fields. He has made the most curious inquiries into our arms of attack and defence, into the state of our hoarded provisions, into the fidelity of our subject tribes. What then, I ask, is his object? I do not deny that his nation, like ours, dreads the approach of a people far superior to either in the weapons of war, all of whom carry arms which are possessed only by a few of our wealthiest chiefs, and which are looked upon rather as curiosities than as the daily implements of warfare. The policy of the Phelatahs, if I read this man rightly, is to render our nation subject and tributary to theirs, and so to oppose a bold front to the common enemy. But what matters it to whom we are subject, if we are subjected at all? What I would, with the due humility of youth, propose is, that if we send our forces to join with theirs, we should not send at once the whole flower of our army, but should divide it into two bands, one of which should openly unite with them, while the other, concealed, should be ready to counteract the effect of any attempt on their part to take captive our men, and employ them hereafter as vassals against the common foe."

Realmah ceased speaking; and there was again the same look of polite indifference which had greeted him upon his entrance. He bowed, and withdrew.

It may be noticed, by the way, that he quite forgot, or was too nervous, to deliver the fine peroration to his speech with which he had favoured his wives.

The debate was resumed; but the words of the chief of the East were not so powerful as they had been. The chief of the North, whether really convinced by Realmah's speech, or being anxious to break the power of the East by encouraging family differences, leant entirely to Realmah's view of the question.

"To adopt the young man's suggestion would," he said, "make no real difference except in detail. Two troops might as well be sent out as one. The Phelatahs had always been false; and he had found that the nettle did not sting yesterday, or to-day, for the first time; but, as far as his poor experience went back, it had always been a stinging plant; and, as far as his poor discernment foresaw, it always would be. He reminded them of the proverb, 'That if judgment belongs to the old, quickness of perception belongs to the young;' or, to speak in the language of the people, that the young foal of the ass might have

better sight than the father of lions. That, for his part, he had noticed that even the prejudices of the vulgar were often based upon something substantial, which chiefs of high lineage might not have condescended to observe. Even the infirmities of Realmah might have rendered his observation very keen—keen as that of a woman; and the great chiefs then present knew full well that their wives sometimes made observations which were worth attending to and which they themselves, conscious of their own power and dignity, had not cared to make. The weasel in its own small circuit saw more clearly than the bison, which relied upon its force, and not upon its sharpness of vision.

"In a word, he was not for discarding a prudent suggestion from whatever source it might come, and his vote should be heartily given in favour of the proposal of that young man who had just withdrawn from them, and to whom he should be more inclined to listen from the fact that the young man must have imbibed some of the wisdom of his uncle, the great chief of the East."

This artful and judicious speech had great weight with the assemblage; and after long debate, it was finally agreed that the plan proposed by Realmah should be adopted by the Council.

After the reading was ended, there was no conversation of any importance to record, and the party separated; Ellesmere merely saying that he should, hereafter, have a few remarks to make upon the singular advantages of being a savage like Realmah, and having three wives, even though two of them should be obviously plain and prosaic; for he would always be able to set two of them against the third.

CHAPTER V.

My master, Mr. Milverton, delighted in frequent excursions of a very humble kind. He used to say that we did not make half use enough of our opportunities while living in the country: that there was always much to be seen within a circle of fifteen miles' radius—all manner of beautiful and interesting things. His idea of a tour was not rushing off to Spain or Italy at the rate of thirty miles an hour, but going up a canal in a little boat, or travelling along rustic roads in a pony carriage at the rate of five miles an hour, and taking everything very coolly. "Look," he would say, "at the charming uncertainty you have about your dinner in these excursions. Then, again, how amused you always are at a country inn. The pictures alone are quite a treat, and convey to you something of the history of the last seventy years."

Ellesmere, of course, opposed and ridiculed Mr. Milverton's views. He maintained there was nothing like sitting in a comfortable room where there were nice, sleep-provoking arm-chairs; not that, as he used to observe, Milverton's arm-chairs were comfortable, but that they were well-intended. It used to amuse me, this praise of sitting at home, coming from one of the most restless mortals ever born; for he never could keep quiet for a quarter of an hour together, but would walk round the room while the others were talking; and a favourite mode of motion of his was to place the chairs so that he could step from one to the other, and thus expend his terrible restlessness. However, though invariably opposing Milverton's excursions, he was always ready to join in them.

On the present occasion Mr. Milverton suggested that we should go to a little inn about eight miles distant, which overlooked a small arm of the sea, where it is proposed to construct a harbour. We set off on a beautiful day, and soon reached our inn. The tide was out, and there was a huge expanse of mud visible.

Ellesmere. What a delicious odour of mud! How gratifying it is to have exchanged our own poor atmosphere for this invigorating air!

Milverton. I always think when I see this place at the time of the receding tide, which gives somewhat of an ungracious aspect to the landscape, how like it is to a person of a fitful temper. The present state represents a sullen mood; but soon you will see the pleasant

tide come up again, and all the scenery about you will become most beautiful—as the human being does, when he has thrown off his sullenness.

Ellesmere. I think I have heard you indulge in this simile before. I should be very sorry to show that it does not walk on four legs; but I cannot help observing that the tide ebbs and flows with regularity, whereas the temper, if I may judge from Lady Ellesmere's, is apt to be a little uncertain in its movements.

Lady Ellesmere. It cannot be said, my love, that your temper partakes of uncertainty.

Ellesmere. A truly conjugal remark, and as true as it is conjugal.

We then separated until dinner-time, rambling about amongst the rocks and the mud, active as any children in picking up sea-weed and shells, and catching crabs: one of which gave a severe bite to Ellesmere, who, with his accustomed good-nature, did not avenge the bite upon the crab, but merely observed, as he put it into its little pool again, "that he was sure it was a female, and did not understand when any kindness was meant for it."

We had a very pleasant dinner, and were somewhat scolded by the landlady of the inn for our sad deficiency of appetite; though I thought we all ate like ploughboys.

After dinner Mr. Cranmer talked in a most official manner about all the things which he foresaw would happen in foreign and domestic politics; not without sundry sneers and sniffs from Sir John Ellesmere, whom Mr. Cranmer's talk always provokes to all kinds of sarcastic opposition. The conversation proceeded thus, as well as I can recollect it.

Milverton. All political prophecy is so difficult. Ellesmere owns that he cannot foresee what will happen in the course of a three-volume novel. Now, I do not feel such difficulty in that. No: I do not feel that difficulty about novels. There you have only to watch the mind of one man, the author; but, as regards political prophecy, it is a very different thing. Now I wish, for the sake of making a curious experiment, that any one of you, at the outset of any political movement, would write down (it must be in writing) what you really think will happen. You will, I believe, be astonished to find how mistaken your prophecy will be. Where men are so deluded, and

think that they foresee far more than they do, is in this way—that they keep on modifying, from day to day, their prophecy, in correspondence with the daily changes of events. I have watched this matter for years—at least, as regards my own mind—and have often found how wrong my prophetic anticipations have been. I remember hearing one of the shrewdest ministers of our time say that he joined a ministry, thinking it would only last seven weeks. "You see," he said, "they were old friends of mine, and they had asked me to join them. And I felt that, being old friends, I was quite willing to partake their downfall; and here I have been years in office with them."

No one can see how a ministry will fall, or how a war will end, or how any series of political events will come to a conclusion.

I declare I never knew a ministry go out upon the exact questions they were expected to go out upon.

Sir Arthur. We are thrown back to the old French proverb, "Nothing is certain but the unforeseen."

Ellesmere. I hate proverbs; they are such bumptious things: they are like boys of sixteen; they all want taking down, not one peg, but many pegs.

Sir Arthur. I must say I delight in French proverbs. Now, what can be better than the celebrated proverb, "Nothing succeeds like success?"

Milverton. The opposite is quite as true, "Nothing succeeds like the want of success;" or, to put it in another way, "None are so successful as the unsuccessful." It all depends upon the meaning you give to the word success. Do you remember how the late Lord Carlisle, good man, used to delight in a saying (where it originally came from I do not know) which ran thus, "Heaven is a place made for the unsuccessful?" You may depend upon it there is, even in this world, nothing in the world so dangerous for a man as to be for a long time supremely successful. I think on this head that the First Napoleon's career is one of the most instructive that the world has ever seen. If he had had but a little less success before he made that fatal blunder of invading Russia, he might have acted with something like wisdom, and an uninterrupted dynasty of his might still have been upon the throne of France.

By the way, I was reading the other day another account of that invasion of Russia (a portion of history which I am never tired of reading), and I observed that one division of the army—I think it was Murat's—had been reduced before it returned to Wilna to 400 infantry and 500 dismounted cavalry, without any guns, or any materials of war of any kind. Now, that division probably started with 60,000 or 70,000 men. But the most instructive thing of that campaign is to observe the wonderful pedantry and perverse obstinacy, in ignoring the most obvious facts, which that great man Napoleon manifested to the end of the campaign. He would draw up the most admirable orders of the day, but unfortunately facts were against him; and it was no good ordering that 20,000 men should go here, and 30,000 men go there, when the division in question was almost annihilated. From the first opening of the campaign, however, there was the same want of skill manifested, and the same abjuration of facts. Now, it was thought a wonderfully clever thing throughout Europe, that the Emperor should have arranged his 5,000 wagons in military fashion; but any man, who knows anything about wagons, carters, and oxen—Wren Hoskyns or Mr. Mechi, for instance—could have told him that a transport of this kind could not be arranged in a purely military fashion.

Ellesmere. For goodness' sake do not let Milverton get upon the subject of war. At all hazards he should be stopped in talking about it.

Let me see, what were we talking about before? Oh! proverbs: well, I say a proverb is like a rule in grammar. I remember there was a detestable Greek grammar, which was the torment of my early days, and which used to lay down some rule, and then there used to come pages of exceptions. In my perverse way, I used to make one of the exceptions the rule, and throw the rule into one of the exceptions. I hate grammar!

But to return to proverbs: as I said before, they are such bumptious things. It may be said of them what the late Lord Melbourne said of dear Macaulay, "They are so cock-sure about everything."

Cranmer. I wonder to hear you say "dear Macaulay;" I should have thought that, being such a great talker, he would have interfered with you, Sir John.

Ellesmere. Do you? you are quite mistaken then. Who was it said of Matt Lewis—

"I would give many a sugar-cane,
Matt Lewis were alive again"?

so I being by nature a poet, say—

"I would bear a load of pain,
So Macaulay were alive again."

Whenever I was invited to meet him, I always went. It is true he was a great talker, but who talked so well? There was no vanity in his talk. There was simply an exuberant knowledge and an exquisite enjoyment of the subject he was discoursing about. I can tell you, I did not interrupt *him*. I was always too glad to hear him talk. He would lay hold of a particular author, and in a short time (say twenty minutes) give you the whole pith and marrow of that author. I remember his doing so once with Cobbett, and one had, I believe, in this brief twenty minutes all the best things ever said by that most vigorous writer.

Then if any of the less prominent characters in history were mentioned, he had anecdotes about them which were known to no one else.

I remember his once describing to us the character and sayings of Lord Thurlow; and he told a story of that large-eye-browed personage which I never heard before, and each of you ought to give me half-a-crown at least, if I agree to tell you. Are the half-crowns forthcoming? (We nodded assent.)

Well, those were days when we had not the infliction of railways, and when barristers, even on the Northern circuit, travelled in post-chaises. It fell to the lot of a very saintly, good man, to have to travel with Thurlow, who was then Attorney-General. A journey to the North was a serious thing in those times, and my saintly friend dreaded the long journey, with the blustering Attorney-General, who he was sure would utter many naughty words before they arrived at York.

They had hardly left London before the good man remarked, "We shall have a long journey, Mr. Attorney, and so I thought I would

bring some books to amuse us. I daresay it is a long time since you have read Milton's 'Paradise Lost.' Shall I read some of it to you? It will remind us of our younger days." (In those days men read great works; for there were not so many books of rubbishing fiction, to which the reading energies of the present day are directed.) "Oh, by all means!" said Thurlow; "I have not read a word of Milton for years."

The good man began to read out his Milton: presently he came to the passage where Satan exclaims, "Better to reign in hell than serve in Heaven." Upon which Thurlow exclaimed, "A d——d fine fellow, and I hope he may win." My saintly friend in horror shut up his "Paradise Lost," and felt that it would be no good reading to the Attorney-General, if he was to be interrupted by such wicked expressions of sentiment.

Milverton. Did you ever read Macaulay's poem on his defeat at Edinburgh? It is a most noble production. I am ashamed to say I cannot recollect it correctly; but the next time we meet I will read it out to you.

Cranmer. I really cannot understand how Sir John could have endured the enforced silence which Lord Macaulay's talk must have imposed upon him.

Ellesmere. I am a misunderstood man, not only by Secretaries of the Treasury, but by all people who come near me. I am *un homme incompris*. Now, I ask you all, did I interrupt Milverton when he was going on with his "Realmah" story? If a talk or reading is good, I am the last man in the world to interrupt it. I only interrupt folly, irrelevancy, inaccuracy, and incomplete logic. I am the best listener in the United Kingdom when there is anything worth listening to; but I am, I repeat, a misunderstood man. Poor dear Charles Lamb complains that he was in the same plight. Nine-tenths of the world do not understand a joke; and no official man, Mr. Cranmer, ever does. Why even my wife does not understand me.

Lady Ellesmere. No, my dear, it would take nine of the cleverest women in England to understand you, and they must pass the chief part of their time in interchanging notes about your character.

Ellesmere. Let us enumerate the nine—only, for goodness' sake, do not let them be nine Muses.

Let me see, what should be their functions?—

1. The arch-concoctor of salads.

2. The sewer-on of buttons.

3. The intelligent maker of bread-sauce.

4. The player of Beethoven's music.

5. The player of common tunes,—"Old Dog Tray," "Early in the Morning," "Pop goes the Weasel," and "Paddle your own Canoe,"

all of which tunes I think beautiful; but, of course, because the populace approves of them, which populace is the best judge of such things, my Lady Ellesmere must needs turn up her nose (and a very pretty one it is) against any one who admires these tunes, and she declines to play them to me.

Lady Ellesmere. I can well imagine you do admire these "tunes," as you call them. It is certainly worth my while to get up Beethoven for you, when "Early in the Morning" satisfies you quite as well.

But pray go on with your list of wives, Sir John.

Ellesmere.

6. The consoler under difficulties.

7. The good reader.

8. The one beloved wife (dear deluded creature) who always believes in her husband, and takes him to be the discreetest, most virtuous, and most ill-used of mortal men. I do love *her*!

9. The manager of the other wives.

By the way, has there not been some talk of a tenth Muse? Well, if I am to have a tenth wife, she shall be the noble and rare creature who can cook a potato. My list is now complete. My polygamic nature is satisfied with these ten adorable beings.

Sir Arthur. Which will you be, Lady Ellesmere?

Lady Ellesmere. The sewer-on of buttons. I do not feel equal to the bread-sauce, though that would be the lighter work of the two if one's mind could master it.

Ellesmere. But, come, let us go on with Realmah, *alias* Milverton—the Milverton who existed when that ground which is now at the bottom of the Swiss lakes was at the surface. I do like a story!

Mrs. Milverton. Is it not somewhat of a confession of weakness on the part of Sir John Ellesmere, that he likes a story? And was he not a few minutes ago abusing fiction?

Ellesmere. No, it is not a confession of weakness, Mrs. Milverton. And as for inconsistency—to be consistent, one must be dull; and nobody can accuse me of that.

From the earliest ages of the world, when men dwelt in tents, and looked out upon the stars at midnight, delighting in them more than in any other created thing, men and women would gather round a fire, and listen entranced, through the dark hours of night, to any one who would tell them a story; however absurd, however inconsistent, however improbable, that story might be. Not that I mean for a moment to say, Mrs. Milverton, that your husband invents absurd, inconsistent, and improbable stories. Doubtless all that he says is absolutely true, and must, as he assures us, have happened. Did not his nymph tell him?—By the way, I wonder you are not jealous of that same nymph: women can contrive to be jealous of any thing, or person, or animal, or even insect—and you see how she inspires him with a higher degree of inspiration than can be gained from yourself, or any other person who exists upon this solid earth.

Mrs. Milverton. I do not know what jealousy is, Sir John.

Ellesmere. Happy woman! I observe that Milverton is silent: he knows very well what jealousy is, at least on your part. Why, if I were to poke the fire in his study, you would be jealous that you had not done it: you are all alike, and jealousy is nine-tenths of your love. Whereas, with us men, jealousy is almost a thing unknown.

By the way, which of the three young savage ladies, that we are introduced to in Realmah, do you think you most resemble? Is it the prudent Varnah, the beautiful Talora, or the incomparable Ainah (with large hands and feet), that you are willing to be classed with?

Milverton. Mrs. Milverton possesses the merits of all the three in her own person—the beauty of Talora, the prudence of the Varnah, and the sympathetic nature of the Ainah.

Ellesmere. You have not a few shillings about you, have you, Mrs. Milverton, that you could give your husband for that speech? for I am sure it is one that requires to be paid for.

Now, Milverton, do go on: I declare seriously I am thoroughly interested in your story, and will not make a single interruption, until those shining waters desert their charming mud, and the stars come out, and we order our horses, and return to the solid comforts and second-rate arm-chairs in Milverton's smoke-dried study.

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER V.

REALMAH VISITS TALORA.

There are few words more abused than the word "love." It is the most commonly-used word in all languages, except the word "money," and some short emphatic word, or other, signifying a curse. But as to the substance, it is rare. Now Talora was a girl incompetent to love any person supremely but herself.

In that age of the world beautiful women must have suffered from the loss of one great source of pleasure. They had no looking-glasses. This want they endeavoured to supply, in a very dim and poor manner, by burnished shells. And there was always the glassy water from which the fair dwellers on the lake could gain some indistinct notion of their beauty.

From what has been said above, it must not be supposed that Talora was a peculiarly heartless person. She was fond of her father, when he did not thwart her, and very gracious and good-natured to her companions when they submitted to her rule. Greatly admired in her own section of the city, she put a high value on herself, and was much afraid of contracting any marriage that should not be fully worthy of her.

In personal appearance she was tall, shapely, and bright-looking; with crisp, wavy hair, brilliant eyes, that had not much meaning in them, a pleasant smile, and some very engaging dimples. Her high rank, for she was the only daughter of the chief of the North, entitled her to be sought for by the noblest youths of the city.

This was the maiden in whose favour Realmah had placed all his future hopes of happiness. She regarded him with a certain kindliness, and even perceived that he was the most intelligent man she had ever seen; but his infirmity, which she naturally thought would surely prevent his attaining the highest rank, rendered her very careful of giving him encouragement.

Athlah, the second son of the chief of the South, was also one of her suitors. He was a coarse, violent man, who, as far as bravery was concerned, had already distinguished himself in war; and he looked with supreme contempt upon the presumption of Realmah, whom he held to be a poor feeble creature, destined for ever to partake of the occupations of women.

Athlah was not a man of sound judgment, or far-seeing sagacity; but he had considerable gifts of Nature, which gained for him credit and high standing amongst the men of his own town. Besides being a brave warrior, he was a bold, fluent, and forcible speaker. His speeches abounded in strong metaphors, quaint similes, and homely proverbs; and, in speaking, he was ever most powerful when most abusive.

In the Council of the Four Hundred he was always gladly listened to, and men renowned for state craft rejoiced to see Athlah rise in the debate; for they felt certain that somebody was then going to be soundly chastised, and that there would be fun and life and real battle.

It is a strange thing to say, but when the number of any public body exceeds that of forty or fifty, the whole assembly has an element of joyous childhood in it, and each member revives at times the glad, mischievous nature of his schoolboy days.

Amongst themselves the first-rate statesmen spoke depreciatingly of Athlah, as a man whose opinion in public affairs was worth very little; but, as I said before, they were all (all but the victim who probably foresaw his fate) delighted when the tall form of Athlah rose in the assembly, for they knew that something was coming which would break through the pattering monotony of dull, though wise, debate.

Athlah was a perfect master of the art of sneering, which, however, is not an art that demands the highest ability.

It was to the apartments of Talora that Realmah betook himself after his speech in the council. He told her what he had done, and she sympathised with him to a certain extent. She also made many inquiries about the dress of the ambassador from the Phelatahs, and how he wore his beard. Then she amused herself and Realmah, by making ugly faces—as far as Talora could make ugly faces—to

imitate the grim chief of the South; and walked about the room with pompous step, and head thrown back, to imitate the dignified gestures of the proud chief of the West. For Talora was a great mimic. Realmah, deep in love, mistook this mimicry for wit.

At this moment Athlah coming in, and not being over-pleased to see Realmah there, sarcastically inquired whether he had come to help Talora to spin, whereupon she smiled pleasantly at the new comer, and seemed to enjoy the jest. She then told Athlah that Realmah had been present at the great council, and recounted the advice he had urged upon the chiefs.

Athlah was provoked at what he considered the presumption of Realmah, in venturing to enter a council-room where he (Athlah) would not have dared to intrude.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I see we are going to borrow an arrow from the sheaf of that wise tribe, the Doolmies. When they go to war, there is always a band of girl-warriors; and these are found to be very useful in killing those who are too badly wounded to make any resistance, and in despoiling the dead. Indeed, they are serviceable in many ways after a battle, and we call them the Doolmie she-crows, birds not quite as noble as vultures, but nearly as useful. I suppose" (turning to Realmah) "you will take the command of this redoubtable band, and they will doubtless be called the Realmahras. Oh, it is not for nothing that you stay at home with the women, and that your knitted brows bear the signs of such deep thought. Your subtle wit becomes almost equal to that of the other girls. The council must have been delighted with this wise advice which they received from one so skilled in war."

Then Athlah went on to say, "Set a weasel to catch a rat. I do not wonder that Realmah sees through the deep designs of the false Phelatah. Even with my poor wit, I have observed that these emissaries, called ambassadors, are not so very unlike old women, being taken from the ranks of those elderly warriors who have not been greatly renowned in war, and have somehow from excess of bravery no doubt, managed, through a long career of warlike service, to return from battle without such vulgar signs of it as wounds. We, mere rough men of war, often fail to understand those sage ambassadors; but feminine craft, when matched against theirs, from its kindred nature, easily discovers their false designs and cunning

purposes. Realmah dear,[5] I congratulate you upon your rendering such great service to the state."

Realmah had not attempted to interrupt this sneering tirade of Athlah's, nor did he show, by look or gesture, that it affected him in the least. It was not quite the same when Talora, after laughing heartily at Athlah's sayings, maliciously added, "That Athlah must recollect that, if Realmah had not had much practice in the art of war, he had invented two or three new ways of playing mikree.[6] Besides, with his clever tongue, he would out-talk even the girls, and so keep them in order."

Realmah laid his hand lightly upon Athlah's arm, and said, "The All-powerful One, not to be named, has given you strong arms and brave ones, Athlah; He has also given you a strong and cruel tongue; but He has not blessed you with a big heart; for if He had, you would not pour insult upon one who has been weak and maimed from his birth, and who cannot answer you in the only way in which you deserve to be answered, and which you would best understand."

Athlah, who, though coarse and violent, was not really a bad-hearted fellow, and a thoroughly brave man, felt the rebuke keenly, and blushed a blush that was quite visible even under his dusky skin, stammering out something about people not understanding what was merely spoken in jest.

Realmah then approached Talora, and said, "Always as witty as beautiful; but still I think Talora might have been kinder to her poor slave, remembering too that it was to please her, when they were boy and girl together, that he invented the new ways of playing mikree, which he is proud to see still find favour with the mikree-playing boys and girls of Abibah."

He then smiled, bowed, and began to retire.

As he reached the matted hanging which was at the entrance of the apartment, he found that Athlah had intercepted him, and in an awkward way was holding out his hand. Realmah grasped it warmly, for he felt that the rude soldier meant to offer an apology, which was a great effort of good nature for him. While still retaining Athlah's hand in his, Realmah said, "You have a bigger and a better heart than I supposed, Athlah; forgive me for having spoken so unjustly and unkindly."

Realmah then took his departure, and walked wearily back to his own home, where he neither expected, nor sought for, consolation.

As he walked he muttered to himself, “The she-spider for fierceness, and the she-adder for spite” (a proverb of the Sheviri, probably directed against women). “I suppose the proverb is true,” he added; “and that the same thing holds good throughout all nature.”

But not the less did he love Talora. Her faults were the faults of her sex; her merits all her own. If the tolerance that is created by love could be carried into other relations of human life, what a happy world it would be!—almost realizing Christianity.

When he had returned to his own home, he was kindly greeted by his wives, the Varnah and the Ainah. The Ainah looked wistfully at him, expecting and hoping to hear some account of his success. But he was silent upon that subject.

The good Varnah scolded him heartily for being late for his meal, and said that he was like no other person in Abibah, but was always late. She had, however, prepared for him, knowing that he would be tired, what she had heard him say that he liked best. Realmah thanked her, and praised her for her thoughtfulness, and then, during the meal, chatted pleasantly about household matters and household goods, to the great delight of the Varnah, who said to herself that some day Realmah might become quite like other people, which was the greatest praise that she could give to anybody.

The Ainah said nothing, fearing to ask the questions which she longed to ask, and conjecturing his failure at the council from his silence.

Realmah’s heart and soul were far away from household stuff, meditating battles, sieges, and surprises, in which Realmah himself was not to take a small or unimportant part.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TREACHERY OF THE PHELATAHS.

Realmah felt bitterly the cold reception he had met with from the council of the chiefs; and he had not the slightest idea that his proposition had received a favourable hearing.

On the ensuing day, after the council had been held, the ambassador from the Phelatahs was dismissed, with an assurance,

however, that in two months' time the forces of the Sheviri should join those of the Phelatahs, just where the river Coolahva falls into the great lake.

Notwithstanding this friendly assurance the council had resolved to adopt Realmah's advice—at least, so far as to divide their forces into two bands: the one was to march along the margin of the lake, while the other, starting a day or two earlier, was to make its way through the woods—the two divisions having previously arranged a system of correspondence by means of signals.

Athlah was entrusted with the command of the main body, which moved along the margin of the lake, while Realmah had the guidance of the detachment that was to force its way through the woods. There was much murmuring at Realmah's being entrusted with the command of these troops. The excuses given for his appointment were, that the idea of sending this second division was his; that the men of whom it consisted were not the flower of the army; that, in all probability, they would never be engaged, and that they were merely sent by way of precaution, and were to return, if possible, unperceived by their allies, should their countrymen not require their assistance.

Every arrangement having now been made, the expedition set out and joined the Phelatahs. Nothing occurred for some little time to justify any suspicion. At length, however, it was to be observed that the Phelatahs far outnumbered their allies; that, when the united forces halted during the march, it was the Phelatahs who occupied always the most commanding positions; and, moreover, there was an air of triumph about them that did not fail to rouse the attention even of the fearless and unsuspecting Athlah.

The united troops continued their march. Slight occasions of dispute arose which were made the most of by the chiefs of the Phelatahs. Finally, under pretence of there being insubordination (although there had been no question of allowing supremacy to the Phelatahs), the principal leaders of the Sheviri were seized and bound; gratuities were offered to the common soldiers; the mask was entirely thrown off: and the unfortunate Sheviri found themselves incorporated in a foreign army.

Gratuities, however, do not compensate for insults; and the common soldiers felt themselves as much aggrieved as their chiefs,

who had been released from their bonds, but who were strictly guarded as they marched along, and were treated in all respects as hostages, if not as captives.

Tidings of this treachery on the part of the Phelatahs did not fail to reach Realmah. He skilfully prepared a night surprise, which was so far successful, that after a fearful and confused contest, he was able to liberate the chiefs of the Sheviri, and to cover the flight of the main body of men into the adjacent woods, from whence, burning with a sense of injury, they returned to their own town in a few weeks after they had left it.

The whole army felt that Realmah's prudence had saved them; and he became, for the moment, the hero of the Sheviri.

His return to the city was welcomed in a triumphal manner, for, though the Sheviri had suffered much in the night attack and in the subsequent contest, to have escaped so great a disaster as the capture of their finest body of troops was held to be a signal cause of triumph.

Immediately a meeting of the great Council of the Four Hundred was held, and the whole of the transactions of the short campaign were explained to them by Athlah and Realmah.

Realmah's speech was eminently judicious. He said not a word in self-glorification, nor did he in any way refer to his past warnings, but merely mentioned to the great council that he had laid some facts before the Council of the Three Fours, which facts had accidentally come to his notice, and which had led them, in their high wisdom, to make such arrangements of the forces as had insured a complete defeat of the wicked design of the Phelatahs. When he left the council he had not by self-praise exhausted any of the gratitude and respect which he now felt sure would be entertained for him by his nation.

That there is nothing new under the sun was the remark of wearied Solomon. Not wholly a true remark; for was not Christianity a new thing? But still the saying holds good for the most part in human affairs. The system of the Roman Empire of having a Cæsar as well as an Augustus had been adopted, or rather anticipated, long ago by the Sheviri, and had doubtless been borrowed by them from some more ancient nation. There was at this moment a vacancy in

the office of Cæsar, *i. e.* of second in command to the chief of the East. The name of this office was Luathmor. By general acclamation this great office was conferred upon Realmah. The insignia consisted of a coronet rudely formed of dark polished stones and feathers, and of a blue scarf called the shemar. The shemar, however, did not strictly belong to the office of the Luathmor, but had almost always been granted at the same time to the person on whom that office had been conferred.

No one murmured when it was decreed unanimously by the Council of the Four Hundred and by the Council of the Three Fours that permission to wear the blue shemar should be conferred upon the young chief, Realmah, whose sagacity had gone far to save the republic; for men are always very grateful just at first, and when the remembrance of the service rendered is fresh and warm in their minds.

After the reading had finished, I am sorry to say that we had rather a painful scene. Sir John Ellesmere has great merits, as every one knows; and I am sure no one admires him more than I do; but he is one of those persons who indulge in intellectual antipathies. This Mr. Cranmer is just the man to keep Sir John in a perpetual state of irritation.

I cannot recollect exactly how the conversation began, but I think it was by either Mrs. Milverton or Lady Ellesmere saying, "Oh, how I wish our dear Mr. Dunsford were alive; how delighted he would be with the character of Realmah, and with all the proceedings that took place in the great Lake City."

My readers may perhaps remember that the former conversations of the "Friends in Council" were collected by a good clergyman of the name of Dunsford, who had been tutor to Mr. Milverton and Sir John Ellesmere.

Mr. Cranmer then remarked, that Sir John must have been a great torment to Mr. Dunsford, and must have given him many an unhappy hour.

Ellesmere. Sir, I did nothing of the kind. Dunsford thoroughly understood me. I never gave him an unhappy hour, or an unhappy five minutes. It was impossible to admire a man more than I admired Dunsford; and of course he knew it. These simple,

unselfish, transparently good people, like Dunsford, are the salt of the earth, and happily they are to be found everywhere. You cannot enter into any small portion of society, but you find them there, believing in the good of everybody, and bringing out the good points of every character. Sir, I am not such a fool as not to have known how far I could go with dear old Dunsford. I never provoked him more than such a man ought to be provoked, in order to show forth the full beauty of his character.

Cranmer. Crushed herbs are very sweet.

Ellesmere. Sir, he was never crushed by me. He was not one of those men who require to be trepanned in order that a joke, or a jesting objection, should be inserted into their dense brains. He was a good clergyman, and not an obtuse official man.

Cranmer. Oh, of course I am very obtuse, Sir John. I am sure I did not mean any offence.

[Ellesmere got up, and, in his pleasantest manner, offered his hand to Mr. Cranmer.]

Ellesmere. Now don't be angry with me, there's a good fellow: we shall be famous friends when we understand one another better; only it is rather hard upon one to be obliged to explain that one does not mean any harm by one's foolish talk. Don't imagine, Mr. Cranmer, that I don't appreciate you. Didn't I listen to you most patiently, and vote with you too in all emergencies, when you were fighting the estimates the last session when you and I were in office together? and I declare no man could have done it better than you did, and I sympathised with you thoroughly. [Turning to us, Ellesmere continued:] What a hand at explanation he was! Some foolish person wished to understand something about an estimate, and presumed to ask a question. Cranmer rose to explain; he was lucid, frank, candid, especially candid; and when he sat down, the House felt that something had been well explained, and yet one understood less about the subject generally than one did before. Now I take this to be a triumph of skill on the part of a great Government official.

Moreover, it is not a delusion impressed upon us by him, for really one does often find that when an explanation is given of any complicated matter, one understands less about it than one fancied

one did before; and that the question one had asked was silly and irrelevant. I can assure you, grave official men on both sides of the House used to nod approval when Cranmer was giving any of his clear and candid explanations.

[Mr. Cranmer took Sir John Ellesmere's hand, and gave it a most friendly grasp. The talk about the estimates had mollified him.]

Cranmer. It is impossible to be angry with you, Sir John; you make such pleasant fun of all of us.

Ellesmere. It does me good to hear you say so: we will never have a dispute again. Quarrels are such vulgar things; and you are the last man in the world I should like to quarrel with. You are made to be in office; and does not one always want some little job or other done, which the Secretary of the Treasury can further?

[We all made a point of laughing loudly at this last speech, and harmony was from that moment reestablished; Sir John Ellesmere resumed the conversation.]

Ellesmere. I must show Cranmer that I can be very serious, and I declare I am really much interested in this history of Realmah.

But is it not asking too much from us to believe that this semi-savage was such a great politician?

Sir Arthur. Mr. Milverton has been making me read that epic he talked to us about—namely, the "Araucana;" and I do assure you that there are speeches in that epic which show us that some of those savages—as you call them—possessed a high kind of political wisdom. "Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona;" and I do not see why there should not have lived considerable statesmen in the earliest times of the world's history. You must remember, too, that their statesmanship was of a much easier character than ours: that they had not the complicated questions arising out of a state of high civilization to deal with.

Ellesmere. You have been in high office, Sir Arthur, and you might really tell us whether Milverton speaks truly and justly, when he asserts that there is so much to be done in the way of improving Government action, even amongst ourselves, who imagine that we are the best governed people upon the earth.

Sir Arthur. If I understand Mr. Milverton, I think he is quite right. I can see that he wants more intellectual power brought to the aid of

Government. You and I were at college together, Ellesmere; though I am sorry to say we saw very little of one another.

Ellesmere. I was a poor man, a sizer, and had to make my way in the world; you were a rich one; and people do not often meet who live at different poles of the pecuniary world.

Sir Arthur. But I have no doubt you knew Alwin?

Ellesmere. Oh yes: the cleverest fellow I ever did know.

Sir Arthur. Well, when I came into office, one of my first thoughts was whether I could get Alwin into the service of the Government; but he is a married man, and has a large family, and is making a lot of money quietly as a consulting counsel. There was nothing I could offer him. What would the Treasury have said to me if I had asked them to give 3,000*l*. a year to what Milverton calls an "in-doors statesman?" It would have been no good pointing out to them that such a man might save us 30,000*l*. a year. Mr. Cranmer is not on my side of politics, but he knows very well what an enormous difficulty I should have had, to persuade any Secretary of the Treasury to give 3,000*l*. a year to such a man.

Well, there is nothing hardly that that man does not know, besides being a good lawyer. He is a man of the greatest general knowledge that I ever met with; and it happened that he was especially skilled in matters relating to my department. But I might as well have tried to have got the man in the moon to work with me as to have got Alwin.

Ellesmere. Milverton's nymphs are very valuable personages; and they never charge any money for their advice.

Milverton. Do not sneer at my nymphs; they are as useful to me as Pope's sylphs were to him in the "Rape of the Lock."

But to talk seriously about Government. Do look at the difficulties; consider that at every step that a Government takes it is beset by importunate and powerful interests. Then look at the overwork of the principal men connected with the Government. Then see how the House of Commons is absorbed, not in its own proper work so much as in that which scarcely belongs to it, in executive as well as in legislative business. Giving Parliament credit for immense ability, we must admit that it is a body not fit for every kind of business.

Ellesmere. Bureaucracy! bureaucracy! Milverton always associates himself in imagination, and probably in reality, with whatever is bureaucratic.

Milverton. I do not admit that. But I want to bring before you another matter bearing closely upon this subject, and that is the unpleasantness of the capital as a place of residence. This will some day exercise a most malign influence over public affairs.

Ellesmere. This is a new idea: but I really do not see exactly what it means.

Milverton. I almost despair of making you see it; but I can tell you that the permanent officers of State—those men upon whom every Government must mainly rely—would well understand what I mean. No sooner does any opportunity arise for getting away from London, than all important people quit it.

But I return to Ellesmere's attack upon me respecting my bureaucratic tendencies.

I maintain that there is not a person in England who has a greater horror of bureaucracy than I have. I only want to point out to you, that there are certain things which can only be done by bureaucracy. I have talked all this over before, and therefore I am aware that I am only repeating myself. Do you remember that passage in Aristophanes, where some good citizen resolves to make peace or war upon his own account simply, and to deal with the enemy himself?

Ellesmere. I never read that improper book Aristophanes, but I am willing to take for granted what you say.

Milverton. Well, you see how absurd it is for a private individual to talk of making peace or war by himself alone. But perhaps you do not see that there are many other matters in which also he cannot act alone. What I am driving at is, to establish a wide distinction between those things that can be done by a private individual, and in which he ought not to be interfered with, and those things in which the State must act for him.

Take sanitary matters—take education; these are things in which a private individual cannot act very forcibly. They must be transacted by Government.

Ellesmere. True: speaking as an individual, I decline to have anything to do with main drainage, or the Conscience Clause.

Milverton. Then you admit that there are some subjects in which the bureau must act for the general community; and I am quite willing that the bureau should be confined to this action.

Ellesmere. I was greatly struck, Milverton, by the remark you made a little time ago, that the aversion to London on the part of men of importance is a serious injury to public business. Do you hold to it, and is it really your own?

Milverton. I do hold to it, but it is not altogether my own. A late Under-Secretary of State used often to talk over the matter with me, and we thoroughly agreed upon it. I maintain that the celebrated Chancellor Oxenstiern's maxim, "*Quantulâ sapientiâ regitur mundus*," is only partially true, and that "*Quantulo tempore regitur mundus*" would be a much more valuable maxim. The truth is, most men of average ability are very capable of estimating good arguments, *pro* or *con*, about any matter; and for my own part, I would rather have the attention of an average man for two hours, when the business really requires that time for discussion, than the attention of the cleverest man in England who will only give you one hour.

Ask any person who has really mastered the details of any great subject, and who has had to lay them before other people for decision. You will seldom find that he complains of any want of apprehension on their part, but that he will bitterly complain that he was not allowed time enough to lay before them the whole matter with all its bearings.

Now, the time to be given for considering a great subject is sure to be very much limited when people are very anxious to get away from the spot where the discussion takes place. And so it becomes a matter of great importance that the capital of every country should be a pleasant place for residence, as the main business of the country must be transacted there.

In all committees and councils, it is to be observed that the man of endurance and perseverance, who may, after all, be a very inferior man in point of thoughtfulness, will ultimately have too much power and influence. And it will be putting additional leverage into his

hands, if he knows that the cleverest men amongst his opponents will be anxious to get away at a certain time, and that he can gain his point by outstaying them, whether he outreasons them or not.

Sir Arthur. I want to bring another branch of the subject before you. I think there might be a better division than there is of the functions of government. For instance, I would have a Minister of Justice, who should attend to matters of justice only. I would at the same time have a minister whose sole duty it should be to attend to the physical well-being of the community. I am not sure that I would not also throw upon him the business of education. And then, to make room for this important minister, I would cancel those offices which are becoming obsolete, I would, for instance, cancel the Privy Seal, in order to make room for a Minister of Health and Education.

Milverton. I entirely agree with you, Sir Arthur. Then there is another thing I would do. I would certainly make more use of the men who hold second-class places in Government. I think it is very hard upon them that, for the most part, they have their tongues tied, and that they are distanced in public estimation by those who are called independent members, who, being free from official trammels, have opportunities of distinguishing themselves which are denied to official personages of the second class.

Sir Arthur. This is very difficult, Milverton. You see, it would be a very serious thing for an Under-Secretary of State to be speaking in a contrary sense to his chief.

Milverton. I know all that, but I would occasionally give him an opportunity of distinguishing himself. I would entrust him, for instance, with the sole conduct of some great measure.

Ellesmere. How true men are to themselves and their old positions! Sir Arthur cannot forget that he has been a Secretary of State.

Milverton. But where the greatest opportunities for improvement in government lie, are in Colonial affairs. We really must come, before long, to some definite principles as to how we are to deal with our Colonies; and in any change of Government, the minister about whose appointment I feel the most anxiety is the Minister for our Colonial affairs. No father ever had a more difficult problem put before him, when he has growing-up boys to deal with, than we have

in the management of our Colonies. It would be very hard upon England to be dragged into an expensive war for any of these Colonies.

Sir Arthur. And, on the other hand, it would be very hard to desert them in the time of need.

Milverton. How to reconcile, in a just manner, these two lines of policy is, you may depend upon it, the greatest question of the present day.

Nobody seemed inclined to combat this proposition. The ladies said it was getting late; and so we ordered the carriages and returned to Worth-Ashton, after a very pleasant day spent at the little inn near the harbour, which, as we left it, was overflowed by the full tide, and, with the setting sun upon it, looked most beautiful and attractive.

As we drove away, Ellesmere nudged Milverton, and said, "You see good temper has come over the landscape, and over us." Then in a whisper, "I assure you I won't break out again with Cranmer, whatever he may say to me. But then, you know how I loved Dunsford; and I believe he was nearly as fond of me as he was of you, though of course your views always suited him better than mine did. Poor dear man! What a large bit of life the loss of such a man takes out from us for ever! Yes, for ever!"

5. Athlah used the word *klava*, the feminine form of the word "dear."

6. A sort of game like prisoner's bars.

CHAPTER VI.

In commencing this chapter, I must say something about Mr. Mauleverer.

To me, with his undisguised love of eating, and his dreary depreciation of all human affairs, he was certainly a disagreeable character. I intimated something of this kind to Mr. Milverton. He replied, "My dear boy, what I dislike in you young people, is your terrible want of tolerance. Certainly, as a man grows older, he loses some of the refinement and some of the absolute straightforwardness that belong to youth; but he generally gains something that is of more worth than what he loses—namely, tolerance, or to use a more Christian word, charity. Now, that sensual man, as I know you think him to be, is a most devoted friend, and would lay down his fortune and his life, and even his truffles, for us, his friends. Shall I tell you what he did a few months ago? He had half his fortune placed in one of those banks about which there were the worst rumours. He came to me, and talked about it. I naturally advised him to withdraw some of the money. 'No,' he said, 'I cannot do it. This banker's father once aided my father, and I will partake the fall of the house, if it does fall.' And he has partaken it; and, what is more, you will never hear a murmur from him upon the subject.

"Now, you know, I am not going to dislike such a man as that, merely because he has an inordinate love of truffles—which, by the way, I think a most overrated fungus."

I never said anything more against Mr. Mauleverer.

There is another of our companions about which I must say something. Everybody, I imagine, supposes that he, or she, has the most wonderful dog in existence; but I do believe that it is no delusion on our part to declare that we have the most unapproachable dog—I mean unapproachable in a good sense. She is a bull-terrier. All the ladies vow that, with her white body, red eyes, and protruding lower lip, she is hideously ugly; whereas, on the other hand, all the gentlemen maintain that she is "beautiful exceedingly." And Mr. Milverton will become quite eloquent about the tenderness and the pathos that are expressed in her face. He has given her the rather inappropriate name of "Fairy." She is the only

dog I ever knew that could kiss. Most dogs slobber over you, and make you very uncomfortable, while you are receiving their most affectionate attentions; but Fairy can give you a dry kiss. Another most extraordinary thing about her is that, when she is very happy and comfortable, she purrs like a cat, only with a noble and more sonorous purring.[7] Of course, she and Sir John Ellesmere became good friends on the first day they met, and nothing could be prettier to see than the way in which, when she was walking off with him, and was recalled by Mr. Milverton, she would leave Sir John Ellesmere, wagging her tail, looking back occasionally at him, and almost saying—at least in very distinct dog language—"I should like to go with you of all things, but I must stay with my master; he always works better when I am at his feet in the study."

Mr. Milverton would not humour Sir John Ellesmere in his wish to have the readings always in the library, and to-day he resolved to have it on a lake that is not far from Worth-Ashton. We call it a lake; but, really, it is only a pond of about thirteen acres. Ellesmere pretended to dislike this arrangement, but I suspect approved of it thoroughly.

As we were punting up and down the lake, before taking up our abode in a new duck-house, which the benevolent proprietor (with whom Mr. Milverton was acquainted) had built for the wild ducks, but which they had not yet inhabited, Ellesmere startled us by the most violent exclamations of surprise, and entreated us to stop.

Ellesmere. Don't hurry on in that way, I see a buried lake city.

We will change the *venue* from Switzerland to Hampshire; and here is the city. How clear the water is! I declare I see at the bottom a dead cat, an old spade, and a decaying basket. Here are quite enough remains to indicate a lake city. What would not Milverton deduce from a dead cat, a spade, and a basket? Intercourse with Persia, abundant iron foundries, and the textile arts carried out to perfection. If osier twigs can be woven into baskets, why not silk, or cotton, or linen thread, into their respective fabrics? I do believe there is a bit of rag attached to the basket, and, if so, what a field of civilization lies before his imaginative mind!

Sir Arthur. What a beautiful thing even this small lake is! Look at the exquisite roundings off of all corners of the land.

Then the water weeds, the water insects, the lazy, happy fish——

Ellesmere. The water-rats too—those engaging little creatures! How Fairy would like to get at them! For my part, I should like to be a fish. Fishes seem to have so little bother with their relations and their families. Now what a life Fairy led us, as long as she had that pup of hers!

She was always bringing it in her mouth, and introducing it, saying as plainly as possible, "My son, sir," "My eldest son," "Quite a genius:" and, in fact, she introduced it so early into good society, and so overwhelmed the poor little creature with her attentions, that it died prematurely.

Johnson. It was a most curious thing to see how, if you asked her, "Where is your pup, Fairy?" she led the way at once, wagging her tail like a pendulum all the time, to her kennel. Now, how could she know what was the meaning of those words?

Ellesmere. Some wit has said, "Good Americans, when they die, go to Paris." I should like to invert the Darwinian theory, and to say that all good men and women, when they die, have, for a time, the honour of becoming dogs. On second thoughts, the women never: they become cats.

But, to return to my ambition to become a fish. You see, fish fathers seem never to have anything analogous to paying college debts for their eldest sons; but that is not all. Oh, the life Lady Ellesmere led me, after little Johnny was born, about his teeth! Nine times a day at least did she drag me up to the nursery, to show me the advent of two little teeth. Never before, I was informed, had any child been known at that age to have two teeth. I was obliged to swear that I felt them, otherwise I saw that Lady Ellesmere and the nurse would declare that I was a perfect brute. Now, you know, if you were a fish father, and had about a million of children, the mother could not be lugging you about for ever to feel for the teeth of the little darlings, and compelling you to swear that you felt these interesting molars, whether you did or not; but I must say that Fairy was quite as tiresome as Lady Ellesmere, and you see the consequence.

After punting about till we were tired, we took refuge in the duck-house from the sun, and, having had the precaution to bring

camp-stools with us, we were soon very comfortable. This building was therefore inaugurated in a way which, I should think, no duck-house had ever been before.

We had hardly seated ourselves, before the conversation was commenced by Sir John Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. Let us have a cigar. Mrs. Milverton and Lady Ellesmere are very like ordinary women. Womanity is strong in them. They scold like the rest of their sex; they delight, in a delicate way, to show forth the weaknesses of their respective husbands; they can, both of them, pout and look injured; and they can cry at you. At least Lady Ellesmere can; but I do not care now a bit about women's tears, since I have ascertained from Faraday[8]—a glorious fellow that—that tears are merely chloride of sodium, carbonate of lime, and general folly. I do not know whether I have the chemicals quite right; but, at any rate, since I have heard of this chemical analysis, I do not care for tears.

Lady Ellesmere. I never cried at you but once, John; and then you know you were most cruel to me. We were travelling abroad, and though I was tired to death, he would not stop at a particular place where I wanted him to stop. He said it would interfere with his arrangements, and that I must go on. I never knew him, before or since, to be so hard-hearted, and I confess to having cried.

Ellesmere. Now, my lady, I am not going to be thought a brute by this intelligent company. You know, if you have a weakness in the way of fear, it is being afraid of the cholera; and I had heard that they had the cholera very badly at the place where you wanted to stop.

Lady Ellesmere. Well, really, John, you might have told me that afterwards, and not have allowed me to think you so very unkind.

[Here she took his hand, and made a playful bite at it.]

Ellesmere. You see the form that gratitude takes with women. But where was I? Oh, that Lady Ellesmere and Mrs. Milverton are not angels in a general way, but ordinary women—except in the article of smoking, and there they are regular angels, for both of them pretend to like it.

[Ellesmere lit a paper and proffered it for the general cigar-lighting of the company.]

You do not know what I offer you in this lighted paper: a possible Ellesmerian fortune. This paper is good enough to inform me, that if I will take any of the numbers from 3,142 to 4,296, all of them lucky numbers, in the Vienna Lottery, I might get a chateau in Styria. I really believe I should take some tickets, for the fun of the thing; but the awkward part of it would be, if one were to get the prize. I am sure I should not know what to do with a chateau in Styria. I should feel like Winkle in "Pickwick" with a dreadful horse, possessing a property which I was obliged to retain, but could neither make use of, nor govern.

Cranmer. You would not really encourage the wickedness of lotteries?

Ellesmere. I don't want to quarrel with you, Mr. Cranmer; and, in fact, it is agreed that we are to be fast friends—if, indeed, Mr. Cranmer can be fast in any way. I must, however, deny your main proposition about the wickedness of lotteries.

Milverton. So do I. I remember I was once condemning lotteries in the presence of one of the wisest and best informed men of the day; and, to my astonishment, he put me down effectually, and showed me that I had never considered the subject.

But let me take you away from lotteries for a moment, and talk to you about this man, for he always offered to my mind a problem which I have never been able to solve, and which I should like to submit to this worshipful company. We will discuss lotteries afterwards.

Well, what I want to lay before you is, how some men know so much as they do about books, and how they retain in their minds such a quantity of information, upon all manner of subjects.

I don't speak to you about your Macaulays, Hallams, Carlyles, Grotes, and Milmans, but about men who attain no great eminence in the world, yet who are as full of information upon all human subjects as an egg is of meat.

Now, this man—we will call him Carrick, for he is such a modest person that he would not like me to tell you his name—I assure you one never found him at fault upon any subject of conversation that came uppermost; and his knowledge was of the most accurate and minute kind. He knew everything that anybody had said about the

currency. If you were to talk to him about the telescope, he would trace it from its earliest beginning, and give to every inventor and improver his due share of the great work. Upon all questions of history he was unrivalled. I don't think he cared much about art, but he knew what every great painter had done, and how his works ought to be classified.

I remember once having got up some subject in history very carefully, having to write about it. Now, you know what pains one takes with all the details of a subject, when one is getting it up not merely for the sake of study, but to express one's own opinion about it. I happened accidentally to talk to this man upon the subject. He had not studied it for twenty years, but there was not a point with which he was not familiar—how the King adopted a certain line of policy, while the Prime Minister opposed it—how, in the campaign that followed, the general, misled by false intelligence, most injudiciously threw forward his right wing, enabling the enemy to cross a river without resistance, &c. &c.

Now, how does any one ever acquire and retain accurately such a vast amount of knowledge?

Sir Arthur. I think I can do something towards explaining the phenomenon. Dr. Johnson let us a good deal into the secret of judicious reading. You know that he said he had never read a book through in his life. Of course, he understood the art of consummate skipping.

Well, then, the physical part of reading is an art in itself. Some men seem to read half a page at a time. And then again, as to memory, we know that some men possess memories such as can hardly be imagined by other men. Consider such a phenomenon as the calculating boy.

Ellesmere. I think a great part of the explanation rests in this, that the great readers know how to get at what we lawyers call the *charging* parts of a Bill in Chancery. I am quite sure that I could, in twenty minutes, get up a case that would take any of you people two hours and a half, because I know where to look for the charging parts.

Sir Arthur. That is only another way of putting the explanation I have given.

Cranmer. I want to recall you to the subject of lotteries. I should like to hear anybody maintain that they are not very culpable transactions.

Milverton. Have you any hope of abolishing that spirit of speculation which is innate in mankind? If it does not break out here, it will break out there. You have horse-racing and roulette-tables. Now lotteries are much better than these, because they take up much less time, do not necessarily bring one into bad company, and require no knowledge of the subject.

Sir Arthur. Despair is the worst thing that can befall a human being. The heaviest stone that Fate can throw at a man is when she contrives that he can see no possible outlet from his misfortunes. While we are talking to-day, there are thousands of persons who do not see any way out of their troubles, even with all the aid of the sanguine imagination which has perhaps led them into those troubles. Every letter must bring additional difficulties and additional pressure; but give them a lottery ticket, and they have something to hope for which fortifies them for their real work.

Ellesmere. Poor Martha Broom; she loves the green-grocer's man: he loves her; but the marriage cannot take place unless she can obtain some money. If she has put 1*l*. 10*s*. into a lottery with a chance of gaining 200*l*., she sweeps the steps before the house with an air and a grace, resulting from concealed hope. The ticket, in all probability, turns out a blank. On she goes, however, and invests a portion of another quarter's wages in another lottery ticket. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." She abridges her crinoline—no great harm in that—and the steps are still swept by a not utterly desponding person.

Mauleverer. Nothing can show more clearly the misery of the human race than that such intelligent people as you are should make such a defence for lotteries.

Cranmer. What do you say, Sir Arthur? Do you really mean—for you are a statesman—to vote with these gentlemen?

Sir Arthur. I am afraid I must lose somewhat of your good opinion, Mr. Cranmer. I am rather of Sir John's way of thinking. You see such good incidents for plays and novels may come out of a

system of lotteries: it adds another element of romance in the way of sudden changes of fortune.

Ellesmere. Mr. Cranmer respects the Stock Exchange and the Liverpool Cotton Market; but if a poor maid-servant, or a poor ex-Attorney-General, makes her or his little venture, it is an enormous crime. Clear your mind of cant, sir. If Dr. Johnson had said nothing else but that saying, it ought to have immortalized him. By the way, acting upon this principle of clearing our minds of cant, shall we cease to pretend to be interested in the fortunes of Realmah, and take the reading as having been read, and enjoy ourselves upon the lake?

Lady Ellesmere. Oh, no!

Ellesmere. Now, if I were a parson going to preach a charity sermon, and had calculated that the sermon would produce, say, on an average, three shillings and sixpence a-piece from every member of the congregation, and I were to say to them, "Make it five shillings, and I won't preach the sermon," don't you suppose the congregation would close at once with this kind and judicious offer?

Well, if you *will* have the reading, let us get it over quickly. Look at Fairy. Consider her feelings at being obliged to keep quiet, and the bank close to us alive with water-rats! Those are my sentiments, too, my dear Fairy; however, the sooner a thing is begun, the sooner it is over; so let us be quiet, Fairy, and listen to our master.

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FESTIVAL.

They were always glad in the town of Abibah to have an excuse for festivity of any kind. Such an opportunity, therefore, as the rescue of the troops from the treacherous Phelatahs was not to be lost; and a solemn festival was ordained. Great games were to be celebrated on the occasion—such as throwing the flint hammer, wrestling, running, and a curious game called *mocra*, which was played with large balls of burnt clay. The whole of the inhabitants were to come in gala dresses.

For poor Realmah, this festival could only be an occasion for bringing into full light his deficiencies. He could not wrestle, nor run, nor throw the hammer deftly; and, had he been thoroughly

wise, he would have been content to show himself begirt with the *shemar* which he had won, not by personal prowess, but by his superior thoughtfulness and penetration. But who is altogether wise when he is in love? and Realmah intended to play at the game of *mocra*, which was a game requiring at least as much force and swiftness as skill.

The festival was to be held in a mead close to the border of the shining lake.

On great occasions like the present, the causeways (which were frail narrow structures) connecting Abibah with the shore, were so encumbered, that the bulk of the people went from the city to the land by means of rafts, which were moored close to some public buildings in that part of the city which was farthest removed from the land.

Those of my hearers who have ever seen a drawing of the great city of Mexico, as it existed when discovered by the Spaniards, may form a good notion of the city of Abibah, if they will only diminish in their minds the causeways, and make them approach the city from that side only which was nearest to the shore—the city being, indeed, not farther removed from the land than the spot where the deep water (on which depth the Sheviri placed their safety) commenced. These causeways were merely wooden footpaths placed on piles, and rising up gradually from the dry land till they approached the drawbridges. Of course, when an enemy threatened to invade the city, these wooden pathways were destroyed, the drawbridges were pulled up, and the town then became an island fortress.

It was a beautiful day, and all the population of Abibah, except the sick, came forth to view the games. The victors in these games were to be crowned with wreaths of roses; and four of the principal maidens, amongst whom was Talora, were to distribute the prizes. This would be a great day for Athlah.

Talora appeared radiant with beauty. Realmah's two wives were also present. The Varnah, as was befitting, was one of those charged with the distribution of the provisions. The obscure Ainah wandered amongst the crowd, with but one object chiefly in her mind,—namely, to speak, if she could, a few words in favour of Realmah to the beautiful Talora.

In all societies, from the most savage to the most civilized, there are heroic deeds which, as they are performed in the most quiet manner, do not count at all as heroism. It would be difficult to estimate what mental suffering it cost the Ainah to praise her husband to the woman whom she knew was the only one he loved; but into whose character she saw with all the sharpness of a woman's and a rival's instinct, and knew that it was shallow and valueless.

The great chiefs, placed on a raised bank, sat with almost immovable gravity, surveying the populace, and expressing with faint gestures of applause (for this faintness of approval was a sign of high breeding amongst the Sheviri, as it has been before and since amongst many people) their recognition of any feat of skill or valour that was accomplished.

Many times did Athlah have the good fortune to approach Talora as a victor in some game, and to receive from her the meed of praise and the garland that were due to his success. Realmah, as Athlah sneeringly observed, was of more service to his opponents than to his own side, in the game of *mocra*; and, certainly, was among the least distinguished players in the field.

The Ainah had crept up close to Talora, who, noticing Realmah's miserable failures, turned to the girl and said, "Your Realmah had better not have made himself absurd by attempting to partake in the games of men." The Ainah grew pale with anger, and her first thought was to reply, "The Great Spirit does not give all gifts to one man; and, where He has given wisdom, may well deny swiftness:" but she thought that this would be too fine a speech for her, a slave, and might betray the depth of interest she felt in her master. She therefore simply replied: "Our dividers of bread are wise men, and do not give the blue *shemar* for nothing. Should we have any games at all if it had not been for Realmah's foresight?"

Talora looked fixedly at the Ainah, and said, "You are proud of him, then?"

"Of course we are," replied the Ainah, "for is there any young man of his age who is allowed to wear the blue *shemar*?" And then she went into all the details of a seamstress, telling Talora how the Varnah and herself had made this wonderful *shemar*. Talora looked upon her as a useful household drudge, and nothing more, but still

was struck with the spirited reply which the girl had made on her Realmah's behalf.

The two young women talked together for some time; and in the course of the conversation the Ainah contrived, with a heavy heart, but with a most determined soul, to do her duty, introducing many encomiums on the various domestic virtues of Realmah.

This skilful pleading was not without its effect; and Talora, making a sign to Realmah to approach her, said, not unkindly, to him, "You should not have contended in these games; your worth and force lie in another direction. The fox cannot play with the young lions; but yet he may be the wisest beast of the forest." And Realmah was entirely comforted, for he had expected nothing but scorn from Talora for his manifest and ridiculous failures.

CHAPTER VIII.

REALMAH'S COURTSHIP.

It certainly seemed to be a great folly on Realmah's part to have engaged in that game of *mocra*, at which he was sure to cut so sorry a figure. But strangely enough it turned out otherwise. Those who had been beaten at the various games consoled themselves, and did what they could to lower the conquerors, by talking a great deal about Realmah's merits, and putting him forward as the hero of the day. What a man he would have been, they said, if he had been a man at all like the rest of them! One lucky stroke or adroit movement he had been fortunate enough to make; and this was magnified into a proof of great possible dexterity.

His wives, too, had not been idle on the day of the festival. The Ainah had not only insinuated great praise of Realmah into Talora's ears, but, in her quiet way, had gone about the crowd, especially amongst her own people, the fishermen, scattering homely sayings in her rude language, tending to show what a great man her husband-master was in her estimation.

The Varnah, too, amongst the sensible maidens and judicious matrons who were entrusted with giving out the provisions for the day, did not fail to praise Realmah. She looked upon him as one of her chattels; and it was never her practice to lower the value of any property that she possessed. Realmah was no fool, she could tell them. *Peki-Pekee* (a very comprehensive term, meaning good store

of provisions, comfort, abundance, general well-being) was not unknown in their house, and never would be, she thought. In short, she gave out the idea that she was marvellously well contented with her cousin; and all the women thought that, if the prudent Varnah was contented, there must indeed be prosperity in Realmah's home.

At the end of the day, there was a sort of ovation in honour of Realmah, and he was accompanied home by a great crowd, and with loud noise of instruments of music which would not much have delighted our ears, but which were very pleasing to the Sheviri.

All these things produced a great impression upon Talora, for she was one of those who mostly see with other people's eyes, and with whom general report is a kind of gospel not to be questioned. Philip Van Artevelde's severe words about women would have well applied to Talora:—

"What's fieriest still finds favour in their eyes;
What's noisiest keeps the entrance of their ears.
The noise and blaze of arms enchant them most:
Wit too, and wisdom, that's admired of all,
They can admire—the glory, not the thing.
An unreflected light did never yet
Dazzle the vision feminine."

As for Athlah, she had never intended for one moment to listen seriously to his suit. The cunning Talora knew full well that Athlah's wife would be very little better than a slave.

Still, however, she hesitated; still she doubted; and Realmah paid court to the capricious beauty with very dubious prospects as to the result. One day she was gracious, another day she was cold; and the poor young man, throughout his courtship, suffered all the tortures that an anxious, unblessed love can give.

Talora's conduct might have been different if she had had the guidance of a mother, but no mention is made of a mother, either in the case of the Ainah, or the Varnah, or Talora. From this and from other circumstances, it may be inferred that there was great mortality amongst the women in the lake cities. Whether this was caused by a certain hardness in their mode of life, or by the unwholesomeness of dwelling on the water, which was corrected, in the case of the men, by their occupations on dry land in the daytime,

and perhaps also by their drinking freely of a certain intoxicating drink which will be hereafter described: certain it is that the loss amongst the male population by war was balanced by this peculiar mortality amongst the women.

The existence of polygamy is not an argument to the contrary, for it was only allowed in the princely families, and there were perhaps not more than seven persons in Abibah and its dependencies who had more than one wife. Moreover, in any one of these princely families, if the Varnah or the Ainah died, she was not replaced.

Now, according to the rites and customs of the Sheviri, which were very rigid, it was not thought proper for a young man to ask a maiden the direct question whether she would marry him. That would have been thought highly indecorous; but the custom was, that he should present her with a flowering plant (having only a single flower to it) in an earthen vase; and this plant was always put out by the maiden on the flat roof of the porch[9] in front of her father's house, or on some other place fully exposed to the rays of the sun. If she suffered the flower to wither and die, it signified that she would have nothing whatever to do with her lover's suit. If, on the contrary, she diligently watered and tended the plant, and kept the flower alive, that was held to be an acceptance of his suit, and a pledge which must be redeemed.

After having endured a great many slights, and also having received a good many marks of favour, Realmah found the state of things unendurable. His courage came to his aid, and he resolved to put his suit to the absolute test of offering Talora the flower. It was with trembling hands that, at the close of an interview with her, in which, without saying anything definite, Realmah had striven to make himself as acceptable as he could to the maiden, he presented the plant without a word, and withdrew.

It was the custom that, during the days of probation, which were never less than eight, the lover should not make his appearance at the house of his beloved; but he generally contrived to have the house well watched day and night, by some faithful friend, to see what was done with the flower. There was, as may be imagined, a good deal of coquetry shown by the maidens of Abibah in their modes of dealing with this very significant flower.

Some of them paid great attention to it for a day or two, and then let it fade away altogether. Others watered it and cared for it the first day, then allowed it to droop, but finally recovered it by the most diligent care and attention before the end of the eighth day. Others again paid no attention whatever to the flower till it was upon the point of dying, and then bestowed the most loving care on it. There were those, too, who never by any chance went near their flower in the daytime, but in the most stealthy manner contrived at night to tend it and revive it.

Talora proceeded in a manner which was a little different from all of these. She did not hesitate to be seen in the broad daylight looking at her flower, taking it up, and admiring it; but Realmah's foster-brother, who watched for him, could not detect that Talora gave the poor flower any water. Still it seemed to thrive. And this was not to be wondered at, for the cunning Talora, though apparently she only looked at the plant, and took it up, and picked a leaf occasionally, in reality contrived, by squeezing a little wet moss which she secreted in her hand, to give the plant a few drops of water whenever she visited it.

At length the eventful eighth day arrived, and with it the apparent confirmation of Realmah's brightest hopes, for the rays of the rising sun brought out in all their beauty the rich colours of a flower which showed no signs of fading, and which was conspicuous upon the porch that was overlooked by the chamber where reposed the beautiful Talora.

The reservoir (they had reservoirs of rain water which was highly prized) near her father's house seemed that morning to be in especial favour with the humble maidens of Abibah, who were the water-carriers.

Many a young man, too, found some good reason for visiting that quarter of the city very early on that day; and, as he sauntered by Talora's dwelling, did not fail to look up at the flower, and smile or sigh.

The truth is, there had been intense curiosity and interest throughout Abibah about the fate of this flower; and there was hardly a maiden in the whole city—certainly not in that quarter of it where Talora dwelt—who had not told her companions what she should, or what she should not, do if she were Talora.

The youths had betted many shells upon the event; and even the elderly men had talked about it at their councils, for pleasant gossip is not always unwelcome even amidst the discussion of the greatest affairs. The good chief of the South, Talora's father, must have had reason to think highly of his power and sagacity, for it was wonderful how many grave and wise persons sought his counsel, or his aid, that day.

The general feeling about this love affair, which had been very much divided (some saying that Talora would be very foolish, and others that she would be very wise, if she suffered the flower to live), became almost unanimous in approbation when there appeared to be a certainty that the flower would live.

Still, however, Realmah was far from certain of his happiness till the sun should go down, as he had heard of maidens who, by some cunning deadly liquid, had contrived to wither up the flower in the last few hours. Realmah's anxiety was so intense, that, breaking through the ordinary custom, he took the seat of his watcher, and watched all day long himself.

Talora did not come near the flower throughout the day, but it had been so carefully tended by her the preceding seven days that it did not wither, and, when the sun went down, Realmah entered the house, and was received by Talora, half-smiling, half-frowning, as her affianced husband.

She was very provoking, and very charming; but Realmah thought that whatever she said or did was altogether graceful and delightful, not discerning that ways which are often very pretty in a kitten sometimes give sure indication of what will not be quite so pleasant when the kitten develops into the cat.

On Realmah's return home, his wives, the Varnah and the Ainah, had only to look at his countenance to know how his suit had sped. Deeply did the Varnah meditate whether Talora's dowry would thoroughly compensate for the additional burden of a vain and expensive girl on their household. The Ainah, contrary to what might be expected, was heartily glad at Realmah's success in love. She felt proud that she had had something to do with it, and she took delight in the prospect of any happiness for Realmah, however that happiness might be attained. Realmah, though he had never pretended to love what may be called his official wives, or had

expected much love from them, was yet a little hurt (such is the vanity of man) at their apparent indifference as to the coming of the new wife. He little imagined what was in the Ainah's heart. But men will always fail to understand women from the beginning to the end of the chapter—from the days when the sun shone upon many island towns upon the Swiss lakes, to the days when, as now, the waters have recovered their dominion, and the sun shines upon pleasant châlets perched up on the sides of the mountains that overhang those beautiful lakes.

The marriage of the wise Realmah with the beautiful Talora was soon afterwards celebrated with much pomp and festivity; and all the citizens of Abibah, except one or two old men who were near relations of Talora, said that Realmah was a most fortunate man—happy in love, successful in policy, and likely to rise to the highest dignity in the state.

CHAPTER IX.

REALMAH IS ACCUSED OF IMPIETY.

Great felicity in human life is too often but a prelude to great danger; and Realmah had only been a short time married to Talora when he had to encounter one of the greatest perils of his life—a peril, too, which was entirely caused by his success.

Hitherto, only Athlah has been mentioned as a rival in love to Realmah. But there was a far more dangerous person named Parejah, who was also a suitor of the beautiful Talora. He had believed himself to be the favoured one; and was perfectly furious at Realmah's success.

Hatred often gives a keen insight into character; and Parejah inferred, without much apparent reason for his inference, that Realmah was not a very orthodox believer in the religious creed of his fellow-countrymen.

Their religious belief, on the whole, was anything but ignoble. They believed, as has been mentioned before, in one great deity, profoundly reverenced, but never openly worshipped, and hardly even named. His was an awful overruling presence, which gave power to all the lesser deities, who busied themselves with the affairs of men, and with the conduct of the material world. These lesser deities I find were more numerous than I had at first imagined.

In addition to those I have mentioned, there were Pelah the god of air, Varoona the goddess of water, Salera the goddess of fishes, and Baradaja the god of dry land. Then came Manoiah the god of joy, Karoiah the god of sorrow, and Plastuna the goddess of design and formation, in other words of intelligent work. The sun, moon, and the stars had also a worship of their own addressed to them, not that they were gods, but that they were symbols of the great unnameable Deity. This symbolism, however, was far beyond the conception of the populace, who honestly worshipped the heavenly bodies as distinct deities—a practice, which, however repugnant to the notions of the priesthood and the ruling families, was tacitly and somewhat contemptuously acquiesced in by them.

When a comet appeared, it was clearly a signal of displeasure on the part of the highest deity, and somebody was to be sacrificed immediately.

Among the lesser deities, none was more feared than Rotondarah. This deity, who was naturally supposed to be rather malignant than otherwise, was conciliated, sometimes by the sacrifice of animals, but more frequently by the so-called voluntary self-inflicted injuries of his worshippers.

Large sectarian differences had taken place with regard to the mode of worshipping this deity. The strictest sect wounded the four fingers of the right hand. Others maintained that a thumb should be wounded; and there was a bitter feud which subdivided this sect, as to which of the thumbs it should be. Finally, there was a third party of loose believers who maintained that blood drawn from any part of the body was equally pleasing to Rotondarah. Terrible feuds had arisen from these religious differences, which at one time had threatened to dissolve the republic.

The result was, that all the great chiefs and the important official personages ultimately sided with the thumb-wounding party, maintaining it, however, to be a matter of indifference which of the thumbs was wounded, and alternately wounding the right and the left thumb. Thus, holding the balance between the two extremes, they kept the state in peace.

Before proceeding with the narrative, it may be well to enumerate the various sects. They were—

1. The Right-hand Four-Fingerites.

2. The Right-Thumbites.

3. The Left-Thumbites.

4. The Whole-Bodyites.

5. The great official personages, who drew blood (in very small quantities) alternately from the right and the left thumb.

Now Parejah had discovered[10] that, on a solemn festival lately held in honour of Rotondarah, Realmah, who was a man keenly sensitive to pain, had not drawn blood at all. Parejah knew that this would be a great scandal even to the least strict amongst the worshippers; and he cited Realmah to appear before the Council of the Four Hundred on a charge of impiety. Realmah felt that this was one of the critical moments of his life, and that it would go hard with his influence for the future, if he were proved to have dealt in a trifling manner with these solemn rites.

Parejah summoned Realmah's wives as witnesses; and, in a preliminary inquiry, held before the meeting of the Four Hundred took place, they were subjected to a strict examination. But the wives, however conscious of their husband's dereliction, could not be brought to testify directly against him. "They did not know;" "They had not observed;" "Realmah had not spoken on the subject to them:"—these, and the like answers, were all that could be obtained from Realmah's wives.

The Ainah, who under cross-examination appeared particularly stolid, brought out in the most irrelevant way that Realmah, during the day of the festival and the day after, seemed not like himself, but as if confused by deep thought or pain. Realmah, though his sensitive ears were sorely wounded by the Ainah's mispronunciation,[11] caught at an idea from the Ainah's testimony, of which he did not fail to make good use.

This charge then of impiety, not having been disproved at the preliminary inquiry, had to be heard, as a matter of course, by the Four Hundred. Amongst a people who had very few intellectual amusements, public speaking held a prominent place. It is even possible that there have been greater masterpieces of eloquence pronounced in the popular assemblies of those nations which we call savage, than in the senates of the most cultivated and learned

people. It was not likely, therefore, that, when a charge of impiety was brought against the nephew of the chief of the East, so good an opportunity would be lost for hearing a great attack and a great defence.

The day was fixed for the trial, and Realmah looked forward to it with a feeling of utter dismay, knowing that if he were convicted, though the punishment might not be very severe, all influence amongst his people (that influence which, with his ambitious nature, he ardently desired) might for ever be denied to him. He did not, however, fail to summon to his aid all the powers of argument and all that great subtlety which he possessed.

CHAPTER X.

REALMAH'S APPEARANCE BEFORE THE FOUR HUNDRED.

The office of prosecutor was entrusted to the high priest of the deity who was supposed to be offended,—the god of storms. It may easily be imagined with what fervour and with what force of argument he pressed the charge.

Upon whom, he asked, of all the gods did their fate and fortunes more depend than upon Rotondarah, the lord of winds, of thunder, and of storms? They, their families, and their habitations existed only by the sufferance of his mighty will. Was this to be imperilled by the arrogance, or the carelessness, or the impiety, of one young man? He did not deny that Realmah had lately been of some service to the state; but of what weight was any mere earthly consideration of that kind when weighed against the danger of impiety? Any appeal to mercy upon such grounds must be looked upon as a temptation to be sedulously overcome if they, the judges, were not to implicate themselves in the crime of impiety.

They all knew what painful disputes there had been about the modes of worshipping this powerful deity. He wished to heaven that all their nation had adopted that mode of worship which insured most sacrifice to, and therefore most favour from, Rotondarah.

But could anybody, even the most careless of worshippers, contend that no worship of any kind was to be offered at the altar of a deity who had especially favoured their city and their nation? The least strict amongst the sects which unhappily divided the worshippers of Rotondarah, should view with most abhorrence the

conduct of Realmah, if it would not have that conduct set down as a natural result of its doctrines, when received by an irreverent and ill-governed mind.

As to the facts of the case, they would be uncontradicted. In the preliminary inquiry it was shown that the wives of the accused, anxious as they were to screen him, had not been able to produce one single jot of evidence in his favour.

Let the Four Hundred think what the accusation was:—that, at their greatest festival, in the midst of assembled thousands, this presumptuous young man had dared to make a mockery of his pretended worship; and that, whether from cowardice, from insolence, or from impiety, not one drop of his blood had flowed in honour of that powerful deity, whose altars he (the chief priest) never approached without a feeling of his abject unworthiness to minister upon them.

The above is but a faint outline of the speech pronounced by the chief priest against Realmah. There was, however, one great error in it, of which the accused did not fail to avail himself. The chief priest had alluded to their divisions of opinion as regarded the worship of Rotondarah; and Realmah saw in that statement an opening for theological discussion, which would be likely to produce great discord in the assembly, and thus, perhaps, enable him to evade the point in question.

He arose and commenced his oration, of which also but a poor outline can be given. Moreover, the modes of eloquence in different nations are so diverse, that if all of the speech were given, much of it that consisted of fables and apologues, which were highly pleasing to that assembly, might appear tedious to modern minds.

Realmah began by alluding delicately to the motives which he believed had induced Parejah to institute the prosecution. He said that he trusted that these motives were not the promptings of private malice and dislike. For a man of Parejah's eminence in the state to be influenced by such motives would be in the highest degree disgraceful; and the result might be not dissimilar from that which befell Ginkel the fox, whose pious anxiety, not unmixed with motives of self-interest, for his little brother's religious behaviour, ended in the discovery that he, too, was wont to make the eight morning salutations at the wrong time.[12]

He then gracefully rebutted the charge of cowardice. It was not for him, he said, in the presence of men, many of whose lives were graced by numerous deeds of valour done in the service of their country, to allude at length to any action of his, though perhaps it might be allowed him to remark that neither in the advance to, nor the retreat from, Abinamanche[13] had he been conspicuous for cowardice. (There was a murmur of applause throughout the assembly.) As regarded the charge of insolence, could it for a moment be supposed that he, who from his birth had been a helpless cripple, subject to great infirmity, could ever look upon himself as other than the meanest and humblest amongst them?

As to the charge of impiety, he called the gods to witness, and he would appeal to the great Rotondarah himself, whether impiety was not the one thing farthest from his thoughts? (Here he introduced a curious story, which was not unfamiliar to his audience, of how a poor man, who in distant ages had stood aloof from the sacrifices to Varoona, the goddess of the waters, had been signalized by her as her most devoted worshipper—his omission to join in a rite, which after all was but a mere outward sign of love and worship, having only arisen from the intensity of his heartfelt adoration.) Even in the expression of earthly affections, Realmah added, it was not always those who made the loudest demonstrations who had the truest and the most devoted hearts. What if he had been communing in rapt enthusiasm with his nymph, his only thought being how, with her aid, he might show himself most grateful to this adorable deity, Rotondarah? He spoke in the presence of those who had many times been conscious of a similar high ecstasy.

This last was a most skilful touch, for it was a matter of pride amongst the Sheviri to appear at times abstracted from all intercourse with their fellow-beings in sublime communion with their nymphs.

After a pause, Realmah resumed. “That venerable man, the chief priest,” said he, “whose accusations have fallen so heavily upon my soul, must know better than all other men what this rapt communion is; and he might be lenient to another man who had committed an error, if error it be, when his soul was absorbed by the highest discourse.”

The chief priest, he continued, had alluded to the painful divisions in opinion and in conduct which had unhappily beset their nation as to their modes of worshipping Rotondarah. Was it to be wondered at that he, an unlearned young man, humiliated by infirmity from his birth, should hesitate as to what form of worship he should adopt in the presence of Rotondarah; and, in that embarrassment of thought, lose the happy moment for worshipping at all?—that is, in outward ceremony, for he dared any man to say that he had failed in the truest devotion of the heart.

Let them not say that these divisions of opinion were trifling, and that the great Rotondarah was indifferent as to the way in which he was to be worshipped. In matters of small import there might be two ways, equally right, of doing a thing; but not in this. (Here from all parts of the assembly resounded exclamations of assent.) Let them not dare to say, he continued, that the believer, who, for a time, maimed himself by wounding the whole four fingers of the right hand in honour of this divinity, had not some reason for contending that he showed superior piety to the man who coolly drew blood from the thumb of the left hand, which enabled him after his worship to prosecute his ordinary work as if nothing had happened.

A tumult of applause arose from the strict sect of the Right-hand Four-Fingerites, who were in great force in the assembly. Being for the most part men that had made their way in life, and who loved what is called respectability, they had many seats in the Council of the Four Hundred.

Far, too, would it be from him (Realmah) to impute blame to those humble and innocent persons who thought that Rotondarah was not to be worshipped by drawing blood from one part of the body only, but who gave up their whole bodies, it might be to light wounds, but still their whole bodies, in sacrifice to him.

Hereupon there were violent acclamations of approval from the least strict of the sects. A personal altercation also arose between one of the strict sect and one of the least strict, the latter having called the former *a cream-coloured face* (their term for hypocrite), and a fool.

When the feud was settled by the officers of the assembly turning out both the disputants, Realmah continued:—

He had never, he said, been able to appreciate the profound thoughts and subtle arguments which had, doubtless, led those who wounded the thumb to conclude that their mode of worshipping Rotondarah was the most grateful to that deity. But this he did know, that a sect to which the great Leonvah had belonged—the hero who had led their forefathers to a hundred victories—must have a great deal to say for itself. (The name of "Leonvah!" "Leonvah!" was shouted forth with enthusiasm by the Thumbites, quite overpowering some sneering remarks that were made by certain arid theologians of the opposing sects, who said, that a man might hit a hard blow with a heavy hand, and yet be very ignorant of the most important questions in theology.) Realmah resumed:—

Least of all would it be for him to presume to blame the sect from which he sprung, and which contained in its ranks those who held the chief offices of state. In their high sense of duty to their country they had doubtless sought to mediate between the two parties, and had adopted a middle course, seeking to please Rotondarah more by their devotion to the nation, which was under his special protection, than even by outward devotion to Rotondarah himself. Perhaps in their hearts, too, many of them longed to join the one side or the other of the disputants, whom they stood aloof from only to break and still the opposing waves of popular opinion which had threatened to submerge the state.

Here the grave official men nodded approval; while, from various parts of the hall, cries of "time-servers," and "world-servers," and "shell-worshippers," resounded.

The assembly was now in a fearful state of ferment. Sharp theological discussions were being carried on in different quarters of the hall. Loud appeals were made to the *manes* of departed heroes who had held strong opinions on one side, or the other, of the controversy.

The four great chiefs, who had sat apart in the principal seats of honour, situated north, south, east, and west in the hall, approached one another in the centre, and consulted as to whether they should then and there dissolve the assembly. At this moment, vehement shouting was heard outside the hall. Several men fully armed burst in.

A curious and cool observer (had there been one in that large assemblage) might have noticed that these men were either personal followers of Realmah, or belonged to the tribe of the fishermen.

"The enemy are near," they shouted, "some of their watch-fires may be seen on the mountain. To the drawbridges!" and they rushed out, followed at once by the greater part of the assembly. True enough; there were fires just discernible upon several parts of the mountain. The alarm spread throughout Abibah. The guards were doubled at all the drawbridges; large bodies of armed men remained all night in the open spaces of the town; and every precaution was taken to prevent a surprise.

In the morning it was found that the enemy had decamped, and no signs were left of them but the smouldering watchfires and some remnants of half-consumed provisions.

Strange to say, when the town was restored to quiet and order, there was no further prosecution on the charge of impiety against Realmah. Some few zealots sounded the chief priest as to when there should be a further hearing of the case; but the shrewd old man remarked that his nymph had been very gracious in her whisperings to him lately, and that there would be no lucky day in this year, he thought, on which the prosecution could be wisely recommenced. Besides, he added, the young man is either a deep knave or a profound enthusiast; and it might, perhaps, be better to wait for a year to see in which direction his character will develop itself. He might prove their fastest friend: he might become their most dangerous enemy. There were parts of the lad's doctrine which were very sound. Rotondarah, heaven bless his clemency, had waited many years for fitting worship from most men. Perhaps he would deign to wait another year for some suitable reverence from Realmah.

The zealots, who also were not without their craftiness, bowed assent to the words of the chief priest; and Realmah remained unmolested, and not unfeared.

This trial, however, exercised a great influence on his fortunes, for he felt that, on the first opportunity, he must signalize himself by some great deed of valour or of wisdom, for a man who was accused of impiety had need to be very strong in the affections of his

countrymen, in order to efface all memory of the charge from their timid and superstitious minds.

Is it possible that the enemy were never upon the mountain that night? and was it for nothing that the Ainah went from house to house of her tribe, remaining a long time with her brothers, who were the loudest to shout when the armed men broke in upon the assembly on the day of Realmah's trial? If so, Realmah himself did not know it, or was too subtle to know it officially, though he did remark to the Ainah, "how watchful her tribe must be, for they were the first people who seemed to have discerned those fires." The plain girl merely answered that her poor people were, of necessity, great watchers; and after saying this, she hastened to withdraw with a profound obeisance, but a dry smile might have been observed playing upon those lips of hers not far from being beautiful.

Cranmer. I wish to make a remark.

Ellesmere. Silence, silence, for half an hour. Mr. Cranmer wishes to make a remark.

Cranmer. This is too bad, Sir John. I am sure that for every word I utter in this good company, you utter one hundred and seventy-six. Why should I occupy half an hour with a single remark?

Ellesmere. The calculation is exact. Have I not heard you say in the House, "I should wish to address a very few remarks to the House upon this subject," and has not your speech generally lasted for one hour and a half? Now, I take a "very few" to mean three: one remark of yours, therefore, if I do the sum rightly, will occupy half an hour.

Cranmer. Well, we shall see. I was going to say that one great merit of Milverton's mode of telling us this story is, that he never breaks off abruptly and leaves us in suspense. If he brings his hero into trouble, he brings him out again, in the same portion of the narrative.

Now, I daresay you will all despise me, and think that I am a dull, prosaic being; but I must own that I do not care much for fiction. It does not amuse me. Laugh as much as you like, but I prefer a blue book to any novel.

My daughters, however, make up for my want of imaginativeness, and they devour novels. You know these serial things: they are

always reading them. Sometimes they rush up to me, and exclaim, "Oh, papa, how I wish it was the beginning of next month!" Now you know when one comes to a certain age, one is not so anxious for it to be the beginning of next month, when it is only the second or third of this month. But young people think that they have such a large balance in the Bank of Life, that they can afford to draw upon it in the rashest manner.

Ellesmere. I declare that is a very pretty financial simile.

Cranmer. Thank you, Sir John; you are very encouraging. I have not exhausted my half hour yet, and so I will proceed.

Well, I venture to suggest to these dear daughters of mine that I am not so anxious for this rapid passing away of time, to which they reply, "But oh, papa, he is in such difficulty; he must be killed. There is nobody near to save him." This "he" is some fellow in a novel.

Ellesmere. My dear Cranmer, I will restore peace and concord to your household. Teach your daughters the true doctrine of Indispensables.

Cranmer. What *do* you mean, Sir John, by Indispensables?

Ellesmere. Why, don't you know? They are the fellows who, if you get rid of them at one part of the story, must re-appear in another.

Now, Cranmer, you are to be a villain in a novel. I assure you it is a very creditable part to assign to you. I always like the villains best. They are the only business-like people in the concern. I will be the Indispensable.

Now try and get rid of me if you can.

You stab me to the heart, and leave me on the ground. I assure you it is of no use. An Indispensable's heart is quite differently placed from that of any other man. The desperate wound you gave me was in fact the best surgical treatment that could be devised for a slight internal complaint which I labour under; and you will find me as lively as ever in the third volume, and ready to unmask your wicked designs.

Or it is a dark, gusty night. We two are walking the deck alone. You politely edge me over the side of the vessel, and go to sleep in your hammock, feeling that you have done a good stroke of business. What do I do? The ship is only going nineteen knots an hour. I therefore easily swim to her, and secrete myself in the stays, or the

main chains, or the shrouds, or the dead lights, or some of those mysterious places in a ship, which Sir Arthur knows all about. There I stick like a barnacle, and you carry me into port with you. I can tell you that when you are just about to make a most advantageous marriage, I shall put my head in at the church-door, and say "Ha!" with a loud voice, and the whole affair will be broken off.

Or you poison me. Bless your heart, poison has no more effect upon my Mithridatic constitution than ginger-beer—probably not so much.

You bury me. No: you don't. You don't bury *me*, but some intrusive fellow who has thrust himself in, to take my place; for an Indispensable has always about him obliging persons who do that kind of work for him.

Or you hurl me down from a cliff, 300 feet high, and go away thinking you have now really got rid of me for good and all. But, Mr. Villain, you are much mistaken. I, as an Indispensable, inevitably fall upon a sea-anemone, rather a large one, three feet square and two feet thick, very common, however, in that part of the coast.

[Much laughter from all of us.]

The poor anemone is somewhat injured, and I am a little shaken; but I shall appear again at the right time, with my fatal "Ha!" and upset your marriage.

By the way, there is one thing which has never been tried upon the Indispensable. Take him to the House of Commons, Cranmer, and make him attend, for three nights following, from half-past six to nine.

The mixture of irritability and comatoseness which might thus be produced, would bring on what doctors call, at least Dr. Ellesmere does, an apoplectic paralysis.

And then you see, Cranmer, if you did not quite kill him, you could reduce him to idiotcy, which would be nearly as good for your purpose, and enable you to carry on your villany undisturbed.

Oh, how I wish that good people in real life were as difficult to kill as Indispensables in fiction!

Sir Arthur. I am not so sure that I agree with Cranmer. I rather like to be kept in an agony of suspense, and I cannot praise Milverton for being so considerate to our feelings.

Ellesmere. Quite true. Praise is nearly always wrong. However, I am not going to indulge much in it. I see that Milverton makes this rogue Realmah, a perfect politician. Now, is that natural?

Sir Arthur. Well, why not? Do you suppose that all policy is confined to civilized people?

Ellesmere. No; but Realmah, I contend, is an official man of the nineteenth century.

Mauleverer. Then, indeed, he is a rogue.

Ellesmere (who laughed heartily). It is a comfort to find that one always has Mr. Mauleverer to back one up in any attack upon any class or portion of the human race.

But to return to the story. I must say I rather like the Ainah; and Milverton has had the courage to make her not too beautiful.

Milverton. I have never been able to do the Ainah justice. You know that, for the most part, when one endeavours to describe a man or a woman, either in history or in a novel, one is obliged to make it seem like the description of a runaway slave. Who can portray the delicate lights and shadows, the smiles and dimples, which go to make a beautiful, or, at the least, a most expressive, countenance?

By the way, you must not suppose, when I have spoken of the Ainah's hands as being rather large and plebeian, that they had not a beauty of their own; and oh, what an expressive thing the hand is!

Sir Arthur. Very true. The other day I was sitting near one of the greatest men in England (perhaps it was in the House of Commons, but I shall not tell you where exactly), and he was suffering from suppressed anger, and was being bullied from all directions. The man maintained his part admirably: he was calm and equable in reply: when he sat down, he put on an air of repose; he kept himself still, he governed his eyes, he governed that organ difficult to govern, the mouth; but his hands quivered with the emotion he felt, and the veins stood out upon them in stern relief. He little imagined he betrayed to me by those hands all that he felt.

Milverton. I have always noticed that great men, without a single exception, have great hands. I do not mean large hands, but expressive hands—hands that indicate greatness. The late Lord Melbourne almost talked with his hands, and so I must say of the

Ainah. She had not a small hand: she had not hands with tapering fingers, which we admire so much in women; but she had expressive hands, which possess a beauty of their own.

Ellesmere. I do declare, Milverton is in love with the Ainah; and, as Mrs. Milverton has such very pretty hands, according to the usual type, I wonder she is not jealous.

Lady Ellesmere. Don't make mischief, sir. You can do very little good in your generation, and you might therefore avoid doing harm.

Ellesmere. There we have again a truly conjugal remark. No great conqueror, who is a married man, has any occasion, when he is taking his triumph, to have a slave with him in his chariot, to remind him that he is mortal. His dear wife and children—who, by the way, are anything but slaves—will be sure to give him sufficient discouragement (of course for his good), and to convince him that he is anything but a divinity.

I cannot comment much upon this story of Realmah. I am thoroughly puzzled by it. There are many pretty points about the story: the courtship is amusing; the prosecution for impiety is not without its slyness; and it is evident that Milverton has thrown his whole force into the depicting and drawing out of the Ainah. But what puzzles me is, that I cannot see the general drift and purpose of the story. Now, I know the man to be full of purpose, and that he is sure to have some scheme in his head,—some wonderful theory which he wishes to impress upon us all, and upon which we are to begin to act to-morrow morning; but I cannot discern what it is.

Here my master and I interchanged smiles (the reader will forgive me for associating myself with the work). We know very well what we are aiming at, and were pleased to find that so acute a man as Sir John had not found us out too soon.

Sir Arthur. I admire the story very much, and think that great things are yet to come out of it.

Ellesmere. Oh yes, we all know that. That is the regular kind of thing for one author to say to another. It is the fashion of the day for all members of the same profession to speak most respectfully of each other. Sir Robert, my successor, does so of me; I do so of him: what we really think of each other's knowledge of law is best known to ourselves.

The same with the medical profession. Dr. B. is called in to assist Dr. A. What does he say? Nothing could have been more skilful than Dr. A.'s treatment hitherto of the case. He should now, he thinks, begin to throw in a little assafœtida, say 1 drachm, and hydrarg. 3 oz., instead of opii tinct. 9 scruples,—that is, if this slight change in the prescription meets with Dr. A.'s entire approval.

As for authors, they are generally in ecstasies (honest ecstasies!) when talking to one another of each other's performances. Have I not seen a number of serpents in a cage as civil to each other as possible, upreared upon the penultimate parts of their tails, and bowing affably to one another,—in process of time to become quite fond and fondling? I think nothing of Sir Arthur's praise of Realmah.

Milverton. I think it is one of the pleasantest things of our time to see——

Ellesmere. Don't go into it seriously. I only meant an eighth part of what I said, but you are all so matter-of-fact and so stupid.

But what I say about "Realmah" I really mean. The author is a man unwholesomely full of purpose. He would not care to write the most interesting story in the world, not the "Vicar of Wakefield" or "La Petite Fadette," which I think the prettiest story I ever read, except he had some distinct purpose in writing it. It must prove something, or illustrate something; but what that something is in the present case, I cannot for the life of me make out.

By the way, I must make another remark, and that is, that I do not see anything so very clever in the little stories and fables which your lake-men, Milverton, are so fond of. I could invent fables by the dozen.

Sir Arthur. Could you, Sir John? Perhaps you would favour us with one of the dozen this morning?

Ellesmere. With pleasure, in a minute or two: just give me time to think.

Hereupon he walked about for a few minutes. As he got up to walk, I saw him look at Fairy, and was sure the fable would be about a dog. He resumed his place, and began his fable.

A man and his dog were walking along a straight road, chatting pleasantly together.

The road was straight, because it was in the good old times of the Romans; and the two companions understood each other well because in those days the dogs talked dog Latin.

"Yes," said the man, "you certainly are a very clever creature. You make good use of your nose, and your eyes, and your ears. What a pity it is you have not hands like we have!"

"Oh," said the dog, "you don't know, then, that we once had hands like yours, and how fortunate we were to get rid of them? You see even now in the streets that there are some of us who, attended by Helvetii playing musical instruments, walk upright, and gain many denarii.

"But this is how we came to lose our hands. Diana, much pleased with our skill in hunting, resolved to ask great Jupiter to confer some signal boon upon us. We consulted together as to what our kind mistress should ask for us. Some said that men should not be allowed to pick the bones quite so clean before they tossed them to us; others that hares and rabbits should not be so fleet; and others that we should not be called by such mean and foolish names as men are wont to give us. But one prudent old dog said, 'Jove is wiser than we are; let us ask him to take away from us whatever we have now which is most dangerous for us to have.'

"Our prayer was heard, for suddenly our hands became paws, and henceforward we went upon four legs.

"Many of my brother dogs grumbled at this change, and howled to Jupiter that he was mocking us; but Jove replied, 'My good friends, I have done the best I could for you; you might hereafter make as bad a use of your hands as men are making of theirs, and thus in time become as dishonest and wicked as they are.' We acknowledged the wisdom of Jupiter; and so the monkey was left to be, in form as in nature, the creature most resembling man."

The poor Roman could not make any reply, and the dog trotted on by his side, wagging his tail approvingly at his own wit.

Lady Ellesmere. Where is the moral, John?

Cranmer. Yes; where is the moral?

Ellesmere. Moral! Why, my good people, the fable is as full of moral as a pigeon-pie at an inn is—of tough beefsteak.

Moral Number One:—

People are proudest of what they should be most ashamed of; *i.e.* man of his hands, which he makes such bad use of.

Moral Number Two:—

Attend, Lady Ellesmere. It is always better to get rid of a plague or an evil, than to acquire a new good.

Moral Number Three:—

Attend, Fairy. Dogs are better and much honester creatures than men.

Sir Arthur. The fable is clever enough, and has plenty of moral in it—indeed too much—but it lacks simplicity. Who would ever think of quoting it, to illustrate anything?

Milverton. Let me now try my hand at a fable.

The sun was setting; the moon was rising; and one solitary traveller was plodding his weary way across the Libyan desert.

"Madam, my sister," said the sun, "how is it that men are so much more grateful to you than to me? All day long have I warmed that poor traveller, and guided him on his way, yet not a kind word did I receive from him; whereas, no sooner do you make your pale appearance above the horizon, than he breaks out into a song of gratitude, celebrating your goodness and your loveliness."

"Sir, my brother," replied the moon, "your benefits are too manifest, and you take care that all you do for men shall be seen in broad daylight.

"What little I can do for them, how I keep their oceans sweet, is known but to few of them.

"Men try to be sufficiently grateful to you, but they love me, not only for my gentleness and my loveliness, but also for my great reserve."

The great god of day did not deign to make any reply, but went down red and angry into the western waters.

Sir Arthur. This is much better, still there is the same fault, it lacks simplicity; and the moral, namely, that to insure gratitude you should conceal your benefits as much as possible from the eyes of others, is a modern idea, not belonging to the age when fables were best written.

Milverton. I will try another. I will not be beaten.

The Pacha rested by the fountain, the flowing waters of which made an oasis in the desert.

His horse and his camel cropped with delight the green herbage near the fountain. Their shadows lay strongly and darkly upon the grass.

"How beautiful," said the horse, "is that dark form which moves as I move; what grace, what symmetry it shows! I can hardly eat for looking at it."

"It is well enough," said the camel, "but look at this one which moves with me. It has all the symmetry and the grace of the other; *and then, too, it has that pretty little hump on its back*."

A dervish passing by, who knew the language of all beasts, exclaimed, "How good is Allah, who gives to every creature its due share of vanity, so that defects seem to their owner especial beauties and merits!"

Sir Arthur. That is a hundred times better; but, at the risk of appearing captious, I must still say that there is an air of subtlety about it which does not quite befit a good honest fable. However, I will admit that in time, my dear Milverton, you might perhaps write a fable.

Ellesmere. Well, at any rate, he can write a history, for I suppose we must not call "Realmah" a story; and indeed, for my part, I believe it to be as true as almost any history I ever read.

There is one more observation I have to make about it, which has just occurred to me. It is a personal one, and it is that Fairy [here the dog looked up sharply]—Don't look at her: she does not like to be looked at, or talked about; and it would be more delicate if I were to put in French what I am going to say, for she does not understand as much of that language as she does of English. So put yourselves into a Gallic state of mind, and listen to me.

Je trouve que Madame l'Ainah et Madame le Fée se ressemblent beaucoup.

Madame la Fée—(I hope she is not looking at me, is she?)—avec son peau—(is it "son peau" or "sa peau?" I always forget those confounded French genders; oh, "sa peau!" thanks)—avec sa peau blanche, ses yeux rouges, et sa lèvre inférieure un peu développée,

est d'une beauté extrême, pas si séduisante, comme réellement rare et remarquable.

Madame l'Ainah, avec ses petits yeux enfoncés dans sa tête (comme nous a dit M. l'Auteur), ses cheveux presque rouges, et ses mains et ses pieds très larges et prononcés, mais, en même temps, très expressifs—est aussi d'une beauté extrême, mais aussi pas si séduisante, comme bien rare, et bien remarquable.

Elles jouissent, toutes les deux, d'une sensibilité très-douce, d'une intelligence très-exquise, et d'un je ne sais quoi, qui laisse beaucoup à l'imagination.

Hereupon Fairy set up a dismal howl, and then began to bark furiously. It was a most ludicrous scene. Sir John had turned away from the dog, and had been addressing his British French, spoken very loudly, very slowly, and with pauses between the words, apparently to some distant person. Fairy evidently thought that something was the matter, either that Sir John was taken ill, or that there was some enemy in the distance, and that it was her duty to come to the rescue, or to rush into the fray.

We all laughed immoderately, while Fairy continued to bark furiously, and thus the conversation was broken up, for all seriousness was gone from us during the rest of the afternoon, and until we had returned to Worth-Ashton.

7. It may seem trivial, my mention of this animal, but I think that the ways of a household are never understood unless one knows all about their domestic animals,—their cats and dogs, and babies, as Sir John Ellesmere would say. And we are all so fond of animals in our house. My master dotes upon them, and so do I, and so does Sir John. I often observe, that our conversation at dinner-time, when we are alone, turns a great deal upon Fairy's wonderful sayings and doings.

We have a cat named Bijou, a perfect prodigy (of course the world will think that all our pets are prodigies, but so they are). This cat, also entirely white, like Fairy, with eyes of different colours, is chatty, affectionate, and companionable. Sir John says that it is the only perfectly happy and wise creature, not being a fish, he has ever known, ready to forget its anxieties and cares, and go to sleep at all times. It does not know what scratching means: it will walk out with

you like a dog, and is really more attached to the people it lives with than to the house it lives in.

There is no knowing what those animals whom we are pleased to nominate "the lower creation" would become, if they lived with more rational and more humane human beings than those whom they generally have as masters. This is a saying of my master's, not of mine; but I thoroughly agree with it.

8. This was said long before Faraday's death.

9. This porch had an outer staircase to it; it was a place where the maidens, at evening time, were often to be seen sitting at their work.

10. Probably from the man who stood next to Realmah at the festival.

11. One word especially shocked Realmah's ears. *Selouvianah* means confusion of mind, taken rather in a good sense, as bewilderment arising from high thought. The poor Ainah ventured upon this difficult word, which she corrupted into *Sellovee*. It is quite possible that Realmah's blindness to his Ainah's merits proceeded from her barbarous use of language,—such, and so dangerous, are the prejudices, arising from education, which beset even the most thoughtful men.

12. This was a very happy allusion, thoroughly understood by the audience. "Ginkel the fox" was a well-known character, entering often into the fables of the Sheviri. He was a very cunning fox, but never quite cunning enough for the occasion. The following is probably the fable alluded to.

Ginkel and his younger brother, a good pious young fox, go out hunting one morning. The younger brother catches a hen, and prepares to return home with it. Ginkel thinks he should like to have it all for himself. He is suddenly seized with scruples of conscience for his brother, who had that day omitted to make the eight morning salutations which it was incumbent upon all good foxes to make. In fact, he had not said his prayers before going out to hunt. The good younger brother fears that he must not eat any of the hen, but still continues to carry it home.

They then meet a priest-fox, and Ginkel hastens to put the case of conscience to him. The younger brother lays down the hen, and

pleads for himself that he was going to make the eight morning salutations after he returned home.

“Too late, too late! my son,” says the priest-fox, upon which Ginkel is about to take the hen in his mouth. But the priest-fox asks Ginkel at what time he made the eight salutations?

“Oh,” exclaims Ginkel, turning his eyes up to heaven, “long before morning broke, I made my salutations: I never forget.”

“Too soon, too soon! my son,” says the priest-fox. “The day had not begun; the hen has not been properly prayed for; and now can only be eaten by a priest-fox:” saying which he throws the hen over his back, and leaves Ginkel and his little brother very hungry, but much edified.

13. The chief town of the Phelatahs.

CHAPTER VII.

"Another hopelessly wet day, I declare!"

This was the exclamation of Sir John Ellesmere as he stood at the window, having risen from the breakfast table before any of us. Then (aside, but quite audibly), "We shall be sure to have a long reading to-day. Would it not look pretty if I were to ask for it? (*Aloud.*) I trust, Milverton, you will cheer us up to-day by giving us a good long spell of 'Realmah.' I like it more and more; for I perceive that the great author of that work has been considerably influenced by a much greater and wiser man. I need hardly say that I allude to myself. I have always complained that in all stories and novels love occupies too large a part. We have happily got rid of that foolish business in this story."

Johnson. Do not be quite so sure of that, Sir John.

Ellesmere. Oh, Sandy, Sandy! It is your fault, then? You exercise a malign influence over your master, I can see. I really did think that Realmah, having got his wonderfully beautiful, but very disagreeable Talora, his work-a-day Varnah (I like that young woman best, and wish that a certain "party" with whom I am distantly connected bore more resemblance to her), and his subtle Cinderella (with a large glass slipper, though), the Ainah, would now be contented.

Lady Ellesmere. It is a great comfort to me that John does not sometimes take the place of Mr. Johnson, although it might relieve me from much of his company, for he would refuse to take down all the nice sentimental bits we women like so much.

Ellesmere. Now, look here: suppose we were to have biography written after the fashion of novels, it would be something of this kind:—

I will give you the life of a distinguished Jones. It will not take long.

Silence! The Biography commences.

As a boy, Jones was much like other boys. He was good at ringtaw, bad at Greek grammar; and he abominated those truly abominable things called decimal fractions. With that vivacity of expression and that sincerity of feeling which in after-life were always conspicuous

in him, he one day, when quite a boy, observed to his friend Master Smith, that Homer was "a regular beast," and he wished "the beggar" had never been born.

As a youth, he was much like other youths. He was justly proud of his peg-top trowsers; thought the governor a good fellow, but rather slow; spoke his native language with a laboured incertitude which was the fashion amongst the gilded youth of the period; and he used the word "awful" on all occasions, informing those who cared to hear that Smith (observe how true he is in his friendships) was awfully jolly, while Robinson was awfully green. At this period of his life, his opinions did not admit of any nice differences of colour. His black was the blackest of blacks; his white the whitest of whites; and he always thought, and generally said, a fellow was a fool who did not see things exactly as he saw them. That nice appreciation of character which had enabled him to describe so tersely and so faithfully the nature of old Homer, was extended now to sundry other personages, and embraced Aristotle, Tacitus, John Mill, Sir William Hamilton, Paley, and Colenso. It is but justice to Jones to conjecture that he had already perceived a want of orthodoxy in that last-named personage, although his depreciatory remarks upon that divine chiefly applied to him as an author of certain arithmetical and algebraical works.

When Jones arrived at the age of twenty-three, he was seized with a fever, not uncommon at that age, called the *Febris amantium*.

Then come a hundred and seventy-three pages in which there is nothing but a minute description of the symptoms and progress of the disease. We are spared none of the details. The only thing that in the least degree relieves this painfully medical description is that another person, in the next street, of the other sex, is smitten at the same time with the disease, and the symptoms of the patients are frequently contrasted.

At last they both get over the disease by means of a potent medicine found very efficacious in such complaints, and called marriage.

Then come a few sentences like the following:—

He was a great lawyer, and therefore naturally—indeed I may say inevitably—a great, good, and humane man. His study of the law, the

greatest of all studies, had opened his mind for the reception of all arts, sciences, and literatures, including poetry, political economy, metaphysics, theology, and the science of book-keeping by double-entry.

That the human race has advanced to its present pitch of comfort and civilization, to which no one but Mr. Mauleverer can do full justice; that our streets are rendered beautiful by lovely works of art in the shape of statues, fountains, and columns; that smoke is banished from our towns; and that war, according to Mr. Milverton, is a thing unknown amongst the European family of nations—are benefits greatly owing to the labours of this incomparable man.—*End of the Biography*.

Now a dull prosaic person such as I am would like to hear a few details about the manner in which the incomparable Jones accomplished these great objects. But Lady Ellesmere maintains that the fever was the only interesting thing in his life, and would not have a page omitted from that part of the biography.

Cranmer. I suppose, Sir John, that as Realmah's love affairs are over, or nearly over, he is now to become an inventor; and you have shown such a sympathy for inventors that you will delight in that.

Ellesmere. I never said, Mr. Cranmer, that the lives of inventors were uninteresting. The more mischievous the man, the more interesting in general is his life. Witness that of any great conqueror. It is not easy, let me tell you, to catch me in an inconsistency.

Sir Arthur. I did not meddle much the other day in your talk about modern inventors, and modern inventions, but I had a good deal to say about telegraphic communication. Only I am half afraid to say it, for anything seems dull after the sparkling fun with which Sir John always enlivens our conversations.

Cranmer. I really should be glad to hear you upon this point, Sir Arthur.

Ellesmere. Cranmer means to say that anything is a relief from Sir John Ellesmere's nonsense. But proceed, Sir Arthur, to instruct us. Conversations should be instructive. See Pinnock, Mrs. Barbauld, and Mangnall, who doubtless confirm this maxim.

Sir Arthur. There are four drawbacks at present on telegraphic communication. 1. A telegram is often inaccurate, and you are in the

greatest state of doubt and bewilderment as to the exact meaning of the thing to which you are very likely asked to give an immediate answer.

2. This mode of communication throws a great additional burthen upon those who most require rest, as being the chief directors of the world's affairs. Now they can never feel that their work is done for the day. Telegrams pursue them to their homes, and rout them out of their beds.

3. (And this is most important.) It dwarfs the powers and diminishes the energies of distant agents, who, feeling that they can always throw the responsibility and the difficulty upon the Head Centre (to borrow an expression from the Fenians), cease to think or act for themselves; and yet often they are the persons who, from intimate knowledge of the circumstances, could act more wisely than the Head Centre.

4. (This fourth I did not learn from my own experience, but from a man who receives more important telegrams than almost any other person in England.) That having heard the main result by telegram, the despatches and reports when they come to hand are comparatively uninteresting. "You think you have heard it all before," he said, "or at least you do not know what your knowledge really is about the matter; or at any rate you are confused with partial knowledge. The result is that you do not take things up in their right order, and that details have not their proper interest for you."

Ellesmere. All this is admirable. What good sense my poor foolish sayings do sometimes elicit!

Cranmer. Sir Arthur's words are weighty. I may be permitted, however, to remark, that all his objections rest upon the abuse and not the use of telegraphic communication.

Ellesmere. If I dared to be so singular as to do so, how often I should protest against that play upon the words "use" and "abuse!" Moreover, it seemed to me that a great deal of what Sir Arthur said applied most closely to the use, and not to the abuse. But, there, we shall never agree upon this subject of telegrams. Let us pass to other great inventions, and their inventors. I will engage to name an

inventor in whose favour not one of you, not even Cranmer, can say anything.

By the way, I did not know that official men, like our friend Cranmer, were so fond of inventors, and so much inclined to take their part. When I was Attorney-General I used to see a good many inventors, and the ungrateful dogs did not burst out into raptures of praise, either of the Admiralty, the War Office, or the Treasury.

But to return to this particular inventor. I have read private Commination Services over him—not using the strong word "cursed," but merely saying *unblessed*.

Milverton. Who can this unfortunate man be?

Mauleverer. He will not be found to be much worse than the others. I dislike all of them. The fact is, the more you elevate and beautify human life in one direction, the more you render striking the sordidness of it in other directions, and so magnify the painful contrast.

Ellesmere. That is cheering, certainly. I am glad to have brother Mauleverer on my side. But I am not prepared to say *ditto* to everything that he says.

Sir Arthur. I should say, or at least I should say that Sir John Ellesmere would say, that it was the man who invented superlatives.

Milverton. Ellesmere is a very mischievous person. I have observed that when anybody has been much in his society, and they want to say a severe thing, they are very apt to put it as a quotation from him.

That puts me in mind of an anecdote which I must tell you, for it is a very droll one. There was a great musician who had a dreadful habit of swearing. But he was very much ashamed of this habit, and so, to excuse himself, always put it as a quotation from the manager of the theatre, who at that time was Mr. Bunn. The great musician would exclaim, "I'll be d—d (as Mr. Bunn would say) if I will be led by that fellow;" or "D—n the thing (as Mr. Bunn would say), there's not a single good note of music in it." I never heard that Mr. Bunn was in the least given to swearing, but the great musician thought that if he quoted his manager, whom he considered the greatest personage in the world, it would keep him harmless from the consequences of this evil habit of swearing.

In like manner, people father their severe sayings upon Ellesmere. You remember that some man said (I think it was a judge), "David said in his haste, I say deliberately, All men are liars." Had Ellesmere lived in that judge's time, the sentence would have run thus:—

"David said in his haste; I say, with brother Ellesmere, deliberately, All men are liars."

Ellesmere. Commend me to an intimate friend—he must be very intimate—for saying the bitterest things in the softest manner about one. But I'll pay it all off some fine day upon Realmah.

Mrs. Milverton. But we have never heard who is this inventor so odious to Sir John, for whom we are not to be able to say a good word.

[I believe that Mrs. Milverton, who never thoroughly understands Sir John, thought that he was really angry with her husband, and so strove to change the conversation.]

Ellesmere. I will not keep you longer in suspense.

I say then "deliberately," Unblessed be the man who invented starch.

[Great laughter.]

Has he not been an unbounded nuisance to mankind? What shirts, what collars, what torturing neckcloths he has made the human race endure! It will be ninety years before we get rid of his detestable invention. Everything about the human body should be loose, flowing, soft, and curvable; and this wretch has made us to some extent, and our poor forefathers entirely, like hogs in armour.

I often picture to myself the kind of man he was. I am sure he was an official man, Mr. Cranmer, who had vexed a department for thirty years, and then, retiring into private life, spent his remaining years in considering how he could best curb, and oppress, and stiffen up the whole human race.

His life would be interesting, Mr. Cranmer, especially during the inventing period, when he narrowly escaped strangulation from his newly-invented neckcloth, which he first tried on upon himself. But you must admit that he was a villain of the deepest dye.

Milverton. I have nothing to say for him.

Sir Arthur. Nor I.

Mr. Mauleverer. I have. These minor miseries are very useful in diverting men's minds from the contemplation of their great afflictions.

Ellesmere. For my part, I prefer contemplating my great afflictions without having to wear a collar that is both stiff and jagged—such a one as Lady Ellesmere sets for me when we have quarrelled. I assure you that this collar does not make me think less of her.

Lady Ellesmere. Will anybody say anything sensible, and prevent John from going on, and talking his nonsense?

Sir Arthur. I rush to the rescue like a gallant knight. I want to say something about the Varnah in "Realmah," who is Ellesmere's favourite. It is very characteristic of such a woman that she should be always wishing "poor Realmah" to be like other people, and that she should be always thinking what people will say.

Ellesmere. Now we really will be serious. I have always maintained, Sir Arthur, that "what people will say" is the one great tyrant, and that the united tyrannies of kings, priests, newspapers, and kaisers, sink into insignificance when compared with Mrs. Grundy's.

Sir Arthur. Mrs. Grundy is an ill-used woman. Long before her time people were ruled by the thought of what other people would say.

I have been always very much struck by the fact that some great baron, ages ago, put up, as a motto, upon some place he built, I suppose his castle,[14] "They have said: let them say."

Milverton. This certainly goes to show that the tyranny, that this good baron stood up against, is not of recent origin.

I suppose it existed in all ages, till we get back to the early days of Paradise, when Adam and Eve had no neighbours to comment upon them.

Ellesmere. Perhaps you are mistaken about that, Milverton. In those early and innocent days there might have been much more communion between man and the lower animals than there is now; and perhaps our first parents said to one another, "What will the jackals say?" or "This will be unpleasantly remarked upon by the spotted snakes;" or coming home, after a long sweet ramble, to their

bower, and seeing a good many toads about (taking care, however, not to hurt them), one spouse would observe to the other, "We will come home earlier to-morrow, dear; I know that the toads comment severely upon our always being out so late of an evening."

Lady Ellesmere. (To Mrs. Milverton.) He is becoming irreverent as well as silly. I think we will leave the gentlemen, dear.

And so the breakfast party broke up.

When we met again to hear the reading, Ellesmere descanted upon what he was pleased to call the delusion that besets men of poetic minds, when they are considering the past, and comparing anything done in it with any similar thing done at the present time. Sir Arthur and Milverton might talk to him for ever about the wonderful speeches in the "Araucana." He did not believe there was one of them to be compared to any great charge to a jury by Chief Justice Cockburn. In fact, he believed he had made better speeches himself than any savage that was ever born. But perhaps I had better let him speak for himself.

Ellesmere. Now I believe that when Realmah made his speech you were all called into council. At any rate there were four of you—Milverton, Sandy, Mrs. Milverton, and my wife. I know it was so, because Lady Ellesmere was very mysterious and kept me out of the study, though she went in herself; and in the distance I heard a pompous noise of rolling, rumbling sentences.

There were four of you, then, besides Realmah, and two or three attendant nymphs. Notwithstanding this agglomeration of sagacity, you contrived to make a most egregious blunder. In the first part of the speech Realmah treated external observance as if it were most unimportant: the devotion of the heart was everything.

In the second part of the speech, external observance was of the utmost importance. There were not two right ways of doing a thing, &c. &c.

Mrs. Milverton. I do believe that Sir John is jealous of Realmah's powers of speaking.

Sir Arthur. As to an inconsistency of this kind, I think nothing of it. Show me any great modern speech, and the chances are that I will point out a similar inconsistency. In good public speaking the audience make half of the speech. The orator discerns what pleases

them, and, to influence them, dwells upon that topic which he sees takes their fancy, and gains their applause, even if it militates somewhat against what he has said before.

Mauleverer. Very true! I want to return, however, to the point from which Sir John started, when he spoke of the delusion manifested by imaginative men in over-praising the past.

There is nothing so foolish as the praise of men, except it be their censure; and the man who thinks that the past *has been* better than the present, is, if possible, a greater fool than he who expects that the future *will be* better than the present.

The life of man is, I tell you, one dead level of stupidity and error. There may be slight inequalities at different periods of the world's history; but these need no more be taken into account than the trifling inequalities in the earth's surface, which, when compared with its main bulk, are absolutely inappreciable.

Ellesmere. Let us have the reading immediately. A stop must be put to Mauleverer's dreary sayings. I believe he is hired by Milverton to reduce us to the proper state of depression for listening submissively to his story.

Besides I foresee that Realmah will fall into great trouble. That meddling sort of prematurely wise young fellow always does fall into trouble; and then we shall not be too much agitated by his misfortunes, Mauleverer having convinced us that a dead level of misfortune is the normal condition of mankind. There are no cheerful rapid rivers, bright up-springing fountains, merry cascades, resounding waterfalls, pellucid lakes, breezy, boisterous, jovial seas: but it is all one dull, turbid, changeless, level line of canal waters that we behold, and upon which we travel, towed by horses lean as Death, angry-eyed as Passion, and conducted by Fate as a bargeman, whence we know not, and whither we know not, except that the whither and the whence are alike abodes of misery and gloom. I believe, though, there are some good dinners to be had on the road.

Milverton. Do you know, Ellesmere, that was rather a fine sentence—that last but one of yours?

Ellesmere. Thank you, patron. I rather think it was: I meant it to be. I am not the rose, but I have lived near the rose, at any rate near the sweetbriar and the dog rose. I cannot write much myself, but I

have my own poor ideas of what writing should be. I have even a scheme of what a sentence should be like—I do not mean an ordinary sentence, but one which is to convey some considerable meaning, and to do some work. I am not sure that even my good friends, Sir Arthur and Mr. Milverton, always fulfil my ideal; but then, we romantic men form such high ideals.

Sir Arthur. Pray lay down the lines for us, Ellesmere. We will endeavour henceforth to build our poor vessels in accordance with them. Pray tell us what a weighty sentence should be.

Ellesmere. It should be powerful in its substantives, choice and discreet in its adjectives, nicely correct in its verbs: not a word that could be added, nor one which the most fastidious would venture to suppress: in order lucid, in sequence logical, in method perspicuous; and yet with a pleasant and inviting intricacy which disappears as you advance in the sentence: the language, throughout, not quaint, not obsolete, not common, and not new: its several clauses justly proportioned and carefully balanced, so that it moves like a well-disciplined army organized for conquest: the rhythm, not that of music, but of a higher and more fantastic melodiousness, submitting to no rule, incapable of being taught: the substance and the form alike disclosing a happy union of the soul of the author to the subject of his thought, having, therefore, individuality without personal predominance: and withal, there must be a sense of felicity about it, declaring it to be the product of a happy moment, so that you feel that it will not happen again to that man who writes the sentence, or to any other of the sons of men, to say the like thing so choicely, tersely, mellifluously, and completely.

We all looked at one another amazed, for Sir John is not wont to talk to us in this way. It was pretty to see Lady Ellesmere. She got up and leaned over Sir John's chair, and looked at us with a look of pleasant defiance, as much as to say, "You see that my husband, when he chooses, can talk better sense, as well as better nonsense, than any of you."

He continued:—

Ellesmere. You may now, Milverton, proceed in your reading, and I trust that there may be a sentence here and there to which I may conscientiously give my approval.

Milverton. I have no such hope. To make such killingly complete sentences is far beyond my power.

[The reading then commenced.]

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SHEVIRI TAKE THE FIELD AGAINST THE PHELATAHS—REALMAH IS MADE PRISONER.

It was not to be expected that the Sheviri would tamely submit to the base and insulting treatment they had experienced from the Phelatahs. They immediately prepared a warlike expedition to go and attack Abinamanche, the chief town of the Phelatahs. In this expedition Realmah had an honourable place.

The campaign was long and varied, and was not crowned with any great success on either side.

It is to be remarked, as very fortunate for these southern people, that the northern tribes did not invade them at this juncture; and that the approach of the northern people, which had been firmly believed in by the Phelatahs when they sent their ambassador to Abibah, was not so imminent as they had supposed.

Throughout the campaign Realmah displayed great skill and bravery; too much bravery, however, for one whose physical powers were so weak. In an obscure skirmish that took place nearly at the end of the campaign, Realmah was separated from his followers, and was captured by the Phelatahs.

The Sheviri had to return to their city, and to carry home the unwelcome news to the Chief of the East that his nephew was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy.

Great efforts were made to ransom Realmah, or to obtain his release by an exchange of prisoners; but these efforts were unavailing. The Phelatahs were well aware what an important person Realmah was, both as a man of counsel and as a man of action, and they revengefully remembered how he had thwarted them in their great scheme of treachery which was the occasion of the war.

For month after month the captive languished in a prison in Abinamanche.

The populace clamoured for his death; and the chiefs of the Phelatahs were obliged so far to give way to the wishes of their people as to promise that on a certain day during the festival of the New Moon, the prisoner should be sacrificed in honour of that deity.

Realmah, who had become a great favourite with those who guarded him, and with some of those who visited him (of one of whom more will be said hereafter), soon perceived, by the increase of their kindness towards him, that his end was approaching. He felt it bitterly. It seemed hard to him that one who like himself was devoted chiefly to great ends should perish thus immaturely, and without having given any convincing proof of the worth that he felt was in him.

There are few things more touching than to see one who has played a great part no longer able to play it—but still going on playing it. To witness, for instance, the efforts of a great singer who remains too long upon the stage, and who has all the graceful ways and manners which accompanied and evolved his past successes; but now they are unproductive, and the result rather resembles a pantomime. The audience, having tender recollections of the man's past greatness, endeavours affectionately to fill up gaps, and to consider as done, and even well done, that which is but vaguely intimated; and there is an applause, genuine in its way, but which is only the result of loving memories.

Still the great actor on the stage of life, or on the mimic stage, *has* played his part, and the remembrance of past triumphs soothes and supports the man; renders, both to himself and to those who hear him, the failure less conspicuous; and fills up, both for him and for them, what is now, alas! but a sadly incomplete representation.

But to die early with a sense of power, unused power, and to have executed nothing; this was the burden upon Realmah's soul during the long days he remained in his prison.

Metastasio makes his Themistocles, when in exile, grandly exclaim, "Future ages will envy me, perhaps, more for my misfortunes than for my triumphs."[15]

But then there must have been triumphs to make the misfortunes effective and memorable. The world does not interest itself much in the career of a man who is uniformly unfortunate. Now Realmah, in

the depressed state in which his imprisonment had left him, did not even give himself credit for the sagacity which had originally baffled the designs of the Phelatahs.

So far as regards his thoughts about the past: with regard to the future, it was not an over-proud thought in him to think that his life, if spared, would have been a useful one, and that his premature death would be a loss to his country. Of private friends he had but few, for his was a reserved nature, and being very different from most of the young men of his nation, greatly inferior to them in personal prowess, greatly superior to them in power of thought, he had never had much companionship with any of them. He thought, as was natural, of those who would mourn especially for him. There was the good old chief, his uncle, who would miss the prop to his greatness that Realmah was becoming. There was his aged nurse, who, he felt, would die of grief when she should hear the sad tidings of his death. There was his foster-brother, who understood him little, but loved him much. There were his wives, Talora, the Varnah, and the Ainah. He felt that they, too, would mourn for him; but not for very long; and he calmly made up his mind to die, and began to look with some little interest to the life beyond the grave.

The greatest of sentimental writers has brought before us the miseries of imprisonment by representing vividly the wretchedness of one single prisoner; but it is to be recollected that there have been periods of the world when the numbers of imprisoned individuals would have amounted to a large army, each of the private soldiers in this army of sufferers being sodden with misery, languishing with little hope, and expecting by way of change, torture or death.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PERILS OF A SPY.

It was a lovely day in autumn, one of those days when it seems happiness enough to be alive, and when a prisoner, however resolved and courageous his nature, might feel a great unwillingness to die.

But, strange to say, it is precisely on these days that it is found that men are most ready to die; for the notion that suicide is more common in bad weather than in good, has long been exploded by facts which tell quite a different tale.

Perhaps it is, that on these beautiful days the higher powers seem to be more beneficent, and the wretch overladen with misery thinks that he can trust more to their mercy, and that he may find on his exit from this life—

"An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey."

The building in which Realmah was a prisoner was raised some seven feet from the ground before the first floor commenced, and this slight elevation enabled him to look down on an open street that led to the water, and to see the men and women passing over the causeways, going to their work in the plain and the woods near the lake.

It did not, however, enable him to perceive a timid, slouching figure of a wayworn, haggard-looking young woman, who hovered near these groups of working-people, apparently engaged in collecting faggots.

Realmah looked long at the beautiful scene, with the blue water, the blue sky, the bright plains near the lake, the distant brown woods, and the quaint buildings which seemed somehow to harmonize with the scene; but these things did not console him; he might have said with a modern poet—

"I see them all so beautifully fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are."

The buildings at Abinamanche, as at Abibah, were chiefly low, but there towered above them, in the most fantastic forms, vanes and weathercocks of every description. It was natural that people who paid so much attention to the four quarters—the east, west, north, and south—should delight in weathercocks. These fantastic ornaments, reflected in the waters, added a certain beautiful grotesqueness to the picture.

It was, however, something comic that most arrested Realmah's attention. Perched upon three rocks, at about equal distances from each other, were three cranes, each resting on one leg. Whether there is something peculiarly comic in these solemn-looking birds,

or whether Realmah happened to think of a proverb much in vogue amongst his countrymen—"The crane pretends to listen to his nymph, but all the while is looking sharply after his fish,"—I do not know, but a smile came over his countenance, which afterwards relapsed into melancholy, as he drew back from the aperture, and sat down upon the ground.

Meanwhile, and indeed all day long, the slouching figure of that young woman, before described, remained within sight, but beyond the ken, of the parties of labourers who were at work in the country near Abinamanche. She was observing how the women of the lower orders amongst the Phelatahs were dressed, and endeavouring to arrange her dress so as to resemble theirs, in order that she might pass in their company unnoticed into the town, when the shades of evening should come on.

At length the day's labour was over, and the men and women began to troop over the causeways into the town. Now this travel-worn stranger went with them. She succeeded in passing unnoticed over the drawbridge, where the crowd was dense, but a different fate befell her when she got into the open streets.

The truth is, this poor stranger had made a great mistake in the arrangement of her dress. The maidens amongst the Phelatahs were distinguished from the matrons, and the matrons from the maidens, by slight distinctions in dress. She first copied the head-dress of one group, who happened to be all maidens, and then copied the way in which another group, who happened to be all matrons, wore their upper tunic; so that, in the eyes of a Phelatah, she made a most ridiculous and incongruous appearance,—dressing herself both as a matron and a maiden.

She had not gone far along the main street, which led from the drawbridge into the centre of the town (and which was called the Street of Primroses), before a boy spied out this strangely-dressed person, and shouted, "The little girl-wife! The little girl-wife!" There was soon a mob of boys and girls following her. This attracted the notice of the elder people, who were greatly scandalized at her appearance.

The crowd now thickened about her: questions were asked who she was, and whether she was mad. She implored to be allowed to go away; and her speech at once betrayed that she was not a Phelatah.

They instantly concluded that she was a spy. The guards at the drawbridge were summoned, and by them she was carried off to the house of the eldest chieftain. He thought that this woman's presence foreboded the approach of an enemy, and lost no time in calling together the council of the chiefs.

It was soon conjectured by them that her coming had something to do with Realmah; and it was resolved to confront the two, and to see if they could be surprised into any signs of recognition.

Realmah was accordingly sent for. He thought that his death was now imminent, and summoned up all his courage to meet his approaching doom.

When he was brought before the council, not a word was said to him. Gestures of high politeness passed between him and the great chiefs of the Phelatahs, but there was dead silence in the council-room.

Suddenly the captive was brought in between two guards, and all eyes were directed towards Realmah.

Now Realmah was a man of great craft and subtlety. Perhaps the only drawback to his greatness was, that he was so crafty and so subtle, for it is not the part of a great man to be crafty and subtle. But on this day it did him "yeoman's service." There was, it is true, a slight movement of the muscles near his mouth, but it was concealed by his beard, for these so-called savages, wiser than many civilized people, did not shave; and the two prisoners regarded each other apparently with stolid indifference.

The captive was Realmah's Ainah.

Realmah, of course, had not failed at once to recognise the Ainah, worn though she was by toil and anxiety; but he felt that any recognition would be fatal to both of them.

"Who is this woman?" said the oldest chief of the Phelatahs to Realmah; and Realmah, without hesitation, replied, "She must be one of my people. Perhaps she brings offers for my ransom, though methinks" (and here he assumed an appearance of haughtiness) "my people might have sent some one of more dignity than this poor woman to negotiate the ransom of one of their chiefs. But speak to her; her words will soon show from whence she comes."

This was a most artful reply on the part of Realmah. He comprehended the situation at once, or at least what he did comprehend was sufficiently near to the true state of the case to make his reply most judicious. He imagined that some effort for his rescue was about to be made by his fellow-countrymen, and that the good-natured Ainah (he had always recognised her good nature) had consented to come beforehand, and prepare him for any emergency. He had not attempted to conceal the fact of her being one of his countrywomen, because he felt that was sure to be discovered the moment that she spoke; and a wise man always makes up his mind to what is inevitable, and appears to welcome it.

The old chief then cross-questioned the Ainah. She was one of those people who have a great capacity for darkening their meaning by many confused words, and she told how she had come to seek for her husband, a common soldier amongst the Sheviri, who had been wounded, they told her, not killed; and what her mother-in-law had said to her, and what she had said to her mother-in-law; and what good people the Phelatahs were; and what a sad affair it was for her being without her husband; and that there was no fish in the house; and that the boys and girls in this town had been very rude to her—but boys and girls were a torment everywhere.

Then she said that she wondered, for her part, that near neighbours could not be friends; but it was all the men's fault. They went out to fight, in order to amuse themselves, and to get away from their wives, and to throw all the burthen of the housework upon poor women. Here the chiefs could not help laughing, upon which the Ainah appeared to become more angry than ever, and dilated at large, in uncouth language, upon the various misdeeds and general misbehaviour of the male sex. She declared that, for her part (quite changing her story), she had come to look for her poor man, not that he was of any use to anybody, but perhaps he would be starved if he were left to himself; and so she supposed it was her duty to come, but she did not expect to be treated in this way. In fact, to use a modern phrase, she gave them all "a bit of her mind."

Finally she succeeded in producing the impression on most of the chiefs that she was a shrewish little woman, who had been accustomed to scold her husband, and felt now the want of somebody to scold.

Realmah wondered at the ingenuity of the Ainah. Once, for a moment, their eyes met, whilst she was in the midst of her scolding harangue, and the incipient laugh that there was in the eyes of both of them might have betrayed them if some of the chiefs at that moment had not been remarking to each other jestingly that if this was a specimen of the female sex in Abibah, it was no wonder that the Sheviri fought pretty well, for anything would be better than going home to such a woman.

Still there were some amongst the chiefs who were not entirely convinced of the truth of this story. Their prudent counsel prevailing, it was eventually ordered that the Ainah should be conveyed to prison; and hints were thrown out to her of torture to be administered next day, if it was found that she had not told the whole truth to the Great Council.

Realmah was conducted back to his prison; and, after a short interval, the Ainah was taken to her place of durance, which was a room in the same building.

So far the Ainah's enterprise, whatever it was, had not proved very successful.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ESCAPE FROM PRISON.

At night Realmah was always bound; but the guards who had charge of the Ainah did not care to bind this helpless-looking, insignificant young woman.

Realmah's thoughts that night were very bitter. The poets say that "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things;" but there is no sorrow for a generous mind that eats into the heart so closely as thinking that you have brought evil upon others, and that they are to suffer for your sake. Realmah feared that it would go ill with the Ainah the next day. He knew that there was one man in that council who was perfectly aware of the relation between them. To that man he had given one imploring look while she was telling her story; but he could not discern whether that look was answered favourably or not. Upon that man much of the fate of the south of Europe at that time depended; but it is not now a fitting occasion to enter upon that subject. Moreover, Realmah conjectured that there were in Abinamanche some common soldiers of the Sheviri, who,

like himself, had been taken prisoners. The probability was that they knew the Ainah very well; and, in fine, he felt certain that it would be discovered who she was.

Realmah, suffering greater misery than he had hitherto endured, remained for some hours sleepless in his bonds. Notwithstanding all this misery, there was, occasionally, a strange feeling of pleasure in his mind connected with the Ainah. He was continually thinking with admiration of her cleverness, and pitying her to himself for her wan looks. He thought, too, there was some affection as well as archness in the glance with which the Ainah favoured him when she was descanting upon the good-for-nothing husband she had come to look after. Suddenly he fancied he heard a soft voice whispering his name. Soon he was assured that it was not fancy, and that the Ainah was close to him on the other side of the wooden division that separated his prison chamber from the next one. How she got there, and what was the nature of her enterprise are now to be told.

During the many months that Realmah had remained in prison, there was one faithful heart in Abibah which never ceased to think of the peril of her Realmah. Through the long nights the Ainah meditated as to what could be done to rescue him. She did not dare to interfere as long as there was any hope from the public negotiations on his behalf. When these failed, she made up her mind to attempt his rescue herself. She did not speak of her determination to any one. What she greatly relied upon to aid her in her enterprise was a wine-skin which she took with her, containing the choicest and most intoxicating liquor known to the Sheviri. This was prepared from honey and from various herbs, amongst which was the *voroo*, a powerful opiate. The Ainah also took with her some strips of dried deer's flesh, and a very sharp instrument made of quartz, which was the pride and delight of the Varnah, and which she had brought with her as part of her marriage dowry. This the Ainah now abstracted furtively.

She set off one morning before daybreak; and, when missed, no one took much heed of her departure but the Varnah, who mourned over the loss of a good helpmate, and, moreover, regretted the theft, as she was pleased to call it, of the sharp instrument of quartz, which was the most perfect one of that kind known in the town of Abibah.

Meanwhile, the Ainah, as we have seen, made her way without much difficulty to the outskirts of the town of Abinamanche, subsisting chiefly on berries, for she hoarded up the strips of deer's flesh for a great occasion.

Now Abinamanche was built very much in the same form as Abibah—a fact which was well known to the Sheviri. The Ainah, therefore, thought that she could readily make her way to the principal buildings, which were placed in similar positions to those in her own town. Her plan was to approach the prison by night; to allow herself to be despoiled of her wine-skin by Realmah's warders; to watch for its effect upon them; and then to attempt, by means of the quartz instrument, to cut a way from the outside into Realmah's prison. She conjectured, and rightly, that this building would be constructed of wood, and therefore not very strong, for both the Sheviri and the Phelatahs relied more upon guards than upon prison walls, which reliance, with their knowledge of building materials, was certainly prudent. There were guards posted day and night about the prison of Realmah.

We have seen how the Ainah got into the town, and by what mistake on her part she had been recognised. Her original plan had therefore been defeated; but a favourable chance and her cunning and her ready wit had, in reality, brought her closer to Realmah than she could have hoped to have been brought if her original plan of escaping notice had been successful.

As the Ainah, after her examination by the Council, was being taken to prison by the soldiers, four in number, who were to watch at her prison room for the night, and to be answerable for her appearance next day, she contrived to show that she was secreting something, and thus to awaken curiosity.

Afterwards, when she was in her prison room, suspecting that they were watching her through some aperture, she, in a furtive manner, appeared to drink something from the wine-skin, which contained the powerful liquid before mentioned. Soon one of the soldiers entered the room, and, rudely jesting with her, partly by intreaty, and partly by force, compelled her to give up the wine-skin to him. She threatened to scream for assistance to her fellow-countryman in the next apartment. This was a mere guess of hers, thrown out to gain some knowledge of the spot were Realmah

was confined. And it succeeded, for the soldier told her that she might scream, as the young cripple was two rooms off; and if he were to hear he could do nothing. “The next room is empty, so scream away, my pretty young maiden,” said the soldier, ironically and tauntingly. And so saying, he left her.

The guards who watched the Ainah did not partake their prize with the guards who watched Realmah, and who were stationed at the other end of the building. The potent liquor, divided among so few, soon had its effect: they were first merry, then noisy and quarrelsome, then silent.

The Ainah, who had carefully watched for these signs, then commenced her operations. In two hours’ time, working very softly with the sharp quartz instrument, she had made an aperture sufficiently large for her to crawl through into the next chamber. It was then that she whispered Realmah’s name, and told him what means she had with her for escape. She had meant to make a small opening, which would be soon cut, and to pass the quartz instrument through it, enabling him to do the rest of the work quickly. To her dismay she learnt from him that he was bound, and that she would have to do the work herself, not knowing where the weak points of the woodwork were. Three long hours were passed in an agony of fear by both of them before she succeeded in cutting her way into his room, for it was the strong room of the prison, in which the greatest offenders were always confined. His bonds were soon severed, and the prisoners commenced to make their escape, passing through the vacant apartment into the room in which the Ainah had first been placed.

It was now two hours past midnight, and there was still an exit to be made from this room. They boldly resolved to try the door, and they cut out that part where the simple latch that fastened it on the outside was placed. This did not take more than half an hour. They then opened the door gently, descended the steps, passed the sleeping guard; and Realmah, though still in the midst of a hostile city, felt that he was once more a free man, and he could have shouted for joy at his deliverance. He was not, however, the kind of man to indulge in shouting before he was thoroughly out of danger.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FLIGHT.

Silently the fugitives glided through the deserted streets, and made their way to the drawbridges. They had not a hope of finding these bridges let down, or unguarded; and were prepared to swim across to shore. By a fortunate accident, however, that night there was a drawbridge, to the south-east of the town, which had not been raised, and the two warders belonging to it were fast asleep. Using the utmost care, the fugitives passed noiselessly over the causeway, and gained the shore. Now the town of Abibah lay to the east of Abinamanche. Realmah had often thought what he would do if, by any lucky chance, he should make his escape. There was a long strip of open ground on the shore. Over this they hurried along, proceeding westwards; Realmah, to the astonishment of his companion, treading heavily so as to insure the marks of his sandals being seen in the ground. When they had proceeded half a mile in this way, they diverged into a wood which lay towards the south, and through this wood they went, but still in a westerly direction. The moon was very bright, and Realmah was able to thread his way without much difficulty. He ascended, with great labour (for from his infirmity he was not agile), a lofty tree, the foliage of which was thickly interlaced with other trees. From this tree he passed to another, and from that other to a third, and then, taking off his sandals, descended with the utmost caution. Carefully choosing the hardest ground when he came near to the spot where he had left the Ainah, he bade her rejoin him, telling her to take care to step as lightly as possible. When she had done so, they changed the direction of their flight, and proceeded swiftly for about three miles to the east, so that the town of Abinamanche now lay to the west of them. There they halted again. Not a word had been spoken by either except the words of command that were necessary for Realmah to direct his Ainah.

The fugitives lay down upon the ground. It was an embarrassing moment for Realmah. He would have liked to have burst into an effusion of thanks and even tenderness towards his preserver; but the relations between them had hitherto been so cold that he hardly knew how to begin. At last he uttered a few words of praise to her for her skill. She recounted the various steps that she had taken to effect his escape: he told her of his sufferings in prison. Afterwards, she

related to him the news of Abibah, and all that had happened at home during his absence.

The subtle Realmah contrived by artful questions to detect, to some extent, from the Ainah, who, however, had no intention of enlightening him, how much his loss had been felt by the Varnah and by Talora. The truth was, that the Varnah had really missed him, having grown accustomed to look after him and to care for him; and that Talora had been very cross at his absence, had blamed him exceedingly for his folly in allowing himself to be captured, and had greatly deplored her own forlorn situation.

Realmah and the Ainah talked on in the douce, quiet way that two youths who had been concerned in some great enterprise, and were still in great peril, would have talked. At length the Ainah, who was oppressed by fatigue and want of food—for she had stinted herself in order that they might have something to eat in case they should escape—fell asleep.

Throughout that night, Realmah sat entranced in thought. There are times when our lives come before us in imagination, not by the recalling or forecasting of individual facts or events, but by their being grouped together as it were in large pictures,—landscapes of the mind, as they might be called; and Realmah now saw his past life, and his probable future life, laid out before him in a strange weird way, the brightness of a morning sun illumining the pictures of the past, the rich hues of a setting sun gilding, and yet softening, the colours of the grander scenes of the future.

As was natural, having just escaped a great peril, in his picture of the future, perils fell into beautiful forms, and it was a picture of success he painted, in which he was to accomplish his high ends and noble purposes. And then, with a certain feeling of profound melancholy, there fell upon him a sense of the futility of it all; and the great questions—Why are we here? What does it all mean? What does it all tend to? came upon him with a force and a pathos far greater than they would upon modern minds; for he had no reason to think that the burthen of such thoughts was partaken by any human being.

Still he resolved to do the work that lay before him, whatever might come of it, or of him.

When the morning broke, his thoughts were diverted into other channels, as he contemplated the sleeping Ainah.

I have said that what little beauty she possessed lay in expression rather than in features; and for the first time Realmah perceived this beauty. Even the fatigue and anxiety she had gone through had improved her looks, creating a refinement in her countenance which had not always in former days been perceptible in it.

Gradually it dawned upon him how it was that neither the Varnah nor Talora had sought to do what the Ainah had done, and he knew, for the first time, what love should be, and who was really lovable. Eventually the bold idea came into his mind that he would kiss the sleeping girl; but he felt ashamed to do so, for he thought within himself, "There is the girl I have treated as a slave, and upon whom I have never bestowed one thought of real affection; and now, because she has saved my life, I begin to discern that she is beautiful and loving,—perhaps the only woman, besides my dear old foster-nurse, who does love me in the world."

At that moment the Ainah awoke. She timidly took his hand, and kissed it. Emboldened by this mark of affection, he embraced her warmly, and poured his thanks into her ears. She looked at him with astonishment, murmured something about her duty, and, as if divining his thoughts, said, that she had not entrusted the others with her enterprise, because she felt that they could not aid her. She knew that her low condition and common appearance would enable her to enter the town of Abinamanche with less observation than that which the Varnah or Talora would have had to encounter. She was sure they would have flown to rescue him, had it been possible for them to do so.

Realmah now found himself placed in a most embarrassing position.

There is hardly any man who has attained middle life who has not—socially speaking—found himself in some very strange position. He has, for instance, sat next, at some feast, to some person, unknown to him by countenance, but well known to him by repute as one of his greatest opponents and bitterest enemies. Each has, on this occasion, found the other very likable and agreeable, and each has been shocked, amazed, and almost startled out of his prejudices, when by some accident it has been revealed to both of them with

whom it was that each had been talking in this most friendly manner.

Or, to take another instance, your next neighbour at a dinner pours out to you, in confidence, being rather taken with you, his especial dislike to yourself, and his contempt for your writings, your pictures, or your statues, or your conduct as a politician; for he, poor man, has no idea that you are yourself, but, having heard that you are in the company, has mistaken the man opposite for you.

But all these positions of awkwardness may almost be said to be pleasant when compared with that in which Realmah now found himself. To have lived in close domestic intimacy with a woman; never to have pretended even to love her; to owe his life to a great and perilous effort on her part to rescue him; then to fall in love with her; and not to know how to begin the love-making, which ought to have begun long ago; to feel that any love now proffered might seem to be merely gratitude;—surely this is a position in which few lovers have ever found themselves, and which Realmah had now to encounter. He was a skilful talker, and probably owed much of his popularity to his being able to enter into conversation with any person, of whatever rank, with whom he was thrown in contact. But, on this occasion, he sat by the side of his Ainah, and could not find anything to say, though, in his heart, he was longing to pour out his love for her. To talk of commonplace things would, he felt, be supremely ridiculous.

At last, however, like a wise man, he resolved to make the plunge at once, and after a long pause, thus began: “What could make you take all this trouble, and go through such peril, for a foolish, dim-eyed man like me, who never had the sagacity to see what a treasure he possessed in you, or the tenderness to say one really kind or loving word to you? You are a very silly child. You should have let Realmah die in prison, and then have married some one more worthy of your love.”

But the Ainah only replied by clasping his hand in hers, and with downcast looks softly saying, “But what if I was so silly as only to love my lord Realmah, whom it was presumption in the poor fisher-girl to love at all?”

Then ensued a long pause, which was owing, on Realmah’s part, to a most ludicrous circumstance. The truth was he had forgotten her

name. He had, of course, heard it on the day she was brought to him, but he had entirely forgotten it. Such titles as the "Ainah" and the "Varnah" were merely words used in the household, and in the presence of other persons, and no lover ever thought of using them when alone with his beloved. Realmah had been struck with this in the few words he had just addressed to the Ainah, and he felt that it would be almost an insult to go on pretending to make love to a young woman whose name he, of all men, should know, but which had entirely faded from his memory.

Poor Realmah sat there in silence, cogitating over the names most common amongst his countrywomen, and vainly torturing his memory as to which could be the right one. At length, when the silence was becoming ominous, he resolved as it were to make a clean breast of it, and exclaimed—

"Here is a miserable wretch of a man who would wish to express all the love he feels for his beloved, and does not even know her name."

The Ainah laughed,—a low, pleasant laugh,—then threw her arms round his neck, and whispered, "Lufra." It was one of the common names which poor Realmah had thought of, and which he naturally could not now help wishing that he had been bold enough to try. But perhaps it was better, as he thought with the wisdom of a second thought, that he had concealed nothing from his Lufra, and that he might now begin from the beginning and address her as if she had been some gracious stranger with whom he had become acquainted for the first time that day. He did not fail to play his part well as a lover. He said that others amongst the Sheviri might talk of their nymphs, who watched over their destinies and defended them from all harm; but henceforth the only nymph he should worship would be his Lufra. She hastened to put her hand upon his lips, for these were sadly irreverent words (Realmah was certainly not orthodox); but, though irreverent, the words were singularly pleasing to the girl, and Realmah did not fail to kiss the hand which sought to save him from the anger of his heavenly nymph.

The first embarrassment overcome, Realmah was fluent, ardent, and eloquent; and much time passed away, during which the lovers spoke of all their love for each other.

He confided to her his great schemes and hopes for the nation, and found her a worthy recipient of his high thoughts. Gradually he gained from her the knowledge of how his courtesy to a poor girl like her had won her timid love, and a hundred times he offered to her his fond excuses for having been indifferent to, indeed unconscious of, her love. They both felt that their love must for ever remain somewhat concealed, because it would not be thought right for a man of his dignity and high rank to be in love with his Ainah.

She then produced from her wallet a strip of dried deer's flesh, all of which she would have insisted upon his eating, but that he was peremptory and commanded her to share it with him.

Having finished their hasty meal they proceeded on their way to Abibah, strangely joyful fugitives, indeed almost reckless ones, for in their great love they had forgotten their imminent dangers. Realmah, however, always made the Ainah precede him by a step or two, for he feared a surprise from the rear.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FINAL DANGER.

The scene which the fugitives were now approaching was one of the grandest in that part of the world. There was a huge amphitheatre of level land, inclosed by mountains. Conspicuous amongst these mountains was the Bidolo-Vamah, which was like no other mountain far or near. Bidolo-Vamah means "a ruined mountain;" and it was indeed like a ruin. It was as if a mountain of the ordinary kind had been upheaved by some volcanic eruption, and had then, in mid-air, burst asunder in all directions. Even in mountains there are some prevailing forms, but Bidolo-Vamah was shapeless, hideous, confused; and yet there was a strange attraction in it which drew the eyes of all men upon it.

There were, as might be expected, strange legends about this mountain. Some said that all the mountains were bad, defying spirits; and that Bidolo-Vamah had been their chief, and upon his devoted head had fallen with most fury the thunder-blasts of heaven. Others—but these were the poets of the people—said that these mountains had been great and wicked kings, who, for their wickedness, had been transformed into stone, and that Bidolo-Vamah had been the most wicked of them all.

The level country was most rich and fertile. Those things which were but small ordinary plants in other parts of the earth, rose here into fullest magnitude and richest beauty. The bushes and trees were of corresponding size, and the luxuriance of all vegetation was such that the plain seemed as if it were meant for a garden of primæval giants, and not for the small race of men who had to subdue it, and to live upon it.

The fugitives had now approached the outskirts of the wood which lay between Abinamanche and Abibah; and the trees were becoming scattered. Still the undergrowth of splendid weeds, gorgeous flowers, and rich grasses, embarrassed their movements. These latter began to take the form of water-grasses, for the fugitives were rapidly approaching the great river Ramassa, which takes a curve from the hill country and crosses the pathway usually traversed between the two towns of Abinamanche and Abibah, at about a mile from the latter.

Realmah had intended to swim across this river, carrying the Ainah with him. He was the most expert swimmer of his nation. His deformity, like that of Lord Byron, was not a hindrance in the water. Then, as from his early years he had been left much at home, he had amused himself by swimming about in the lake, while the other young men of his nation were hunting in the woods or cultivating the lowlands. Besides—and this is a very curious fact—neither the Sheviri nor the Phelatahs, though their habitations were on the water, were at all attached to that element. They looked upon it as a means of defence, but they were neither good swimmers nor good boatmen. And, as we see to the present day in some nations, their genius did not lead them to love the water, and they were afraid of it.

The shades of evening were coming on when the two fugitives were nearing the extreme outskirt of the wood. They had been silent for some time, being much overcome by fatigue and exhaustion. Suddenly the Ainah began to sing softly that beautiful song which was such a favourite among the Sheviri, and which begins thus—

"Melaiah, Paraiah, amadala paree,
Invannah doveeno, corosa Ramee."

It was in truth a beautiful song. The main idea of it was this: all created things grow, but love: that, from the first, is infinite. The burden of the song may be translated thus—

"All creatures grow but the Great God,
And my fond love for thee."

Then the song went on to say how the oak was once an acorn; and the branch was once a bud: how the blazing day was once grey morning; and the full moon was once a little curve of light. And then the burden of the song came in again—

"All creatures grow but the Great God,
And my fond love for thee."

The Ainah never committed a graver error than in attempting to sing that song. A great scholar of ancient languages might have written nearly a treatise upon the blunders which the poor Ainah contrived to make, both in grammar and euphony, in the first two lines of that celebrated song. For instance, the first word, Melaiah, she turned most unaccountably into Melakkah.

Realmah shuddered, and could not avoid uttering a loud sound of intense disapproval. The sensitive Ainah turned and saw the shrug of the shoulders and the look of disgust upon her lover's countenance. She hastily approached him, rested her head upon his breast, and exclaimed, in a sorrowful tone, "I am so ignorant, I shock you. How can you love me?"

In that moment a change came over Realmah, and he saw certain things in a light which he had never seen them before. In book-life men retire into their chambers to reflect deeply, and to resolve upon a different course of thought or action; but in real life, these changes are often absolutely sudden, and occur at the most unexpected times and places. And so it was now. Realmah saw at a glance how pedantic and how cruel it was of him to love the Ainah less, and to be disgusted with her, because he, who had been brought up with the learned and the noble, knew how to pronounce words rightly which the poor fisher-girl knew not. And with the tenderest words he re-assured her, telling her what a fool a man was if he looked to the expression and not to the thought; and he laughingly told her that she might even call "louvara" "luffee," alluding to one of her worst

blunders, if she liked, and he would love her just the same. After a moment or two they walked on together in the same order, and in a few minutes the Ainah commenced another song—one of the songs of her own tribe, which was in their humble language, and the burden of which was—

"For my love he loves many,
Though I love but one."

Being a common song, and the words consisting chiefly of monosyllables, she thought it would not vex his delicate sense of language.

And here we may notice what a good girl the Ainah was. Many girls, under similar circumstances, would have been angry; some would have been depressed; others would have been sullen; but her obedient and docile thought was only how she should show Realmah that she was not vexed, and that she could trust him when he told her that he would love her sweet words, however incorrectly they might be expressed.

They were now in sight of the great river Ramassa; indeed, they were not more than three hundred yards distant from it. They had emerged from the dense wood, but there were still great trees between them and the river. They walked on in this way for about a hundred yards. Realmah had joined in the burden of the Ainah's song; but a nice discriminator of musical sounds might have discerned that some strange and sudden emotion had come over him while he was joining in the burden of that song.

In truth, he had seen a face from behind one of the trees, and in a moment had conjectured what had been the plan of the Phelatahs in pursuit, and that they had sent on a party to intercept him at this river.

He revolved his chances of escape, and decided upon his course of action. Suddenly stepping up to the Ainah, he playfully said, "Shall we see, Lufra, who will be first at the river's edge?" and, with a strange inconsistency with his words, he seized her hand and rushed with her down to the river's edge. In a minute or two shouts were heard; the scout who had seen Realmah had warned his fellows, five or six of whom had emerged from the wood in pursuit of Realmah and the Ainah, and were overtaking them rapidly. The fugitives,

however, gained the river; Realmah dashed in, dragging her after him. She clung to him in a way that embarrassed him most dangerously. Quick as thought he gave her a violent blow, which made her relinquish her hold, and indeed rendered her senseless, and then he commenced swimming, dragging her after him.

Before the Phelatahs were on the bank, Realmah, availing himself of the current, and swimming rapidly, was at a considerable distance from the shore; but not at such a distance, however, that the javelins of the Phelatahs were without effect. One of these pierced the arm of the senseless Ainah, while another struck the shoulder of Realmah, and remained in it. His courage, however, did not fail him; and, though in great pain, he succeeded in reaching the opposite shore, dragging the Ainah with him, where he threw himself on the ground quite exhausted, the Ainah being still insensible. Happily they were now beyond the reach of the enemy's missiles. The Phelatahs dared not follow; and after a short interval the Ainah recovered her senses.

Realmah felt ashamed at the blow which he had given her, though he knew it had afforded the only chance for her safety; and, lover-like, tenderly apologized to her for his great cruelty. This readiness in a crisis of danger to take the necessary step, however painful, was eminently characteristic of Realmah, who had in him the nature of a great commander: swift to appreciate, and ready to act upon, the dictates of dire necessity. The Ainah playfully said that the danger now was not his being too cruel, but too kind.

The fugitives having bound up each other's wounds, pursued their way northwards. In a few hours they met with a party of labourers from Abibah, and in their company gained safely their native town.

Great was the joy in Abibah when the return of Realmah was made known through the town. Talora appeared more beautiful than ever; and the Varnah forgot, for the first day, to scold those persons who came to congratulate, but had the audacity to enter her apartments without having first carefully wiped their sandals.

Nobody cared to inquire much into what the Ainah had done to aid in Realmah's escape; and he himself did not dwell upon that part of the proceedings lest it should lead persons to notice and examine more closely the tender relations which now subsisted between them. But the love that there was in his heart for her partook of the

largeness of his nature, and was, from that moment, deep, intense, and enduring.

Conversation is certainly a very capricious thing. I did expect that after this reading we should have had a most interesting conversation. My master and I had taken great pains with those chapters of "Realmah." I do sometimes think that Mr. Milverton must, in some previous state of existence, have lived in one of these Lake cities, as whatever explanation I ask for upon any point, he always gives me at once; and I took great care in these chapters not to allow him to go on narrating without I thoroughly understood every point of the narrative. In short, I was very proud of our work; and that is the truth.

After the reading there was some praise in general terms: "it was very interesting," "a new phase of life was opened," "it was an excellent choice of subject," &c. &c.; but that was not what I wanted. I did think we should have had some good discussion.

Sir John Ellesmere is, no doubt, a very distinguished man; very amusing, agreeable, and even lovable; but he is sometimes very trying, too. It is one thing to read about a man, and another to live with him. It was all his fault that this conversation went off so badly. The only thing that he could find to talk about, and that he discoursed about at great length, was about the three cranes which Realmah saw from his prison window, and the proverb of the Sheviri about cranes. (I wish we had never put in that passage.) He made out that it was an insult to fishermen, and dilated at large upon the especial merits and virtues of anglers. It was true they looked a great deal down into the waters, but it was not merely to catch fish, but to see the reflection of the heavens. They had written better books than any other men; and then somehow he fell foul of authors, and publishers, and literary puffing, which I did not think very good taste, seeing there were two or three authors present. And, altogether, I was very much disappointed in the conversation.

Mr. Milverton saw I was vexed, and said to me as he went away, "I see, Alick, you are quite annoyed at their not discussing our story. But, my dear boy, you must take it as a compliment. They do not see much to find fault with, and praise is always a dull thing. People seldom spend much time in praising. When a man looks back upon

his misspent hours, he will not find that he has to reproach himself for many of them having been spent in commendation."

I do not think he was quite pleased either. As for me, I could not help thinking of a passage in Pepys's Diary which I had lately been reading out to Mr. Milverton. I do not recollect the exact words, but they were something like these—Pepys had been going up the river in a barge, attending upon King Charles the Second and his brother the Duke of York. Pepys is delighted at being in such good company; nevertheless, in his honest way, he says: "But, Lord! what poor stuff it was that they did talk—as poor as ever I heard; though, Heaven bless them, they are two princes of a noble nature, and of excellent discernment."

I remember that when I read out that passage, Sir John remarked that he was sure that Charles and James were making fun of Pepys (to speak vulgarly, chaffing him), and that he did not understand it; but I believe that they were talking downright nonsense, just such "poor stuff" as Sir John himself and the other clever men were talking to-day.

It is impossible to continue to be angry with Sir John Ellesmere: he is such a kind-hearted man. An hour or two after our last meeting I observed Sir John, Mr. Milverton, and Mr. Mauleverer walking in the garden, and in earnest conversation. I longed to join them, but did not like to do so, fearing that I might be intrusive. Sir John, seeing me in the distance, and guessing, I have no doubt, what I felt, called to me.

Ellesmere. Come here, Sandy, and be flat-ironed—I mean morally and metaphysically. Mr. Mauleverer is telling a story which is to show convincingly that all young men are nincompoops; all middle-aged men mere beasts of burden; and all old men fools.

Mauleverer.—some nine miles out of town. I always came up to town with him, in the four-horse omnibus. It was before the days of many railways. He was a stout, comely, serious-looking man, who invariably wore gold-rimmed spectacles, to which he paid great attention, often polishing the glasses with a bit of leather, and looking at the sky through them.

"Good morning, sir!" I said to him, after he had settled himself in the omnibus, "I think I had the pleasure of seeing you at the play last

night. And those two pretty little girls are your daughters, I suppose? How they did enjoy it!"

"Yes, sir, they did, the dears! I am afraid, though, they disturbed some of our neighbours by their merry laughing."

"How inimitable Keeley was," I said, "after he had got hold of the talisman! What fun it was when he wished for all his little brothers and sisters; and they came pouring in through the walls in their nightgowns, and throwing their little arms about him; and then when he said, 'Oh, how I wish they were gone!'

"I could not help thinking, though, all the time, what each of us then present would wish for, if we had such a talisman, that would only grant us one of our wishes. Now, I wonder, sir, what you would wish for?" It was rather an impertinent question on my part, for I only knew the man as an omnibus acquaintance. I did not even know his name.

"I have not the slightest objection to telling you, sir," he said. "May one wish for anything for one's children? because, of course——" "No," I said, "it must be a purely personal wish."

"My wish, then, sir, would decidedly be that my spectacle-glasses should always be clear. You have not come to spectacles, sir. You have no idea of the trouble of keeping the glasses clear. If it is frosty, a mist comes upon them; if it is too hot, a mist comes upon them; if you only wink your eyelids, the glasses suddenly seem to become dim. Spectacles are the greatest blessing, and the greatest plague of one's life. Yes: that is what my wish would be."

"Rather different, I suspect, from what it was when you were younger, sir?"

"Yes, sir, my wish then was to be an Arab sheik, galloping about Arabia Petræa on an Arab steed, with a lance in my hand. I had always a mania for the East; but it has gone off considerably since I have married, and lived at Upper Tooting."

"By the way, have you looked, sir, at the debate of last night? I agree with the Times—not that I always do agree with the Times, sir—that both the Ministry and the Opposition played their respective games very badly."

Ellesmere. Now Mauleverer tells us this anecdote with his usual spirit of malice against the human race. He means, no doubt, to

show how we come down, in the course of years, from grand ideas to small and household ones—from Arab sheikdom to an anxious care for the clearness of our spectacles.

I read the anecdote quite differently. I say that the man's ideas had expanded. You see he took an interest in politics. He declared (I don't believe him) that he did not swear by his Times. He delighted in taking his little daughters to the play. He had the good sense to prefer Upper Tooting to Arabia Petræa. In order to maintain his clearness of vision in these matters, he naturally wished to have his spectacle-glasses clear. This anecdote seems to me to put human nature and human life in a very favourable point of view.

Milverton. You have not heard my story, Ellesmere, which I told Mauleverer before you joined us.

I was with an eminent man of letters the other day, and he received a proof-sheet. "Here is this beast of a thing," he said; "full of printer's errors, I have no doubt!"

"Oh, dear, dear, how well I remember my first proof-sheet, which I received when I was quite a youth. It was a divine moment! I had written something which somebody was foolish enough to think worth printing, and I was expecting the first proof-sheet."

"My good father, as I had just gained a prize at college, had given me a horse a few days before; and, to employ the slowly-moving hours of expectation, I had taken a fierce ride, resolving not to return until after the time when the post came in, and when the proof-sheet *must* have arrived."

"The benevolent printers (how I blessed them for it!) had not disappointed me; and there was the delightful packet on the table when I did return. What a beautiful invention printing seemed to me! How my poor thoughts seemed to gain in force and clearness, when they were clothed in this charming dress! I should be sorry to say how many times I read over that proof-sheet, each time admiring it more. And yet there was a feeling of humility mixed with my exaltation. Were my thoughts really worthy to be put in this fine garb? I said to myself. But this did not damp my joy much. Worthy or not, there they were in print, and would be 'in a book, with kivers to 'un.'"

"And now, when I have one of those things," he said, pointing to the rather dirty proof-sheet, "'I have neither a sense of exaltation nor of humility, but there is simply before me a bit of disagreeable work to be carefully done.'"

Ellesmere. I see nothing in all this. You men of fine sentiments are always duped by your sentimentality. The man has now an assured reputation, which is a permanent source of pleasure to him. Of course, the novelty of proof-sheets has gone off; and, moreover, he knows by this time that he cannot do so much by criticism and correction as he thought he could when he was younger. Would he be younger? Ask him that. That is the question.

Mauleverer. No: he would not, because he has found out what a miserable thing life is.

Ellesmere. Come and find out your nursery-tea: a great and wise institution this, of nursery-tea! Do I not see Mrs. Milverton at the window, making imperious gestures to us, signifying that the tea is getting cold? When shall I ever make these men, wise men?—more like myself, and more willing to take life comfortably, instead of interchanging their respective drearinesses, and making melancholy out of anecdotes which are really pleasant and encouraging. Come along!

14. It was one of the Lords Marischal.

"On Marischal College, Aberdeen, which the Earl founded in 1593, and endowed with a portion of the doomed spoil, the inscription in large letters remained on the building till 1836, when these were taken down to make room for the present structure:—

'They say?
Quhat say thay?
Thay haif sayd?
Lat thame say.'"

—Buchan, by the Rev. John B. Pratt. 1858.

15.

"Invidieranno
Forse l' età future,
Più che i trionfi miei, le mie sventure."

CHAPTER VIII.

We were all at breakfast this morning—all, at least, but Sir John Ellesmere and Mr. Mauleverer, who had gone for a walk. It was a dull, sombre, autumn day, with a low mist in the valley, and hardly a breath of air moving. Our conversation, too, in the absence of Sir John, was not particularly lively. Mr. Milverton was telling Mr. Cranmer that, after a recent battle, there was a continuous line, ten miles long, of wagons and carriages carrying the wounded; and Mr. Cranmer was making calculations as to how many wounded persons there must have been. Sir Arthur was reciting, aside, some passages from "Paracelsus" to Lady Ellesmere, to convince her that it was a great poem. I overheard some of the passages, and looked at them afterwards.

"The rabbit has his shade to frighten him,
The fawn a rustling bough, mortals their cares,
And higher natures yet would slight and laugh
At these entangling fantasies, as you
At trammels of a weaker mind; but judge
Your mind's dimension by the shade it casts!"

And then this one—

"And from the East
Day, like a mighty river, flowing in;
But clouded, wintry, desolate, and cold."

And this—

"Are there not, dear Michal,
Two points in the adventure of the diver:
One—when a beggar he prepares to plunge?
One—when a prince he rises with his pearl?
Festus, I plunge!"

Even the cleverest men, I find, make great mistakes sometimes. It does not do to talk humanity, or quote poetry, at breakfast time. It is too early, and people are neither humane nor romantic at this immature and "uncooked" period of the day. Besides, I could see

that Lady Ellesmere was only thinking about her husband, and wondering why he was not at breakfast; and so Browning's beautiful lines received merely a polite attention from her. Presently we heard the noise and bustle which usually announce Sir John Ellesmere's approach, and he burst into the room.

Ellesmere. Oh! I am so glad to see you all again!

Lady Ellesmere. Why? What? Has anything happened? Have you met with any accident, John?

Ellesmere. Don't be so fussy, my dear. If anything had happened, if I had tumbled down a precipice, it would be a mark of ill-breeding to make a fuss about it, especially at breakfast. But here I am, safe and sound; and as for His Vastness (Sir John often called Mr. Mauleverer "His Vastness," or "His Amplitude"), he is about half a mile away, at the bottom of the hill. I ran off, saying I wished to warm myself, but in reality to make my escape from him. He has been awful this morning. What a clever man he is, though!

You see the kind of day it is—not superabundantly cheerful. Well, we went to walk under "the beeches." I am not a man particularly subject to mournful fancies; but if ever they succeed in oppressing me, it is when I am walking upon damp, rotting, autumn leaves. There is a passage in Alfred de Vigny's celebrated novel of "Cinq-Mars," in which, previously to the hero's downfall, the royal cavalcade of heavy carriages goes crunching through the dead leaves of the forest, on just such a day as this, and everybody feels a foreshadowing of some calamity. That passage made a great impression upon me when I was a boy. Mauleverer saw that I had not my usual life and spirits this morning, and shamefully abused his opportunity. Of course he preached upon his never-failing text, the misery of human life.

He told me that fees were a mistake. I did not see that, looking at the question from a recipient's point of view.

He told me that Lady Ellesmere was more of a plague than a pleasure. That I denied, maintaining that in this particular case the plague and the pleasure were about equally balanced.

Lady Ellesmere. Thank you, John, for your noble defence of your poor wife.

Ellesmere. He then mentioned that virtue was dull, and vice despicable, disgusting, and dyspeptic. You must have noticed how fond he is of alliteration. Meanwhile I kept singing a song of Beranger's—

"Aimons vite,
Pensons vite;
Toute invite
A vivre vite.
Aimons vite,
Pensons vite.
Au galop
Monde falot!"

But nothing would stop him.

Lady Ellesmere. John singing! Ye Powers of Time and Tune, what ye endure!

If he should have the misfortune to survive me, instead of the usual things that men say in epitaphs of their dear wives, he need only inscribe this line—

"She did not mind her husband's singing much."

And, indeed, I rather like it, for, though it is murderous in the way of music, John is always in an especial good humour when he sings, as he calls it; but the autumn leaves and Mr. Mauleverer were evidently too much for him this morning.

Ellesmere. You are very witty; but you waste precious time, my dear. I have lots to tell you before he comes.

Well, then, he deviated into a discussion about the minor miseries of human life, and here he made a simile which I think you will say is one of the strangest you ever heard. He compared these miseries to the crumbs in the bed of a sick man, who is too ill to rise for his meals. The poor wretch, he said, does what he can to brush them away; thinks, after great labour, and many painful twistings and turnings, for he can hardly move, that he has accomplished it; but when he settles down once more, he is sure to find some of those detestable crumbs molesting him again, and he never gets rid of them till he is taken out of bed—perhaps for the last time. It is one of

the homeliest of similes; possibly the homeliest that was ever made; but it is really a very tolerable one, and it certainly cannot be said to be far-fetched.

You should have heard him dilate upon it in his grandiloquent way. "The man who lives but on applause finds ever, in his hard couch, the crumbs of an unsatisfied vanity molesting him. The jealous, sensitive man may brush away at these unpleasant fragments ever so diligently, but some of them (the hard little daily annoyances caused by an over-craving affection, or by a nature 'misunderstood,' as he is pleased to called it) remain to plague him. And to every man these relics of his incomplete and misspent life return to torment him, let him be nursed ever so sedulously." Now, did you ever hear such a simile as that? Sometimes, of course, one did not make out which were the physical, and which the metaphysical, crumbs; but that sort of confusion is indulged in by all simile-mongers.

Sir Arthur. I should have thought, Sir John, that you would not have——

Ellesmere. Yes, I know; you think, because you see me now so boisterously well, that I am never ill, and cannot appreciate this crumb-misery; but I suffer from a fit of sciatica about once every other year. The domestic persecution I undergo on those occasions!—but there is no time to tell you about that now. I have a good deal more to say: and His Vastness, though he moves but slowly, never stops, if you observe. "He will be here anon," as they say in plays.

Now I have something very serious to tell you. You would all be utterly oppressed by that stout gentleman—I know you would—if it were not for me. The women would go over to his side at once. They like a melancholy man; and then he is so charmingly polite. Sandy, too, would go over to his side: the Scotch have rather a turn for melancholy. As for Cranmer, His Amplitude would soon win him. He would do it by simple syllogism. Thus—

All men who do not pay their taxes cheerfully are wicked and miserable;

Nobody does pay his taxes cheerfully;

Therefore, everybody is wicked and miserable.

Cranmer could not resist that piece of close reasoning; and would go over to the other side of the House—that is, to the side of dumps and dolorousness.

I believe if I were to go away for three days, and come back again here, this is the state of things I should come upon. I should find Mauleverer at dinner alone. I should ask for the rest of you. With a smile of serene satisfaction, he would conduct me to the trees which are your especial favourites in the garden, and there I should find each of you pendent from your favourite tree. I can see the air of polite contempt with which, having persuaded you to get safely away from the miseries of life by hanging yourselves, he would offer you your choice of a tree. His contempt would be for human beings having any likings or dislikings in such an insignificant matter as hanging themselves.

Mark you, he is the soul of honour. Without joking, there is a touch of real grandeur in that man's character, and I am beginning to like him very much. But he is the dreariest mortal that ever lived. I'll bet that the story of his life, if we could ever worm it out of him, is very remarkable.

Well, as I was saying, he is the soul of honour; and he would not have persuaded you to do a thing which he would not do himself. He also would have been an interesting pendent from a tree; but is there any branch of any tree in Hampshire that could sustain his weight? Of course he would have come to the ground at once, only half-hanged. Then he would think that he would have one more dinner—a dinner that he could order for himself without Mrs. Milverton's well-meant but half-instructed interference; and there I should find him enjoying one of his favourite dishes, at the production of which he would have assisted.

But stay, one thing I have forgotten. I have shown how he would win over the ladies, and Cranmer, and Sandy, but there still remain Sir Arthur and Milverton. They would make something of a fight. But they have no sound basis of animal spirits to go upon; and melancholy, steadily applied, conquers everything but animal spirits. I am the only *pièce de resistance*, to use one of his own favourite phrases, which would not be devoured by him. Take care of me—I am your safeguard against him. He is in immense force to-day. I am sure something very unfortunate for the human race must have

happened somewhere, and that he has a mesmeric consciousness of it. But hush! Don't you perceive the room shake a little? His Ponderosity has entered the hall, and here he comes.

[

Enter Mr. Mauleverer.

]

Mauleverer. I am sorry, Mrs. Milverton, to be so late.

Mrs. Milverton. I have kept these warm for you at the fire, Mr. Mauleverer.

Lady Ellesmere. And so, Mr. Mauleverer, you have been telling my husband that I am more of a plague than a pleasure to him.

Mauleverer. I, Lady Ellesmere? I never said anything of the kind. Something, I believe, I did say about women in general; but every woman I know is an especial exception to the rule I laid down. How can you be so treacherous, Sir John, as to repeat sayings intended only for your own discreet ears?

Sir Arthur. Do not ask Mauleverer any more questions, Lady Ellesmere. Do let the poor man have his breakfast in peace.

I want to ask Ellesmere something about his illnesses. I cannot picture him to myself as a sick man.

Lady Ellesmere. He will tell terrible things about me, I know.

Ellesmere. There I am, in bed, unable to move, and Lady Ellesmere comes and talks to me in this fashion by way of comforting me. "I told you it would be so, John; you never take an umbrella, never change your damp boots, you will always walk home from the House, and you would go out to dinner the day before yesterday with that under-secretary, who gives such exquisite dinners that you are dissatisfied with mine for a month afterwards; and this is the result." Now I call that comforting. There is a consoler for you.

Milverton. Of course, Mildred, I don't believe one tithe of what he says. I have no doubt you are an excellent nurse; but that kind of talk which he describes is much affected by our nurses, and certainly it is not very consolatory.

I have often wondered that there is not, in any language that I know of, an especial word to designate the person who always goes

back from the present to dwell upon the mistakes and errors of the past. We have not even any great personage in history or fiction to whom we can compare such a person. Now, when we want to describe a person who is always prophesying evil, we liken him, or her, to Cassandra; but when we want to describe the other thing, namely, the person who always goes back to the evil of the past, saying this was wrong, and that was mistaken, and that everything would have been very different if everybody had acted differently, and had foreseen the event, we have nobody to whom to liken him. I suppose, mathematically speaking, we must say Cassandra with a *minus* sign.

Sir Arthur. Well done, Milverton! You have really pointed out a great want in language. Suppose we call him a "backwardiser," and the process "backwardising?"

Ellesmere. These are not very pretty words, Sir Arthur. I would rather say an "afterteller" and "aftertelling," just as we say foreteller and foretelling. But I was going to discourse to you more about illness—I think I know a great deal about it, and what I can say would be worth a Jew's ransom if people would only attend to it.

You hear of people dying of this disease, or of that disease, but what they really do die of is of questions. I believe I have a pretty strong will—some people would say it amounts to wilfulness; but when I am unwell I lose all strength of will, and cannot bear to be bothered with questions. "Will you have your gruel made of grits or barley? Will you have your vapor bath now? When will you take your medicine?" These weighty questions—and they are weighty to the poor sick man—thoroughly overcome me.

Now I am quite serious. An invalid ought to be treated mentally and morally as he is physically; namely, with gentleness, yet with perfect firmness. Don't give him any choice about anything: don't burden his mind with decision: remove from him all responsibility, which is so fatiguing a thing. I have no doubt that the excellent Miss Nightingale has said all this in her way, but I venture to say it in mine. A person in health can hardly have a conception of the helpless irritability of a real invalid. The most difficult case does not disturb my equanimity when I am well; but when I am ill, the question of grits or barley is an overpowering one, and raises the pulse seven beats at least.

Lady Ellesmere. You may imagine what a monster of impatience he must be when he is ill.

Sir Arthur. His words, though, are the words of wisdom, Lady Ellesmere. I have no doubt that a judicious moral treatment of the sick has saved many a life.

By this time, Mr. Mauleverer had finished his breakfast, the ladies rose, and our conversation this morning was ended.

Sir Robert Walpole said that every man has his price. My small experience of the world does not enable me to confirm, or to contradict, this maxim; but I begin to suspect that every author has his vanity. I did think that my master was free from this foible. He never cares to hear what is said about his writings, except for business purposes—that is, to meet an objection or to remedy an error, or to explain something that he finds is not understood; he would give away to anybody his most cherished ideas—ideas he had toiled over to bring into shape; and he even dislikes to have his name connected with anything he has done. To-day, however, or rather this evening, I could see that the author's vanity was not extinct in him, and that he was thoroughly pleased and flattered by a person not much given to please and flatter,—namely, Sir John Ellesmere.

This circumstance is what gives the following conversation especial interest to me, though perhaps in itself it was not the least interesting we have had.

Mr. Mauleverer, who has studied astronomy very carefully, expressed a wish that, in the evening, we should come out upon the lake that has been before described, whence we could look at the stars, and see something which he was anxious to point out to us. We agreed to dine very early; to go and see what Mr. Mauleverer was to show us; and then to return for our reading of Realmah.

Oddly enough, after we had got into the boat, the conversation did not at first turn upon any grand or elevating subject, but was merely a continuation of a conversation that had commenced at dinner, upon a very common place subject; namely, hospitality. I cannot give all the conversation in detail; but I remember the main points.

Mr. Cranmer maintained that the mode of reception of a guest was the most important thing. Mr. Milverton said that the chief point for a host to think of was, that his guests were not at

home—that they were, to use a French expression, *desorientés*, whereas he was perfectly aware of the points of the compass. He (Mr. Milverton) therefore maintained that the host must attend to all manner of little things connected with the comfort of his guests; take an interest in their comings and goings; and especially watch that they are well attended to when they ring their bells. He maintained that dinner was, comparatively, an unimportant thing, that we were always too well-fed everywhere; from which proposition Mr. Mauleverer expressed, in the most emphatic manner, his entire dissent.

Sir Arthur said that the Prime Minister[16] was a perfect host, because he attended to these little things which Mr. Milverton had spoken of; would even, in the midst of his arduous duties, study Bradshaw for the benefit of his guests, carefully provide the means of transit for them, take care to have early breakfasts for them if they were going anywhere at an irrational time in the morning; and, in short, be even a little fussy in looking after all manner of comforts and conveniences for them. But how one valued this thoughtful kindness from such a man!

From this point I remember how the conversation went:—

Sir Arthur. Some time ago I went into a part of the country which is celebrated for its romantic scenery. Our friend J——,—whom we used to know and to like at college, Milverton,—invited me to his place, and I accepted the invitation. The morning after I arrived at his house I felt very unwell. Now the first thing when you are unwell is to get a fire made in your room. I rang the bell early: it was answered by a rather clownish, but not unintelligent-looking young fellow.

"Light me a fire, please."

"A fire?" said he, and looked despondingly at me, and then at the fireplace.

"Yes; I must have a fire: I don't feel well."

Then he set to work to light the fire, taking great pains with his work.

In a few moments the fire began to smoke furiously.

I jumped up in bed, and remarked, not in the mildest terms, "that it smoked."

"Yes, I knowed she 'ud: she almost allus does. She's smoked this twenty year, as I've heerd say."

The door was put open; but "she" was one of those vicious chimneys which do not care a bit whether doors are open or not.

"Have you got such a thing as a pair of bellows?"

"No, we han't got such a thing as bellusses." And then the good-natured youth lay down on the floor, and performed the part of a bellows with a goodwill and a vigour that it was astonishing to behold.

By the way, I may remark that our friend J—— is not a poor man. He has a magnificent collection of gems and medals; and household gods of every variety of strange hideousness adorned every disposable corner of his dwelling. I really mean "household gods"—Roman, Chinese, Peruvian, Mexican, Japanese. These quaint little monsters (J—— has no children) were doted upon by himself and Mrs. J——.

The boy went on puffing and blowing.

"Goethe was quite wrong," I remarked, thinking aloud for myself.

"Were he, sir? I dare say he were," replied the youth, looking up for a moment. "Master's allus complaining of them people at the Bald-faced Stag." This was the inn I had taken horses from to come on to J——'s.

"Yes," I continued; "he said, '*Always take care of the Beautiful, for the Useful will take care of itself.*' I would say, '*Always take care of the Useful; for the Beautiful will take care of itself.*'"

Mauleverer. And it does not much matter whether it does or not.

Sir Arthur. And the youth said, "Eh, dear, the gentleman didn't know no better, I suppose." But whether my puffing friend understood the question, and really sided with me, or whether he agreed with me from complaisance, I am to this day in doubt.

Milverton. Goethe is as right as possible.

Ellesmere. Sir Arthur is certainly very unjust in this instance. It is not the Beautiful but the Curious and the Grotesque that J—— cared for.

Milverton. Of course.

Ellesmere. And Sir Arthur's error was in visiting a collector. Collectors are a race of men by themselves. They are the most dangerous form of misers—I mean dangerous to live with. They are very useful fellows, I admit. But my reply to any invitation on their part would run as follows:—"Sir John Ellesmere presents his compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Collector, and regrets that a previous engagement prevents his having the pleasure of accepting their kind invitation."

Mauleverer. You have both set upon Sir Arthur, and have treated him very hardly, I think. His remark was one of general application; and, just because he happened to mention that this J—— was a collector of little household monsters, you have directed your attack upon this point—ignoring the fact, as I say, that Sir Arthur's remark was of a most general character. I think the story a very valuable one. Bellows absent, gems present; smoky chimney suffered to exist; comfort of guests utterly neglected, but "household gods" affronting you everywhere. That is the way to put it.

Ellesmere. I maintain that the great duty of a host is not to be a bore, and not to show people anything which he may fancy they *might* like to see. Indeed I have come to the conclusion that the host, to be a perfect host, should be blind and a cripple—I even think it would be better that this perfect host should have an impediment in his speech, and be slightly paralytic.

[No one would agree with this inhuman proposition.]

Ellesmere. Oh! you think me a monster!

We are all to tell our sad experiences of what is fondly called hospitality; so hear one of mine.

I was once invited by a host whom I thought to be perfection. He was very learned: he was very witty: he was partially blind: and always either in a fit of the gout, or threatened with a fit of it. "Here is the man for me," I said. "I will accept his invitation. We shall only see him at dinner, when he will be most agreeable." I went to his house. The next morning after my arrival, to my utter amazement, he ordered horses for all of us, and took us to see some drainage works on his estate. There were 27 degrees of frost that day. As we sat on our horses, surveying the common process of draining,—about which I thought I knew something, and did not

want to know any more,—we were nearly statuefied. As the old women say, you might have knocked me down with a feather; for hands, arms, feet, and legs were entirely without life. As we rode back, I could not help saying, "My dear sir, don't take me indoors, I am entirely frozen; just throw me into your ice-house. I shall be very useful there next June." I don't believe he felt the reproof.

Now look at Milverton: perhaps he is the best host in this kingdom. I have never met with his equal. He complains of fatigue if he walks with you more than 200 yards: he is ever anxious to be back at his work again; he will "almost allus" leave you alone, if you will leave him alone. Considered as a host, he is a beautiful creature—unrivalled. But I would not trust even him.

I maintain my first proposition, that a man to be a perfect host should have nothing to show you, or, if he has, he should be too ill to be able to show it.

Mr. Cranmer then astonished us all by maintaining that the one great thing to ensure happiness in any assemblage of people was, that they should like one another (that one uncongenial person could neutralize ten congenial people), and that all social happiness consisted in the amount of affection and esteem that pervaded the society—that you did not care what rude things a man said to you of whose regard you were really sure, and so conversation might be free, frank, bold, and yet not offensive. It was the main point in hospitality to bring congenial people together.

After this the conversation changed, and Mr. Mauleverer pointed out to us the phenomena in the aspect of the heavens that he had wished us to come and see. I cannot give an account of what he said, for I did not understand it.

Sir Arthur. What an awful thing it would be to behold the conflagration of a star! Such a thing has occurred recently, has it not, Mauleverer?

Mr. Mauleverer. Yes.

Milverton. There are two things that appal me whenever I consider them. One is, the immense amount of complicated misery which any one human soul can endure without going mad.

Ellesmere. And the second is?

Milverton. The idea of illimitable space that is to be derived from the contemplation of these innumerable worlds around us.

I don't know whether you remember a theory I once propounded to some of you, that the stars are as close to one another (relatively speaking) as the ultimate atoms of the wood in this boat; and that to the vision that could embrace such a scene, the heavenly bodies would appear to be solid bodies, or, perhaps, one solid body.

Ellesmere. That is an idea in respect to which I would rather not pledge myself to say anything.

Milverton. Well, then, I imagine that all matter is in motion; that the motion is analogous to that of the heavenly bodies; and that chemical combination is merely a disturbance and re-formation of the orbits of the ultimate atoms of matter.

Mauleverer. In fact, that all chemistry is but astronomy?

Ellesmere. I hope your theories may be true for this reason: that we should then only have to learn one science instead of two, which would be a great convenience to half-educated persons, such as I am.

Sir Arthur. I like to dwell upon the moral aspect of such a scene as this. The contemplation of these innumerable worlds really ought to make us a little less fussy and tiresome about our own small affairs.

If I had to comfort a disappointed man, or to soothe an angry man, or to console a bereaved man, I should like to have him in the open air to talk to, on a starry moonlit night.

I think I should have far more chance of prevailing with him if I could direct his attention occasionally to the stars. I wonder more use has not been made of this situation in the drama, and in fiction generally.

Ellesmere. Well, you see, in these northern climes, when one has any great business to transact,—a murder to plan, a ministry to upset, a rival in love to circumvent, a large sum of money to get,—one likes to be in a comfortable, warm room, if possible with a fire, and not to be amongst gnats and insects, (how they do plague one now!) staring up at these heavenly bodies about which we know next to nothing, and the contemplation of which does not make us practical and business-like.

Mr. Mauleverer. As we drove down here, we passed the telegraph wires. I saw a sparrow comfortably perched upon one of these wires;

and I said to myself, "*As much as that sparrow knows of the urgent haste, and the sorrow, and the suffering which are expressed in the messages that are passing under its claws, which do not perceive the slightest tremulousness as the messages speed on, so much does the poor human being know of what is being transacted in this universe, and of what it all means.*" And while I was thinking this thought, Mr. Sparrow chirped an affectionate little chirp, and Mrs. Sparrow came and perched beside him; and they doubtless thought that they were the masters of the situation, and the lord and lady of the whole scene.

Ellesmere. Just as Mrs. Milverton believes that the wild theories that Milverton has just put forward, are in exact accordance with scientific truth and wisdom.

It would be an amusing thing (if one dared to think of amusement in a future state) to imagine how most of the greatest thinkers will prove to have been utterly wrong.

But let us quit these dangerous themes for those which are humbler and safer.

You said some time ago, Sir Arthur, that stars have not been made enough use of in the drama and in fiction generally. Have you ever read Alexander Smith's works? They are really very good, and he makes immense use of the stars. But there is an obscure author, a friend of mine, who is also very fond of making good use of the sun and the stars.

The next thing to being a poet is being a person who can remember poetry; and I am not sure but that the man who takes the trouble to learn by heart large quantities of poetry has not a more poetical soul in him than the poet.

I know it is so in the present case.

Milverton. Ellesmere's memory for poetry is extraordinary. He can quote you 70 lines at a time from Pope or Dryden.

Sir Arthur. Nothing would be more appropriate, Sir John, than that, amidst this beautiful scene, you should quote poetry largely to us. We are coming near the swans' nest too, which would make such quotation more suitable.

Ellesmere. Well, it is from a drama that I am going to quote. There are two lovers (of course there are. When shall we ever have a good

story without these tiresome lovers?). The hero tells of his travels: he comes to the South:—

"The joyous, noisy South, where the perfume
Of orange-groves pervades the charmèd air,
And overcomes the incense in the temples;
And where the yellow rocks uprise from out
A tideless sea that purples as you gaze,
And seems like th' unreal waters of enchantment
You read of in a magic tale—that might,
Some potent word pronounced, vanish away."

Then he describes a thing I once saw myself somewhere on the Mediterranean, a part of the shore where the sand is wholly black:—

"Like crumbled memories of a life
All spent in sorrow ...
On which the calm blue ripple, like a lizard
Up a dark wall, stole softly: then, to Africa
We sailed, and in the desert drew that breath
So full, so deep, that ever afterwards
There is a sense of stifling in grand palaces,
When we recall our sojourn midst the sand,
And see again brown camels moored about
Our tent, and watch the all-pervading sunset—
One fiery dome—the north, the east, the south,
Reddening alike, nor leaving to the west
Alone the duty-task of shining out
In regal pomp—when the fierce king of day
Takes leave of all the courtly hemisphere
At once—a sunset wholly inconceivable
To those who dwell in pallid Russia."

Then, of course, the lady says:—

"Oh, would that I had been with you in that tent!"

Then comes the starry bit, for the gentleman exclaims:—

"And how at the big stars we gazed, and wondered
That men could e'er be cruel to each other,

Having that sky to look upon, and all
That it may mean to interpret."

Then he gives a description of the ruins of some provincial amphitheatre, saying that of all he saw, that was the thing which haunted his memory most closely:—

"Like some fierce, wicked face, seen once in a crowd,
That will obtrude its unblest recollection,
And will not bide dismissal; it is this:
Amidst the hills there lies an oval valley,
Not shaped by nature, but man's work—all man's.
From base to summit curving lines ascend
Of granite steps."

Then there is a description of some of the arrangements for the spectators, especially for the ladies:—

"That great provincial dames might sit in comfort,
Four arched and barred recesses, treasure caves,
Contained the hoarded mass of human misery
And bestial suffering chosen to delight
The pampered multitude pining for blood.

See! the Proconsul comes....
The hushed spectators draw a lower breath,
And wait, with palpitating joy, the rush
Of beasts which are to tear their fellow-men;
Or, peevish at some wearisome delay,
Denounce the meanness of patricians nowadays,
And moralize upon the scarcity
Of lions, praising much the good old times,
When gladiators died more freely."

Then I suppose there is some stupid love-making; but I forget. At any rate the gentleman resolves to go on with his story, and he does so in these words:—

"And now, departed all,
Proconsuls, lions, gladiators, slaves,—

A wooden stage, and painted daubs hung out
Of dancing girls, such as attract the boors
At festivals, betray the conquering march
Of a new creed that makes account of men."

I suppose it is Verona that the dramatist alludes to, where you see a modern boarded theatre occupying some portion of the old amphitheatre.

By the way, when I saw Verona, I was in company with another friend of mine, named Leonard Milverton, and I never saw a man so entranced with a picture as he was with one of those said "daubs." You could not arouse him from his contemplation of it. Now I could always get him away from a Titian. I so soon become tired of pictures. That reminds me of an omission in our talk about hospitality. Should it not be set down as one of the greatest breaches of hospitality when a man *will* show you his pictures? And there are fiend-like hosts who absolutely insist upon showing you books of prints, and making you go right through them; but such men never have my company more than once.

Well, but I left Milverton contemplating this daub. You never saw a man so fascinated by a work of art. So, quoth I, "What can you see in that thing, Milverton? It is only a magnified representation of the pictures 'fast' men at college in our time (I suppose there are no such things now) used to have in their rooms of favourite dancers."

"No," he said, grasping my arm, and looking at me with a fierce seriousness, "it is perhaps the greatest stride that Christianity has ever made—from gladiators to dancing maidens."

Let me give you another passage from my drama; it is my favourite, and it will delight Mauleverer. In fact, I think he will send a 10*l.* note anonymously to the author, as a proof of his entire satisfaction. I think he will give me what the vulgar call a "fiver," for having quoted it. This is the passage:—

"We shall succeed.
This one injustice may be remedied.
But then the things that *have* been—why they come
Upon me now I wot not: hideous deeds
Long numbered with the past. The earth may smile,

And deck herself each May, vain thing! with flowers,
And seem forgetful of the cruelties
Enacted on her ever-changing stage,
Till every spot upon the storied surface
Is rank with tragic memories."

Then he dilates upon the horrors that have been perpetrated on this earth.

"The earth may smile, I say,
But, like a new-made widow's mirth, it shocks one.
And she, the earth, should never quit her weeds;
And should there come a happier race upon her,
Ever there'll be a sighing of the wind,
A moaning of the sea, to hint to that
More favoured race what we poor men have suffered.
There must have been a history, they'll say,
To be interpreted by all these sighs
And moans."

Not bad lines, are they, Mrs. Milverton?

Mrs. Milverton. I think they are beautiful, Sir John.

Sir Arthur (who had evidently an inkling of the authorship). They certainly are, Mrs. Milverton. Where is this poem to be found?

Ellesmere. Trunks or butter, Sir Arthur. The linings of old trunks, or the wrappages of butter, are to be examined carefully if you would recover this charming work.

Milverton. My dear John, you must have had a great liking for the author, or you never would have cumbered your memory to such an extent with his rubbish.

Ellesmere. Well, honestly, I did not think it was rubbish, though it was written by a friend. (Here Ellesmere put his hand for a moment on Milverton's; and I certainly never saw Mr. Milverton look more pleased.) Moreover, the tyrant of an author laid hold of me, and made me copy out some of the drama for the printers; and that is how I came to know so much of it by heart.

How about the ten pounds, Mauleverer, which you were to send to the poor author?

Mauleverer. You do not quite understand me, any of you. I am not disposed to indulge in the munificence which Sir John has kindly suggested for me, and I shall not send that anonymous author ten pounds, or give Ellesmere five, because the author merely dwells upon cruelties and horrors of all kinds committed by men, whereas I should have liked him to have dwelt upon their littleness and their baseness.

Ellesmere. My dear Mauleverer, do you really think that a poem should be something like the proceedings of the Central Criminal Court?

Sir Arthur. Mauleverer thinks that poetic description ennobles, and so disguises, human suffering.

Cranmer. Prose is the proper thing. There is nothing of any importance that can be described adequately, except in prose.

Ellesmere. A noble sentiment!

Mauleverer. I am very much obliged to Sir Arthur for explaining what he thinks I mean; but I decline to accept my kind commentator's version of my meaning.

The poet, as quoted by Ellesmere, has just told his story to show the sufferings of mankind. I could tell you one to show its ineradicable baseness. You think that you learned and imaginative men, Sir Arthur, are the only persons whose nymphs inform them of strange stories; but I have my story, too.

Ellesmere. Pray let us have it. Do not be modest, Mauleverer: modesty would not sit well upon you.

Mauleverer. Well, then, you *shall* have it.

To a planet, not very far from us, but which I shall not mention, because one ought to be confidential as regards the doings in neighbouring planets, the souls of capitalists, men of business, and well-to-do people are transferred. Now the law in this planet is that these people shall be endowed with certain portions of their dear money, according to the use, judicious or injudicious, which they have made of it in this world. The form of the endowment is this—

They all have to pass, one by one, in front of a colossal statue. It would tax the utmost powers of any mortal to describe this statue. I have ever loved statues beyond all other works of art, and therefore may be permitted to attempt a description of it. There have been

great statues made even in this world. Who has not heard and thought of the magnificent Memnon with his unseen lyre trembling into music at the rising of the sun? Who, that has seen it, has not been awed by the Sphinx, cruellest of maidens, daughter of Chimæra, propounding riddles harder to understand than her own mixed nature of lioness and woman? Need I dwell upon the god-like grandeur of Michael Angelo's Jupiter? And, to come down to the statues of ordinary life; who that at night, alone, has paced up and down long galleries enriched with statues, has not felt that these statues have spoken awful words to his soul? Perhaps there has been a row of mighty wicked Roman emperors; and Neros, Caligulas, and Domitians have frankly acknowledged their colossal wickednesses to the horror-stricken mortal contemplating them.

But all these, the works of men, sink into insignificance when compared with the statue which, with humility and fear, I venture to describe.

It was golden: not that it was of gold, but that it produced in your mind the idea of gold. Its robes were of jasper, onyx, and opal: not that these earthly materials were there, but that it produced the ideas of them in your mind. But the transcendent quality about this statue was this—that you were fully conscious that it was alive, and yet that it was a statue. Its face was downcast; its attitude bending: it held its clasped hands in front of it, the elbows resting on its curule chair. Not anger nor pity, nor joy, nor sorrow, was imprinted on its countenance, but only intense thought. It did not give you the idea of a Being petrified into a statue, nor as if any hands had wrought at it and fashioned it. It seemed as if only supreme thought and judgment had taken form.

One by one those who had been mortal defiled before it, and its ministers awarded gifts according to the dread thoughts of the Statue, which they alone could interpret. I need hardly say how different its judgments were from those which Fortune had pronounced in this world. The struggling man who had hardly known how to keep soul and body together here, but who had a great heart that might be trusted, found himself, to use a French phrase, "at the head of" large revenues; while he who had been a millionaire here, found himself condemned to live upon the merest pittance. Not that it was always so, for envy had dwarfed the just receptiveness of

some poor men for money, while there were men who had been rich in this world, and remained rich in my planet too, because they had been great in soul, as well as abounding in substance.

The curious thing was that all went away, if not satisfied, at least unmurmuring, and supremely convinced of the absolute justice of the Statue's awards. I noticed one man who had possessed three millions of money while he was on earth, of which sum it could not be said he had used one hundred wisely or usefully, and he went away, not joyfully, but unmurmuringly, when he was awarded by the ministers of the Statue one ducat per week.

But now comes the strangest thing. I could not help watching this man, whom I had known in life, to ascertain what would be his social state in his new sphere. Strange to say, other men were willing to partake their fortunes with him, though there were many more deserving than he. *But men liked to be seen walking and talking with this man, for they said, "He was once so rich—so very rich—in the other world; and it is still a credit and an honour to be acquainted with him." Such is the ineffable, ineradicable baseness of mankind.*

Ellesmere. Has not the air suddenly become chilly, or is it that Mauleverer talks chilliness into our blood?

It does not seem to have entered into Mauleverer's head that man might naturally feel some pity for this quondam rich man; but, upon the whole, the story has a very pretty moral to it—very superior, Sir Arthur, to what can be found in Milverton's fables or mine, or even in yours.

The boat was now rowed to the shore; we took a last look at the beautiful reflection of the moon and stars in the still water, and were then driven home to Worth-Ashton.

In the course of the evening the reading commenced, and was as follows:—

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER XVI.

REALMAH'S FAILURE.

No doubt the Romans were a great people. Their tombs, temples, columns, roads, bridges, and aqueducts attest that. The world (as far as it was then known) conquered by them attests that; nor less the

splendid reconquest of the barbarians by Roman laws, manners, and customs; and of the barbarian tongues by the Latin language.

But, though masters of the world, they were not perfect men of the world, else, amid the innumerable divinities they worshipped, they would not have omitted the great god Stupidity. They could worship a goddess, the protectress of sewers; they had even a goddess who took charge of such humble things as lime-kilns; but to him who rules the world, and before whom Fortune herself gives way, they raised no altars and burnt no incense.

There are people, even in modern times, who are as remiss as the Romans were in appreciating the power of this great authority amongst the sons of men. But the anxious father, if wise, and the fond mother, if foreseeing, would not pray that their child should be clever; but that all the loveliness and strength of stupidity might encircle him, like a halo, from his cradle to his grave.

A better word than stupidity might be found. It is not so much the stupid man as the limited man, the man of routine, the man who does not indulge in ideas, who does not believe much in anything or anybody, who will have an easy and a happy life. For want, however, of a better word, we must accept the word stupidity; and I say again, it derogates much from the sagacity of the Romans to find that they had no god, the lord and patron of Stupidity. The only way of accounting for this oversight is, that the Romans, finding that all men favoured what was stupid, thought that they need not have any particular goddess to protect a thing like stupidity, which is as strong, as universal, and as prevailing as the circumambient air.

It cannot be said that all modern men have been as unobservant as the Romans in this respect. Did not the first Napoleon cherish a just dislike of ideologists, as he called them, the men whom stupidity would least have favoured? And did Schiller ever write anything with more force and wisdom in it, than when he said—

"Against stupidity, the gods themselves are powerless?"

Our poor hero, Realmah, possessed by an idea, was now to learn what potency there is in that great divinity whose claims we have been advocating.

The people of the town of Abibah were much disappointed at the conduct of Realmah after his escape from Abinamanche. They expected that he would be a frequent speaker in their public assemblies; that he would take a leading part in the conduct of the war which was to be waged against the Phelatahs; and, in short, that he would be an active, energetic, public man. He was nothing of the kind. All they heard of him was, that he lived a life in the woods, accompanied by one of his foster-brothers, by some of his personal followers, and by fishermen belonging to the tribe of his Ainah.

But never since their life as a nation began had there been a man who worked so devotedly for them as Realmah was working at this present time.

It is necessary to go back a little in the narrative, in order to understand what was the nature of Realmah's work. While he was in prison in the town of Abinamanche, there was one visitor who passed a great deal of time with the young man; and, strange to say, it was the ambassador whose projects he had defeated, and who might have been expected to be his bitterest enemy. But this ambassador, whose name was Koorali, appreciated thoroughly the subtle intellect that had vanquished him. Almost in the words of Ossian, he said to himself, "I love a foe so great. His soul is bright. His arm is strong. His battles are full of fame. But the little soul is a vapour that hovers round the marshy lake. It never rises on the green hill, lest the winds should meet it there."

It will be remembered that, in the account of Realmah's escape, it was mentioned that he was always bound at night. Koorali generally paid a visit to Realmah at that time in the morning when these bonds were taken off. Sometimes he anticipated that time; and, by his own authority, caused the bonds to be taken off earlier than they otherwise would have been. A similar kindness he showed in providing that Realmah should be well cared for, and kindly treated by his guards. In fact, Koorali did everything that he could to oblige and gratify the prisoner.

Realmah, however, for a long time distrusted him. The conversations between Koorali and Realmah were mainly directed by the former to one topic, namely, the apprehended invasion of the Northmen; and Realmah at last perceived that this was the subject

which Koorali had most at heart, and that he came to him for present sympathy, and possibly for future aid.

One day that Koorali had been more than usually communicative, he conveyed to Realmah in a few words the whole extent of his fears and projects.

He said, "We are all slaves, your people as well as mine, if these people of the North come down upon us. They have swords which cut through ours as ours do through our children's, and javelins against which it is useless to hold up our puny shields.

"I never believed in allies. There was the alliance we made with the Maranahs against the Koolmen. What happened? We conquered the Koolmen; and the very next summer, it was over the country of the Koolmen that the Maranahs, fearing no resistance, marched to attack us. Honest and useful alliances are almost impossible things with us. I own I sought to subjugate you for a time, in order to save us all from the otherwise irresistible enemy. It might have been better to confide in you; but who readily makes confidences after he has seen three and twenty harvests grow ripe, and whiten in the sun?"

Such was the substance of Koorali's conversation with the prisoner. Realmah, left in solitude, had little else to think of but these strange discourses. "What are these weapons of the men of the North?" he said to himself. "Can wood be hardened? No. Can earth be hardened? No; we bake this earth, but it only becomes brittle." He pondered over these ideas night after night.

The confinement of a prison creates sleeplessness. His guards, to while away the time, sang songs. One of the songs they sang was a drinking song, and ran thus—

"All joys to enhance,
With song and with dance
The flower-dew we cull."

The air reminded him of another song which he had known as a child:—

"Your heart's desire
By stone and fire
Will surely beam brightly upon you;

By fire and stone
The victory's won,
And your foes lie bleeding beneath you."

This poor doggrel had been the song of some furious old woman of the tribe of the Sheviri, who had lost her only son in battle, and whose fury had always been held by her tribe to be prophetic.

Amongst all nations, and during all periods of the world's history, there have been tacit agreements in regard to certain things which, it is universally held, are not right to be done in war. At the present time we do not think it right to poison wells: we should think it very base to endeavour to introduce disease into the enemy's camp. Now among these dwellers in lake cities, which, for the most part, were built of wood, it was a point of honour in warfare not to make use of fire as a means of destroying the enemy's habitations. I cannot but conjecture that the words of the prophetess meant that no reserve of this kind was to be maintained, but that all means of destruction were to be employed against those wicked people who had slain her son.

But see the irony of life—those few frantic words may have been the means of altering the condition of nations in that period of the earth's history. Realmah, as by a sort of inspiration, said at once to himself, "That is it—the prophetess is right. Have I not noticed masses of stone, or metal, or whatever they may be, which I am sure must have been burnt? Nor I alone. What do we call them but heavenly missiles, things which we suppose have been hurled from the upper air by beings superior to ourselves, in their dread wars? and have I not noticed, too, that there are stones which seem half-burnt to me? A melted stone it is which gives the North its power."

It is a dreadful thing to be driven by a great idea. The man who is so driven is never alone. The image of his goading thought sits beside him; walks hand-in-hand with him; leans over him to remind him of his presence, in the hours of his utmost joy; and, even in his slumbers, takes care that he shall not forget its august and overpowering companionship. Better be the swineherd who, after his day's toil, eats his meal in peace, and goes to rest unthinkingly, than

the man over whom broods the ever-present image of a great idea; who is impatient of all thought, of all joy, of all sorrow, of all rest, that may interfere with the embodiment of that idea, which will for ever haunt him like a ghost until it is laid and quieted by being brought into action, and thus transformed into a living creature, to do its destined work henceforth amongst the sons of men.

It needs but little more to say why Realmah withdrew himself from the haunts of his fellow-men. Day after day he and his followers collected stones of various kinds, which they placed together in heaps, putting like with like, and choosing only those of which the properties were unknown to them. Of course they were well acquainted with every kind of stone that could be worked into stone implements.

The inhabitants of Abibah were subject not only to the spiritual influence of their priests but to those earlier spiritual influences which take the form of wizardry and witchcraft. As may be imagined, there was a constant feud between the priests and the wizards—some such feud as exists in all ages between the established person in any art or science and the interloper. The common people, however, preferred to have dealings with the wizards and the witches rather than with the priests.

Now there was a wise woman in Abibah of great renown, whose name was Potochee; and when Realmah found that the spirits of his followers were flagging, as they soon did, he resolved to have recourse to Potochee, thinking that by judicious gifts he would be sure to command her influence in his favour.

To the dismay of the Varnah he took away some of their household treasures and presented them to Potochee, taking care at the same time to say that he might have occasion shortly to consult her wisdom in regard to a difficult enterprise, of the good results of which he himself had no doubt whatever.

It is the business of people who pretend to supernatural wisdom to make themselves very well acquainted with the affairs of this world; and, for many weeks past, there was not a person in Abibah, except the Ainah, who was so thoroughly acquainted with Realmah's hopes and prospects as the Potochee. And she hated him.

With that keen instinct that belongs to women, she knew as well as possible that Realmah despised her arts and her pretensions; that he was merely seeking to make use of her for a purpose; and that the general enlightenment which this young man would develop, if he could, was essentially hostile to witches and to wizards. She resolved that he should have a killing answer to his inquiry. When, therefore, in the presence of his foster-brother and some of his principal workmen, Realmah demanded of Potochee whether the enterprise he had in hand would be successful, she said, that of late the moon and the stars, and the ripples on the waters, had all given forth significant omens of a malignant nature. She would, however, make further inquiries. Did his enterprise relate to any one of the principal elements? Was it an enterprise of air, of water, or of earth? Realmah replied, of earth. Then Potochee made her incantations, and burnt her sweet-smelling herbs, and sat silent for a time wrapped in profound meditation. At last she spoke, and said it was not for her to say sweet and pleasant things when superior powers spoke otherwise. If it was an enterprise of earth that he was engaged in, it was her duty to tell him that she could hear, though he could not, the mocking laugh of the demons of the earth, who sought to bring him and his deluded followers down to them. Had they not noticed the blue flame which the incense had sent forth; and was it ever known that good fortune followed that fatal colour? “Abstain, abstain,” she exclaimed; “fly, while yet you may, from the delusions that beset you.”

And Realmah withdrew from her presence—his followers dismayed and terrified, and he himself mortified to the uttermost, and regretting that he had not been more profuse in his gifts.

Thus Realmah remained alone in the world, supported only by his own profound conviction of the truth, by his own determined tenacity of purpose, and by the unbounded belief in him, and ineffable affection for him, of his slave-wife, the Ainah.

The malicious prophecy of Potochee did not fail to exercise the evil influence that might have been expected over the followers of Realmah. The day after the utterance of her prophecy Realmah went with a heavy heart to the scene of his daily labours. His forebodings were verified. Not one of his followers was to be seen. He wandered disconsolately hither and thither; but no one made his appearance.

Realmah was standing at the side of a pit in which had been placed the stones that he had thought most likely to yield metal. The other stones had been collected in heaps; but these, as most precious, had been buried in a pit; and at the end of each day's labours had been covered with leaves. These leaves he had removed, and he was gazing into the pit when the Ainah arrived, bringing his usual mid-day meal. She stood opposite to him, looking up into his face, and was glad to perceive—for she knew every shade in that countenance full well—that he was more angry than sorrowful. Now anger, as the Ainah knew, was a thing much easier to deal with than sorrow, especially in such a nature as Realmah's, which was inclined to humorousness—he being one of those persons whom you can generally cause to perceive the absurdity of their passions.

"The boundless idiots!" he exclaimed.

"The unwise man who trusted to a witch," said the Ainah, smiling.

"The abominable hag!" exclaimed Realmah.

"The poor dear Varnah and her pipkins," replied the Ainah.

"And her fan of feathers," said Realmah.

"And her red cloth."

"And her jade knife."

"And her two mats which," replied the Ainah, "we were kept so many weary winter hours to work at."

And then they burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, making the wood re-echo with their merriment.

Both Realmah and the Ainah were attached to the Varnah, and fully recognised her merits; but it struck them as a thing unspeakably ludicrous, if the Varnah could but know that her cherished possessions, which she loved so dearly, had been used in vain to propitiate a witch, and to induce her to give a favourable prophecy as regarded the result of endeavouring to melt what the Varnah would have called some useless stones. The poor Varnah had thought, when this property was carried away from her by Realmah, that it was for some politic reason, for she had great faith in his policy, though not in his common-sense, and that they had been taken from her—only to return, as she hoped, in the shape of more magnificent presents.

After they had indulged in their laughter, the Ainah drew Realmah away, and, sitting down not far from their much-prized pit, said many things to him cheering and encouraging.

They talked over their plans for recovering the services of their followers, and afterwards spoke upon higher and happier themes—of their great love for one another, and their confidence in each other.

I am afraid that the Ainah was not so unhappy as she should have been at the temporary check to Realmah's enterprise, for it gave her one more day to be alone with him—the last she ever had.

In the course of that evening, and early the next morning, she was very busy with her tribe. She could tell them in how many cases Potochee's forebodings had failed; she pointed out that Realmah's answer to the witch had not been quite correct, for was it not an enterprise in which flame was more concerned than earth? She held out to them what great things Realmah could do for their tribe, if he became a powerful chief; and that whether he failed or not in this enterprise he would be equally grateful to them. It might be a young man's folly, she said; but he would never be satisfied until it was proved to be a folly. And then he would be himself again wise in council, dexterous in war, and, above all things, a lover of the poor and despised tribe of fishermen.

She did not prevail with all those who had hitherto been employed; but she did with some of them, and she enlisted new recruits.

Realmah, too, was not idle. He was one of those men whose personal influence is very great. No man was quite the same, after having had an earnest conversation with Realmah, as he had been before.

Realmah's foster-brother, Omki, was a timid, superstitious man; but, after being well talked to by the young chief, he was prepared to endure whatever evil fate the demons of the earth were ready to inflict upon him. Besides, whatever happened to him, it would be in company with his dear Realmah; and to be with Realmah was the greatest happiness of this faithful friend and follower.

On the morrow there was as numerous a band of workmen as there had been before; and they worked apparently with good-will. This, however, did not last. The malign influence of Potochee was

always hovering over these superstitious men. A general carelessness pervaded the work. The stones were not kept distinct. Great effort was not made to find them in distant places. The firewood was chosen carelessly. Indeed, throughout the whole work, that spirit of indifference prevailed which is the sure consequence of anticipated failure. Still the work, though done in a very slovenly manner, was not abruptly broken off by any further desertion on the part of Realmah's followers.

The Ainah continued to meet Realmah almost daily in the woods. She was commissioned by the Varnah to bring him his food, and she assisted him in giving directions to his people to collect the mast from the locasta-tree, and the firewood, which made an excuse in his home for their wanderings. There, too, they gave utterance to their fervid love. There she heard, day by day, of his disappointments, and, notwithstanding these, of his undaunted hope.

Each day her wanderings became more difficult to her, for the sufferings and privations she had undergone during her escape with him had implanted the seeds of fatal disease; and the Ainah, though Realmah knew it not, was dying. Ever intent upon his object, and exerting himself more and more to counteract the lukewarmness of his followers, Realmah did not notice the ravages which disease was making in his Ainah, or, if he did notice them, thought that she, like himself, was growing pale and thin from anxiety as to the success of their enterprise. At last, with great labour, he and his men had brought together huge heaps of stones, and large quantities of wood for their fire; and they awaited now, with anxious hearts, the trial and result of their grand experiment.

It was a lovely day on which that experiment was first tried. Can there be anything more beautiful than a wood, teeming as it does with infinite forms of sheltered life, and yet so quiet, so grave, so solemn? The creatures of the wood had become accustomed to Realmah and his men. It was one of the deep superstitions of Realmah that, if he would succeed, no form of life should be hostile to him. He carefully avoided all quarrels with his fellow-creatures of whatever degree. He laid it down as a rule not to injure even the smallest creature that makes pretence to life. The *maralah*, a larger kind of squirrel, with a nascent wing, played about in the trees above his head. The *poolmens*, a sort of rabbit that existed at that period of

the world, and had a sharp claw, frisked to and fro. Occasionally a harmless snake glided hither and thither, not far from those silently working men, with whose doings one might almost fancy it had become amused and interested. There was a tame dog (one of those that do not bark, like the prairie dogs of modern times) which accompanied the Ainah in her wanderings, and looked on at the proceedings of the men with even more than the usual canine gravity, as if it fully understood the whole drift and purpose of Realmah and his band of followers.

The experiment was tried, and it was not successful. The whole day long they plied the fire, and left it burning late in the evening. The next morning the wood had burnt away; but the ironstones (if ironstones they were) remained unconsumed and unchanged.

Realmah's followers had been very true to him, and had kept his secret well, as long as there was a hope of success; but now that there was failure, they could not restrain their gossiping; and all that Realmah had been attempting of late, was noised throughout the city on the very evening of the day that had witnessed his failure.

CHAPTER XVII.

REALMAH'S DEPRESSION.

One of the notable persons in the city of Abibah was a man of good rank, of the name of Condore. This man had easily attained a high reputation by always prophesying evil, and by uttering criticism of a damaging kind upon all occasions when any great effort was made by other people. He it was who had put down the invention of wooden forks, which some ingenious man in the city had proposed, instead of fingers, to eat their food with. "What insanity," Condore said, "it would be to provide every person with a sharp implement at a time when he was likely to be excited by meat and drink, and to be especially quarrelsome!" And the idea of eating with forks was at once discarded.

If a man was building a house, or forming a piece of furniture, Condore was always ready to pronounce that it would be a failure; and as, in this world, failure rather than success is the rule, Condore was very frequently right, and indeed had secured to himself the appellation of "Condore the judicious."

So thoroughly had this chieftain attained the character of depreciating all the efforts of his fellow-townsmen, that a verb had been formed from his name; and when any enterprise was depreciated by adverse criticism, it was said in the town of Abibah that it had been "condored." Once, however, he had erred by approving something. An ingenious man had proposed a bridge of boats instead of drawbridges as the means of access to the city. This, though a feasible scheme, had failed in execution; and the unfortunate Condore had found himself pledged to the approval of something that had failed. This approval had injured him for a time with his fellow-townsmen; but he took care not to repeat the error, and it could never afterwards be said of him that he had bestowed his august approval upon any plan, whether wise or foolish.

It may easily be imagined what a thorn this man had been in the side of Realmah. When Realmah had proposed that a small army of observation should go to support the main army that went as allies to the Phelatahs, Condore had pronounced that this was a mistake, just as he had pronounced that the sending any army at all was a mistake. He was much vexed with Realmah for having proved to be right. Great, therefore, was his joy when it was found out that Realmah had been baking stones without any effect.

Poor Realmah's efforts were very critically considered throughout the city, and Condore formed one of many a group assembled to discuss Realmah's doings. Some said he was foolish—others that he was mad; and it seemed to be generally admitted that his having obtained that order of merit, the blue *shemar*, had completely turned his head.

Realmah returned to his home in a state of the deepest depression. When he arrived there he was sent for by his uncle, the chief of the East, who reasoned with the young man in a very kindly manner. He said, "Chiefs must be chiefs. They must attend councils. They must make speeches. Their business must be the ruling over men. Work with the hands was not their work. Doubtless Realmah had some meaning in what he had done (the old Chief had a secret belief in the sagacity of his nephew); but was it worth doing at the loss of so much reputation? Years would have to pass before Realmah would stand upon the height that he had stood upon after succouring the troops in the flight from Abinamanche."

Realmah withdrew from the old man's presence much depressed, but not the less resolved; though, if possible, more thoroughly convinced than ever how dangerous it is for a man to be one little step in advance (in thought) of his fellow-men.

Realmah did not find much comfort at home. The Varnah had never expected that her husband would show much common sense in anything he undertook. She regretted the time he had lost and the ill-repute into which he had got as so much distinct loss of property; but she was neither particularly kind nor unkind to him. The beautiful Talora, for her part, was deeply vexed. She had married Realmah for repute's sake; and now, all that she had got was a lame man with a damaged reputation. While they ate their meal together, she could not refrain from one or two covert sneers at him, speaking of people who thought they were wiser than others because they had odd crotchets in their minds which came to nothing. The Ainah did not say a word; but once during the meal, she stole her hand into his, and sought by a soft pressure to assure him of her entire belief in him.

It is needless to say that Realmah had by this time discovered what kind of character Talora was, and how great had been his mistake. She was a very difficult person to live with, being pre-eminently tiresome, and never useful. She would comment upon a burden, saying that it was too small or too large, or that it was put awry upon the back, or that it should not have been taken up at all; but she never lifted a little finger to assist in carrying it herself. Moreover, nothing could be done rightly that was not begun under her auspices. Shakespeare, who knew all forms of tiresomeness in men and women, has pointed out this one in the tragedy of "Julius Cæsar," where he makes Brutus say of Cicero:

"For he will never follow anything
That other men begin."

She attained to great power in the household, for the really useful and kind-hearted Varnah, having been accustomed to be much praised for her doings, was at first astonished, then grieved, and finally rendered submissive, by Talora's continued stream of polite depreciation. The Ainah, for Realmah's sake, endured the caprices, and submitted patiently to the rebukes, of the wayward Talora.

Realmah himself, being especially anxious not to visit the result of his own mistaken choice upon the object of that choice, was always courteous and kind to the spoilt beauty. And thus such people have their way.

Talora could be very pleasant when she was pleased, for she had some talent for social intercourse, though not of a kind adapted to domestic life.

The wives retired to their apartments, while Realmah sat motionless for hours before the fire, looking at it steadfastly as if he felt that fire was the creature which he had not yet sufficiently mastered.

The cold morning light began to break into the room when the Ainah with a soft step entered, and threw her arms round his neck. "Heed them not," she said, "you will yet succeed. There is something in me" (she alluded to her deadly illness which she knew, but he did not) "which makes me a prophetess."

Realmah replied, "'One dog howls for nothing; and the whole neighbourhood is alive with howling.' Or shall we quote another proverb, dearest Lufra?—'The dogs bark loudly together; but a wise man speaks softly, and, not at all, except to another wise man.' I am resolved to recommence to-morrow." So saying, he dismissed her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LOVES OF REALMAH AND THE AINAH.

I suppose that all those who have ever been in love feel that very little has been said or written that adequately represents what they have felt. This love is a wonderful thing; and we can never cease, when we are bystanders, to be astonished at the phenomenon,—that one human being should appear to another to include all the beauties and virtues of humanity; and that the love of the whole human race could, in no measure, satisfy him, or her, if the love of the one person loved was wanting.

Although lovers will not be satisfied with what has been said about love, we must admit that a few fine things have been said. For instance, that man spoke with some experience who said, that the test of loving is, that being with the loved person all talk is needless, and that the silence, which is embarrassing sometimes in the

presence of the nearest friends and the dearest relatives, is perfect ease, and harmony, and comfort in the presence of the one beloved.

The Roman poet, too, has well described the feelings of a lover for his mistress, when he says—

"Illam, quicquid agit, quoquo Vestigia movit
Componit furtim, subsequiturque decor;
Seu solvit crines, fusis decet esse capillis,
Seu compsit, comptis est veneranda comis.
Urit seu Tyriâ voluit procedere pallâ,
Urit seu niveâ candida veste venit."

Ellesmere. I must at all hazards interrupt: Milverton once quoted those lines before; and, after long and anxious consultation with Ainsworth's Latin Dictionary, I furnished a translation which has been much admired by great scholars:—

"Whether she wears a bonnet that is like a coal-scuttle; or whether she claps on a little platter that is attached to the back of her head: whether, gracefully, she trails after her in the muddy streets an ample sweep of flowing drapery; or whether, succinct and neat, she trips along in Bloomer costume: whether she allows her beautiful hair to fall in corkscrew ringlets round her enchanting face; or whether she throws it all back, and, with the aid of alien hair, forms a huge and overweighting lump behind:—she is equally fascinating, equally tiresome, and equally disposed to look in at all the haberdashers' shops."

[Milverton resumed.]

Steele, also, did not ill describe, though briefly, the charm of being with a woman whom he greatly admired when he said, "That to be much with her was in itself a liberal education."

It was not ill said, either, by that man who exclaimed, "How much happier it is in absence to think of thee, than to be with any other person!"

Certainly there seems a good deal to be said for that theory ascribed to Plato, that the soul is dual, and that one half of it wanders about in the form of a man, and the other in the form of a woman. When these two parts meet, a thing which occurs but rarely, there is doubtless supreme felicity, as was the case with Realmah

and the Ainah. But when severance comes, then the felicity must be amply avenged by the corresponding misery of desolation.

But oh! what cruel tricks does love play; and what mistakes and what misfortunes are comparable to those which are caused by its perversities! Granted that all the rest of human life were raised into a higher and a happier stage of being, love alone would leave the human race nearly as unhappy as it is. Suppose that climate, instead of being the dire thing (to be ever watched and contended with) which it is over the greater part of this globe, was entirely harmonious and beautiful: suppose, indeed, that everywhere and at all times it was like that which prevails during those few days in an American autumn, when serenity seems to rule over the land; when it is neither too hot nor too cold; when "never winds blow loudly;" and when all Nature, often so harsh, seems to subside into an unwonted lovingness and kindness—still, if the loving heart were not at peace, small would be the gain thereof. Granted too, that men could worship the Supreme Being without engaging to define His nature and His attributes, and to persecute all those who differ from them in the minutest particular when defining what is undefinable, and explaining what is inexplicable: granted too, that the life of man in great cities was not as inexpressibly sordid as it is, but that all men, from the lowest to the highest, were well housed and well cared for; that men were fed without the slaughter of the animal creation; that there were none of those excessive and hideous contrasts which now exist between the states of the rich and of the poor; and that the office of ruler, in any form or shape, was taken with reluctance, and only from a sense of duty, the ruling man feeling he was only the servant of those over whom he had the sway: granted all this, granted an Arcadia, granted an Atlantis, or any state of being for mankind that the wisest and most benevolent men in their juvenile dreams—alas! only in their juvenile dreams—have imagined: granted that the state of things pictured by the poet existed here (it may exist in some happier planet); that

"Qui Sdegno non s'accende,
E soggionar non sa;
La Colpa non offende,
Trova l'Error pietá.
"L'Inganno quì non ride

Nel mascara del Ver;
Fra noi ciascun divide
L'Affanno ed il Piacer."

—granted that men loved their neighbours, and did not hate their enemies; that ill-natured criticism was not abundant; and that Christianity was not a name, but a reality,—still, if Cupid were left to play his strange, horrid pranks, the happiness of the world would by no means be assured.

Where the greatest error and mistakes arise is in forgetting that love is a thing of infinite variety.

At the moment I am writing, there are hundreds of ingenious and clever people weaving wonderful love tales to amuse the mind; but the love they portray is, for the most part, of the same kind. They exhaust their ingenuity in framing subtle obstacles to the fulfilment of the love, but they seldom dwell with much ingenuity on the different kinds of love.

I have been led to make these reflections while considering the love of Realmah for the Ainah, which was of a most singular description. To use a common expression, which is very forcible, he worshipped the very ground upon which she trod. He found with her alone the exquisite joy of a perfect companionship. He saw, and even exaggerated, all the grace and all the beauty, whatever they were, that she possessed. He admired her when she spoke. He was happy with her when she was silent. Whatever she did or said was pleasing in his eyes.[17] To her there was no need of long explanations from him. She understood him at once, and her soul was a twin-soul to his. They had none of the pretty quarrels and playful diversities of opinion which so often make love amusing to lovers; but she was sister, and counsellor, and companion, and comforter, partaking every hope, every trouble, every sorrow that was his.

The Ainah possessed one very rare accomplishment: she was an admirable talker. How rare that accomplishment is, may be seen from the fact that throughout the civilized world, at the present time, there are more great musicians, great poets, and great painters, than there are consummate talkers.

This man repeats profusely; that man is dry and curt: one man is over-explanatory and indulges in parentheses, which are the death of good talk; another is unsympathetic, or egotistical, and his talk degenerates into an oration chiefly about himself and his own doings; while a third contrives to turn all conversation into mere argumentation or dispute. When we read of the remarkable women who have bewitched the world—the Aspasias, Cleopatras, the Ninons d'Enclos—we may simply conclude, not that they were much more beautiful than other women, but that they talked better.

This art has an especial attraction for men who, like Realmah, are somewhat melancholy. The beauty of it too is, that it does not need to have wonderful subjects to discourse about. It is beyond and above all erudition; and the commonest domestic tales are brightened up and made something of by a good talker. There are proverbs about speech being silver and silence being gold; but at the most they only apply to the conduct of business, or to the talk of dull people, for good talk is ever one of the choicest things in the world, and wins all people who come within its sphere. Now the Ainah, as we know, was not only profoundly ignorant, but even vulgar in her language; nevertheless her sweet and nimble talk, her sense of humour and of pathos, made the listener forget her vulgarities of speech.

No one could be more cautious than Realmah of showing how much he was enchanted with the Ainah's conversation. When he returned home after his day's work, if he had not seen the Ainah, he went first to the Varnah, listened to all she had to say about the furniture that had been spoiled, and the deficiency that there was in fuel or in food; he then listened to the pretty nothings or the cross comments of Talora; and then afterwards sauntered into the apartments of the Ainah, to be solaced by the wit and humour which flowed from her discreet and softly-speaking lips.

The Ainah, too, was equally careful to conceal that she had any pleasure in his society. She was not like the favourite slave of whom the poet says—

"Abra was ready, ere I named her name;
And when I called another, Abra came."

On the contrary, the Ainah never sought Realmah's society, or showed any particular pleasure in it; and so there was a house in which there were three wives, and next to no jealousy. The Varnah knew that she was transcendent in the art of housekeeping, and looked upon all the others as children of whom she had to take care. Talora knew that she was beautiful, and cared for nothing else than that this should be acknowledged. The Ainah knew that she was loved, and that naturally sufficed for her.

There would probably be no such thing as jealousy if souls were visible, for we should then find that the love of any person for any other is so completely a peculiar relation between those two only, that there would be nothing for any third person to be jealous of. We are speaking now, of course, of the higher kinds of love.

I have said above, that the love of Realmah for the Ainah was singular in its character. It was singular, because it was so great, considering that there was so much in it which was but fraternal in its nature.

The truth is, that there was a little too much resemblance in their characters. They were both very subtle persons. The Ainah, as well as Realmah, had that peculiar characteristic which is best expressed in a Spanish word, "*Longanimidad*"—that is, that they were both of them people of great mental endurance; being long-continuing, patient, quiet haters, or lovers, or sufferers. They were alike also in the breadth of view with which they regarded any question, and in their freedom from being influenced by the opinions of the comparatively inferior people who surrounded them. They were thus a little too much alike to fulfil the condition which, according to Plato, has been laid down for perfect happiness in love.

Not that there is not always an immense difference between the masculine and the feminine soul, even when they are apparently cast in the same mould.

Realmah did not know all this. In fact, he was one of those men who all their lives remain very ignorant of the nature of women. We have seen how deluded he was in his estimate of Talora's merits. But then great men are so easily deceived: indeed, you may often measure the greatness of the man by his liability to be deceived. Not if his attention is aroused; not if he brings the powers of his mind to

bear upon the question; but, in the ordinary course of life, he is very apt to believe too much both in men and women.

Realmah, as I have said above, was happily unconscious of these fine distinctions and subtleties in love. He thought his Ainah perfection, and never imagined that a more joyous and more resonant nature—a nature that did not quite partake his aspirations, though it might sympathise with them—a nature that would even have permitted her sometimes, playfully and tenderly, to laugh at him and make fun of him—would, after all, have been a nature more fitted to amuse and distract him, and to lighten the burden of his cares.

The joy and comfort, however, that his Ainah was to Realmah at this critical period of his life were unspeakable. While he was at work in the forest he could, from the spot where his works were situated, obtain a view of a slight eminence which lay between his works and the town of Abibah. Evening after evening—for, alas! the Ainah began to be unable to come in the day-time—the descending sun threw its yellow rays upon the summit of that eminence; and a figure, which most people would not have thought remarkable for its grace or its beauty, made its way over the hill, walking in a certain resolute fashion—the Ainah having husbanded whatever little strength was left to her to appear strong to Realmah. That figure in his eyes, if in those of no other man, was pre-eminently attractive. He always paused in his work to regard it; and when it approached him, he looked to be cheered by the smiling welcome, and the truthful blue eyes, full of tender encouragement, which said to him, in that unwritten language well known amongst lovers, “If you have succeeded, I come to rejoice, as none other can rejoice, in your success; and, if you have failed, I come to tell you that your failure is only the failure of to-day, and that to-morrow must be brighter.”

It was a thing worth noticing, to see the cautious, wistful glance which the Ainah threw at the works, and then at her husband’s face, before she spoke to him, making up her mind as to the tenor of the few loving remarks which with low and sweet voice she would make to Realmah upon the labours of the day—her hand, now feverish and tremulous, softly clasped in his.

It is a bold assertion to make; but, such is the dulness of perception created by familiarity, that it may be asserted that we are

often as unobservant of the change in the bodies of those we live with, as we are of their varying states of minds and of the movements of their affections.

Realmah, no doubt, noticed that the Ainah did not come in the day-time; but he did not attribute this to her failing strength, which prevented her from wandering about with him for hours. If he had been asked the cause of this change, he would have said that, though she was as much interested as ever in the result, the details of the work had probably by this time become rather wearisome to her. And he would perhaps have moralized upon the superior perseverance of men to women in dealing with these details—little imagining that to be with him was always pleasure enough for the Ainah; and that superintending the collection and distribution of these stones and the firewood was an employment at which she would never have grown weary as long as he was by her side.

CHAPTER XIX.

REALMAH'S SUCCESS.

We left Realmah intent upon recommencing his work on the morrow. Wiser thoughts, however, took possession of his mind, and he resolved, before he commenced his own especial work, to regain, if possible, the good opinion of his countrymen. Deeply deliberating upon the folly of mankind, he came to the conclusion that he must maintain his influence with his nation by the ordinary arts of statesmen if he would successfully undertake any new invention. Wherever there are few real distinctions amongst mankind it is especially necessary to invent conventional distinctions. The chieftains therefore of the Sheviri were particularly careful by a composed gesture, by gravity of speech and solemnity of demeanour, to show that they were different from other men, and so to maintain and dignify their high position. When there are real distinctions amongst men, this is less necessary. For instance, in more civilized life, when a man is a distinguished scholar, or an eminent mathematician, or a profound lawyer, he need hardly care much about the dignity or the grace of his demeanour. He has his just influence from the special knowledge which he possesses.

Realmah, however, had to win the regard of his countrymen by the arts that were usually employed by their chiefs. Some weeks passed by before he accomplished this result; but at last he did

accomplish it, and began to feel himself strong enough in the good opinion of those about him to recommence his great work. Before doing so, however, he thought it prudent to communicate, in a vague way, his hopes and aims to several of his friends. He did not tell them that he hoped to melt stones into metal; but he mentioned that he had some ideas which might be wise, or might be foolish, but which he must endeavour to prove, and which had reference to improving their defences. He met with little encouragement; but he felt that he had at any rate told enough of his plan to prevent for the future any outbreak of excessive ridicule and hostility in the way of criticisms. He took care to promise that, when he had made some more experiments, he would open his mind fully to his friends if there should be anything worth asking their advice about.

He had come to the conclusion, as we know, that his fires had been utterly insufficient. He now resolved to form them underground. For this purpose he dug a round pit, cementing it as well as he could with clay, formed an adit to it communicating with the surface of the ground, and then endeavoured to burn some of the stones which he had collected. This experiment was not successful; but he observed that he had produced a much fiercer fire. He now resolved to pay still greater attention to his fuel, of which he prepared large stacks carefully dried. He also resolved to intermix the fuel with the stones, and he determined to try the next experiment upon a much larger scale. This time the result was different. He succeeded in getting up and maintaining such a degree of heat as had never yet been accomplished in that part of the world. For five days and nights he kept up his furnace; and, finally, he banked in the fire from the top by putting on more stones and by covering it all, to two feet of depth, with tenacious clay, leaving a small aperture by way of a chimney. When the glowing mass had become cool, which did not take place for several days, the pit was uncovered and laid bare, and at the bottom of it there was found a considerable quantity of metal that had run together. Realmah felt certain that his great problem was now solved. The Ainah had been assiduous in her attentions to him during the critical days which this experiment had occupied. She was present at the uncovering of the pit, and was the first person to whom he triumphantly showed the result of his long-continued labours. Forgetting their habitual

reserve, and unmindful of the various comments that might be made upon their conduct, the two lovers embraced each other fondly. They then proceeded home in triumph.

But alas! what are the triumphs of men? Realmah saw in the success of this experiment the safety of the South from the attacks of the North, the preservation of his native city, and the ascendency of his race. But that very day, as they approached the drawbridges of Abibah, the Ainah, dearer to him than all the metals in the world, dearer than city, or race, or empire, or his own great idea, fainted in his arms, and as he laid her down upon the ground beside the gate, a thin stream of blood trickled from those lips which only a short six months ago he had hardly dared to kiss, and which for him contained all the joy, the private personal joy, that life was capable of giving.

Her end was rapidly approaching: he carried her to her apartment—hours passed away, and his hand remained in hers; but, sublimely prudent to the last, Realmah, who knew how much he should lose in the estimation of his nation if he should show any excessive affection for a lowly girl, one of the tribe of the despised fishermen, concealed his agony when her end approached, and when, amidst many friends of her own, and his other wives, she breathed her last.

Just before she died, their eyes met, and in the meeting of those eyes was told the unutterable love each bore to the other.

Realmah moved from the room with a composed step, and gave orders for such a funeral as became the Ainah of a man of his rank.

It would not do to say that Realmah never smiled again; but it might be true to say that he hereafter designed his smiles, and never finished them.

Henceforward he lived but for ambition, and laboured on mainly in the hope of finishing the great work he had undertaken, and then rejoining the only being whom he had ever profoundly loved, and who had ever profoundly loved him.

Untold ages have passed since the day when that grave young chief moved away from the deathbed of that lowly girl, with anguish gnawing at his heart, and supreme composure in his countenance; and thousands of other men, like him, have trodden the same path,

lost in an unutterable love for some one being who has gone, but all the more sternly resolved to fulfil a great career, and to tread down private sorrow in some absorbing idea for the public good.

Realmah had hitherto merely been a clever man, taking an interest in public affairs: he was, from this moment, a profound and ambitious statesman. And thus it is that subtle Nature, always anxious to make the most of her children, weaves out of irreparable private sorrow great and abiding advantage for the public good.

Mauleverer. This is as it should be. Some truth is told us here, or at least some portion of truth. Men, as Milverton well says, make their highest and best exertions simply to escape from themselves.

Milverton. I really do not think I said that.

Mauleverer. Well, you implied as much; but I go much further, and I say that when you see a man do anything very splendid you may look upon it as the result of disease, acted upon, and brought into full play, by unfortunate circumstances.

There is not a person here present, except perhaps Mrs. Milverton and myself, who is not a victim to some of the especial diseases which make men famous.

I am afraid I cannot even make an exception for Mrs. Milverton. She cares too much to please people's tastes, and to make them comfortable. I could see how vexed you were yesterday at dinner, Mrs. Milverton, at the hare being overdone. By the way, I must impress upon you once for all, that if you will have a hare for dinner, you must take care that one person's mind is solely devoted to the dressing of it. No person is skilful enough, or watchful enough, to dress a hare and attend to other things.

Ellesmere. For goodness' sake, stop this man! Milverton upon the subject of war, Mauleverer upon cookery, Cranmer upon finance, Johnson upon the merits of the Scotch, are public nuisances. I must call you back to the subject, which is very interesting. What is the nature of my disease?

Mauleverer. You have two of the worst diseases known—restlessness and argumentativeness. Those two diseases brought into full action by unfortunate circumstances have made you the distinguished lawyer that you are.

Sir Arthur. What is the matter with me, Mauleverer?

Mauleverer. Oh, you labour under a horrible disease, Sir Arthur. When I think of what you might have been, I feel the tenderest pity for you. You might have been a quiet, comfortable English gentleman devoted to yachting. And then to think of what you are, a great author and a distinguished politician!

Cranmer. But his disease—tell us what that is. Something horrible, you say.

Mauleverer. Yes; Sir Arthur is a man full of imagination, before whose mind there come all manner of beautiful ideas and fancies. He can't leave them alone, or enjoy them quietly by himself, but must put them into form. This passion for form is his disease.

[I observed that Sir Arthur looked very grave, and seemed as if he felt what Mauleverer said.]

Milverton. And mine?

Mauleverer. Yours is lamentable, deplorable; you are victimized by pity. You look around you, and see hundreds of things that might be improved, and you fondly think that it is your business to set to work and improve them. A more fatal disease cannot well be imagined. You must be an unhappy man, and yet you might have been so happy if you had attended only to metaphysics, and immersed your mind in the doctrine of "contradictory inconceivables."

Mr. Cranmer. And what is my disease?

Mauleverer. The dot-and-carry-one disease. A painful love of accuracy, and a joy in doing long sums, possess your mind; and these disorders you carry into public life.

But when I say all these things you must understand that they are a mere playful way of putting it. I mean something much more serious.

Ellesmere. Mauleverer playful! A hippopotamus festive! Did I not tell you all that he would be dreadful to-day?

Mauleverer. No; but what I really mean is, that there is in each of you too much, or too little, of some important component of the human body, and that this excess or deficiency is the source of disease. There are too many, or too few, carbonates, or sulphates, or sulphites, or sulphides, or some of these chemical things. Now, in poor Ellesmere, for instance——

Ellesmere. Don't "poor" me, sir. Nobody ever "poored" me before. It's actionable.

Mauleverer. I will run the risk of damages. In poor Ellesmere, for instance, there is evidently too much phosphorus. Little as I know of chemistry, I know that. Hence the superabundance of excitability.

Ellesmere. I never wished so much to be a chemist as I do now. What are the component parts of adiposeness? Will anybody tell me?

Sir Arthur. I say, Mauleverer, this is really taking too material and physical a view.

Mauleverer. I cannot help it. That is what it seems to me. All greatness, I repeat, is but disease developed by unfortunate circumstances.

Consider what pre-eminence is amongst mortals. It is generally success in a particular thing, occasioned by the development of the man's character and powers in one direction, to the great detriment of the man taken as a whole. Now, again, let us take Ellesmere for an instance.

Ellesmere. The malice of this man is inconceivable. Why can't you take some one else as an example? Take Sandy—he is not married. Lady Ellesmere will never cease quoting the things you say against me.

Mauleverer. Now, take Ellesmere, for instance. The unfortunate circumstances of his being bred to the Bar, acting upon his phosphoric restlessness, has developed his powers of objectiveness to the uttermost. He is always ready with some point to be taken against you, whatever you may say. How far this prevents his taking a large and just view of any question it is not for me to determine. You all know the kind of little dog which lives at a suburban villa, and scutters out, as hard as its little fat legs can carry it, to bark madly at every in-comer, and even at every passer-by. It makes no distinction between the good dogs' meat man, who brings it its own food, and the prowling area sneak. The barking powers of that dog I admit: its judgment I deny; and it does occur to me that its barking powers have been developed at the expense of its judgment. I can say no more—that's my poor view of the case.

Ellesmere. For goodness' sake, let us have some more reading. Our characters are slipping away from us under this man's cold, calm, cruel scrutiny. I have always heard it observed that very stout gentlemen are, as a rule, much better fellows than men of an ordinary size; but that when they are ill-natured, they are far worse than the leanest of men. The reason is that they are so far advanced in wickedness that they have come to take a pleasure in malignity. It agrees with them: they grow fat upon it. The lean and hungry Cassius is a pleasant fellow compared with Mauleverer. I shall go. Call me back, Sandy, when the conversation returns to a proper state, and Mauleverer is either silent or polite.

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Exit Ellesmere.

Mr. Mauleverer rubbed his fat hands, and uttered a low, wheezy, chuckling laugh, the nearest approach to merriment that I have ever observed in him. There was afterwards some general conversation, of which I did not catch the purport until I heard Mr. Mauleverer apologizing to Lady Ellesmere.

Mauleverer. Forgive me, Lady Ellesmere, but Sir John does sometimes require a little putting down, and you are all too much afraid of him to do it. The unpleasant task, therefore, remains with me.

Lady Ellesmere (who did not look very much pleased). When John is talking seriously, I believe there is no one who takes a larger and a broader view of his subject.

I have heard that the late Lord Chancellor used to say——

Mauleverer (taking Lady Ellesmere's hand in his). Yes, my dear, yes; we all know what a clever fellow your Sir John is; but a little attack upon him will do him no harm. Do you think I didn't know by intuition what fun he was making of me this morning when I was toiling up that hill, and that he ran off on purpose to do so? Never fear, Lady Ellesmere; he will come back soon, and be more brilliant than ever.

Cranmer. There is a great deal of truth in what Mauleverer says. Sir John is always down upon one in a moment with an objection, sometimes before one has time to explain oneself.

Lady Ellesmere. He keeps you all to the point. I am sure that John is really one of the most tolerant of men.

Ellesmere (who had entered while she was speaking). That's right, my dear, always stick up for your husband, especially when he is in the wrong. So you have all, except my wife and Fairy, been talking against me during my absence; but, as the heavy villain at the Surrey Theatre would say, "I will a-a-have my r-r-r-revenge."

Mrs. Milverton. I wish to make a remark.

Ellesmere. After Cranmer's celebrated remark, which lasted three-quarters of an hour, we all adopt this form, and say, "I wish to make a remark."

Mrs. Milverton. I am very much displeased with all of you. You have been discussing nothing but characters and chemistry, and have been talking in the most cold-blooded and heartless manner about all manner of things, and not one of you has said a word about the death of the Ainah. I had read it all before, and I am not ashamed to say that I had a good cry over her death. I cannot think how Leonard could have been so cruel as to kill her so soon.

Milverton. My dear, I cried too—as much as men ever cry; but it could not be helped. The fact stared me in the face, for it was a fact to me; and I was obliged to tell the story as it happened.

Sir Arthur. I do think, Milverton, you might have let her live a little longer.

Ellesmere. I repent me bitterly of all the jokes I ever ventured to make about her.

Sir Arthur. Nobody can accuse me of being too much given to moralizing; but I must draw forth a moral now. Ellesmere is sorry now, he says—now that the Ainah is dead—that he said anything against her, even in jest:—

"And she is gone; sweet human love is gone!
'Tis only when they spring to Heaven that angels
Reveal themselves to you; they sit all day
Beside you, and lie down at night by you,
Who care not for their presence—muse or sleep:
And all at once they leave you, and you know them!
We are so fooled, so cheated!"

I have no doubt that Realmah thought with remorse how little he had appreciated the poor Ainah, even when he had appreciated her the most.

Ellesmere. I always rather liked the girl; but, of course, when I made that remark——

Sir Arthur. Now don't explain away what you said, Ellesmere. It may be absurd to feel in that way about a character in a story; but, for the moment, you really did feel what you said.

Ellesmere. Well, upon my word, I really think I did.

Sir Arthur. I need not work out my moral, but may just venture to remark that real, living people have their feelings too; and if we were sometimes to think how soon they would die—even the halest of them—that thought might restrain us from many a depreciating remark.

Mrs. Milverton. Ah, indeed it might, Sir Arthur.

Lady Ellesmere. Yes, John. Listen to Sir Arthur, and become a more kind and considerate person.

Ellesmere. It is all very well talking, but people in books do not tread upon our toes, whereas real flesh-and-blood people sometimes do, and that rather heavily.

Milverton. But you see, Ellesmere, they too might draw the moral, and not tread upon your toes quite so heavily, reflecting that, after all, even great lawyers——

Mauleverer. Though the toughest of human species.

Milverton. —do eventually take their departure from this vale of tears and trouble. By the way, why should we always make it a vale of tears? Are there no sorrows on the hill-tops?

Sir Arthur. Ruskin, in his eloquent way, would show you that there really is less sorrow on the hill-tops, and that mountaineers, living in closer amity with nature, are better and heartier people than the money-making inhabitants of valleys.

Cranmer. The way in which you have been talking about imaginary people is to me astonishing.

Sir Arthur. You cannot ignore facts, Cranmer; indeed you love them too much to do so. I maintain that most people's minds are

fully as much filled with thoughts and feelings respecting persons in fiction as they are about persons in real life.

Mauleverer. Perhaps so: especially if you add the personages in history to the personages in fiction.

Ellesmere. That is where Cranmer has such an advantage over us, and is able to do his sums without any foolish interruption.

Di Vernon (to me far the most loveable of all Scott's heroines), and Mignon, and Margaret in "Faust," and Beatrice, and Laura, and Mary Queen of Scots, and Medea, and Medora, and Rosalind, and Helen, and Cleopatra, and dozens of other fair women, never disturb the equal current of his thoughts.

Upon my word, I do not know whether it would not be a good thing to banish them all. Good heroes and heroines are an especial nuisance. They are apt to make us discontented with ordinary mortals. I dare say though, the Ainah, poor dear, was peevish sometimes, and allowed her superiority to the other two to be plainly perceived, at least by Realmah, and that sometimes she was even intolerant of him. But I am very sorry she is gone.

Sir Arthur. You seem to forget, Ellesmere, that the portraying of these heroes and heroines makes people strive to become like them, and so tends to improve the world.

Ellesmere. So it may; but I think this does not compensate for the mischief of setting up a high ideal.

Milverton. I do not agree with you, and would venture to contend that no writer has been able to depict people so good as good people really are, for the truth is no writer's canvas is large enough to do so. It is in length of patience, and endurance, and forbearance, that so much of what is good in mankind and womankind is shown; and you (the writer) have neither time nor space enough to show forth those high qualities as they are shown in life.

Mr. Cranmer. I wonder what is to become of Realmah now? We have seen him as a lover, and as an inventor; I suppose he is to rise into some higher sphere.

Ellesmere. Cranmer thinks he will become a man of business, the highest form of which human nature is capable.

Mauleverer. You see in this story what you see in most stories that are truly told—what a mistake it is to love anybody very much.

Lady Ellesmere. I do not see anything of the kind, Mr. Mauleverer. I would a thousand times rather be Realmah now, than Realmah before he made his escape from Abinamanche, and when he did not know that the Ainah loved him.

[It was now late in the evening, and the party separated for the night. Sir Arthur and Ellesmere remained in the drawing-room after the others had left.]

Sir Arthur. You were not really angry, Ellesmere, were you, when you left the room?

Ellesmere. Not I. Do you think anything which that fat man could say to me would disturb my peace of mind? But he is right in what he says about my phosphoric restlessness. We had had a long reading, and a very long conversation, and I was scheming how to get a little change, and a little fresh air under the stars; so, from the moment he began to attack me, I began to prepare to get into a huff, and to make my escape for a few minutes, which I think I accomplished rather neatly. Our serious Falstaff thinks he has crushed, smashed, and pounded me to atoms. Depend upon it, he has gone to bed to-night much happier than he has for many of the preceding nights, and that he has acknowledged that the world is not so wretched a place as he supposed it to be. There is some pleasure in crushing Ellesmere. I thought the likeness he was pleased to discover between my poor self and a yappetting suburban poodle was not bad at all. I do not think I shall ever do any great good in the world, except in opposing, and, if I may presume to say so, curbing men like you and Milverton, and so keeping you within bounds.

When I am here I always take up that objective line, because I think it amuses Milverton, and keeps him alive. There is such a vast amount of melancholy in his disposition, that he requires all the aid we can give him in the other direction.

Sir Arthur. Dear me, I should never have thought it. He enters into everything with spirit, from the most trivial game to the most serious conversation.

Ellesmere. Ah, but you do not know him as I do, or as Sandy there does. In the background of his mind, there is gloom all the time. There is no knowing what mischief Mauleverer would do to him, if they lived much together.

Moreover his is a mood of mind which you cannot answer nor satisfy. Mauleverer made a great hit when he attributed all Milverton's misfortunes to pity. If you were to make everything on this earth comfortable, and were to arrange the world as he pleased, he would still sit down and mourn over the past, like Marius amidst the ruins of Carthage, or Rachel for her children.

Was Mauleverer equally successful with you, Sir Arthur?

Sir Arthur. Yes, he was. That passion for form which he attributed to me is one of the things which has given me more trouble, and led me into more work, than any other motive power in my nature. I brood over an idea; I suddenly think how it may be expressed, or rather rendered, generally adopting in my mind some extraordinary form—and I am haunted by the thing until I have succeeded in putting it into that form. I believe the desire to accomplish that part of the work which depends upon form is stronger with me even than the desire to give vogue and furtherance to the idea. I always had a notion that this was an important part of my intellectual character; but I never saw it so clearly as when Mauleverer charged me with it in that forcible manner.

Johnson. What a remarkable thing that was that he said about the sparrow and the telegraph wires, when we were on the lake!

Sir Arthur. Yes. That was very good. One felt that it must have been said before. That is one of the first thoughts that occur to one when one meets with any fine passage in almost any work. By the way, it strikes me now that that is one of the reasons why, as Carlyle has pointed out, there is generally considerable disappointment on our first reading of a great work.

Ellesmere. To return to Mauleverer. He certainly is a very remarkable human being; but still he is terribly monotonous. I declare, without exaggeration, that I do not think I have heard him, while he has been here, make one single remark that had not the tendency to depress human effort, and lower our view of human prospects. I mean henceforward to take the other side.

In order to do so with effect, one must be particularly well, and have good long sleepful nights—without the aid of your blue "sleep," though, Sir Arthur. So, good night.

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Exeunt

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The next day there was a reading of the story of Realmah, as follows:—

CHAPTER XX.

REALMAH'S GRIEF. THE USE MADE OF IRON IN ABIBAH.

It has often been noticed how, in civilized life, routine goes on, whatever suffering, or sorrow, or shame, or bereavement may have befallen. Dinner is not put aside because there is death in the house. There was the same thing at that period of the world's history; and Realmah had to conform to the inevitable routine of life. At such times men move about, as it were, in a mist—a mist, however, causing trouble and confusion only to themselves; for they may seem to others to see very clearly, and to do their work well.

The sufferer has not only to appear upon the stage of action, whatever that may be, and to act his part tolerably; but he has to continue to act, when off the stage and behind the scenes, and only ceases to act when he is quite alone. Moreover, the usual supports are gone. Even that most clinging of human frailties and follies, vanity, gives way before profound sorrow and bereavement; and, in their presence, it has been known that a very vain man has lost his vanity, and all the comfort and sustainment that it used to bring with it. An ambition, especially if it be of the higher kind, embracing the good of others, may survive the shock: and thus it was with Realmah.

One of the many miseries of greatness, and not perhaps the least, is that neither its joys nor its sorrows can be private. To this was added in Realmah's case an especial necessity to conceal the magnitude of his grief, and to behave as if it were only a small loss that he had suffered.

The report of his having made a successful experiment spread throughout the city with considerable rapidity, though not, of course, so rapidly as the knowledge of his failures had spread on former occasions. Everybody was anxious to see him, and to talk to him, and to be one of the first to congratulate him. Crowds of the citizens flocked out to that part of the wood where Realmah had carried on his experiments; and, in a very few hours, every bit of the

iron had been carried away. The people of Abibah were very ready to appreciate the uses that might be made of this new metal.

One cannot help feeling a little for Condore, considering the mortification that one naturally supposes he must have had to endure from this success on the part of Realmah. But "Condore the Judicious" was equal to the occasion. It is true that he was not one of those "silly people," as he called them, who flocked to the scene of Realmah's experiments; but Condore did not hide himself from his friends, nor did he conceal his feelings by maintaining a sulky silence. He had always known, he said, that certain stones would melt into metal. Of course they would. Anybody that had seen a thunderbolt knew that. He had viewed this enterprise with disfavour, not because he imagined for a moment that it was a thing that could not be done, but because it was not worth doing, and could have no good result. For his part, he was content with what had contented his ancestors, who, he supposed, were not greater fools than his contemporaries. He would trouble those who were in this fuss of foolish delight at a most commonplace transaction, to mention to him any instance of a new thing turning out to be a good thing. The presumption in all cases was, that every change is for the worse.

They were descended from the gods—at least so the priests had informed him—and was it likely that there would be any improvement in their race, as time went on, and as each generation was still further removed from their great ancestors?

As to the uses that might be made of this metal, he begged to remind them of the well-known story of the ambitious pig which was so much discontented with his own tail, calling it a ridiculous and useless little appendage. The gods, willing to give man a lesson, bestowed upon this pig the tail that he coveted, namely, that of a fox. It was not found, however, to be so very great a gain. It went flopping about in the dirt; it made the poor pig look still more ridiculous than he had looked before, and proved only very serviceable to the little boys who wished to catch the pig. Such was the result, as far as his poor observation had gone, of men taking up new things unfitted for them; but the kindness of the gods in giving examples to mankind was seldom understood.

This satire pleased the bystanders (there was generally a little circle of listeners round Condore), and his words were noised throughout the city, especially the satirical story which he had invented about the pig. It did not, however, produce all the effect that Condore expected. Sneering can do a great deal: you can sneer down, at any rate for the moment, truth, honour, religion, generosity, and patriotism. Moreover, anything that is new offers especial opportunity for sneering attacks. But men cannot be sneered out of manifest physical advantages; and the men of Abibah were not such fools as to prefer fighting with wooden instead of iron weapons against enemies who were furnished with iron weapons. Besides, they took it as a very ill compliment that Condore should insinuate, as they thought he did, that they were of an inferior race to the men of the North, and that it was unfit for them, the Sheviri, to aspire to have superior weapons.

In short, the story of the ambitious pig was not well received, and people began to murmur against Condore, saying that he had been a hinderer of many good designs.

Time went on, but the ardour of the men of Abibah for making use of this new metal did not abate. Many ingenious persons were found to aid Realmah in his projects, and there were several of them who now showed much more ingenuity than he did, in working this metal, and adapting it to many uses. In truth, inventors, or rather those who have the power to invent, are very numerous. Let any man observe how many persons amongst his friends have told him of inventions that they had in their minds, and he will perhaps come to the conclusion which this writer has come to, that one out of every three persons is a born inventor.

Why there are not as many useful inventions as might be expected from the number of possible inventors, may be easily explained. Most men have to get their bread; and that employment gradually absorbs all their attention. To many men the physical requisites for successful invention are wanting, namely, nicety of eye, deftness of hand, room for experiments, and the materials requisite to work upon. But perhaps the greatest want of all is want of perseverance. Most men become tired of their own ideas; and, even if they try an experiment, are apt to accept the first defeat as final. Besides, few

men thoroughly believe in themselves, and are the first to go over to the side of their adverse critics.

However this may be, certain it is that Realmah found not only many favourers and admirers, but, what was much more important, many intelligent coadjutors. In a few months' time, dating from the day when his experiment had proved successful, and when his Ainah had received her death-stroke, the working of iron had made a great advance among the Sheviri. Indeed, a new tribe was formed called the Ironworkers. The name they gave to iron was *Krool-Varla*, which means stone-honey.

Of course the first use made of iron was to construct a good weapon of attack; and great was the delight in Abibah when the first iron javelin was made. Naturally this has been the first and indeed the chief use of iron in all ages—namely, to make it into some weapon of offence which shall pierce well into the soft flesh of our fellow-men. It is only during the dull times of peace that this valuable metal—*the* metal of our system—has been applied to the ignoble uses of social life.

It is almost needless to add that Realmah became immensely popular. Most men recollected now that they had always said that there was something extraordinary in that young man. Condore and Potochee fell into the background. Invention became the order of the day; and the daring man who had proposed to eat with forks held up his head again.

When the Spaniards first discovered South America, they found a nation which worshipped certain sacred toads, that were carefully kept and fed, and reverenced, and prayed to. If, however, after a long course of praying, the prayers were not attended to, and rain did not come when it was wanted, or did not cease when it threatened to be too abundant, the sacred toads were delicately whipped, to remind them of their duty to their worshippers. Thus it is always. Those who are great amongst us are either whipped or worshipped. It was now worshipping time with Realmah, and everything he said was looked upon as oracular.

It was well that there was, at that period, some one member of a princely house who was very popular, for there was much distress in Abibah, and consequent discontent. There had been great

inundations that year; and both the roots and the cereals, upon which the Sheviri depended, had, to a certain extent, failed.

In looking back upon those times, one cannot help thinking what advantage Condore and Potochee might have taken of this scarcity. They might have said that it showed the disapproval of the gods at the impiety of Realmah in offering to his fellow-men weapons like to those of the gods themselves.

But no such thing was said; and Realmah reigned in the hearts of all his fellow-citizens as the man whom they were proud to acknowledge as their foremost citizen.

Talora's beauty gained fresh radiance from her consciousness of power and pre-eminence amongst the women. The Varnah was delighted with the presents that enriched their house, but did not change her inmost opinion of Realmah's deficiency in commonsense, for was he not averse to receiving these presents, and, if possible, still more indifferent than ever to the good things of this world?

Many a subdued and furtive sigh came from Realmah's heart, when he reflected that the one person whose delight in his success he would have cared for most, was numbered with the dead.

16. It was Lord Palmerston.

17. The Sheviri, a nation rich beyond measure in proverbs, had one or two which illustrate the statement in the text, or its converse.

"The man you hate cannot take up his bit of meat with his fingers but you hate him more."

And again this one—

"Akbal jumped into the water; but no man said that Akbal was wet"—meaning that a favourite can do anything without offence.

CHAPTER IX.

It was a sunny morning, and several of us were sauntering in the garden for a few minutes before breakfast-time, when Sir John came up to us.

Ellesmere. Mind, you must all be "as civil as an orange" to Milverton to-day. If he gives us a reading, you must swear that it is excellent. He has been in such a rage with me.

Lady Ellesmere. How wrong it is of you, John, to vex Leonard in this way.

Ellesmere. I assure you I did not mean it. Unfortunately we began talking about the Ainah; and I reminded him of his original description of her. Now you know he has been getting more and more enamoured of her; and, if he had to describe her again, she would be a perfect beauty. You will see that he will add all manner of beauty to her countenance, if he talks about her again. There will come charming smiles and dimples, and I know not what besides.

[Here Mr. Milverton joined us; and there was an embarrassing silence.]

Milverton. I see that Ellesmere has been telling you of the nonsense he has been talking. I did not mean, I did not say, that her hands were extraordinarily large; but, contrasting her in my mind with the high-bred Talora, I was obliged to confess that there were some drawbacks upon her beauty. Hers was one of those countenances which require nice and loving observation to perceive all the merits and the beauties in them. There was a constant play of beautiful expression; there were exquisite dimples; and——

Ellesmere. Ha-ha! Did I not tell you so? Am I not a true prophet?

[Here Sir John began dancing about in the wild manner that he frequently indulges in when he is triumphant in some argument.]

Milverton. This dancing dervish is not always wrong when he gives us a taste of his prophetic powers.

In one word, the Ainah's was *a very marrying face*.

Cranmer. What do you mean, Milverton?

Milverton. Why, don't you know, or didn't you know, Cranmer, when you were younger?

You went into a ball-room, and saw two or three great beauties. Haply your eyes fell upon a cosy young couple in some corner. You asked about them, and were told that they were engaged. The girl was not beautiful; but you said to yourself, "The man is right. He is a sensible man: that girl will make a good wife. She will always——"

Ellesmere. Make marriage somewhat less painful and disagreeable than it is its nature to be. Now here is a face

[He came behind Lady Ellesmere, and inclosed her face in his big hands—for he has big hands.]

which would insure a happy marriage. You see in it that assurance of perpetual provocation which will not allow a man time to think whether he is happy or not, for he will be in a constant state of warfare. And that is one form, perhaps the best, of happiness for some men.

Here Lady Ellesmere disengaged herself somewhat hastily from his grasp, and we all went to breakfast, laughing heartily.

There is some celebrated story of a young man who exclaimed, "And I, too, am a painter!" So now I may say, "And I, too, am an author!" It happened in this way. I had been speaking of some of the curious superstitions which exist in a remote part of Scotland where I, when a boy, had been to visit my relations, who were poor fishing people in that district. Upon this, Sir John Ellesmere declared that Sandy could write a tale if he chose, and that Sandy must choose to do so. It would be a very good thing to employ his mind in that way, and would prevent his spoiling "Realmah" by persuading Milverton to introduce foolish chapters about love.

This was two or three weeks ago. I tried very hard to think of a subject for a story; but, think as hard as I would, no subject for some time occurred to me. At last, one night, an idea for a story of the supernatural kind did strike me. I told it to Mr. Milverton. He approved of it, and said he would aid me; and so I wrote my little story. I was very shame-faced and nervous when I came to read it before such an audience; but I managed to get through the reading somehow, and my story was much praised. Of course they said everything they could to encourage me. I shall not venture to trouble the reader with the story; but I mention the fact of having written it,

as, without doing so, the following conversation would not be understood.

To-day there was a good deal of talk about my story, and afterwards about those strange fancies which have occupied so many minds in all ages, endowing men with gifts and powers in addition to those which they actually possess. Mr. Mauleverer, of course, maintained that this was a proof of the wretched state of man. Sir Arthur declared that it was an instance of the abounding imagination and poetry that there are in all men, women, and children: while Mr. Cranmer contended that these fancies were rather irreverent; that men had better be contented with what they are, and make the best of that, and not indulge in fancies that could never be realized. Sir John Ellesmere asked whether Mr. Cranmer was prepared to move for the destruction of all fables and of all fairy-stories, and whether all imagination was to be employed in inventing lies about matters of business?

Before recounting any more of the conversation, I must describe the spot where it took place. At the bottom of the hill there is a little rivulet which, even in the driest summer, forms a reedy, rushy sort of place, through which meanders a little stream three or four feet in width, and about nine inches in depth. Mr. Milverton delights in this spot, though it is said to be rather malarious. On one side of the rivulet there is a high grassy bank, having upon it a very comfortable seat. I will now continue my account of the conversation.

Milverton. I cannot agree with you, Cranmer, about the irreverence you assign to these fancies. If we are never to fancy that we might here, or hereafter, be endowed with other gifts than those which we now possess, we must close our eyes completely to all the forms of life which surround us, and which are so suggestive.

I have been very fortunate in life as regards friends and acquaintances. I have known poets, historians, philosophers——

Ellesmere. Observe where the fellow puts historians, because he happens to dote upon history.

Milverton.—poets, historians, philosophers, statesmen, men of science, artists, doctors, lawyers, and merchants, but I was never fortunate enough to know any man who had made the insect world his study. I am sure I do not know what is the proper name for such

a man—I suppose an entomologist. Well, I was never fortunate enough to know an entomologist.

If we had such a man with us now, what interesting things he could tell us about the myriads of inhabitants of this rushy streamlet. I believe there are creatures below us there, which can both crawl and hop, and fly and swim; which possess eyes by the score; can weave and spin, and build nests, in water; which, in short, embody all the vagaries of the most fanciful person; and about which, by the way, if they were familiar to us, fables and stories might be written having much more pith and diversity in them than those about dogs, bears, wolves, elephants, and foxes, which, after all, are poor simple creatures like ourselves, being seldom able to do more than one thing very well.

Ellesmere. I do not think much of your entomologist. I do not want him here at all. He would merely shy barbarous words, half-Latin, half-Greek, at us, and bother us about "genus" and "species," and other things, for which we should not really care one solitary dump.

Besides, we should have to hear all about his grand discovery of the *onomatoscylax*, some pestilent little creature that hops, and runs, and bites, and wriggles, and turns up its tail spitefully at you. No; give me the man who can talk well about anything if you only give him a rough bit of a brief to talk upon. Just read to me, or any other lawyer, a little chapter in any book about insects, and we will argue their case in a manner that will bring round any jury to think whatever we are instructed to make them think on behalf of our clients. There are creatures, are there not, who pop out of their shells to take the air, and then other creatures pop into the vacant shells; and when the softies come back, they find their houses occupied, and the doors bolted against them. What a good case for an action of ejectment!

Milverton. Mark you, I do not mean to say that I have not known men such as Carlyle, Kingsley, and Emerson, who have been able to talk admirably about all forms of nature, from the highest to the lowest. As I think I have told you before, I never heard a more exquisite conversation than one in which Carlyle and Emerson, both of them nice and patient observers of all natural objects, discoursed upon the merits and beauties of common grass. A walk, too, in the

country with Kingsley is something to remember; but still I say, as I said before, I should like to know a real entomologist, a man who had lived a great deal with insects——

Ellesmere. The Patronage-secretary of the Treasury!

Milverton. —and who could tell me all about the *onomatopylex*, which Ellesmere——

Ellesmere. No, no; if you are scientific, be accurate—*onomatoscylax*.

Milverton. —which Ellesmere affects to scorn, but which I have no doubt, if well studied, would afford the human race many a good lesson in the arts of life. Very probably he is a great architect. The arch was constructed by insects long before it was known to man.

Mauleverer. Talking of men who have studied these minor creatures, there is Mr. G. H. Lewes. You know him, Milverton?

Milverton. Yes; but he is too gelatinous. He describes admirably; is as clear as the sky at Avignon; but his talk is of molluscs, sea-anemones, jelly-fish, and other flabby, pulpy creatures, squeezable as Ministers of State. I want a man who has lived with well-developed, shrewd, masterful, designing insects.

Sir Arthur. I do not say we wander from the subject, because the fact of these insects possessing multifarious powers is very suggestive. But I want to know why it is irreverent to imagine men to be endowed with other powers or means than those they now possess. I feel rather guilty in this matter, if there is any guilt, as I was the first to tell you a story of the kind which Mr. Cranmer must disapprove of. I mean my "sleep" story. I intended that to convey some sound doctrine.

Ellesmere. Yes; that pleasant tale was nearly suffocated by morality. It was far too moral to be interesting. And observe this, Cranmer, that in almost every story in which extraordinary powers are given to a man, that poor man is sure to come to grief.

Even in that dear "Arabian Nights," the unfortunate "gins," or genii, always get the worst of it, being bottled up for a thousand years, or otherwise maltreated. We make a point of pouring misfortunes with a liberal hand upon the head of any creature whom we admit for a moment, even in fancy, to be a more gifted being than man.

Milverton. Well, I have a fanciful idea which, indeed, has been in my mind for many years, and which I fear Cranmer would blame, for if realized it would give a great and, as I think, a most delightful increase to human power.

Ellesmere. Let us guess. The philosopher's stone? The power of always reasoning rightly? Long life? A knocker that would knock down all disagreeable people who came to visit you—the postman and telegraph-boy included? A power of eating three dinners a day? A self-upholding umbrella? A supernatural knowledge of trains, so that you could defy Bradshaw and all his books? A perfectly well-built house, built after a model of some insect establishment? A winged paper-cutter that would always fly to you when you whistled for it?

No; I have it! It is never to be sea-sick!

Milverton. No; you have not. You certainly have imagined sundry very delightful appurtenances, such as your discriminating knocker, self-upholding umbrella, and flying paper-cutter.

Sir Arthur. Is it the power of seeing clearly into other men's minds?

Milverton. No; you will never guess it.

Ellesmere. Tell us, then.

Milverton. I shall have some difficulty in explaining. I mean that there should be a double soul, taking the word "soul" to include all powers, both of thought and feeling, so that you should be able to give one of these souls perfect rest. They should be so intimately in unison, that what one thinks, or feels, or says, or does, should be admitted to be thought, and felt, and said, and done by the other which is absent. There must be no separate interest, no possibility of reproach. There should be a spare body, so that the one soul could go and recreate itself while the other was fighting the direst battle.

Lady Ellesmere. There must be a woman equally gifted to correspond with this man. Conceive a double Sir John! when *one* is enough to drive a poor woman distracted.

Ellesmere. As the soundest theologians and metaphysicians have proved conclusively that women have no souls, it will be doing a very handsome thing if we give *them* one. But this new possession would embarrass them very much. They would lose all that power of

governing, so dear to them. Unreason always governs. *Nothing prevents your having your own way so much as being at all amenable to reason.*

Lady Ellesmere. Women have just that small portion of irrationality, and only that, which enables them to understand the immense irrationality of men, and so to steer clear of it, or to guide it.

Sir Arthur. Well said, Lady Ellesmere! He does not gain much by attacking women in your presence.

Milverton. But think of the advantages of my fancy, if it were realized:—all the regrets, and vexations, and remorses being partaken by another soul which would occasionally come fresh to the work, and bear the burden which its exhausted compeer and partner was almost fainting under. Such a man, so gifted, would rule the world. Observe the lives of all great men, who will go on working at a moment when the powers are enfeebled. Imagine Napoleon the First with two such souls. Send one of them to vegetate in the country, while the other is conducting the retreat from Moscow, and you would find that the total Napoleon would never have been sent to Elba. Mark you, the two, when combined, are not to have double power.

Mauleverer. I am delighted with Milverton's idea of a double soul. It proves to me that he sees that the single soul cannot possibly bear up against its misfortunes.

Milverton. No, Mauleverer, you press my words too far. It is but an occasional, and even rare, relief that I imagine is so much wanted for the soul. Have you not known occasions in which you have said to yourself, "I would give anything to have another me—to take up the burden for this day only—to attend this funeral—to meet those men upon that painful business in which my feelings are so likely to overcome my judgment—to fight that battle which I could fight so well, if the gaiety of heart which is requisite were not altogether wanting, while I could, as it were, retire into private life, and collect my thoughts, my energies, and my hopefulness, which, at this critical moment, have deserted me?"

Sir Arthur. Really, Mauleverer, I agree with Milverton that you have pressed him too hard. It might not be more than twenty times

in one's life that one should want to be absent in the spirit though present in the body; and when one should be so glad to have another soul, a second self, to represent one fully.

I wonder, by the way, whether any of you feel with me that you would like to have been in a different sphere of life.

Ellesmere. The life of a sweeper at a crossing used to be my ideal. But I have changed my mind. I should like to have been a waiter at an inn. "Coming, coming, coming." One would thus see a good deal of life without much trouble. I should observe the different tastes of our customers: how this old gentleman likes to have his mutton-chops well done; how that customer rejoices in baked potatoes; and how the other is offended, if, when he calls for a newspaper, one does not give him the paper which is *his* paper.

I would be very kind, too, to the young people, who are always a little afraid of waiters.

I would be unmarried, because my ideal would be to be free from all responsibility.

Gradually I should have amassed a large sum in savings—say two hundred and seventy pounds—and then my plan would be to retire, with my sister, a housekeeper in a good family, to our native village of Mudby Parva, which, by the way, would be intolerable to us from the alterations that had been made in it, and from the railway that would pass through it.

But, in reality, we should never realize our great plan of retirement, and I should die in harness, or rather in white tie and seedy black dress-coat.

Mauleverer. Think of Ellesmere as a waiter, with no power of interrupting the conversation of the customers! How little men know of themselves! What a miserable mortal he would be!

Sir Arthur. And what would you have been, Mauleverer?

Ellesmere. Let me answer for him, for I know. He would like to have been the *chef* in a great kitchen—at some club, for instance—where he could have wandered amidst groves of beef-steaks, and forests of mutton-cutlets, followed by a legion of cooks, giving them orders fraught with culinary wisdom.

Sir Arthur. And you, Cranmer?

Cranmer. I should like to have been a mail-coachman in the olden times.

Ellesmere. Of course he would choose something official. How punctual he would have been! How fussy and important about His Majesty's Mails! He would have insisted upon being guard and coachman too.

Sir Arthur. And you, Milverton?

Milverton. Well, I am not so humble as the rest of you. I should like to have been a colonist—to have conducted a body of settlers to Paraguay. That part of the earth, from what I have heard of it, and read about it, takes my fancy more than any other. Almost every known product is to be found there.[18] Then there are great rivers, and vast parks reminding one of English scenery; and withal, a charming climate. Moreover, one would get free, I think, both from European and North American disturbances. Insects, I believe, are not intolerable there. Volcanoes are unknown; and, in fact, it seems to me that it fulfils the idea of an earthly paradise.

Then I think I should like the business of managing a settlement. I should not take out any lawyers with me—only a notary or two. I should try and get a good many young doctors, and a few very carefully selected clergymen. Carpenters, sailors, and navvies should form the bulk of the common people I would bring with me.

Mauleverer. Should you take out a newspaper editor? Because I should rather think that would interfere with the paradise.

Milverton. No: I should be my own editor, so that I could represent my own quarrels (for quarrels there would be) in my own paper, the only one in the colony, in my own way.

Sir Arthur. Would you have an architect, Milverton?

Milverton. Yes: I should not object to having one. We should overpower him, and compel him to make plans to please us, and not according to his own preconceived notions.

Ellesmere. Should you take out any women?

Milverton. Yes: thirty cooks, who would, of course, marry off like wildfire. The rest of the men must marry the women of the country, so as to secure alliances.

Lady Ellesmere. And what would you have been, Sir Arthur?

Sir Arthur. A painter.

Ellesmere. House?

Sir Arthur. No: history. You see there is such a happy mixture of manual and mental work in a painter's career. I learnt that long ago from one of Hazlitt's essays. And then, too, what a pleasure to see the work grow under your hand! A book is a thing much further from you than a picture. I look with peculiar tenderness upon a picture, the work of any great painter. I think how it has lived with him—with what fond and anxious looks he has regarded it in early morning and late evening—what joy and sorrow have gone into it—what great men, his friends, have come to look at it.

Suppose it to be a Titian: Charles V. has come to look at his friend's work; and has given anxious, judicious, and affectionate criticism about it. Then, too, the painter's loving wife and daughters have given, from day to day, their criticisms, being most careful to give at the same time due encouragement and admiration. In fact, the thing which we see now, has been, for the time, a sort of domestic idol.

Yes, I should like to have been a painter, even if I had been one of only moderate endowments.

Ellesmere. Sentiment, sentiment, sentiment! Think, on the other hand, what you would have suffered from art critics.

Mauleverer. It is idle talking of what we should like to have been. There may be some wisdom to be gained from contrasting different situations in life—comparing what one is oneself with what another person is, and so deriving wisdom from the contemplation of the contrast. But I rather agree with Cranmer, that these imaginations lead to nothing.

Ellesmere. I don't agree with Cranmer; but I do see, with Mauleverer, that it may be a wise thing to consider what good qualities are developed in positions in life different from our own, and adopting them into our own.

Milverton *once* said a shrewd thing. Years ago, he remarked to me, that a man generally fulfilled best that position in life for which he was apparently most unfitted by nature. He illustrated it by numberless instances. He said that Lord Althorp was a most successful minister, and *primâ facie* he had none of the qualities for a minister. Milverton added, I remember, that the best clergymen

were those who had some qualities that were somewhat unclerical. I quite agree with him.

You see, old fellow, if you ever do say a good thing, I make a point of remembering it.

Sir Arthur. Talking of contrasts of situation, I will tell you the most remarkable instance that ever occurred to me.

I went to see one of the most notable personages in Europe, not on any political errand, but merely as a private friend. Now I shall veil what I am going to tell you as thoroughly as possible, for it is wrong to betray a friend's moods to any stranger. You will conjecture; and your conjectures will most probably be utterly wrong. Well, when I entered his cabinet, I saw at a glance that he was sunk in the deepest dejection. He gave me a short sad smile, shook hands cordially; but seemed to have nothing to say. At length, however, I persuaded him to tell me what ailed his mind. He was misunderstood, he said; his policy was misrepresented everywhere: he was weary of the never-ending labour and struggle. "See the hideous calumnies that are current about me!" he exclaimed. "What is life worth? What a dreary farce it all is!"

Ellesmere. Well, and what friendly stings, my dear fellow, did you add?

Sir Arthur. I took an uncommon, but, as I think, a judicious course.

I did not say one word in contradiction to his statements. How could I? They were true. I did not urge, that if he had met with great failures, he had enjoyed great successes. I did not attempt to soothe him by showing what a potent personage he was.

I Mauleverized, if I may coin a word, to explain shortly what I did.

I simply dwelt upon the huge amount of misery and disappointment in the world. To illustrate this, I fell into a strain of quotation. The personage I addressed knew many languages.

I reminded him of the saying of Petrarch: "*Initium cœcitas: progressio labor: error omnia.*"

I quoted your favourite bit, Milverton, from Disraeli: "Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret."

That made me think of Sir George Lewis's "Life would be very tolerable but for its pleasures."

The great man smiled at that, which encouraged me to give a slightly different version of my own—namely: "Life would be intolerable but for its absurdities." He was pleased to smile at that, too.

Then I quoted from Pascal—I forget what. Then from Rousseau.

Then I ventured humbly to say that I thought that some of the greatest men in the world had been the great writers; and that it was found, as in the case of David and Solomon, that when they were monarchs as well as writers, their writings did not the less betray their misery.

I showed him that Horace, notwithstanding his Chloes, and Lesbias, and myrtle coronets, and Chian wine, was a melancholy individual:

"Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume,
Labuntur anni," &c.

—also Pope, Swift, Byron, Shelley, Cowper, and the rest of them. I gave him Tennyson's

"Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean.
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes
In looking at the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more."

Of course, I brought in my Browning bit about the greatness of the mind being shown by the shadow which it casts.

I need hardly say I touched upon Cervantes and Shakespeare,

"But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here
About my heart: but it is no matter."

And again:

"'Tis but a tale,
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

Then thinking I had not treated him with any Italian, I gave him this passage from Leopardi: "*Ma io, quanto a me, con licenza vostra*

e del secolo, sono infelicissimo; e tale mi credo; e tutti i giornali de' due mondi non mi persuaderanno il contrario." The latter bit about the newspapers amused him greatly.

I longed to give him De Quincey's magnificent passage about "Our Lady of Sorrow," but I could not recollect it.

Finally, I wound up with Sir William Temple, "When all is done human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over."

I think my conversation had, as was natural, a cheering effect for the time. He thanked me very much: something that would have been tears in any other man rose over his expressive countenance, and I withdrew. As I did so, however, I am afraid I noticed in a parting glance at him, as he sank back in his chair, that his melancholy was not so easily to be baffled, but that it only waited for my departure to seize upon him again.

Ellesmere. Well, but the contrast? I suppose you saw a happy beggar at the gate, munching an unexpected crust, or revelling in an unaccustomed sausage.

Sir Arthur. No; it was not so common-place as that. I went away by train. In the carriage were a young man and his wife, not a newly-married couple. They were the very types of round, smiling, smooth-faced insignificance. But how they did enjoy their excursion! They sucked the same orange: they bit at the same cake. Though they evidently were never parted, they had an unceasing flow of utter babblement to interchange. They put me so much in mind of two monkeys! Their talk, though exquisitely silly, was irradiated—really made beautiful—by happiness. They minded me no more than if I had been a bit of the wood-work of the carriage. No reticence had they in their joy, and in their supreme satisfaction with each other.

When I contemplated them, and when I thought of the great man I had left sunk in gloom and dejection, I felt that happiness was not equally distributed to all, as people sometimes perversely contend. By the way they spoke of the great personage, and very kindly too, which won my heart; but as being one who had an infinity of oranges and cakes, and who had no need to save up for three months, in order to afford such a delightful outing as theirs was to be.

Ellesmere. It would have been very wicked; but I should like to have heard what they would have said if you had Mauleverized them.

Sir Arthur. I would not have done so for the world; I declare I would rather have stolen their money, and spoiled their excursion in that way.

Ellesmere. But to return to the main subject. Do keep to the point, my excursive friends.

I could make the greatest possible improvement as regards your wish for a second soul, Milverton. You want that soul to be exactly like your own. I would have it the complement to your own. Where you are soft, it should be hard; where you are sympathetic, it should be cold; where you are simple and stupid, it should be astute and alert; and then indeed it would be of some good to you. In fact, you ought to have mine as a second soul to yours; and we should fight the battle of life triumphantly. I think I hear the Milvertonian soul saying to the Ellesmerian, "You must fight these fellows to-morrow, for I really cannot;" and the Ellesmerian soul would rejoice in the contest. Perhaps the day afterwards some judicious man would remark, "What a much cleverer fellow Milverton is than I thought; you see we could not take him in at all, he was down upon us in a moment: and so good-humoured, too, whereas I always thought he was an irritable, over-sensitive person. No fussy particularity either; not at all the fellow to be for ever washing his own soap."

One thing, however, you would have to do, Master Milverton: you would have to manage Lady Ellesmere for me; and I have no doubt she would say, not knowing of the interchange of souls, "How manageable John is to-day! not quite so bright as usual, but how much more my slave; and he seems to think exactly what I think," for you would have the art, of which I have none, to persuade her that your thoughts were hers, and that when you were acting most completely on your own hook, as the saying is, you were but using her bait. Oh dear, what a surprise it would be to her when the real Ellesmere came back to undertake the management of my lady!

Sir Arthur. I think I have heard something like your idea before, Milverton, in some French story.

Milverton. No, Sir Arthur, you have not, I assure you. I know what you are thinking of—one of Eugène Sue's novels. In that, an artisan

enters into the body of a marquis, and has to go through some very uncomfortable scenes. But the marquis is totally unconscious of the change; and the artisan is not aware, while he is a marquis, that he has another form of existence. It is only when he comes to himself again that he knows that he has had for twenty-four hours the experience of a marquis's life. Eugène Sue's object was, doubtless, to show the poor man how great a mistake it often is to envy the rich man. There was no increase of power given to the individual soul.

Now, I really do not see, taking into consideration the infinite variety and beneficence manifested in creation, why in some happy planet there may not be a great increase of power given to a creature something like man.

Ellesmere. I am not so taken as the rest of you with Milverton's fond imaginations. I see fifty objections to his grand idea. If the other soul is to be of any real use or comfort, it must have individuality. If it has individuality, it will differ in opinion with Soul No. I.

Again, you may talk about joys being doubled, and sorrows being halved; but I do not take much interest in things that are done in committee. The whole affair is too much of a joint-stock transaction.

Milverton. I am going to tell you something, which perhaps has some application to Ellesmere, and to the critical race generally—a little simple story which I have often longed to tell when Ellesmere has been taking points, and making endless small objections.

Ellesmere. Oh, we are a little nettled now, are we? Nothing makes a man more cross than when a really kind friend shows him that his poetry won't scan. The same thing when it is shown him that what he thinks to be his most poetical ideas are all awry, as it were, and won't bear looking at. Pray tell your story, though.

["Oh, yes, pray do," said the others.]

Ellesmere. How delighted you all are at any attack being made upon me! Everybody seems to rouse up all of a sudden; and Fairy perceiving a general movement, makes a circuit round us, as you see, and sniffs and snuffs as if there were a rat or a badger near, to be hunted or baited. Tell your story; do not spare my feelings. I like to see people happy. This sort of thing amuses you, and it does not hurt me.

Milverton. When there is a nursery in a house, everybody must admit that the pleasantest meal in the day is nursery tea. I always contrive to become sufficiently familiar with the nursery authorities to be admitted. The mistress is never more agreeable than when presiding at this tea. The master gets away if he can from his sporting friends and their eternal talk about horses, dogs, and partridges; and enjoys the high paternal pleasure of playing at pick-a-back with his little boys. The children are much more pleasant and natural at this tea-time than when they are brought down in their best nursery-frocks after dinner.

Ellesmere. Ugh: this nursery story, which is to confound all judicious critics, including myself.

Milverton. Well, I was assisting at one of these pleasant nursery teas in a country house. One of the children present was a pretty little girl about three years old, who had a nurse, especially devoted to her, of the name of Maria.

By the way, I may mention that some baked apples had made their appearance at this nursery tea, which in consequence may be considered to have been what the fashionable world calls "a high tea."

Suddenly, at a pause in the conversation, the little child, putting down a piece of bread and butter, exclaimed, with a very distinct utterance, "*Ma-i-vey say 'happles'; fool she are*."

Maria, a jolly country girl about fifteen years old, blushed, but looked quite pleased that Miss Gertrude was so clever, and said, "You dear little thing."

The mamma was "shocked" at such a "naughty word" as "fool" being used to "good kind Maria."

Miss Gertrude having uttered her "judicious" criticism, was not much dismayed by mamma's remonstrance.

I thought of Ellesmere and of his flock of critics whom he delights in.

You see the small critic pointed out, with great satisfaction, a little over-indulgence in the use of the aspirate on the part of poor Maria; but was perfectly unconscious that in her own six words she had committed four errors.

Ellesmere. How do you make out four?

Milverton. "Maivey" for "Maria," "say" for "says," "are" for "is;" and surely you would admit that the use of the word "fool" is thoroughly inappropriate. People who misplace their aspirates are not necessarily fools.

But does not Miss Gertrude's criticism remind you all, not only of Ellesmere's way of exercising his critical faculty, but also of other criticisms not heard in nurseries, but in the high courts of literature and politics? Have you never found the critic disclose four errors on his own part for one that he delights to point out in the sayings or doings of the person he criticises? You may be sure that something very nearly akin to "Ma-i-vey say 'happles'; fool she are," has been uttered in very high places this very day, and not by children of three years old only.

Ellesmere. Absolutely malignant! He has bottled up this story to be told against me on some great occasion. I believe it has been impending over my devoted head for the last two years. I really was not particularly critical to-day; but he was particularly vexed, as people always are when the ideas which they are very fond of, but which are not a little rickety, come to be examined by the drill-sergeant, or rather by the Medical Board.

Sir Arthur. It is an excellent story.

Lady Ellesmere. I shall never forget it.

Ellesmere. I know that; I shall be bored by my lady with the story all my life. And as for Sir Arthur, he was sure to delight in it. He has undergone a little criticism himself in the course of his life—totally unjust, no doubt; for as I heard him say to Milverton the other day, "Criticism is for the most part so thin." What he meant I do not know, but the two authors chuckled over the phrase, and seemed to think it so condemnatory and so clever.

Sir Arthur. Milverton has silenced Ellesmere. I am, however, going to revive Sir John, and I shall do so by returning to our original subject. Have you never felt over-wearied yourself, Ellesmere, and as if you would give anything to have another Sir John to take up the work for you? In no great case that you have had to argue?

Ellesmere. I am a sensible man; and I do not allow myself to fret myself to fiddle-strings. Sometimes, after a weighty consultation, I

have found myself lying awake, and scheming and planning how to conduct a case. On such occasions I do everything I can to break up such trains of thought. I say to myself, "My health and spirits belong to my clients; there is nothing so important for their interests as that I should be strong and in good nerve to-morrow."

Only think if race-horses, the night before the Derby, knew about to-morrow's race, how the more nervous and sensitive spirits among them would fret, and fuss, and lose their sleep, and fail to answer, when called upon to make their final effort.

When I was in the —— case, one of the heaviest I was ever engaged in, I found myself at this planning of my course of argument the night before, and becoming cold, and nervous, and miserable. I got up, and lit a fire, and set to work to read a volume of Victor Hugo's novel, "*Les Miserables*." That great book has, happily, certain long parenthetical discussions which are not very exciting. I fell upon one of these, and in half an hour I was in a sweet and composed state of mind, and I had five hours' good sleep that night.

My client was a dear friend as well as client, and when I saw his anxious face next day in court, I should not like to have told him that I had read "*Les Miserables*" the previous night, in order to get rid of him and his cause from my thoughts. But it was the best thing I could have done for him.

You see, therefore, that you do not take much by appealing to me to back up Milverton's "fond imaginations," for so I must call them.

Milverton. My dear Sir Arthur, you cannot bring Ellesmere round, when he has once taken up a side against you. Let us change the subject. Ellesmere's reference to "*Les Miserables*" has put me in mind of what he said some time ago about novels. Do you remember the fun he made of his "Edwin and Angelina"? But if he meant to run down the works of fiction of the present day, I am sure he is not warranted in doing so. I have just been reading a number of the "Last Chronicle of Barset." What an excellent novel it is! How true to life are the conversations and the letters! Now I maintain that no age has been so rich in good works of fiction, and perhaps in good writing of all kinds, as ours. Ellesmere will, I dare say, declare that, in a future age, almost all the present writers will be quite forgotten. I do not know, but I cannot imagine that Tennyson and Browning, Dickens and Bulwer, and Thackeray and Trollope, and the great

feminine writers, the authoress of "The Mill on the Floss," the authoress of "Jane Eyre," or of "John Halifax, Gentleman," and many others, will cease to be valued and their works to be read.

I think the same may be said of the great historical writers—such as Hallam, Grote, Macaulay, Carlyle, Milman, Froude, and Merivale.

I don't venture to speak much about the writers of other nations, but I think it will be a long time before Emerson, and Hawthorne, and Prescott will be forgotten in their own country.

Now I have not brought this subject on the *tapis* merely for the sake of getting a change of subject, but I have something very important to say about it. I see, though, Ellesmere is impatient to have his say.

Ellesmere. "Blow the trumpets, sound the drums!" Milverton is going to say something at some future time which will be worth hearing.

You began by talking about the "Last Chronicle of Barset." I am sorry to say that I fear that my relations with the distinguished author of that work will be considerably changed for the worse. I cannot be friendly with him any more, if Lily Dale——. No, I shan't tell you what I was going to say: you would only laugh at me.

Milverton. How men may misunderstand one another! I really do believe that, if Ellesmere were to meet Mr. Trollope, he would be very cold or cross to him if Lily Dale marries John Eames, or if she marries Crosby, or if she does not marry him, or if she does not become an old maid, for I am sure I do not know what Ellesmere wants her to do.

Trollope would go away thinking that he had somehow or other offended Ellesmere, or was greatly disesteemed by him; whereas Ellesmere would be paying him the highest compliment that could be paid to a man of imagination.

Here is this severe, satirical, case-hardened lawyer, and he is so possessed by a phantom of the novelist's brain, that he is positively prepared to be enraged if this she-phantom does not act exactly as he would have her. What's Lily Dale to him, or he to Lily Dale?

Ellesmere. Well, she is more to me than many a character I read of in history. Your historical characters are such fleeting things nowadays. I used to dislike Nero. I am now told that he was a most

estimable gentleman, and has been quite misunderstood until the present time. *If he fiddled at all, it was not during the fire, but after the fire, to collect subscriptions for the sufferers.*

But what was the important thing that you were going to tell us, Milverton?

Milverton. I do not care how much you ridicule me, but I do maintain that ours is an age noted for its richness in literary skill. Look at the excellence in the daily and weekly press, and in these innumerable monthlies. It is a perpetual source of astonishment to me to see how many people can write well, and have really a great deal to tell you.

I know that Ellesmere will say that I am always unreasonably prone to dwell upon the merits of everything and everybody; but, upon the other hand, I think I am very critical about the writing of English.

A few minutes ago, I mentioned several names of men eminent in literature. But I could add many others. There are Henry Taylor, and Ruskin, and Kingsley, and John Mill, for instance: I pity the man who has read their works, and has not been able to learn a great deal from them, and to appreciate the goodness of the writing.

Amongst our statesmen, too, there are men who would have been very considerable writers, if they had not devoted themselves to statesmanship. Lord Russell's "Europe since the Peace of Utrecht" is a very well written work. Mr. Disraeli's novels are remarkable productions. I read his "Contarini Fleming," as a youth, with immense admiration; and I read it again, last year, with great pleasure. Mr. Gladstone, also, and the Duke of Argyll, are men who have shown that they can leave their mark in literature.

Whatever you may say, I do maintain that ours is a great age as regards power of thought and expression.

Now, what I want you to notice is, that the great men who have made the age pre-eminent were all born, or at least nurtured, and the direction of their talents given to them, in a time of profound peace. The great strides in European civilization, whether in arts, in science, or in literature, have been made in consequence of there having been such periods. I wish we could have Buckle back again in life here with us, for I am sure he would——

[At this moment the postman made his appearance with the second delivery of letters, which the old man asked us to receive, in order that he might be saved the trouble of going up the hill. Now Sir John is furious about this second delivery. It is no joke with him; he is really very angry.]

Ellesmere. Have you no conscience, George; are you dead to all the finer feelings of humanity, that you molest us twice a day? I must come to some understanding with you. Your proper Christmas-box from me is two hundred and forty pence,—that is, if you do not bring me any letters during the time that I am here. For every letter you bring I must deduct a penny, and if the balance turns against you, you must give me a Christmas-box. I do believe you have brought me two hundred and eighty letters this time; consequently you owe me forty pence: which, when I was a National School-boy, used to amount to three shillings and fourpence, the sum, Mr. George, you are now in debt to me.

George. Oh, your honour would not be so 'ard on poor old George, as 'ave know'd you these twenty year, and such a snowy winter, too, as last winter 'ave a been. 'Sides I must do what the missus (the postmistress) tells I to.

Ellesmere. It is no excuse, George! If we do all that our "missuses" tell us, we shall most of us come to the gallows.

George. Ah, you be allus so jokous, Lawyer Ellesmere; but you know we must. (And saying this, the old man took off his hat, and, making a general bow to us, trotted off.)

Ellesmere. Do you see Peter Garbet's house in the distance—that wretched hovel surrounded by other hovels, on the top of Mendmore Hill? I am sorry to tell you that old Peter and two of his children are ill of the fever, and that Mrs. Garbet is nearly distracted.

Mrs. Milverton. I knew all about it, John. I have done everything I could for her.

Ellesmere. I know you have, my dear Blanche, and so have I in my little way; but how can we counteract the post-office?

Milverton. What nonsense, Ellesmere! I am sure old Peter has not received three letters in the course of his life.

Ellesmere. Considering that you pretend to have a great admiration for history, you are certainly a very shallow fellow, my dear friend, and never look far back enough to causes.

Who in modern times invented the post-office? As Macaulay would have said, "Every schoolboy knows that."

Why, Louis the Eleventh: just like him, is it not? Everybody who has seen Charles Kean in the character of Louis the Eleventh would know that that crafty, cruel, unprincipled king would, of course, invent the post-office system.

What did he say to himself?—"Despatches make my life miserable; my subjects shall have a taste of them, too. Besides, they will not look so sharply into my proceedings, if they have their own letters to molest them every day."

What happens? By these means Louis the Eleventh crushes his nobles, and increases the kingly power to an enormous extent. Louis the Fourteenth, the Regent Orleans, and Louis the Fifteenth abuse this kingly power outrageously. France is rendered miserable; and in good, well-meaning Louis the Sixteenth's time comes the French Revolution.

Out of the French Revolution, by necessity, comes Napoleon the First.

By an equal necessity, England and Pitt must have a set-to with Napoleon the First.

Hence four hundred millions of debt.

Hence window-tax and excise duty on bricks.

Consequently Peter Garbet's cottage is built with one side against a damp hill to save bricks, and has a window only eighteen inches square. Hence dampness and insufficient ventilation, and hence poor Peter Garbet and his two children lie ill in that miserable hovel.

Milverton. I am sorry to say anything against a series of statements and conclusions which are so admirably set forth by our learned friend; but Louis the Eleventh did not establish the post-office in the sense which Ellesmere understands it. He established a series of posts for the Government and for the Court, but it was not adopted by the community in general till Richelieu's time.

Ellesmere. The same thing. Richelieu was but Louis the Eleventh in cardinal's petticoats.

Milverton. I am sorry to intrude with unpleasant facts, but Richelieu was not the prime agent in this matter. It was done by the Duc d'Epernon, when Richelieu was for a year or two in retirement.

Ellesmere. What wretched pedantry all this is! It is clear that the cruel Louis the Eleventh was the inventor of the system. You admit that he applied it to his Court. The Court in those days comprehended the principal men in the kingdom. Well, then, this system was enlarged in Richelieu's time. Do you think it was done without his approbation, or continued without his consent?

Practically speaking, it is a device of tyranny. After you have passed the immature age of twenty-three, does anybody write to you but to annoy you about something?

Mauleverer. I think Ellesmere is quite right. All the clever inventions of man only lead to increased misery.

Milverton. What do you say to the use of chloroform?

Ellesmere. They do not apply it to the right people. Anybody who is about to write a letter to a lawyer in vacation should be chloroformed, and the trance should be made to last for two years at least.

Here Sir John, who had an immense number of letters to-day, got up and walked away. The rest of us did the same, and so the conversation ended.

We had only just begun our walk, when we heard Sir John calling after us. When he came within speaking distance, he shouted out to us, "Mind, I don't agree with Milverton about his eminent men being born and nurtured in times of peace. I am prepared to maintain the exact contrary, only I haven't time just now. Old George, the villain, came at the exact moment to save Milverton, that peace-maniac, from a sound intellectual drubbing. Good-bye." And so saying, he rushed up the hill again, while we proceeded on our walk towards the town; Mr. Milverton merely remarking, "What a contentious creature it is!" But I never thought he would let that pass.

18. Mr. Milverton afterwards read to us this extract from some historical work:—

“The most important products of the world can be grown there—sugar, maize, tobacco, cotton; and it has peculiar products of its own, such as the Paraguay tea. It is not volcanic, and has not to dread the catastrophes which have often overwhelmed the Spanish cities on the other side of the Andes….

“It has lakes, rivers, and woods, and, in the character of its scenery, much resembles an English park. It is rich in trees of every description—cedars, palms, balsams, aloes, cocoa-trees, walnut-trees, spice-trees, almonds, the cotton-plant, the quinaquina that produces the Jesuit’s bark, and another tree, of which the inner bark is so delicate and white, that it can be used as writing-paper. There is also the ceyba tree, which yields a soft woolly substance of which the natives make their pillows.

“The fruits of this most fertile land are oranges, citrons, lemons, the American pear, the apple, peaches, plums, figs, and olives. The bees find here their special home. The woods are not like the silent forests of North America, but swarm with all kinds of birds, having every variety of note and feather, from the soft colours of the wild dove to the gay plumage of the parrot; from the plaintive note of the nightingale, to the dignified noise of those birds which are said to imitate the trumpet and the organ. A few Indians, rarely to be seen, and appearing like specks in the landscape, roam over this vast plain, which a modern traveller has well said might be ‘the cradle of a mighty nation.’”

CHAPTER X.

Next morning I awoke at seven o'clock, and saw a tall figure very busy at my drawers. "Who is that?" I exclaimed.

"It's me," replied a voice which I recognised as Sir John Ellesmere's.

Ellesmere. I say "It's me" advisedly; and am prepared to maintain that it is good grammar to say so.

What am I about? Why, I am rectifying my frontiers in the article of cricket-balls. Little Tommy Jessom has got a whole holiday, and has honoured us by a visit. A quarter to seven is not a strictly fashionable hour for making a morning call upon a respectable family; but boys are privileged beings. The minute but persevering Tommy insists upon our having a game at cricket, and I am going to give him an innings. I saw you put away a well-greased ball in one of these drawers the other day.

Hallo! emerald studs! and very pretty ones too. What young woman has been foolish enough to see anything in your lengthy face, Sandy, and to give you these studs? I see I must "execute the provisions of a treaty" in regard to these studs—a treaty to be signed by the small Tommy and me, which being rightly interpreted, will be found to provide that, under pain of being thrashed himself, he shall come into your room, carry off the studs, and present them to the other high contracting party. You shall then complain to me of Tommy; and between us we will execute the provisions of another treaty, and carry off Master Tommy's bat and stumps. We want stumps sadly, and should not be the worse for a spare bat. Thus everything will be arranged satisfactorily, according to the latest and best construction put upon international law.

So saying, Sir John, having, to use his own phrase, "rectified his frontiers" by seizing upon my pet cricket-ball, strode out of the room to play with Tommy Jessom.

An hour or two after breakfast we all went to the summer-house to have another reading of Realmah.

Ellesmere. Tommy, I have a serious word to say to you. You are an incomplete, imperfect boy; in fact, a mere eidolon, or spectrum, or

larva, of a boy. The perfect boy has always in his pockets a ball of string, a lump of beeswax, thirty-seven marbles, two alley-taws, and a knife with six blades, a gimlet, a punch, a corkscrew, and a little saw. I regret to say that you were found to be deficient in all these articles this morning. Proceed at once to Mother Childman's in the town, and buy them forthwith. (Here Ellesmere gave the boy some money.) Away! Avaunt! "*Quousque tandem abutêre, Caitlina, patientiâ nostrâ!*" Vanish.

[

Exit Little Tommy.

The boy would be bored to death by our reading and our talk. By the way, he has made me very unhappy this morning.

Milverton. Why, he is the best of little boys—a perfect boy, notwithstanding the absence of beeswax and string.

Ellesmere. I am in a sort of a way his godfather. Poor S——, my cousin, was his godfather; and now that S—— is dead, I consider that I take his place. Consequently, I thought it my duty, in the intervals of cricket, to talk to him a little about his lessons. It is the same sad story as it was in our time. Hexas and pens for to-day: alcaics and Latin theme for Monday; in fact, a painful and laborious gathering together of useless rubbish.

Johnson. What are hexas and pens, Sir John?

Ellesmere. You have not been brought up, Sandy, in the groves of Academus, or you would know that hexas and pens are the short for hexameters and pentameters.

Hereupon ensued a conversation of the most animated description. I could not have thought that any people would have been so excited about the question of boys making Latin verses. The most uncomplimentary speeches passed between Mr. Cranmer and Sir John, Mr. Cranmer insinuating that Sir John would have been a much more polished individual if he had made more Latin verses in his boyhood, and Sir John insinuating that Mr. Cranmer would not have been quite so much given to routine, and so narrow-minded, if he had made fewer Latin verses.

Mr. Milverton—an unusual thing for him—rushed in to aid Sir John; upon which Sir Arthur came down upon *him*, not in his accustomed dignified way, but with great warmth and vehemence,

declaring that, if these new ideas were to prevail, all elegance and scholarship in literature would pass away. Mr. Mauleverer sneered a little at both parties, but rather inclined to Mr. Cranmer's view of the question, from his hatred of anything new. For some time they all talked at once, and I cannot give any account of it.

When the fray had a little subsided, Sir Arthur and Sir John were left in possession of the field. Sir John demanded of Sir Arthur a distinct enumeration of the advantages to be gained in education from the making of Latin and Greek verses. Sir Arthur did not hesitate to accept the challenge, and enumerated these advantages one by one. Sir John pointed out the fallacy in each case, dwelt upon the loss of time, the loss of real knowledge, and the cumbering the mind with what is useless, occasioned by the present system of classical education. I thought he had much the best of the argument, though Sir Arthur was very eloquent and very adroit.

At length the conversation was broken off, as they thought that Tommy Jessom would soon be back upon us again; and Mr. Milverton commenced reading another portion of Realmah.

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE REVOLUTION.

Government is a most mysterious thing. There are constitutions which seem as if they would last for ever, being well-constructed, reasonable things; but they do not last;—and there are others full of anomalies, abounding in contradictions, which persevere in living, however unreasonably. Thus it was at Abibah. The least-foreseeing of prophets might have prophesied that, in a nation where the supreme power was divided amongst four chiefs, the government would be sure to be soon broken up. This strange government, however, had lasted for several generations.

A time was now approaching when this government would be sorely tried. The scarcity of provisions made men sour, and ready to blame their chiefs with or without reason. The immediate cause of danger, however, arose from a most trivial circumstance. There was a day of festival in honour of Salera, the goddess of the waters. At this festival it had been customary for the inhabitants of the town to appear in festal dresses totally different from their ordinary

costume, but both as to form and colour each individual might follow his, or her, own fancy. It happened, however, that on one occasion, a few years previously, a large family of children had been dressed out with blue scarves, while those of a neighbouring family had been dressed with red scarves. There was great contest in the particular neighbourhood as to which set of children had been most becomingly adorned. Gradually the dispute spread into other quarters of the city, and eventually the population were divided into those who wore blue scarves at Salera's festival, and those who wore red. Feuds, similar to those of the circus at Constantinople, which shook the thrones of emperors, arose about these colours; and the red and the blue factions hated one another with a fell religious hatred.

The chief of the West had incautiously proclaimed himself an ardent partisan for the Blues, and had earned the intense dislike of the Reds. It happened that he had lately issued some regulations about the distribution of food, which, though very reasonable, had given great offence to his quarter of the city. The Red faction were crafty enough to drop all allusion to their hatred to him as a strong partisan of the Blue faction, and to dwell merely upon that which was a subject of general offence to both factions.

This chief of the West was one of those unfortunate rulers who seem to be born at the wrong time; and whose virtues, no less than their errors and their vices, contribute to their misfortunes. In this dispute between the Red and Blue factions, though, as I have said above, he was an ardent partisan of the Blue faction, he had never favoured them in the distribution of offices; being too just a man for that. He was therefore neither valued as a friend, nor feared, however much disliked, as an enemy. He was very much the prey of the last speaker, and so his policy was never consistent; being alternately strict and lax, bold and timorous. A simple-minded, good, honest man, having every wish to govern rightly, he could scarcely be said to govern at all. It seems as if such men were sent into the world, and placed in power just at a time of crisis, in order that it might be rendered absolutely certain that the crisis should be developed into great disaster, or at least great change.

Realmah knew the character of this man well, and from that knowledge foreboded calamity.

It was peculiarly unfortunate that the poorer inhabitants of Abibah should have congregated in the Western quarter of the town. It was there that the weavers dwelt, who were always inclined to be a turbulent body; and who were the first to suffer from any scarcity of provisions, as men can dispense with weaving, and go on with their old garments, when threatened by want of food. From the Western quarter the disaffection spread; and great political discussions arose throughout the whole city as to their present form of government. Any person, or thing, much discussed, is sure to be much vilified; and this quadrilateral government, when once it had to endure discussion, offered many points for attack and depreciation. Moreover, there were not wanting amongst the Sheviri ambitious men anxious for a more republican form of government, and who looked forward to a position of power and profit, if that mode of government should be established. Their scheme was to form a council of twelve, by election, who should have supreme power for five years, three members of this council being allotted to each division of the city.

Disaffection grew to a great height, and a dissolution of the present constitution was imminent.

It is not to be supposed that men like Realmah, belonging to the ruling families, were unobservant of this dangerous state of public opinion. In fact, Realmah was perfectly certain that there would be a revolution, and he began to prepare for it. The main thing that he was afraid of was that, in some popular tumult, a capture of himself, or of any of the principal people on his side, would be effected by his opponents. He was determined to profit by the revolution, but to have no hand whatever in making it. He wished that whatever step he might take, should appear to have been forced upon him. The main terror of his life, as we know, was lest the tribes of the North, already possessing the knowledge of iron, should come down upon his nation, and enslave it before he had completed his manufacture of that metal. He had long come to the conclusion that a despotism would be preferable to that. The preparations that he made to prevent his being suddenly captured, were these:—In his principal room he secretly contrived that, near the entrance, a part of the flooring should descend into the water upon his cutting a cord. This was for his enemies. For his own escape, he made a trap-door at the

further end of the room. Beneath this opening he had a boat suspended. There was room between the lower flooring of some of the better houses in Abibah (and Realmah's was one) and the water, to navigate a boat, pushing it along from one pile to another. By these means he would be able to reach the water-stairs of the residence of his uncle, the chief of the East.

He knew from his spies the very day upon which a general outbreak was intended to be made. Early on that day he took care that the whole of the guard should be assembled in the guard-room attached to the house of the chief of the East. Realmah remained in his own house, resolved to take no active part until some step of violence had been taken by the other side. On some pretext he contrived to remove Talora to the house of his uncle, while he and the Varnah remained at home waiting the event.

The opposite side were well aware of the sagacity of Realmah, and had arranged that a party of their adherents should attack him in his house, and that two of their principal partisans should pay him a visit of courtesy an hour before the attack was to be made, in order that they might be sure of knowing where he was, and of being able to secure him. Accordingly, in the evening, these two noblemen, Tapu and Paradee, paid their ceremonial visit. The crafty Realmah contrived to place them immediately over that part of the floor which he could make descend into the water. The guests talked upon indifferent subjects, and then afterwards ventured to discuss the dangerous state of political affairs. Realmah went on discoursing platitudes and keeping up the conversation in an easy manner. Soon the noise of a great tumult was heard. The revolution had broken out before the appointed time. Indeed, revolutions are seldom conducted with the needful punctuality. Some of the rioters had made at once for Realmah's house, had broken through the outer doors, and now rushed into the apartment. The two guests then changed their tone, and demanded that Realmah should surrender to them. Having gained what he wanted, namely, this overt act of rebellion, he let the flooring drop beneath them; and, in the confusion that ensued, he and the Varnah escaped in the manner he had planned to the house of his uncle, the chief of the East.

Realmah then hastened to put into operation the plan that he had long determined upon. There were certain officers in the state whose

functions cannot be better described than by saying that they were like those of Spanish alguazils. Realmah's scheme was to arrest the principal conspirators by means of these alguazils (whose fidelity he had taken great pains to secure), giving to each one of them a guard of ten men. Those attendants he had furnished from the tribe of the fishermen and of the ironworkers who were devoted to him.

The conduct of Realmah at this crisis was widely different from that of Athlah; and a philosophic student of history, a kind of person not known in Abibah, might have added to his store one more notable instance of the way in which revolutions are made, and of the kind of characters which guide them.

Athlah, as we know, was not merely a stalwart man of war, but also a very considerable person in council and debate. At any rate, he had always something to say, and people were always willing to hear what he said.

Those chiefs who were loyal to the present system of government, when the tumult had begun, rushed to the house of the chief of the East. An irregular sort of council was held. Realmah briefly explained his long-matured plan. Athlah raised all manner of objections—not that he wished to object, for he was sincerely anxious to find a remedy for the present state of things. But when the time for swift action came, this bold hardy man, an excellent lieutenant in war, could not see his way to a course of action; and his mind was filled with doubts, scruples, and difficulties. "They had no authority," he said, "to interfere with the other quarters of the town. The West was to govern the West, just as the East governed the East, without interference. The proceedings suggested by Realmah would be a perfect breach of the constitution. He, for one, could not take such a responsibility upon himself." He did not use such a fine word as responsibility. The equivalent for it in their language was "tying a knot," and Athlah said he could not tie such a knot.

The truth is that Realmah could tie a knot, a feat which the daring Athlah could not accomplish.

Realmah replied, "The counsel that I gave, will not be the counsel that I should give when that water has ceased to pour.[19] It must be taken at once, or rejected for ever. Great Lords, Dividers of Bread, I see that you agree with me; and I hasten to execute your commands." So saying, Realmah quitted the room. The great Lords,

Dividers of Bread, were secretly glad that anybody would take upon himself the burden of tying a knot, and save them the agony of deciding what should be done at this dangerous crisis. There were not wanting some of the baser sort who said to themselves that they could hereafter declare that they had not assented to Realmah's counsel, and so they should be safe whatever might happen.

Perhaps Realmah's well-devised plans might altogether have failed but for a piece of singular good fortune. A violent storm of wind and rain came on that evening. Revolutions require, before all things, fine weather. The populace gradually dispersed. In that part of the town which was subject to the chief of the East, the alguazils and their body-guards succeeded in capturing, by domiciliary visits, the chief conspirators, of whom Realmah had long ago made a careful list.

The other quarters of the town were not so well managed. The chief of the West was slain at the first outbreak; and the chiefs of the North and the South had, in a most dastardly manner, fled. The moment that the capture had been made of the principal conspirators in the Eastern quarter, Realmah felt himself strong enough to pursue the same system in the North and in the South. Before daybreak, three-quarters of the city owned the rule of the chief of the East; that is, practically speaking, of his wise and energetic nephew, Realmah. A sharp encounter took place between the insurgents in the Western quarter and the troops who remained faithful in the other three-quarters of the town, in which contest the insurgents were completely worsted.

CHAPTER XXII.

REALMAH BECOMES KING.

The city was now in peace. Order had been restored; and all the sensible inhabitants of Abibah felt that to Realmah this peace and order were due. No member of the family of the chief of the West had come forward to take his place. The flight of the chiefs of the North and of the South was looked upon as an act of abdication on their part. The councils of these quarters of the town met together, and it was almost unanimously resolved (what was done in one council not being, at the time, known in the others) that the chiefdom of each quarter should be offered to Realmah. His aged uncle, the great chief of the East, upon hearing the determinations of

the several councils, said that he would abdicate in favour of his nephew, who should thenceforward be king of the whole nation. It is curious to observe that, from their having a word in their language for king, the kingly form of government must, at some time or other, have prevailed amongst them. There was an ancient proverb to this effect,—"*Lakaree*[20] *slapped the king's white face—when he was dead*."

The principal men of the several councils presented themselves before Realmah, and tendered to him this kingly office. He asked for twenty-four hours to deliberate.

The evening after he had received these men was like the one that has been described at the beginning of this story. The atmosphere was cloudless, and the stars were visible. Realmah walked out upon the balcony overlooking the lake, which he had walked upon in the early days of his career, and when his chief thought had been how to defeat the wiles of the ambassador of the Phelatahs. What great events had happened to him during the interval that had passed! He had been comparatively an obscure young man when he first walked up and down that balcony, and gazed upon those stars. Since then, he had been in battles; had performed the part of a conqueror, and endured that of a prisoner. He had been madly in love with the beautiful Talora; and now, if he told the truth, her charms had very small attraction for him. The despised Ainah had taken with her, to her untimely grave, all the capability for love that there was in him.

Since that first walk, too, on the balcony, he had become a great inventor; and his discovery of iron, he felt, would be the chief safeguard for his nation.

These were the principal subjects of thought for Realmah; but there were others which will force themselves upon the minds of all poetic and imaginative people when they regard the unclouded heavens, and think of, or guess at, the great story which those heavens can tell them.

Perhaps a starlight night is the greatest instructor that is permitted, otherwise than in revelation, to address mankind. Realmah could not know what science has taught us. We now know that, in contemplating those heavens, we are looking at an historical scene which makes all other histories trivial and transitory. That speck of light which we call a star is an emanation which proceeded

from its origin thousands of years ago perhaps, and may not in any manner represent the state of the star at the present day. Then, again, it is not as if we were reading the history of any one past period; but we are reading the commingled history of innumerable ages, widely distant from each other.[21] If men thoroughly entered into the spirit of this strange, weird scene, it would be the greatest cure for ambition, vanity, and avarice that has ever been devised.

Milverton. You see, Sir Arthur, that I have stolen your thunder.

Realmah, however, gazed upon it with the ignorant eyes of one comparatively a savage. And yet the wonderful scene had a strange influence upon him, and roused in his mind those thoughts which are common to all thinking men, and which, as we have seen, had before, on a remarkable occasion, been present to his mind; namely: "Whence am I? What am I? What am I here for? What does it all mean?"—thoughts which are never without a wild kind of melancholy, the melancholy of an inquiring and unsatisfied soul. And then he turned to business. There were motives which made him hesitate, now that the opportunity had come, to accept the greatness thrust upon him. I have said that, after the death of the Ainah, he had become ambitious. But still his nature was to a great extent like that of Hamlet, as described by our great poet, who felt it so hard that rough action, and dire struggle with the world around him, should be forced upon one who would far rather contemplate the ways of men than be in any measure mixed up with them.

Moreover, there was one thought that plagued Realmah, and drove him like a goad; namely, the consideration as to who should be his successor to the throne—for he was childless. After long pondering, he resolved that he would adopt some youth, the worthiest of the scions of those noble houses which had fallen from their high estate in the sudden revolution. With a sigh he congratulated himself, or rather the state, upon his being childless. "For," as he said to himself, "any child of mine might be most unworthy to succeed me; but it will be hard if I cannot discover one amongst these young men of noble family, who should be able to guide the kingdom when I am old, or dead." This thought soothed his mind; and, as the cold grey light of early morning broke in upon his meditations, he had completely made up his mind how to act, in every particular, on this, the greatest occasion of his life.

He had resolved, unhesitatingly, to be the King of the Sheviri.

Ellesmere. I am an ass, an idiot, a dolt, a dunce, a blockhead, and a dunderhead. All the rough, rude things that my enemies say against me are true. All the utterances of the refined malice of my friends are true. Yes, Cranmer, you are right. I cannot be sure of doing a simple sum in addition correctly. Say what you like of me, all of you.

Whatever any theologian has said of any other theologian, who differs from him slightly, is true of me.

Whatever any editor of any Greek play has said of any former editor of the same Greek play, is true of me.

Whatever any elderly lady who attends the Billingsgate Market and sells fish, says of any other elderly lady engaged in the same vocation, who sells her fish at a lower price, is true of me.

Whatever any "Right Honourable friend" who has left the Cabinet, says of any other "Right Honourable friend" who remains in the Cabinet, is true of me.

Sir Arthur. No, no, Ellesmere; keep within some bounds.

Mauleverer. Whence comes this sudden burst of just, but long-deferred, self-appreciation?

Ellesmere. I have been puzzling my brain for weeks to find out what this man was at, and I now see that I ought to have perceived his drift at once. The first syllable of the word Realmah ought to have enlightened me. Of course he was to become king; and of course, he is to initiate a form of government, or a mode of foreign policy, which is to be eminently instructive in modern times.

I am disgusted. I have been bothered about all these love affairs: I have been worried about the smelting of iron-stones: my feelings—my tenderest feelings—have been harrowed by the death of the Ainah; and now I find that I have gone through all this suffering, only that I might become interested in the character and fortunes of Realmah, and therefore be induced to listen more patiently to the record of his official and diplomatic proceedings. I am a dupe.

Mr. Milverton did not make any reply to this outburst of Sir John Ellesmere's, but continued the reading of the story.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE KING PROVIDES AGAINST FAMINE: HIS COUNCILLORS.

Realmah's first care upon coming to the throne was to provide against the famine which threatened the inhabitants of Abibah. In his mode of doing this, he struck, as it were, the key-note of the policy he was about to pursue throughout his reign. He determined to persuade the Phelatahs to supply him with provisions. He accordingly addressed a letter to their chiefs.

It may surprise the reader to hear that there was any mode of communication amongst the dwellers in the Lake cities which can be likened to the writing of a letter.

The Peruvians kept their records by means of the *quippus*, which was a tassel composed of threads of different colours, having knots in them at different lengths in the threads.

The inhabitants of the Lake cities had adopted a similar system, only that they used shells instead of threads; and the differences of form and colour of the shells corresponded with the differences of interval in the knotted lengths and of the colours of the threads in the Peruvian *quippus*. This seems a very rude and difficult mode of writing, but practice made it easy; and those who were much practised in it, could read and write with comparative facility.

Realmah's letter to the chiefs of the Phelatahs was as follows:—

"*Your eldest brother, I, Realmah, the King of the Sheviri, by Londardo with the four feathers, to the great Lords and Dividers of Bread of the Phelatahs, send greeting, and desire for them health, honour, wealth, and quails.*

[The four feathers were the insignia of an ambassador; and quails meant abundance, alluding to the immense flocks of those birds which, at certain times of the year, passed over those regions of the earth, and furnished the inhabitants with food for many days.]

"*The koopha,*[22] *when set free, forgets the hardship of its captivity, and remembers only the kindness that it received when it was in its cage. The great king's heart is larger and more loving than that of the little koopha.*

"*What he did, whom you would wish to love as a friend, let it be as a bad dream, not to be thought over in the good daytime, for he did it mistakenly.*

"*For both, the same moon above; for both, the same waters beneath; the same day for both, when the almond trees, blossoming*

with joy, tell that summer has come back again: why should the Phelatahs and the Sheviri shoot arrows at each other? They should sing the same song on the same day to the dear summer when she returns to them.

"*The wild bulls may stamp their forefeet as if to the sound of the mithral,*[23] *but if one moves out of the line, coming forward or drawing backward, all is lost, and the little young lions in their dens have much food.*

"*The men of the North are as a lion, and the young lions are many.*

"*Paravi*[24] *has been good to the Phelatahs, but has hidden her face from the Sheviri, and would not behold them. The good goddess makes things uneven so that good men may make them even again, for she is always wise and loving.*

"*The young maidens of Abibah droop like the lilies when the stars drink up the dew before the morning, and there is no rain. The mothers in Abibah almost wish that their children were dead, for they have no food to give them.*

"*What need I say more? The generous do not love to have many words said to them. It is I who have written this.*

"

I, Realmah, the King.

"

We may smile at this extraordinary production, but there is something touching and tender, and not without dignity, in the way in which these poor people expressed their thoughts. It was a point of high diplomatic politeness not to say anything directly, but in tropes and similes, with proverbs and with fables; in fact, to write always allusively, but so that the allusions should be understood by any intelligent person cognizant of the facts.

This missive was entrusted to Londardo, who, without delay, was to proceed to Abinamanche.

His secret instructions were, to put himself into communication with Koorali, who was friendly to Realmah; to proclaim everywhere that the government had been thrust upon Realmah; that the King's main object was to unite all the people of the South against the threatened invasion of the North; and, if he found great difficulty in

obtaining the main object of his mission, to declare very plainly that the Sheviri would come and take the food they wanted, and that desperate men were desperate enemies to deal with.

The above commands were given in full council to Londardo. There was, however, another instruction, most secret, given by the King alone. It was to the effect that Londardo might delicately ridicule the King, showing by shrugs of the shoulder and smiles, and dubious words uttered only to a few of the Phelatahs, very confidentially ("It will spread enough," said Realmah), that he, Londardo, thought their new King almost a maniac on the subject of his fears of the men of the North. "Possess them with that idea," said the subtle Realmah, "convince them that I mean to be an ally, and not an enemy, and so we may prevent their fighting us now—now, when my people are hunger-stricken, and my power is not confirmed." Londardo succeeded in his mission, and thus the first difficulty in Realmah's reign was overcome.

Londardo was one of Realmah's chief councillors; and, before proceeding to enumerate the principal events of the reign, it will be well to give an account of these men. They were selected by the King from the four councils that had been attached to the four chiefs who had ruled over the town.

First there was Lariska, who was thought to be the wisest man in the kingdom. But there were great drawbacks upon his wisdom. He spun out innumerable arguments, and had always a great deal to produce for, or against, any given course of action. There was, however, this terrible defect in him—that an argument was valued according to its purely argumentative value, rather than according to the nature of the thing it touched. For example: if there were an argument which affected eighty parts of the transaction debated upon—the whole transaction being represented by the number one hundred—to Lariska that argument was not of more value, and not more to be insisted upon, than some argument which affected only one one-hundredth part of the transaction, but which was interesting and curious as an argument. In short, as the Court jester observed, Lariska never made any difference in his nets, whether for panthers or for rabbits.

Then there was Bibi. He was really a very able man; but he habitually placed the expression of his opinion under severe

restraint; and his mode of declaring approval, or disapproval, was so cold, that Realmah had to study Bibi's lightest words in order to ascertain what he really meant. Realmah used to invite Bibi frequently to his table, and was wont to talk to him upon State affairs when the strongest bowls of mead had circulated freely round the board.

Then there was Delaimah-Daree, who was a wonderful man, not only for producing arguments, but for suggesting resources. His extraordinary fertility, however, dwarfed his powers of conclusiveness; and, after an admirable speech in council, Realmah did not know how Delaimah-Daree wished any question to be settled. The lines of his thought were all parallel, and never met in a focus. As Philip van Artevelde says of the mind of some councillor—

"A mind it is
Accessible to reason's subtlest rays,
And many enter there, but none converge."

Then there was that burly old man, full of sagacity, named Brotah. He always took a common-sense view of every matter, and his counsel was often most valuable; but he was greatly influenced by personal feelings. He said what he said, because somebody else had said the other thing. You had therefore to abstract from his advice the personality of it, before you could tell whether it was either good or bad. It was to be observed of Brotah that he delighted at being in a minority.

Then there was Lavoura, a refined and delicate-minded man, who always suggested indirect and sometimes sinister ways. You were never to meet the matter in hand directly; but you were to do, or say, something quite remote from it, which was to come back in some wonderful manner upon the question at issue. Had Realmah known the principle of the boomerang, he would have called Lavoura his boomerang councillor. Realmah himself was a little too much inclined at times to adopt Lavoura's advice—not seeing that this is not the right way for a great king to govern.

Then there was Delemnah—a bluff, coarse, sensible man, who never was for adopting a roundabout way, or even a delicate way of doing anything, but believed in brute force, and almost worshipped it. He and Lavoura generally spoke against one another in council.

Then there was Marespi. He did not indulge in many opinions of his own; but, after a matter had been much debated by others, he had the keenest perception of how the votes would go, and was fond of being on the winning side. He was immensely guided by what was said out of doors of any measure of the Government; and a tumult in the street was a thing that quite ruled his views of policy.

Then there was Londardo. He was a man with a large noble mask of a face, with very bright black eyes, who indulged in obstreperous laughter, and had a habit of rubbing his hands together in a boisterous manner that expressed the continual joy and fun that was bubbling up in him. He was a very sensible person, and absolutely invaluable as a peace-maker. In the pleasantest manner he could tell two councillors, who were about to quarrel, that they were two fools; and he would even get up from the council-table, and shake them, contriving with exquisite tact, perhaps, to make a remark that should tend to conciliate the opponents, such as, "You are the last two men who should ever disagree, for did I not hear him say of you the other day, that you were one of the best of men, and one of the cleverest of us all? Now do not be fools. We have not time for folly; and if we disagree amongst ourselves, how are the people to be governed?" He was the man who proposed that refreshments should always be brought in when there was a council, and would contrive that the eating time should arrive very opportunely. He was of great service to the King, performing that part of rude conciliation which it would have been quite undignified for Realmah himself to undertake.

In the higher circles of the Sheviri there were always stories current about Londardo. It was told of him that, when debates at the council were dull, he would absolutely have the audacity to go to sleep; but that, somehow or other, when he woke up, it always seemed as if he knew all about what was going on. There was a story, too, of how, at a council in the first year of Realmah's reign, when the King had made some subtle proposal, Londardo had observed, "Well, you are the craftiest young chief that ever sat upon a throne; but do not be so over-clever; for, after all, kings should be plain, blunt sort of fellows—something like me, only with better manners."

Also, on a memorable occasion, when there was great division in the council, and when a tumult of discord arose amongst the councillors, Londardo got up, and placed his broad back against the

door, saying, “Now I do not care a snail’s shell how the thing goes. One way is as good as another, and the arguments for and against anything are always about equal; but one way you must go, and you do not pass through this door till you are all of one mind as to which way that shall be. Right or wrong, decide something; and stick to it.” And they did decide something; and did stick to it.

Then there was Llama-Mah. He was an adroit, clever man, but withal a poor creature, a thorough flatterer by nature, whose only object at a council was to discern what was the King’s opinion upon any matter, and to vote as the King would wish. Realmah, at first, could not endure this man, and was, for some time, very cold in his demeanour to him. But the allurements of flattery and of constant assent are so powerful, that, eventually, the great King was overcome by the assiduities of Llama-Mah, and began to look upon him as one of his truest friends. It was, at last, “My good Llama-Mah has said it;” or “Llama-Mah has made a very sound observation;” or “We must wait to hear what Llama-Mah will say.”

Let this not be wondered at. A life-time is so short, and life is so difficult, that we are glad to avail ourselves of the services of any human creature who is good enough, and wise enough, always to be of our opinion.

Lastly, there was Litervi, who was more of a judge than a councillor. He seemed to have no ideas of his own, and always managed to speak last, summing up carefully, and with great discrimination, what the others had counselled.

It is not to be supposed that these able men are thoroughly described in these short characters given of them, or that they acted always consistently with these characters. Sometimes Delemnah was timid. Sometimes Lavoura was brave. Sometimes Delaimah-Daree was conclusive. Sometimes Londardo was not sweet-tempered. Sometimes, but very rarely, Litervi hazarded a remark of his own. This was not altogether from inconsistency; but men know what others think of them, and how they are expected to think and act, and, as they do not like to be shut up in a character, they sometimes go in quite a contrary way to that which they know is expected of them.

Besides, there are profound inconsistencies of character. Litervi, the most cautious of men, who adored delay, was, during the

twenty-four hours that preceded Realmah's accession to the throne, the most bold and unscrupulous of councillors; and you could perceive that there was in the same man the nature of a daring conspirator, and of a timid and procrastinating judge.

It may seem surprising that so many eminent men should have been collected together in one council; but the truth is, that among semi-civilized people, as amongst boys at school, and young men at college, the right persons are almost always chosen. It is true that there were strong lines of demarcation of rank among the Sheviri, and there was no chance of any man being made a councillor who was not in the highest class; but in that class the most just and wise choice was made of men fit to counsel and to rule.[25]

Such were the councillors with whom Realmah undertook to govern the great kingdom of the Sheviri, which, under his government, gradually increased until it embraced an extent of country three hundred and seventy miles in length, and something like one hundred and eighty in breadth.

It was a piece of good fortune for Realmah that he was one of those men who could listen carefully to counsel of various kinds, and have the courage to abide by it, or neglect it, as it suited his great purposes.

Ellesmere. Well, now we have Realmah and his councillors before us, and a precious set of crafty scoundrels they are. I know this, that I should not have liked to have lived in that time, and to have been a chief possessing any territory within 300 miles' distance from Abibah. I feel certain that I should have been absorbed by these Marespis, Llama-Mahs, and Realmahs.

I suspect we have all sat for our portraits, and that bits of us, at any rate, are to be found in the characters of these councillors. I do not, however, see any Mauleverer amongst them. Probably Realmah thought that he could do all the melancholy part of the business for himself. There is no mention made of a clerk of the council, but I suppose, when he is described, that Cranmer will sit for the portrait—a good, steady official man, with no nonsense about him, having no regard for fables or falsities of any kind, except perhaps for Potochee and her crew, because age would have rendered any institution respectable in his eyes, even that of wizardry and witchcraft.

But I must go and play a game of quoits with Tommy Jessom.

By the way, it would be a good thing in any council to have a boy. His counsel would be so direct and honest, and he would not make long speeches.

After a fearful speech by Lariska, or by that other fellow who never brought his manifold suggestions to a point, what a treat it would be to hear Tommy Jessom exclaim, "I vote we go in and lick 'em." or, "I vote we cave in." I do not pledge myself to explain the exact meaning of the expression "cave in;" but Tommy has taught it me: and I observe he always uses it when he is about to yield to my superior prowess.

A woman, too, would be a great acquisition to a council, as bringing an amount of common sense and steady regard for present advantage which are often wanting in a council composed of men only.

There! Have I not compensated by this speech for all the rude truths I may have uttered during my life-time about women? You may kiss my hand, Mildred and Blanche, in token of your gratitude.

Here Ellesmere held out his hand, but only received a sharp slap upon it from his wife, whereupon he went away declaiming loudly against the inveterate ingratitude of women. The others followed him, and our party was broken up for the day.

19. They measured time by the falling of water from a vessel with a small hole in it, resembling the *klepsydra*.

20. A cant name for one of the lowest class of weavers.

21. The idea in the text is very difficult to realize, or to express. To compare small things with great, this illustration may be used. It is as if a man of the present day were to see (not to read about, but to see) Lord George Gordon's riots, Louis the Fourteenth's conquest of Flanders, Charlemagne's slaughter of the Saxons, Hannibal's victory at Cannæ, the building of the hundred-gated Thebes, and weary Methuselah celebrating his seven hundredth birthday—all at the same time, these scenes having reached his eyes at the same moment, and being for him the story of the present day.

22. Ring dove.

23. A musical instrument resembling the flute.

24. The goddess of fertility.

25. The idea of a man's wealth being any reason why he should be made a councillor would have been one impossible for the Sheviri to contemplate. They would not even have thought it a joke, but rather a suggestion made by a man about to have a fever, if any one had suggested that Pom-Pom, the richest man in Abibah, but one of the most foolish, should be made a councillor. In fact, they thought that a councillor should be a man able to give counsel. But then semi-savages are so blunt and rude, and childish in their ideas; and their ways of going on are quite different from those of civilized people.

CHAPTER XI.

I must make some apology for what I am going to narrate in this chapter. I have been asked to give the story, written by myself, to which I alluded in a former chapter; and, as a sensible young lady sits down to play at the piano when she is asked, whether she is a good or an indifferent performer, so I think I had better give this story at once rather than show any tiresomely modest reluctance to do so.

On the day when I told the story, we met in the study, after luncheon, for the weather was stormy, and the gentlemen were not inclined to venture out. The ladies, however, had gone to hear a confirmation sermon. Mr. Milverton began the conversation.

Milverton. We are to have something new to-day. Johnson is going to give us a bit of his experience of life.

Ellesmere. Babes and sucklings! A discourse on coral, eh?

Sir John seemed to have forgotten, or pretended to have forgotten, that he had himself asked me to write a story.

Milverton. I can tell you it is very good, and very deep.

Ellesmere. Oh yes! we know! Milverton has a forty-woman power of prejudice in favour of his friends. Anything that they do must be admirable. And, as for his secretary, who is part of himself, whatever he does is good enough for the Revue des deux Mondes.

I wonder what mischief Sandy has been hatching. I have observed he has been very thoughtful lately, and has been an execrable companion. O Sandy the clever one! drinker-in of wisdom from many fountains of that fluid! And oh the delight of a well-woven story that agitates the mind with pleasing alternations of hope and fear!

Milverton. What *do* you mean, Ellesmere, by that nonsense?

Ellesmere. It is an imitation, and not a bad one, I think, of one of Paul Louis Courier's best bits.

He was ridiculing some of the French lawyers for their habit of apostrophizing, which, however, he said he had adopted himself; for, when at home, he did not ask his servant Nicole simply to bring his slippers, but exclaimed, "*O mes pantoufles! et toi, Nicole, et toi!*"

And so, instead of asking Sandy to give us his story, I exclaim, "Oh the cleverness of Sandy! And oh the beauty of a good story!"

But what is it about, though? A treatise, in the disguise of a story, on weights and measures? An essay, disguised as a tale, on the system of decimal notation? If it is, I go. Friendship has its limits. I like Sandy very much; but one must draw a line somewhere: and I draw the line by refusing to listen to any essay on decimal notation, even from my dearest friend.

Milverton. Make your mind quite easy, Ellesmere; and, Alick, do not wait for any more talk, but begin at once.

Johnson. I begin by saying that it has always been admitted that the Scotch possess peculiar prophetic powers, as I may instance by their well-known powers of second sight. And now I commence my story.

When I was a youth I went to visit my uncle, a small tenant-farmer and fisherman, who lived in the extreme north of Scotland on the sea-side. Boy-like, I was always about amongst the boats, which were new things to one who had hitherto lived far inland. One morning I succeeded, by dint of great efforts, in pushing my uncle's boat down to the margin of the sea. I got into it, and rocked it about from side to side. In a few minutes it happened that a great wave came rushing up the shore—a ninth wave, I suppose it was—and when the recoil of the waters came, the boat, to my dismay, was afloat; and a strong wind from the shore carried me out to sea.

Ellesmere. Of course you had some haggis with you?

Johnson. No, Sir John; but I had two bannocks which my good aunt had given me after breakfast, knowing that I should not return to the house for hours. But I had no water. For three days I was driven further and further out to sea. What I suffered from thirst no man, who has not gone through similar suffering, can imagine. I think I should have died if it had not been for a slight shower which fell at the end of the second day, some drops of which I caught in my bonnet.

On the morning of the fourth day, after my departure, I neared an island. To my great astonishment, a number of people were on the shore and made signs of welcome to me. The moment I landed, a young girl handed me a beautiful shell, full of water.

The people were all dressed in a fashion quite unknown to me. After turning me round several times, and pulling about my clothes in the way in which savages examine the dress of civilized men, and asking me many questions which I could neither fully understand nor answer, I was taken to the hut, near the shore, of the father of the girl who had given me the water. His name was Pitou. Her name was Effra. They showed me a couch of heather; gave me some dried fish to eat; and, after I had eaten it, I lay down and went to sleep for four-and-twenty hours.

When I awoke, and was refreshed with food, I went out of the hut, and wandered about the island. It was very beautiful. Doubtless the beneficent Gulf Stream made the surrounding waters warm and the climate temperate.

The language was very like Scotch: indeed it was Scotch, only that there were many old words in it such as I had never heard any one but my grandfather make use of. I soon became familiar with the language. It is such an easy thing to learn a language when one is taught by a girl like Effra.

I was allowed to roam about the island as I pleased; but, to my dismay, I found that my boat had been hauled up some distance from the beach, and had been firmly fastened to stakes driven into the earth, so that I could not move it.

After I had been a few weeks in the island, Pitou asked me if I would like to see the House of Wisdom. He did not use the word "wisdom," but said the House of Direction for Head, Heart, and Hand. You will readily consent to my abridging the title.

I assented to Pitou's suggestion. We then went to the only building of any pretension to architecture in the island. I had often noticed it in my rambles; but had never ventured to approach it, thinking it to be the residence of the chief of the island, who might not approve of my coming into his presence unsent for. The first persons I saw, and who were in a sort of out-house, had a painful, anxious, subdued look about them, most unpleasant to behold. They glanced at me for a moment, and then seemed to look far away over my head. Then they muttered something to one another which I could not understand.

“Those are the Spoolans,” said Pitou to me. It is almost impossible to give an idea of the contempt which Pitou threw into his pronunciation of the word “Spoolans.” “Two foolish old fellows,” he added.

Now, they were not old. One was quite young, and the other only middle-aged. What can Pitou mean? I thought.

After making a gesture of contempt, which was done by bringing his two hands together close to his mouth, and then throwing them suddenly from his mouth, as if he said, “I have collected all their merits together, and find them to be naught,” Pitou departed. I could not help looking back at these two poor men, who must have seen this gesture; but they were evidently used to such demonstrations, and merely looked wistfully over Pitou’s head into the far country and the distant sea.

We then went into a shed on the right hand of the principal building. Here there were six men. These men also looked very miserable, but there was not that abject and hopeless appearance about them that there had been about the Spoolans. They were better clothed too; the Spoolans were in rags. I made my bow, and then Pitou said to me, “The Raths!” Then he added, “It’s no good staying here. Come on;” but, as we departed, he did not make any gesture of contempt.

We then ascended a flight of steps which led to the principal building. It consisted of three chambers on the lower story, and two on the upper.

We went into the left-hand room on the lower story. There were five men here. They were well-dressed, and, though exceedingly thoughtful, did not seem to be unhappy. Pitou made a bow to them, and then saying to me, “The Uraths,” conducted me out of the apartment.

We then went into the right-hand chamber. Here there were four men. These were handsomely dressed, were evidently in good spirits, and altogether in good case. Pitou made three low obeisances; and, as if introducing me, said, “The Auraths,” and then added, “The Boy from the Black Land.” I made my obeisances, imitating Pitou, and we walked out.

We then entered the centre chamber. Here were seated two men, very well dressed and very jovial-looking, and with an imperious air about them. When Pitou came into their presence, he was abject. It was not merely that he indulged in bows and genuflexions; but he almost crawled before them. "The Mauraths," he said; and then pointing to me, "Your servant from the Black Land."

I then made sundry bows—I could not condescend to crawl, like Pitou—and we quitted that apartment.

Then we went upstairs into a sort of ante-chamber, that was crowded with people. A way, however, was made for us, and we entered the principal chamber of the building. Here was seated, in great state, a coarse, fat, jovial-looking, rubicund man, who seemed to me to spend half his time in laughing about nothing. He was waited upon by persons who knelt to him. If Pitou had been abject before, in approaching the Mauraths, it was nothing compared to his abjectness now. He pulled me down on the ground, and dragging me after him, crawled to the feet of the laughing man. Then he said, "The Amaurath;" and afterwards, pointing to me, "Your slave from the Black Land." Then, shading his face with his hands, as if he could not bear the splendour of the jolly chief's commonplace countenance, Pitou crawled backwards, pulling me with him.

Then we went home. I should think that on the face of the earth that day there was not a more puzzled and bewildered individual than I was. As we walked home I remained silent; but Pitou kept exclaiming, "O the beloved young man! O the beautiful Being! O the Basketful of Direction for Head, Heart, and Hand!" I thought Pitou had gone crazy, especially as I understood him to apply these exclamations to the stout, rubicund, middle-aged, laughing gentleman we had just left.

After I had a little overcome my amazement, I questioned Pitou and Effra as to what all this meant. It was not until after many hours' talk on that and on the succeeding day that I began to understand the whole matter.

These twenty men whom I had seen in the House of Wisdom were prophets, or were supposed to be prophets. At any rate, they had remarkable gifts of foresight. But these gifts differed very much in value. For instance, the wretched Spoolans only foresaw what would happen after a hundred years had passed: the unfortunate Raths,

what would happen after twenty-seven years: the Uraths, after a year: the Auraths, after a month: the Mauraths, after three days: while the great Amaurath, that genial prophet and potentate, could foretell what would happen after the next six hours. The extent of their prophetic powers was after this fashion—that each set of prophets foresaw for as long a time as that which had to elapse between the present and the time at which their power came into play. For instance, the Amaurath's duration of prophetic vision, if I may so describe it, was for six hours: that of the Mauraths for three days: and so on with all the rest.

The latter four classes foresaw only, or chiefly, material damage or material good. Moreover, they could not explain much about their prophecies. They could not tell you about the means to the ends which they foresaw; while on the other hand the despised Raths and Spoolans had great width and depth of foresight. But who cares to know what will happen twenty-seven years hence, still less what will happen a hundred years hence? I now quite understood the sorry garb of the Raths, and the absolute rags of the Spoolans.

As time went on I became familiar with the inhabitants of the House of Direction for Head, Heart, and Hand. The jolly old chief would laugh his loudest when he saw his slave from the Black Land. These people had somewhat of an aversion and distrust for any person who lived upon a continent. They used to say, the bigger the land he comes from, the worse the man; and they preferred to remain quite isolated from the rest of the world. They naturally supposed me to come from a continent; but gradually they came to tolerate me, and were very kind to me.

This freedom of entry into the great House would have given anybody much knowledge of the world who had brought any of such knowledge to begin with. But I was a simple youth of eighteen, and could profit but little by what I heard. The world seemed then to me, and indeed seems now, like a play, or an opera, acted before you in a language you do not understand.

There are very emphatic gestures; and the principal performers come together in twos, threes, and fours; and they lift up their hands, and appeal to the audience very earnestly about something. They do not seem to have much to say to one another.

Then somebody seems to hate somebody else very much, but you do not make out why. Also somebody, always a tenor (why tenors should be the only men who ever fall in love I cannot understand), loves some soprano very much, and there is a stage embrace, which does not seem to count for much; especially as the gentleman and lady on the stage make most of their love respectively to a lady and gentleman apparently in the upper gallery.

Then there is a chorus of very clean peasants, who never have anything to do with clay soils, and who seem happy, and are certainly noisy, about something; and then there is some dancing, of which you cannot exactly construe the meaning. And then there is a good deal of scuffling amongst the minor performers; but whatever they do, it never interferes with the singing of the principal performers. The politeness is wonderful; fetters are never put by the little people on the great people until they have quite finished their songs.

And then somebody, generally the principal lady or gentleman, seems resolved to die, and takes a long time about it, but keeps in good voice, if not in good heart to the end. And then the curtain falls down, and he or she comes on looking very smiling and gracious; and then the audience rush away to catch cold in the passages.

When you go home and have to tell the story of the play, and endeavour to do so, it must often be a story that differs considerably from the one that you were intended to listen to and understand.

But I suppose one makes out quite as much, and quite as accurately, about this play-story as about the story of the men and women who surround you.

Now here was an opportunity for getting nearer to the heart of things, and making out what people really wished for; but, as I said before, this grand opportunity was given to a mere lad. Still I remarked some things which, perhaps, were worth observing.

I was with the Raths one day. I used to frequent the rooms of those who could prophesy distant things to a degree that astonished the other inhabitants of the island. Suddenly there entered a handsome young man who was celebrated for his skill in minstrelsy. He had come to ask the question whether he would be famous in future years. The Raths told him that neither his fame, nor even his

name, nor the songs he sang, nor the music which he sang them to, would be known to any human being in twenty-seven years' time. He went away very sad; and I noticed that the mean fellow carried off some honey-cakes which he had doubtless brought as a present if the response should be favourable. The Raths looked wistfully after the honey-cakes; but they were obliged to tell the truth: and they told it, and remained hungry.

Again, everywhere throughout the building there was a buzzing sound, on the days of audience, of the word "Beans," or something like it. Beans, beans, beans, nothing but beans. I was puzzled at first, but soon found out that a wild bean, much smaller than ours, passed for money; and there were constant questions about beans addressed to the short-time prophets. Would beans be more or less valuable? would there be many found this year? A whole boat-load of these beans had once come from a neighbouring island, and had been exchanged for dried fish and other articles of small value. The disturbance this had caused amongst the beaned (I mean the moneyed) men of the island was fearful; and a frequent question was whether any such pestilential cargo would soon come again.

The prophets took no share in the government of the island. But they were often secretly consulted by the ruling men, or by those who aspired to rule. It surprised me greatly, at first, to find that the ruling men consulted only the short-time prophets. Certainly one old chief did ask a question of the Uraths while I was there; but he was the only one who did so. The Mauraths or the Amaurath were the prophets chiefly consulted by politicians. I thought this very strange; but Mr. Milverton tells me that not only in this little island of mine, but elsewhere, the politicians would be quite contented with veritable prophecies for six hours, or three days, or at the most for a month.

I wondered that lovers never came to the Raths, or even to the Uraths; but I found that they were too sure about their future to care for asking questions respecting it. One poor fellow, a melancholy bachelor (the rarest thing in that island), had once asked a question of the Uraths about his prospects of happiness after the first year of marriage. His name was Toulvi, and that of his beloved, Dalumma. Dalumma, hearing of this question (all the prophets were addicted to

gossipping), refused poor Toulvi; and no other young woman ever listened to his advances.

I expected that unpleasant questions would be asked about life and death. But this was never done. It had been tried in former years; but mankind, at least the mankind of that island, could not endure such knowledge. Besides, there were very ugly stories of sons and wives having asked questions about the lives of heads of families—questions asked in the purest spirit of conjugal and filial tenderness; but, somehow or other, the husbands and fathers did not take it well; and the practice was very wisely discontinued. It was a beautiful arrangement connected with this prophetic power, that, with rare exceptions, the prophets had no knowledge of future events, unless distinct questions were submitted to them respecting these events.

The questions chiefly asked were of a very humble kind; and were asked more by fishermen, and husbandmen, and handicraftsmen than by any other classes in society. In truth, in good society, if I may use such an expression as regards the society amongst those who may be considered semi-savages (for they had no newspapers), it was not thought very good taste to be seen in the House of Wisdom. Any foreknowledge was an agitating and vulgar thing: it tended to democracy: it made people dissatisfied with the goings on of their ancestors and of the ruling classes; and it was, very judiciously, voted to be vulgar.

My sympathy was with the Spoolans. Such melancholy I have never seen upon the faces of any human beings as that which was indented upon theirs. And yet the things they prophesied were mostly pleasant. According to them, the race of these islanders was always to improve in sagacity and gentleness. But that foreknowledge seemed to make them (the Spoolans) dreadfully discontented with the present state of things. I suspect that there will prove to be the usual counterbalancing drawbacks to all the good things the Spoolans prophesied; but they seemed to believe only in the good. And they always wore the aspect that is to be seen in sanguine men, when the things they have hoped for, and schemed for, do not come to pass—at least in their time.

Once a year (luckily it happened while I was in the island) the Spoolans were called in to make mirth for an evening, by narrating

what would begin to happen in one hundred years' time, and would continue to happen for a hundred years. What they said was in the highest degree interesting to me. I listened to them with breathless attention, but the rest of their auditors were, for the most part, convulsed with laughter—even when calamity was prophesied. And yet there were traditions showing how truly the Spoolans of a former age had spoken.

For instance, the chiefs who ruled the island now were of a conquering race who had subdued the original inhabitants. The Spoolans had foretold the coming of these conquerors. The Spoolans had only met with ridicule.

When the calamity had in two more generations approached much more closely, the Raths began to utter their forebodings. One or two chiefs (and it is remarkable that they were amongst the oldest) endeavoured to warn the people, and to suggest fortifications. But nobody heeded them. All the middle-aged men said to themselves: "This is an affair for our children. Meanwhile we have to be predominant in the Great Council to-day, which is hard work enough for us."

Then it came to the Uraths to prophesy upon this coming invasion. A little stir was made then; but men said, "If the invasion is to come in a year, it must come: we cannot do more than we are doing. Our forefathers really ought to have looked to this matter. It is disgraceful to see how careless men are about the fortunes of those who are to succeed them."

It need hardly be said that the island was easily conquered; and that the ancient inhabitants had to submit to the new dynasty, as the Chinese to the Tartars.

I must not weary my hearers any longer. You will, of course, know that I escaped from the island; for here I am. My personal adventures are not worth listening to; but I thought you might like to hear about an island which possesses such a wonderful institution as that which is to be found in the House of Wisdom of Tele-Ma-Malakah, which means the "Bridal Pearl of the Sea."

Ellesmere. Well, Sandy, I must congratulate you. You will evidently become a great writer of fiction. Only, my dear fellow, avoid preciseness. Observe the great Sir Arthur: you would not have

caught him placing his island in any waters near home; and then your foreseeing people are too clearly distinguished one from another by your naming distinct periods for their prophetic powers. "*Nemo repente fuit falsissimus*," which means "no one tells plausible lies," or writes fiction well, without a good deal of practice.

For my own part I should have liked to have heard more about Effra. Doubtless she aided in your escape, and won over a foster-brother; and then you and she and he were wrecked on the rocks at Brixton, somewhere near where the railway station is now. You know there is, or was, such a river as Effra at Brixton. The name was unquestionably derived from your Effra. Some foolish antiquaries—but they are always in the wrong—might contend that it was an Anglo-Saxon name which the said river had enjoyed for a thousand years. But never mind. What says the poet?—

"Whate'er, my friend, you say, whate'er you write,
Keep probability well out of sight."

She, I mean your Effra, was very beautiful, was she not?

Johnson. Indeed she was.

[My readers will imagine that there was a young lady whom I could describe.]

She had a horizontal face, and——

Ellesmere. What on earth does the boy mean by a horizontal face?

Sir Arthur. I understand.

Johnson. A forehead which is so set in the hair that it shows squarely—straight eyebrows—straight lips, though full; in fact, all the lines which principally attracted your attention, were horizontal.

Ellesmere. A civil engineer's description of his love. But I do see what Sandy means. When she smiled, the dimples spread horizontally and not vertically. I declare, though, I believe there never was such a description of a young woman given before. You certainly are an original fellow, Sandy.

The moral of your tale is a shade too obvious. We all know that short-time prophets are the people worth attending to in this short-time world. If anybody will be good enough to tell me what Mr. Gladstone or Mr. Disraeli will do next week, I shall be very much obliged to him, whether the much-foreseeing man is called a

Maurath or not. And, in truth, I should be one of those who would crawl before the laughing Amaurath, a worthy man who could tell me, on the last day of the debate, better even than Mr. Brand or Colonel Taylor, what the division would be. Down with the Raths and the Spoolans, say I. If such fellows were listened to, we might have good sense prevailing in the world, which would be a very dull thing.

My complaint of the world, which I beg leave to make very loudly, is this—that there is too much of everything. A conservatory is always too full of flowers to please me; a city, of inhabitants; a dinner, of dishes; a speech, of words; a concert, of songs; a museum, of curiosities; a picture-gallery, of pictures; a sermon, of texts; an evening party, of guests: and so I could go on enumerating, for an hour at least, all the things which are too full in this fulsome world. I use fulsome in the original sense.

You remember the witty saying of a French traveller. When asked about his travels he pithily exclaimed, "*Il y a quelque chose de trop dans tous les pays—les habitans.*"

And so say I, there is always "*quelque chose de trop*" in everything human. With one exception, however. There are not too much good sense and foresight in mankind. Now, Sandy would make us all wise and foreseeing, or at least borrowers of wisdom and foresight from his old Spoolans. I quite understand why everybody thought them old.

In fact, Sandy would make us all into Scotchmen. Now the Scotch are pleasant and useful fellows in their way. In truth, they have done wonderful things, and have made their little rugged country occupy a great space in men's hearts and minds.

But I decline to belong to a universe of Scotchmen.

There would be no such unproductive sports left in the world as leap-frog. And every joke would be sat upon by a jury.

No, Sandy, whatever other mischief you may do, beware of bringing too much good sense and foresight into the world. Good-bye, I am going to walk. Come along, Fairy. Every dog would be made useful, and have to draw a cart. And the immense fun and affection that there are in dogs would all be worked out of them. They would come home in the evening to their wives and families, as

dull as men of business. It shan't happen in my time, if I can prevent it.

[So saying, he whistled to Fairy, and off they went together.]

Sir Arthur. There was one passage in the story that I hardly think was yours, Mr. Johnson; and, in fact, I hope it was not. I accuse Mr. Milverton of it.

Johnson. Which was it, Sir Arthur?

Sir Arthur. The illustration of human life taken from an opera heard by you in some language not known to you. That passage was too old for you, and a little too cynical, I thought.

Milverton. Well, that was mine: it really was almost the only thing I did insert; but I did not mean it to be cynical.

I know very well what you mean—that a young man is too much delighted by his early operas to take much notice of the comic element in them.

Now I go beyond that, and must confess I am greatly amused by the real life at a play or an opera, and by what goes on behind the scenes: things which would have disgusted me, as being unpleasantly real, when I was young.

Sir Arthur. I do not know exactly what you allude to.

Milverton. The reproachful look of the severe conductor when he turns to quell some of his band who are too loud or too fast; the anxiety of the stage-manager who at the side is tempestuously waving his flag to "supers" who will not come on at the right time; the gay chattering with some friend at the side-scenes of the great tragic lady who is just coming on with the dire intention of killing herself, and a child or two; the good-natured ballet-girl who is adjusting a wreath, to make it more becoming, upon some other ballet-girl, or smoothing down her friend's skirts; the pot of porter which the high tragic actor is consuming with considerable relish; the perplexity of the scene-shifter when the scenes won't go rightly together, and an obstinate old oak-tree will cut into the middle of a cottage; the busy carpenters in the flies giving the final touches to their work; the abrupt change of demeanour which occurs when the chief tenor and soprano have gone off the stage with their arms round each other, or in some loving attitude, and they part at the side-scenes as a lady and gentleman who have a slight acquaintance

with one another, and perhaps a considerable dislike: all these things amuse my foolish mind; and I like to sit in a box which will give me a good view of them.

Mauleverer. Do not forget the choruses. How beautiful is their unanimity! How I wish that there was anything like it in common life! The same gesture, the same question, the same reproach, the very same words, seem to occur to all these excellent men at the same moment. Hands, arms, legs, eyes, eyebrows, all move together. They make use of the same exclamation: if one says "hah!" they all say "hah!" Of "ohs" and "ehs" and "hahs" and "hums" there is no unpleasant variety.

Milverton. As the French song says,—

"Quand un gendarme rit,
Tous les gendarmes rient,
Dans la gendarmerie."

Sir Arthur. I declare we have gone into quite a discussion of the proceedings at operas and plays. It is all your fault, Milverton, as it was you who introduced that illustration into Mr. Johnson's clever story, which illustration, forgive me for saying so, was evidently lugged in, and had no proper relation to "Spoolans" or "Uraths."

[After this the conversation ended.]

CHAPTER XII.

It was agreed that the reading to-day should be in the drawing-room, in order that the ladies might be able to go on with their work (they were very busy preparing for some fancy fair) while we were talking or reading.

Before the reading commenced, there was an interesting conversation, which began in this way:

Milverton. I have just been into your room, Ellesmere, to see about the chimney, which they say smokes.

Ellesmere. Pray don't trouble yourself. There is a proper concatenation in all human affairs. One must have a smoky chimney when one has a scolding wife.

Milverton. I saw Dickens's "American Notes" on your table, and, looking at it, I came upon a passage about solitary confinement. I suppose it is the dreadful punishment which Dickens says it is, and in which he is supported by Mr. Reade in "Never Too Late to Mend;" but I have always fancied that I could bear a little of this solitary confinement very well.

See what advantages there are:—

No letters.

No choice given you about your food.

Lots of time for thinking about and inventing things.

No servants to manage.

No visitors to entertain.

The chief pain of life is in deciding; and there, in your solitary cell, there would be no occasion to decide anything.

Ellesmere. I agree with you. Life becomes more and more tiresome from our having more and more to decide. Now, at a dinner-party, they *will* bother you with two sorts of soup, two kinds of fish, and innumerable wines.

Mauleverer. Very wrong of the host to throw such a weight of responsibility upon his guests. One is sure to believe that one has chosen indiscreetly, to feel that it is irremediable, and to be tormented by regret throughout the dinner for one's error—say, in the choice of the soup. I have often felt that.

Sir Arthur. I always admired the plan that great Catholic monarchs had of going into retirement in some monastery for two or three weeks.

Milverton. I am afraid they received despatches. Now, in solitary confinement, one should have ceased to be a person to whom anybody could address anything.

It would be better than being in a yacht—at least to any one who is apt to be sea-sick.

Sir Arthur. There would be no bells to molest you. The three great evils in life are noise, poverty, and popularity. Nobody can tell what I have suffered from noise in the course of my life. It has been an act of great forbearance on my part to endure dogs, for I do so much detest their barking. The weak part of their character is, that they will bark, in season and out of season, for good reason, or for no reason at all—generally the latter. I love horses, because they make so little noise. Rabbits, too, and white mice are——

Ellesmere. I will not have a word said against dogs. They are the best fellows I know. Sir Arthur objects to their barking; why does he not object to men's talking? Pray, sir, by which have you been most bored: by the injudicious barking of dogs, or by the foolish talk of men? Do dogs make two hours' speeches to convey ideas (ideas?) which might have been conveyed in ten minutes?

Of course, if I wished to run them down—that is, if I were a base and ungrateful man—I too could say something against them. They are a little too prone to be vulgarly aristocratic, for my taste,—too apt to despise poor and ragged people, and to bark at their heels. But then, again, if they are on the other side of the House, if they belong to poor and ragged persons, they have a proper respect for rags and poverty, and sniff contemptuously at carriage people. In short, they partake the errors and vices of their masters: that is all. Milverton's dogs howl philosophy; Sir Arthur's whine poetry; Mauleverer's (epicurean dogs those!) discern great difference between different kinds of bones: and mine bark at everybody, just like me, without doing any harm to anybody.

In general, dogs have rather too much love for good society—a failing which they partake with most of us. We all like to visit the best people, as they are called. So with dogs. The kitchen is warm, its

atmosphere is rich with unctuous and savoury odours, the cook is kind; but the parlour is preferred by the dog, from an innate love of high society.

I do not believe there has been any instance of a man committing suicide when he has had a dog to love him. Move for a return, Mr. Cranmer, and you will find I am right.

As regards friendship, the very word would have been unknown but for dogs. Does not Max Müller say that the word for friendship in the original language was "man-and-dog-in-the-desert?"

Milverton. What an ingenious way Ellesmere has of insinuating that he is supported by some great authority! "Does not Max Müller say?" No, he does not say anything of the kind.

Ellesmere. How do you know? I have no doubt it is in a note which has hitherto escaped your observation. But, at any rate, the friendship between a dog and a man is the highest form and exemplar of friendship. Does a dog ever say, or look as if he would say, "I told you so," when you are mortified to death at having committed some grievous folly? or does it use what is called "the privilege of a friend," to say the most cutting things to you?

Then look at the nice appreciation of character which dogs manifest: their tolerance of children, their boundless fidelity, their interest in all human affairs.

"Omnis Aristippum decuit color, et status, et res."

Aristippus must have been very like a dog. Dogs will go with you to a badger-bait, to a fox-hunt, to a public meeting, to races, to church, and will almost always behave themselves well and creditably, and not disgrace their masters.

Cranmer. The irrepressible dog at the Derby?

Ellesmere. If I wanted an instance to show the brutality of men and the humanity of dogs, I would rely upon the case of the dog at the Derby. He knows that his master has backed heavily Vauban, or Hermit, or Lord Lyon, and, of course, he has a deep and affectionate interest in the race for his master's sake. And then the poor creature is malignantly shouted at all along the racecourse; and when he perceives, with the tact of a dog, that he is doing something wrong,

and wishes to escape to the right or the left, no good Christians make way for him.

By the way, talking of Christians, I admit that dogs are not good Christians: they are too prejudiced for that, and too much inclined to persecute the inferior animals; but then how few men are Christians! In short, you cannot say anything against dogs which does not apply with equal force to human beings; while, on the other hand, how many things may be said against human beings, which do not apply to dogs? If Rochefoucauld had passed his time with dogs instead of with courtiers, would he ever have said "that there is something in the misfortunes of our friends which is not entirely displeasing to us?" I ask you, did you ever know a dog bark out any maxim like that? No; down with men, and up with dogs, say I.

If the Pythagorean system is true, it will only be the very good and choice men who will become dogs in the next stage of existence. Come here, Fairy: I have no doubt you were an exemplary woman; that you never scandalized any other woman at tea-time; that you did not thwart your husband seriously more than twice a day; that you did not worry him to sign cheques; and that you did not say he was a brute if he declined to go out shopping with you. Yes, turn up the whites of your eyes, my dear, to show how horrified you are to think that there are women not quite so good as you were. But you were a wonder of a woman, as you are now a wonder of a dog. I will not have dogs run down: I am their champion. What does the excellent Dr. Watts say, somewhat ironically?—

"If dogs delight to bark and bite,
We make a great to-do;
If men show fight, and women spite,
Why, 'tis their nature to."

Any excuse for ourselves; none for the poor dogs.

Milverton. Poor Dr. Watts! What would he say to hearing his good words so parodied?

Sir Arthur. Notwithstanding Ellesmere's eulogium upon dogs, I venture to say again, what I said before, that I do not like their barking. But, to pursue the general question of noise, we never hardly, in our houses, make any sensible provision against it.

Milverton. Very true, Sir Arthur. I remember reading of some murder committed in a Russian palace,—a noisy murder, too—but nobody heard anything of it in the next room. Now that is my idea of how a house should be built. It should be possible to commit a murder in any room, without the rest of the house being troubled or disturbed. As it is, architects seem to have set their faces against all quiet and privacy. Studious men are the victims of neighbouring pianos. A nursery is a hot-bed of annoyance. I have studied the question of noise very deeply, and I will tell you something of the greatest importance. Put a layer of small shells between the flooring that separates a room from the room above it. You will find these shells admirable non-conductors of sound.

Cranmer. I wish architects were subject to examinations.

Milverton. Very good. The first question I should ask them would be, What thickness of what material will prevent such and such noises—say the playing of a piano by a beginner—from being heard in the adjacent rooms?

Sir Arthur. I remember when I was in Germany, and used to spell over the German newspapers, nothing used to delight me more than the advertisements of servants, which so often began, "*Ein stilles Mädchen*." Now, if one could advertise about houses, and say truthfully, "*Ein stilles Haus*" (I'm sure I do not know whether that is the right German), what an attractive advertisement it would be!

Ellesmere. You were quoting just now "Never Too Late to Mend." I don't think Mr. Reade protested so much against solitary confinement as against the cruelty which in that particular case accompanied solitary confinement. At least such is my recollection of that eloquent and fervid book.

Milverton. No, you are wrong; he protested against the system as well as against the cruelties which he stated to have accompanied it in that particular case.

It is a commonplace remark to make, but what an atrocious thing cruelty is! Do not you all feel that circumstances favouring you might have committed all other sins known in the calendar of sinfulness? but cruelty is unspeakably abhorrent to all thoughtful men. There is nothing Christianity has set its face so distinctly against.

Ellesmere. But then, you see, there are so few Christians in the world. At least such is the conclusion I have come to, from my limited experience. There is something in my mind upon this subject which would, I fear, perfectly horrify you all. It is a strange, almost ridiculous resemblance that has often struck me between Christianity and something which is considered to be one of the most frivolous of all the frivolous things in this world.

I would not have said it before dear Dunsford for the world, and I am afraid to say it even to you.

Cranmer. Let us hear it. We are not bound to agree with it, and I am certain beforehand I shall disagree with it.

Sir Arthur. Do not all at once be modest and timid, Sir John. If you are suddenly taken in this way, we shall all think you are going to have an illness.

Lady Ellesmere. Pray do not imagine such a thing. I did not half describe to you, when we talked upon the subject of illness the other day, what an irrational person he is. He had the audacity to complain of me. But, indeed, the great superiority of women to men is never more conspicuous than in illness. Men oscillate from utter abjectness to obstinate indocility.

One day it is, "Oh, pray manage for me, and pray manage me. I have no will of my own; I am nobody, only a bundle of pain and misery."

The next day my lord is a little better, and has resumed his usual grandeur and obstinacy. If you bring him some beef-tea or some water-gruel, he insists upon your explaining to him (at least Sir John does) the exact nature and effect of those harmless fluids. He once reasoned with me for three-quarters of an hour about a mustard-plaster; and, indeed, he made a speech about it (at a time when he was ordered not to talk at all) which would have done him great credit before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. He divided his speech into seven heads, and it ended by showing that a mustard-plaster was one of the most dangerous remedies that could be applied; but I did apply it nevertheless. I say again, that the superiority of a woman to a man is never more manifest than in a sick-room, whether as nurse or patient—in the one case showing a skilfulness and tenderness; in the other, a patience and endurance

utterly unknown to what is facetiously called the stronger-minded sex.

Ellesmere. Doesn't she talk like a book?—like a bit of the Rambler or Spectator? "Showing in the one case a clumsiness and hardness, and, in the other, an impatience and irritability, which are quite unknown to the wiser and the gentler sex, that is, to the sex masculine." I think those were her words, or, at least, such as they ought to have been.

Sir Arthur. I thought that what Lady Ellesmere said was equally true and well-expressed.

Ellesmere. The poor husband, or father, or brother, is always at a sad disadvantage in dealing with his womankind. He brings, with trembling and reluctant hand, the invigorating but distasteful acid of the medicinal potion, while the polite stranger assiduously presents the fallacious palliative of the consequential saccharinity.

At least, that is how Dr. Johnson and Lady Ellesmere would express it. Plain John (that is how some people describe me, as they used to describe a former Lord Chancellor), plain John has to administer the dose, and the polite Sir Arthur gives the sugar or the jam which weak people take after their doses.

Milverton. This is a very pleasant and instructive interlude; but you were going to say something which would horrify us. I join with Mauleverer, and maintain that it is beyond your power to horrify me.

Ellesmere. Here goes, as you will have it. Is there anything that Christianity protests against so much as riches and the belief in riches? Or, to put the question more largely, Is there anything that Christianity protests against so much as a slavish yielding to worldly greatness of any kind—to great riches, great power, great intellect, great force, or great worldly success of any kind?

Milverton. Yes; you are right.

Sir Arthur. Yes.

Ellesmere. Well, then, *Fashion is the only thing which, in modern times, has stood up boldly against wealth, power, rank, dignity, and success of all kinds*. I am not old enough to remember when Fashion was predominant, but I heard older men talk about it, and I learned to estimate its power. There was a time when it was the

fashion to be poor. Think of that. It is very like Christianity, you know.

Sir Arthur. This is the most paradoxical thing I ever heard, and yet there really is something in it. *Fashion* did make a sort of protest against riches, rank, and adventitious worth of all kinds. But, my dear Sir John, the idol it set up instead was a miserable one.

Ellesmere. I do not care about that; it somehow appealed to what was considered to be personal worth rather than adventitious circumstances. Men were fashionable who did not possess any of the things that the world generally dotes upon.

Milverton. What you say, Ellesmere, is very ingenious; and I must honestly say I sympathise with anything that thwarts, or tends to thwart, the brute power of wealth.

How many a man may say, as some Don Alonso, or Don Juan, says in one of Calderon's plays—

"Y el haber, en mí, ó no haber,
O temor ó atrevimiento,
No consiste en otra cosa
Que haber ó no haber dinero;"

which being liberally translated, means, "If I have cash, I have courage; but if I am poor, I have none."

Ellesmere. You see neither Sir Arthur nor Milverton have much to say against my theory. I am not such a fool and scoundrel after all, Mr. Cranmer, am I?

Cranmer. Nobody thought that you were, Sir John; but, for my part, I must say I prefer a great contractor to Beau Brummel.

Ellesmere. I do not.

Sir Arthur. The best protest I ever knew made against worldly success was by a small society of young men at college. Their numbers were very few, and their mode of election was the most remarkable I have ever known. The vacancies were exceedingly rare—perhaps one or two in the course of a year—and the utmost care and study were bestowed on choosing the new members. Sometimes, months were given to the consideration of a man's claim.

Rank neither told for a man, nor against him. The same with riches, the same with learning, and what is more strange, the same with intellectual gifts of all kinds. The same, too, with goodness; nor even were the qualities that make a man agreeable any sure recommendation of him as a candidate.

Mauleverer. What did you go by then?

Sir Arthur. I really feel a difficulty in describing to you, and yet I know perfectly what it was.

A man to succeed with us must be a real man, and not a "sham," as Carlyle would say. Matthew Arnold has invented a word to describe certain people, which is not a bad one. He calls them "Philistines." Now our man was never a "Philistine." He was not to talk the talk of any clique; he was not to believe too much in any of his adventitious advantages; neither was he to disbelieve in them—for instance, to affect to be a radical because he was a lord. I confess I have no one word which will convey all that I mean; but I may tell you that, above all things, he was to be open-minded. When we voted for a man, we generally summed up by saying, "He has an apostolic spirit in him," and by that we really meant a great deal.

I remember ——, who is now a very great personage in the world, saying to me, "In the course of one's chequered life one meets with many disgraces and contumelies, and also with several honours; but no honour ever affected me so much as being elected, as a youth, into that select body. And, to speak very frankly, I think they were right in choosing me, for, with many demerits of the gravest kind, I do think I am a real human being, and I say what I think, and I try to think for myself, and the world's gauds and vanities do not, I conceive, excessively impose upon me."

By the way, I must tell you a curious thing—viz. that the choice made by these young men, though made without any view to future worldly pre-eminence, yet seemed to involve it, for a very large proportion of the men so selected have made their mark in the world; and some of the foremost men of the time belonged to that society. But boys at school and youths at college do choose so wisely and so well, as Milverton has told us. They are not to be deceived by wrappages of any kind.

Milverton. But we wander from our subject. Ellesmere said that there were few Christians anywhere. If he means that there are few perfect Christians, every one would agree with him. But if he means that Christianity has not prevailed, is not prevailing, and will not prevail in a much higher degree, I humbly think he is mistaken. The truth is, so large a conquest has already been made by Christianity in the human mind, that each individual Christian looks smaller, and is of course of far less account, than when he was surrounded by a Pagan world. "*Non meus hic sermo*." These are not my words, but Dunsford's—almost his last words to me.

Dunsford was our tutor, Ellesmere's and mine, at college. He lived near us here, and was much with us.

Ellesmere. I never asked, Milverton, what he died of. As you know, I was abroad at the time.

Milverton. Of simple exhaustion. You know he was about the most learned man in England, being great in science, in classical lore, and in literature of all kinds. He kept up his learning, was a most diligent student to the last, and withal a most active clergyman in a large and scattered parish. He burned the candle at both ends, rising early and going to bed late.

Lady Ellesmere. He had no wife. Wives are of some use, if only to prevent their husbands from overworking.

Milverton. Well, a day or too before his death, he cleared the room of his attendants, and told me he wished to speak to me. He began by talking of the critical spirit of the present age, and how the historical part of Christianity would have to undergo a severe ordeal. He spoke of some of the great heresiarchs of the present day, both of those who were eminent in Biblical criticism and in science, and he spoke of them with the greatest kindness, saying that many of them were good men who loved the truth, and that no permanent harm could come to religion from a sincere search after truth.

"I do not wish," he said, "my dear boy" (he always looked upon Ellesmere and myself as his children)——

Ellesmere. Yes; Dunsford was one of those persons who think you never grow any older, and always treated Milverton and me as boys, because we had been his pupils. I remember once, after he had been lecturing me in a very pedagogic way about some heresy which I had

presumed to utter anent the classics (I dare say about the manufacture of Latin verses), I let the conversation drop, and then a few minutes afterwards, in the most demure way (I was staying at his house), I asked whether one of the maids could be spared to take me out for a little walk. The good man laughed heartily, and did not attempt to tutorize me for the next three days. It is true it was some years ago, but I had "taken silk" (as we say at the Bar), and did not by any means think myself a small or insignificant personage. As we grow older we grow more modest: at least I do every day.

But go on, Milverton, with what dear Dunsford said to you.

Milverton. "I do not wish," he said, "to prevent such people as you and Ellesmere (he named you, John) from reading all this criticism, and accepting any of it that seems to you good; but let no man rob you of the main truths of Christianity: let no one blind you to what there is essentially divine in our religion.

"I may be an enthusiast, but I think that the triumphs of Christianity are but commencing. I look forward to a time when war, which so distresses you now, Milverton, will be an obsolete thing; when the pity we have at present for the woes and miseries of other men, will seem, comparatively speaking, but hardness of heart; when the grief of any one will be largely partaken by all those who know of it, and when our souls will not be isolated; when good men will allow themselves to give full way to their benevolent impulses, because no unfair advantage will be taken of their benevolence; when the weak will not traffic upon their weakness, nor the strong abuse their strength; when wealth will not be ardently sought for, except by those who feel that they can undertake the heavy burden of dispensing wealth for the good of their brethren; when men and women will be able to live together in a household without mean dissensions; when the lower seats shall be preferred; when men will differ about nice points of doctrine without adjudging to their opponents eternal condemnation; when, in short, instead of a tumult of discord ascending to heaven from this bewildered world, there shall go up one harmonious melody, breathing peace and faith, and love and concord and contentment."

Mauleverer (aside to me). And when every fir-tree in the wood shall be a Christmas-tree bearing pretty toys and delicious sweetmeats.

Ellesmere. "*Jam redeunt Saturnia regna.*" There will be no room for the like of me in this good world that the excellent Dunsford contemplated, but I shall only be too delighted to behold it, whether from near or from afar; and certain it is, that if we do not believe and hope for better things, we shall never try to make things better.

Milverton. And then he added something which impressed me very much, for he was not a man of a romantic turn of mind, or given to daring speculations.

"Moreover," he said, "I fondly believe that physical nature will then become less obdurate—that is, if men are fitted to receive a softer, gentler state of being. Now, as it is, if Nature were more easy and more bountiful, men would only have more spare time for annoying and persecuting one another; but depend upon it, if we were more fitted to receive good things from our Father, we should receive them.

"Think of these sayings of mine when I have gone, my dear, and let no one persuade you that Christianity is the mere dream of a few benighted enthusiasts. I can say no more. Good night;—and perhaps it is good night for ever."

It was not so, for I saw him die; and it is a sight that is not without consolation to see a good man die.

No one seemed inclined to comment upon these last words of the good Dunsford. Mr. Milverton soon got up and walked about the room. The others looked at one another with a curious expression of countenance, half sad, half hopeful. Mr. Mauleverer shrugged up his shoulders, and Ellesmere replied to him by a similar gesture (it was not a mocking gesture, but one of sadness), but neither of them said anything.

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER XXIV.

REALMAH'S DANGER FROM CONSPIRACIES.

Personal enemies are very rare. Taking the population of the world at one thousand millions, it is true that there are at least one thousand millions of personal enemies; but then, as we must consider each man as his own chief personal enemy, this calculation will not prove much.

It may be said of Realmah that, with the exception of himself, he had no personal enemy, unless, indeed, it was the witch Potochee; but, unfortunately, there were many persons who were much injured, or fancied they were, by the advent of Realmah to power. For example, there were near relatives of the deposed chieftains who had hopes of being elected chiefs of the North, of the South, or of the West, if the old form of government were ever re-established. Besides, there were those who had been attendants at these little courts; and Realmah, though very anxious to do so, had not been able to find room for all these men at his own court. There were, therefore, several persons who, though not particularly disliking the man Realmah, earnestly desired the death of the King. These men formed a band of conspirators, and for several years after Realmah came to the throne he was exposed to their machinations.

Realmah was a singularly fearless man, possessing all that fearlessness which often belongs to sickly, feeble people, and which seems to be given to them by kind Nature as, in some measure, a compensation for their deficiency in physical force.

His foster-brother Omki, however, was anything but fearless, and was indeed a very suspicious person, always upon the look-out for conspiracies against his beloved Realmah. A casual remark made to him by a woman of rank in the northern quarter of the city strengthened these suspicions. One day, when he was enlarging upon the merits of Realmah, this woman happened to exclaim, “Poor man! I doubt whether we shall get a better!” These words dwelt in the suspicious Omki’s mind. He kept repeating the words to himself, “‘Poor man!’ Why poor man? ‘We shall never get a better.’ Humph! Then somebody is thinking about getting a better.” From that time Omki set a sedulous watch upon that woman’s husband and her brothers. He soon detected that they and other disaffected persons met together secretly; and he became perfectly sure of the existence of an important conspiracy. He warned Realmah. But the King replied, “Dear Omki, I cannot take all the trouble about my life that you would have me. I should be thinking of nothing else but my life; and the life would become not worth having. It is not much worth having as it is.” Omki, however, redoubled his watchfulness, and formed, chiefly from among the fishermen’s tribe, a guard of men

whose main duty it was to watch the movements of the King, without his knowing that he was so watched.

Now, Realmah had one delight which he thought was quite unknown to his subjects. He would go and mourn, in complete solitude as he supposed, at the grave of the Ainah; and this he was particularly prone to do when more than usually vexed by anything disagreeable in public affairs. Her tomb was in a wood; and he had caused a house to be built close to it, in which one of his stewards dwelt, for it was a part of the royal domain. By means of a secret approach through this house (he was a great lover of these secret ways), he had unobserved access to the tomb. One side of the house was built against a rocky and wooded eminence, and he had caused a secret aperture to be constructed from that side into this elevated ground.

It may appear inconsistent to say that Realmah was a very fearless man, while mentioning that he took such precautions as the above. But this was eminently characteristic of him: that he should foresee danger; provide, in some measure, against it; and then not trouble himself any further about the matter.

It is a wonder that he was not more anxious about his life; for the conspirators had already tried what poison could do, and their plot had only been defeated by Realmah's fine sense of taste, which had detected something wrong in some beverage that had been handed to him. Careful inquiries had been made about this; but the guilt had not been brought home to any one, and Realmah affected to believe that it was an accident. Omki, however, took care to make great change in the King's immediate attendants.

One morning in the spring-time, very early, a man in the dress of a fisherman might have been seen issuing from an obscure postern of the palace, and making his way rapidly, though with somewhat of a limping gait, to the Bridge of Foxes, as it was called, which led to the wood of the royal domain. He did not turn to look about him. Had there been an observant person present, that person would have seen a small body of men emerge from some spot near the palace, and disperse themselves in twos and threes, taking nearly the same route as the fisherman. In half an hour afterwards, a similar body might have been seen issuing from the same postern of the palace from which the fisherman had come. The first body were the

emissaries of the conspirators: the second were the faithful guard led by Omki. This was not the first time that the fisherman had been followed in this manner; but it was the first time that the conspirators had received much earlier notice than Omki of the fisherman's intention to take an early walk. It need hardly be said that the fisherman was the King.

It is a fortunate thing for the world that conspiracies are almost always ill-managed. In this instance, nothing would seem simpler than that one or two of the foremost of the conspirators should have gained upon Realmah, and have murdered him before he reached the house. But they did nothing of the kind. It had been agreed that they should meet together near the house, force their way into it, and attack him there. And they kept to their agreement. Probably not one of them really liked the work, and therefore they were all averse to acting, except together in numbers.

Realmah gained the house; and, after speaking a few kind words to the steward's wife, descended into the secret passage that led to the tomb of the Ainah, which was covered in on all sides, and into which, except by this passage, there was no access.

Now this poor woman had been solemnly warned by Omki of the danger that the King incurred during these visits to the tomb; and no sooner had she attended Realmah to the secret passage which led to the tomb, than she went up to the highest room in the house and kept watch. There, to her amazement and dismay, she saw assembling, by twos and threes, no fewer than seventeen men under the shelter of a large "quilpahra," a tree like a beech-tree, but with a larger leaf. She hastened down to the King to give him notice. Realmah instantly appreciated the danger; and, leaving the tomb, betook himself to the place of concealment in the rock, which was entered by an opening from the vestibule of the house, at a height of about ten feet from the ground. It was reached by means of a rope-ladder. It led into a long passage, which had an exit in the wood. The King made at once for this exit; but, hearing voices near, did not venture to take this way into the wood. The truth was, that the conspirators had discovered that there was some such means of exit; but had not ascertained its exact situation, as it had been very artfully contrived. Their first care, however, had been to place a

small party at that spot near which they had once or twice seen the King emerge.

He had not long taken refuge in this concealed passage, when the conspirators came to the door of the cottage, and demanded entrance. The woman made no reply. The conspirators began to force the door, which had been made very strong. Moreover, there were two iron bars which could be drawn across it, and which went into staples fixed in the adjacent walls. The careful Omki had provided these means of defence, and had instructed the steward's wife how to make ready use of them. Seven or eight minutes were lost by the conspirators in forcing this door: at last they made good their entrance. They then seized hold of the poor woman, and by frightful threats compelled her to disclose to them the secret entrance to the tomb. They descended into the vault, where of course they did not find the King; but one of them, groping about on the floor, picked up a shell brooch of exquisite workmanship, which they were sure could only have belonged to a person of high rank. After a fruitless search, they returned to the vestibule. They then searched all through the house, but without effect. One cruel man then proposed to put the poor woman to the torture. This plan was immediately adopted. A cord was twisted round her forehead, and pulled violently by the men at each end of it. Her agonizing screams rent the air, but no word of betrayal came from the poor woman. Realmah could bear it no longer. He drew aside the rough screen of wood-work that concealed him; and, standing like a saint in a niche, addressed the conspirators. "I am here: who is it that wishes to kill his king? If any one, let him do so." Most of the conspirators stood staring at him. One or two, more hardened than the rest, hurled missiles at him, one of which struck the King on the breast, and made him fall backwards into the recess. They were looking about for the means of ascending, when Omki and his followers, who had pressed upon their steps, rushed into the house. The fight was furious; but Omki's party prevailed. Six of the conspirators were left dead on the floor, and the others were overpowered and bound. His faithful foster-brother then ascended to Realmah's aid. The King was still senseless. But, though considerably injured, he was not fatally wounded, and after a short time he recovered his senses. His first orders were to spare the conspirators, and to bring them before him.

He reasoned with these guilty men, and, upon a promise of clemency, obtained from them a full account of the plot and of the chief movers in it. He then ordered their bonds to be loosed, and was carried home in the arms of his faithful followers.

Such a transaction could not be kept secret, and in a few hours it was noised all through the city. Realmah's clemency was to no purpose. While the King was in a deep sleep, for the physicians of that nation understood the use of opiates, the populace rose in fury, and sacked the houses of the principal conspirators, killing those who had not made their escape.

There was no further attempt upon the life of Realmah; for those who might still wish to conspire against him felt that, even if they were to succeed in their conspiracy, they would have to endure the rage of an infuriated populace.

CHAPTER XXV.

REALMAH'S GREAT ENEMY, BRISHEE-BRASHEE-VAH.

In our moral likings and dislikings there are as many odd fancies and peculiarities as in our physical likings; and we all know in physical matters how peculiar these likings are. One man is attracted by black hair in his beloved, another by auburn, another by red. The countenance which is absolutely repulsive to one, is fearfully attractive to another. There are even some people to whom obliquity of vision on the part of their beloved is delightful.

But it has often passed unobserved that there are the same invincible likings and dislikings as regards the moral qualities. One man can endure anything but cruelty in those he loves. Another has a positive hatred for the puritanical virtues.[26] A third, and such a man was Hamlet, adores justice, and cannot bear the unjust and passionate man:

"Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee, Horatio;"

while again there are others who are very tolerant of passion and injustice, but cannot abide small, narrow-minded equitable priggishness.

Now Realmah, great as he was, was not exempt from these prejudices in his moral likings and dislikings. You might oppose him in council, and he would like you just the same. You might say injurious things against him, and he would forgive you, merely observing that he was sorry that you did not understand him. You might even conspire against him, and he would readily pardon you, as we have seen. But he was unspeakably bitter against the men who promoted false rumours. He was wont to say that these false rumours are the great difficulty of government, and that all the skill in the world cannot quite meet and dissipate them. Here it may be remarked how very difficult it must have been before printing had been invented for a government to check these false rumours. Much of what we now call history consists perhaps of the lightest, falsest, and most unauthorized sayings of the most gossiping of mankind.

Realmah would lose all his usual calmness and dignity when inveighing against the men who made and propagated false rumours. Indeed he was in the habit of saying that *Brishee-Brashee-Vah*, which meant in their language *The Lord of False Gabbling*, was the only enemy he never had conquered, and could never hope to conquer.

Of the rumours that made Realmah so angry, some were of this kind.—The Varnah, who delighted in household arrangement, and who seldom went out of doors, was ill. The court physician recommended that Her Loftiness should take more air. Realmah, entering her apartments one day, remarked before her and her women—"We must take the open air a great deal this summer, my Varnah; that is the way to meet your enemy. He is not to be battled with in the house."

That simple speech led to a report, which was believed throughout Abibah, that the King would take the field at the head of thirty thousand men for a summer campaign against the Bibraskas; and absolutely, ambassadors arrived from the Bibraskas to propitiate the wrath of so great a monarch.

Realmah, when he addressed the Varnah, had pointed to an opening in the wall which looked towards the east, and the Bibraskas were the only tribe in that direction who did not admit the suzerainty of Realmah.

The King strove to trace the origin and growth of this report; and, finding that one of the Varnah's women had repeated his words, with sundry additions, to her lover, was with difficulty persuaded from ordering her to be strangled. The great and good-natured King was never known to have been so fierce as upon this occasion, nor to inveigh so loudly against Brishee-Brashee-Vah, whom he believed to be the chief god of evil in this lower world.

Corresponding with his hatred of Brishee-Brashee-Vah was Realmah's love for true intelligence. No man, to use an expression of Talleyrand's, was more "avid of facts." He did not care for the facts being apparently important: if they were trivial, but true, he valued them. He desired to know who in Abibah loved whom, who hated whom, who was about to marry whom. He did not despise gossip, if gossip were but based upon facts.

The Varnah and Talora, with the tact of women, discovered this, and, when they wanted him to do anything in household matters, took care to please him first by giving him intelligence that he could rely upon.

His foster-brother, Omki, vexed him much by bringing him rumours and suspicions of all kinds; but there was a great affection between Realmah and Omki, and the King endured from his foster-brother what he would not have borne from any other man.

If Realmah was desirous to know the truth about all manner of minor matters, it may be imagined how anxious he was to have sound intelligence about serious things connected with his government, and, above all, to have exact accounts of the movements of the men of the North.

For this purpose he posted men, upon whose vigilance and judgment he could thoroughly rely, at all the passes of that part of the country which is now called the Vorarlberg.

The instructions he gave to these men were very characteristic of him. He said, "Do not bring me your suspicions; do not bring me even your thoughts; do not worry me with rumours: I will only act upon ascertained facts.

"You all know the story of Kalvi the Timid, who lived in the woods. It was always 'Wolves, wolves!' with poor Kalvi. Even his wives ceased to be frightened by him. At last, the wolves did come; and

what said the wives? 'Those are not the howlings of real wolves; but the boys, poor Kalvi, are playing their wicked jokes upon you, as usual; and we will not shut the door.'

"My people must not liken me to Kalvi the Timid. Do not bring me anything in the way of intelligence that you have not seen with your own eyes. There is always time enough. For once that we unwisely delay to act, we act prematurely one hundred times. Be wise; and do not disturb your king until the real moment for action comes."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INVASION.

Seven years had now passed since Realmah's accession to the throne; and, in the course of that time, his power had immensely increased. Three objects had chiefly occupied his attention: the manufacture of iron, the gaining of allies, and the consolidation of his sway over distant provinces that had hitherto owned but a dubious allegiance to the Sheviri. In all of these objects he had been eminently successful; and it is not too much to say that the kingdom he ruled over was ten times as strong as it had been when the burden of government first devolved upon him.

He had urged on, with all the power of government, the new manufacture of iron. He had formed many firm alliances—as firm, at least, as alliances ever are. After paying attention, in the first instance, to the arming and disciplining of his own troops, he had bestowed similar care upon those of his allies, and had not hesitated to furnish the choice bands of those allies, upon whom he could most rely, with weapons which had been made in his own forges.

There was great murmuring amongst his people upon this point. What a large mind it takes to be profoundly generous! and nations are mostly less generous even than individual men. But few cared to speak out openly against anything that Realmah had set his heart upon; for was he not Realmah-Lelaipah-Mu—Realmah the Foreseeing Youth? And almost all his subjects acknowledged that it was not once, or twice, or thrice, that this man, their King, had been right, and those who opposed him wrong; but that his words had uniformly proved to be the words of prudence and of wisdom. Even Condore, who was now an old man, joining the peevishness of age to the confirmed habit of prophesying evil, ceased to have any weight

with his fellow-countrymen, though he did not cease on every occasion to foretell that no good would come of whatever was proposed. For had he not once prophesied that good would come; and, being mistaken, did he not take care never again to prophesy a good result? Realmah was wont to say to his courtiers, with a smile, "Poor old Condore has been with us to-day, and has told us, in words which once or twice before I have heard from him, that what my government proposes will not succeed. We needed but this confirmation to act upon our resolve; for has the good Condore ever prophesied that it will thunder on the left hand, that it has not impertinently thundered on the right?" This was not true, for Condore had often been right in his forebodings; but this was the way in which Realmah chose to put it.

Meanwhile, what had the men of the North been doing? It is not known to us; but we may conjecture that disputes amongst themselves had exhausted for a time their warlike energies, and diverted their attention from the conquest of the South. Whatever was the cause, it is certain that the dreaded invasion from the North had not occurred during these seven years. The prudent mind of Realmah had not, however, been the less solicitous on that account. He had never doubted that this invasion would come in his time; and not a day had passed in which he had not done something in the way of preparation to encounter it.

Realmah was much given to a splendid hospitality. This hospitality was caused not only by his liberal nature, but also by that spirit of melancholy which ever encompassed him. It is often supposed that the most melancholy among the sons of men retire into privacy to indulge that melancholy; but, on the other hand, it may frequently be observed, especially if they are in a great public position, that they surround themselves with a multitude, in order to chase away the dark thoughts of their own souls. Thus it was with Cortes; thus it was with Wallenstein, and with many others who have played a great part in the world's affairs.

It was one day, early in the spring of the eighth year of his reign, that Realmah sat at the head of his royal table, surrounded by many of his best friends and most trusted councillors. The King's jester sat at his left hand, and rejoiced to see that every now and then his ready jests provoked a faint kind of smile from the weary monarch.

The feast was not concluded when, from the further part of the hall, there arose an unaccustomed murmur, and then a sudden silence. The crowd opened, and there advanced towards Realmah a man, not clad in festal robes, but dusty, toil-worn, travel-stained. He approached the King hastily, and whispered in his ear the ominous words: "They have come. Through the Pass of Koraun they are pouring into the Vale of Avildama by countless thousands."

He had hardly given his report when another messenger in like guise entered the great hall, and, rushing through the crowd, approached the King, breathing into his ear similar intelligence,—with this addition, that the enemy were accompanied by women and children, flocks and herds; and that the whole host did not appear to be less than 250,000 souls.

Realmah rose from his seat with alacrity, and, with a loud voice and a most cheerful countenance, announced the news to the assembled guests and servitors.

"This is a day," he said, "that will ever be memorable in our annals. For years we have been awaiting in anxiety this attack; and, now that it has come, I feel all the relief that there must ever be when suspense is turned into certainty. After the defeat of these hordes (and of that defeat I am well assured), such peace and joy as we have never known—at least, such as I have never known—will be ours for the glad future. But now to Council; and, meanwhile, do all of you spread the joyful tidings throughout the city."

Thus, like a great commander and politic statesman, did Realmah simulate a joy he was far from feeling, and throw forth a light of hope which was but dimly reflected in the sombre recesses of his own mind.

To both of the messengers he gave what he knew would be considered great largesse, thanking them publicly for their vigilance, and bidding them spread the good news throughout the city. Drawing his sword, he presented that to the first messenger; and to the second he gave his own goblet, ornamented with amber.[27]

The feast was broken up, and the Council met at once. The first thought of Realmah, on hearing this disastrous news, had been a determination to get rid of the greater part of his Council, and to conduct the war in the plenitude of despotic authority.

When, therefore, he met the Council, he did not allow the councillors to speak, but gave out his own views as if they were not for a moment to be gainsaid, or even questioned.

He then told them frankly that they would at first be beaten at all points; and that the only question was, to exhaust the enemy's forces by the sacrifice of greater numbers on their own side. He explained to them that that was his policy. He was not for doing anything ungenerous; but the fate of the South hung upon what he was doing. They must not, therefore, scruple to shed the blood of their tributaries and their allies, as they would their own. The war would have a successful issue if they could sacrifice a hundred of their own lives, or of the lives of their tributaries and allies, for every thirty of the enemy.

He gave special missions to almost all the members of the Council, retaining only three with him. These three were Delaimah-Daree, the man of many resources; Londardo, the man of unlimited daring; and Llama-Mah, Realmah's flatterer and dependant. The King felt nearly sure that he should have his own way in this diminished Council; and secretly resolved, if he were in the least degree thwarted by them, to dismiss them also upon foreign service, and to take the command alone.

Before concluding the business of the Council, he gave general orders for an illumination of the town of Abibah, such as that which was held in the eighth month of the year, in honour of Rotondarah, the god of thunder and of storms.

He also ordered those councillors who were to proceed upon missions to various parts of the kingdom, and to the territories of their allies, to signalize their arrival by similar illuminations in the various towns to which they were ordered to proceed.

After the Council had broken up, he went to his own house, which, from motives of policy, he had always retained, and where he often resided—to show that he did not personally care for grandeur—and, walking up and down the balcony for hours, he revolved the whole conduct of the war.

Ah me! how different are the thoughts of men in this perplexed world from what those thoughts would be if men were left to themselves, and were not perpetually molested by their fellow-men!

Here was Realmah, who loved the life of every living creature, who would stoop to save the life of an insect which had become embarrassed in running water; and yet his sole thought that moonlight night, as he paced up and down the balcony, was how he could most advantageously sacrifice the lives of his subjects so as to insure the greatest destruction in the ranks of the enemy.

"Were I resolved to die," he said to himself, "poor creature as I am in battle, they could not kill me without my having at least slain one of the enemy. I will give a great banquet to-morrow, to the tribe of the fishermen and the ironworkers, and upon them I will impress the idea that no man must perish without having slain one at least of these accursed Northmen."

With this consolatory idea, the great King at last sought the repose that was so much needed for him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

REALMAH'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE SIEGE. HIS PLAN OF THE CAMPAIGN.

Realmah lost no time in making his preparations for resisting the siege of Abibah. He felt sure that the Northern tribes would ask who was the greatest king in those parts, and would direct their energies, in the first instance, to the reduction of his power.

What he most feared was fire; and his first efforts were directed to meet that danger. All those parts of the town which lay near the drawbridges he protected with thin plates of iron. The neighbouring parts to them he covered with a coating of clay and small stones; and the more remote parts of the town with the hides of animals.

Fortunately, the supply of water was inexhaustible; but the provisioning of the town for a protracted siege was a matter of anxious thought for Realmah.

As amongst the ancient Peruvians, so amongst the Sheviri, their laws and customs provided for considerable public storages of corn to meet the claims of the widows, the orphans, and the sick. And, as it was spring-time, there was nothing further to be done in the storing of grain.

Much, however, might be accomplished by slaughtering the principal part of their flocks and herds, and drying the flesh in the sun. This was done; and, after great exertions, Realmah found

himself in a position to endure a siege of three months, without being in the least degree liable to suffer from famine. He was enabled to persuade his people to consent to the sacrifice of the best of their flocks and herds, by showing them that when the enemy came to invest the city they must be masters of the plains and the woodlands near, and the only question would be whether the Sheviri, or the enemy, should feed upon their flocks and herds.

The people were thoroughly docile to their king; and, on this memorable occasion, all private interests were merged in a great effort to meet, and if possible to defeat, the public enemy.

The name of the king who led the Northern forces was Lockmar; and the epithet that well described him was Dansta-Ramah—"the All-destroying Flame." Like Attila, or Genghis-Khan, or any of the fearful scourges who have devastated the fairest regions of the earth, he was simply a brute kind of a man, who loved carnage, and had gained the superiority amongst his fellows by being, if possible, a lower and more ferocious animal than any of them. Remorseless as a tiger, subtle as a serpent, and brave as a lion, Lockmar had all the sway which belongs to a supreme pre-eminence in badness.

Against this man the gentle, kind-hearted Realmah was pitted; and it remained to be seen whether brute force was always to be predominant in this world.

The plan of the campaign, as it had long been matured in the mind of Realmah, was very simple. There were to be three armies in the field. The Phelatahs and the Doolmen were to form the bulk of one of these armies. The subject provinces were to furnish a second army; and the third, upon which Realmah placed the greatest reliance, was to consist of Sheviri, and to operate in the plain south of the city, through which the great river Ramassa runs.

A small body of the troops of the Sheviri was to be attached to the first and second armies. The brunt of the war was to be borne by the army of the Ramassa, as it was called. This army was to be commanded by Athlah.

The relations between that chieftain and Realmah had been greatly changed since the beginning of this story. Athlah was a man who always believed in power, and was very submissive to it. Besides, he had learnt to appreciate fully the great qualities of the

King; and on no one's could Realmah have placed a firmer reliance than he did on that of Athlah.

Realmah resolved to remain in the town of Abibah, for he had many devices in his mind to prepare it for a state of siege, and he was determined to fight the invaders street by street, and not to yield as long as a single vestige of the town remained upon the waters.

He intended to be present at the battle in the plain, but he had resolved to come away from it alive, and to reserve all his energies for the siege. He did not hesitate to let this intention be known to his principal friends and councillors. He felt that the knowledge of this intention (which was sure to leak out) would give great comfort to the inhabitants of the town, and induce them to bear without murmuring the great labours and sacrifices which he was about to impose upon them for the defence of the town.

He had in his own mind come to the conclusion that each one of these three armies would be worsted, but not without inflicting considerable loss upon the enemy; that they would then commence a siege; that this siege would be very impetuously maintained for a short time; that it would then languish; that he could direct a guerilla warfare against the southern divisions of the enemy's army; and, in fine, that he could protract matters until the rainy season should come on. By that time, he would have collected the scattered remnants of these three armies, and would make a final grand attack.

The reasons which had led Realmah to form and to rely upon this plan of campaign were these:—Though he had armed his own troops and some of his allies with iron weapons, he was well aware that every man of the Northern tribes would be well armed. He was also aware that they had much more practice in war than the nations of the South. He, therefore, concluded that his people and his allies would inevitably be beaten in pitched battles until he had called in pestilence and famine to his aid. He also concluded that if he could withstand the first great attack upon the town, these Northern barbarians, who, he had heard, were very capricious and unstable beings, accustomed to rapid victories, would become tired of a protracted siege. They would then either retire, or be defeated upon his striking a great blow, in concert with his allies, upon the forces of the enemy diminished and disheartened by pestilence and famine.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ACCOUNT OF THE CAMPAIGN—THE INTERVIEW BETWEEN REALMAH AND ATHLAH—THE BATTLE OF THE PLAIN.

The early events of the campaign were such as Realmah had foreseen. It is needless to recount the battles, for there is hardly a more dull thing in the way of narration than the narrative of a battle, unless it is given in full detail, or unless it is signalized by some remarkable incident or manœuvre.

The Phelatahs and the Doolmen, who operated to the north-east of the lake, were beaten, but not ingloriously. The army that was furnished by the subject provinces was also defeated.

Just as Realmah had anticipated, the men of the North, after defeating these armies, directed their course to Abibah. The army of the Ramassa went forth to meet them; and from day to day a battle was imminent.

Realmah, as has been said before, resolved to be present at this battle, but not to take any active part in it. He trusted Athlah thoroughly; was willing and ready to give him aid and advice; but told everybody that Athlah was to be the real general, and was to have the full credit for the conduct of the war outside the town of Abibah.

Realmah had a body-guard of sixty men, each of whom was devoted to him; and, previously to the battle, he told them what he had mentioned before to his councillors, that he had no intention whatever of dying on that field of battle, and that they must take care and bring him back to the town of Abibah unharmed. Before gunpowder was invented, it was very difficult to kill a man who had sixty devoted followers, each one of them ready to die for him.

It is a very remarkable statement to make, but it is true, that not one of Realmah's subjects dared to surmise, much less to say, that it was cowardice on his part to resolve to come away from the battle alive and unharmed. On the contrary, all felt that while Realmah was gracious enough to remain alive, and to constitute himself as a rallying point for his subjects, the great cause could not be altogether lost.

Realmah did not name any successor: he knew that it would be idle to do so, for if *he* fell, the hopes of the South would fall with him,

and the Sheviri would hereafter be the mere slaves or vassals of the North.

The interview between Realmah and Athlah on the evening before the battle of the plain was a most interesting one.

In that vast area there was but one tent—the King's. All his people knew his sickness and debility, and were delighted to provide for him that comfort and convenience which he would not ask for himself.

Athlah entered the King's tent. Realmah and Athlah had for many years acted together in affectionate concert; but not one word had passed between them having reference to the past. The wisdom gained from experiencing the difficulties of high command had greatly improved Athlah. He had learned to know himself better, and to understand others better. He knew, for instance, that Realmah's genius was one which could rebuke and dominate his own.

After the first greeting, Athlah fell upon his knees, and, kissing the King's hand, begged pardon for his offences in past time. He said that in early days he had not known the greatness of the King.

Realmah raised him affectionately, and said, "What need of words, my Athlah? I have long known that you are the truest and most faithful of my subjects. And not subject, but friend and councillor, and of my heart, the core of heart."

Milverton. You see, Sir Arthur, even in that distant age men talked, unconsciously, their Shakespere.

Realmah then explained to Athlah in close detail, as he had done before in general words, the whole drift of the campaign.

"The gods," he said, "dear Athlah, do not always grant our first wishes; and time with them is long; and they are very patient. You must not rely upon gaining a victory. I have made up my mind to bear defeat. The plain to the rear of the wood, where Ramassa curves towards Bidolo-Vamah, must be the spot where, after defeat, you must collect the scattered troops of the three great armies. That spot is propitious to me.

"I have sent our good Londardo to the Phelatahs. He will bring what remains of their forces there.

"I mean to live. You are a warrior, Athlah; I am a craftsman: the resistance to the siege must be under my sole guidance; and, during

many a weary night of sickness, have I revolved every incident that will probably occur in it. The siege it is that will test their power, and, I trust, consume their souls.

"The army of the Ramassa, in a few weeks, will be a great army, acting in concert with me."

Then Athlah said, "And must I survive defeat, my King?"

"Yes; if you love me, live."

Then Athlah said, "But I have never turned my back upon the enemy; all my wounds are in front."

"What is life or death to a wise man, Athlah? Even the otlocol[28] has the sense to fly from superior force; but he comes again.

"What is life, I say, my Athlah? On balmy days, when the breeze sighs gently, and all nature is bountiful and loving, I feel the spirit of my Ainah near me. I would but too gladly join her; but it must not be yet."

Realmah then arranged what should be his mode of communication with Athlah, when that chief should have collected all their scattered forces in the plain to the rear of the great wood.

After Realmah had instructed Athlah fully upon these details, he embraced him lovingly; and the general then took leave of his king.

Athlah was attended by a splendid body-guard, formed of the flower of the army. His conduct must have appeared strange to them. After leaving the King's tent, he walked with hesitating steps. When he had moved a little distance, he drove his spear into the ground and leaned against it, regarding the tent with a fixed look. The chiefs of the Sheviri thought that he was meditating about the battle that was imminent, and observing, with the cautious eyes of a commander, the nature of the ground. But his thoughts were of a very different complexion. The great French writer, Victor Hugo, in his description of "the last days of a condemned man," describes how, while the prisoner was being tried for his life, he thought neither of his crime nor of his approaching condemnation, but regarded, with much interest, the movements to and fro of a little flower that was upon the window-sill of a window in the court, and was played with by a gentle breeze.

So it was with Athlah. The issue of a great battle depended somewhat upon his sagacity and his courage, but his mind dwelt

only upon the words of Realmah about the Ainah. “So then,” he said to himself, “it was that common-looking girl” (to such a man as Athlah she would naturally appear but common-looking) “who was his only love; and the beautiful Talora is as a painted picture to him!”

And the chiefs that stood around said to one another, “There is not the slightest inequality of ground of which the great Athlah will not make some use in the battle of to-morrow.”

And Athlah removed his spear, and walked on moodily to his watch-fire, where he lay down to sleep with his guards around him.

The battle did take place on the morrow. The King surveyed it from a slight eminence on which he was placed. Calmly he saw his chosen legions fall before the disciplined valour of the enemy. Those who were near him might have seen some tears course down his suffering countenance. But he said nothing—not a word. And when the victory was evidently gained by the men of the North, and when further resistance was manifestly hopeless, he allowed himself to be conveyed back to Abibah.

He had previously sent twenty of his body-guard, on whom he could thoroughly rely, to mingle with Athlah’s body-guard, and, by force if needful, to convey that general (giving it out as an order from the King) to the plain behind the wood, where, as before said, the Ramassa curves westward towards the ruined mountain, Bidolo-Vamah, and where Realmah had listened to his Ainah’s song when she sang—

“My love, he loves many;
Though I love but one.”

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SIEGE.

Immediately after Realmah’s retreat into the town, the causeways were destroyed, the drawbridges pulled up, and every part of the town finally prepared for a state of siege.

Before describing this siege it is necessary to give some notion of the skill of the inhabitants of Abibah in the art of building. This is the more necessary as it is a fond idea of modern people that they are pre-eminent in that art; overlooking the masses of falseness, pretentiousness, and inappropriateness which deform so large a part

of their greatest towns. It would rather astonish them if they could see again ancient Mexico, Thebes, Memphis, Nineveh, Babylon, and Cusco[29]—the last perhaps the grandest city that has ever been built upon this earth.

The construction of these Lake cities was also most remarkable. In the remains of one of them there are this day to be seen the relics of about twenty thousand piles. Now the art of pile-driving is a most difficult one; and those who are skilled in it move from place to place where their services are wanted. But if we were to say to the inhabitants of any ordinary English town, "Build us, with all the means and appliances that are at your command, but without any aid from specially skilled workmen, a town upon water which shall have for its basis twenty thousand piles," we should find, from their difficulties and their failures, what great mechanical and workmanlike skill would be requisite for such an undertaking, and should have a just respect for the powers, the skill, and the perseverance of the men of Abibah.

Five days after the battle of the Ramassa, the enemy commenced the siege. They naturally commenced it at the southern part of the town, which was the part nearest to the shore. They had employed the intervening days in constructing rafts, which they did by tying together the smaller trees which they had hewn down in the great wood.

A low, long building, devoted to barracks, formed the principal defence on the southern side of the town. It was, in fact, a long semi-inclosed balcony, for the most part open at the back, but having in front only those openings which admitted of missiles being thrown from them.

Realmah's plan of defence for this building was very singular. He meant the enemy to take it, and to perish after they had taken it. The whole of the flooring was to fall into the water, and the enemy with it, immediately after they had occupied it. But what showed his skill in its construction and his knowledge of human nature, was, that he had planned that this falling-in of the flooring should take place in separate portions, separately. Between the piles there was generally a portion of the flooring that would enable thirty men to stand upon it and defend it; and each of these compartments was so constructed that, by the cutting of a single cord, it would descend into the water.

Realmah knew well that if all the men who were to defend this position knew that the flooring was suddenly, and perhaps without their knowledge, to descend into the water, they would be apprehensive of being left with the enemy and perishing with them. He also knew that if it depended upon the occupants of any particular compartment, or rather upon their captain, at what moment the flooring of that compartment should fall in, the men defending it would fight bravely to the last. To insure and reward this bravery, he offered a reward of iron swords with amber handles, to the survivors of that band of thirty men who should make the stoutest resistance.

The enemy advanced upon their rafts to the attack with great determination, and with great confidence of success. Their advance was covered by 3,000 archers, who occupied a small eminence just above the shore, and whose missiles dealt death to many a brave defender who but for a moment exposed himself to their deadly shafts. The besieged on their part were not inactive. Many of the attacking party fell by their iron-pointed javelins; many more were disabled by the boiling pitch poured down upon them as they neared the fortress. Still they pressed on, and swarming up the low building, found entrance here and there. For fully an hour the attack and the defence were vigorously maintained. The time would have been much shorter, but that the archers, who formed the covering party on the hill, were no longer able to give assistance to their friends, when besiegers and besieged were commingled in the fight. At length the enemy gained entrance at all points, and then the stratagem of Realmah had its full effect. The floorings everywhere descended almost simultaneously, and nothing was to be heard but the cries of drowning men, shouting helplessly for succour from their friends, who were cut off from them. Thus ended the first day's siege, with a signal failure on the part of the besiegers.

For seventeen days there was no further attack. Realmah was at first much puzzled at this inaction, but by his spies he soon learnt that a division of the enemy's army had gone to attack Abinamanche, the capital of the Phelatahs.

He readily conjectured that this was done in order to possess themselves of the fleet of canoes belonging to Abinamanche, and therefore was not the least surprised when, on the fifteenth and

sixteenth days after the first encounter, he perceived numerous canoes creeping along the shore, and making their rendezvous not far from the enemy's head-quarters on the shore.

On the eighteenth day the siege recommenced. This time it was a much more formidable attack. It may seem strange, but will be accounted for hereafter, that Realmah did not bring his own little fleet of canoes into action, but reserved it for a much more critical occasion.

The enemy, who were skilled warriors, having been accustomed to fight the men of their own hardy North, had not been idle during these seventeen days. Besides availing themselves of the fleet of the Phelatahs, they had constructed three times the number of rafts with which they had attempted the former attack.

On this second attack they brought no less than 16,000 men into immediate action.

Realmah was undismayed. He had too long thought of the coming evil to be unprepared for it.

It is needless to give the almost innumerable details of the attack and defence on this day. Both sides showed the utmost determination; but, as the sun descended behind Bidolo-Vamah, that luminary might have seen that the enemy had made a lodgment in Abibah, and that their troops occupied the "Street of the Ambassadors," which ran parallel to the fortress that had been the point of attack on the first day, and which communicated with the whole of the southern part of the town by four other principal streets. Previously to this lodgment being made by the enemy, Realmah had caused barricades to be formed at the end of these streets.

For eleven more days no fresh general attack was made by the enemy, though continual fighting and great slaughter took place at these barricades.

Meanwhile the valorous Athlah was re-forming his army. Meanwhile the enemy were constructing more rafts.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CONDUCT OF THE VARNAH DURING THE SIEGE.

I interrupt the description of the horrors of the siege to tell what part the Varnah took in it. The present was an occasion on which her great ability in practical matters shone forth.

She knew her husband's character intimately. She was, perhaps, the only person in his wide dominions who had never changed her view of that character. She liked him because he was very indulgent, and very reasonable—for a man. Moreover, he was a good listener, and entered into all her plans for the welfare of the people very heartily.

Spiritual things were not in her domain. She knew that she was not great in comforting Realmah; and, excellent woman that she was, wished that the Ainah was alive again for that part of the business. She was the only person who conjectured how much comfort Realmah had derived from the Ainah's sympathy.

The Varnah was one of those women who really have a considerable disrespect for men. She thought contemptuously of their objects in life. She knew that Realmah was great amongst men: he was very clever in managing councils, and settling about treaties and alliances; but she looked upon all these matters as a kind of amusement for beings who did not see what is the real object of life—namely, to be thriving and comfortable.

She was always, however, very deferential, both in public and private, to her husband, and was greatly vexed that Talora did not see that similar conduct on her part was an absolute duty. Much as the Varnah feared Talora's bitter tongue and cruel temper, she once or twice plucked up courage to tell her that she did not behave well to the man who had raised them both to the great position which they occupied.

Her Loftiness was greatly liked by the people. Even her frugality had endeared her to them. People do not like others the less for having something to laugh at about them. Her subjects had well known that Her Loftiness was a very frugal woman, fond of acquisition, very different from their king; but they forgave her these defects when they found that she was willing to sacrifice all her treasures for the public good.

On the present occasion she was in the most fitting element for the display of her gifts and powers. In every place where her

presence was needful she was to be found encouraging, consoling, and proffering aid, medicaments, and food with a most liberal hand. No one said now that Her Loftiness was acquisitive or mean; but they felt what true generosity there may be in a prudence which is only prudent for the sake of others.

Far otherwise was it with Talora. She was ever declaring blame, and prophesying disaster. Realmah grew so wearied of her depressing influence that he had her conveyed to the head-quarters of Athlah's army, while he kept the Varnah with him, as his first aide-de-camp, and as the true dear friend to whom he could tell everything, even the worst that had befallen him.

She had one great merit in his eyes: she never troubled him by wishing to know what he was doing. Realmah received her as he did one of his generals, and gave her instructions as if she had been a man.

I have said that the Varnah, when married, was not remarkable for good looks. But dignity sat well upon her; and whatever beauty and grace she possessed had been developed by the greatness of her position. Such simple-minded characters as hers are never deficient in dignity; and Realmah was thankful that, in this emergency, such a woman had been vouchsafed to him, as his friend and counsellor, if not his consoler, who was worthy in so many respects to be the Queen of the Sheviri, and who proved to be far greater in adversity than in prosperity.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LAST DAYS OF THE SIEGE.

On the twelfth day after the lodgment was effected, another great attack was made upon the southern and western quarters of the town.

A few words must here be given in explanation of the way in which Abibah had been built.

When the first settlers commenced driving their piles, there was, from some inequality in the nature of the ground at the bottom of the lake, a curved line about eighteen feet in breadth and about a thousand yards in length, in which the piles sank hopelessly into soft mud, finding no footing. This part therefore had been abandoned as foundation, and had been bridged over by flooring which could

easily be removed. It divided the city in this way: that two-fifths of the city were on the southern and western side of this sort of covered canal, and three-fifths on the other side. The canal itself was called "The Way of the Pescaras" (the largest kind of fish found in those waters). Unfortunately, there was a bit of the eastern quarter of the town which was in a similar way cut off from the main part of that eastern quarter by a canal. The enemy became aware of this fact. That island, if it may be so called, in the eastern quarter, was mainly occupied by a small fortress.

The attack, on the part of the besiegers, commenced at the rising of the sun. The number of assailants who were brought into immediate action was twice as great as that which had been brought into action on the previous occasion. And, moreover, they had this great advantage, that their people had gained and maintained a lodgment in the "Street of the Ambassadors." From early morning till late evening the battle raged furiously in the southern and western quarters, and also at that part of the eastern quarter which I have described.

By the evening all the barricades were forced. The women and children were hastily removed into the northern and eastern quarters of the town, where the poor creatures were huddled together in the open spaces.

Where the battle raged most furiously was in the great market-place, which, for the sake of convenience, as being nearer to the land whence they drew their supplies, was in the southern part of the town. Here Realmah himself was present, though not taking much part in the action. In his mind he compared the attack of the numerous enemy to a flood of molten lava. The comparison was a just one; for, as in the flow of a stream of lava it is at the edges of the torrent that there is least force, while at the middle part it boils up and overflows the edges, so it was with the attack of the enemy, who pressed over the prostrate bodies of their own men, and overwhelmed Realmah's now disheartened forces.

The shades of evening came on, and found the men of the North in possession of the two-fifths of the town, bounded by the Pescara Canal; and also, which was still more alarming, of the fortress in the eastern quarter of the town. The slaughter on both sides had been immense; and, alas! many women and children of the town of

Abibah had been slain during this dreadful day. One remarkable incident must be commemorated. Litervi, that cautious and judicious councillor, had returned from his mission, and had been placed in command of the eastern fortress. Like another great man whose fate is commemorated in the story of one of the greatest sieges that ever took place in the world, Litervi had found himself alone at the topmost part of the fortress, with all his warriors slain around him; and, after hurling his massive club (for he was one of those old-fashioned warriors who could not take to the new weapons) upon the enemy beneath him, he threw himself down—being resolved to slay at least one of the enemy by that last missile. This was told to Realmah, who merely remarked that Litervi was a wise, happy, and good man.

Llama-mah, too, had shown his devotion in a very unexpected manner. According to the usual theory, Llama-mah, who had been a flatterer in the days of prosperity, ought to have been a coward and betrayer in the days of adversity. But men are so strange in their ways that there is no accounting for them. Llama-mah, at the risk of his own life (for he received a dangerous wound), had stepped in front of Realmah and saved the King's life in the great fight in the market-place; for Llama-mah really loved the man he had so often flattered and beguiled.

Realmah sat in the great Hall of Audience on the evening of this day's disastrous fight. A cordon of his guard kept off the crowd of persons who came for orders, admitting them one by one. Suddenly a head, which had been hurled over the canal by the enemy with loud triumphant shouts, was brought to Realmah. He recognised at once the noble features of Londardo, who, it appears, had fallen in some skirmish, while leading the scattered troops of the Phelatahs to the place of rendezvous.

Realmah was much affected by this sight, but did not show what he felt. He merely observed—"Preserve it for a noble burial when we have conquered."

All night long the King received his chieftains, and gave to each man the orders or the encouragement that he required. There was one thing that much astonished these chieftains, who were all men of high rank,—namely, that sundry obscure persons, mere artisans,

fishermen, and iron-workers, were admitted to Realmah's presence, and had long audiences of the King.

The first faint dawn of morning, with its cold grey light, began to appear. Realmah quitted the Hall of Audience and went up to the topmost story of his uncle's palace, now his own. Realmah was fond of high places; and this topmost story, or watch-tower, having an open gallery round it, was the only addition he had made to that palace.

What a scene was spread before him! Towards the north and west he could hardly discern any water for the innumerable rafts of the enemy, which now surrounded those parts of the town. To the extreme east, however, there was a sight to be seen which gladdened the King's heart. A large army of the Sheviri and their allies was posted on the eastern heights about three miles and a half distant; and, to attack them, numerous bodies of the enemy's troops were already beginning to march eastward, deserting their quarters on the southern shore of the town.

Realmah had ordered that, upon no account, whatever might happen, should he be disturbed while he remained in this watch-tower. Joyfully he observed the movement of the enemy's troops on shore, until the greater part of them had moved to a position within a mile's distance of Athlah's. He then raised a large green flag, and watched with satisfaction his little fleet, which he had kept far out of harm's way until the present moment (a fleet of arrant cowards, as the enemy called them), move in good order, round the eastern part of the town, and take up a position close to the southern quarter of the town, near that part of the shore which the enemy had abandoned.

Meanwhile he had raised a large red flag which he still kept in his hand. One half-hour, a time of dreadful suspense, in which Realmah seemed to himself to live a life, passed away; and then, to his infinite joy, appeared in twenty or thirty different places in the southern and western parts of the town, on the further side of the Pescara Canal, light wreaths of smoke—the prelude to so many great fires.

Realmah's plan was simple. He had resolved to sacrifice two-fifths of his town, and by that means to secure victory. His own escape at the outbreak of the revolution had long given him the groundwork of this plan. He had caused maps to be carefully made of what we may

call the underground, or rather underfloor, part of his city, and knew to a nicety those devious paths upon the waters along which small boats could make their way amongst the piles. Thirty canoes, which had been moored under his palace, had been destined for this work of incendiarism; and their men had been furnished with the most inflammable materials.

Realmah had hardly time to descend from his watch-tower and place himself at the head of his troops before the flames had burst out furiously in many quarters of that part of the town occupied by the enemy. They were utterly dismayed by this new and unexpected form of attack, and before they had time to recover their presence of mind, Realmah had thrown planks across the Pescara Canal, forming temporary bridges, and was upon them.

His own people had not thoroughly known Realmah before that day. There are two lines of Byron's which well describe what had been, and what were now, Realmah's feelings and his mode of action:—

"Then all was stern collectedness and art,
Now rose the unleavened hatred of his heart."

Thus it is ever with men in whose natures are combined great passion and great prudence. A hundred times, perhaps, they play with the hilt of their swords; and the bystander, or opponent, little knows how much they have longed to draw them, and what restraint they have exercised upon themselves. But when the time has come, and they do flash forth those swords, it is with a fury that contains in itself the long-accumulated passion hitherto oppressed and controlled, but never really annihilated, by the restraints of prudence.

The King's feelings were very bitter against the men of the North. To them he traced all the misfortunes of his life. By reason of them he had been made a prisoner. For them he had lost his Ainah. To contend with them, he had left the peaceful paths of life so dear to him, and had become a king, with all the miseries (for to such a man miseries they were) of kingly state. Silently he had seen his choicest troops fall before these barbarians. Silently, and with no outward demonstration of sorrow, but with tears of the heart, he had seen the poor women and children of Abibah slaughtered before his eyes;

and, at this moment, he saw a large part of the city he loved so well about to be consumed by fire, to get rid of these hateful invaders.

The King was that day as one possessed. Danger and Death, as if scared by such a madman, fled before him. His guards, the most active and energetic of the young men, toiled after their sickly, careworn, almost-deformed King, in vain.

The enemy in the city being attacked at once by fire, by the fierce Realmah, and by the fleet of boats which prevented their escape, and cut off their retreat, perished nearly to a man. Those on the rafts made at once for the southern shore, where they joined the main body of the troops, who, discovering the stratagem that had been devised against them, quitted their position opposite to Athlah's camp, and returned to their old quarters.

There was mourning and lamentation in the enemy's camp that night. Three of their greatest chiefs (amongst them it was said the King of the North himself) had perished in the town.

All night the flames rose higher and higher, and affronted the placid skies. These flames did not invade that part of the town which lay to the north and east of the canal; but the rest of the town was completely consumed. There was not, however, a man amongst the Sheviri so base as to lament publicly the loss of his own habitation.

Meanwhile Realmah joined Athlah. The next day a great attack was made upon the position of the men of the North; and their complete defeat ensued. Hardly a man escaped to tell the tale; but Realmah, naturally merciful, gave orders for sparing the women and children who had accompanied the men of the North. These were incorporated into the nation of the Sheviri, who learnt many of the arts of life from their captives.

Thus were the men of the North defeated, without the aid of pestilence and famine; and, for generations, they did not venture again to invade the now indomitable South. The name of Realmah became a word of terror with which they scared their fretful children into swift obedience. "And the land had peace."

Ellesmere. I am not too much devoted to Realmah, but I am glad that he and the besieged have got the best of it. I am always on the side of the besieged. I remember becoming quite excited on behalf of the Dutch when I read Motley's account of the siege of Antwerp.

Sir Arthur. And then, as boys, how we pitied poor Priam, and longed for Hector to gain the victory. I suppose there is no boy who has not been against that bully Achilles, and who has not been anxious to blab to the Trojans about the real contents of that wooden horse, which seems so stupid a device.

Lady Ellesmere. I wonder that the Trojan women did not find it out. Now Realmah would not have been taken in by such a device, for he had something of woman's nature in him, and of woman's wit.

Ellesmere. Say craft. But indeed, my lady, you are talking a great man's talk without knowing it. That deep thinker, but not always perfectly intelligible writer, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, maintained that all the greatest men have something of the feminine nature in them.

Sir Arthur. One Trojan maiden, Lady Ellesmere, did warn her people—Cassandra; but nobody believed in her.

"Tunc etiam fatis aperit Cassandra futuris
Ora, dei jussu, non unquam credita Teucris."

Lady Ellesmere. Without translating, gentlemen must not talk Latin, nor smoke, nor swear, in the presence of ladies.

Ellesmere. She thinks now she has been very epigrammatic. Then men may swear if they translate it? The commonest form of muddlement in sentences is occasioned by this endeavour to be brief. You apply two or three nominatives to one verb, or two or three verbs to one nominative, which do not agree together if you look at them separately. I am obliged to translate for Lady Ellesmere. What she did mean was,—that, in the presence of ladies, men must not smoke without permission: must not swear at all: and must not quote Latin without translating it.

Sir Arthur. Sir John's conjugal correction of Lady Ellesmere, of the justice of which I am very dubious,—

Ellesmere. Saccharinity again!

Sir Arthur. —has given me time to make my translation:—

"For ever disbelieved by Trojan ears,
So willed the god, Cassandra told her fears."

Ellesmere. Such an odd thought struck me while Milverton was reading.

I recalled to my mind Dr. Johnson's going about, with his ink-bottle stuck in his coat, at the sale of Thrale's brewery, and saying, "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

You do not see how this applies, do you? But I said to myself, We are not here to listen to the obscure battles of the Sheviri and the Phelatahs, of the Doolmen or the Koolmen, and their Athlahs, and Realmahs, and Lockmars (about as interesting, as Milton would have said, as the battles of kites and crows); but we are listening to the political notions of a man who is contemplating the present state of Europe and America.

What he means I do not know for certain, but I have ideas.

Sir Arthur. And so have I.

Ellesmere. But I shall not declare my ideas, because Milverton will be sure to say they are not the right ones.

Cranmer. I am sure I do not see what is meant.

Ellesmere. Perhaps not; I only said I had ideas. They are not taxable things, Cranmer, and you cannot prevent my having them. They won't hurt you, Cranmer.

Mauleverer. I see nothing more in it than this, which I believe I knew before, without the aid of the ingenious Milverton, that men had always had plenty of tyrants and oppressors among them, and that, a few times in the world's history, these tyrants and oppressors had been beaten back.

But the Northmen will come again, and then there will be no Realmah to resist them.

Ellesmere. I know all about it. I know the nation which eventually conquered the Lake cities: and, what is of more importance, I know how the nation attained to its greatness.

To make the rest of Sir John's discourse intelligible, I must give a little explanation. Sir John is a man who indulges in very few theories. He chiefly employs himself in demolishing the theories of other people; but one theory he has, and holds to very strongly, viz. that grey-eyed people are much cleverer, wiser, and better than the black-eyed or the blue-eyed. It was pointed out to him that Lady

Ellesmere has grey eyes, and we knew that he would never admit in public that she had any especial merit. He merely said that this was the one exception which did not "prove the rule," as foolish people say, but which confirmed the statement that there is an exception to almost every rule, however well founded.

Ellesmere. The nation in question was the nation of the Gogoes. A Gogoe of more intelligence than his neighbours put forth the theory that all the blue-eyed female children under three years of age should be made into mince-meat. This theory found favour among many ingenious and thoughtful people. There was soon a mince-meat society, then a mince-meat newspaper.

The question then entered into the domain of politics. The Gogoes were chiefly governed by two great councils. The most potent council was that which sat in the Hall of Echoes, and was an elected body. The other council consisted of the stoutest men of the community, and was an assemblage of Mauleverers, but chiefly of a jolly nature.

The mince-meat question was taken up by an important party in the first-named council. They were never able, however, to make it the law of the land.

You can easily imagine what an excellent subject it was for debate—how much there was to be said on both sides of the question. Eventually the anti-mince-meat party came into power.

Here I am going to say something so profound, and yet so simple, as regards politics, that if people were allowed to carry round a hat, and to receive subscriptions when they had said anything good, I should, of course, receive much largesse from this liberal company.

It is this. You suppose that the mince-meat party fell from power for some great political reason. Those are the kind of reasons that historical people, like Milverton, endeavour to impose upon us, to account for great political changes; whereas I am a practical man, and I know better. The party fell because people were tired of it. You think that it is only Aristides of whom his neighbours were tired. But I tell you that Julius Cæsar, Sejanus, Thomas à Becket, Cardinal Wolsey, Thomas Cromwell, and a host of others, fell—simply because the principal people concerned with them were tired of them. You are fond, Milverton, of quoting that saying of Talleyrand, "that he was avid of facts." I say that "all men are avid of change."

Why, men become tired even of themselves, and of their position, however powerful! And thus it was that the mince-meat party in the Gogoe Hall of Echoes fell.

Meanwhile public opinion amongst the Gogoes had been pronounced more and more in favour of the mince-meat question. What did the party newly in power do? They were always for large measures, if they were for any measures at all. Largeness was their forte. They proposed that the black-eyed portion of the young maidens should undergo the same fate as that which had been proposed for the blue-eyed.

The original mince-meat party was astounded; but what could they say or do? Their arguments against the blue-eyed were found to have equal force against the black-eyed, and the large measure passed unanimously.

From that time forward the Gogoes became a great nation. They were not so much "blessed"—or shall we say "bored?"—by an affluence of women, as the surrounding nations were; but all their women, whether won by conquest of neighbouring nations, or born in their own territory, were grey-eyed, which became the fashionable colour. It was the Gogoes, as far as my historical researches have gone, who devastated Europe, and conquered the Lake Cities, and to this day their grey-eyed descendants are ruling men wherever they are to be found.

The original country of the Gogoes (this will be a Milvertonian touch) is where the great river Niebelungen curves round the base of the great mountain Oltivago, and falls into the Lake of Palmah, which was then the central part of Europe. I flatter myself that that is equally precise and descriptive, and conveys to you the idea of a territory which can easily be recognised in the present day.

We all laughed very much at the droll way in which Sir John had illustrated his favourite theory, and had combined it with a satirical view of modern politics. Afterwards there was no more conversation, and we went our separate ways.

26. "I have known distinguished fathers and mothers in our Christian Israel, whose presence was like mildew upon flowers, and who sent you away with the feeling of having been defrauded of half your vital electricity." The writer of the above, an American named

Henry James, would not be likely to admire much even the virtues of Puritanism.

27. It has surprised antiquaries to find that the inhabitants of the Lake cities possessed amber; and it has been conjectured that this amber came by trade of some kind with the Baltic.

28. The puma, or lion.

29. An eye-witness says: "I measured a stone at Tiaguanaco, twenty-eight feet long, eighteen feet broad, and about six feet thick; but in the wall of the fortress of Cusco, which is constructed of masonry, there are many stones of much greater size." It appears from modern research that some of these stones were fifty feet long, twenty-two feet broad, and six feet thick. "Habia entre ellas algunas que tenian cincuenta piés de largo, veinte y dos de alto, y seis de ancho."—*Antiguedades Peruanas*, por Mariano Eduardo de Rivero y Juan Diego de Tschudi, cap. ix. p. 250.

CHAPTER XIII.

My master, Mr. Milverton, has a great dislike to taking a walk. He can be energetic enough if there is anything to be seen, or done; but walking for walking's sake is odious to him. When the others were going for a walk, he would accompany them across the little bit of flat garden, and even to the entrance of a paddock: but there he would take leave of them, unless there were some remarkable clouds to be seen which could be observed better in the open space of the paddock. Beyond the confines of the paddock I hardly ever knew him favour anybody with his company.

I mention this trifling circumstance because it occasionally prevented me from reporting conversations which I should like to have reported.

Mr. Milverton always viewed with pity anybody who went for a long walk. He would say, "Ellesmere has gone for a long walk upon the Downs to-day, poor fellow!" And I really believe he did pity Sir John upon such an occasion, though Sir John himself immensely enjoyed getting rid of some of his superfluous energy by a walk of ten or twelve miles.

Upon the present occasion they had all gone for a long walk, except Mr. and Mrs. Milverton and myself. We stayed at home and worked at "Realmah."

On their return, they all came rushing into our study, boasting of the immense walk they had taken, with a kind of insolence, as if they had done something wonderful; and calling us "muffs" for having stayed at home all day.

I will now report the conversation which followed:—

Ellesmere. Ah! Master Leonard, we have had such brilliant talk during our excursion. I would have given anything for you to have been with us. After discussing almost all human affairs with a degree of wisdom which is only known to stalwart walkers, we came to a question which would have delighted you. It was, Given a benevolent fairy (I have never myself held a brief for any such party, but Sir Arthur is sure that there are such parties), and given that the said fairy offered to each of us the absolute fulfilment of any wish we might please to make, what should we wish for? Now you know you

would have been in your element in such a conversation. You must not suppose for a moment that this was the ordinary benevolent-fairy business. I limited their wishes in this way—that they must wish for something, not for themselves, but for the good of the world, and that the something in question must not be foolishly wide and conclusive, such as "I wish that everybody may be happy and good;" in short, they were to wish for means, not ends. Moreover—and this was the best part of my limitation, as it knocked off all such things as invisible coats, and ten-leagued boots, and swords of all-powerful sharpness that would make their way even to the brains of bores in Parliament—that the thing wished for must be an increase of something which is in existence.

I need hardly tell you what they all wished for. Mr. Cranmer, of course, wished that the benevolent fairy would endow him with an insight into the depths of political economy, and especially favour him with its views about the Bank Charter Act, in order that he might make the world happy by his next speech upon that subject in the ensuing session of Parliament.

Sir Arthur, of course, wished that the benevolent fairy would impress upon mankind his notions of the beautiful. He thought that an increased perception of beauty in nature and in art would add immensely to human happiness.

Mr. Mauleverer wished that the *benevolent* fairy would have the goodness to inform mankind thoroughly and completely what a miserable set of wretches they are. They would not then follow after all manner of foolish schemes of happiness, which only lead to disappointment.

Lady Ellesmere expressed a wish that the benevolent fairy would instruct mankind as to the wonderful qualities and merits of her son Johnny. His future success in the world would be the best means she knew of for insuring happiness to mankind.

Cranmer. There are very few grains of truth, we need hardly tell you, Milverton, in all he has said.

Ellesmere. I disregard their vain assertions. You know as well as I do, Milverton, that these were their secret thoughts, even if they pretended to wish for others.

Now, what do you say?

Milverton. Well, if I must make a choice, I should say this: Please, benevolent fairy, grant that there should be more love in the world.

Ellesmere. This is vague. These philosophers are always vague. What do you mean by love?

Milverton. You know very well what I mean—that charity, as described by St. Paul, should prevail to the extent which that great Apostle himself desired.

Ellesmere. Well, Master Sandy, and what do you say?

Johnson. Well, I say, Let intellect prevail: let the great thinkers among mankind be able to impress their views upon the rest.

Ellesmere. This, now, is also somewhat vague. Like master, like man! The thinkers differ amongst themselves. My dear Sandy, you must be more precise. You know very well what you mean—namely, that what Milverton dictates and you write should govern the whole of the habitable globe.

Johnson. I do, Sir John.

Ellesmere. That is an honest boy. Have you nothing especial to say about Scotland?

Johnson. No; I will be quite content with the wish I have expressed.

Ellesmere. Now, Mrs. Milverton, it is your turn to have a wish. Shall we wish that Milverton shall be made Lord Milverton? Shall we wish that little Leonard shall cut all his teeth without suffering, and shall become one of the wisest of mankind?

Mrs. Milverton. I will not have words thrust into my mouth. I am not going to say anything that Sir John Ellesmere chooses that I should say. My wish is of a totally different kind. I wish that all mankind should see the beauty of what Goethe calls Renunciation.

Milverton. Bravo, my dear! I believe that you have mentioned *the* thing which would tend most to raise mankind into a higher atmosphere of being.

Mrs. Milverton. This is not my own idea; but what, in his most serious mood, I have heard Leonard dilate upon.

Ellesmere. You see, Lady Ellesmere, what it is to follow out your husband's views. If you had only said that your wish was that there should be an affluence of good and good-natured criticism—in fact,

that there should be a Saturday Review for every day in the week—what *kudos* you would have gained from this worshipful company!

Now then, Sir Arthur, and Mr. Cranmer, and Mr. Mauleverer, and Lady Ellesmere, if I have not represented you all truly, say your say.

Mauleverer. I say, Let the earth produce more corn, and with less trouble.

Sir Arthur. I say, Let the distinction of nations, or rather of races, cease to have such effect as they have had in latter days.

Ellesmere. You forget, Sir Arthur: you must ask for something more, not something less.

Sir Arthur. Well, then, let there be more cosmopolitan good feeling.

Lady Ellesmere. What I wish is this: That the feeling for pain (physical pain, if you please to put it so) should be so predominant throughout mankind, that no one should knowingly do anything which should increase the physical pain of man, woman, animal, fish, or insect.

Here the ladies rose and left us.

Ellesmere. I declare the women have been very clever to-day. It was very sharp of Mrs. Milverton "going in," as the slang phrase is, for "Renunciation;" and for my wife trying to do away with all pain that is caused by our recklessness of physical sufferings. Of course, she does not see the full extent of her views, and that all war would be put an end to, if her benevolent fairy granted her the wish that she seeks for. But now, Cranmer, you protested against my representation of your opinions. What do you wish the fairy to grant you?

Cranmer. That representative government should be brought to perfection, and should prevail everywhere.

Ellesmere. I declare you are all very unkind to me: you have never seriously asked what I wish for.

Sir Arthur. Pray tell us. We are sure that it will be something quite out of the common way.

Ellesmere. No; I believe what I should ask would be the greatest boon that could be demanded for mankind. I only ask this simple,

trifling thing—that good reasoning should have its exact weight with mankind.

Now all of you think that this is a small, poor, inadequate wish; but you may depend upon it, it beats all of yours out of the field.

Give me one thousand millions of mankind (that is the present number on the earth, is it not, Cranmer?) reasoning accurately upon the arguments brought before them, and I, for my part, do not wish any more.

I hate to "talk shop," as it is called; but if you will give me the present Lord Chancellor, that good, just, and honest man, Lord——, to decide upon all questions for the world, I shall be perfectly satisfied. And if my wish were granted, every man would be as good an appreciator of arguments as Lord——.

Sir Arthur. So, you would remit all earthly and heavenly questions to the Court of Chancery.

Ellesmere. I would; and you will never have a tribunal so competent to decide upon them. We don't look at popular opinion, or at aristocratic opinion, or at philosophic opinion, or at unphilosophic opinion; we decide upon the exact matters brought before us; and I do say, however much it might horrify you, that if you would only have the humility to submit any great question to the judicial authorities of this kingdom, it would be well decided.

Milverton. What, the highest abstract questions?

Ellesmere. Yes. We—I am speaking for the great lights of the Bench—are equal to decide any earthly question brought before us. We have ascertained what justice means. We are really impartial. I believe that in England there is more of the judicial faculty developed than in any other nation. Newspapers, what you are pleased to call public opinion, political considerations of all kinds, personal considerations of all kinds, weigh not with us. We shall simply (I am speaking for our great judges) give its due weight exactly to what is brought before us to decide upon.

I must admit that Sandy and I seem to have somewhat of the same idea. There is, however, this distinction.—He says, Let great intellect prevail; I say, Let good reasoning prevail. According to his system there would be endless contention; whereas, according to mine,

there would be clear judicial decision and precise action consequent thereupon.

The company then rose.

Mauleverer. Stay. I must say something more. You have all taken this matter more seriously than I expected, and I desire to recall my former wish. I should ask for more knowledge.

It has become the fashion in this house of late, to express one's ideas after the mode of the Sheviri, by fables or apologues. Now I wish you to listen very patiently to a little story of mine.

Once upon a time there was an island (I observe most of your stories relate to islands), the unfortunate inhabitants of which were molested in this way:—An invisible fiend, supposed to rise from the ground, would lay hold of one of these inhabitants and give him a sound beating, making every bone to ache. The fiend would repeat this chastisement at regular intervals, say every two, three, or four days, at the same hour of the day. At last any poor man who was so persecuted would tremble and shiver all over when the time for his punishment came. But if this poor man had but known (see the advantage of knowledge) one or two simple things, he could have defied his enemy.

The first was a salve which, when applied to the eyes, rendered the foul fiend perfectly visible. Now this fiend was a slow, dull, heavy fiend.——

Ellesmere. Slow, dull, heavy, and punctual, therefore a good fiend of business, as we say a good man of business, Cranmer.

Mauleverer.——and never could mount higher than thirty feet.[30] Consequently if the man went up a ladder thirty feet high, he could laugh at the dull fiend, and defy him.

But more than this, there was a good natured wood-sprite, a dryad, who would walk hand-in-hand with any of the poor men of the island, and would carry him safely through any of the fastnesses of the foul fiend. Unfortunately, however, for thousands of years, neither the eye-salve, nor the habitation of the wood-sprite, who by the way lived some six thousand miles off, though he would come at a minute's notice, were known to the inhabitants of the island.

Cranmer. I have not the least idea what you mean. I wish all of you would talk more plainly. You despise blue books, but really they

are much more intelligible than you are with your pink and blue "sleep," and with your Spoolans, and foul fiends and wood-sprites.

Mauleverer. To come down then to a blue book, the foul fiend is the ague. The eye-salve is the microscope, which has shown us exactly the limits of the ague spore. The wood-sprite is Jesuit's bark or quinine.

Now I beg to ask you, Milverton, whether your "love," or Mrs. Milverton's "renunciation;" or, Mr. Johnson, your "thinking;" or, Ellesmere, your "reasoning," would ever have found out a remedy for the ague? No: you must all admit that I should ask the fairy for the right thing, merely, more knowledge.

I hope too, you all observe, that the instance I have given shows the exceeding misery of man, and how much too small he is for his place, that he should go on suffering all this misery for thousands of years when a little knowledge would have raised him above it.

Depend upon it the present generation is suffering in an exactly similar way from many such evils, moral, intellectual, and physical, which a little more knowledge would dispel.

No one made any reply, and the company then separated.

30. See an excellent paper on this subject in a recent number of All the Year Round.

CHAPTER XIV.

I was telling Mr. Milverton the interest I had felt in the conversation of yesterday about the choice of gifts from the benevolent fairy. "Well," he said, "if you like this kind of fanciful discussion, we will have another. What shall we choose? I think it would call out all Ellesmere's comicalities, if we were to ask what he would do if his life were to be prolonged to the length of those of the patriarchs."

When two people have resolved that a conversation shall come to a particular point, they can always manage to effect their object. Accordingly, when we next met, Mr. Milverton and myself soon contrived to place the question before Sir John Ellesmere in the manner that we had proposed, and the conversation proceeded thus:—

Ellesmere. I am to have a 900 years' life. Let me see, what age did I convince you all the other day that I was? I think thirty-seven. Well, then, in the first place, I decline to live 863 years with Lady Ellesmere. You know, my dear, you are a most agreeable woman; but in the course of a few hundred years, always struggling, as you do, for mastery, you would be sure to gain complete power over me, and I object to being such a slave as you would then make of me.

Lady Ellesmere. There was nothing said, John, about my having the same term of life as yours. No person, even in imagination, could be so cruel as to make a poor woman live for hundreds of years with you.

Sir Arthur. Pray let these interesting conjugal remarks cease; and let us hear what you would aim at, Ellesmere, if you had before you this great length of life.

Ellesmere. I have no objection to tell you. But you must not fancy that everything I say is a joke. I do not like being always the funny man of the company. If I say something which I really mean, but which does not happen to fit in with your small notions of wisdom and propriety, you laugh your silly laughs, and have not the slightest faith in the earnestness of what I say.

Cranmer. We will believe in you, Sir John, as much as we possibly can.

Milverton. Now then, Ellesmere, proceed.

Ellesmere. In the first place, I would abolish the penny post.

Milverton. That we knew before.

Ellesmere. In the next place I would disinvent telegraphic communication.

Milverton. Good. That we knew too.

Ellesmere. When I say I would do this thing, or that thing, you must readily see that I should have the power to do it, because, outliving the rest of mankind, I should get the whip-hand of the whole nation. My experience would prevail over theirs, and I should be universally listened to and respected.

I should abolish bells, and so win Sir Arthur's heart. I mean out-of-door bells. I never met with any sensible person who liked these noises.

Milverton. True: but really, Ellesmere, what small things you are proposing.

Ellesmere. Well, I will come to much greater, then. I would set my face against the growth of great cities. People laugh at James the First, and think him a pedant and a fool; but I have always thought him very wise in his strong objection to the increase of London. If you allow cities to increase in this way, you ultimately get them so big that it is impossible to have fresh air. I am as serious as I ever was in my life, when I say that the perpetual and rapid increase of London is a grief to me.

Milverton. I quite agree with you.

Ellesmere. Well, then, I would build a house—a model house. I really think that a great many of the evils that afflict mankind are to be traced to the badness of habitations. I do not bother myself with what your sanitary reformers say about things; but I can see that nine-tenths of your difficulties would vanish if good houses and cottages were built.

Cranmer. But what do you mean by a good house?

Ellesmere. Well, if you must know, I mean, in the first place, a washable house—washable thoroughly, inside and outside. Building, as I should, for 800 years, I should resolve to be free from paperers and painters and plasterers, and, in short, from repairers of all kinds.

Sir Arthur. But, Ellesmere, as Milverton says, you have hitherto mentioned such trivial things—mere mint and cummin.

Ellesmere. I would reform dress. Is that a small thing?

Again: I would establish recreation—such recreation as has never hitherto been thought of. There should be no town, however small, which should not have its appointed place for recreation—for indoors and out-of-doors recreations. In every town—yes, almost in every village—there is musical talent enough to form the delight of the population if it were well developed.

Milverton. I really think that Ellesmere is upon the right tack now.

Ellesmere. I would also provide medical aid and service for almost every centre of population, however small.

By the way, I would certainly set up an Ædile.

Mrs. Milverton. I am very ignorant, but I do not know what an Ædile is. I suppose it is a person, not a thing. And if it is a person, what duties has he to perform?

Ellesmere. It is said that the late Bishop of London being asked by some inquisitive foreigner (what a nuisance it is when people are always wanting information) what an English Archdeacon had to do, judiciously replied, "Oh, an Archdeacon is a person who performs Archidiaconal duties." So I say an Ædile was a person who performed Ædilian duties. Seriously, I am afraid, in the presence of these learned men, to undertake to give a full account of an Ædile's duties. I may say briefly that he was the arch-putter-down of nuisances. If there was such an officer now—mark you, he was a very powerful man—I should not be plagued with street cries, with the howling of my neighbour's dog, with unwholesome odours of all kinds; and it would be his business to see that I was generally made comfortable. Only tell him that you suspected that your goods were dealt out to you with false weights and measures, and he would soon settle that matter for you. No Boards, nor Commissioners, nor people of that kind to consult, and to receive dreary official letters from; but you would have a swiftly-perambulating Lord Mayor with plenary authority. London would require a good many Ædiles.

Cranmer. Would you abolish lawyers?

Ellesmere. This is a very painful question; but I think I would. In the course of 800 years, using the legal talents of each generation, I

should be able to arrange and codify the law; and then I would only have public notaries.

Sir Arthur. What about war?

Ellesmere. Here I should shine. Here would come in that practical good sense of which I possess so large a share. We are such a set of foolish, quarrelsome little beasts, and we derive so much pleasure from hearing about sieges and battles, and knowing of the miseries of our fellow-creatures, that I should not endeavour to abolish war altogether. But what I should do is this. I should reduce the European armies in the following proportion. I should allow them one man for each thousand that they now possess. France, for instance, should have 700 soldiers; Austria, about the same number; Prussia, 600; England, 450; Russia, 800; and the United States, 900.[31] The great naval powers should be allowed a ship apiece, and one or two gun-boats. These little armies and navies should go about fighting away like fun, and undertaking what would then be thought great battles and sieges. The newspapers would still be well fed with interesting events; and taxation for war purposes would be insignificant. I should have outside the great cities little model cities, which should represent them for warlike purposes—a neat little Paris outside Paris: and I should scatter some squalidity in the way of building about Wimbledon Common, and call it in military despatches, London.

Again, another reform I should institute of the utmost magnitude is this: I should abolish after-dinner speeches.

Sir Arthur. The world would be grateful to you for that.

Ellesmere. Then I should bring my enormous power and experience to bear upon all literature. I should reduce three-volume novels to one.

Cranmer. But about the newspaper press? What should you do with that?

Ellesmere. For the sake of freedom, I should allow one article in each newspaper to be published without signature. To all the others I should require signature. I should make the newspapers into an octavo shape, with the leaves cut.

Johnson. What about the Church?

Ellesmere. I should forbid any one to preach a sermon more than once in three weeks. I would make sermons, instead of being nuisances, things to which the congregation would look forward with expectation, and listen with delight.

Mauleverer. What about education?

Ellesmere. Oh, in that matter I would institute reforms that would astound you. I would organize bands of well-instructed persons who should go about the country and teach everybody everything; and not merely teach in the ordinary way, but exemplify.

Cranmer. And this is your practical man, who laughs at theorists and enthusiasts!

Ellesmere. Recollect I have 800 years and more to work in. I should be able to organize a system which, if it were well developed, would far surpass the present. I would have people who could teach the rudiments of the best arts in life—who could instruct in cookery, in natural history—in the properties of earth, air, and water. I know what is to be said in respect of the shallowness that may result from mere lecturing; but, on the other hand, I have observed how greatly those people are enlightened, elevated, and instructed, who have had only what is called a smattering of knowledge, derived from judicious lectures. And then, look at this. There is a genius in some remote place or obscure position—one of those people described in Gray's Elegy,—

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear,"—

and the good seed of instruction falls upon his or her mind; and then we have an inventor. The consideration of Newton's life has always weighed much with me. It has been a great blessing to mankind that that wonderful man was not a labourer's child. Being a farmer's son, he got the *rudiments* of education, and upon that small platform what a building did he not erect! I mean my peasants' children to have, at least, all the advantages that Newton had.

Sir Arthur. I declare, Sir John, you are becoming quite eloquent.

Ellesmere. Oh! I should mainly rely upon education. That is the chief fulcrum upon which we could raise society.

Cranmer. What about political economy?

Ellesmere. Don't be unhappy, Cranmer. In the course of 800 years—about the 781st—I would settle the Bank Charter Act, and there should be no more of these absurd panics.

Milverton. What about government?

Ellesmere. I would in this respect institute reforms of which you are now only dreaming. Do you think I would be plagued to death with distant peoples' affairs? Not I. Do you think, as Sydney Smith says, I would have upon every bare rock, where a cormorant can hardly get its living, a Governor, and a Bishop, and an Attorney-General? Not but what the last-named officer would be useful anywhere; but still we must do without even him when we cannot afford to have him.

Milverton. I beg you all especially to remember what Ellesmere has just now said.

Ellesmere. Then, as to home government; I would abolish bribery and suppress bores in the House of Commons.

A man should prove to me that he knew something about government before he should govern; and not even Milverton himself, with all his schemes, should educe a more comprehensive form of official government than I, in my 800 years, would strive to create. You do not think I would have a Lord Privy Seal, do you, when the Privy Seal had ceased to be an entity of any importance?

Cranmer. What about the House of Lords?

Ellesmere. I would certainly make my House of Lords a senate consisting of the wisest and ablest men who had filled public functions, and also consisting of those men who, from their education, their health—or rather, their want of health—and their peculiar nature, were not especially fit to solicit popular suffrages, but were justly fitted to become members of a legislative assembly.

Milverton. What would you do about the poor?

Ellesmere. Well, I feel that the labouring poor have an immense claim upon us. I would render smooth and happy their lives in their latter days. I believe that we could well afford to do so, and that these poor people have the greatest claim upon us. If a man or woman has worked, we will say, for fifty or sixty years, in the production of the fruits of the earth for us, we are bound, I think, to render happy, as far as we can, the last years of this poor person's life.

Sir Arthur. I must still say, Sir John, that your inventive genius does not take great flights. You would crush the penny post, disinvent—I think that was the word—the telegraph, build a house, abolish bell-ringing, and send round lecturers, who—if I make out right—were chiefly to be good cooks, improve the House of Lords, and a few other little transactions of that kind. But the human mind——

Ellesmere. Wait a bit, Sir Arthur. I am going to take the human mind, or rather the human soul, in hand presently. You may depend upon it, however, that the human body needs our first attention. How can a man be virtuous in a smoky house, listening to the noise of those detestable bells, startled by the penny postman's rap, delivering bills all the day, and being threatened by those alarming telegraph envelopes?

But now for the human mind. I shall put down jealousy. I do not mean man-and-woman jealousy; but all that misery which arises from sensitive people being afraid that they are not liked enough, that they are not made enough of, that they are neglected, that somebody is foolish enough to prefer somebody else to them.

Milverton. Your 863 years will be full of work, I see.

Ellesmere. I am discontented with that word jealousy. Give me another word, Milverton.

Milverton. Claimfulness?

Ellesmere. Not a bad idea; but the word is an ugly word, and will not do.

Milverton. Claimativeness, then?

Ellesmere. That is better.

Now the reason that Milverton and I have been such good friends from boyhood upwards is, that we are both so free from jealousy, or, to use his own word, claimativeness.

This is no merit on his part; but a great one on mine. Of course Milverton has great faults in my eyes. He always likes everybody. He has fewer dislikes than any man I ever met with. Whereas I own to having a good many hearty dislikes—and he never partakes them with me. I might have been jealous or claimative a thousand times, seeing him take to people whom I cannot endure, and whom I might fancy he prefers to me.

You come and complain to him that So-and-So is a horrid bore, and Milverton replies:—"Well, but he has built a great many cottages on his estate,"—or "he is very kind to his three maiden aunts,"—or "he is very great in Byzantine literature,"—or "his views upon the digamma are sound,"—or "he is a great natural historian, supereminent in moths,"—or "he knows which are the edible fungi; and the poor would gain so much if the right fungi were brought into fashion."

Well, I distrust fungi: I do not care much for moths, they are sure to worry one by burning themselves in the candle as a poor clergyman is to invest his savings in Poyais Bonds or any other destructive security. I loathe the digamma, which I believe to have been a thing invented by schoolmasters to plague mankind, or rather boykind. I am not attracted by the three maiden aunts, and I am not going to live in So-and-So's cottages; but I know that So-and-So is an egregious bore, and I might naturally be jealous of Milverton's making so much of this man.

I am really so free from jealousy or claimativeness, that if I were to find that Milverton had invited a very agreeable party to Worth Ashton, and I was not asked, I should not feel that I was neglected; but should conclude at once that there was good reason for my not being asked—that the digamma man was to be there, and it was thought that I should speak irreverently of the digamma, or that there was scarlatina in the village, and that no risk was to be run for dear little Johnny. In a word, I should firmly believe that Milverton would long to have me with him; but could not manage it. I should not be in the least claimative. Indeed the more I consider myself, which I seldom have time to do sufficiently, the more I perceive that I am really a very great man (though Lady Ellesmere does not think so); and in the course of these 863 years I should make other people as great as myself.

Mr. Cranmer. But how is this to be done, Sir John?

Ellesmere. Why, man, I should direct all literature and all education, and all sermonizing; and I should have claimativeness written, talked, educated, and sermonized down.

Sir Arthur. Does it ever enter into your imagination, Sir John, that this claimativeness, which you inveigh against, proceeds from modesty?

Ellesmere. I hate modesty.

Lady Ellesmere. No wonder.

Milverton. But, seriously, my dear fellow, do consider that you have always been a successful man; that you have good health; that your enemies would say—not that I say it—that you have a little touch of hardness in your character; and that, perhaps, you do not make sufficient allowance for humble, timid, sensitive people, who are naturally prone to think they are neglected.

Ellesmere. It is all selfishness or immoderate self-esteem. That, too, is the cause of shyness. I am not shy.

Lady Ellesmere. Oh yes, you are, John. I do not know anybody who is more shy when he is in the company of those who do not sympathise with him, or understand him.

Ellesmere. Well, in the course of the 863 years I will get rid of shyness, and modesty, and claimativeness, and all my other vices—if I have any; and I will become a great man, and will bring all other people up to my level.

Sir Arthur. You are gradually to rule all literature. You kindly intimated to us that you would reduce all three-volume novels to one. How is this to be done?

Ellesmere. I am an outrageous and immoderate reader of fiction. I admire, as I have told you, the writers of fiction amazingly; but I have great faults to find with them, especially with their incidents.

Now, there is dear old Sandy there. He is just the sort of quiet, observant fellow to be mapping all our characters down, and forming us into a novel. I will address him as if he were an arch-novel writer, and will give him such a lecture as will make him the first novel-writer of his time.

Johnson. Pray, do, Sir John, for then my fortune is made.

Ellesmere. Now, Sandy, you are the arch-novel writer, and I am the hero of the novel.

In the first place I decline to go to a picnic party. You novel-writers always make something very important occur at a picnic, whereas in real life I have never found anything important occur, except that the earwigs are mixed up with the salt. I will not go to a picnic.

Johnson. Yes, sir.

Ellesmere. I will not be upset from a boat. No sooner do I read in any novel that there is a river, or a lake, near the principal house, than I know that I, the hero, am to be upset from a boat. Matilda and Louisa are to be with me. Matilda I really love, Louisa I am engaged to. In rescuing these two dear creatures I am to throw Louisa carelessly into the bottom of the boat, while I am to support Matilda in my arms, and to whisper to her (loud enough to be heard by Louisa), "Matilda, dearest, open your eyes once more, and gaze upon your beloved Augustus." I object, in this damp fashion, to be brought to betray my affections and to lengthen out the second volume. Do you hear, Mr. Novel-writer?

Johnson. I do, Mr. Hero. You shall not be upset from a boat.

Ellesmere. Thank you. Well then, sir, I decline, after having enjoyed my property for twenty years, to have a will of my great-uncle's discovered in an old book, which should dispossess me of the property, and make me liable for the back rents received during those twenty years.

Johnson. The great-uncle's will shall not be found, Sir John.

Ellesmere. Thank you. Again, I do not wish my uncle in India, Mr. Currie Pudder, to have made a fortune and to leave it to me exactly at the right moment. I can do without my uncle.

Sir Arthur. There are few people who can.

Johnson. I must not be rash. I cannot promise you, Sir John, that you are not to have Mr. Currie Pudder as your rich uncle in India; and if you please, I must kill him when I choose, and not when it is perfectly convenient to you.

Ellesmere. Very good. There is one comfort, Master Sandy, that *you* are not going to live for 863 years.

I am now going to impress upon Mr. Novel-writer one of my strongest objections to his usual mode of proceeding. I have declined many pleasant things; and now I decline to be made successful in any calling or profession upon having merely distinguished myself upon one occasion. In your novel, Johnson, if I, the hero, make a speech, as a lawyer or a politician, produce a remarkable sermon as a clergyman, cure one difficult case as a doctor—all of a sudden, honours, dignities, and riches pour in upon me like a flood, and Matilda's father withdraws all his objections. If I am a poet, and

write a sonnet; if I am a prose-writer, and write an essay; the great publishers all at once besiege my doors—that is, in the novel, for in real life I never experienced anything of the kind. My early sonnets were laughed at, and my first speeches were said to be "very well for a young man;" but Pump Court was not inundated by attorneys' clerks inquiring the way to Mr. Ellesmere's chambers.

The truth is, the world is very hard, and yet a somewhat elastic substance; and you have to hit it many consecutive blows, and to keep on hitting it, before you produce any such impression as will create for you a serviceable reputation.

Why, in a novel I have known Mr. Hero rise suddenly from being a private secretary to being a Cabinet Minister; but nothing like this happens in real life. When you see a successful man, you generally find him middle-aged, slightly bald, very haggard-looking, and generally with dints in his face which show how much he has endured and laboured. He is a much battered-about individual, and not at all like the young man who rejoices in Matilda's love, and who has suddenly, at one bound, prevailed over adverse fates, and conquered fortune.

Now, without any joking, it is a very mischievous thing to misrepresent life as novelists often do in this respect, and so to indicate that success is to be attained by anything but hard, long, and continuous effort.

Mr. Novel-writer, I would rather you would overwhelm me with rich uncles, or make me pick up treasure in Oxford Street, than delude me by making me put forth an all-commanding speech, sonnet, essay, or sermon. What do you say to this, Sandy?

Johnson. I really am placed in very unpleasant and difficult circumstances. My hero is without any money; and Matilda's father is obdurate. My hero has gone forth to seek his fortune in the world; and I really cannot wait until he is slightly bald and somewhat "battered," to use Sir John's expression, and Matilda has grown very stout, before they are to be married. What is to be done? There must certainly be an unlimited supply of uncles, or on that little bit of land which my hero has retained out of all his possessions, and which lies on the top of a down, a coal-mine must be discovered. I am not to be bullied by geology, at any rate.

Ellesmere. Well, discover your coal-mine for me, Sandy, in preference to your making statesmen and attorneys and publishers act contrary to their natures.

Well, then, I absolutely refuse to have a brain-fever brought on by change of circumstances and unaccustomed work at a critical time of my fortunes. I never had a brain-fever—even when Lady Ellesmere, benighted woman, at first refused to have anything to say to me. Have you had a brain-fever? or you, or you, or you, or you, or you? [turning to us all.]

We all answered in the negative.

Then why should I have one; and why should I reveal in moments of delirium my especial regard for Matilda—and her blue-grey eyes, black eyelashes, and auburn hair?

Johnson. I am very sorry not to be able to oblige a gentleman-hero in your position; but I am not sure that I can carry on my novel without your having a brain-fever.

Ellesmere. What tyrants and pedants these novel-writers are!

Well, one thing I protest against, namely—Matilda's coming and nursing me when I have the brain-fever. I cannot imagine a more disagreeable thing for a poor hero, when he is ill, than having the young woman he keeps company with come to look after him in his dangerous illness.

Would you like to hear the passage in the novel which describes the unpleasant transaction?

[We said that we should.]

"Edwin"—I like the name of Edwin better than Augustus—"had for a month been hovering between life and death. Dimly, during the last four days, he had been conscious of a presence which had seemed to him like a beautiful vision. On the fifth day he opened his eyes, and discerned a creature of joy and beauty which reminded him of his Matilda, but which he thought to be an angel.

"On the sixth day with a sigh he opened his eyes, regarded the vision steadily, and exclaimed, 'Matilda!'

"Later in the day he uttered the words, 'Again, again!' This was in reality a demand for more chicken broth, but was supposed by the bystanders to be a demand for the reappearance of his

Matilda—especially as he stretched out his white and wasted hand as if to have it clasped in hers."

I cannot go on any more. My feelings overpower me; but to speak plainly, Matilda is a nuisance in the sick-room. Now I am getting used to Lady Ellesmere; but if I were to tell the honest truth, I should prefer being nursed by Peter Robinson, my old clerk, to anybody in the world. Peter does not mind one's fractiousness. Scold Peter ever so much about the gruel, and he would only move up and down his bushy eyebrows and wink at you, as much as to say, "You are very tiresome; but I don't mind it a bit." Now Lady Ellesmere would go and cry—Yes, my dear, you know you would—and would never recognise the fact that an invalid is a tiresome, querulous, irritable, unreasonable being.

No: as the hero of the novel, I take my stand upon this. I will go to a picnic; I will be tumbled out from a boat; I will be dispossessed of my property; I will spring into full success at one bound; I will have a brain-fever; but I will not be nursed by the young woman that I keep company with. Don't talk to me about Richard Swiveller and the Marchioness. The Marchioness was accustomed to squalidity and misery; but my Matilda has been brought up in the best circles, and I cannot be plagued with her in a sick-room.

Johnson. I will be merciful, Sir John. You shall not be plagued with Matilda when you have a brain-fever.

Ellesmere. I could go on throughout the whole evening, cutting down the incidents which form the ordinary staple of modern novel-writers. For example, I would insist that when the novel-writer has brought eight or ten characters upon the scene, he shall not contrive their movements in such a way as that whether the hero or heroine remain in England, or go to Australia, or to India, he or she shall always find himself or herself surrounded by the same people.

Now I have said enough, I think, to show that if I could eliminate these foolish and unreasonable accidents and incidents, we should have no more three-volume novels; and by the time I had lived through my eight hundred and sixty-three years, all fiction would be so much like fact that there would be no more occasion for any biographers or historians; and if that would not increase the happiness of the world, I do not know what would.

But I have not done yet. I should devote myself greatly to instructing the people in the arts of reading and writing. In the course of 800 years I should persuade the English to open their mouths, and speak plainly. This would be a grand improvement.

Then, as to writing, I would insist upon everybody being able to write clearly. I am "lost in astonishment,"—do you know that phrase of Milverton's which he is so fond of, and also that other one of "humanity shudders when it contemplates?" Well, I am going to borrow them both for the occasion. I say that I am "lost in astonishment" at the audacity of people who write letters to me which I cannot read. And "humanity shudders when it contemplates," or at least it ought to "shudder when it contemplates," how very badly, all over the world, it writes. It is all the fault of that villain who invented a fine up-stroke.

There have been one or two sneers at my having mentioned only small matters. Did you hear that I meant to put down the bores in the House of Commons? Do you call that a small thing? Why, all the other things I should accomplish in the first 300 years; and the remaining 500 I should devote to putting down bores and sending up balloons. Not easy matters, either of them; but still, I believe, within the reach of human power.

Sir Arthur. You said something about reforming dress, Ellesmere?

Ellesmere. Yes; the lion should have his mane again.

Cranmer. I haven't a conception what he means.

Ellesmere. Why, that the male creature should dress well.

Mrs. Milverton. But what about us?

Ellesmere. My dear Blanche, I should devote thirty solid years to your improvement; and, in the course of those thirty years, I should institute two such great reforms in your nature, that I should make you all both perfectly lovable and perfectly lovely.

I should make each woman not to be afraid of all other women. They are to fear us, and not their own sex—consequently a woman should not be ashamed of going out five times following to parties in the same dress, if the dress were becoming, and pleased her husband, her brother, or her lover.

Lady Ellesmere. The second great reform?

Ellesmere. I should develop vanity amongst women—personal vanity—which seems now to be so dead amongst them.

Sir Arthur. I have always prided myself upon having the greatest admiration for women, and never uttering any foolish sneer against them; but Sir John goes far beyond me. I did imagine, I dare say without due thought, that they had vanity enough.

Ellesmere. No, no, Sir Arthur, you are quite mistaken. Each woman sacrifices her own personal appearance to the conceits of fashion—whereas, when I had properly developed every woman's personal vanity, she would only think how she could dress herself in the manner that would be most becoming to her. At present, they are all sadly deficient in a care for their own especial beauties.

Mrs. Milverton. There is a great deal of truth in what Sir John says.

Ellesmere. I believe there is, but I have yet a great deal more to say.

I would make everything in the way of festivity shorter and earlier. Balls should begin at eight o'clock in the winter, and nine in the summer. Dinners should never last more than two hours, concerts be abridged by one hour. There should never be performed more than one play at a time. As for evening parties, unless they are very much improved in the course of these 900 years, I shall abolish them altogether.

At remote railway stations, I shall have lending libraries. Is there anything more suicidal in its tendency than having to wait at one of these stations for two mortal hours?

Now I come to what I suppose you will call a great thing, as if the things I have just proposed were little things! I shall do away with the adulteration of food and drugs. I believe I could do that now, with my present term of life, if I could only get one or two clever young members of Parliament to back me, and get up the facts, leaving me to see how the matter could be dealt with legally.

Milverton. This is really good, Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. Now I don't take that as any compliment—just as if the other things were not good!

Why, man! do you suppose that there are not as many lives injured or lost by ill-managed festivity as even by the adulteration of

food? And recollect this, that I mean to take care of the recreation of the poor, and not allow them to bolt down their beer and their spirits without tempering it with plenty of real recreation—open air, music, dancing, quoits, bowls, and cricket; and for quiet people, like Milverton, dominoes, backgammon, and whist.

I shall set my face against hurry.

Lastly, I shall put down parentheses, snub fine writing of all kinds, and make people say what they have to say in clear, distinct sentences, with a proper nominative, verb, and accusative; and nobody shall use words of which he does not understand the meaning; consequently, the words "objective" and "subjective" will be banished from the language.

I have said my say.

Sir Arthur. I must sum up, for I have noted down the great labours which Ellesmere purposes for himself in these 863 years.

You will observe that three-fourths of them have reference to getting rid of something tiresome, and indicate the natural wishes of a man who, unhappily for himself in this tiresome world, is easily bored.

He would abolish the penny post, disinvent the telegraph, silence bell-ringing, stop the growth of great cities, build a good house, reform dress (chiefly by making women more vain), abolish lawyers and substitute notaries, reduce armies 999 per 1000, send lecturers on practical subjects throughout the country, put down bores in the House of Commons and set up balloons, crush all jealousy, do away with after-dinner speeches, reduce all three-volume novels to one volume, make everybody write well, make everything in the way of recreation shorter and earlier, prevent the adulteration of food, provide lending libraries at remote stations, set his face against hurry, and put down parentheses.

Goodly work, all of it! Let us hope that he will make a beginning of some of this work during his natural lifetime.

Ellesmere. One thing more! My afterthoughts are, perhaps, the best of my thoughts. I will have it declared, absolutely and finally, that this nation does not undertake to protect missionaries who go into distant countries with which we have no settled diplomatic relations.

Great will be the joy of the Three per Cents, as Sydney Smith would say, when I have brought the nation to this most needful resolve.

More last words! I have a brilliant idea. Indeed I am as full of ideas as an egg is of meat.

I told you that I should make a small London for military purposes, out of London—on Wimbledon Common, I think. Well, I shall remove most of the London statues to that small town. If the enemy should be of an æsthetic turn of mind, and should gain entrance into the town, they will be so disgusted, horrified, and amazed by these statues that they will fall an easy prey to our troops. On the other hand, if they should survive the shock, and take the town, they will carry off the statues as trophies taken from the barbarians. At any rate, we shall get rid of the statues from London proper.

Now, is it not desirable that I should have this long life, which Milverton and Sandy are kind enough to arrange for me, if only to effect this grand reform?

I end with what I began with—that Milady must not have this length of life too. You know women are so persevering, and so one idea'd. Men can be bored out of anything. I do feel that if you gave her the same vitality as I am to have, it would be Lady Ellesmere, and not Sir John, who would govern the world. And I leave you to guess how it would then be governed. Eventually, she would put down smoking, and take away from the male part of the human race the chief element of consolation—the one thing which enables men to bear their troubles with an equal mind.

Our conversation had now lasted so long that it was getting towards evening, and the gong began to sound for dressing. Mr. Mauleverer, who had hitherto been silent, now burst out with the exclamation,—"Oh, what dinners we should have, if Sir John could rule us for eight hundred and sixty-three years! What a pretty idea that was of his to send about the country consummate cooks as lecturers. But humanity, as I have always told you, is a poor creature. And even in the greatest characters,—Sir John's, for instance,—there are sad defects and shortcomings. The remarks he made about edible fungi were those of a man, comparatively speaking, small-minded, prejudiced, and ignorant."

We all laughed at Mr. Mauleverer's enthusiasm, and then separated to dress for dinner.

31. It must be remembered that this conversation took place some time ago.

CHAPTER XV.

I am so anxious to get on with the story of Realmah that I do not like to interrupt it by the account of long conversations. I cannot help, however, giving a part of a conversation which occurred when we assembled together to hear a reading. Sir John Ellesmere had been propounding one of his favourite maxims; namely, that all vice is but dulness.

Ellesmere. Not idleness, you know; but dulness. How often the word dull could advantageously be substituted for wicked, or malicious, or cruel, or criminal! Many a puffy, fluffy sentence of historians might be most advantageously abridged if they would but use the right words. I will give an instance.

An historian of the Huns, a learned Hun, not known to many people, but much studied by me, writes as follows of Attila:—"The great King's disposition, which, even in his earliest years, could not have been accounted as humane and forbearing as that of other Huns, was now exacerbated by the impertinent and unwarrantable resistance which had been opposed to his victorious and civilizing arms by the inhabitants of Verona, Mantua, and Brescia: he felt that the power he had gained by unsparing vigour might be lost by the exercise of a mercy that would have been considered weakness: religious controversy, in the course of which a fanatic Christian had dared to suggest that the great King was the scourge of God, had not sweetened his temper, or soothed his suspiciousness: moreover, the number of his prisoners embarrassed and delayed his progress; and accordingly Attila resolved to put them all to the sword."

Now, I should merely say, Attila was dull that day; and, wanting something to amuse him, ordered a general slaughter of the prisoners.

Sir Arthur. What an historian is lost to the world in this great lawyer! But what is your remedy, Ellesmere, for dulness?

Ellesmere. Oh, inducing men to take an interest in what you would call little things; in cultivating all manner of small pursuits—that is, if they cannot be persuaded to take up great ones. A man who loves his garden, and works in it, is sure to be a less dull,

and therefore a better man, than other men who have no such pursuit. This is a very commonplace remark; but it is true.

Milverton. I quite agree with you.

Ellesmere. I don't believe that any of you see the full force of what I mean. Calumny, ill-nature, malice—all the minor vices, which, however, give so much pain to the world, are merely functions, to use a mathematical phrase, of dulness.

Now, suppose I were to die suddenly. I might easily do so of irritable over-yawning some day in the House of Commons, or at the Bar. In the —— case, that fellow Wordall spoke consecutively for three days—his speech in all exceeding fourteen hours, when it might easily have been made in one and a half. I had to listen, because I had to reply to the fellow, and I declare to you I might have expired then and there, from suppressed irritability.

Well, I die. Now I do believe I am not an unpopular fellow, and that a good many men rather like me than not; but their first feeling would be of satisfaction at something having happened that interested them, that they could go home and tell their wives: "My dear, such a sad thing has happened; Sir John Ellesmere is dead—and suddenly. You've heard of him, of course? He was Leonard Milverton's great friend. A much cleverer fellow, by the way, as people, who knew them both, have often told me! There was always some good saying of his floating about the world. He was the man who said that the greatest humbug of all humbugs is the pretending to despise humbugs."

"Poor fellow, I am afraid he had a sad time of it with Milady! You have only to look at her face to see that she has a temper of her own. A *nez* does not become *retroussé* by internal *angelic* influences." (Don't hit me, Lady Ellesmere. Milverton, you should protect your guests against battery and assault.)

Now this heartlessness about my death; this just but depreciatory view of poor Milverton; this painful truthfulness about poor Lady Ellesmere,—all of it is the result, not of ill-nature, but of dulness. Dulness it is that creates the momentary unkindness. The same thing with calumny; people calumniate because they are dull; in nine times out of ten they do not mean any harm!

Sir Arthur. Moralist as well as historian! We shall never come to the end of Ellesmere's powers. But what pursuit have you got, Sir John, which always prevents you from being dull, and therefore malicious?

Lady Ellesmere. Why, don't you know, Sir Arthur? Perhaps, though, you thought the other day, when my amiable husband talked about setting up balloons, he was joking. Would that it were so! There is a back room in our house in town, where knocking and hammering, and screwing and pasting, and warming and cooling, and gas-burning, are constantly going on. He and his clerk—for they are both bitten with the same mania—shut themselves up in that room for hours; and it is as much as my place is worth to disturb them. Sometimes, when things are going well with them, I am kept awake through the small hours of the night to hear all about the machine, which is to combine lightness with strength and with power, and is to enable us all to be aëronauts. Truth, not dulness, compels me to say that my husband has all other demerits known in the human character but that of dulness—that is, dulness for himself, because he can make other people dull by being so eminently disagreeable.

Sir Arthur. I think you are paid off, Ellesmere, for what you have made your friends say about Lady Ellesmere; but if we once get into recriminations of this kind, we shall never have the reading: so please, Milverton, begin.

Ellesmere. Stay a bit. I must say more. I want to show you how benevolent my view of dulness makes me. When I hear that any man has been speaking ill of me behind my back, I am not angry with him, but I merely say to myself, "How dull he must have been to have had nothing better to do!" I long to address to him an oration in the form of a single sentence, the outlines of which I have often imagined, and talked over to myself. The gracious Milverton was good enough, as you will perhaps remember, to tell me, patronisingly, that some sentence I uttered some time ago was not so bad.

Lady Ellesmere. Take breathing time, John. I wonder, by the way, whether ears can take hearing time; for, if so, we must all prepare for John's oration, which is to be compressed into one grand, full (perhaps we may say overflowing) sentence.

Ellesmere. Yes, my dear, prepare; for it is always a difficult thing for a woman to listen for any time to anything that is well worth hearing.

I should take my dull maligner aside (probably it would be in Westminster Hall), tell him I had heard what he had said of me—prove to him that it was not my demerit, but his dulness, which had caused him to speak in that manner of me; and should then address him thus:—

"What, dull! when you do not know what gives its loveliness of form to the lily, its depth of colour to the violet, its fragrance to the rose; when you do not know in what consists the venom of the adder any more than you can imitate the glad movements of the dove; when, unlike the wisest of monarchs and of men, far from knowing trees as he did, 'from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall,' you do not know anything even of the two extremes of Solomon's great knowledge in this behalf; and when even these crushed syringa[32] leaves might form a subject for you to investigate, which, for the remainder of your natural life, should save you from dulness:—what, dull! when the all-pervading forces and powers of chemistry are unknown to you; when light, heat, electricity, are mere words to you, clad with no more ideas for you than they are for that boy who is whistling as he goes along, unmindful, nay unconscious, of the beauty and grandeur of this glorious building:—what, dull! when earth, air, and water are all alike mysteries to you; and when, as you stretch out your hand, you do not touch anything the properties of which you have mastered; while, all the time, Nature is inviting you to talk earnestly with her, to understand her, to subdue her, and to be blessed by her:—what, dull! when you have not travelled to the ends of the earth, and have not seen what your forefathers, the mighty men of old—some of whom were not dull men—have formed, and built, and restrained, and vanquished:—what, dull! when you have travelled over so few minds, and have not read the hundred great books of the world—for there have been at least a hundred books written by men who were not dull, and whose works fulfil the words of Samson, when he went down to Timnath to take a wife from among the Philistines, and found that which, as he said, combined leonine strength with honied sweetness:—what, dull! when you know

nothing of the niceties of theology, the subtleties of metaphysics, the closeness of logic, the completeness of mathematics, the intricacies, and withal the beauties, of jurisprudence and of law:—dull, you say; and you know nothing, comparatively nothing, of the long, finely-woven chain-work of history, telling you, as best it can, of the innumerable tribes of men who have fought and bled—sinned, suffered, and rejoiced—even as we are now doing, in these which are rashly denominated the later ages:—what, dull! when Art divine, whether expressed in painting, in sculpture, or in architecture, is a thing which, even when you admire it, you ignorantly gaze at, as the heathens at Athens ignorantly worshipped their 'Unknown God;'—what, dull! when there are thousands, nay millions of human beings, at least as worthy as yourself (ay, and poor animals too; for God only knows how much they need care, and what a burden lies upon our souls for our conduct to them), some of whom might be aided, cheered, improved, invigorated, soothed, by the smallest deed or word of sympathy on your part. Go away, man; learn something, do something, understand something; and let me hear no more of your dulness condensing itself into malignity."

Sir Arthur. I think I see the poor man dazed and amazed by Ellesmere's torrent of grand words, and passing the remainder of his life, not in the expression of dull malignity, but in the vain endeavour to recall Ellesmere's sentence. By the way, is it not droll to see that he brought in, unconsciously, one or two legal phrases, such as, "in this behalf"—"Solomon's knowledge in this behalf?"

Mauleverer. It was a full and gorgeous sentence. Ellesmere would be a grand fellow if he were not so disagreeable sometimes.

Lady Ellesmere. When? How? Where? Never to anybody, Mr. Mauleverer, but to me; and he has a right to be so to me, if he please.

Milverton. Don't be angry, Mildred. Mauleverer only said that to tease you; and, as the vulgar say, to get "a rise" out of you.

Lady Ellesmere. I am much obliged to him, I am sure.

Ellesmere. Now then, Milverton, you may proceed. After a great effort of mind, one can never stoop to answer small criticisms.

Milverton. I will proceed: but after one of these grand flights of Ellesmere's, which occur about two or three times a year, I really am

ashamed to read to you my poor, slow, dull, creeping, crawling sentences.

[The reading was then continued.]

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SHAM FIGHT.

In the embroidered language of the Sheviri (and all people in the beginning of their education are fond of this embroidery), a hundred times since the last day of the siege had the celestial maiden who adorns the heavens grown up from delicate childhood to the full beauty of womanhood, when we are again called to look upon the town of Abibah.

Very different was it from that town as it might have been beheld on the day succeeding the siege. It had greatly increased both in size and beauty. Its new foundations had been made much more substantial; and the buildings placed upon them were of a much more enduring character than those which had been consumed in the great fire. That part of the town, however, which had not suffered from fire remained unaltered, and Realmah still continued to occupy his palace in that quarter.

Most men hate details, and it is a delightful thing for the historian and the novelist, as well as for their readers, that they can judiciously pass over details; and, as in dramatic writing, bring a fresh scene before you without tiresome explanations as to what had occurred in the interval between that scene and the previous one commemorated.

It was early on a beautiful morning that Realmah came forth from his palace, accompanied by many courtiers and attendants. He was much altered in appearance. He walked with greater difficulty, and his face was deeply marked with the long furrows ploughed in by that sedulous husbandman, Care. He was more richly dressed than he had formerly been, but the old habit of carelessness was still strong upon him, so that his clothes seemed to be huddled on anyhow.

As he descended the steps of the palace, he tripped and nearly fell, whereupon a courtier, who—though a courtier—knew but little of human nature, rushed forward to assist the King; which assistance

Realmah waved away with a gesture of petulance, for great people do not like to be thought failing in strength, and do not approve of being publicly assisted.

Joy and excitement sat upon the faces of all the people of Abibah that morning—on all, at least, but that of the King; and he seemed not unhappy, but only anxious.

A large historical work might be written to commemorate the proceedings of Realmah during these waxings and wanings of the celestial goddess by whose movements they chiefly measured time. There is, however, so much material for history in the world, that there are long periods abounding in great transactions which are obliged to be chronicled in a few sentences; and every day the need for compression in historical narrative becomes greater.

This day was the day of the year on which a festival was held to commemorate the last day of the siege, when the greater part of the city was consumed by fire, and when the men of the North were driven away.

Hitherto this festival had been celebrated in a commonplace way—by games, feasts, and illuminations; but to-day a much more striking mode of commemorating the great event was to be adopted. The scene was to be acted over again, without, of course, the accompaniment of fire; but there were to be parties of besieged and besiegers; in short, a mock fight. The King had with great difficulty been induced to give his consent to this mode of celebration.

He had been inclined to remind his people of a very ancient proverb which had much meaning in it, and ran thus, "*In the games there are no two sons of the same mother*," intimating that even in playful contest all the ties of brotherhood are forgotten. The King, however, restrained himself from saying this, by thinking of another proverb, "*Why tell him that his two eyes look two different ways?*" meaning, it is no good telling people of evils which they cannot cure.[33]

Still, Realmah did not like the idea of this mimic fight, and was not by any means sure that it would not lead to serious consequences; the more so as he had detected some unwillingness to serve in those young men to whom it had fallen by lot to play the part of the besiegers. However, they all looked very happy on this bright

morning, for the spirits of people are always raised when they put on their best clothes.

Iron weapons had been brought to a great state of perfection, but these were not allowed to be used on the present occasion, except by the King's guard, who were not to take any part in the action.

During the earlier part of the day everything went well; but, after some hours of struggle, men's tempers began to be irritated; and what annoyed the besiegers greatly was the part which the women took in the fight, both in jeering at them, and also in throwing down upon them glutinous masses made from the gums of trees, which caused very severe contusions.

It was in the new market-place that the sham fight raged most furiously. The time came when the leaders of the besieging force were to give the signals for retreat; but some of them, especially the younger ones, refrained from giving the appointed signals, and the common soldiers were so excited that those orders which were given by the older officers were not attended to. In short, the fight at this point became a real one.

Realmah, wearied with the day's proceedings, and seeing that, as far as he had observed, nothing unpleasant had occurred, had retired to his palace, when news was brought to him that the worst he had anticipated was occurring.

Hastily summoning his guards, he rushed to the market-place and into the thickest of the fray. Before the combatants were thoroughly aware of his presence, he had received two wounds, one in the arm and one in the thigh; and several people were either slain or much injured by the royal guards in their endeavour to protect the fallen King.

At last the tumult was allayed, and Realmah was carried back on a litter to his palace.

For some time he was insensible, for he was a man very sensitive to the effects of pain; but, to the astonishment of the Varnah and of all the bystanders, when the medicine-men had dressed his wounds, he burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, and was heard to mutter to himself many times, "There never was anything so fortunate."

Throughout the city that evening it was generally reported and believed that the King was delirious. The shame and vexation of the

men of Abibah were unutterable; as also their fears, for they feared that they would never be forgiven by their King.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

REALMAH'S GREAT PROJECT.

They erred, indeed, who thought that the words of the King, which had expressed his joy, and declared his good fortune, in having been wounded, were the words of delirium. Never had Realmah been more sane than when, with laughter, he had uttered those words; for he saw in that occurrence an additional means of carrying into action a project which, from his earliest years, had been very near to his heart.

He was one of those men who, even when not gifted with genius, or with manifold talents, yet have their way in the world, simply because they never become tired of their projects.

What chance have ordinary men against such men as these? The ordinary man, after he has said his say a few times, begins to be tired of that saying. If he is a person of any refinement, he becomes ashamed of so much repetition. He seeks to clothe his idea, even if he maintains it, in new words; and at last, perhaps, he varies, not only the expression, but the substance of his idea. Now, the world of thought is a thing which requires to be penetrated by constant hammering in the same place. What would be thought of the woodman who became tired or ashamed of driving his axe into the one cutting which he had begun to make in the tree? It would be a long time before that tree would be felled, if it had only such an inconstant woodman to attack it.

In a neighbouring territory, belonging to a people called the Azarees, there was a narrow strip of land which was occupied by a fortress belonging to the Sheviri. Some generations past, the Sheviri had conquered the Azarees; and, after the conquest, had held this strip of land, and built this fortress, as a means of keeping the Azarees in a kind of subjection, and also of controlling all the tribes on the lake which had to pass that way, as it was in the nature of a defile which had to be passed by many peoples.

From his earliest years, bred up in government in the house of his uncle, Realmah had been much accustomed to listen to the talk of statesmen and ambassadors. The silent, reserved boy had heard the

old statesmen of his nation gloat over the fact that this fortress was a thorn in the side of all their enemies, and even of their allies. He had also noticed what a bitter subject of complaint the existence of this fortress had often been with the ambassadors from foreign tribes. Without daring to breathe a word of what he thought, the studious boy had come to a conclusion totally different from his elders, and had even, at the age of fourteen, resolved, that if ever he should come to power, he would win the hearts of all the nations of the lake by abolishing, in time of peace, this obnoxious fortress.

He *had* come to power; and the resolve of his boyhood was as much fixed in his mind as ever. With that patient sagacity, however, which was so striking a part of his character, he waited for some time before he even dared to broach to his wise favourite, the court jester, the strange idea which beset him. Not from the jester even, not from any of his most intimate friends, did he at first win a single word of encouragement for his great project. They had not in their vocabulary the word "romantic," or they would have used it; but they had the word "starlight," which they used in the same sense as we use moonshine, signifying something which is unreal, which pretends to be warm, and is not. There was not a soul to whom Realmah at first confided his great project who did not intimate to him that his idea was starlight. Even the Ainah, to whom he told it first, had but said in answer, "If all men were like my Realmah, it would be well to be so generous; but there are none like him." And Realmah sighed, for the fondness of her words did not console him for the absence of her sympathy with him in this his dearest project.

The way in which his proposition was received by three or four of his principal councillors may well illustrate the difficulties with which Realmah had to contend. When he did at last broach the matter to the court jester, that great functionary, as was natural, conveyed his views chiefly by means of a fable.

He said that of course the great king, who was not only the greatest but the most learned man in his dominions, must know the old fable about "the good-natured Otlocol."

"That magnificent but fearful creature, the Otlocol, was wont in former days to hold long conversations with mankind; and the particular Otlocol in question would often walk about the ancient streets of Abibah.

"One day a friend of his, a man, said, 'My good Otlocol, why do you take such trouble in getting your food, being up all night sometimes, as I hear, to hunt after the poor reindeer?[34] If you would but allow me just to break off the ends of those two formidable teeth of yours, and pare your front claws a little, everybody would be delighted to partake their food with you. But now, good-natured as you are, people are a little afraid of you. *Then*, even the little children would share their crusts with you.'

"The good-natured Otlocol, always ready to believe what his friends told him, consented. The teeth were broken, and the nails were pared, by his kind friend. But somehow or other, from that day forth, the Otlocol grew thinner and thinner. He did not, after all, find so many people ready to share their bones and their crusts with him. He was no longer interesting, now that he could not do anybody any harm; and, in the end, the poor animal died of starvation.

"That is all your poor jester has to say, my prince, to your magnanimous proposal."

The next person that Realmah tried was Llama-Mah. That courtier was dismayed. He had never yet disagreed with the King; but there are bounds to everything, and even Llama-Mah could not give his approbation to the surrender of this fortress. But though he could not assent, he could flatter; and, after a few minutes' silence, he said to Realmah: "The King is always wise and judicious; but I have observed sometimes that his wisdom takes a higher flight upon the second discussion of any great subject than that which it did on the first."

Realmah knew full well what a decided negative was most unwillingly conveyed by Llama-Mah in these flattering words.

Not daunted, however, he resolved to lay the question before Lariska. Here there was not so fatal and immediate a negative, for Lariska was always delighted to discuss anything; but he had so many ingenious things to say against the proposition, as well as some few things for it, that Realmah felt more disheartened by his discourse than by that of either of the others.

The next day the King broached the matter to Londardo. Now, as we know, Londardo was one of those men who think that the reasons for, or against, anything, are about equal, and that the main object in

this world's affairs is to adopt some course, and to keep consistently to that. After listening carefully to Realmah's explanation of his project, Londardo looked very grave; and, to Realmah's astonishment, asked for two days' delay before he should say anything at all about the matter.

When those two days had elapsed, Londardo waited upon the King. Without any preamble he said, "It is a great idea, and I should be for its adoption if only we could, from this moment, act consistently with the continuous generosity that such a plan demands. It will not do to be conquering here, and giving up the results of conquest there. For example, you had thought of punishing the disobedience of the Malquas—that must be abandoned, and you must give them the option of refusing all allegiance to you. From all quarters there must come, at the same time, reports of your generosity and of your unwillingness to place a yoke upon any new tributaries.

"Public affairs differ from private affairs only in largeness; and, if you observe, the effect of great forbearance and generosity in dealing with private individuals, breaks down solely because you do not go far enough. You keep up some restriction, or maintain some advantage; and, in doing this, you retain as much odium as if you had maintained all your advantages, and kept up all your restrictions. I will vote as you wish me in the council, provided you will, from that time, be consistent in a course of complete generosity."

This conversation took place in the early days of Realmah's reign. Londardo, as we have seen, was slain by the Northmen; and bitterly did the King mourn over the loss of such a counsellor—especially in regard to this great project.

It is not needful to give in detail the constant efforts made, both in council and out of council, by Realmah to win over his chief friends and councillors. Suffice it to say, however, that gradually he did win them over.

I do not think he would have been able to do so, but that this project of abandoning the fortress called Ravala-Mamee was consistent with the rest of Realmah's policy, which had proved eminently successful. The older councillors were astounded when they found that embassies came to Realmah, absolutely offering him

a kind of suzerainty over nations that had hitherto been in no manner whatever connected with the Sheviri.

These councillors began to see that there really is such a thing as the power of love, as well as the power of hatred. Oh, if Realmah had but been blessed with such a religion as Christianity in his time, what a difference there might have been in the aspect of the world!

The councillors had been at last convinced of the wisdom of Realmah's policy, but they dreaded its being put forth to the people. Year after year they had persuaded the King to postpone the announcement of his intentions, always using the common phrase of statesmen in all ages and in all nations, that the time was not ripe for it; *as if the time were ever ripe for the utterances of a great man—as if he did not create the time!*

It may appear surprising to the hearers of this tale that these secret conferences of Realmah with his friends and his councillors on this important subject, lasting as these conferences did for so many years, never became known to his people, nor even to the inhabitants of Abibah. This fact was in direct contradiction to a celebrated proverb, or rather trilogy of proverbs, said to have been made by the King himself.

It is this—*The dragon-fly told the bee a secret: the whole hive of bees knew it that evening.*

The dragon-fly told another dragon-fly the secret: for three whole days it remained a secret.

The dragon-fly told the lark the secret: the lark soared up to heaven and did not think much of the dragon-fly's secret: the other larks never knew it.

This proverb, naturally a kingly one, meant: "Trust equals a little: inferiors not at all: superiors (that is, me the King) thoroughly."

Now, Realmah had not been betrayed by these inferiors to whom he had trusted the great secret. But the reason why it had never been betrayed was evidently this—that each man who knew it, feared that he might be considered by the common people as a traitor to his country, if he knew of such a project, and had not at once put his veto upon it.

It was as if, in the times of Louis XIII. of France, a man should have been known to have had correspondence with the Court of Spain.

This will show the dangers and the difficulties which Realmah had to encounter in the execution of this great design. In truth, for the last twenty years he had maintained this project at the risk of his throne, and even of his life.

Milverton. I do not think that I am especially timid or nervous on ordinary occasions of speaking or talking. I feel what I suppose all people feel when they have to make a speech. One's heart beats a little faster for a few minutes before the time, and one feels that, on this particular occasion, one is sure to make a failure of it. But when I have got through my first sentence, and have looked into the eyes of my audience, I am seldom troubled by any further embarrassment.

So, in talking: I never feel nervous or uncomfortable, except when I have to explain something, or to argue about something, that will require a certain portion of time to be given to it, and which time I know my auditors will not, or cannot give. One becomes very nervous then.

Cranmer. That is a very frequent case. I have often felt it myself.

Ellesmere. Probably; but proceed, Milverton, with what you were going to say.

Milverton. Well, I was going to say that to-day I am in a permanent state of nervousness, which has almost hitherto been unknown to me.

I feel that you are to a certain extent representative men. If I fail in persuading any of you, I know that I have no chance with the world in general.

Of course, you see what I have been aiming at, and why I have written the story of Realmah. I do not care at all about your saying that mine has been an inartistic mode of proceeding—namely, the writing of a story with a purpose. It is my way of doing the thing, and you must bear with it. At any rate you must own, that I have followed Goethe's great maxim of not talking away my interest in the subject. You have never heard me speak about it, and yet it has been in my mind for years.

Ellesmere. What a restraint the man must have put upon himself! It is just what my favourites, the dogs, do. They could talk well enough about the subjects nearest to their hearts, but they have read their Carlyle, and they know that stern purpose is gradually frittered away by idle talk.

Milverton. Now I want to discuss the matter most carefully with you; and you must allow me to commence the discussion. I should wish to divide my subject into five heads.

Ellesmere. Good heavens! this is becoming serious. I should like to tell you my experience about a sermon that was divided into five heads.

Milverton. Now, don't joke, Ellesmere.

Ellesmere. Sir Oliver Roundhead come again! who never laughed himself, nor ever permitted any of his family to laugh. But, indeed, I will be a thoroughly good boy, and as serious as the men who sell fish about the streets, for I have observed they never joke with their customers.

Milverton. (1) *The diminution of expense*. And to this branch of the subject I especially invite Mr. Cranmer's attention, reminding him of Tennyson's words,

"And that eternal want of pence
Which vexes public men;"

which I know vexes him and Mr. Gladstone, and sundry other great financial authorities.

You, Sir Arthur, who love the works of the great Greek tragedians, will recollect that passage in the "Prometheus vinctus," in which Prometheus is exhorted to cease from his philanthropic ways. I have often thought how that applies to modern times. If Governments will indulge in philanthropic ways, they must be prepared for constantly increasing expense in this direction. For instance, if we are to go on taking care of the health and sanitary conditions of the people, the expenses of our Medical Department must go on increasing.

If we are to go on educating the people, the expenses of the Education Department must inevitably increase.

If we are to go on cultivating art and science amongst our people, the expenses of the Art and Science Department must also increase.

If we are to go on caring for the recreation of the people, there will be increased expense in this direction.

And, taking the Civil Service generally, considering that, under the new order of things, it will be required to be strengthened and added to, rather than to be reduced, and that of all men in this country, excepting country surgeons, the public servants are the worst paid, I do not see how we can hope for any reduction of expenditure under the heads I have just enumerated.

I stop here for the moment, and wish to know what Sir Arthur and Mr. Cranmer will say.

Sir Arthur. You are quite right, Milverton; these philanthropic ways must not cease.

Cranmer. And I have no hope of reducing the Civil Service estimates. That excellent man, Joseph Hume, did not look for much economy in that direction.

Milverton. Very good. Where, then, must we look for it? I answer, mainly in the naval, military, and colonial departments.

Ellesmere. Of course we all know that. So far the Court is with you.

Milverton. Now, I say that the way in which the expenses in those departments are to be reduced, *is not by diminishing expense over the whole surface generally, and so producing general weakness everywhere, but by totally doing away with the need for expense at certain fixed points*.

The above I hold to be a great maxim, applicable alike in private and in public affairs. Don't stint your wife and your children, and your servants and your horses, but do away with the carriage and horses at once, if you really cannot afford to keep it handsomely. Of course you see how I mean to apply this. The wisest political move in our time was the cession of the Ionian Islands. What was the expense to us annually, Cranmer, of the Ionian Islands?

Cranmer. Say 50,000*l*.

Milverton. May I ask you, Cranmer, what has been the expense to us of fortifying Alderney?

Cranmer. About 1,177,000*l*.

Milverton. What about Bermuda?

Cranmer. The cost incurred by Imperial Funds for the defence of Bermuda, in 1859-60, was, if I remember rightly, about 87,000*l*.

Milverton. And Gibraltar?

Cranmer. About 420,000*l*. for that year; and I do not think that was a heavy year.

Milverton. For the present I drop the question of expense. You are men of that degree of intelligence and knowledge of the world, that one need not bother you with details, and need only indicate to you a course of argument.

I am now going to the second branch of my subject.

(2) *The increase of prestige*. Mark you, I have not confined myself to any particular case. I do not choose to tell you whether Realmah's fortress of Ravala-Mamee means Gibraltar, or Malta, or Bermuda. I argue the case generally; and I say that that nation will gain greatly in prestige which first dares to do some great act of renunciation of the kind that I have intimated. Am I right in this?

Sir Arthur. I am with you.

Cranmer. I doubt.

Mauleverer. Dreams! Moonshine! Starlight!

Ellesmere. I should like the question to be more specific. The peculiar circumstances of the case would much affect my opinion.

Milverton. Well, then, I will be more specific. Suppose that we possess a fortress naturally belonging to another great nation, which nation this fortress menaces, discourages, and mortifies; and suppose that this great nation is one which is never likely to come into direct hostility with ourselves, and the amity of which great nation we should probably win by such an act of renunciation, what should you say then?

Ellesmere. I should say that it would be a grand thing to do; but I should wish to know whether this fortress might not be one which it would be important for us to hold in reference to our own military and naval movements, and our possible hostility with other States. I think that is rather an ugly question, Master Milverton.

Milverton. It is; but I shall be prepared to answer it in its proper place. I beg you to keep to the point, and to answer me, whether there would be any loss of prestige in such an act of renunciation as I propose?

Ellesmere. No, there would not. Prestige is never lost by anything which indicates fearlessness——

Sir Arthur. And magnanimity.

Ellesmere. A thing may be very unwise, and yet not cause you to lose prestige.

Milverton. Very good. I now come to the third branch of the subject.

(3) *Safety for the State*. That safety, you may be sure, in the present condition of the means and appliances for warfare, depends upon the concentration of the powers and forces of the State.

The more you extend the line of possible attack by the enemy, the more you render yourself liable to be defeated at some point, which, though unimportant in itself, as a place to be guarded, is for the moment all-important to you, as being a part of your empire which you are bound to defend. A great empire cannot bear defeat anywhere. I might bring a host of metaphors and similes to illustrate this assertion, but every-day facts will perhaps do so better. You have to take the same care of some obscure British subject, if that man is unduly molested, as you have of your whole Indian dominions. What have you to say to this branch of the subject?

Cranmer. I am with you.

Sir Arthur. So am I.

Milverton. The rest, I perceive, are silent.

Ellesmere. I do not like pledging myself. You see he is gradually getting us into his net. He has nearly gained an assent to three of his propositions, and I do not see what we may be led to. We must beware of letting ourselves be treated as the characters are in an imaginary dialogue. You have your Euphranor and Lycidas and Polyphrastes. Euphranor really represents the author, and the other fellows his opponents. Lycidas and Polyphrastes seem at first to come out very grandly and boldly; but anybody who is experienced in such writing easily discerns that the buttons are on their foils, while Euphranor's weapon is unguarded. I decline to be Polyphrastes.

I tell you what these unhappy characters always remind me of—the performing monkeys of a showman: the poor little creatures hop about gaily enough, but if, springing to the end of their tether,

they struggle to get beyond it, the hard-featured showman jerks them back again, and makes them know their proper place, close to his barrel-organ. They are only to dance to his tunes, and are not to be indulged in caperings of their own.

Now, I am not going to be perverse or unreasonable. I will ultimately admit anything that I am convinced of; but I decline, as we go along, to make more admissions than I can help, so that it may not afterwards happen, that Polyphrastes having admitted this, and Polyphrastes having said that, Euphranor comes forth triumphantly, and shuts poor Polyphrastes up in a syllogism. We are not here to play our parts according to Milverton's bidding, but to argue out a very serious question seriously and guardedly.

Milverton. I proceed to Number 4.

(4) *The physical well-being of the community.*

This part of the subject has incidentally been treated in Number 1, when we were considering the question of expense. All projected improvements tending to the physical well-being of the State are now met with the answer, "No funds."

But I have more to say about it. It is not only that funds are wanting; but time, attention, and forethought are wanting. Look what a lot of time and attention on the part of Ministers and Parliament is taken up by small questions concerning these petty dependencies.

This course of argument will apply to education as well as to physical well-being. The greatest things for our general well-being as a nation fail to have due thought given to them, because we are busied with all manner of details connected with possessions that are really of no use to us.

What do you say to all this?

Mauleverer. Are people any the happier for this physical well-being and for education? I doubt.

Sir Arthur. No, no, Mauleverer; you mustn't go into your usual course of depreciation of all human effort. We must keep close to the subject. For my part I have nothing to say against Milverton as regards this last branch of the subject.

Cranmer. Nor I. I know I never got sufficient attention to anything; and I believe that we, the British people, are distracted

from the consideration of matters that most concern us, by a multiplicity of cares and troubles brought to us from afar.

Milverton. I am delighted to hear you say that, Cranmer. I may now proceed to the fifth branch of my subject.

(5) *The advancement and development of Christianity.* I have very little to say upon this head. If you do not feel with me at once, I have no hope of persuading you by long arguments. I would just ask you, is it not most inconsistent to advocate the adoption of Christianity by individuals, and not to ask Governments to act upon principles which are essentially Christian?

You all regret and dread the perpetual increase of armaments in Europe. You admit the cruel and wicked expense of these armaments, the loss occasioned by which has lately been estimated at 178,000,000*l.* per annum, and you ask how on earth this great mischief is to be remedied?

I say that some one nation must make the first move, and why should not this nation be England?

At present it is an auction of folly. Each nation goes on bidding against the other. There is no end to it. It is like the conduct of ostentatious people, contending who shall make most show; and this kind of contest can only be ended by the absolute ruin of almost all the contending parties.

Now, what have you to say to my argument taken as a whole?

Here a curious thing occurred. There was a good deal of whispering between Sir John, Sir Arthur, and Mr. Cranmer; and then Sir John spoke.

Ellesmere. Whenever there is a rude thing to be done, I am the unlucky wight upon whom it falls to do it. We wish that our good host and hostess should take a little conjugal walk, arm in arm, to the fountain in the front garden, and there, reclining on the grass in sweet repose, should consider what they would give us for dinner to morrow, while we make up our minds what we shall reply to this elaborate talk of Milverton's. He has had time to prepare, and so must we.

Sandy must go too, because, though he is a good and trusty fellow, he so thoroughly belongs to the other camp, that we should be a little afraid of his presence.

Sir Arthur. Just write down for us, Milverton, the heads of your discourse.

Mr. Milverton did so, and left the paper with Sir Arthur. We then began to move away.

Ellesmere. Fairy stays with us.

But Fairy did not stay with them, but moved away slowly in our direction, in the odd fashion that a dog sometimes does, moving its hind legs like a rheumatic old gentleman, indicating a certain unwillingness to go—just what it does when told to go to its kennel, or to go to bed.

We went to the fountain, and I brought out some railway rugs for us to lie down upon. Mr. Milverton soon fell asleep, for he had been up half the night writing the last chapters. Thus half an hour passed. Afterwards we went into the study and worked. At length we were sent for, and when we had returned to them Sir Arthur began the conversation.

Sir Arthur. It was somewhat impertinent in us, Milverton, to send you and your wife and Mr. Johnson away, but we felt we could discuss the matter better without you, and settle amongst ourselves where the argument was weak, and where it was strong, and what we should finally resolve to say. I am to be the spokesman.

I have first the pleasure of informing you that you have made a convert in the person of Mr. Cranmer.

Cranmer. No, not exactly a convert. I assure you I had many of these ideas floating in my mind before; and now I only mean, that if I were obliged to vote to-day, I should vote with Milverton.

Milverton. I am delighted to hear it, Cranmer.

Ellesmere. Milverton does love anybody who agrees with him. That is the sure way to his heart. You have risen thirty-three and a half per cent. in his affections, Cranmer. I know you like exact calculations.

Sir Arthur. I now resume my office as your spokesman.

In the first place, we are all agreed, except Mauleverer, that philanthropic ways must not cease, and, in short, we agree with you in the main with regard to all you said about expense.

With regard to the increase of prestige, we do not seem to care much about it. We think, however, that you may be right in what you said.

With regard to safety for the State depending on the concentration of its powers and its forces, we thoroughly agree with you.

Here you must forgive me for a little interruption in the way of illustration that has occurred to me. You know the Highland saying, "Cut your talk with a little drink." So I say, even in the most serious discussion, the talk may be allowed to be cut with something that is either jocose or fanciful.

Is there any insect that has a particular enmity to the spider? I daresay there is; and, if we had your entomologist here, he would probably tell us all about this insect. I will call him the fly-friend. It is rather a shame, by the way, to compare a great nation to a spider, but still I think you will say the illustration is a good one.

You have observed how spiders' webs are often formed with filaments thrown out to a great distance, the points of attachment being of great importance for the maintenance of the web.

My fly-friend comes and cuts one of these filaments at the furthest point. Before the spider can reach him, he has gone to another spot and cut the filament there; and before the irritated spider can reach his enemy, half the web is flapping helplessly down; for the damage to these distant points is as fatal as if the spider and the fly-friend had come to close quarters.

You may rely upon it that a great nation, with many distant dependencies, is as liable to mischief in this way as any spider's web.

Milverton. The illustration is admirable; but I think it all comes to be included in the saying of Napoleon, "That the art of war is the art of being strongest at a given time, at a given place." Now I just wish to ask you this ugly question, How are we to be strongest at a given time in Canada?

How few, even of our greatest statesmen, have given any indication that they are meditating deeply upon our colonial policy?

Johnson's story about his Spoolans had a great deal of meaning in it. There is next to no looking forward to prepare for great political emergencies.

Sir Arthur. I must resume.

With regard to what you said about the physical well-being of a state, we are agreed with you.

With regard to what you said about the advancement of Christianity, we are all of the same mind with you, except Mauleverer, who said that he had observed that the advancement of Christianity generally meant an increase in the number of clergymen and priests. He was not for that. Then he told us that the most malignant human being he had ever known was a parson. We did not see that this had much to do with the present subject, and we outvoted him.

Milverton. I scarcely know how to construe what I hear. You appear to have nothing to say against me; and yet you tell me I have only made one convert.

Sir Arthur. Lady Ellesmere is on the point of conversion.

Ellesmere. I think nothing of that. I do not mean to depreciate women: I am in a thoroughly serious mood to-day; but I knew beforehand that they would be sure to be with you. Your proposition has in it everything to please them. They like anything that looks great and magnanimous; and you are not to expect them to go into all the statesmanship of the matter.

Sir Arthur. I am afraid it is now my painful duty, as a schoolmaster would say when he is going to give a boy a whipping, to set before you, Milverton, the great objections that have occurred to us, and which prevent us from being converts, or at least keep us undecided.

Is not this matter for a congress? Should there not be something like give and take, in such affairs? Is our Ravala-Mamee to be given up for nothing? Would not more of what you would wish to be accomplished, be accomplished by making the question European instead of British?

These are grave questions, my friend.

Milverton. They are. I wish you had allowed me to be present while you were discussing this part of the subject. I shall merely reply by asking you in turn some grave questions.

Would there have been such a thing as free-trade in our time if we had waited until other nations had been convinced of the wise policy of freedom in trade?

Would slavery have been abolished by us if we had waited till other slave-holding nations had come to an agreement with us upon this point?

And, to take a recent instance, should we ever have ceded the Ionian Islands if we had made that cession a matter of European talk, and haggled about it with other nations?

Sir Arthur. I proceed to tell you further what we thought; and I am now really afraid that I shall have to say something very unpleasant, and which you will have great difficulty in getting over.

If any cession of the kind you imagine is to be made, it will have to be discussed in Parliament. You know how injudiciously they often talk there about foreign affairs, and how little power the Ministers have either in preventing or directing dangerous discussions of this kind. Now, the transaction which you mean to be a great and generous thing, winning you the love and amity of the nation to whom you make this cession, will be so be-slimed with disagreeable and injurious talk, that you are as likely to be hated as to be loved for what you do.

Milverton. This is a hard blow, I admit; but it is not a fatal one. Such a transaction as I contemplate will never take place without a great burst of generous enthusiasm, and there will be a great many noble as well as ignoble things said about it.

But take the worst: say that we do not win the amity of the nation to whom we cede any possession. Will this affect the surrounding nations? Will it make the act really less noble? Will it be the less an initiation of a great policy? And remember this, that some of the advantages I have held out, affect our own individual interests—such as diminution of expense, and concentration of forces.

Sir Arthur. I proceed. I am not to enter into discussion, but simply to tell you what we all thought and felt.

We felt, then, that we were not competent to decide upon such a question without having evidence of a military kind before us.

Of course you are not able to give us that; and we should not quite trust you if you were able to give it. We admit that there would probably be great prejudice from a military point of view against your proposal; but, whether that view is prejudiced or not, we must

hear it before pledging ourselves, even in friendly talk, upon such a grave matter.

Milverton. I have nothing to say in reply on this head, or rather I have a great deal to say; but it must be said after your military views have been expressed, and when I should be able to call in counter-evidence. I could say a great deal from history, bearing upon this point.

Ellesmere. Yes, yes; of course you could. You are better up in such subjects than we are; and you would only give us the instances which are in your favour. I do not mean that you would be intentionally unfair; but, in the course of your reading, the historical examples which are favourable to your own views would naturally have attracted your attention, and have retained the foremost place in your memory.

Sir Arthur. I will not allow discussion just yet. I must complete my statement.

We are afraid, Milverton, of being led away, or rather misled, by the consideration of some one of your projects—such as the giving up of a particular fortress. We see that it would be a great change in our imperial policy, especially as regards the colonies, if we were to consent to come over to your idea, and vote as you propose. We must look upon the thing as a whole. The power, influence, and reputation of a great nation are very delicate things. We are afraid, lest in touching some bit, we should derange the whole. In fact, to use an official word, we are not "prepared" to give our assent, however much or little it may be worth to your proposition. We admit that it is worthy of the most serious, the most anxious consideration. From this time forward we shall, no doubt, keep it in our minds, and find many things to bear upon it which may be either for you or against you. In fine, to talk after a parliamentary fashion, we shall not go into the lobby with you, nor will our names be found in the division list amidst your opponents; but we shall walk out before the end of the debate.

Ellesmere. A mode of action which, in general, I detest; but, in this particular case, I must hear a great deal more on both sides before I can come to any conclusion upon so grave a matter.

Milverton. I do not wish to say anything disrespectful, and I am very deeply obliged to you for the earnest attention you have given to this important subject; but I must remark that some of the arguments, or rather some of the feelings—for it seemed to me rather sentiment than argument that Sir Arthur has just adduced—are such as have been brought forward to stop the way of every great reform. "Touch this, and what will become of that?" "Suppress here, and you will cause detriment there." You must admit it is hard to meet these vague accusations.

Sir Arthur advised that we should sometimes cut our talk by something that was either jocose or fanciful; and, whilst he was speaking, I couldn't help thinking of a proverb in vogue amongst the Sheviri:—

"The frog leapt from the bank into the water; and, making a little splash, said that he was so much afraid lest his friend, the pescara,[35] who ate up pike for him in the deep waters of the lake, should be troubled by it."

Ellesmere. Now that won't do, Milverton: it is very well meant, and very sarcastic, but it won't do; for you begin by telling us that the leap of your frog was a most important plunge—the initiation of a new policy.

Milverton. Then I will give you another proverb which shall be more applicable. No: it shall not be a proverb, but a fable, which was a favourite with the Sheviri.

In the great wood where the Ramassa curves round the Bidolo-Vamah (I know that Ellesmere always makes fun of this bit of description) there dwelt two lions, occupying respectively the north-east and south-west corners of the wood.

This was in the time when lions and men were very friendly, and often had good talk together.

Both of these lions had scratched out with their powerful fore-claws deep pitfalls near and afar from their respective caves.

These pitfalls troubled the poor men very much when they came to gather beech-mast in the woods. So they said to the lions, whom they met walking out together one fine day in the woods, "These holes that you make everywhere are a great trouble to us; and we

have lost some of our people in them. Please fill them up, that friendship may abide between us."

And the lions said that they would consider about it; and, after the men had gone, they reasoned together, but could not agree.

The lion of the south-west, calling all his friends of the forest together, did fill up these pitfalls: the other lion remained sullen and obdurate.

Now there came a great drought in the land; and the lions, drinking filthy water, fell sick, and the little lions were at death's door.

Then the men sent their chief medicine-man to the good lion, who restored him and his young lions to their full strength; but the other lion lost his lioness and his young cubs, and became more gloomy and ferocious than ever.

Ellesmere. But there was a time when war did break out between men and lions, and what happened then?

Milverton. That is exactly what I was going to tell you.

War did break out between men and the lions; and the suspicious lion, flying from a band of armed men who were too strong for him, fell into one of his pitfalls far away from his cave, the existence of which he had forgotten; and he died miserably of starvation. But the good and wise lion mocked at the pursuit of armed men, and roamed freely, or if he fled, fled fast and unharmed, over his part of the forest, for he had not to beware of pitfalls; and he and his descendants occupied his corner of the wood securely, down to the days of the great King Realmah—commonly called Realmah-Lelaipah-Mu,——Realmah, the youth who could foresee things.

Ellesmere. I must admit that the fable is a very significant one, and keeps close to the matter it is meant to illustrate; but these kind of illustrations never convince me.

Milverton. Before I conclude, there is one point upon which I wish especially not to be misunderstood; and I trust that you will not misunderstand me.

I trust that you will not think that I wish Great Britain to act like a cruel stepmother—the stepmother that we meet with in fiction; for I

have often observed that in real life stepmothers are very kind—and to get rid of her colonies in the most summary and careless manner.

All I wish is, that these great colonial questions should be carefully considered by our statesmen. There may be a great State, or what will soon be a great State, which, in case of the outbreak of any European war, will be molested solely in consequence of its being attached to us by ties, however slight. Now, for the interest of such a State (if such a State there be), still more than for our own interest, I wish to disengage it from us, and so to free it from any mischief that might come upon it from its connexion with ourselves.

I have come to no fixed conclusions upon the difficult points connected with this matter. I only wish, both for the sake of our colonies and ourselves, that this great subject should have due and instant consideration.

I do not pretend that I have not some distinct views and principles in my own mind upon this subject; but I do not desire to impress them, at the present moment, upon you. All I ask for, is consideration.

Sir Arthur. I must say, Milverton, that you are very good and reasonable upon this great subject. I should have much less faith in you, and much less interest in your treatment of the subject, if you were to endeavour, at this early period of the discussion, to enforce upon us any cut and dried opinions upon it.

Ellesmere. Oh, he is as cunning a dog as ever lived, as regards the artful way in which he gradually gets his opinions to sink into your mind! He began with me, as a little boy in a pepper-and-salt jacket and trousers, to convince me about the Corn-laws, and Free-trade, and other great questions about which he had made up his boyish mind most conclusively. To be sure he turned out to be right; but that is no matter. That was a mere accident. I warn you that when he is most fair-spoken, he is most dangerous.

Milverton. I cannot talk any more to-day. I am very tired.

Having so said, Mr. Milverton rose to go away. Before doing so, however, he put his arm in a brotherly fashion round Lady Ellesmere, and gave her a kiss, saying, “I am so glad, my dear Mildred, that you are on my side, for I know you are; and you must bring him round. It is an important admission, by the way, that he

makes—namely, that all the women would be on my side of the question."

Ellesmere. Oh dear me, how wonderfully affectionate we are to those people who agree with us! It is not often that my poor wife, "a poor thing, sir, but mine own," is honoured in this way. And I am not sure that I should like it to occur very often.

Please don't go yet. After a painful and elaborate discussion one ought to have something to amuse one. Do you remember that just before Milverton announced his five propositions, I said I could tell you something about a sermon that was divided into five heads? And Milverton would not let me interrupt.

Sir Arthur. Yes.

Ellesmere. Well, I was a boy of thirteen, at church with my father; and opposite to us, in the gallery, was a lad of about the same age as I was, in a pew with his family.

The sermon was of the order called drowsy, and we were well into the third head of the discourse, and I was trying to get a glance at the MS. in order to see whether we had got through more than half the number of pages, which I am sorry to say was a favourite device of mine, when my attention was arrested by a noise in the pew opposite. Up started the lad I have told you of (we will call him Tom Brown, remembering Tom Hughes's story): in the most decisive manner he brushed by his family, banged the pew door, and marched away, making a considerable disturbance.

Immediately after church, my father, one of the most amiable of men (Lady Ellesmere is thinking now how different from her son), said to me, "Johnny, we must go and call at the Browns' directly. Tommy is either very ill, or there is something extraordinary the matter with the boy." Accordingly we went to pay a visit to the Browns', and there we found what really had happened. My little friend Tom Brown had been chaffering the whole week with a gipsy boy from the neighbouring common, about the purchase of a donkey. Late on Saturday evening the negotiation stood thus:—Tommy had offered 1*l*. 15*s*. The gipsy boy stood out for 1*l*. 17*s*. 6*d*.

During the first and the second head of the sermon, the wicked Tommy had been thinking over all the good points of the donkey;

and in the course of the third head had come to the conclusion that he would give 1*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* And, being a boy of a most decisive turn of mind, he resolved at once to complete the bargain.

That boy was the only person I ever saw go boldly out of church, banging the pew door, and stamping out as if he thought the whole congregation, if they knew what was in his mind, would entirely approve of what he was doing. You know if one has ever so good a reason for going out of church, one generally sneaks out as if one were doing the most wicked thing possible.

Now the recollection of that transaction has stood me in good stead ever since. When I have been arguing before the House of Lords, or the Privy Council, and have noticed that the attention of one of the Lords is wandering a little, I say to myself, he is thinking whether he will give 1*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* for the donkey, so I must quit this branch of the subject, and rouse him up with a fresh argument.

How invaluable this story would be to Members of Parliament! When a man, in a long and tiresome speech that he is labouring through, sees that the attention of the House is wandering, he should immediately realize the fact that it is thinking whether it will give its 1*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* for the donkey, and he should at once conclude by firing off his peroration, long ago prepared. It is the most foolish thing in the world to go on, even with good argumentation, when you see that your audience is tired. I should like it to be told of me that my auditors had always said, "I wish Ellesmere would have given us a longer speech; but he is always so succinct and curt." What an example the late Sir William Follett was to all of us! There *was* a man. People did not presume to cough while he was speaking. It was really one of the highest intellectual pleasures to hear that man deal with a difficult case, or a great subject. And how appreciative even the most uncultivated intellects are of such closeness of reasoning! I knew a common soldier who always went to hear the late Archbishop of Dublin preach, because, to use an expression which delighted me, "it was so well argued and put." By the way, what a good essay that is of that man of many initials, A.K.H.B., on the "Art of Putting Things."

Now you will all remember this story of mine about the 1*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* for the donkey. You are very good, Sir Arthur, in respect of speech-making, for you never make a speech in Parliament but it is a

great speech, and I honour you for that. You are very seldom tiresome.

Sir Arthur (putting his hand to his heart). It is indeed a compliment to be praised by Sir John Ellesmere, whose praise, from its exceeding rarity, is certainly most valuable. I hope I may always deserve it.

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Exeunt omnes.

32. Lady Ellesmere afterwards told us that Sir John was passionately fond of the syringa, and that she had made an arrangement for a gardener who comes to Covent Garden to supply her with flowers and leaves from this shrub, which, as she said, she sometimes gave her husband when he was good.

33. Though the best proverbs are common to all nations, we find something peculiar in the proverbs of each nation. For instance, this was a favourite proverb of the Sheviri which I do not remember to have seen elsewhere—"Do not turn round sharply lest you catch them laughing at you."

34. The reindeer in those times came as far south as the Swiss lakes, as may be seen from the bones that have been exhumed from the bottom of those lakes.

35. Mr. Milverton afterwards told me a droll proverb, or rather proverbial story, about the pescara and the frog. They are always supposed to be great friends. The story is this: "The pike had hold of the frog's leg; the pescara came up and swallowed both of them. As the frog was being swallowed he protested against this breach of friendship. Upon which the pescara said, 'It is a pity, but how is it I find you in such bad company?'" The story used politically to intimate that a small State cannot get into relation with a larger State, even that of hostility, without partaking of its troubles.

CHAPTER XVI.

For some few days we had no readings nor conversations. The truth is, Mr. Milverton was ill. I think the excitement and the anxiety that he had lately undergone, from his desire to convince these people, had made him ill, but he would not allow, even to his wife or to me, that this was the case.

When he had recovered, we had another meeting. Sir Arthur began the conversation.

Sir Arthur. Do you know, I think, Milverton, that we behaved rather badly to you the other day. We treated you and Mrs. Milverton, and Mr. Johnson, as if you were enemies; and we, the know-nothings, held our private caucus, and arranged our opposition to you, somewhat ungraciously perhaps. But I can assure you that you had great friends in this caucus, in Lady Ellesmere and Mr. Cranmer.

Cranmer. I am very anxious to hear Realmah's speech.

Ellesmere. And so am I; not that there will be anything new in it; for, depend upon it, Master Realmah has nothing to say beyond that which Master Milverton has already said to us. But he (Realmah) is an interesting specimen of a savage, and I should like to see how he deals with his Sir Arthur, his Cranmer, his Ellesmere——

Cranmer. Say, his Condore.

Ellesmere. And his Mauleverer, who, after all, will be the most difficult person to deal with.

Mauleverer. I do not know what the Lake City Mauleverer might have been like; but I can only say, that the British Mauleverer is a most reasonable person to deal with. It is true that he does not partake of any of your enthusiasms; but, at least, he is very like that good man, Londardo, and is apt to think that the arguments for and against anything are about equal; and so he is generally inclined to go the way that his friends would have him.

He is not like a certain yappetting little poodle that I once ventured to describe, but is rather of the bull-dog order, ready and willing to take up his friend and master's side, without looking too anxiously into the rights of the dispute.

Sir Arthur. Let us have the King's speech, Milverton. The greatest proof that we can give you of our interest in your subject is, that we would rather listen to you than have any more of our own talk. And I am sure that this is the general feeling.

Milverton. I don't know how you all became aware that Realmah is to make a speech; I never told you. But Mildred knew it, and I suppose she told her husband, for there is no trusting a married woman with anything. She is sure to go and tell her husband; and then he, not having been trusted himself in the first instance, has no scruple in telling the whole world. The speech, however, does not come just yet.

Mr. Milverton then commenced the reading.

The Story of Realmah.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE KING'S BIRTHDAY.

The King began to look very old and worn and wan. It was a weakness of this great monarch that he would not know of this approach of age and decay. Never did he look in the polished shells that served as mirrors amongst the Sheviri, nor gaze down into the waters of the lake by daylight. He felt that he had yet much to do. Life had few, if any, pleasures for him; but it abounded in duties. That man is very strong and powerful who has no more hope for himself: who looks not to be loved any more; to be admired any more; to have any more honour or dignity; and who cares not for gratitude; but whose sole thought is for others, and who only lives on for them.

This was the state of Realmah. He ever feared that the civilization he had created with such great rapidity, would die away with equal rapidity after his death. Fearing this, even he, wise as he was, redoubled his efforts at a time when he ought, in great measure, to have relaxed them; and he would not know that he was fading away.

Quick to discern what was in their monarch's mind, the courtiers were prone to talk before him of his never-failing youth and vigour; and had the effrontery to dwell upon this welcome theme, even when they saw the pale grey King, in his grand heavy robes, wearily make his way to a council, or drag himself along in some state ceremony.

Do what you will, you never can get to the end of the odd folly of mankind. It is a sea that cannot be sounded. The witty Erasmus may write a book[36] about it, but it defies the satire of the keenest satirist, and is beyond the imagination of the most imaginative man. Here was a prince who had done great things, and was inaccessible to any flattery about them. Indeed, he could not bear to hear them alluded to. So impatient was he in this respect, that he had cut short an ambassador from a neighbouring people, who commenced an oration by a long and laudatory description of the King's great doings. "Could we not, my Lord Ambassador," said Realmah, "take all this for granted, and proceed at once to the business in hand?"

The same man, however, was open to gross flattery upon the subject of his youthfulness and continued vigour; and did not object to be told, though he knew it to be false, at each recurring birthday, that the King possessed a charmed life, and that the past year seemed to have added to his vigour, rather than to have taken from it.

The art of sculpture is one which makes its appearance at the earliest periods of civilization; and the Sheviri were already considerable adepts in this art. As was to be expected, the representation of their monarch was a favourite subject with the artists of Abibah. On the Bridge of Leopards, an elegant little wooden bridge which connected two portions of the eastern part of the city, there were two statues of the King. The second one had been taken from life, seventeen years after the first. The costumes of the statues were different—one being the garb of a warrior, the other that of a king; but the second statue was even more juvenile-looking, if anything, than the first. And both of them represented a very young man, a kind of Apollo, who would by no means halt in his gait.

There was not a person, man or woman, in Abibah, who did not know the foible of the great King; and probably it endeared him to them, for a man of great merit ought to have many foibles, if he would be much loved.

There is generally something very interesting in premature decay, and that because of the strange contrast it mostly affords. It is seldom, or ever, total. There has been either great physical or great mental overwork; and part of the vital energies is deadened or destroyed, while the other part remains intact. Upon this other part

new strain is put; and gallantly for a time, if backed by a great soul, this other part answers to the strain put upon it. But each day the enemy is stronger, and the resisting power is weaker.

There was also in Realmah a quality which is to be noticed in the greatest men, but it is one which tells with great severity upon the vital powers. There was an almost infinite pitifulness[37] in Realmah. The private and the public troubles of his subjects became his own, and there was not a disease or a disaster amongst his numerous subjects that did not weigh upon the heart, and tax the energies, of the great and loving King.

His career, which we have but in a small degree narrated, shows that he possessed that first quality needful for a ruler—justice. But if there was any exception to this rule, any weakness of favouritism to be observed in him, it was in a leaning which he always showed to the tribe of the fishermen. Never was it known that the poorest fisherman was kept long waiting for an audience with Realmah. That tribe never suspected that the King's especial regard for them proceeded from his never-dying love for the Ainah. They thought that it was their own especial services to him on the night of the great revolution that endeared them to him. And, perhaps, his leaning to the fishermen's tribe was, after all, a stroke of policy (at any rate he pretended to himself that it was so), for it is a grand thing for any person in power to have any man, or body of men, upon whose affection he can profoundly rely, and whom he has not to study to win upon any particular occasion of difficulty. Even the great Napoleon, as hard a man as ever lived, could speak with loving tenderness of those who were "devoted to my person;" and it is one of the few blessings that attend great men, that they are sure to elicit a large amount of personal affection amongst those who come into close contact with them.

The forty-seventh birthday of the King approached, and was to be celebrated throughout the city with great rejoicings. It was customary, on that anniversary, for the King to receive all the official persons connected with his government, both of the city of Abibah and of the neighbouring towns.

It had been doubtful, on account of the wounds which the King had received on the occasion of the mock fight, whether he would be well enough to undertake this ceremony. But, notwithstanding those

wounds were still unhealed, he did so, though on this day it was a very long reception, which lasted indeed for five hours. Never was the King more gracious—never did he give more ample encouragement to those of his high officers who had pleased him by the diligent discharge of their duties, and who had loyally promoted his great designs; but, at the end of the reception, he fainted away in the arms of his attendants. Still this warning had no effect in rendering the King more prudent; and, with unabated vigour, he prepared to undertake in a few days' time a great ceremony, the particulars of which will be narrated in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FESTIVAL OF THE FOUNDATION OF ABIBAH.

It was the festival of the foundation of the city of Abibah. The festival was always celebrated on the ninety-sixth day of the year,[38] and it was an occasion upon which the King was expected to speak very frankly to his people, and to declare to them his hopes, his fears, and his wishes for the future.

Whether Realmah felt that his health was in a precarious state (though no man dared to say that he was not as young and vigorous as ever), or whether he feared any quarrel amongst his allies and tributaries (and he was well aware that what he intended to do could only be done in a time of profound peace), he resolved that at this festival he would declare his great project to the people. His recent wounds, he knew, would not be otherwise than most serviceable to him on this occasion. In fact this may have determined him, as he was well aware that his people were much afraid that they had not yet earned his forgiveness, and would therefore be most anxious to conciliate him, and to make their peace at any sacrifice.

Now Realmah was a great orator—a born orator. After the first moments of abject nervousness, which all men of fine temperament experience at beginning a speech, Realmah was never greater, never more self-possessed, than when he was addressing a multitude of his subjects.

The thousands of eyes looking up at him seemed to endow him with a part of their own magnetic force. He felt that he could move his audience to tears, to laughter, and even, what is more difficult still, to self-abnegation. He was well aware that on this great

occasion he must tax his powers to the utmost, and either win or lose the cause which, for thirty-five years, he had set his heart upon.

It was from a platform ascended by steps in the centre of the great market-place of Abibah, that the King was accustomed to address the assembled people on the auspicious day of the anniversary of the founding of their city.

Slowly and painfully did the King ascend the steps on this memorable day. He smiled a strange, ghastly smile, composed partly of pain, partly of a wish to appear very gracious and very much delighted at meeting the assembled people. In the distance the smile looked very well, and seemed all graciousness; but to the faithful Omki, his foster-brother, this set smile brought tears to the heart. And, strange to say (which was only too painfully noticed by Omki), the King, in the middle of the ascent, laid hold of his arm, and leant heavily upon it. "Keep close to me, dear Omki," he said; and Omki shuddered, for the King was not wont to say "dear," or to be so openly affectionate, even to him.

A word or two must be said of Omki before we proceed to give an account of the royal speech, and of its direful results.

There is much hero-worship even in these days, but, alas, of what a different kind to that of this faithful foster-brother! It is the hero-worship of asking the hero out to unwelcome festivity, in order to show him off, of invading his privacy, of molesting him in every way: it is not the hero-worship of devoting labour and time, and fortune and self-sacrifice, and life itself, to a great man, who would be worth it all. Now it is little to say that Omki would have given his life for his foster-brother the King: he would have waded deep in blood, regardless of his own soul, to obey any order of the King. I am describing a pagan, and not a Christian; but there is great merit in such self-devotion, in whatever way it may be shown.

The King gained the platform, and wearily threw his jasper-studded robes behind him.

His great Council followed—a body of venerable men, who looked as if the cares of state were deeply marked in their expressive countenances. There was a flourish of trumpets, or of the instruments that corresponded with trumpets, which was by no means ineffective, for the Sheviri were an eminently musical people,

and, in their rude instruments, there were the beginnings of all the instruments that are now most potent in the expression of musical ideas. The people were hushed into a supreme silence.

Milverton. I reserve the speech for a new chapter; and, before describing its effect upon the men of Abibah, would like to hear what the guests at Worth-Ashton have to say further upon Realmah's great project.

Here there was a pause for a time, but nobody chose to make any remark, and then Mr. Milverton resumed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE KING'S SPEECH.

The King commenced his speech. He began in those low, soft, musical tones which compel attention from a crowd.

He told his people of the delight it was to him to meet them; and how, in that vast assemblage of thoughtful men (and he should that day demand the utmost of their thought) he believed that there was not one single human being who was not a friend of his—who was not indeed devotedly attached to his person and his government.

He went into various details, which we need not recount here, to show what had been done during the past year; and he dwelt at some length upon the ever-increasing prosperity which had gladdened the streets of Abibah. He spoke of their improvements in manufacture, especially of the manufacture of iron, and pointed out to them how wise and how advantageous had been the policy which had made them the manufacturers of iron for all that part of the world. "See," he said, "the fruits of a generous policy. Had we kept this art to ourselves, we might, it is true, have been almost supernaturally strong to resist invasion; but now we not only can defy invasion, but we have gained the goodwill of all the people both far and near, and, in the last three years, our city is doubled in extent."

From all parts of the vast assemblage, at that and at other portions of the speech, the cries of "Maralah! maralah!"—"He has said it! He has said it!" (which corresponded to our "Hear, hear,") were heard.

While the King was giving these details there was a gentle murmur of under-talk amongst the crowd, for neither civilized nor uncivilized men can long endure the narration of details, however interesting they may be, or rather however interesting they ought to be. But this

murmur was entirely hushed into a supreme silence when the King changed the subject, and began to speak about the mock-fight.

This subject he touched upon with great skill and delicacy. He took all the blame upon himself, saying that he ought to have known that the Sheviri, even in play, could not bear to be defeated. He was glad that he had been one of the principal sufferers. With regard to those few poor men who had fallen, our good Queen, he said, had taken care to provide for their families.

When he ceased speaking on this topic, the crowd felt that a weight had been taken off them, and there was a general murmur of satisfaction, each man congratulating his neighbour that no evil thing had happened to them, and saying how good and kind the King was, so ill too as he looked from the effects of his wounds.

Realmah won many hearts by this part of his speech.

Then there came a long and elaborate story, or rather fable. Some such fable had always been told by Realmah on these occasions, and for this occasion it had cost him many a weary midnight hour to think over this fable and to prepare it. All the rest of his speech flowed from his heart, and was the gift of the moment; but the fable was a work of art. He was not so much in advance in thought of his fellow-countrymen as not to think these fables a most significant way of conveying ideas; and what to us would seem childish, was to him a great flight of imagination and of thoughtfulness.

The story was all about a crane and a serpent, and it told how the good crane was loved and favoured by everybody—brought good fortune wherever it alighted, and, in fact, was a sort of much-loved king. While, on the other hand, the serpent was hated by all living creatures; and even when it was innocent, and had left its poison behind it for the day, the remembrance of its treachery and its malignity made all creatures pitiless towards it, and anxious to destroy it.

The people did not quite perceive the drift of the story, which, however, was soon to be made manifest to them; but they applauded it, because any story about beasts, or birds, or reptiles, was very welcome to them.

The King then dwelt upon the various embassies which had reached the town of Abibah in the course of the preceding year, and

showed his people what credit and what vast advantages had flowed from the commanding position which the Sheviri now occupied amongst the sons of men. “Is it not better,” he said, “to be called upon to arbitrate than to be deluded into a participation in their trumpery wars? Not that we fear war—all the nations know that; and there lives not a prince so daring as, even in his dreams, to contemplate a war with the Sheviri;” and all the people shouted again with renewed enthusiasm, “Maralah! maralah!”

“What,” Realmah continued, “could be said of the frenzy of those who should dare to attack the men by whose valour and sagacity alone the warlike nations of the North (now no longer dreaded) had been triumphantly beaten back to their inhospitable, ice-bound climes?”

And now he dexterously changed his mode of speech; he dwelt upon the beauty and the power possessed not only by himself, but by every one in that assemblage, even the meanest, of being as it were an arbiter of the fate of surrounding nations, of settling quarrels, of appeasing feuds, of being, if he might presume to say so, humble representatives upon earth of the great God whose name he did not dare to mention, who loved all men, and only wished that all mankind should be one brotherhood.

Here the exclamations of applause were redoubled, and the soft voices of women might also have been heard exclaiming “Maralah! maralah!”

Realmah then, with great tact, alluded to the labours of his Council; he was but the meanest of the servants of his people. What should he, a comparatively young man (here there was a smile on the faces of the whole assemblage, which each man and each woman strove to suppress), be, if he had not the guidance, the affectionate guidance, of their fathers, who had grown old in the service of the country, and who stood around him, a devoted band of trusty councillors, second to none upon this green earth?

He then, with the skill of an accomplished orator, affected to hesitate and to be overcome, while from the most distant outskirts of the vast assemblage there arose cries of the most endearing encouragement. They called upon the gods to bless him, to prosper all his doings, to preserve him to them for untold years; and even Realmah, who had meant the interlude as a mere artful point in

oratory, was himself, for the moment, overcome by the vast display of real affection exhibited towards him by his people. He absolutely wept; but knowing how mistaken a thing it is for an orator to be really overcome by his feelings, he threw himself back upon the thought of the great work he had to undertake, and of the immense difficulty that it would be to overcome his people's prejudices. He himself, however, scarcely recognised the effect he had produced,—that there was not a man in that vast assemblage who at that moment would not have thought it almost treason to presume to differ from their great King.

A little incident, too, succeeded in recovering Realmah more than almost anything else could have done. His eyes had fallen upon the critical Condore; and, to the King's amazement, Condore, who by the way was always fascinated by oratory, was one of those who gesticulated most furiously, and made the most tempestuous exclamations of applause.

But Condore, true to his critical character, the moment he found the King's eyes upon him, changed immediately, and began to move his head from right to left, in token of the severest disapproval. Realmah, who like most men of genius had the keenest sense of what was ridiculous, was amazingly tickled by Condore's behaviour; and the good Condore probably at that moment unconsciously fulfilled his mission on the earth, for he succeeded in restoring the King, who had been nearly overcome by these outbursts of affection, to the full mastery of his usual cool, crafty, self-possessed nature.

Realmah resumed his oration, feeling that it was almost the supreme moment of his life. "What then have we gained, and how have we gained it? We have gained the affection of all the peoples who dwell within four hundred innesangs.[39] Now look," he said, "what is it that governs? Is it force? Force lasts only as long as it is present, but the power of affection lasts for ever, speaks even out of the tomb. Most of us here present are men.—Are we ruled? Doubtless we are. By whom are we ruled? Is it by those who have strength to compel us, or is it by those whose weakness and whose delicacy contain their most undoubted strength? What man amongst us, from the king on his throne to the fisherman whose daily bread is precarious, will not own, if he be a man, to an infinite desire to win and to gratify those who are dearest to him in his household, his

wives and his children?" (There was enormous shouting in the crowd, with loud bursts of laughter, in which the women did not join, and great cries of "Maralah! maralah!")

The King proceeded: "I have spoken, it may be jestingly, it may be that the most earnest thoughts that I have ever uttered underlie this playful speech. Do you think that the law of affection is confined to individual men and women alone? May there not be states that should feel towards one another a similar relation? And now I will tell you what I have felt from my youth upwards, and, if ever you have loved your King, you must listen to him when he seeks to persuade you of that which, from his earliest years, has been his deepest wish, and to which the endeavours of his years of maturity—years not passed without suffering, such as only a king can know—have been devoted. What has been the one thing which has long prevented our being supremely loved and admired by the nations around us; which has stood in the way of our being loved by them with the devotedness which a woman has for the lord of her household, her chief? It has been our possession of the great fortress of Ravala-Mamee. This, and this alone, has alienated the affections of the nations from us. When we were a weak people, it might have been well to preserve it; but now we are beyond all fears, and our rule will best be enlarged, maintained, and preserved, by our possessing the entire confidence and love of all the surrounding nations.

"I am for abandoning this fortress" (there were cries of "Maralah nevee"—"He has not spoken it!" The King disregarded them; he continued): "Is it much to confide in your king? There are not many times in a man's life when it becomes him to say what he has done; but there are such times. Have not I—have not we" (turning to his councillors)—"raised you from a petty state to the most commanding nation known in this part of the world? Is it for ordinary men to measure the wisdom of chiefs? But I need not upbraid you. I see by your countenances that you are only too willing to believe in your king, who has led you on so often to victory; who has made each of you a conqueror; and who now seeks, with your aid, which you will not refuse your king, to place your dominion upon a basis which cannot be removed—the love, the affection, and the gratitude of all the surrounding nations, upon whose necks you might have

trampled, but to whom you say, 'Rise, and be one with us, who are the leaders of arts, of knowledge, and of policy—the indomitable Sheviri.'" The vast assemblage answered to the King's noble words with corresponding enthusiasm, and there was but one cry, or if there was, the voices of dissentients were drowned by the predominant shout of "Maralah! maralah!"

The King, upon whose face there beamed the light of joy such as no man had yet seen upon it, resumed: "It is not I—who am I that I should guide your councils? It is your fathers, the venerable men who stand around me, who sanction all that I propose, and who, far superior to me, have overcome their attachment to a policy in which they were bred; which they have long maintained by arts and by arms; but which, with the greatness of minds open to conviction, they are now determined to supersede by a policy of wise and affectionate conciliation." The surrounding members of the Council intimated, by expressive gestures, their consent, and the approving shouts of the whole assemblage were redoubled.

Realmah resumed his speech; and resolved, in one splendid peroration, long ago prepared in those midnight walks of his up and down the balcony, to fix upon the minds of his people his own prophetic ideas. I call them prophetic, for, alas! they were not to be realized in his time; but such ideas were to be for the guidance of nations to whom the very name of Realmah, of his nation, of his generation, would be entirely foreign, and to whom his wars, his alliances, and his suzerainties would be as utterly unknown as the battles of the kites and the crows, or any of the inferior animals.

Realmah resumed: "And now these are my last words to-day to all of you. And it may be that the King may not speak to you many more times, for he is feeble"—(from all parts of the assemblage arose shouts of "Long live the King!")—"yes, he is feeble; and he knows, though he has sought to disguise it from you and from himself, that he is not the man he was. He would have you drink in these words as if indeed they were his last. He has sought to be a father to you; and all his own joys and sorrows have been put aside to fulfil to each one of you the loving relation of a father. And you have been good sons to him.

"What man amongst you is there that does not love Realmah?" (The audience were moved to an inexpressible degree.) "But I come

back to my great subject. What is the highest power? What is the greatest force? What is the most unbounded dominion? Is it the power of the sword? Is it the force of arms? Is it the dominion gained by conquest? Lives there one amongst you, the most daring, the highest placed, whom Realmah could not, by a word, condemn to death? But what would the King gain by the loss of a loving subject? And so it is with each one of us, all of whom are kings. We will rule in the hearts of surrounding nations, and not diminish or destroy them. It shall be for ever said of the Sheviri that they were dauntless in battle, merciful in conquest, and good lords whom all men desired to live under, and whose beneficent sway spread out undivided, unresisted, unopposed, from where that bright luminary rises joyous in the strength of youth, to where, surrounded by his purple guards, he descends into the waters that receive him tenderly, and refresh him for the labours of the ensuing day.

"I say again, What is conquest? What is power? What is domination?" And here, strangely enough, Realmah concluded in a form of speech that was adopted on a similar occasion by one of our own greatest orators,[40] so true is it that the highest flights of oratory are alike in all nations, and under all circumstances. "To have found the peoples of this vast region sunk in barbarism,[41] living from day to day a mean, care-driven, hazardous life, each man set against his neighbour, each chief against his brother chief, each state against its neighbour state; their arms of defence and offence the weapons of children; their habitations, huts; their policy, only craft; their ambition, only self-interest; their mode of life, little better than that of the wild animals of the woods—to have raised all these people till they are men, statesmen, members of great nations—these are the triumphs of reason[42] over barbarism. This is the just, the only just, and God-rewarded conquest insured to us by our arts and our morals, by our divine policy and our heaven-descended laws."

The King ceased. The assemblage was moved to a degree that had never been known before, even at these high festivals. Upon their recovering from their emotion, they shouted with one voice, "Let it be as the King has said; we are his slaves,—long live Realmah."

But, strange to say, the King, for a minute or two, moved not, but gazed at his people with a glassy stare, as if all intelligence had gone

out of him. Then, recovering himself, he grasped at the balcony, afterwards, in a moment, at the arm of the faithful Omki, who was close to him. “Stay near me,” he muttered in strangely indistinct words, “guards, close around me: let the trumpets sound.”

The faithful Omki divined the coming danger. Leaning heavily upon Omki, and tottering down the steps, surrounded by his body-guard, and followed by the councillors, whose looks to one another betrayed their fears, the King was half led, half carried, to his palace, the populace remaining in profound ignorance of the sudden seizure by illness of their beloved sovereign.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DEATH OF THE KING.

Even during the days of his last illness, Realmah’s exertions for the good of the kingdom were unremitting. The heir to the throne, Andarvi-Milcar, who loved the King fervently, and who, perhaps, of all the men in the city least desired his death, was constantly with him, receiving his last instructions. And here the exceeding sagacity of Realmah may be noticed; for though he spoke much of what had been his designs for the future, he spoke more of the men who were to carry them out, giving to Andarvi, even in the minutest particulars, his opinion of the characters, not only of the principal officers of the kingdom, but even of those lesser magistrates who had considerable power in distant settlements.

It was a curious thing, as illustrating the King’s mechanical skill and love of science, that while he was ill he had invented an ingenious arrangement by which the sponges containing nutritious liquid could be conveyed to his lips by his slightly moving a particular string or wire.

During his last illness he saw much of his wives. Realmah had really been very good to the Varnah. On ordinary occasions, and when his mind was full of business, he could not pretend to sympathise with her in her petty cares and hopes, but every now and then he made a great effort to please her. He would send for some rare product or some rare work of art to a distant part of his dominions, and would then confide to the Varnah what he had done, pretending all the while that he was doubtful whether he should get it, though he knew full well that no one ever refused the great King

anything he asked for. Then he would charm the Varnah by talking about the expected present, as if he were deeply interested in it, and he would contrive that it should come upon some festal day, especially upon the birthday of her departed mother; for the mother's birthday was always held in great reverence. Realmah really liked the Varnah, admired her skill in household management, was pleased with her orderliness (though he had none of that quality himself), never forgot the aid he had received from her during the siege, and believed that in her way she was attached to him. Indeed, to the court jester, the only man whom he allowed a glimpse into his inmost soul, he would say, "I am the Varnah's choicest possession, and she will mourn for me, poor thing, when I am gone, as no one else will mourn. In truth I am afraid lest then all the other possessions should lose favour in her sight." And when she came into his presence, as he was dying, he would take her hand, and speak kindly to her, and tell her how to guide her household and her wealth. And the poor Varnah was astonished to find that even in those matters in which she had thought her husband but a good-natured child, he was her master—a wise and sagacious man, full of foresight.

To the beautiful Talora, too, though less loving, he was kind; and she was astonished to find that he read the utmost depths of her soul, counselling her, notwithstanding her protests, as to whom she might marry hereafter, and what alliance she might with least loss of royal dignity advantageously contract; and Talora wept bitterly, discerning, perhaps for the first time, what a great man she had married, and what a small part of her heart she had given to him. The intensity of this feeling on her part may best be shown by the fact that it was three long years before Athlah could win the still beautiful Talora to be his bride, and that Realmah was never mentioned but that Talora blushed and sighed and looked sad, when she thought how great a soul had nearly been her own, and what she might have made of the love of a man who had so large a capacity for loving.

But, poor woman, she was somewhat mistaken, for it was not in her nature to comprehend the love that the Ainah had called forth in Realmah, and what immeasurable regrets and infinite longings of his had been buried in her tomb.

On the ninth day after the festival, at three in the morning, when the air was coldest, a deep groan from the King summoned his drowsy attendants. He started up in bed. In a loud voice he said, "Preserve my kingdom; be faithful to Andarvi-Milcar. I go to meet her for ever—for ever; light, more, more light." And saying this, the great King sank back upon his couch, and with a sigh poured forth his spirit.

The next morning there was sorrow and lamentation in almost every house in Abibah; and they mourned for him as for a father.

His funeral was magnificent. They raised a great mound for him, which, amidst the changes of the earth's surface, is still visible in the wood that lies adjacent to those waters which were once a great lake, and are now but a small one, and which mound still puzzles the learned amongst the antiquarians.

What a strange memorial is that round, coarse, undescriptive thing, a mound, to tell of heroic deeds, grand thoughts, and unbounded suffering! And yet how often in the world's history is it all that does remain to commemorate these deeds, these thoughts, and this suffering. Perhaps, too, all that will remain of us in after-ages, and of our intricate civilization, will be a few such mounds, and some collected heaps of rubbish, to be pored over by the learned men of a new generation, occupying a little portion of that surface of the earth which is, after all, but one vast unrecorded burial-ground.

Ellesmere. And so poor Realmah is dead! You all think me a very hard man, but if there is anything in this world that I have a horror of, it is my friends dying, whether in real life, or even in fiction.

I have become quite accustomed to Milverton's droning on about Realmah, and thought that it was to last for the greater part of my natural life. I must not say that he is a friend in fiction, and not an entire reality. As for Mrs. Milverton, Lady Ellesmere, Sandy, and even Milverton himself, they have the firmest belief in their Realmah. You could not offer them a greater insult than to suppose for a moment that such a being as Realmah had not existed, and that he had not done all these fine things. They get together in the study, and I hear them in my room overhead buzzing away, and I know that it is all talk about Realmah. I have very little doubt that Blanche and

Mildred had a good sisterly cry together (nothing comforts a woman so much as having a good cry) over "poor dear Realmah's death."

Sir Arthur. I agree with Ellesmere, it is hateful to come to the end of anything, or anybody.

There is one thing I am very curious to know; and that is, whether Andarvi-Milcar, Realmah's successor, fulfilled Realmah's wish, and gave up, or demolished, the fortress of Ravala-Mamee.

Milverton. He did; but whether he was successful or not in so doing, I do not know. I suppose that in some succeeding age the Northmen did come down again, and make an end of the Lake-cities.

I feel, now that it is all written, that I have omitted to dwell upon many things and persons that I ought to have described, but I did not like to worry you with details. For instance, I should like to have told you about the King's jester, whom I have alluded to, but never described.

He was a very clever man, but excessively indolent. He never cared to take much interest in public affairs. He had the right of accompanying the King everywhere, and being near him whether at a council or a feast. Sometimes at a council he said very shrewd things, and was really of use. At other times he took no interest in the business in hand, but all the time played a game with himself called *kinwee*, which was played with fishes' bones. He was very fond of Realmah, and followed him about like a dog. He delighted in witnessing so much energy and activity, and felt almost as if he himself was energetic and active. He kept the King's secrets well, and that endeared him to Realmah. His mischievous propensities plagued the good Varnah a great deal, and he delighted to tease her, but she bore with him most kindly for the King's sake.

Ellesmere. Just as Mrs. Milverton tolerates me for Milverton's sake.

Milverton. It was very comical sometimes to see the jester at a council, when he was in one of his queer moods. He would throw down a large number of these fishes' bones on the table, close to Realmah, then make a grab at them, shutting his eyes; then say, "Odd or even?" and retire into a corner to count the bones, nobody of course paying any attention to him. At last he would get tired of playing by himself, and would resolve to bring Realmah into the

game. The poor jester did not dare to go near anybody else, so he would whisper persuasively in the King's ear, "Loftiness, my dear, do let us have a bet, it's so dull."

Ellesmere. I thoroughly sympathise with this poor man. Everybody does so over-explain everything to me. I am so tired sometimes of everybody.

Milverton. And the King would return the whisper, "Go into the corner, throw ten times,—even bet of two shells there are more odds than evens. Play fair, don't cheat your poor King, he has always enough to do with his shells." And so the jester was kept quiet for a time.

The jester might have served the new King, but he would not do so. After the funeral of Realmah, the poor jester sadly followed the Varnah home to the house which had been Realmah's in his earliest days, and where the Varnah meant to dwell for the remainder of her life. He (the jester) had never asked leave to live with Her Loftiness, nor had she made the offer to him to do so, but she would have taken care of a dog (though she disliked dogs) which Realmah had loved, and she was secretly delighted that the jester had elected to live with her.

Two more uncongenial souls could not have been imagined than Her Loftiness and the poor jester. She could not understand his wit (he was really very witty), and she detested his coarse fun and his practical jokes, but had endured them most kindly for Realmah's sake. Realmah, too, was not the man to be amused by practical jokes, but he liked to see the people about him laugh, and be amused with anything, for he said, "Then they do not busy themselves too much with the affairs of my government."

Ellesmere. The poor jester! I pity him from the bottom of my heart. I know full well what it is to live with people who do not quite understand one. None of you, except perhaps Milverton, quite understand me—not even always Lady Ellesmere.

Milverton. Be comforted, Ellesmere. It was not long before the jester had a companion.

The faithful Omki had, in obedience to Realmah's dying command, attached himself to the new King. But he could not take any real interest in public affairs, or in the new King. He became

utterly listless and depressed, so, at the end of a year, he went to Andarvi-Milcar, and said, "My lord and king, Omki's heart is not a big heart, and it has not room for more than one love. I am the man who was in the same cradle with the great King, and I cannot love anybody else. Let thy servant go, for he is stupid and useless." Andarvi-Milcar consented; and Omki, also, went and took up his abode with the Varnah. Her Loftiness rejoiced that she had now two feckless, listless, human beings to look after, who had loved her Realmah.

See what a dangerous thing it is to come within the influence of a very great man, or of a very admirable woman. If you have not a great capacity for loving, they take all the love out of you at once, and make the rest of the world uninteresting to you.

These two, the jester and Omki, would sit in the porch before the house of Her Loftiness, the jester playing his game of odd-and-even by himself, while Omki sat silent, full of sad memories of Realmah; and then an old man would join them, and pass the sunny hours of the day in their company.

This old man was Condore. His chief happiness consisted in talking with the jester and with Omki about the late King; and there was a great deal of talk, in which you could hear the words, "and he said to me," and "I said to him;" and then they went through the strange scenes which had occurred on Realmah's coming to the throne, and on the defeat of the Northmen, and on the sham fight, and on the last days of Realmah's public appearance.

Thus these three men passed the remainder of their lives. Condore lived to a great age, for the daily exercise of criticism is not a thing which rapidly exhausts the vital powers.

Ellesmere. I am glad at least to find that, according to Milverton, I am to have a long life.

Milverton. There was a councillor whom I forgot to mention at the time when I described to you the rest of Realmah's councillors. I thought of this omission afterwards, but imagined you would not care to have it remedied. However, I should like to describe him to you now, for his was a very peculiar form of mind, but one not unknown in modern times.

His name was Pimmenee. Like the other councillors, he was a very clever man. He was the most observant person amongst the Sheviri of natural phenomena; and, in general, knew more facts than anybody else. He would make a statement very boldly, and apparently well founded upon facts. But then there would come such a string of exceptions that the original statement would seem to be broken down by them, and at last you felt as if you had nothing to rely upon.

Realmah would try and bring him back to his original statement by repeating it; but Pimmenee would never admit that the repetition was correct. He had not said quite this. That was not the exact word he had used; or, if he had, it would not quite bear out his meaning.

For instance, a question would arise where the summer camp should be placed, and Pimmenee would at first pronounce very decidedly against a particular spot as being near a morass. Then there would come a host of exceptions to the statement—there were morasses and morasses. It might even be an advantage to be near a morass. And so he would go on, fining down his original statement till at last hardly anything remained of it.

Ellesmere. Is he not a little like two of the other fellows, namely, Lariska and Delaimah-Daree?

Milverton. No: there is where you are so often deluded in estimating men, and fail to get the most out of them—summing them up under some one general form of condemnation: saying, for instance, that they are not *practical*.

Now, Lariska was simply too argumentative: Delaimah-Daree too resourceful, and therefore too inconclusive; while this man, Pimmenee, was too exceptive. To get the good that was really to be got out of these men, you must have mastered the peculiar bent of each of their minds, which prevented each one of them, taken by himself, from becoming a perfect councillor; but which did not prevent their being of great use as individual members of a council.

I should like to give you some of the proverbs of the Sheviri. These were, in after-ages, all attributed to Realmah; and some of them, I really think, were his.

Sir Arthur. I should like to hear them. There is nothing in all literature more interesting to me than proverbs, and the fact that

they are no man's children makes them more interesting. I do not know a single instance, except in the Bible, where you can say for certain that such a proverb was made by such a man.

Milverton. Well then, here are some of them:—

The viper will stand upon the tip of his tail to make himself agreeable in good company.

The crane stands upon one leg, in heavenly meditation; but all the while he is looking sharply after his fish.

When the eyes and the lips lie, look to the hands and the feet.

The prudent man (literally, the man who has eyes in the back of his head) *cares more whom he is with, than even what he does.*

Four fishes smelt at the bait and turned their tails to it; one fish came by and swallowed it. (The advantage of a council.)

Before the journey is over, the dog has run twice the distance. (Applied to a man who does not go directly to the point; but wanders hither and thither like a dog.)

Make the four salutations to a friend every day. (This alludes to the four bows that were made to foreign ambassadors by all who met them; and the proverb means this,—Keep up always the highest forms of courtesy with your friends.)

Jealousy kisses its left hand, because the right hand caught the fish.

The man you hate cannot carry his food to his mouth, but you hate him more for his way of doing so.

The ghosts of snails get into their shells (money) *by night, and go, for company, where there are most shells.* (*i.e.* Money makes money.)

Eukee! Eukee! Eukee! but, wife, the salt fish will do. ("Eukee" is a solemn word addressed to the gods; and the proverb alludes to the hypocrite, who addresses the gods fervently, but sacrifices to them only salt fish.)

The tears of a chief cause sore eyes to all other chiefs.

The water sends you back (reflects you), *so do all men and women.*

Better be quite blind than see one side only of everything.

If you will do the thing that has not been done before, first hide all the stones that are in the streets of the city.

To the tiger his claws; to the serpent her venom; to the eagle his talons; to the rat his teeth; and to men and women calumny:—the good God gives weapons to all.

The Sheviri cursed the rain; but the patient rain went on raining, and the earth became green.

Say it often; men, as well as parrots, will say it too.

If you slay your adversary, are you sure you have done him any harm?

The ants march in one line, and overrun kingdoms. (An argument for unity and order.)

The echo says nothing of itself; so, the people.

The clever lizard leaves its tail in your hand. (This was a favourite saying of the King when he was urging compromises on his councillors.)

A lie lasts for a day: but it may be the day. (This, in the original language, is really a most effective proverb. The articles "a" and "the" are not expressed directly, but are included in the substantives. A day, *i.e.* an ordinary day, is *Tala*. *The* day, *i.e.* the day upon which some important decision is arrived at, is *Talammah*; and so the proverb runs in the original language, *Strag* (a lie) *marlt Tala; pol kree Talammah*.)

When you want to sell the blunt hatchet, be the first to say that it is blunt.

How wise the clever men would be if they could understand the foolish!

All make the four bows to yesterday. (Meaning, I suppose, that all must submit to what we call now "the logic of facts.")

One wise man knew the secret way into the city; but all said, "Why should we follow one man?"

The king had a friend before he was king.

Only the quite deaf hear praises always of themselves.

If the spider barked like a dog, would he catch flies?

He who looks down, gathers shells (*i.e.* money); *he who looks up, sighs for stars, but they do not come to him.*

The tiger that you look at will not give you the death-stroke.

A wise man said a word too much: that word was the word of a fool.

While the lightning lasted, two bad men were friends.

Ellesmere. Some of the proverbs are not bad. I like "the clever lizard" one, and "the dog that runs twice the distance."

There, again though, how hard men are upon dogs. Why, men, metaphorically speaking, run ten times the distance! Then I like "the four fishes" one. I have myself observed that it is much easier to delude fish when they come singly, than when they come three or four together, and are fishes in council.

There are several of the other proverbs, Milverton, that are far too modern in their substance, and that you could never persuade me were uttered by any savage, however much you may try to make him out a Solomon.

Sir Arthur. *I* like all of them very much.

Ellesmere. Of course you do. As I have said before, one never gets an author to speak disrespectfully of another author—in his presence. Now I'll give you a proverb which shall be worth something. *Never believe a man when he talks about anything which he thoroughly understands.*

Mauleverer. That is the most impudent proverb I have ever heard.

Ellesmere. Impudent it may be; but true, it undoubtedly is.

When a man understands anything very well, he generally has an especial repute for it, and he speaks with an eye to that repute of his. Sir Arthur being an eminent man of letters, his *public* opinion of other men of letters is not worth that [snapping his fingers].

Sir Arthur. I shall respond to Ellesmere by giving him a proverb, or rather a saying, which I met with the other day, and which has delighted me beyond measure. It was in that recent work of Sir Henry Bulwer. Some Frenchman said, "*C'est un avantage terrible de n'avoir rien fait; mais il ne faut pas en abuser*." What a wonderful lesson that is for some critics! Eh, Ellesmere?

Ellesmere. I don't seem to feel it personally, but it certainly is not bad. It is indeed a tremendous advantage to have done nothing, when one is oneself the subject of criticism.

Milverton. Well, now that "Realmah" is ended, all that I have got to say to you is, whether you have done anything or whether you have not done anything (in which latter case you will certainly be in the best position for criticism), do not trouble yourselves with criticising, but do consider whether we may not draw some lesson from this savage chief as to the management of our own political affairs. Only promise me that, and I shall be amply rewarded for any pains that I have taken in telling you the truthful story of his life.

[Here the conversation ended, and we went our separate ways.]

36. The celebrated work, "Moriæ Encomium."

37. It is a strange thing, by the way, that that word "pitiful" should have been so corrupted, and that the man whose heart is full of pity should have come to be looked upon as a small and poor kind of man.

38. The manner in which the day for holding this anniversary was fixed upon was by calculating as follows:—three fours were *multiplied* together; and to their product was added the sum of eight fours, thus making the total 96.

39. Innesang, a measure in use with the Sheviri, being 400 times 4 feet, taking the average length of the human foot as the unit.

40. Lord Macaulay, in his Indian speech.

41. The word for barbarism is "*pralo-mi-mamee*,"—"only able to count 1, 2, 3."

42. The word was a long compound, "sitting alone at night."

CHAPTER XVII.

The holidays were coming to an end, a melancholy fact which, as may be imagined, we did not at all like to contemplate.

It was breakfast time on the Monday morning preceding that on which we should have to return to town. After we had sat down, Sir John, as usual, was the first to begin talking.

Ellesmere. Oh dear, dear! 'Tis sad to think that, after one more revolving week, I shall have to go back to town with Lady Ellesmere, to be entrusted to her tender mercies, and to take leave of Fairy and of the water-rats, of whose bright little eyes and inquiring countenances I see so much when I go fishing; and of Milverton, too, and of all the other intelligent creatures with whom I am at present domiciled. Let us make the most of this week.

Milverton. I am preparing, at Sir Arthur's particular desire, an essay for you for next Saturday.

Ellesmere. And that is what the fellow calls "making the most of this week." However, it is all right. The blackness of Black Monday is greatly diminished in intensity when the preceding Saturday is made of a dark brown colour by having to listen to an essay.

Milverton. But this will be an essay that you will like, I think.

Ellesmere. That is what you always hold out. The particular thing that you are at work upon is always to give life a new savour. It is the one subject which mankind is pining to hear discussed.

Milverton. It is to be an abrupt, disjointed essay. It is to sum up, as it were, our discussion, of late, of many subjects. There will be much that is commonplace in it; much that you have often heard me talk about before; much that you yourselves have said; and, perhaps, there will be a few new things. I really believe it will be the last I shall ever write.

Hereupon Sir John muttered something which sounded very like a grace after meat; but Lady Ellesmere put her hand upon his mouth and stopped his muttering. When she removed it, however, he began talking.

Ellesmere. No: I don't believe it. Placards up! "Signor Doncatelli, or Herr von Klinkel, has consented, at the urgent request of his many

friends and admirers, to give one more representation, in which he will appear in his well known part of, &c. &c."

No one seems to know when to leave off. Poor dear Sir Walter Scott! even he, shrewd man though he was, must write "Count Robert of Paris."

Pooh! don't tell me. I know but too well the nature of all you fellows who are accustomed to exhibit, and to be pointed out as monsters by the finger of the passers-by (*monstrari digito prætereuntium*), whether you are statesmen, actors, or authors. You never can be quiet unless you are upon your stage. There will no more be a last essay by Milverton, while he is alive, than there will be a last muffin baked as long as there are people who have the rude digestion to consume muffins. Don't hold out false hopes: there is nothing more cruel.

Milverton. I shall not reply to Ellesmere's sneers. He will be sure, after all, to take a box for Lady Ellesmere and himself, to hear Doncatelli.

What I want, however, to consult you about—for I am very much puzzled myself about it—is, what title we shall take. The essay will consist of endeavours to show how human life may be improved. I do not for a moment agree with Mauleverer that we are at a standpoint of misery, as he imagines; but, no doubt, there is a great deal that is very miserable in the world, and within our power, I think, to ameliorate.

Cranmer. What should you say to this for a title?—"On the improvement of things in general."

Milverton. Too vague, Mr. Cranmer.

Sir Arthur. "On the improvement of the human race?"

Ellesmere. That's right; lug in "the human race:" that is sure to please Milverton. What says Sandy?

Johnson. "On physical and mental development, with a view to the future welfare of the world."

Ellesmere. Oh, you pedantic Scotch boy! we can't have that.

Mauleverer. "On the possible, but very far from probable, diminution of the extreme wretchedness of mankind."

Milverton. No. I can't accept that; I do not begin by looking at things from your point of view, Mauleverer.

Mrs. Milverton. "On consolation."

Ellesmere. Pour out a cup of tea for me directly, please, Mrs. Milverton. She will well water the teapot, I know, to spite me, if I say what I think of her title before my cup is poured out.

My dear woman, it is *not* "consolation" that we are going to write about. It is to prevent the necessity for your rubbishing consolation. We all know that you women think you are such "dabs," as we used to say at Eton, at consoling. It is not bolts and bars for the stable door that we are going to provide, after the donkey has been stolen; but we are here assembled, or rather shall be next Saturday, to prevent the stealing of donkeys.

And now, Lady Ellesmere, what wise suggestion are you going to make for a title?

Lady Ellesmere. "On *man*kind being made less provoking."

Ellesmere. What would that do for the solace of the world, if *woman*kind were left as they are? For surely the art of provoking is their own.

I see you will have to come to me for a title. I boldly suggest this one: "On the art of making men comfortable."

In this Act of Parliament, or, if you like it, essay, the word "men" shall include men, women, dogs, horses, cows, water-rats, black-beetles, and all other animals and insects.

Milverton. Your title is rather long, Ellesmere, especially if your interpretation of the word "men" be added to it.

Ellesmere. Not a bit too long. The Act, I mean the essay, shall always be referred to as "The Comfortable." That will please Sir Arthur.

Sir Arthur. It will show what a forgiving disposition I have, and how fond I am of "The Magnanimous," that I confess I agree with Ellesmere, and am quite content that his title, in its full length, should be adopted.

Milverton. So be it then; and Mr. Johnson and I will do our best to get ready by next Saturday. I shall want a good deal of indulgence from you.

Ellesmere (tapping his breast). This is the shop, as Mr. Squeers would say, to come to for indulgence.

Here the conversation about the essay ended. Mr. Milverton and I worked very hard during the whole week, and succeeded in getting our materials ready by Saturday.

That Saturday was a lovely day. Indeed, it was one of those calm, warm, bright days, which we sometimes have in England, and in which are combined almost all the beauties of summer and winter. There had been a frost in the early morning; and a white rime was still upon the trees, marking out each spray and twig most beautifully. We took our places in the summer-house in the garden that overlooks a vast expanse of country. Sir John Ellesmere thus began:—

Ellesmere. Who shall say we understand anything about "The Comfortable," when we take our places in this summer-house to listen to a shivering essay which might have been delivered to us in a comfortable study?

Milverton. Shall we go back then?

Ellesmere. Oh, by no means!

Lady Ellesmere. That is so like John. He will object to anything, even when he likes it himself, merely for the sake of making, or, as he calls it, taking, an objection.

Ellesmere. Don't interrupt, Lady Ellesmere, and waste time. Don't you see that Milverton is wild to begin, and that there is an alarming mass of paper in his hands to be got through before we shall have any comfort?

Mr. Milverton commenced reading: "On the Art of making Men Comfortable; the word 'Men' to include Men, Women, Dogs, Horses, Cows, Water-rats, Black-beetles, and all other animals and insects."

Milverton. You see I have adopted your title literally, for so you willed that I should. And now, first, I am not going to read an essay, but to make a speech. I shall speak to you in a most familiar way; and, moreover, shall consider that you recollect a great deal that I have already said, so that I may merely have to deal with it by allusion.

It is a very great difficulty to introduce anything like method into this vast and complicated subject. What I shall do is this: I shall first consider all the main points which bear upon a man from without: I shall then take him to his home and see how he is to be made

comfortable there: afterwards, I shall conclude with several general reflections, which will have for their tendency to show how man and other animals (I do not neglect Ellesmere's "rider") should be made more comfortable.

[Here Mr. Milverton spoke upon the topics of Government, Education, Religion, War, and Railway Management. I omit all that he said upon these subjects, because otherwise the essay, or rather the speech, would stretch to an immoderate length. He spoke for nearly forty minutes; and, as he speaks very rapidly, the speech contained a great deal of matter which it is quite impossible for me to give now. At a future time I may take some opportunity of doing so. He then proceeded, and said as follows:—]

I descend now to questions that may be considered of lower importance than those I have discussed, but which are nevertheless of great importance as regards the comfort of mankind.

I go first to the consideration of their dwellings. These are at present deplorable. We have not made any advance (indeed I think our movement has been retrograde in this respect) since the time of the Romans. The main objects are for the most part neglected. How dampness should be avoided? how noise should be subdued? how fresh air should be provided? how smoke should be carried off? seem to be unimportant questions, so that the exterior is kept according to the style most in favour with the architect.

The waste that there is in this matter is most surprising. If houses were well built, there would be very little expense for repairs, for painting, and, perhaps, for fire insurance. We have excellent materials; we make hardly any use of them: and there is scarcely a house in which any provision is made for the exceptional events, either festive or calamitous, which are sure to occur at some time or other, in every household.

Then look at the waste in decoration, in furniture, in knick-knacks of all kinds. I often take an individual room, and I say to myself, "If I had the money which that foolish cornice has cost, which that hideous centre-piece in the ceiling has cost, which that painful furniture, constructed so as to retain the utmost amount of dust, has cost, which those knick-knacks, which amuse one for two or three minutes and are a trouble ever afterwards, have cost, the room could

be so enlarged and improved that the people who inhabit it would be far more comfortable."

The last thing architects and builders generally seem to consider is, that the room is really to be inhabited. I have seen the whole wing of a great palace or castle so spoilt for the want of a little additional space, that there was not sufficient room for the furniture which would be imperatively required in the twenty or thirty apartments of that wing. There has been no space in these rooms (which people are not only supposed to sleep in by night, but to live in by day) for a sofa, and for a writing-table.

Again, no attention has been paid to climate. It has been forgotten that there are a good many rainy days in Great Britain in the course of the year, and that the British spring is not altogether a balmy season. In this respect our ancestors were much wiser than we are, and understood what is called "Gardenesque architecture." Now, one often sees a great white staring house situated in the midst of a great park. Nobody seems ever to have considered that people might like to have some walking exercise or to breathe some fresh air without being exposed to inclement weather in that spacious park. I have often seen that the needless, foolish, and ugly decorations of two or three of the principal rooms would have provided a beautiful colonnade like our cloisters at Trinity, in which the sickly and the young might enjoy the sun, and have the advantage of fresh air and exercise throughout the winter days.

The above are trifling things to speak of; but, while we are discussing "The Comfortable," they are scarcely out of place.

As to the cottages of the poor, they are outrageous. Often constructed without the means of drainage—the walls in some instances being built up against the earth, the outlets being exposed without any protection against the east winds—they are really nothing better than nests for fever, and well-devised traps for rheumatism and consumption.

Here comes in that sad neglect of admirable materials for building which I have before commented upon. Terra-cotta, slates, and tiles might be used with the greatest advantage in such constructions. In fact, a house, and still more a cottage, ought to be impregnable to damp throughout, and capable of thorough ventilation. Will you

have the kindness to show me any such constructions from the highest to the lowest class of buildings?

And now look at our buildings in London. I am very sensitive, I acknowledge, to noise; but I do not believe I am altogether singular in this respect. Now, you know, one is absolutely dependent upon one's neighbour to the right and to the left. We enjoy smoke from their chimneys. We have the pleasure of listening to their daughters practising the first scales in music; we partake, uninvited, of the clamour, if not of the enjoyment, of their feasts.

But I must not dwell much more on this subject: all I wish is, that when people are building houses they would not forget that these houses are to be inhabited, and would act accordingly. If half the thought which is given to obscure questions in theology or metaphysics had been given to the question of making men more comfortable by building better habitations for them, what a much happier and more endurable world it would have been.

When Sir Walter Scott died, and critics were commenting upon his works, one of the best criticisms was to this effect:—"Shakspeare builds up his characters from within to without. Their coats, dresses, and external paraphernalia of any kind are the last things about which he gives any indication; whereas Sir Walter commences from without, and his heroes or heroines are greatly connected in your mind with their outside paraphernalia." There was some little truth in this, though I think it was much too severe on Sir Walter; but I have often thought that we mostly do what was complained of in Sir Walter, and nearly always attend to the outside first. There is charming Gothic architecture, as seen from the outside, in which the Gothic architect, neglecting the improvements which have taken place in materials since the time of the Goths, gives you foolish windows and dark passages, and every evil with which the Goths were contented—as indeed they were by their ignorance obliged to be contented—to endure.

The same error is to be found in those men who live for the outer world instead of for home. This brings me naturally to the subject of ostentation, the direst enemy of comfort. No, I will not put it down exactly as ostentation, but as the doing of things because others do them, whether you like them or not, and whether they are suitable or not, to you or your means. I think I will call it imitation, and say that

imitation is the direst enemy of comfort. Women, I am sorry to say, are greatly to blame in this matter. It is always an unanswerable argument in their minds that other people do anything. In fact, women are the only real and sound Conservatives, or rather Tories, in the world; and one great end that we shall gain from their education, if ever a better education is given to them, is this, that we shall have much less conventionalism to contend with.

Now I proceed to the next point, viz., as to what should be done inside a house to make it a happy and comfortable home. Of course, the great danger, the pressing danger, of domestic life is its familiarity—mark you, there is immense pleasure in this familiarity, but I think we might have all the pleasure without the mischief. I recur to a few of the points which I have often dwelt upon before. Never scold for little things and for things in which there is no intention to do wrong: people don't mean to break glass or china, or to spill the grease; and yet you often hear a child or a servant reproved for some accident as if it had been done out of *malice prepense*.

Never ridicule other people's tastes, especially the tastes of those who live with you, or any of your neighbours' tastes, unless those tastes are absolutely noxious and mischievous.

Cultivate the great art of leaving people alone, even those whom you think you have a right to direct in the minutest particular.

Now here I am going to say a most important thing, and I beg your attention to it.

Praise those with whom you live, if they really deserve it. Do not be silent upon their merits, for you should cultivate their reasonable self-esteem. If they have merits, other people—strangers—will tell them of it, and they think it is unkind of you who have lived with them, and ought to love them, not to have recognised their merits. A person shall live with a person his junior, and during the whole of his life shall never have told that junior of his good qualities or his merits; and it is only perhaps when that first person dies, that the other finds out that, during the time they had lived together, he had been thoroughly appreciated; but, unfortunately, it has been a silent appreciation.

Domestic comfort is the very core of happy life. Now what perfection it would be if, in domestic life, the courtesy and civility which strangers show to us were combined with the affection and the absence of restraint which belong to domesticity!

Now I am going to insist upon a point which might be thought very trivial, but which yet has something in it. Do not merely endeavour to be joyous and pleasant with those with whom you live, but even to be agreeable to look at; in fact, I say it boldly, although you may laugh at me, try and look your best for your own people as well as for the stranger.

[Here there came in a somewhat long statement about communism, which I am sure would not be very interesting to most people, and which I omit. Then the subject of wealth was introduced by Sir Arthur. Mr. Milverton proceeded:—]

Riches! In any discourse about human happiness, something must be said upon this subject. Everybody admits that money is the source of all evil, and everybody tries to get as much money as he or she can. Of course, seriously speaking, wealth is a good thing. That we should have plenty of corn, of coal, of wool, of cotton, and of cattle, is before all things necessary if we are to be comfortable; but what is a bad thing is, that too much respect should be paid, and too much honour given, to merely wealthy people.

"The learned pate ducks to the golden fool:
All is oblique."

Now instead of its being a thing which is *primâ facie* for a man, it may be argued that it is rather *primâ facie* against him, that he is rich: it is a fact which he has to account for, and often the account he may have to give is anything but creditable to him. What may be called the legitimate influence of riches is surely enough. That a rich man has the services of other men and animals in every way at his command is surely power enough. You have, doubtless, heard me tell the story of a dignitary in the Romish Church, one of the most actively benevolent of men—a sort of Borromeo; and he was descanting among his friends about the worthlessness of worldly goods, and he concluded by saying, "All, all, is vanity—except a carriage." Doubtless the good man had often found, in his career of active benevolence, the advantage of rapid locomotion.

Well, let the rich have their carriages, and make good use of them.

Ellesmere. Only one word! I won't interrupt again. Let them take care to send their carriages to the railway station, to meet their poor friends who come to visit them.

But you will say, give us instances of the illegitimate influence of wealth. There is one that occurs to me directly. I say it is iniquitous, it is monstrous, that a man should be raised to the peerage merely because he is a rich man, and can—to use the cant phrase—afford to support the dignity of the peerage. That dignity of the peerage would be easily supported, if only those persons were made peers who had, by public service and distinguished merit, deserved the honour.

If it were universally recognised that there were great objects in human life, such as social distinctions, over which riches had no influence whatever, riches would be less unreasonably, and less immoderately pursued. Again, I object strongly to a man's power of voting, in any capacity, being augmented by his wealth. I do not care about your telling me that this is sheer Radicalism, and talking to me about stakes in the country: that betting phrase has no weight with me. The judgment of men who have devoted themselves to the getting, the saving, or the enjoying of riches, may be as much warped by those employments as the poor man's judgment may be by his poverty. I beg to ask you one question: do you think the railways would have been worse managed if the qualifications for directorship had been lowered, or had been abandoned altogether?

However, all that I contend is, do no honour to a rich man merely because he is rich. If this maxim were adopted, riches would be robbed of half their mischief.

I now pass to quite another subject, which, however, is not unconnected with the foregoing. I maintain that now life goes too fast, too fussily, and too anxiously, to admit of much comfort, at least for those who have any prominent part to play in life. All our swiftness of locomotion, our promptitude of communication, tends to promote this fussiness. Here, again, I am merely talking after Ellesmere. I must own I am very much puzzled as to how to suggest any remedy for this state of things. I have tried to think over it deeply, and the only thing that has occurred to me, as a remedy, is this,—that more persons should be taken into partnership with those who have to bear the arduous parts in life, and who would then have

more time for thinking. The general complaint now is, which I have heard uttered dozens of times, that those who have anything to do, have generally too much to do, while there remains a number of intelligent and active-minded people who have nothing to do—unless, indeed, the shooting at hares and pheasants be considered something to do.

Now, I want to put before you a dilemma: either this increase of work is profitable to the community, or it is not; if it is not, let us drop it; but if it is, then the benefit to the public will pay for the employment of additional heads and hands.

I mean this to apply to Government, and to all public services useful to the community. But I will illustrate my meaning by an example taken from Government.

[Here Mr. Milverton gave an account, which would not interest my readers much, of the labours and duties of the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and strongly urged the division of the work of that office into two branches, with a new Minister.]

I pass now to another subject,—recreation. I do not advocate recreation exactly upon the same grounds as those upon which it has often been argued for. I say this—I say that men——

Ellesmere. Yes, and women too. Oh, dear! I ought not to have interrupted.

—that men are such mischievous animals, that you can hardly take too much pains to occupy their spare moments innocently. Oh, if we could have put down frequently to a game at whist Attila, Charlemagne, Genghis Khan, and the First Napoleon! I am afraid that there would be chronological difficulties in the way of this arrangement; but you know what I mean.

As to recreation for the poor, I agree with Ellesmere, that that man will be one of the greatest benefactors to his species, and will fulfil the functions of a great statesman, who contrives that the poor man shall take a little longer time than he does at present to consume his pot of beer. Remember there is but standing-room in those bright and odious gin-palaces; and one "go"—I believe that is the word—is swallowed hastily after another, because the poor man has nothing else to amuse him, or to do.

Now I do not care what amusement you provide for him, so that it is tolerably innocent,—whether, following the humble Milverton, he sits quietly down to draughts and dominoes, like a French peasant; or whether, imitating the ambitious Ellesmere, he makes "ducks and drakes" with a flat stone upon a pond; or whether, partaking the poetic nature of Sir Arthur, he devotes his spare energies to the beautiful accomplishment of dancing; or whether, following the example of the solid Mauleverer, he plays at bowls and quoits (for those, I know, are your favourite games, Mauleverer); or whether (to please you, Johnson) he indulges in golf and cricket; or whether, to the delight of the wise and fact-loving Cranmer, he plays at the game of Mechanics' Institutes—it is all one to me, so only that he is amused, and does not drink off his gin or his beer quite so quickly.

Why is it, by the way, that women are so much better than men—less given to drunkenness, or any similar excess? Simply because they have a thousand little occupations. A woman, who is not oppressed by much riches and many servants, always finds plenty to do about her house, and, in that, finds her chief occupation in life and often her chief happiness. And if Sir Arthur's plans[43] are adopted, women must also, of necessity, partake in the recreation provided for men. Now all the feminine species love dancing, either as actors or spectators. The other day, in a hideous back street, an organ-grinder came down the street while I was passing, and six or eight young ragamuffinesses, who seemed to spring from the gutters, began to dance to the polka which the organ-man was grinding out. They danced capitally, keeping the right time, while their rags fluttered in the wind. Their little grimy faces were suffused with joy, and their bright teeth shone all the more brightly from the contrast with the general dirt of the countenance. Their mothers came out to see them. One or two slouching men lounged to the doors and looked on complacently. For the moment that wretched street was quite lit up with festivity.

You may think me a foolish man, overmuch given to sentimentality; but I could have sat down, if there had been any clean place to sit upon, and cried, though crying is not much in my way. But it did grieve me to think how few opportunities for recreation these poor little wretches had; and I pictured to myself a scene which I have often beheld near Dresden, where, in some

tea-garden near to the town, I have seen the artisan and his wife and his children all making themselves supremely happy (at an expense which is often consumed in one or two "goes" at a gin-palace, swallowed in a few minutes' time by the respectable father of a family in England), dancing being the principal amusement, and eating and drinking only secondary.

I pass on to other topics connected with the great subject of promoting the comfort of mankind. These topics will be of a general character. The main enemies to human comfort are—intolerance, denigration, unjustifiable repetition, unjust criticism, uncalled-for publicity, pedantry, irrational conservatism, and the cultivation of hardness of character.

It would be like giving out one of Blair's sermons, just such as we used to have at Eton from Dr. Keate, and which we called "Second-prose"—a juvenile corruption for "Second-prayers"—to dilate much upon these topics; but I shall say a word or two upon each.

Touching intolerance, it is comparatively easy for men of large and tolerant nature to be tolerant, generally speaking. Their difficulty will ever be to be tolerant of intolerant people. Let them remember that intolerance is the twin sister of ignorance, and that they do not understand nor appreciate these intolerant people if they cannot tolerate them.

Denigration. It may be very stupid in me, but I cannot understand the pleasure which people take in blackening each other. In the first place, it is such an easy thing to do. The clever thing to do, is to find out people's merits. I do not say this satirically; but it is often the outer points of men's characters—little foolish habits, modes of talk that are not agreeable, tiresome ways, unpleasant roughness on the surface, all which afford such easy opportunities for denigration, while, to discern the sterling worth and merit and kindness which there are in so many human beings (I believe in nearly all) does require nice observation, guided by a kindly imagination.

I should not care so much about this denigration, if there were not always people ready to repeat to the person blackened all the dark and unpleasant things which others have said about him or her.

Touching unjustifiable repetition, which makes so much mischief and destroys so much comfort in the world, I would only quote that good man, Thomas à Kempis, whom I have quoted before, and who says, "Do not hasten to repeat even those things which you believe" ("*Nec audita, vel credita, mox ad aliorum aures effundere*").

With respect to unjust criticism. The world is full of this, and the critics little know what pain they occasion. I do not say that critics should be able to do the work they criticise, but really they ought to sympathise to some extent with whatever they criticise. Do they ever think how difficult it is to do anything? It is lucky that we come upon the fruits of other men's work in former generations, when there was less criticism, for there is no knowing what good work might not have been stifled, if it had been subjected to the same ordeal of criticism which abounds in the present day. If we do not take care, we shall enter into a Byzantine period of the world's history, in which there is endless comment, and little or no original production.

Now, for pedantry. This is one of the greatest enemies, in a small way, to human comfort; it pervades every class of society. Scholars and official men are especially accused of it; but they are not more guilty than other people. How dreadfully pedantic doctors are, and railway officials, and, above all, servants! A doctor would see his dearest friend die rather than interfere with another doctor, or presume to say that the treatment is not quite judicious. And I believe if a superior being, who had only observed our world from a distance, were obliged to come down and live amongst us, he would not be surprised at our stupidities and our cruelties—our wars for example—so much as he would be by all the pedantries, vanities, and conventionalities, by which we create so much discomfort. The utterances that would astonish him, until he became familiar with them, would be, "It is not my place to do this:" "It is not your place to do that:" "I think I ought to have been consulted:" "It seems I am nobody now;" and the like. He would say to himself, "They are always tormenting themselves about trifles. They do not look at the substance. They do not consider what things should be done; but rather, how these things should be done according to certain narrow formularies."

Now, for irrational conservatism. I am sure that I am fully alive to the advantages of conservatism. It is a grand thing, as some one has

said, that in England we never wake up some fine morning and find from the newspapers that everything has changed, and that we are about to live under quite a new dynasty. But there is such a thing as irrational conservatism. An evil is fully proved to be an evil, and an obvious remedy is suggested to counteract it. You say to yourself, paraphrasing Shakspeare—

"The times have been,
That, when the brains were out, the *thing* would die,
And there an end."

But no, it won't die. It goes on spasmodically without brains, and continues to cause a great deal of practical discomfort. All this is the result of an irrational conservatism, prone to reject every new thing merely because it is new.

Now I come to unreasonable publicity. Publicity in these days is too rapid, and not inquiring enough. There comes out a flaming attack against some poor man, based upon certain statements. In a day or two, the man generally contradicts some of these statements, and apparently with truth. But the mischief has been done. The accused person has been made very uncomfortable, for people are always in a great rage at being accused in any respect wrongfully. Now it occurs to me to ask, Why could not the accusing writer have made a little more investigation before he wrote the accusing article? I suppose the answer will be, that he must write to live, and he cannot make a living out of it if he is to take all this trouble in investigation. All I can say is, that as there seems to be a likelihood of publicity increasing greatly, an immense amount of discomfort will be caused, both to public and to private individuals, by rash and injurious publications.

I am now going to touch upon another subject, not before alluded to by me, and which I daresay you will take to be very fanciful in me, and somewhat effeminate. Is there not a certain hardness in the English character which, instead of being repressed, is much cultivated in modern times? I scarcely know how to describe it—whether to class it as stoicism or cynicism, or any other ism; but I perceive it, and feel it. No young man likes to show that he feels anything very much, or cares for anybody very much. Now you see from the literature of former ages that people then were not so

reticent. I admit that there is something grand in the Spartan-like endurance which enables you to let the fox gnaw you, without your making any unpolite allusion to the pain you suffer. But there is a wide distinction between this endurance and the reticence to which I have referred. If you constantly repress the expression of feelings, you will gradually cease to have these feelings. Now, for the comfort of the world—and it is that which I am advocating—it is desirable that we should know more of the better and more amiable parts of each other's characters, and that amiability should not be diminished by the constant avoidance of the manifestation of it. Do you hear, Sir John?

[Ellesmere nodded.]

I am afraid I have hitherto neglected to comment upon the rider which Sir John Ellesmere was good enough, with the consent of the company, to add to the title of my essay. I can only say that I shall never be happy or comfortable in this world while the lower animals are treated as they are; and I believe that mine is not an exceptional case, but that there are tens of thousands of human beings who feel exactly as I do. If you were to amend all other evils, and yet resolve to leave this untouched, we should not be satisfied. It is an immense responsibility that Providence has thrown upon us, in subjecting these sensitive creatures to our complete sway; and I tremble at the thought of how poor an answer we shall have to give when asked the question how we have made use of the power entrusted to us over the brute creation.

Ellesmere. According to Milverton, in order to make people comfortable, we are to praise them when they deserve it, even though we have the misfortune to live with them. Don't pinch my arm, Lady Ellesmere! I praised you so much before we were married, that there is an immense balance of praise, still unaccounted for, that will never be deserved on your part. But I have not indulged Milverton to this extent, and therefore I can afford to say now that the essay is not despicable. Useful, too, it is. People come bothering me, even in court, and saying, "How I wish I were you, having the pleasure of assisting at those essays and conversations which take place at Worth-Ashton." And these people are wonderfully suggestive too, telling me what you should write about, and what I should talk about. Now I can answer them, "My good fellows, only

read his last essay, the very last that ever is to be, together with my talk upon it, and then you need not read any more, and need not bother me any more, for you will know exactly what we think upon every subject."

Now I will at once point out the things I agree with. I agree with what you say about government and education; also about riches and religion. Indeed, what you said about riches and education was chiefly derived from me.

By the way, with respect to religion, could you not have said something more about sermons? I have only heard three sermons in my life upon what may be called the daily topics of common life. Kindness to animals, gentleness and tolerance in domestic life, not ridiculing the young, not hurrying to repeat everything you hear, and several other topics that you dwelt upon, would make excellent subjects for sermons. Only the sermons must not be vague; they must not be Blairish; they must condescend to details. The preacher must sometimes say, "I saw this or that the other day, and I must protest against it." He must not be afraid of using common words, and must call a spade a spade, and not an agricultural implement. If he is going to speak against bribery at an election, he must use the word "bribe" pretty plainly.

"It is no doubt, my Christian brethren, a thing to be greatly reprehended that when a person is admitted to exercise the privilege connected with a great trust, held for the good of the community at large, and for the welfare of our holy religion, he should, in an unseemly manner, betray that trust for the sake of any creature comfort, or endanger his soul by yielding to the desire of the natural man for filthy lucre, when lucre of any kind cannot be honourably or virtuously conjoined with the due exercise of this important privilege."

What poor man discerns in that sentence any allusion to pots of beer and five-pound notes for his vote? He perceives that somebody has done wrong, or will do wrong. Naturally he thinks it is the squire, and he goes away saying, "Parson have a-been giving of it to the squire this morning, he have."

Sir Arthur. I perceive a great opening for "filthy lucre" to be gained by Sir John Ellesmere, if he would but write a series of skeleton sermons.

Ellesmere. I will do it when I have time, and you shall have a presentation copy, Sir Arthur. I think they might even be of use to you when you are composing sonnets.

There is one thing you have omitted, Milverton, as regards the art of making men comfortable. I shan't be comfortable until you give me some good plays to go to, played by great players. It is true there is always the House of Commons, which Charles II. said was as good as a play; but I want something beyond that.

Mauleverer. Yes; I like a good play. It is the only time one thoroughly forgets one's private miseries.

Cranmer. I don't care much about plays.

Mrs. Milverton. I think they are the most enjoyable things in the world.

Milverton. I will tell you a very foolish thing that is often said, even by very clever men, about playgoing. They say, "Why care to go and see Shakspeare acted? Can't you read it in your closet?" Now this appears to me such nonsense.

Ellesmere. Yes, it is. I don't believe that anybody thoroughly understands a great play until he has seen it acted.

Milverton. If there is anything in the world that I think I know well, it is Macbeth. I knew it when I was six years old, for my mother used to spend hour after hour, and day after day, in teaching it to me, and making me play it with her; but when I came to see a great actress in Lady Macbeth's part—Helen Faucit—new lights burst in upon me, and I saw what a delicate and refined fiend Lady Macbeth could be.

Ellesmere. Yes, I know, Milverton, that is a theory of yours, that "Lady Macbeth" is her best part; but I differ from you, and think that in "Rosalind" is her greatest triumph. Now I will tell you what I think is one of that lady's greatest merits as an actress. It is that she is not always quite the same. Of course her main conception of the part does not much vary; but there will be particular touches—new felicities—evolved in each representation. She gives me the notion of one to whom her part is always fresh, because, like the characters of all persons who are good for anything, it is, in fact, an inexhaustible subject of study.

Sir Arthur. Well, now, I like her in the Lady of Lyons. She it was who made the Pauline. I remember seeing her act with Macready in that play, and I never was more delighted in my life.

Ellesmere. You see now what a pleasure is lost to us if we neglect the drama. I shan't be comfortable, Milverton, until you have the kindness to restore that to us—an easy matter, of course, for such a genius as you are.

But to revert to Milverton's speech. I quite agree with what he said about the iniquity of adding undeserved honours to riches. Riches ought to have no effect over the distribution of honours and dignities. All merit throughout the world receives an insult and a discouragement when a rich man receives an honour on account of his riches.

Sir Arthur. As to discouragement, I differ from you.

Milverton. And so do I.

Sir Arthur. The men who do anything that is worth doing seldom think about reward of any kind. You can get their best work from them, whether you treat them well or ill.

Milverton. Quite true, Sir Arthur. We should confer honours upon them, not so much for their sakes as for ours. And not for ours in a worldly or acquisitive point of view, for, as you say, we shall get their best work from them, whether we reward them or not.

Cranmer. I don't know. They knock pretty hard at the doors of the Treasury sometimes.

Mauleverer. Yes; after their work is done.

Ellesmere. Let us proceed with the discussion on the essay. How severe Milverton was upon our present mode of building and decorating. I think some general principles might have been enounced there—such as that celebrated one of Pugin's, "Do not conceal the construction." The mischief that is done by concealing the construction is immense.

Let us each invent a maxim. Of course it will only be partially true, as all maxims are. Let us be silent for five minutes. Walk about if you like (my locomotive thoughts are always best), and then each of us shall propound his or her nostrum in the form of a maxim.

We agreed to do so, and in five minutes were reseated and ready to produce our maxims.

Ellesmere. Of course I am ready first, and mine will be the wisest maxim. *Never mind the outside*.

Lady Ellesmere. *Avoid uniformity*.

Ellesmere. Very good. What an advantage it is to live with clever people: how it sharpens the wits! I almost think I shall change my maxim into, *Find out clever people, and insist upon living with them*.

Lady Ellesmere. One would think I had followed John about before we were married, and had implored him to allow me to live in the light of his sagacity, and to sun myself in the warmth of his tender nature.

Ellesmere. You gave clear proof of your good sense in doing it. Why deny it? What do you say, Mauleverer? What is your maxim?

Mauleverer. *No artificial surfaces of any kind*.

Ellesmere. That is grand, but there must be many exceptions—gilding, for instance.

Cranmer. *No house to be built on leasehold property*.

Ellesmere. Tyrannous, and inadmissible, I fear; but very suggestive. What do you say, Milverton? We expect something very good from you, as it is your especial subject.

Milverton. *Never do anything in building which cannot give a good account of itself*.

Ellesmere. A splendid moral maxim! but is it not a little remote from bricklaying and plastering?

Milverton. I really do not know how to sum up what I mean in one maxim, but I will endeavour to explain.

The other day, before we left London, I took a walk. I came upon some masons busily chipping holes in some blocks of stone at the basement of a grand house; making, in short, little dust-pans for the London dirt to accumulate in. This was done, I believe, because at the Pitti Palace, in Florence, the architect had, doubtless to save trouble, used rough and indented blocks of stone. Now what account could these little dust-pans give of themselves?

Then I saw a house with three huge brick pilasters rising nearly to the roof, but not quite, and all that they supported was a beam of

wood fantastically and ridiculously ornamented? What account could those pilasters give of themselves?

Then I paid a visit, and was shown into a fine room with a coved ceiling. There were seventy-eight half-brackets, which, if they had been completed, would have had to support four beams of wood, which had manifestly other support. These semi-brackets were elaborately carved, and abounded in leaves. They were splendid receptacles for dust and dirt. The only account they could give of themselves would be that they were put up to accommodate spiders. Indeed the benevolent attention paid in house decorations to the judicious lodgment of spiders is quite marvellous. I wish people, when they were building, provided as carefully for the accommodation of servants.

Ellesmere. The illustrations are good, but the maxim remains somewhat vague and obscure, according to my judgment. What do you say, Sandy?

Johnson. Let every house in the country, and, where possible, in London, have a good large playroom, separated from the house by a passage having double doors at each end of it.

Ellesmere. Elevate Sandy upon a tub, send at once for Theed or Woolner, and have a statue made of Sandy, with a battledore in his hand. It is a most judicious suggestion that he has contributed.

What a place that room would be to send children to on rainy days, and whenever their irrepressible animal spirits keep the nerves of the elder people in a state of anxious quivering!

N.B. (and this would make that playroom an earthly paradise). It should be an understood thing that the family are not "at home" to visitors, when they are in the playroom.

Sir Arthur. What a place for private theatricals, without upsetting the rest of the house!

Ellesmere. No foolish flowers to be put there to take up room. It should be big enough for croquet, while battledore and shuttlecock and children's hoops should revel in it.

Milverton. What a place it would be for a good jovial dinner to one's poor neighbours after a cricket-match or an archery meeting!

Lady Ellesmere. What a place to practise archery in!

Milverton. I will engage to build it out of the expensive and ugly follies——

Ellesmere. Which would, of course, be committed, if you were not entrusted with the building of the house.

Sir Arthur. Another good point is that there would be much less space required in the ordinary reception rooms, if one had such a room as this for extraordinary occasions.

Ellesmere. You are all going into too much grandeur. Sandy and I mean this room to be roughly constructed and attached to houses of very moderate calibre; and, if we were left alone for a fortnight, without being bothered with essays, and had one carpenter attached to us, we would knock up something of the kind here.

Now, Mrs. Milverton, what is your maxim?

Mrs. Milverton. I will give up the playroom, though with great regret, if you will only give me two rooms separated, in a similar manner to that which Mr. Johnson proposes, from the house, to be used in case of illness, and especially in case of infectious illness.

Ellesmere. An excellent idea! But you must put it in the form of a maxim.

Mrs. Milverton. Leonard, do put it for me. You know I am not clever in putting things.

Milverton. Mrs. Milverton wishes to say that *Every house should be so arranged as to contain a domestic infirmary*.

Ellesmere. Well, you are all very clever! and have offered a heap of good suggestions.

As I proposed the game, I think I ought to be allowed to have another turn.

[We all assented.]

Then I say, *When you are building, think of the comfort of your servants, even before you think of your own*.

["Hear, hear," from Mr. Milverton and Sir Arthur.]

My first maxim, however, was the great one. I really am proud of it. I should like it to be commemorated in my epitaph. By the way, as this is Milverton's last essay, it would be a very appropriate thing if I were to give you a sketch of what my epitaph should be. I think it should run thus. Give me your pencil, Sandy; let me write it out:—

He was a sound lawyer;
And, by a peculiar felicity,
Not uncommon to great advocates,
The side on which he argued
Happened always to be
The side of justice and of truth.
He never beat his wife, though she was often
Very provoking.
He was an endurable friend,
And, in a dull country house,
Was worth a deal of money
As a guest.
He was a good master to his dogs,
A persevering fisherman,
A powerful singer;
And when he borrowed books, he always
Took care to return them.
The grand maxim,
Never Mind the Outside
,
Which has improved the Art of Building
Throughout the world,
And which has tended to dignify and purify
All other departments in human life,
Was his'n.

Sir Arthur. Excellent! But there must be a Latin quotation somewhere.

Ellesmere. Oh, ah! Latin. Yes, I have it. "*Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes*."

Sir Arthur. I must be very stupid, I suppose; but I do not see the appropriateness.

Mauleverer. Nor I.

Ellesmere. Nor I; but it will set people thinking. They will say I used it in some great speech, and that, as it had never been heard in

the House of Commons before, it completely crushed Mr. Disraeli, or Mr. Gladstone.

Sir Arthur. No: say something of which nobody can make any meaning, such as "*Sed memor quia immemor*" ("But mindful, because unmindful," ladies).

Milverton. No: turn it this way, "*Immemor quia memor*" ("Unmindful because mindful"), and then a very subtle interpretation might be given. Don't you know that, when you know a person very well, and love him or her very much, you have more difficulty in recalling his or her countenance than that of any ordinary person?

Ellesmere. That is too fine-drawn. I stick to my Gracchi.

But is not my epitaph modest and touching? I could almost myself shed tears for the loss of such a man. I do not say that I was a perfect friend, but only an *endurable* one. And then how exquisitely my honesty, carefulness, and general propriety of conduct are indicated in what is said about the returning of borrowed books! Some people might think there is a little flattery in the words "powerful singer," but I know that Lady Ellesmere always goes out of the room when I begin to sing, and I conclude that her exit is from an excess of pleasure that requires solitude to moderate it.

I observed that Lady Ellesmere did not say anything, and looked grave. Women do not like this kind of jesting about serious subjects, such as epitaphs. Sir John saw this too, and immediately turned into another branch of the subject.

Ellesmere. What you said about pedantry, Milverton, was not bad, but I think it was muddled up in your mind with other things, and, if you examined the matter, you would find that what you disapproved of was a mixture of pedantry and insolence.

Sir Arthur. Resulting in disobligingness, which is but too common everywhere.

Ellesmere. Everybody knows, and Lady Ellesmere better than anybody, that I am the least offendable of mortal men. But I have been offended thrice in my life, and in each case it was by an official personage. Mark you that, Sir Arthur and Mr. Cranmer.

Milverton. Let us hear all about it. I can hardly imagine your being offended with anybody.

Ellesmere. The guilty official personages were the croupier of a gaming-table, a young woman in a refreshment-room at a railway-station, and an Under-Secretary of State.

Mauleverer. How came you to be on such terms with a croupier as to be offended?

Ellesmere. Don't be alarmed! I never lost a penny at a gaming-table in my life. When once I am convinced that the odds, in however small a degree, are against me, not a thaler would I venture. But I met this fellow in some reading-room, and I asked him to do me some little service, such as one man may reasonably ask another, to show me where the bell was, or to be good enough to indicate the way to the hotel of the Three Knaves, or to allow me to have the Kölnischer Zeitung when he had done with it.

He intimated to me that people mustn't speak to people if people had not been introduced to people, and snubbed me entirely. He was the most insolent of the three.

She was the haughtiest. I was foolish and tiresome enough, seeing a largely-spread board, to wish for something to eat and to drink. The young lady was apparently absorbed in writing an epic poem. She looked over my head, as Dickens describes, "into the far distance," and yet I felt she saw this tiresome person. I never was cut so dead in my life. I went away hungry and thirsty; but I found another damsel who was gracious and kind to me, and gave me a bun, from the stifling effect of which I have not yet fully recovered. Oh, she was haughty, I can tell you, that first young woman!

Now for my third snubbing. My time is too highly appreciated for me to bestow it unnecessarily; but I had to represent some grievance—I think it was for some constituents—to the —— Office.

I made my way, not without difficulty, to the Under-Secretary,—not without difficulty too, from the many interruptions, did I contrive to state my case. Then he commenced snubbing me fearfully. You will think I was in a rage. Nothing of the kind. An odd idea struck me while he was talking, that amused me all the time.

Did you ever hear the story of Mrs. Siddons, "How gat he there?" You don't know it? Well, she heard some one say of a Frenchman that he was in his bureau. Her ideas of a bureau were not of a room,

but of a piece of furniture, and so the great tragic actress naturally exclaimed, "How gat he there?"

And so, too, all the time I was listening to this gentleman's objurgations, I was saying to myself, "How gat you there? What Minister originally took you out of the ruck of men?" I say originally, because when once a man has got anything, he rises afterwards by a kind of routine, in parliamentary official life, as well as in the permanent civil service.

And then I thought of Milverton. He once wrote a story—the best thing he ever did write, to my mind. By the way, he will not live in future days by anything he has written that the public has read as his; but if he does survive in men's minds it will be by some obscure thing he has written, which neither he nor the public has taken any account of.

Milverton. Thank you, Ellesmere!

Ellesmere. Oh, where was I?

Milverton. That's so like Ellesmere; he has often so many persons on his hands to attack—in this case the croupier, the refreshment-girl, the Under-Secretary, the Minister who first noticed him, and my unfortunate self—that he hardly knows where he is, and whom he is mauling.

Ellesmere. Oh, yes: I know where I was. Milverton wrote a story about some people who were always obliged to speak the truth when it was dark. I began to fear that I was one of these people. It was a November day when I saw the Under-Secretary, and, though only four o'clock (I was on my way to the House), the shades of evening were coming on. A nervous dread seized me lest I should be obliged to tell my thoughts, and ask the Under-Secretary, "How gat you there?" I hurriedly took my departure.

That man was the rudest of the three.

But, seriously speaking—for I mean that all my stories should bear closely on the subject—this illustrates what I mean.

These three people were probably pedants. The croupier had a pedantic idea of acquaintanceship—the Under-Secretary of official work—the refreshment-girl about giving refreshments. I have no doubt I did something that was out of due course: asked for coffee at a wrong time, or committed some solecism in refreshment manners.

I daresay they were all pedants, but they were ill-conditioned people too. Pedantry is not so harmful as you would make out; and besides, you often mistake a necessary preciseness, or an inevitable division of labour, for mere pedantry.

Sir Arthur. I really think that, when a man has written his own epitaph, it indicates a great desire on his part for rest and quietness. I am sure, therefore, that Sir John will be very much obliged to me if I take up the running in his stead, and offer what few objections occur to me.

I think you are all too much inclined to look at what is physical. What you have said about houses is very good; but, really, man is too great a creature to be made very comfortable merely by comfortable houses. I like best what Milverton said about social and domestic intercourse.

How many human beings, Mr. Cranmer, were there found to be in the British Islands on the occasion of the last census?

Cranmer. 29,423,628; I know you will believe in my odd figures.

Sir Arthur. Divide that number roughly by four, and it will come to something like 7,000,000. I have no doubt, then, that there are, at this moment, 7,000,000 of misunderstandings in the British Isles. You know what I mean by misunderstandings;—that A thinks that he has reason to think that B thinks meanly of him; and that B thinks that C said something very unkind about him behind his back; and that E is sure that F has prejudiced G against him, for G has never been so friendly with him since he (G) made F's acquaintance; and so it goes on, through innumerable alphabets. Now this habit of self-tormenting might be considerably diminished by judicious education. Here is a thing, too, for preachers to preach against.

Milverton. The mischief chiefly arises from a kind of modesty—from a keen sense in most people of their own shortcomings and deficiencies. If people would only exercise their imagination in imagining that others think as well and as kindly of them (and this is surely not a great stretch of imagination) as they do of these others, the world would be a much more comfortable place to live in. The agonies that sensitive people invent—no, absolutely create—for themselves are as astounding in magnitude as they are ingenious in conception. I have seen the tears start into the eyes of a

child on its being called by some new name of affection which it did not understand. Now, though a very humble, what a striking instance this is of the misery of misunderstanding!

Sir Arthur. A great French writer, I think it was Eugène Sue, said, "*Tout pardonner, c'est tout comprendre.*" I would rather he had turned it the other way, and had said, "*Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.*" For, in truth, one would never be angry with anybody, if one understood him or her thoroughly. Now there is not time to understand them thoroughly. One must trust a great deal to the imagination: and therefore, I say, educate the imagination to believe that people are saying many favourable things of John behind his back.[44]

Ellesmere. I know a John who never indulges in this fond imagination, and yet does not make himself very miserable by fretting over what he imagines people may be saying of him.

Sir Arthur. I was going on to say that we do not make enough of, or give sufficient encouragement to, pleasantness in people. I know I am only saying here what Milverton would say, and indeed what he has said elsewhere; but I do not think he gave the just weight to such topics in his speech, and that he, like the rest of you, dwelt too much on material comforts. He led you from the senate or the school to the social circle and the home; but I want to deal with the man himself, and with his modes of thought, if I am to make him "comfortable." And I believe that a great deal can be done by training, especially by early training, to habituate our minds to "comfortable" modes of thought.

To illustrate how rare a thing is pleasantness of demeanour. I knew a lady who received, as it is called, London society very extensively. This lady was a comely, cosy woman, "fair, fat, and forty," and one of those persons in whom others inevitably confide, and to whom they come and tell their grievances.

One day I was alone with her, when she began to talk of her experience of the world. I listened very attentively.

"Now, as regards you men," she said, "what a number of clever and intelligent men there are! A clever man is no rarity! Also, what a number of good people there are; people (perhaps of rough, queer, awkward exterior) who gave no sign of their goodness and

kindheartedness, but who, on the contrary, 'from the cradle to the grave,' are misunderstood; and who are very cross, too, at being misunderstood, when it is really their own fault, or rather the fault of their training. But if you want to know what is a rarity among men, it is a pleasant man—one who is safe, who never makes, nor takes, needless offence; who brings out the best points of other people. I assure you, Sir Arthur, when one has to give many parties, one learns to value such persons very much, and to discern that they are highly gifted."

I never forgot this conversation, and have ever since been looking about for pleasant people. The lady was quite right: they are the rarities. Double their number, and the world would be much more "comfortable."

Now, don't come down upon me by saying that a man must be somewhat false, or too much given to assent to everything that everybody says, in order to be a pleasant companion. Falseness, or insincere assent, is immediately perceived, and destroys pleasantness of intercourse, instead of creating it. But a pleasant man can dissent from you heartily and earnestly, without giving the least cause for offence. Of course no man is pleasant who is not truthful. Now a disagreeable man will often dissent from you from the mere love of opposition, and you do not call that untruthful, whereas it is the essence of falsehood, and you never know what the man's opinions really are, because he is so given to object to everything that anybody else says.

Milverton. I agree with every word you say, Sir Arthur; but do not blame me for not having introduced all these things into my speech; if I had done so, I should have spoken from breakfast-time till dinner-time.

Ellesmere. I must revive, and return to this dull earth; for I have something very good to say. I object to a species of ill-natured ridicule which is very rife in these days, and which goes by the vulgar name of "chaff." I have heard the most ill-natured things said chaffingly.

Mauleverer. Well! If I ever!

Sir Arthur. Upon my word, Ellesmere, we must revert to the Latin of your epitaph, and exclaim:—"*Quis tulerit Ellesmere, de chaffatione querentem*."

Ellesmere. And I must revert to what you say about misunderstandings. I will knock off, at once, some four or five units from your seven millions of misunderstandings, for I daresay there are four or five foolish people who misunderstand me. Cranmer did, for one; but that's all over. I never say anything that can hurt anybody of any sense. Half an hour ago, I said something to Milverton about his works which might be taken to be an unpleasant saying, whereas it was a high compliment; delicately veiled, I admit, but still a high compliment. Other people valued his well-known works; I, for my part, delight most in those which are at present obscure. All my *dis*pliments (if I may coin a word for the occasion) are (when unmasked) highly complimentary.

Lady Ellesmere. There never were masks, then, so like real flesh and blood.

Ellesmere. It is very kind of you, my lady, to point out how well the thing is done, and that the deception is so like real life; and yet, as I contend, it does not deceive anybody. The birds do not come and peck at my picture: they merely say to one another, "How well Sir John paints his cherries! It is quite a treat to look at them."

Now, for goodness' sake do admit that there is a gulf so wide between fun and ill-nature that no Curtius can fill it up. Don't think you are going to make men comfortable by making them dull.

Mauleverer. I am going to have my "innings" now, and I shall presume to take you back to a very grave part of the subject. You may try to improve individual men as much as you like, but I can tell you that they will always be little, spiteful, vain, sensitive, backbiting creatures.

Now I think you may possibly do something to make governments wiser, and so improve the comfort of mankind. I do not wish to be censorious, but the statesmen of modern days do not seem to me to be well educated for statesmanship—to be well grounded in the things it most behoves them to know. A signal proof of this seems to me to be, that all great measures are carried by the very men who began by opposing them. I will not use the ugly words "renegades"

and “apostates,” but, to use parliamentary language, I will say that the best measures are carried by gentlemen “who have seen reason, and are not ashamed to own it, for greatly modifying their opinions on this important subject,” which generally means that they have come right round.

I know full well that to make too much of mere consistency is a great mistake; but it does occur to me as a subject of regret, that statesmen should not have apprehended the drift of certain main lines of policy. Now I must speak a little egotistically, but it will illustrate what I mean. When I was a young man, and thought it likely that I should some day or other be in parliament, the great noise was beginning to be made about Free-trade and the Corn-laws. I said to myself, I will study these questions for myself: and I did study them carefully. I came to the conclusion, which was not particularly welcome to me, that the principles of Free-trade must prevail, and that the Corn-laws must be abolished. Now, really, I cannot help giving myself, and others who did as I did, more credit for statesmanlike views than those men who filled a much greater place in the world, but who seemed to be very deaf to sound reasoning, and never to have looked into things for themselves. I cannot respect them so much for their inconsistency, whatever merit it may have, as I should have done for their sagacity, if they had been consistently right from the first.

Another point has struck me about statesmen. Sometimes they do not seem to be equal to the clever men outside, or even to the general body of ordinary men, for that is the point. A Cabinet, perhaps consisting of really clever men, puts forth something which gods, men, and omnibus drivers protest against, not only as a thing bad in itself, but which has also this disadvantage, that it cannot possibly be carried. That good sense which forms the best part of what we call “the public mind,” seems sometimes to have no representatives amongst even first-class statesmen. This has really puzzled me. I am not speaking satirically at all, but very earnestly, and I hope humbly. Do explain this phenomenon to me.

Cranmer. Let me answer him. You seem to forget, Mauleverer, that these things you object to, which are put forth by statesmen, and which, as you say, are discovered to be foolish, even by commonplace persons, are the results of compromise. Now, every

compromise is easily attackable. Your commonplace man has nobody whom he is obliged to consult. His views are therefore uncompromising and clear. You would see what modifications he would have to make if he had to act with others, instead of merely talking out his own views, upon his own responsibility alone.

Sir Arthur. It seems but fair to consider this.

Milverton. Still, does there not remain an important residuum of truth in what Mr. Mauleverer has stated?

Sir Arthur. Perhaps; but much less, I think, than you imagine.

Lady Ellesmere. Now may I not take up the running, or have the innings, to use the elegant phrases which you gentlemen adopt, and make my comment upon the speech?

How was it, Leonard, that you did not say anything about marriage, upon which, surely, so much of comfort or discomfort depends?

Milverton. My dear Mildred, are you going to be unreasonable too, like the rest of them? To discourse properly on such a subject would have required a long speech, and who is to make such a speech? An unmarried man cannot, for want of experience, and a married man will not; consequently there has been very little written or said about marriage, if we except Jeremy Taylor's celebrated sermon, which is worth listening to.

I will tell you something which occurs to me, but it has reference to love-making rather than to marriage. I think that some of you women make a point of being too reserved and too reticent in the expression of your feelings, or rather of neglecting to give any intimation of what those feelings might be; and so, many a marriage, that might have proved very happy, has been prevented.

Ellesmere. I quite agree with Milverton that, considering the greater natural modesty and timidity of men, women should make more of an advance than they do. What would have become of me if Mildred had not been somewhat different from the rest of her sex? You know how it all happened?

"Johnny!" she said (I did think that a little familiar, and that she might have contented herself with "John"), "Johnny! you are intolerable to most men, and nearly to all women; but you are not so very intolerable to me. I don't mind, if you don't. Pegotty is willing."

What could I do, but close at once with the proposition, and say, "Barkis is willing, and has been for many a long day"? And so it ended; no, it didn't end there; I always do what the books tell me to do—I believe in books—and so down I knelt and kissed her hand. And here we are, not more miserable than other married people. Oh, it's a capital instance of the advantage of women coming forward. Speaking on the part of men, having received a "brief," marked with a large fee, and intituled "Mankind in general *v.* Mauleverer and Others," I say we should not mind at all if women would take the leading part in love affairs.

Lady Ellesmere. I think I need not contradict this statement. The Court is too well aware of my learned friend's power of statement, which is nearly equal in truth and accuracy to his "powerful singing." Johnny's audacity (I suppose I may call him Johnny now) is too well known for it to be supposed that it was wanting to him on any occasion. Their lordships, I am sure, are so far with me.

Milverton. Have you anything to say, Johnson? for, if not, I shall commence my speech in reply.

Johnson. I have something to say, but it is not quite relevant to the subject.

Ellesmere. Say it, Sandy. Hang relevancy and consistency, and all other strait-laced inventions for tying up the tongues of men.

Johnson. No, I shall postpone it to another time.

Milverton. Have you anything you wish to say, Blanche?

Mrs. Milverton. No, dear; I agree, chiefly, with what Sir Arthur has said.

Milverton. Then, I suppose, I may commence my reply.

In the first place, Ellesmere sneered at me about repetition.

[I did not hear Sir John say anything of the kind: I suppose it was an aside.]

I shall begin with a story.

I was travelling with one of the leading men of the extreme Liberal party in Ireland, a man of great eloquence, and it was at a time when O'Connell was in full force, and creating immense agitation for repeal. "What a great man he is!" said my friend. "Is there any man who can repeat the same thing over and over again in the way that he does? You do not see the greatness that there is in that. If you or I,

poor creatures, were to have said the same thing once or twice, however appropriate, should we not be too shamefaced to say it again?—

‘Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not,
Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow?’

Now, could you ‘hereditary bondsmen’ them more than once or twice in your life? You know you couldn’t. Whereas O’Connell can and will do so a hundred times. Those lines exactly convey his meaning, and he is not going to waste his time in searching for what would be sure to do not quite so well.”

What my Irish friend said made a deep impression upon me, and when I am drawing back from a word, or a phrase, or a sentiment, merely because I have said it once or twice before, I mutter to myself, “Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not?” and on I go with my word or my phrase, which happens to suit me now as it suited me before. Have I not answered you, Master Ellesmere?

[Ellesmere made a shrug of negation, but said nothing.]

I should like now to add a few words in explanation of my speech. I do not think I made very clear what I meant by unreasonable conservatism. I will give an instance. A man who has given considerable attention to the poor, and has been noted for benevolence, tells me that it would be an immense advantage if wages were paid in the middle of the week instead of at the end. I thought I knew something about this matter, but when I came to talk with this man, I found there were advantages, in the plan he proposed, that had entirely escaped me. Look, for instance, how much longer time the poor woman would have for laying out her husband’s wages to advantage. Whereas, under the present system of paying on a Saturday, she has scarcely any choice given her; for recollect that Sunday is the feast day: the day for which meat is bought.

Then another thing that you would never have thought of is, that no extra blaze of gas would be brought on, like there now is on a Saturday night, for the purpose of selling an inferior article under the deceiving influence of that extra light. Well, this man had two great establishments; one in town, and one in the country. At one he

succeeded, but at the other conservatism, as he told me, was too strong for him.

Now, take another instance,—the locking of the doors of railway carriages. I never met with a man who could give me valid reasons for the continuance of that practice that almost everybody wishes to be discontinued. I believe that the reason mainly adduced for the practice is, that some madman might jump out while the train is in motion. But what a one-sided madman he must be, for the doors are only locked on one side. Bring the people of England to the poll on this question, and not one in one hundred thousand would vote for this locking up—except, perhaps, the madmen. They might naturally enough vote with the directors.

But the thing having been done once, irrational conservatism comes in, and years pass away before the thing can be undone.

Take another instance,—we mend our roads with rough stones, and omit to press them down properly. This injures our horses, spoils our carriage-wheels, and annoys ourselves; and, moreover, is a great detriment to the road. But to bring a heavy roller over these stones would be a Whig-Radical device, and irrational conservatism shudders at it.

Now I come to Sir Arthur's remarks. Of course, if it had been an essay or a speech chiefly directed to the government of the man's own mind, I should have dwelt much more upon the art of making men more comfortable in their minds. I should have mentioned, for instance, what I have said before, about the folly of hating, and of imagining evils for, others, upon this ground alone, that, exercise your imagination as much as you will, you cannot imagine anything which is sure to do your enemy, if you are stupid enough and extravagant enough to indulge in such a luxury as an enemy, any harm.

I should have endeavoured to deal with envy and jealousy in a similar way: but I was not speaking about the passions, but about the possible comforts of mankind.

Finally, I should like to say something more about communism. I fear I shall be misunderstood in what I said about that. I do certainly think that some of the advantages which communists aim at might be gained by central government, which, in my judgment, is bound

to undertake that good for individuals which they cannot possibly compass by individual exertion.

But now, following the line of Sir Arthur, I will show that there is a much larger and higher communism in my mind—the communism of sympathy that should pervade all classes.

What is the great misery of each individual man? Isolation. "No losses but of my making, no tears but of my shedding," says Shylock, being himself, partly from his own fault, and partly from the fault of cruel prejudices, one of the most isolated of beings.

You all know those words in the "Flauto Magico" which I admire so much. I have often repeated them to you, and ("Hereditary bondsmen, know ye not?") I shall repeat them again. The words which please me most are—

"Fra noi ciascun divide
L' affanno ed il piacer."

What a comfort it would be to human life if men felt they could divide their sorrows with other men, and how willingly they would then allow those others to partake their joys! Of course, I know that, upon this earth, such a state of things is impossible. The only approach that can be made to it is by sympathy, and sympathy must grow with knowledge. Changing and enlarging a little your French proverb, I would say—"*Tout comprendre c'est tout aimer*."

We dined together, and everybody tried, at least everybody except Sir John Ellesmere, to make the evening go off cheerfully; but it was manifestly an effort, and the wheels "drave heavily." It was in vain that Mr. Milverton, playing the part of a good host, threw out topics of conversation, chiefly political. Sir John gave short, snappish answers, which led to nothing.

When we had left the table, and had drawn round the fire, there was a heavy silence for a minute or two, which was at last broken by Sir John.

Ellesmere. No, I will not come again; it is such a detestable thing, the breaking-up. Nothing is worth it.

I will come and see you, Milverton, if you are in trouble or ill, but I will not assist any more at these pleasant meetings.

What did Dr. Johnson say when he went over Garrick's cheerful house, and saw Garrick's pleasant, comely wife, and Garrick's well-chosen furniture? It was something of this sort:—"Oh, Davy, Davy, these are the things which make it so terrible to die!"—and parting is a kind of death.

Now there is Sir Arthur. I knew him to be a great writer and a great politician, but I did not know that he was such a good fellow, and that he would endure the impertinences of a certain flippant lawyer, presuming to chaff him (shall I admit the word "chaff"?) about "The True," "The Good," and "The Beautiful."

And then there is Cranmer. Who would have thought that an ex-Secretary of the Treasury would be so tolerant of such an unofficial-minded man as I am? And then, Mauleverer,—I now know that he has a large soul, and am sure that he likes me better than any turtle;—and Sandy, there; what a clever boy he is! Have I not taught him many athletic sports—such as fishing, and making ducks and drakes on the water? And I am very sorry to part from him, too. I hate parting, that's a fact! and I am not such a hypocrite and impostor as, like the rest of you, to pretend to be very cheerful this evening.

By the way, having mentioned Garrick's wife reminds me of something. With my fear of any great felicity in this world, and my horror of having to part from it, I almost wish I had never seen Mildred. She has made life too agreeable to me. Now then, dear, have I not said a thing which compensates for all rude speeches, past, present, and to come?

[It is always very difficult to know how far Sir John is in earnest. I think there was a touch of earnestness in that last sentence of his. Lady Ellesmere evidently thought so, too. In that beautiful woman's eyes there came that mist which rises before tears, or upon the conquest and suppression of tears, and which gives the deepest and tenderest expression to a face. She stole her hand into his; but said nothing. Sir John continued—:]

Talking of "The Comfortable," there is one comfort in having a wife, that one can throw one's packing upon her; and, as no true woman can refuse a good opportunity for making a fuss, she is sure to delight in it. To-morrow is Sunday, and we start early on Monday; so, my dear, you really must set to work now. Remember to return

those books of Milverton's that we have carried off into our room, or my epi—— Don't look so reproachful, my dear. Do you know, Milverton, our wives are angry with us: yours because you said it was your last essay; and mine, because I wrote a posthumous account of myself. You silly thing! it does not make one die a bit the sooner; and as for you, Blanche, Milverton's threat of its being the last essay is merely a sign of increased liveliness, and a decent way of informing us that he is coming out next season with renewed vigour. Do Ministers always mean to resign when they threaten to do so?

No, don't go just yet. I will give you a good winding up of all our writing and talking. Do you remember the concluding chapter of Rasselas, "in which nothing is concluded"? I will give you my version of it as applicable to ourselves. It is as follows:—

It rained incessantly (that is, it did yesterday), and the Friends in Council were confined to the house. A juicy day in the country promotes meditation of the most serious kind; and they had ample time to think over and to communicate to each other the various schemes of happiness which each of them had formed.

Mr. Cranmer thought that, of all sublunary things, taxation was the prettiest. He desired to found a state where the people would pay their taxes gladly, and where financial statements made by the Government would be universally believed in.

Mr. Mauleverer sought to enrol himself in a community where every man, woman, and child should know how thoroughly and hopelessly miserable he or she is, and where a joke should be a crime punishable by instant death.

Sir Arthur maintained that a perception of "The Beautiful" would, of itself, render all people sufficiently happy; but his wanderings from Mesopotamia to Yucatan had only brought him in contact with coarse people, who seemed more intent upon "The Beefy" than "The Beautiful."

Mr. Milverton desired a kingdom in which right reason—that is to say, his own ideas—should always prevail. He had carefully fixed the limits of this kingdom; but could never find anybody worthy to be an inhabitant of it except himself and his private secretary, Sandy Johnson.

Mr. Alexander Johnson thought that literature was the salt of life, and that any man who had written a book must be very wise and very good. Some converse, however, with men who had written books, induced him greatly to modify this opinion; and he was now inclined to maintain that the northern part of each community contained all the worth, and wit, and wisdom of the land, and that the universe, to be well governed, should chiefly be ruled over by Scotchmen.

Mrs. Milverton desired to find—that greatest of household treasures—a good cook, with a good temper.

Lady Ellesmere proposed to form a female community, herself to be the head of it, where, freed from the turbulence of men, gentle means should be employed for the attainment of generous ends, and where rationality of enjoyment should be the just reward of perspicuity of design; but, never having been for any ten minutes alone with other women, without finding their society rather dull, she was beginning to conclude that men, as well as wasps, must have their place in creation (though she could not quite see why) and must be endured as necessary evils.

Sir John Ellesmere was contented to be driven along the stream of life without expecting to find anybody much wiser, more judicious, or less unreasonable than himself.

Of the many discussions and deliberations in which the "Friends" had been involved, they were now aware that some of them were wise, and that some of them were inept. Of the opinions they had pronounced, the precepts they had urged, the suggestions they had presumed to offer for the benefit—as they had been pleased to fancy—of mankind, reflection taught them that those which were the utterances of folly would be readily adopted by the common nonsense of their fellow-men; while such—alas, but few!—as were the dictates of sound wisdom would mostly be devoid of growth in the shallow soil upon which such seeds are, of necessity, scattered by the sower. Rejoicing in the thought that, if their lucubrations would do no good, at any rate they would cause but little harm—for the world is so full of foolishness that if a new folly is introduced it must perforce expel some other folly—the Friends in Council resolved, if the train should not break down, to return to their smoke-stained habitations in the "unlovely" precincts of modern Babylon.

After this there was much humorous conversation, everybody, except Mrs. Milverton and Mr. Cranmer, protesting that their views and hopes had been grossly misrepresented by Sir John Ellesmere. We then separated for the night; and I have nothing further to relate respecting our sojourn during the holidays at Worth-Ashton.

And now I must say a word or two for myself. I may not always have set forth accurately the conversations which I have undertaken to record. I may not even have chosen the most interesting of them. I am very young, but I think I am not unobservant; and the love I have had from my childhood for investigating character may have been useful to me in this instance. I hope it may have been so. But, at any rate, I have done my best, and can only hope that what I have done will not be received with disfavour by the public.

43. This alludes to some views of Sir Arthur's given in a conversation which I have not recorded.

44. I did not understand this expression, but afterwards found out that it was anciently a way by which a man delicately alluded to favourable things that had been said about himself, "*Dicebant multa favorabilia de Johanne.*"

THE END

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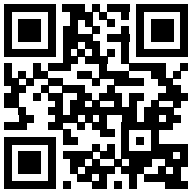

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