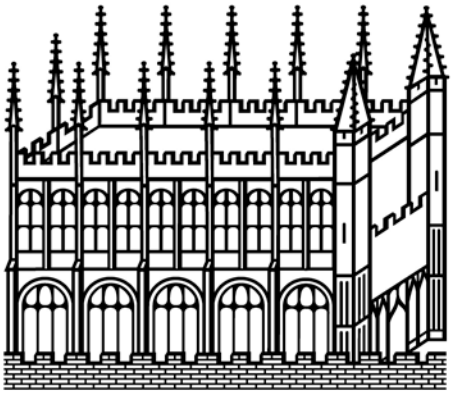

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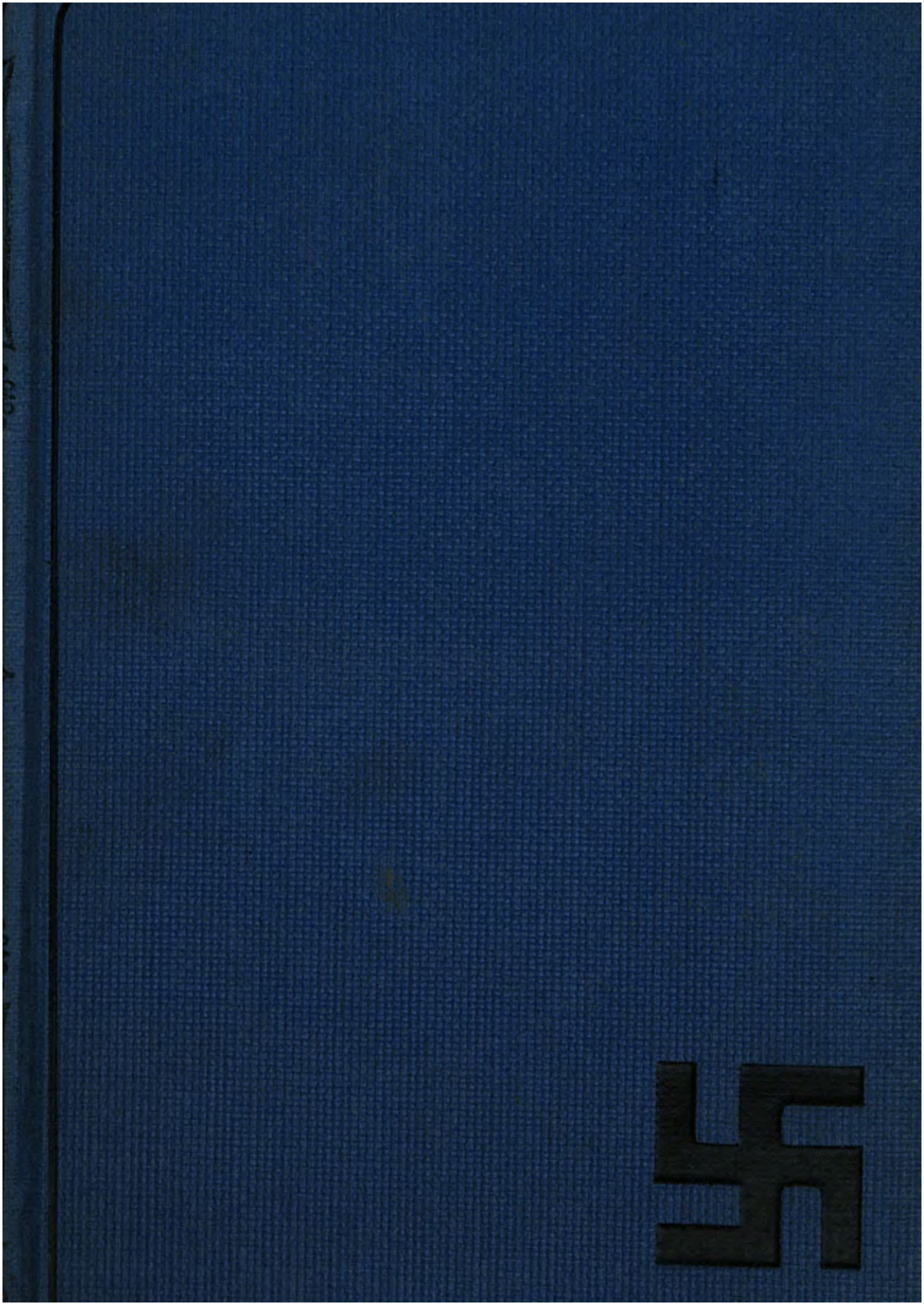

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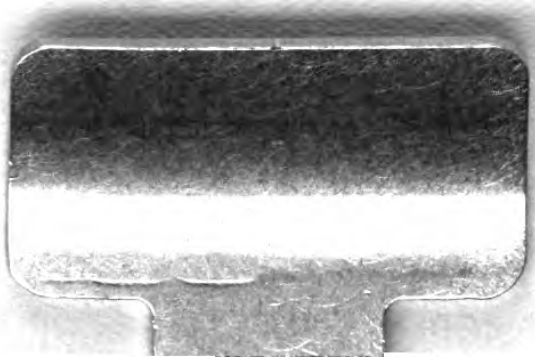

DONOVAN
PASHA

DONOVAN PASHA

AND SOME PEOPLE OF EGYPT

BY

SIR GILBERT PARKER

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.
LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK

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A FOREWORD

IT is now twelve years since I began giving to the public tales of life in lands well known to me. The first of them were drawn from Australia and the Islands of the Southern Pacific, where I had lived and roamed in the middle and late Eighties. They appeared in various English magazines, and were written in London, far from the scenes which suggested them. None of them were written on the spot, as it were. I did not think then, and I do not think now, that this was perilous to their truthfulness. After many years of travel and home-staying observation I have found that all worth remembrance, the salient things and scenes, emerge clearly out of myriad impressions, and become permanent in mind and memory. Things so emerging are typical at least, and probably true.

Those tales of the Far South were given out with some prodigality. They did not appear in book form, however; for, at the time I was sending out these Antipodean sketches, I was also writing—far from the scenes where they were laid—a series of Canadian tales, many of which appeared in the *Independent* of New York, in the *National Observer*, edited by Mr. Henley, and in the *Illustrated London News*. By accident, and on the suggestion of my friend, Mr. Henley, the Canadian tales *Pierre and his People* were published first; with the result that the stories of the Southern Hemisphere were withheld from publication, though they have been privately printed and duly copyrighted. Some day I

may send them forth, but meanwhile I am content to keep them in my own care.

Moved always by deep interest in the varied manifestations of life in different portions of the Empire, five or six years ago I was attracted to the Island of Jersey, in the Channel Sea, by the likeness of the origin of her people with that of the French Canadians. I went to live at St. Heliers for a time, and there wrote a novel called *The Battle of the Strong*.

Nor would it be thought strange that, having visited another and newer sphere of England's influence, Egypt to wit, in 1889, I should then determine that, when I could study the country at leisure, I should try to write of the life there, so full of splendour and of primitive simplicity; of mystery and guilt; of cruel indolence and beautiful industry; of tyranny and devoted slavery; of the high elements of a true democracy and the shameful practices of a false autocracy; all touched off by the majesty of an ancient charm, the nobility of the remotest history.

The years went by, and four times visiting Egypt, at last I began to write of her. That is now some years ago. From time to time the stories which I offer to the public in this volume were given forth. It is likely that the old Anglo-Egyptian and the historical student may find some anachronisms and other things to criticise; but the anachronisms are deliberate, and even as in writing of Canada and Australia, which I know very well, I have here, perhaps, sacrificed superficial exactness while trying to give the more intimate meaning and spirit. I have never thought it necessary to apologise for this disregard of photographic accuracy,—that may be found in my notebooks—and I shall not begin to do so now. I shall be sufficiently grateful if this series of tales does no more than make ready the way for the novel of Egyptian life on which I have been working for some years. It is an *avant courier*. I hope, however, that it may be welcomed for its own sake. G. P.

TO

SIR JOHN ROGERS

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WHILE THE LAMP HOLDS OUT TO BURN

THERE is a town on the Nile which Fielding Bey called Hasha, meaning "Heaven Forbid!" He loathed inspecting it. Going up the Nile, he would put off visiting it till he came down; coming down, he thanked his fates if accident carried him beyond it. Convenient accidents sometimes did occur: a murder at one of the villages below it, asking his immediate presence; a telegram from his Minister at Cairo, requiring his return; or a very low Nile, when Hasha suddenly found itself a mile away from the channel and there was no good place to land. So it was that Hasha, with little inspection, was the least reputable, and almost the dirtiest town on the Nile; for even in those far-off days the official Englishman had his influence, especially when Kubar Pasha was behind him. Kubar had his good points.

There were certain definite reasons, however, why Fielding Bey shrank from visiting Hasha. Donovan Pasha saw something was wrong from the first moment Hasha was mentioned.

On a particular day they were lying below at another village, on the *Amenhotep*. Hasha was the next place marked red on the map, and that meant inspection. When Dicky Donovan mentioned Hasha, Fielding Bey

twisted a shoulder and walked nervously up and down the deck. He stayed here for hours: to wait for the next post, he said—serious matters expected from head-quarters. He appeared not to realise that letters would get to Hasha by rail as quickly as by the *Amenhotep*. Every man has a weak spot in his character, a *sub-rosa*, as it were, in his business of life; and Dicky fancied he had found Fielding Bey's. While they waited, Fielding made a pretence of working hard—for he really was conscientious—sending his orderly for the mamour * and the omdah, and holding fatuous conferences; turning the hose on the local dairymen and butchers and date-growers, who came with backsheesh in kind; burying his nose in official papers; or sending for Holgate, the Yorkshire engineer, to find out what the run would be to the next stopping-place beyond Hasha. Twice he did this; which was very little like Fielding Bey. The second time, when Holgate came below to his engine, Dicky was there playing with a Farshoot dog.

"We don't stop at Hasha, then?" Dicky said, and let the Farshoot fasten on his leggings.

Holgate swung round and eyed Dicky curiously, a queer smile at his lips.

"Not if Goovnur can 'elp, aw give ye ma woord, sir," answered Holgate.

Fielding was affectionately called "the Governor" by his subordinates and friends.

"We all have our likes and dislikes," rejoined Dicky casually, and blew smoke in the eyes of the Farshoot.

"Aye, aw've seen places that bad! but Hasha has taaste of its own in Goovnur's mouth, ma life on't!"

"Never can tell when a thing'll pall on the taste.

* A Glossary will be found at the end of the book.

Hasha's turn with the Governor now, eh ? " rejoined Dicky.

Dicky's way of getting information seemed guileless, and Holgate opened his basket as wide as he knew.

" Toorn, didst tha saay," (Holgate talked broadly to Dicky always, for Dicky had told him of his aunt, Lady Carmichael, who lived near Halifax in Yorkshire), " toorn, aw warrant ! It be reg'lar as kitchen-fire, this Hasha business, for three years, ever sin' aw been scrapin' mud o' Nile River."

" That was a nasty row they had over the cemetery three years ago, the Governor against the lot, from mamour to wekeel ! "

Holgate's eyes flashed, and he looked almost angrily down at Dicky, whose hand was between the teeth of the playful Farshoot.

" Doost think—noa, tha canst not think that Goovnur be 'feared o' Hasha fook. Thinks't tha, a man that told 'em all—a thousand theer—that he'd hang on nearest tree the foorst that disobeyed him, thinks't tha that Goovnur's lost his nerve by *that ?* "

" The Governor never loses his nerve, Holgate," said Dicky, smiling and offering a cigar. " There's such a thing as a man being afraid to trust himself where he's been in a mess, lest he hit out, and doesn't want to."

Holgate, being excited, was in a fit state to tell the truth, if he knew it ; which was what Dicky had worked for ; but Holgate only said :

" It bean't fear, and it bean't milk o' human kindness. It be soort o' thing a man gets. Aw had it once i' Bradford, in Little Cornish Street. Aw saw a faace look out o' window o' hoose by tinsmith's shop, an' that faace was like hell's picture—aye, 'twas a

killingous faace that! Aw never again could pass that hoose. 'Twas a woman's faace. Horrible 'twas, an' sore sad an' flootered aw were, for t' faace was like a lass aw loved when aw wur a lad."

"I should think it was something like that," answered Dicky, his eyes wandering over the peninsula beyond which lay Hasha.

"Summat, aw be sure," answered Holgate, "an' ma woord on't . . . ah, yon coomes orderly wi' post for Goovnur. Now it be Hasha, or it be not Hasha, it be time for steam oop."

Holgate turned to his engine as Dicky mounted the stairs and went to Fielding's cabin, where the orderly was untying a handkerchief overflowing with letters.

As Fielding read his official letters his face fell more and more. When he had read the last, he sat for a minute without speaking, his brow very black. There was no excuse for pushing past Hasha. He had not been there for over a year. It was his duty to inspect the place: he had a conscience; there was time to get to Hasha that afternoon. With an effort he rose, hurried along the deck, and called down to Holgate:

"Full-steam to Hasha!"

Then, with a quick command to the reis, who was already at the wheel, he lighted a cigar, and, joining Dicky Donovan, began to smoke and talk furiously. But he did not talk of Hasha.

At sunset the *Amenhotep* drew in to the bank by Hasha, and, from the deck, Fielding Bey saluted the mamour, the omdah and his own subordinates who, buttoning up their coats as they came, hurried to the bank to make salaams to him. Behind them, at a distance, came villagers, a dozen ghaffirs armed with

naboots of dom-wood, and a brace of well-mounted, badly-dressed policemen, with seats like a monkey on a stick. The conferences with the mamour and omdah were short, in keeping with the temper of "Fielding Saadat"; and long into the night Dicky lay and looked out of his cabin window to the fires on the banks, where sat Mahommed Seti the servant, the orderly, and some attendant ghaffirs, who, feasting on the remains of the effendi's supper, kept watch. For Hasha was noted for its robbers. It was even rumoured that the egregious Selamlik Pasha, with the sugar plantation near by—"Trousers," Dicky called him when he saw him on the morrow, because of the elephantine breeks he wore—was not averse to sending his Abyssinian slaves through the sugar-cane to waylay and rob, and worse, maybe.

By five o'clock next day the inspection was over. The streets had been swept for the Excellency—which is to say *Saadat*—the first time in a year. The prison had been cleaned of visible horrors, the first time in a month. The last time it was ordered there had been a riot among the starving, infested prisoners; earth had been thrown over the protruding bones of the dear lamented dead in the cemetery; the water of the ablution places in the mosque had been changed; the ragged policemen had new putties; the kourbashes of the tax-gatherers were hid in their yeleks; the egregious Pasha wore a greasy smile, and the submudir, as he conducted Fielding—"whom God preserve and honour!"—through the prison and through the hospital, where goat's milk had been laid on for this especial day, smirked gently through the bazaar above his Parisian waistcoat.

But Fielding, as he rode on Selamlik Pasha's gorgeous black donkey from Assiout, with its crimson trappings,

knew what proportion of improvement this "hanky-panky," as Dicky called it, bore to the condition of things at the last inspection. He had spoken little all day: and Dicky had noticed that his eye was constantly turning here and there, as though looking for an unwelcome something or somebody.

At last the thing was over, and they were just crossing the canal, the old Bahr-el-Yusef, which cuts the town in twain as the river Abana does Damascus, when Dicky saw nearing them a heavily-laden boat, a cross between a Thames houseboat and an Italian gondola, being drawn by one poor rawbone—rawbone in truth, for there was on each shoulder a round red place, made raw by the unsheathed ropes used as harness. The beast's sides were scraped as a tree is barked, and the hind quarters gored as though by a harrow. Dicky was riding with the mamour of the district, Fielding was a distance behind with Trousers and the Mudir. Dicky pulled up his donkey, got off and ran towards the horse, pale with fury; for he loved animals better than men, and had wasted his strength beating donkey-boys with the sticks they used on their victims. The boat had now reached a point opposite the mudirieh, its stopping-place; and the rawbone, reeking with sweat and blood, stood still and trembled, its knees shaking with the strain just taken off them, its head sunk nearly to the ground.

Dicky had hardly reached the spot when a figure came running to the poor waler with a quick stumbling motion. Dicky drew back in wonder, for never had he seen eyes so painful as these that glanced from the tortured beast to himself—staring, bulbous, bloodshot, hunted eyes; but they were blue, a sickly, faded blue;

and they were English! Dicky's hand was on his pistol, for his first impulse had been to shoot "the rawbone"; but it dropped away in sheer astonishment at the sight of this strange figure in threadbare dirty clothes and riding-breeches made by shearing the legs of a long pair —cut with an unsteady hand, for the edges were jagged and uneven, and the man's bare leg showed above the cast-off putties of a policeman. The coat was an old khaki jacket of a Gippy soldier, and, being scant of buttons, doubtful linen showed beneath. Above the hook-nose, once aristocratic, now vulture-like and shrunken like that of Rameses in his glass case at Ghizeh, was a tarboosh tilting forward over the eyes, nearly covering the forehead. The figure must have been very tall once, but it was stooped now, though the height was still well above medium. Hunted, haunted, ravaged, and lost, was the face, and the long gray moustache, covering the chin almost, seemed to cover an immeasurable depravity.

Dicky took it all in at a glance, and wondered with a bitter wonder; for this was an Englishman, and behind him and around him, though not very near him, were Arabs, Soudanese, and Fellaheen, with sneering yet apprehensive faces.

As Dicky's hand dropped away from his pistol, the other shot out trembling, graceful, eager fingers, the one inexpressibly gentlemanly thing about him.

"Give it to me—quick!" he said, and he threw a backward glance towards the approaching group—Fielding, the egregious Pasha, and the rest.

Dicky did not hesitate; he passed the pistol over.

The Lost One took the pistol, cocked it, and held it

to the head of the waler, which feebly turned to him in recognition.

" Good-bye, old man ! " he said, and fired.

The horse dropped, kicked, struggled once or twice, and was gone.

" If you know the right spot, there's hardly a kick," said the Lost One, and turned to face the Pasha, who had whipped his donkey forward on them, and sat now, livid with rage, before the two. He stood speechless for a moment, for his anger had forced the fat of his neck up into his throat.

But Dicky did not notice the Pasha. His eye was fixed on Fielding Bey, and the eye of Fielding Bey was on the Lost One. All at once Dicky understood why it was that Fielding Bey had shrunk from coming to Hasha. Fielding might have offered many reasons, but this figure before them was the true one. Trouble, pity, anxiety, pride, all were in Fielding's face. Because the Lost One was an Englishman, and the race was shamed and injured by this outcast ? Not that alone. Fielding had the natural pride of his race, but this look was personal. He glanced at the dead horse, at the scarred sides, the raw shoulders, the corrugated haunches, he saw the pistol in the Lost One's hand, and then, as a thread of light steals between the black trees of a jungle, a light stole across Fielding's face for a moment. He saw the Lost One hand the pistol back to Dicky, and fix his debauched blue eyes on the Pasha. These blue eyes did not once look at Fielding, though they were aware of his presence.

" Son of a dog ! " said the Pasha, and his fat fore-finger convulsively pointed to the horse.

The Lost One's eyes wavered a second, as though

their owner had not the courage to abide the effect of his action, then they quickened to a point of steadiness, as a lash suddenly knots for a crack in the hand of a postillion.

"Swine!" said the Lost One into the Pasha's face, and his round shoulders drew up a little farther, so that he seemed more like a man among men. His hands fell on his hips as, in his mess, an officer with no pockets drops his knuckles on his waist-line for a stand-at-ease.

The egregious Selamlik Pasha stood high in favour with the Khedive: was it not he who had suggested a tax on the earnings of the dancing girls, the Gházeeyehs, and did he not himself act as the first tax-gatherer? Was it not Selamlik Pasha also who whispered into the ear of the Mouffetish that a birth-tax and a burial tax should be instituted? And had he not seen them carried out in the mudiriehs under his own supervision? Had he not himself made the Fellaheen pay thrice over for water for their onion-fields? Had he not flogged an Arab to death with his own hand, the day before Fielding's and Dicky's arrival, and had he not tried to get this same Arab's daughter into his harem—this Selamlik Pasha!

The voice of the Lost One suddenly rose shrill and excited, and he shouted at the Pasha. "Swine! swine! swine! . . . Kill your slaves with a *kourbash* if you like, but a bullet's the thing for a waler!—Swine of a leper!"

The whole frame of the Lost One was still, but the voice was shaking, querulous, half hysterical; the eyes were lighted with a terrible excitement, the lips under the gray moustache twitched; the nervous slipshod

dignity of carriage was in curious contrast to the disordered patchwork dress.

The trouble on Fielding's face glimmered with a little ray of hope now. Dicky came over to him, and was about to speak, but a motion of Fielding's hand stopped him. The hand said, " Let them fight it out."

In a paroxysm of passion Selamlik Pasha called two Abyssinian slaves standing behind. " This brother of a toad to prison ! " he said.

The Lost One's eyes sought Dicky like a flash. Without a word, and as quick as the tick of a clock, Dicky tossed over his pistol to the Lost One, who caught it smoothly, turned it in his hand, and levelled it at the Abyssinians.

" No more of this damned nonsense, Pasha," said Fielding suddenly. " He doesn't put a high price on his life, and you do on yours. I'd be careful ! "

" Steady, Trousers ! " said Dicky in a soft voice, and smiled his girlish smile.

Selamlik Pasha stared for a moment in black anger, then stuttered forth : " Will you speak for a dog of a slave that his own country vomits out ? "

" Your mother was a slave of Darfûr, Pasha," answered Fielding, in a low voice ; " your father lost his life stealing slaves. Let's have no airs and graces."

Dicky's eyes had been fixed on the Lost One, and his voice now said in its quaint treble : " Don't get into a perspiration. He's from where we get our bad manners, and he messes with us to-night, Pasha."

The effect of these words was curious. Fielding's face was a blank surprise, and his mouth opened to say no, but he caught Dicky's look, and the word was not uttered. The Pasha's face showed curious incredulity ; under the

pallor of the Lost One's a purplish flush crept, stayed a moment, then faded away, and left it paler than before.

"We've no more business, I think, Pasha," said Fielding brusquely, and turned his donkey towards the river. The Pasha salaamed without a word, his Abyssinian slaves helped him on his great white donkey. and he trotted away towards the palace, the trousers flapping about his huge legs. The Lost One stood fingering the revolver. Presently he looked up at Dicky, and, standing still, held out the pistol.

"Better keep it," said Dicky; "I'll give you some peas for it to-night. Speak to the poor devil, Fielding," he added quickly, in a low tone.

Fielding turned in his saddle. "Seven's the hour," he said, and rode on.

"Thanks, you fellows," said the Lost One, and walked swiftly away.

As they rode to the *Amenhotep* Dicky did not speak, but once he turned round to look after the outcast, who was hurrying along the bank of the canal.

When Fielding and Dicky reached the deck of the *Amenhotep*, and Mahommed Seti had brought refreshment, Dicky said: "What did he do?"

Fielding's voice was constrained and hard: "Cheated at cards."

Dicky's lips tightened. "Where?"

"At Hong Kong."

"Officer?"

"In the Buffs."

Dicky drew a long breath. "He's paid the piper."

"Naturally. He cheated twice."

"Cheated twice—at cards!" Dicky's voice was hard now. "Who was he?"

"Heatherby—Bob Heatherby!"

"Bob Heatherby—gad! Fielding, I'm sorry—I—couldn't have guessed, old man! Mrs. Henshaw's brother!"

Fielding nodded. Dicky turned his head away; for Fielding was in love with Mrs. Henshaw, the widow of Henshaw of the Buffs. He realised now why Fielding loathed Hasha so.

"Forgive me for asking him to mess, guv'nor."

Fielding laughed a little uneasily. "Never mind. You see, it isn't the old scores only that bar him. He's been a sweep out here. Nothing he hasn't done. Gone lower and lower and lower. Tax-gatherer with a *kourbash* for old Selamlik the beast. Panderer for the same. Sweep of the lowest sort!"

Dicky's eyes flashed. "I say, Fielding, it would be rather strange if he hadn't gone down, down, down. A man that's cheated at cards never finds anybody to help him up, up, up. The chances are dead against him. But he stood up well to-day, eh?"

"I suppose blood will tell at last in the very worst."

"'And while the lamp holds out to burn
The vilest sinner may return—'"

hummed Dicky musingly. Then he added slowly: "Fielding, fellows of that kind always flare up a bit, according to Cavendish, just before the end. I've seen it once or twice before. It's the last clutch at the grass as they go slip—slip—slipping down. Take my word for it, Heatherby's near the finish."

"I shouldn't wonder. Selamlik, the old leper, 'll lay in wait for him. He'll get lost in the sugar-cane one of these evenings soon."

"Couldn't we . . ." Dicky paused.

Fielding started, looked at Dicky intently, and then shook his head sadly. "It's no good, Dicky. It never is."

"'While the lamp holds out to burn . . .'" said Dicky, and lighted another cigarette.

Precisely at seven o'clock Heatherby appeared. He had on a dress-suit, brown and rusty, a white tie made of a handkerchief torn in two, and a pair of patent-leather shoes scraggy and cracked.

Fielding behaved well, Dicky was amiable and attentive, and the dinner being ready to the instant, there was no waiting, there were no awkward pauses. No names of English people were mentioned, England was not named; nor Cairo, nor anything that English people abroad love to discuss. The fellah, the pasha, the Soudan, were the only topics. Under Fielding's courtesy and Dicky's acute suggestions, Heatherby's weakened brain awaked, and he talked intelligently, till the moment coffee was brought in. Then, as Mahommed Seti retired, Heatherby suddenly threw himself forward, his arms on the table, and burst into sobs.

"Oh, you fellows, you fellows!" he said. There was silence for a minute, then he sobbed out again: "It's the first time I've been treated like a gentleman by men that knew me, these fifteen years. It—it gets me in the throat!"

His body shook with sobs. Fielding and Dicky were uncomfortable, for these were not the sobs of a driveller or a drunkard. Behind them was the blank failure of a life—fifteen years of miserable torture, of degradation, of a daily descent lower into the pit, of the servitude of

shame. When at last he raised his streaming eyes Fielding and Dicky could see the haunting terror of the soul, at whose elbow, as it were, every man cried, "You are without the pale!" That look told them how Heatherby of the Buffs had gone from *table d'hôte* to *table d'hôte* of Europe, from town to town, from village to village, to make acquaintances who repulsed him when they discovered who he really was.

Shady Heatherby, who cheated at cards!

Once Fielding made as if to put a hand on his shoulder and speak to him, but Dicky intervened with a look.

The two drank their coffee, Fielding a little uneasily; but yet in his face there was a new look: of inquiry, of kindness, even of hope.

Presently Dicky flashed a look and nodded towards the door, and Fielding dropped his cigar and went on deck, and called down to Holgate the engineer:

"Get up steam, and make for Luxor. It's moonlight, and we're safe enough in this high Nile, eh, Holgate?"

"Safe enough, or aw'm a Dootchman," said Holgate. Then they talked in a low voice together.

Down in the saloon, Dicky sat watching Heatherby. At last the Lost One raised his head again.

"It's worth more to me, this night, than you fellows know," he said brokenly.

"That's all right," said Dicky. "Have a cigar?"

He shook his head. "It's come at the right time. I wanted to be treated like an Englishman once more—just once more."

"Don't worry. Take in a reef and go steady for a bit. The milk's spilt, but there are other meadows. . . ." Dicky waved an arm up the river, up towards the Soudan!

The Lost One nodded, then his eyes blazed up and took on a hungry look. His voice suddenly came in a whisper.

"Gordon was a white man. Gordon said to me three years ago, 'Come with me, I'll help you on. You don't need to live, if you don't want to. Most of us will get knocked out up there in the Soudan.' Gordon said that to me. But there was another fellow with Gordon who knew me, and I couldn't face it. So I stayed behind here. I've been everything, anything, to that swine, Selamlik Pasha; but when he told me yesterday to bring him the daughter of the Arab he killed with his *kourbash*, I jibbed. I couldn't stand that. Her father had fed me more than once. I jibbed—by God, I jibbed! I said I was an Englishman, and I'd see him damned first. I said it, and I shot the horse, and I'd have shot him—*what's that?*"

There was a churning below. The *Amenhotep* was moving from the bank.

"She's going—the boat's going," said the Lost One, trembling to his feet.

"Sit down," said Dicky, and gripped him by the arm.

"Where are you taking me?" said Heatherby, a strange, excited look in his face.

"Up the river."

He seemed to read Dicky's thoughts—the clairvoyance of an overwrought mind: "To—to Assouan?" The voice had a curious far-away sound.

"You shall go beyond Assouan," said Dicky.

"To—to Gordon!" Heatherby's voice was husky and indistinct.

"Yes, here's Fielding; he'll give you the tip. Sit down." Dicky gently forced him down into a chair.

Six months later, a letter came to Dicky from an Egyptian officer, saying that Heatherby of the Buffs had died gallantly fighting in a sortie sent by Gordon into the desert.

"He had a lot of luck," mused Dicky, as he read. "They don't end that way as a rule."

Then he went to Fielding, humming a certain stave from one of Watts' hymns.

THE PRICE OF THE GRINDSTONE— AND THE DRUM

I

He lived in the days of Ismail the Khedive, and was familiarly known as the Murderer. He had earned his name, and he had no repentance. From the roof of a hut in his native village of Manfaloot he had dropped a grindstone on the head of Ebn Haroun, who contended with him for the affections of Ahassa the daughter of Haleel the barber, and Ebn Haroun's head was flattened like the cover of a pie. Then he had broken a cake of dourha bread on the roof for the pigeons above him, and had come down grinning to the street, where a hesitating mounted policeman fumbled with his weapon, and four ghaffirs waited for him with their naboots.

Seti then had weighed his chances, had seen the avenging friends of Ebn Haroun behind the ghaffirs, and therefore permitted himself to be marched off to the mudirieh. There the Mudir glared at him, and had

him loaded with chains and flung into the prison, where two hundred convicts arrayed themselves against myriad tribes which, killed individually, made a spot on the wall no bigger than a threepenny-bit! The carnage was great, and though Seti was sleepless night after night it was not because of his crime. He found some solace, however, in provoking his fellow-prisoners to assaults upon each other; and every morning he grinned as he saw the dead and wounded dragged out into the clear sunshine.

The end to this came when the father of Seti, Abou Seti, went at night to the Mudir and said deceitfully:

"Effendi, by the mercy of Heaven I have been spared even to this day; for is it not written in the Koran that a man shall render to his neighbour what is his neighbour's? What should Abou Seti do with ten feddans of land, while the servant of Allah, the Effendi Insagi, lives? What is honestly mine is eight feddans, and the rest, by the grace of God, is thine, O effendi."

Every feddan he had he had honestly earned, but this was his way of offering backsheesh.

And the Mudir had due anger and said: "No better are ye than a Frank to have hidden the truth so long and waxed fat as the Nile rises and falls. The two feddans, as thou sayest, are mine."

Abou Seti bowed low, and rejoined: "Now shall I sleep in peace, by the grace of Heaven, and all my people under my date-trees—*and all my people?*" he added, with an upward look at the Mudir.

"But the rentals of the two feddans of land these ten years—thou hast eased thy soul by bringing the rentals thereof?"

Abou Seti's glance fell and his hands twitched. His

fingers fumbled with his robe of striped silk. He cursed the Mudir in his heart for his bitter humour; but was not his son in prison, and did it not lie with the Mudir whether he lived or died? So he answered:

"All-seeing and all-knowing art thou, O effendi, and I have reckoned the rentals even to this hour for the ten years—fifty piastres for each feddan——"

"A hundred for the five years of high Nile," interposed the Mudir.

"Fifty for the five lean years, and a hundred for the five fat years," said Abou Seti, and wished that his words were poisoned arrows, that they might give the Mudir many deaths at once. "And may Allah give thee greatness upon thy greatness!"

"God prosper thee also, Abou Seti, and see that thou keep only what is thine own henceforth. Get thee gone in peace."

"At what hour shall I see the face of my son alive?" said Abou Seti, in a low voice, placing his hand upon his turban in humility.

"To-morrow at even, when the Muezzin calls from the mosque of El Hassan, be thou at the west wall of the prison by the Gate of the Prophet's Sorrow, with thy fastest camel. He shall ride for me through the desert even to Farafreh, and bear a letter to the *bimbashi* there. If he bear it safely, his life is his own; if he fail, look to thy feddans of land!"

"God is merciful, and Seti is bone of my bone," said Abou Seti, and laid his hand again upon his turban.

That was how Mahommed Seti did not at once pay the price of the grindstone, but rode into the desert bearing the message of the Mudir and returned safely with the answer, and was again seen in the *cafés* of

Manfaloot. And none of Ebn Haroun's friends did aught, for the world knew through whom it was that Seti lived—and land was hard to keep in Manfaloot, and the prison near.

But one day a kavass of the Khedive swooped down on Manfaloot, and twenty young men were carried off in conscription. Among them was Seti, now married to Ahassa, the fellah maid for whom the grindstone had fallen on Abn Haroun's head. When the fatal number fell to him and it was ordained that he must go to Dongola to serve in the Khedive's legions, he went to his father, with Ahassa wailing behind him.

"Save thyself," said the old man, with a frown.

"I have done what I could—I have sold my wife's jewels," answered Seti.

"Ten piastres," said old Abou Seti, grimly.

"Twelve," said Seti, grinning from ear to ear. "If thou wilt add four feddans of land to that I will answer for the Mudir."

"Thy life only cost me two feddans. Shall I pay four to free thee of serving thy master the Khedive? Get thee gone into the Soudan. I do not fear for thee: thou wilt live on. Allah is thy friend. Peace be with thee!"

II

So it was that the broad-shouldered Seti went to be a soldier, with all the women of the village wailing behind him, and Ahassa his wife covering her head with dust and weeping by his side as he stepped out towards Dongola. For himself, Seti was a philosopher; that is to say, he was a true Egyptian. Whatever was, was to be; and Seti had a good digestion, which

is a great thing in the desert. Moreover, he had a capacity for foraging—or foray. The calmness with which he risked his life for an onion or a water-bag would have done credit to a prince of buccaneers. He was never flustered. He had dropped a grindstone on the head of his rival, but the smile that he smiled then was the same smile with which he suffered and forayed and fought and filched in the desert. With a back like a door, and arms as long and strong as a gorilla's, with no moral character to speak of, and an imperturbable selfishness, even an ignorant Arab like Seti may go far.

More than once his bimbashi drew a sword to cut him down for the peaceful insolent grin with which he heard himself suddenly charged with very original crimes; but even the officer put his sword up again, because he remembered that though Seti was the curse of the regiment on the march, there was no man like him in the day of battle. Covered with desert sand and blood, and fighting and raging after the manner of a Sikh, he could hold ten companies together like a wall against a charge of Dervishes. The bimbashi rejoiced at this, for he was a coward; likewise his captain was a coward, and so was his lieutenant: for they were half Turks, half Gippies, who had seen Paris and had not the decency to die there. Also it had been discovered that no man made so good a spy or envoy as Seti. His gift for lying was inexpressible: confusion never touched him; for the flattest contradictions in the matter of levying backsheesh he always found an excuse. Where the bimbashi and his officers were afraid to go lest the bald-headed eagle and the vulture should carry away their heads as titbits to the Libyan hills, Seti was sent. In more than one way he always

kept his head. He was at once the curse and the pride of the regiment. For his sins he could not be punished, and his virtues were of value only to save his life.

In this fashion, while his regiment thinned out by disease, famine, fighting, and the midnight knife, Seti came on to Dongola, to Berber, to Khartoum; and he grinned with satisfaction when he heard that they would make even for Kordofan. He had outlived all the officers who left Manfaloot with the regiment save the bimbashi, and the bimbashi was superstitious, and believed that while Seti lived he would live. Therefore no clansman ever watched his standard flying in the van as the bimbashi—from behind—watched the long arm of Seti slaying, and heard his voice like a brass horn above all others shouting his war-cry.

But at Khartoum came Seti's fall. Many sorts of original sin had been his, with profit and prodigious pleasure, but when, by the supposed orders of the bimbashi, he went through Khartoum levying a tax, upon every dancing-girl in the place and making her pay upon the spot, at the point of a merciless tongue, he went one step too far. For his genius had preceded that of Selamlik Pasha, the friend of the Mouffetish at Cairo, by one day only. Selamlik himself had collected taxes on dancing-girls all the way from Cairo to Khartoum; and to be hoist by an Arab in a foot regiment having no authority and only a limitless insolence, was more than the Excellency could bear.

To Selamlik Pasha the bimbashi hastily disowned all knowledge of Seti's perfidy, but both were brought out to have their hands and feet and heads cut off in the Beit-el-Mal, in the presence of the dancing-girls and the populace. In the appointed place, when Seti saw

how the bimbashi wept—for he had been to Paris and had no Arab blood in him ; how he wrung his hands—for had not absinthe weakened his nerves in the *cafés* of St. Michel ?—when Seti saw that he was no Arab and was afraid to die, then he told the truth to Selamlik Pasha. He even boldly offered to tell the pasha where half his own ill-gotten gains were hid, if he would let the bimbashi go. Now, Selamlik Pasha was an Egyptian, and is it not written in the Book of Egypt that no man without the most dangerous reason may refuse backsheesh ? So it was that Selamlik talked to the Ulema, the holy men, who were there, and they urged him to clemency, as holy men will, even in Egypt—at a price.

So it was also that the bimbashi went back to his regiment with all his limbs intact. Seti and the other half of his ill-gotten gains were left. His hands were about to be struck off, when he realised of how little account his gold would be without them ; so he offered it to Selamlik Pasha for their sake. The pasha promised, and then, having found the money, serenely prepared the execution. For his anger was great. Was not the idea of taxing the dancing-girls his very own, the most original tax ever levied in Egypt ? And to have the honour of it filched from him by a soldier of Manfaloot—no, Mahommed Seti should be crucified !

And Seti, the pride and the curse of his regiment, would have been crucified between two palms on the banks of the river had it not been for Fielding Bey the Englishman—Fielding of St. Bartholomew's—who had burned gloriously to reform Egypt root and branch, and had seen the fire of his desires die down. Fielding Bey saved Seti, but not with backsheesh.

Fielding intervened. He knew Selamlik Pasha well, and the secret of his influence over him is for telling elsewhere. But whatever its source, it gave Mahommed Seti his life. It gave him much more, for it expelled him from the Khedive's army. Now soldiers without number, gladly risking death, had deserted from the army of the Khedive; they had bought themselves out with enormous backsheesh, they had been thieves, murderers, panderers, that they might be freed from service by some corrupt pasha or bimbashi; but no one in the knowledge of the world had ever been *expelled* from the army of the Khedive.

There was a satanic humour in the situation pleasant to the soul of Mahommed Seti, if soul his subconsciousness might be called. In the presence of his regiment, drawn up in the Beit-el-Mal, before his trembling bimbashi, whose lips were now pale with terror at the loss of his mascot, Mahommed Seti was drummed out of line, out of his regiment, out of the Beit-el-Mal. It was *opéra bouffe*, and though Seti could not know what *opéra bouffe* was, he did know that it was a ridiculous fantasia, and he grinned his insolent grin all the way, even to the corner of the camel-market, where the drummer and the sergeant and his squad turned back from ministering a disgrace they would gladly have shared.

Left at the corner of the camel-market, Mahommed Seti planned his future. At first it was to steal a camel and take the desert for Berber. Then he thought of the English hakim, Fielding Bey, who had saved his life. Now, a man who has saved your life once may do it again; one favour is always the promise of an-

other. So Seti, with a sudden inspiration, went straight to the house of Fielding Bey and sat down before it on his mat.

With the setting of the sun came a clatter of tins and a savoury odour throughout Khartoum to its farthest precincts, for it was Ramadán, and no man ate till sunset. Seti smiled an avid smile, and waited. At last he got up, turned his face towards Mecca, and said his prayers. Then he lifted the latch of Fielding's hut, entered, eyed the medicine bottles and the surgical case with childish apprehension, and made his way to the kitchen. There he foraged. He built a fire; his courage grew; he ran to the bazaar, and came back with an armful of meats and vegetables.

So it was that when Fielding returned he found Mahommed Seti and a savoury mess awaiting him. Also there was coffee and a bottle of brandy which Seti had looted in the bazaar. In one doorway stood Fielding; in another stood Mahommed Seti, with the same grin which had served his purpose all the way from Cairo, his ugly face behind it, and his prodigious shoulders below it, and the huge chest from which came forth, like the voice of a dove:

"God give thee long life, saadat el bey!"

Now an M.D. degree and a course in St. Bartholomew's Hospital do not necessarily give a knowledge of the human soul, though the outlying lands of the earth have been fattened by those who thought there was knowledge and salvation in a conquered curriculum. Fielding Bey, however, had never made pretence of understanding the Oriental mind, so he discreetly took his seat and made no remarks. From sheer instinct, however, when he came to the coffee he threw a boot

which caught Mahommed Seti in the middle of the chest, and said roughly, " French, not Turkish, idiot ! "

Then Mahommed Seti grinned, and he knew that he was happy ; for it was deep in his mind that that was the Inglesi's way of offering a long engagement. In any case Seti had come to stay. Three times he made French coffee that night before it suited, and the language of Fielding was appropriate in each case. At last a boot, a native drum, and a wood sculpture of Pabst the lion-headed goddess, established perfect relations between them. They fell into their places of master and man as accurately as though the one had smitten and the other served for twenty years.

The only acute differences they had were upon two points—the cleaning of the medicine bottles and surgical instruments, and the looting. But it was wonderful to see how Mahommed Seti took the kourbash at the hands of Fielding, when he shied from the medicine bottles. He could have broken, or bent double with one twist, the weedy, thin-chested Fielding. But though he saw a deadly magic and the evil eye in every stopper, and though to him the surgical instruments were torturing steels which the devil had forged for his purposes, he conquered his own prejudices so far as to assist in certain bad cases which came in Fielding's way on the journey down the Nile.

The looting was a different matter. Had not Mahommed Seti looted all his life—looted from his native village to the borders of Kordofan ? Did he not take to foray as a wild ass to bersim ? Moreover, as little Dicky Donovan said humorously yet scornfully when he joined them at Korosko : " What should a native do but loot who came from Manfaloot ? "

Dicky had a prejudice against the Murderer, because he was a murderer; and Mahommed Seti viewed with scorn any white man who was not Fielding; much more so one who was only five feet and a trifle over. So for a time there was no sympathy between the two. But each conquered the other in the end. Seti was conquered first.

One day Dicky, with a sudden burst of generosity —for he had a button to his pocket—gave Mahommed Seti a handful of cigarettes. The next day Seti said to Fielding: "Behold, God has given thee strong men for friends. Thou hast Mahommed Seti"—his chest blew out like a bellows—"and thou hast Donovan Pasha."

Fielding grunted. He was not a fluent man, save in forbidden language, and Seti added:

"Behold thou, saadat el bey, who opens a man's body, and turns over his heart with a sword-point, and sewing him up with silken cords bids him live again, greatness is in thy house! Last night thy friend, Donovan Pasha, gave into my hands a score of those cigarettes which are like the smell of a camel-yard. In the evening, having broken bread and prayed, I sat down at the door of the barber in peace to smoke, as becomes a man who loves God and His benefits. Five times I puffed, and then I stayed my lips, for why should a man die of smoke when he can die by the sword? But there are many men in Korosko whose lives are not as clean linen. These I did not love. I placed in their hands one by one the cigarettes, and with their blessings following me I lost myself in the dusk and waited."

Mahommed Seti paused. On his face was a smile of sardonic retrospection.

"Go on, you fool!" grunted Fielding.

"Nineteen sick men, unworthy followers of the Prophet, thanked Allah in the mosque to-day that their lives were spared. Donovan Pasha is a great man and a strong, effendi! We be three strong men together!"

Dicky Donovan's conversion to a lasting belief in Mahommed Seti came a year later.

The thing happened at a little sortie from the Nile. Fielding was chief medical officer, and Dicky, for the moment, was unattached. When the time came for starting, Mahommed Seti brought round Fielding's horse and Dicky Donovan's. Now, Mahommed Seti loved a horse as well as a Bagarra Arab, and he had come to love Fielding's waler Bashi-Bazouk as a Farshoot dog loves his master. And Bashi-Bazouk was worthy of Seti's love. The sand of the desert, Seti's breath and the tail of his yelek made the coat of Bashi-Bazouk like silk. It was the joy of the regiment, and the regiment knew that Seti had added a new chapter to the Koran concerning horses, in keeping with Mahomet's own famous passage:

> "By the CHARGERS that pant,
> And the hoofs that strike fire,
> And the scourers at dawn,
> Who stir up the dust with it,
> And cleave through a host with it!"

But Mahomet's phrases were recited in the mosque, and Seti's, as he rubbed Bashi-Bazouk with the tail of his yelek.

There was one thing, however, that Seti loved more than horses, or at least as much. Life to him was one long possible Donnybrook Fair. That was why,

although he was no longer in the army, when Fielding and Dicky mounted for the sortie he said to Fielding :

" Oh, brother of Johsua and all the fighters of Israel, I have a bobtailed Arab. Permit me to ride with thee."

And Fielding replied : " You will fight the barnyard fowl for dinner ; get back to your stewpots."

But Seti was not to be fobbed off. " It is written that the Lord, the Great One, is compassionate and merciful. Wilt thou then, O saadat——"

Fielding interrupted : " Go, harry the onion-field for dinner. You're a dog of a slave, and a murderer too : you must pay the price of that grindstone ! "

But Seti hung by the skin of his teeth to the fringe of Fielding's good-nature — Fielding's words only were sour and wrathful. So Seti grinned and said : " For the grindstone, behold it sent Ebn Haroun to the mercy of God. Let him rest, praise be to God ! "

" You were drummed out of the army. You can't fight," said Fielding again ; but he was smiling under his long moustache.

" Is not a bobtailed nag sufficient shame ? Let thy friend ride the bobtailed nag and pay the price of the grindstone and the drum," said Seti.

" Fall in ! " rang the colonel's command, and Fielding, giving Seti a friendly kick in the ribs, galloped away to the troop.

Seti turned to the little onion-garden. His eye harried it for a moment, and he grinned. He turned to the doorway where a stewpot rested, and his mind dwelt cheerfully on the lamb he had looted for Fielding's dinner. But last of all his eye rested upon his bobtailed Arab, the shameless thing in an Arab country, where every horse rears his tail as a peacock spreads

his feathers, as a marching Albanian lifts his foot. The bobtailed Arab's nose was up, his stump was high. A hundred times he had been in battle; he was welted and scarred like a shoemaker's apron. He snorted his cry towards the dust rising like a surf behind the heels of the colonel's troop.

Suddenly Seti answered the cry—he answered the cry and sprang forward.

That was how in the midst of a desperate *mêlée* twenty miles away on the road to Dongola little Dicky Donovan saw Seti riding into the thick of the fight armed only with a naboot of domwood, his call, "*Allah-Akbar!*" rising like a hoarse-throated bugle, as it had risen many a time in the old days on the road from Manfaloot. Seti and his bobtailed Arab, two shameless ones, worked their way to the front. Not Seti's strong right arm alone and his naboot were at work, but the bobtailed Arab, like an iron-handed razor-toothed shrew, struck and bit his way, his eyes blood-red like Seti's. The superstitious Dervishes fell back before this pair of demons; for their madness was like the madness of those who at the Dôsah throw themselves beneath the feet of the Sheikh's horse by the mosque of El Hassan in Cairo. The bobtailed Arab's lips were drawn back over his assaulting teeth in a horrible grin. Seti grinned too, the grin of fury and of death.

Fielding did not know how it was that, falling wounded from his horse, he was caught by strong arms, as Bashi-Bazouk cleared him at a bound and broke into the desert. But Dicky Donovan, with his own horse lanced under him, knew that Seti made him mount the bobtailed Arab with Fielding in front of him, and that a

moment later they had joined the little band retreating to Korosko, having left sixty of their own dead on the field, and six times that number of Dervishes.

It was Dicky Donovan who cooked Fielding's supper that night, having harried the onion-field and fought the barnyard fowl, as Fielding had commanded Seti.

But next evening at sunset Mahommed Seti came into the fort, slashed and bleeding, with Bashi-Bazouk limping heavily after him.

Fielding said that Seti's was the good old game for which V.C.'s were the reward—to run terrible risks to save a life in the face of the enemy; but, heretofore, it had always been the life of a man, not of a horse. To this day the Gippies of that regiment still alive do not understand why Seti should have stayed behind and risked his life to save a horse and bring him wounded back to his master. But little Dicky Donovan understood, and Fielding understood; and Fielding never afterwards mounted Bashi-Bazouk but he remembered. It was Mahommed Seti who taught him the cry of Mahomet:

> "By the CHARGERS that pant,
> And the hoofs that strike fire,
> And the scourers at dawn,
> Who stir up the dust with it,
> And cleave through a host with it!"

And in the course of time Mahommed Seti managed to pay the price of the grindstone and also of the drum.

THE DESERTION OF MAHOMMED SELIM

I

THE business began during Ramadán; how it ended and where was in the mouth of every soldier between Beni Souef and Dongola, and there was not a mud hut or a mosque within thirty miles of Mahommed Selim's home, not a khiassa or felucca dropping anchor for gossip and garlic below the mudirieh, but knew the story of Soada, the daughter of Wassef the camel-driver.

Soada was pretty and upright, with a full round breast and a slim figure. She carried a balass of water on her head as gracefully as a princess a tiara. This was remarked by occasional inspectors making their official rounds, and by more than one khowagah putting in with his dahabeah where the village maidens came to fill their water-jars. Soada's trinkets and bracelets were perhaps no better than those of her companions, but her one garment was of the linen of Beni Mazar, as good as that worn by the Sheikh-el-beled himself.

Wassef the camel-driver, being proud of Soada, gave her the advantage of his frequent good fortune in desert loot and Nile backsheesh. But Wassef was a hard man for all that, and he grew bitter and morose at last, because he saw that camel-driving must suffer by the coming of the railway. Besides, as a man gets older he likes the season of Ramadán less, for he must fast from sunrise to sunset, though his work goes on; and, with broken sleep having his meals at night, it is ten to one but he gets irritable.

So it happened that one evening just at sunset, Wassef came to his hut, with the sun like the red rim of a huge thumb-nail in the sky behind him, ready beyond telling for his breakfast, and found nothing. On his way home he had seen before the houses and *cafés* silent Mussulmans with cigarettes and matches in their fingers, cooks with their hands on the lids of the cooking pots, where the dourha and onions boiled; but here outside his own doorway there was no odour, and there was silence within.

"Now, by the beard of the Prophet," he muttered, "is it for this I have fed the girl and clothed her with linen from Beni Mazar all these years!" And he turned upon his heel, and kicked a yellow cur in the ribs; then he went to the nearest *café*, and making huge rolls of forced meat with his fingers crammed them into his mouth, grunting like a Berkshire bear. Nor did his anger cease thereafter, for this meal of meat had cost him five piastres—the second meal of meat in a week.

As Wassef sat on the mastaba of the *café*, sullen and angry, the village barber whispered in his ear that Mahommed Selim and Soada had been hunting jackals in the desert all afternoon. Hardly had the barber fled from the anger of Wassef, when a glittering kavass of the Mouffetish at Cairo passed by on a black errand of conscription. With a curse Wassef felt in his vest for his purse, and called to the kavass—that being more dreaded in Egypt than the plague.

That very night the conscription descended upon Mahommed Selim, and by sunrise he was standing in front of the house of the Mamour with twelve others, to begin the march to Dongola. Though the young man's father went secretly to the Mamour, and offered

him backsheesh, even to the tune of a feddan of land, the Mamour refused to accept it. That was a very peculiar thing, because every Egyptian official, from the Khedive down to the ghaffir of the cane-fields, took backsheesh in the name of Allah.

Wassef the camel-driver was the cause. He was a deep man and a strong; and it was through him the conscription descended upon Mahommed Selim—"son of a burnt father," as he called him—who had gone shooting jackals in the desert with his daughter, and had lost him his breakfast. Wassef's rage was quiet but effective, for he had whispered to some purpose in the ear of the Mamour as well as in that of the dreaded kavass of conscription. Afterwards, he had gone home and smiled at Soada his daughter when she lied to him about the sunset breakfast.

With a placid smile and lips that murmured, "Praise be to God," the malignant camel-driver watched the shrieking women of the village throwing dust on their heads and lamenting loudly for the thirteen young men of Beni Souef who were going forth never to return—or so it seemed to them; for of all the herd of human kine driven into the desert before whips and swords, but a moiety ever returned, and that moiety so battered that their mothers did not know them. Therefore, at Beni Souef that morning women wept, and men looked sullenly upon the ground—all but Wassef the camel-driver.

It troubled the mind of Wassef that Mahommed Selim made no outcry at his fate. He was still more puzzled when the Mamour whispered to him that Mahommed Selim had told the kavass and his own father that since it was the will of God, then the will of God was his will, and he would go. Wassef replied that the Mamour did

well not to accept the backsheesh of Mahommed Selim's father, for the Mouffetish at the palace of Ismail would have heard of it, and there would have been an end to the Mamour. It was quite a different matter when it was backsheesh for sending Mahommed Selim to the Soudan.

With a shameless delight Wassef went to the door of his own home, and, calling to Soada, told her that Mahommed Selim was among the conscripts. He also told her that the young man was willing to go, and that the Mamour would take no backsheesh from his father. He looked to see her burst into tears and wailing, but she only stood and looked at him like one stricken blind. Wassef laughed, and turned on his heel, and went out: for what should he know of the look in a woman's face —he to whom most women were alike, he who had taken dancing-girls with his camels into the desert many a time. What should he know of that love which springs once in every woman's heart, be she fellah or Pharaoh's daughter.

When he had gone, Soada groped her way blindly to the door and out into the roadway. Her lips moved, but she only said, "Mahommed, Mahommed Selim!" Her father's words knelled in her ear that her lover was willing to go, and she kept saying brokenly, "Mahommed—Mahommed Selim!" As the mist left her eyes she saw the conscripts go by, and Mahommed Selim was in the rear rank. He saw her also, but he kept his head turned away, taking a cigarette from young Yusef the drunken ghaffir as they passed on.

Unlike the manner of her people, Soada turned and went back into her house, and threw herself upon the mud floor, and put the folds of her garment in her

mouth lest she should cry out in her agony. A whole day she lay there and did not stir, save to drink from the water-bottle which old Fatima, the maker of mats, had placed by her side. For Fatima thought of the far-off time when she loved Hassan the potter, who had been dragged from his wheel by a kavass of conscription and lost among the sands of the Libyan desert; and she read the girl's story.

That evening, as Wassef the camel-driver went to the mosque to pray, Fatima cursed him, because now all the village laughed secretly at the revenge that Wassef had taken upon the lover of his daughter. A few laughed the harder because they knew Wassef would come to feel it had been better to have chained Mahommed Selim to a barren fig-tree and kept him there until he married Soada, than to let him go. He had mischievously sent him into that furnace which eats the Fellaheen to the bones, and these bones thereafter mark white the road of the Red Sea caravans and the track of the Khedive's soldiers in the yellow sands.

When Fatima cursed Wassef he turned and spat at her; and she went back and sat on the ground beside Soada, and mumbled tags from the Koran above her for comfort. Then she ate greedily the food which Soada should have eaten; snatching scraps of consolation in return for the sympathy she gave.

The long night went, the next day came, and Soada got up and began to work again. And the months went by.

II

One evening, on a day which had been almost too hot for even the seller of liquorice-water to go by calling

and clanging, Wassef the camel-driver sat at the door of a malodorous *café*, and listened to a wandering welee chanting the Koran. Wassef was in an ill-humour: first, because the day had been so hot; secondly, because he had sold his ten-months' camel at a price almost within the bounds of honesty; and thirdly, because a score of railway contractors and subs. were camped outside the town. Also, Soada had scarcely spoken to him for three days past.

In spite of all, Soada had been the apple of his eye, although he had sworn again and again that next to a firman of the Sultan, a ten-months' camel was the most beautiful thing on earth. He was in a bitter humour. This had been an intermittent disease with him almost since the day Mahommed Selim had been swallowed up by the Soudan; for, like her mother before her, Soada had no mind to be a mat for his feet. Was it not even said that Soada's mother was descended from an English slave with red hair, who in the terrible disaster at Damietta in 1805 had been carried away into captivity on the Nile, where he married a fellah woman and died a good Mussulman.

Soada's mother had had red-brown hair, and not black as becomes a fellah woman; but Wassef was proud of this ancient heritage of red hair, which belonged to a Field-marshal of Great Britain—so he swore by the beard of the Prophet. That is why he had not beaten Soada these months past when she refused to answer him, when with cold stubbornness she gave him his meals or withheld them at her will. He was even a little awed by her silent force of will, and at last he had to ask her humbly for a savoury dish which her mother had taught her to make—a dish he always ate upon the

birthday of Mahomet Ali, who had done him the honour to flog him with his own kourbash for filching the rations of his Arab charger.

But this particular night Wassef was bitter, and watched with stolid indifference the going down of the sun, the time when he usually said his prayers. He was in so ill a humour that he would willingly have met his old enemy, Yusef, the drunken ghaffir, and settled their long-standing dispute for ever. But Yusef came not that way. He was lying drunk with hashish outside the mosque El Hassan, with a letter from Mahommed Selim in his green turban—for Yusef had been a pilgrimage to Mecca and might wear the green turban.

But if Yusef came not by the *café* where Wassef sat glooming, some one else came who quickly roused Wassef from his phlegm. It was Donovan Pasha, the young English official, who had sat with him many a time at the door of his hut and asked him questions about Dongola and Berber and the Soudanese. And because Dicky spoke Arabic, and was never known to have aught to do with the women of Beni Souef, he had been welcome; and none the less because he never frowned when an Arab told a lie.

"*Nehar-ak koom sâid, Mahommed Wasseſ,*" said Dicky; and sat upon a bench and drew a narghileh to him, wiping the ivory mouthpiece with his handkerchief.

"*Nehar-ak sâid, saadat el basha,*" answered Wassef, and touched lips, breast, and forehead, with his hand. Then they shook hands, thumbs up, after the ancient custom. And once more, Wassef touched his breast, his lips and his forehead.

They sat silent too long for Wassef's pleasure, for he took pride in what he was pleased to call his friendship

with Donovan Pasha, and he could see his watchful neighbours gathering at a little distance. It did not suit his book that they two should not talk together.

"May Allah take them to his mercy!—A regiment was cut to pieces by the Dervishes at Dongola last quarter of the moon," he said.

"It was not the regiment of Mahommed Selim," Dicky answered slowly, with a curious hard note in his voice.

"All blessings do not come at once—such is the will of God!" answered Wassef with a sneer.

"You brother of asses," said Dicky, showing his teeth a little, "you brother of asses of Bagdad!"

"Saadat el basha!" exclaimed Wassef, angry and dumbfounded.

"You had better have gone yourself, and left Mahommed Selim your camels and your daughter," continued Dicky, his eyes straight upon Wassef's.

"God knows your meaning," said Wassef in a sudden fright; for the Englishman's tongue was straight, as he well knew.

"They sneer at you behind your back, Mahommed Wassef. No man in the village dare tell you, for you have no friends, but I tell you, that you may save Soada before it is too late. Mahommed Selim lives; or lived last quarter of the moon, so says Yusef, the ghaffir. Sell your ten-months' camel, buy the lad out, and bring him back to Soada."

"Saadat!" said Wassef, in a quick fear, and dropped the stem of the narghileh, and got to his feet. "Saadat el basha!"

"Before the Nile falls and you may plant yonder

field with onions," answered Dicky, jerking his head towards the flooded valley, " her time will be come ! "

Wassef's lips were drawn like shrivelled parchment over his red gums, the fingers of his right hand fumbled in his robe.

" There's no one to kill—keep quiet ! " said Dicky.

But Wassef saw near by the faces of the villagers, and on every face he thought he read a smile, a sneer ; though in truth none sneered, for they were afraid of his terrible anger. Mad with fury he snatched the turban from his head and threw it on the ground. Then suddenly he gave one cry, " *Allah !* " a vibrant clack like a pistol-shot, for he saw Yusef the drunken ghaffir coming down the road.

Yusef heard that cry of " *Allah !* " and he knew that the hour had come for settling old scores. The hashish clouds lifted from his brain, and he gripped his naboot of the hard wood of the dom-palm, and, with a cry like a wolf, came on.

It would have been well for Wassef the camel-driver if he had not taken the turban from his head, for before he could reach Yusef with his dagger, he went down, his skull cracking like the top of an egg under a spoon.

III

Thus it was that Soada was left to fight her battle alone. She did not weep nor wail when Wassef's body was brought home and the moghassil and hanouti came to do their offices. She did not smear her hair with mud, nor was she moved by the wailing of the mourning women nor the chanters of the Koran. She only said to Fatima when all was over, " It is well ; he

is gone from my woe to the mercy of God! Praise be to God!" And she held her head high in the village still, though her heart was in the dust.

She would have borne her trouble alone to the end, but that she was bitten on the arm by one of her father's camels the day they were sold in the market-place. Then, helpless and suffering and fevered, she yielded to the thrice-repeated request of Dicky Donovan, and was taken to the hospital at Assiout, which Fielding Bey, Dicky's friend, had helped to found.

But Soada, as her time drew near and the terror of it stirred her heart, cast restless eyes upon the white-washed walls and rough floors of the hospital. She longed for the mud hut at Beni Souef, and the smell of the river and the little field of onions she planted every year. Day by day she grew harder of heart against those who held her in the hospital—for to her it was but a prison. She would not look when the doctor came, and she would not answer, but kept her eyes closed; and she did not shrink when they dressed the arm so cruelly wounded by the camel's teeth, but lay still and dumb.

Now, a strange thing happened, for her hair which had been so black turned brown, and grew browner and browner till it was like the hair of her mother, who, so the Niline folk said, was descended from the English soldier-slave with red hair.

Fielding Bey and Dicky came to see her in hospital once before they returned to Cairo; but Soada would not even speak to them, though she smiled when they spoke to her; and no one else ever saw her smile during the days she spent in that hospital with the red floor and white walls and the lazy watchman walking up and

down before the door. She kept her eyes closed in the daytime; but at night they were always open—always. Pictures of all she had lived and seen came back to her then—pictures of days long before Mahommed Selim came into her life. Mahommed Selim! She never spoke the words now, but whenever she thought them her heart shrank in pain. Mahommed Selim had gone like a coward into the desert, leaving her alone.

Her mind dwelt on the little mud hut and the onion field, and she saw down by the foreshore of the river the great khiassas from Assouan and Luxor laden with cotton or dourha or sugar-cane, their bent prows hooked in the Nile mud. She saw again the little fires built along the shore and atop of the piles of grain, round which sat the white, the black, and the yellow-robed riverine folk in the crimson glare; while from the banks came the cry, "*Alla-haly, 'm alla-haly!*" as stalwart young arabs drew in from the current to the bank some stubborn, overloaded khiassa. She heard the snarl of the camels as they knelt down before her father's hut to rest before the journey into the yellow plains of sand beyond. She saw the seller of sweetmeats go by calling—calling. She heard the droning of the children in the village school behind the hut, the dull clatter of Arabic consonants galloping through the Koran. She saw the moon—the full moon—upon the Nile, the wide acreage of silver water before the golden-yellow and yellow-purple of the Libyan hills behind.

She saw through her tears the sweet mirage of home, and her heart rebelled against the prison where she lay. What should she know of hospitals—she whose medicaments had been herbs got from the Nile valley and the cool Nile mud? Was it not the will of God if

we lived or the will of God if we died? Did we not all lie in the great mantle of the mercy of God, ready to be lifted up or to be set down as He willed? They had prisoned her here; there were bars upon the windows, there were watchmen at the door.

At last she could bear it no longer; the end of it all came. She stole out over the bodies of the sleeping watchmen, out into the dusty road under the palms, down to the water side, to the Nile—the path leading homewards. She must go down the Nile, hiding by day, travelling by night—the homing bird with a broken wing—back to the hut where she had lived so long with Wassef the camel-driver; back where she could lie in the dusk of her windowless home, shutting out the world from her solitude. There she could bear the agony of her hour.

Drinking the water of the Nile, eating the crumbs of dourha bread she had brought from the hospital, getting an onion from a field, chewing shreds of sugar-cane, hiding by day and trudging on by night, hourly growing weaker, she struggled towards Beni Souef. Fifty—forty—thirty—ten—five miles! Oh! the last two days, her head so hot and her brain bursting, and a thousand fancies swimming before her eyes, her heart fluttering, fluttering—stopping, going on—stopping, going on.

It was only the sound of the river—the Nile, Mother of Egypt, crooning to her disordered spirit, which kept her on her feet. Five miles, four miles, three miles, two, and then—she never quite remembered how she came to the hut where she was born! Two miles—two hours of incredible agony, now running, now leaning against a palm tree, now dropping to her knees,

now fighting on and on, she came at last to the one spot in the world where she could die in peace.

As she staggered, stumbled, through the village, Yusef, the drunken ghaffir, saw her. He did not dare speak to her, for had he not killed her father, and had he not bought himself free of punishment from the Mudir? So he ran to old Fatima and knocked upon her door with his naboot, crying: "In the name of Allah get thee to the hut of Wassef the camel-driver!"

Thus it was that Soada, in her agony, heard a voice say out of the infinite distance: "All praise to Allah, he hath even now the strength of a year-old child!"

IV

That night at sunset, as Soada lay upon the sheepskin spread for her, with the child nestled between her arm and her breast, a figure darkened the doorway, and old Fatima cried out:

"Mahommed Selim!"

With a gasping sound Soada gathered the child quickly to her breast, and shrank back to the wall. This surely was the ghost of Mahommed Selim—this gaunt, stooping figure covered with dust!

"Soada, in the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful, Soada, beautiful one!"

Mahommed Selim, once the lithe, the straight, the graceful, now bent, awkward, fevered, all the old daring gone from him, stood still in the middle of the room, humbled before the motherhood in his sight.

"Brother of jackals," cried old Fatima, "what dost thou here? What dost thou here, dog of dogs!" She spat at him.

He took no notice. "Soada," he said eagerly, prayerfully, and his voice, though hoarse, was softer than she had ever heard it. "Soada, I have come through death to thee—— Listen, Soada! At night, when sleep was upon the barrack-house, I stole out to come to thee. My heart had been hard. I had not known how much I loved thee——"

Soada interrupted him. "What dost thou know of love, Mahommed Selim? The blood of the dead cries from the ground."

He came a step nearer. "The blood of Wassef the camel-driver is upon my head," he said. "In the desert there came news of it. In the desert, even while we fought the wild tribes, one to ten, a voice kept crying in my ear, even as thou hast cried, 'What didst thou know of love, Mahommed Selim!' One by one the men of Beni Souef fell round me; one by one they spoke of their village and of their women, and begged for a drop of water, and died. And my heart grew hot within me, and a spirit kept whispering in my ear, 'Mahommed Selim, think of the village thou hast shamed, of Soada thou hast wronged! No drop of water shall cheer thy soul in dying!'"

Fatima and Soada listened now with bated breath, for this was the voice of one who had drunk the vinegar and gall of life.

"When the day was done, and sleep was upon the barrack-house, my heart waked up and I knew that I loved Soada as I had never loved her. I ran into the desert, and the jackals flew before me—outcasts of the desert, they and I. Coming to the tomb of Amshar the sheikh, by which was a well, there I found a train of camels. One of these I stole, and again I ran into the

desert, and left the jackals behind. Hour after hour, day and night, I rode on. But faintness was upon me, and dreams came. For though only the sands were before me, I seemed to watch the Nile running—running, and thou beside it, hastening with it, hastening, hastening towards thy home. And Allah put a thorn into my heart, that a sharp pain went through my body—and at last I fell."

Soada's eyes were on him now with a strange, swimming brilliancy.

"Mahommed, Mahommed Selim, Allah touched thine eyes that thou didst see truly," she said eagerly.

"Speak not till I have done," he answered. "When I waked again I was alone in the desert, no food, no water, and the dead camel beside me. But I had no fear. 'If it be God's will,' said I, 'then I shall come unto Soada. If it be not God's will, so be it: for are we not on the cushion of His mercy, to sleep or to wake, to live or to die?'"

He paused tottering, and presently sank upon the ground, his hands dropped before him, his head bent down. Old Fatima touched him on the shoulder.

"Brother of vultures didst thou go forth; brother of eagles dost thou return," she said. "Eat, drink, in the house of thy child and its mother."

"Shall the unforgiven eat or drink?" he said, and he rocked his body to and fro, like one who chants the Koran in a corner of El Azhar, forgetting and forgotten.

Soada's eyes were on him now as though they might never leave him again; and she dragged herself little by little towards him, herself and the child—little by little, until at last she touched his feet, and the child's face was turned towards him from its mother's breast.

"Thou art my love, Mahommed Selim," she said. He raised his head from his hands, a hunger of desire in his face.

"Thou art my lord," she added: "art thou not forgiven? The little one is thine and mine," she whispered. "Wilt thou not speak to him?"

"Lest Allah should strike me with blindness and dry up the juice of my veins, I will not touch thee or the child until all be righted. Food will I not eat, nor water drink until thou art mine—by the law of the Prophet, mine."

Laying down the water-jar, and the plate of dourha bread, old Fatima gathered her robe about her, and cried as she ran from the house: "Marriage and fantasia thou shalt have this hour."

The stiffness seemed to pass from her bones as she ran through the village to the house of the omdah. Her voice, lifting shrilly, sang the Song of Haleel, the song of the newly-married, till it met the chant of the Muezzin on the tower of the mosque El Hassan, and mingled with it, dying away over the fields of bersim and the swift-flowing Nile.

That night Mahommed Selim and Soada the daughter of Wassef the camel-driver were married, but the only fantasia they held was their own low laughter over the child. In the village, however, people were little moved to smile, for they knew that Mahommed Selim was a deserter from the army of the Khedive at Dongola, and that meant death. But no one told Soada this, and she did not think; she was content to rest in the fleeting dream undisturbed.

"Give them twenty-four hours," said the black-visaged fat sergeant of cavalry come to arrest Mahommed Selim for desertion.

The father of Mahommed Selim again offered the Mamour a feddan of land if the young man might go free, and to the sergeant he offered a she-camel and a buffalo. To no purpose. It was Mahommed Selim himself who saved his father's goods to him. He sent this word to the sergeant by Yusef the drunken ghaffir: "Give me to another sunset and sunrise, and what I have is thine: three black donkeys of Assiout rented to old Abdullah the sarraf."

Because with this offer he should not only have backsheesh but the man also, the fat sergeant gave him leave.

When the time was up, and Mahommed Selim drew Soada's face to his breast, he knew that it was the last look and last embrace.

"I am going back," he said; "my place is empty at Dongola."

"No, no, thou shalt not go," she cried. "See how the little one loves thee," and, sobbing, she held the child up to him.

But he spoke softly to her, and at last she said:

"Kiss me, Mahommed Selim. Behold now thy discharge shall be bought from the palace of the Khedive, and soon thou wilt return," she cried.

"If it be the will of God," he answered; "but the look of thine eyes I will take with me, and the face of the child here." He thrust a finger into the palm of the child, and the little dark hand closed round it. But when he would have taken it away, the little hand still clung, though the eyes were scarce opened upon life.

"See, Mahommed Selim," Soada cried, "he would go with thee."

"He shall come to me one day, by the mercy of God," answered Mahommed Selim.

Then he went out into the market-place and gave himself up to the fat sergeant. As they reached the outskirts of the village a sorry camel came with a sprawling gallop after them, and swaying and rolling above it was Yusef the drunken ghaffir, his naboot of dom-wood across his knees.

"What dost thou come for, friend of the mercy of God?" asked Mahommed Selim.

"To be thy messenger, praise be to God!" answered Yusef, swinging his water-bottle clear for a drink.

V

In Egypt, the longest way round is not the shortest way home, and that was why Mahommed Selim's court-martial took just three minutes and a half; and the bimbashi who judged him found even that too long, for he yawned in the deserter's face as he condemned him to death.

Mahommed Selim showed no feeling when the sentence was pronounced. His face had an apathetic look. It seemed as if it were all one to him. But when they had turned him round to march to the shed where he was to be kept, till hung like a pig at sunrise, his eyes glanced about restlessly. For even as the sentence had been pronounced a new idea had come into his mind. Over the heads of the Gippy soldiers, with their pipe-stem legs, his look flashed eagerly, then a little painfully—then suddenly stayed, for it rested on the green turban of Yusef, the drunken ghaffir. Yusef's eyes were almost shut; his face had the gray look of fresh-killed veal, for he had come from an awful debauch of hashish.

"*Allah! Allah!*" cried Mahommed Selim, for that was the sound which always waked the torpid brain of Yusef, since Wassef the camel-driver's skull had crackled under his naboot.

Yusef's wide shoulders straightened back, his tongue licked his lips, his eyes stared before him, his throat was dry. He licked his lips again. "*Allah!*" he cried, and ran forward.

The soldiers thrust Yusef back. Mahommed Selim turned and whispered to the sergeant.

"Backsheesh!" he said; "my gray Arab for a word with Yusef the ghaffir."

"*Malaish!*" said the sergeant; and the soldiers cleared a way for Yusef.

The palms of the men from Beni Souef met once, twice, thrice; they touched their lips, their breasts, their foreheads, with their hands, three times. Then Mahommed Selim fell upon the breast of Yusef and embraced him. Doing so he whispered in his ear:

"In the name of Allah, tell Soada I died fighting the Dervishes!"

"So be it, in God's name!" said Yusef. "A safe journey to you, brother of giants!"

Next morning at sunrise, between two dom-palms, stood Mahommed Selim; but scarce a handful of the soldiers sent to see him die laughed when the rope was thrown over his head. For his story had gone abroad, and it was said that he was mad—none but a madman would throw away his life for a fellah woman. And was it not written that a madman was one beloved of Allah, who had taken his spirit up into heaven, leaving only the disordered body behind?

If, at the last moment, Mahommed Selim had but cried out, " I am mad ; with my eyes I have seen God ! " no man would have touched the rope that hanged him up that day.

But, according to the sacred custom, he only asked for a bowl of water, drank it, said " *Allah !* " and bowed his head three times towards Mecca—and bowed his head no more.

Before another quarter was added to the moon, Yusef, the drunken ghaffir, at the door of Soada's hut in Beni Souef, told old Fatima the most wonderful tale, how Mahommed Selim had died on his sheepskin, having killed ten Dervishes with his own hand ; and that a whole regiment had attended his funeral.

This is to the credit of Yusef's account, that the last half of his statement was no lie.

ON THE REEF OF NORMAN'S WOE

" It was the schooner Hesperus
That sailed the wintry sea ;
And the skipper had taken his little daughter
To bear him company.
. . . . . .
Such was the wreck of the Hesperus
In the midnight and the snow !
Christ save us all from a death like this,
On the reef of Norman's woe ! "

ONLY it was not the schooner *Hesperus*, and she did not sail the wintry sea. It was the stern-wheeled tub *Amenhotep*, who churned her way up and down the

Nile, scraping over sandbanks, butting the shores with gaiety embarrassing—for it was the time of cholera, just before the annual rise of the Nile. Fielding Bey, the skipper, had not taken his little daughter, for he had none; but he had taken his little Dicky Donovan, who had been in at least three departments of the Government, with advantage to all.

Dicky was dining with Fielding at the Turf Club, when a telegram came saying that cholera had appeared at a certain village on the Nile. Fielding had dreaded this, had tried to make preparation for it, had begged of the Government this reform and that—to no purpose. He knew that the saving of the country from an epidemic lay with his handful of Englishmen and the faithful native officials; but chiefly with the Englishmen. He was prepared only as a forlorn hope is prepared, with energy, with personal courage, with knowledge; and never were these more needed.

With the telegram in his hand, he thought of his few English assistants, and sighed; for the game they would play was the game of Hercules and Death over the body of Alcestis.

Dicky noted the sigh, read the telegram, drank another glass of claret, lighted a cigarette, drew his coffee to him, and said: "The Khedive is away—I'm off duty; take me."

Fielding looked surprised, yet with an eye of hope. If there was one man in Egypt who could do useful work in the business, it was little Dicky Donovan, who had a way with natives such as no man ever had in Egypt; who knew no fear of anything mortal; who was as tireless as a beaver, as keen-minded as a lynx is sharp-eyed. It was said to Dicky's discredit that he

had no heart, but Fielding knew better. When Dicky offered himself now, Fielding said, almost feverishly:

"But, dear old D., you don't see——"

"Don't I?—Well, then,

> 'What are the blessings of the sight?—
> Oh, tell your poor blind boy!'"

What Fielding told him did not alter his intention, nor was it Fielding's wish that it should, though he felt it right to warn the little man what sort of thing was in store for them.

"As if I don't know, old limeburner!" answered Dicky coolly.

In an hour they were on the *Amenhotep*, and in two hours they were on the way—a floating hospital—to the infected district of Kalamoun. There the troubles began. It wasn't the heat, and it wasn't the work, and it wasn't the everlasting care of the sick; it was the ceaseless hunt for the disease-stricken, the still, tireless opposition of the natives, the remorseless deception, the hopeless struggle against the covert odds. With nothing behind; no support from the Government, no adequate supplies, few capable men; and all the time the dead, inert, dust-powdered air; the offices of policeman, doctor, apothecary, even undertaker and gravedigger, to perform; and the endless weeks of it all. A handful of good men under two leaders of nerve, conscience and ability, to fight an invisible enemy, which, gaining headway, would destroy its scores of thousands!

At the end of the first two months Fielding Bey became hopeless.

"We can't throttle it," he said to Dicky Donovan.

"They don't give us the ghost of a chance. To-day I found a dead-un hid in an oven under a heap of flour to be used for to-morrow's baking; I found another doubled up in a cupboard, and another under a pile of dourha which will be ground into flour."

"With twenty ghaffirs I beat five cane and dourha fields this morning," said Dicky. "Found three cases. They'd been taken out of the village during the night."

"Bad ones?"

"So so. They'll be worse before they're better. That was my morning's flutter. This afternoon I found the huts these gentlemen call their homes. I knocked holes in the roofs *per* usual, burnt everything that wasn't wood, let in the light o' heaven, and splashed about limewash and perchloride. That's my day's tot-up. Any particular trouble?" he added, eyeing Fielding closely.

Fielding fretfully jerked his foot on the floor, and lighted his pipe, the first that day.

"Heaps. I've put the barber in prison, and given the sarraf twenty lashes for certifying that the death of the son of the mamour was *el aadah*—the ordinary. It was one of the worst cases I've ever seen. He fell ill at ten and was dead at two, the *permis d'inhumation* was given at four, and the usual thing occurred: the body-washers got the bedding and clothing, and the others the coverlet. God only knows who'll wear that clothing, who'll sleep in that bed!"

"If the Lord would only send them sense, we'd supply sublimate solution—douche and spray, and zinc for their little long boxes of bones," mused Dicky, his eyes half shut, as he turned over in his hands some scarabs a place-hunting official had brought him that

day. "Well, that isn't all?" he added, with a quick upward glance and a quizzical smile. His eyes, however, as they fell on Fielding's, softened in a peculiar way, and a troubled look flashed through them; for Fielding's face was drawn and cold, though the eyes were feverish, and a bright spot burned on his high cheek-bones.

"No, it isn't all, Dicky. The devil's in the whole business. Steady, sullen opposition meets us at every hand. Norman's been here—rode over from Abdallah—twenty-five miles. A report's going through the native villages, started at Abdallah, that our sanitary agents are throwing yellow handkerchiefs in the faces of those they're going to isolate."

"That's Hoskai Bey's yellow handkerchief. He's a good man, but he blows his nose too much, and blows it with a flourish. . . . Has Norman gone back?"

"No, I've made him lie down in my cabin. He says he can't sleep, says he can only work. He looks ten years older. Abdallah's an awful place, and it's a heavy district. The mamour there's a scoundrel. He has influenced the whole district against Norman and our men. Norman—you know what an Alexander-Hannibal baby it is, all the head of him good for the best sort of work anywhere, all the fat heart of him dripping sentiment—gave a youngster a comfit the other day. By some infernal accident the child fell ill two days afterwards—it had been sucking its father's old shoe—and Norman just saved its life by the skin of his teeth. If the child had died, there'd have been a riot probably. As it is, there's talk that we're scattering poisoned sweetmeats to spread the disease. He's done a plucky thing, though . . ." He paused.

Dicky looked up inquiringly, and Fielding continued. "There's a fellow called Mustapha Kali, a hanger-on of the Mudir of the province. He spread a report that this business was only a scare got up by us; that we poisoned the people and buried them alive. What does Norman do? He promptly arrests him, takes him to the Mudir, and says that the brute must be punished or he'll carry the matter to the Khedive."

"Here's to you, Mr. Norman!" said Dicky, with a little laugh. "What does the Mudir do?"

"Doesn't know what to do. He tells Norman to say to me that if he puts the fellow in prison there'll be a riot, for they'll make a martyr of him. If he fines him it won't improve matters. So he asks me to name a punishment which 'll suit our case. He promises to give it 'his most distinguished consideration.'"

"And what's your particular poison for him?" asked Dicky, with his eyes on the Cholera Hospital a few hundred yards away.

"I don't know. If he's punished in the ordinary way it will only make matters worse, as the Mudir says. Something's needed that will play our game and turn the tables on the reptile too."

"A sort of bite himself with his own fangs, eh?" Dicky seemed only idly watching the moving figures by the Hospital.

"Yes, but what is it? I can't inoculate him with *bacilli*. That's what 'd do the work, I fancy."

"Pocket your fancy, Fielding," answered Dicky. "Let me have a throw."

"Go on. If you can't hit it off, it's no good, for my head doesn't think these days: it only sees, and hears, and burns."

Dicky eyed Fielding keenly, and then, pouring out some whisky for himself, put the bottle on the floor beside him, casually as it were. Then he said, with his girlish laugh, not quite so girlish these days, "I've got his sentence pat—it'll meet the case, or you may say, 'Cassio, never more be officer of mine.'"

He drew over a piece of paper lying on the piano—for there was a piano on the *Amenhotep*, and with what seemed an audacious levity Fielding played in those rare moments when they were not working or sleeping; and Fielding could really play! As Dicky wrote he read aloud in a kind of legal monotone:

"*The citizen Mustapha Kali having asserted that there is no cholera, and circulated various false statements concerning the treatment of patients, is hereby appointed as hospital assistant for three months, in the Cholera Hospital of Kalamoun, that he may have opportunity of correcting his opinions.*"—*Signed Ebn ben Hari, Mudir of Abdallah.*"

Fielding lay back and laughed—the first laugh on his lips for a fortnight. He laughed till his dry, fevered lips took on a natural moisture, and he said at last: "You've pulled it off, D. That's masterly. You and Norman have the only brains in this show. I get worse every day; I do—upon my soul!"

There was a curious anxious look in Dicky's eyes, but he only said, "You like it? Think it fills the bill, eh?"

"If the Mudir doesn't pass the sentence I'll shut up shop." He leaned over anxiously to Dicky and gripped his arm. "I tell you this pressure of opposition has got to be removed, or we'll never get this beast of an epidemic under, but we'll go under instead, my boy."

"Oh, we're doing all right," Dicky answered, with only apparent carelessness. "We've got inspection of the trains, we've got some sort of command of the foreshores, we've got the water changed in the mosques, we've closed the fountains, we've stopped the markets, we've put Sublimate Pasha and Limewash Effendi on the war-path, and——"

"And the natives believe in lighted tar-barrels and a *cordon sanitaire!* No, D., things must take a turn, or the game's lost, and we'll go with it. Success is the only thing that'll save their lives—and ours: we couldn't stand failure in this. A man can walk to the gates of hell to do the hardest trick, and he'll come back one great blister and *live*, if he's done the thing he set out for; but if he doesn't do it, he falls into the furnace. He never comes back. Dicky, things must be pulled our way, or we go to deep damnation."

Dicky turned a little pale, for there was high nervous excitement in Fielding's words; and for a moment he found it hard to speak. He was about to say something, however, when Fielding continued.

"Norman there,"—he pointed to the deck-cabin,—"Norman's the same. He says it's do or die; and he looks it. It isn't like a few fellows besieged by a host. For in that case you wait to die, and you fight to the last, and you only have your own lives. But this is different. We're fighting to save these people from themselves; and this slow, quiet, deadly work, day in day out, in the sickening sun and smell—faugh! the awful smell in the air—it kills in the end, if you don't pull your game off. You know it's true!"

His eyes had an eager, almost prayerful look; he was like a child in his simple earnestness. His fingers

moved over the maps on the table, in which were little red and white and yellow flags, the white flags to mark the towns and villages where they had mastered the disease, the red flags to mark the new ones attacked, the yellow to indicate those where the disease was raging. His fingers touched one of the flags, and he looked down.

"See, D. Here are two new places attacked to-day. I must ride over to Abdallah when Norman goes. It's all so hopeless!"

"Things will take a turn," rejoined Dicky, with a forced gaiety. "You needn't ride over to Abdallah. I'll go with Norman, and what's more I'll come back here with Mustapha Kali."

"You'll go to the Mudir?" asked Fielding eagerly. He seemed to set so much store by this particular business.

"I'll bring the Mudir too, if there's any trouble," said Dicky grimly; though it is possible he did not mean what he said.

Two hours later Fielding, Dicky, and Norman were in conference, extending their plans of campaign. Fielding and Norman were eager and nervous, and their hands and faces seemed to have taken on the arid nature of the desert. Before they sat down Dicky had put the bottle of whisky out of easy reach; for Fielding, under ordinary circumstances the most abstemious of men, had lately, in his great fatigue and overstrain, unconsciously emptied his glass more often than was wise for a campaign of long endurance. Dicky noticed now, as they sat round the table, that Norman's hand went to the coffee-pot as Fielding's had gone to his

glass. What struck him as odd also was that Fielding seemed to have caught something of Norman's manner. There was the same fever in the eyes, though Norman's face was more worn and the eyes more sunken. He looked like a man that was haunted. There was, too, a certain air of helplessness about him, a primitive intensity almost painful. Dicky saw Fielding respond to this in a curious way—it was the kind of fever that passes quickly from brain to brain when there is not sound bodily health commanded by a cool intelligence to insulate it. Fielding had done the work of four men for over two months, and, like most large men, his nerves had given in before Dicky's, who had done six men's work at least, and, by his power of organisation and his labour-saving intelligence, conserved the work of another fifty.

The three were sitting silent, having arranged certain measures, when Norman sprang to his feet excitedly and struck the table with his hand.

"It's no use, sir," he said to Fielding. "I'll have to go. I'm no good. I neglect my duty. I was to be back at Abdallah at five. I forgot all about it. A most important thing. A load of fessikh was landed at Minkari, five miles beyond Abdallah. We've prohibited fessikh. I was going to seize it. . . . It's no good. It's all so hopeless here."

Dicky knew now that the beginning of the end had come for Norman. There were only two things to do: get him away shooting somewhere, or humour him here. But there was no chance for shooting till things got very much better. The authorities in Cairo would never understand, and the babbling social-military folk would say that they had calmly gone shooting while

pretending to stay the cholera epidemic. It wouldn't be possible to explain that Norman was in a bad way, and that it was done to give him half a chance of life.

Fielding also ought to have a few days clear away from this constant pressure and fighting, and the sounds and the smells of death; but it could not be yet. Therefore, to humour them both was the only thing, and Norman's was the worse case. After all, they had got a system of sanitary supervision, they had the disease by the throat, and even in Cairo the administration was waking up a little. The crisis would soon pass, perhaps, if a riot could be stayed and the natives give up their awful fictions of yellow handkerchiefs, poisoned sweetmeats, deadly limewash, and all such nonsense.

So Dicky said now: "All right, Norman; come along. You'll seize that fessikh, and I'll bring back Mustapha Kali. We'll work him as he has never worked in his life. He'll be a living object lesson. We'll have all Upper Egypt on the banks of the Nile waiting to see what happens to Mustapha."

Dicky laughed, and Fielding responded feebly; but Norman was looking at the Hospital with a look too bright for joy, too intense for despair.

"I found ten in a corner of a cane-field yesterday," he said dreamily. "Four were dead, and the others had taken the dead men's smocks as covering." He shuddered. "I see nothing but limewash, smell nothing but carbolic. It's got into my head. Look here, old man, I can't stand it. I'm no use," he added pathetically to Fielding.

"You're right enough, if you'll not take yourself

so seriously," said Dicky jauntily. "You mustn't try to say 'Alone I did it.' Come along. Fill your tobacco-pouch. There are the horses. I'm ready."

He turned to Fielding.

"It's going to be a stiff ride, Fielding. But I'll do it in twenty-four hours, and bring Mustapha Kali too—for a consideration."

He paused, and Fielding said, with an attempt at playfulness. "Name your price."

"That you play for me, when I get back, the overture of *Tannhäuser*. Play it, mind; no tuning up sort of thing, like last Sunday's performance. Practise it, my son! Is it a bargain? I'm not going to work for nothing a day."

He watched the effect of his words anxiously, for he saw how needful it was to divert Fielding's mind in the midst of all this "plague, pestilence, and famine." For days Fielding had not touched the piano, the piano which Mrs. Henshaw, widow of Henshaw of the Buffs, had insisted on his taking with him a year before, saying that it would be a cure for loneliness when away from her. During the first of these black days Fielding had played intermittently for a few moments at a time, and Dicky had noticed that after playing he seemed in better spirits. But lately the disease of a ceaseless unrest, of constant sleepless work, was on him. He had not played for near a week, saying, in response to Dicky's urging, that there was no time for music. And Dicky knew that presently there would be no time to eat, and then no time to sleep; and then, the worst! Dicky had pinned his faith and his friendship to Fielding, and he saw no reason why he should lose his friend, because Madame Cholera was stalking the

native villages, driving the Fellaheen before her like sheep to the slaughter.

"Is it a bargain?" he added, as Fielding did not at once reply. If Fielding would but play it would take the strain off his mind at times.

"All right, D., I'll see what I can do with it," said Fielding, and with a nod turned to the map with the little red and white and yellow flags, and began to study it.

He did not notice that one of his crew abaft near the wheel was watching him closely, while creeping along the railing on the pretence of cleaning it. Fielding was absorbed in making notes upon a piece of paper and moving the little flags about. Now he lit a cigar and began walking up and down the deck.

The Arab disappeared, but a few minutes afterwards returned. The deck was empty. Fielding had ridden away to the village. The map was still on the table. With a frightened face the Arab peered at it, then going to the side he called down softly, and there came up from the lower deck a Copt, the sarraf of the village, who could read English fairly. The Arab pointed to the map, and the Copt approached cautiously. A few feet away he tried to read what was on the map, but, unable to do so, drew closer, pale-faced and knock-kneed, and stared at the map and the little flags. An instant after he drew back, and turned to the Arab.

"May God burn his eyes! He sends the death to the village by moving the flags. May God change him into a dog to be beaten to death! The red is to begin, the white flag is for more death, the yellow is for enough. See—may God cut off his hand!—he has moved the white flag to our village." He pointed in a trembling

fear, half real, half assumed—for he was of a nation of liars.

During the next half-hour at least a dozen Arabs came to look at the map, but they disappeared like rats in a hole when, near midnight, Fielding's tall form appeared on the bank above.

It was counted to him as a devil's incantation, the music that he played that night, remembering his promise to Dicky Donovan. It was music through which breathed the desperate, troubled, aching heart and tortured mind of an overworked strong man. It cried to the night its trouble; but far over in the Cholera Hospital the sick heard it and turned their faces towards it eagerly. It pierced the apathy of the dying. It did more, for it gave Fielding five hours' sleep that night; and though he waked to see one of his own crew dead on the bank, he tackled the day's labour with more hope than he had had for a fortnight.

As the day wore on, however, his spirits fell, for on every hand was suspicion, unrest, and opposition, and his native assistants went sluggishly about their work. It was pathetic and disheartening to see people refusing to be protected, the sick refusing to be relieved, all stricken with fear, yet inviting death by disobeying the Inglesi.

Kalamoun was hopeless; yet twenty-four hours earlier Fielding had fancied there was a little light in the darkness. That night Fielding's music gave him but two hours' sleep, and he had to begin the day on a brandy-and-soda. Wherever he went open resistance blocked his way, hisses and mutterings followed him, the sick were hid in all sorts of places, and two of his assistants deserted before noon. Things looked ominous enough, and at five o'clock he made up his mind that Egypt

would be overrun with cholera, and that he should probably have to defend himself and the *Amenhotep* from rioters, for the native police would be useless.

But at five o'clock Dicky Donovan came in a boat, and with him Mustapha Kali under a native guard of four men. The Mudir's sense of humour had been touched, and this sense of humour probably saved the Mudir from trouble, for it played Dicky's game for him.

Mustapha Kali had been sentenced to serve in the Cholera Hospital of Kalamoun, that he might be cured of his unbelief. At first he had taken his fate hardly, but Dicky had taunted him and then had suggested that a man whose conscience was clear and convictions good would carry a high head in trouble. Dicky challenged him to prove his libels by probing the business to the bottom, like a true scientist. All the way from Abdallah Dicky talked to him so, and at last the only answer Mustapha Kali would make was "*Malaish*"—no matter!

Mustapha Kali pricked up his ears with hope as he saw the sullen crowds from Kalamoun gathering on the shore to watch his deportation to the Cholera Hospital; and, as he stepped from the khiassa he called out loudly:

"They are all dogs and sons of dogs, and dogs were their grandsires. No good is in a dog the offspring of a dog. Whenever these dogs scratch the ground the dust of poison is in the air, and we die."

"You are impolite, Mustapha Kali," said Dicky coolly, and offered him a cigarette.

The next three days were the darkest in Dicky Donovan's career. On the first day there came word that Norman, overwrought, had shot himself. On the next,

Mustapha Kali in a fit of anger threw a native policeman into the river, and when his head appeared struck it with a barge-pole, and the man sank to rise no more. The three remaining policemen, two of whom were Soudanese and true to Dicky, bound him and shut him up in a hut. When Fielding refused to play that evening Dicky knew that Norman's fate had taken hold of him, and that he must watch his friend every minute—that awful vigilance which kills the watcher in the end. Dicky said to himself more than once that day :

> " Christ save us all from a death like this,
> On the reef of Norman's woe ! "

But it was not Dicky who saved Fielding. On the third day the long-deferred riot broke out. The Copt and the Arab had spread the report that Fielding brought death to the villages by moving the little flags on his map. The populace rose.

Fielding was busy with the map at the dreaded moment that hundreds of the villagers appeared upon the bank and rushed the *Amenhotep*. Fielding and Dicky were both armed, but Fielding would not fire until he saw that his own crew had joined the rioters on the bank. Then, amid a shower of missiles, he shot the Arab who had first spread the report about the map and the flags.

Now Dicky and he were joined by Holgate, the Yorkshire engineer of the *Amenhotep*, and together the three tried to hold the boat. Every native had left them. They were obliged to retreat aft to the deck-cabin. Placing their backs against it, they prepared to die hard. No one could reach them from behind, at least.

It was an unequal fight. All three had received slight wounds, but the blood-letting did them all good. Field-

ing was once more himself: nervous anxiety, unrest, had gone from him. He was as cool as a cucumber. He would not go shipwreck now "On the reef of Norman's woe." Here was a better sort of death. No men ever faced it with quieter minds than did the three. Every instant brought it nearer.

All at once there was a cry and a stampede in the rear of the attacking natives. The crowd suddenly parted like two waves, and retreated; and Mustapha Kali, almost naked, and supported by a stolid Soudanese, stood before the three. He was pallid, his hands and brow were dripping sweat, and there was a look of death in his eyes.

"I have cholera, effendi!" he said. "Take me to Abdallah to die, that I may be buried with my people and from mine own house."

"Is it not poison?" said Fielding grimly, yet seeing now a ray of hope in the sickening business.

"It is cholera, effendi. Take me home to die."

"Very well. Tell the people so, and I will take you home, and I will bury you with your fathers," said Fielding.

Mustapha Kali turned slowly. "I am sick of cholera," he said as loudly as he could to the awe-stricken crowd. "May God not cool my resting-place if it be not so!"

"Tell the people to go to their homes and obey us," said Dicky, putting away his pistol.

"These be good men, I have seen with mine own eyes," said Mustapha hoarsely to the crowd. "It is for your good they do all. Have I not seen? Let God fill both my hands with dust if it be not so! God hath stricken me, and behold I give myself into the hands of the Inglesi, for I believe!"

He would have fallen to the ground, but Dicky and the Soudanese caught him and carried him down to the bank, while the crowd scuttled from the boat, and Fielding made ready to bear the dying man to Abdallah —a race against death.

Fielding brought Mustapha Kali to Abdallah in time to die there, and buried him with his fathers; and Dicky stayed behind to cleanse Kalamoun with perchloride and limewash.

The story went abroad and travelled fast, and the words of Mustapha Kali, oft repeated, became as the speech of a holy man; and the people no longer hid their dead, but brought them to the *Amenhotep*.

This was the beginning of better things; the disease was stayed.

And for all the things that these men did—Fielding Bey and Donovan Pasha—they got naught but an Egyptian ribbon to wear on the breast and a laboured censure from the Administration for overrunning the budget allowance.

Dicky, however, seemed satisfied, for Fielding's little barque of life had not gone down "On the reef of Norman's woe." Mrs. Henshaw felt so also when she was told all, and she disconcerted Dicky by bursting into tears.

"Why those tears?" said Dicky to Fielding afterwards; "I wasn't eloquent."

FIELDING HAD AN ORDERLY

I

His legs were like pipe-stems, his body was like a board, but he was straight enough, not unsoldierly, nor so bad to look at when his back was on you; but when he showed his face you had little pleasure in him. It seemed made of brown putty, the nose was like india-rubber, and the eyes had that dull sullen look of a mongrel got of a fox-terrier and a bull-dog. Like this sort of mongrel also his eyes turned a brownish-red when he was excited.

You could always tell when something had gone wrong with Ibrahim the Orderly, by that curious dull glare in his eyes. Selamlik Pasha said to Fielding that it was hashish; Fielding said it was a cross breed of Soudanese and Fellah. But little Dicky Donovan said it was something else, and he kept his eye upon Ibrahim. And Dicky, with all his faults, could screw his way from the front of a thing to the back thereof like no other civilised man you ever knew. But he did not press his opinions upon Fielding, who was an able administrator and a very clever fellow also, with a genial habit of believing in people who served him: and that is bad in the Orient.

As an orderly Ibrahim was like a clock; stiff in his gait as a pendulum, regular as a minute. He had no tongue for gossip either, so far as Fielding knew. Also, five times a day he said his prayers—an unusual thing for a Gippy soldier-servant; for as the Gippy's rank increases he soils his knees and puts his forehead in the dust with discretion. This was another reason why Dicky suspected him.

It was supposed that Ibrahim could not speak a word of English; and he seemed so stupid, he looked so blank, when English was spoken, that Fielding had no doubt the English language was a Tablet of Abydos to him. But Dicky was more wary, and waited. He could be very patient and simple, and his delicate face seemed as innocent as a girl's when he said to Ibrahim one morning: "Ibrahim, brother of scorpions, I'm going to teach you English!" and, squatting like a Turk on the deck of the *Amenhotep*, the stern-wheeled tub which Fielding called a steamer, he began to teach Ibrahim.

"Say 'Good morning, kind sir!'" he drawled.

No tongue was ever so thick, no throat so guttural, as Ibrahim's when he obeyed this command. That was why suspicion grew the more in the mind of Dicky. But he made the Gippy say "Good morning, kind sir!" over and over again. Now, it was a peculiar thing that Ibrahim's pronunciation grew worse every time; which goes to show that a combination of Soudanese and Fellah doesn't make a really clever villain. Twice, three times, Dicky gave him other words and phrases to say, and practice made Ibrahim more perfect in error.

Dicky suddenly enlarged the vocabulary thus: "An old man had three sons: one was a thief, another a rogue, and the worst of them all was a soldier. But the soldier died first!"

As he said these words he kept his eyes fixed on Ibrahim in a smiling, juvenile sort of way; and he saw the colour—the brownish-red colour—creep slowly into Ibrahim's eyes. For Ibrahim's father had three sons: and certainly one was a thief, for he had been a tax-gatherer; and one was a rogue, for he had been the servant of a Greek money-lender; and Ibrahim was a soldier!

Ibrahim was made to say these words over and over again, and the red fire in his eyes deepened as Dicky's face lighted up with what seemed a mere mocking pleasure, a sort of impish delight in teasing, like that of a madcap girl with a yokel. Each time Ibrahim said the words he jumbled them worse than before. Then Dicky asked him if he knew what an old man was, and Ibrahim said no. Dicky said softly in Arabic that the old man was a fool to have three such sons—a thief, and a rogue, and a soldier. With a tender patience he explained what a thief and a rogue were, and his voice was curiously soft when he added, in Arabic, "And the third son was like you, Mahommed—and he died first."

Ibrahim's eyes gloomed under the raillery—under what he thought the cackle of a detested Inglesi with a face like a girl, of an infidel who had a tongue that handed you honey on the point of a two-edged sword. In his heart he hated this slim small exquisite as he had never hated Fielding. His eyes became like little pots of simmering blood, and he showed his teeth in a hateful way, because he was sure he should glut his hatred before the moon came full.

Little Dicky Donovan knew, as he sleepily told Ibrahim to go, that for months the Orderly had listened to the wholesome but scathing talk of Fielding and himself on the Egyptian Government, and had reported it to those whose tool and spy he was.

That night, the stern-wheeled tub, the *Amenhotep*, lurched like a turtle on its back into the sands by Beni Hassan. Of all the villages of Upper Egypt, from the time of Rameses, none has been so bad as Beni Hassan. Every ruler of Egypt, at one time or another, has raided

it and razed it to the ground. It was not for pleasure that Fielding sojourned there.

This day, and for three days past, Fielding had been abed in his cabin with a touch of Nilotic fever. His heart was sick for Cairo, for he had been three months on the river; and Mrs. Henshaw was in Cairo—Mrs. Henshaw, the widow of Henshaw of the Buffs, who lived with her brother, a stone's-throw from the Esbekieh Gardens. Fielding longed for Cairo, but Beni Hassan intervened. The little man who worried Ibrahim urged him the way his private inclinations ran, but he was obdurate: duty must be done.

Dicky Donovan had reasons other than private ones for making haste to Cairo. During the last three days they had stopped at five villages on the Nile, and in each place Dicky, who had done Fielding's work on inspection for him, had been met with unusual insolence from the Arabs and Fellaheen, officials and others; and the prompt chastisement he rendered with his riding-whip in return did not tend to ease his mind, though it soothed his feelings. There had been flying up the river strange rumours of trouble down in Cairo, black threats of rebellion—of a seditious army in the palm of one man's hand. At the *cafés* on the Nile, Dicky himself had seen strange gatherings, which dispersed as he came on them. For, somehow, his smile had the same effect as other men's frowns.

This evening he added a whistle to his smile as he made his inspection of the engine-room and the galley and every corner of the *Amenhotep*, according to his custom. What he whistled no man knew, not even himself. It was ready-made. It might have been a medley, but, as things happened, it was an overture;

and by the eyes, the red-litten windows of the mind of Mahommed Ibrahim, who squatted beside the Yorkshire engineer at the wheel, playing mankalah, he knew it was an overture.

As he went to his cabin he murmured to himself, "There's the devil to pay: now I wonder who pays?"

Because he was planning things of moment, he took a native drum down to Fielding's cabin, and made Fielding play it, native fashion, as he thrummed his own banjo and sang the airy ballad "The Dragoons of Enniskillen." Yet Dicky was thinking hard all the time.

Now there was in Beni Hassan a gházeeyeh, a dancing-woman of the Ghawázee tribe, of whom, in the phrase of the moralists, the less said the better. What her name was does not matter. She was well-to-do. She had a husband who played the kemengeh for her dancing. She had as good a house as the Omdah, and she had two female slaves.

Dicky Donovan was of that rare type of man who has the keenest desire to know all things, good or evil, though he was fastidious when it came to doing them. He had a gift of keeping his own commandments. If he had been a six-footer and riding eighteen stone—if he hadn't been, as Fielding often said, so "damned finnicky," he might easily have come a cropper. For, being absolutely without fear, he did what he listed and went where he listed. An insatiable curiosity was his strongest point, save one. If he had had a headache—though he never had—he would at once have made an inquiry into the various kinds of headache possible to mortal man, with pungent deductions from his demonstrations. So it was that when he first saw a dancing-

girl in the streets of Cairo he could not rest until by circuitous routes he had traced the history of dancing-girls back through the ages, through Greece and the ruby East, even to the days when the beautiful bad ones were invited to the feasts of the mighty, to charm the eyes of King Seti or Queen Hatsu.

He was an authority on the tribe of the Ghawázee, proving, to their satisfaction and his own, their descent from the household of Haroon al Rashid. He was, therefore, welcome among them. But he had found also, as many another wise man has found in " furrin parts," that your greatest safety lies in bringing tobacco to the men and leaving the women alone. For, in those distant lands, a man may sell you his nuptial bed, but he will pin the price of it to your back one day with the point of a lance or the wedge of a hatchet.

Herebefore will be found the reason why Dicky Donovan—twenty-five and no moustache, pink-cheeked and rosy-hearted, and " no white spots on his liver "—went straight, that particular night, to the house of the chief dancing-girl of Beni Hassan for help in his trouble. From her he had learned to dance the dance of the Ghawázee. He had learned it so that, with his insatiable curiosity, his archæological instinct, he should be able to compare it with the Nautch dance of India, the Hula-Hula of the Sandwich Islanders, the Siva of the Samoans.

A half-hour from the time he set his foot in Beni Hassan two dancing girls issued from the house of the gházeeyeh, dressed in shintiyán and muslin tarah, anklets and bracelets, with gold coins about the forehead—and one was Dicky Donovan. He had done the rare thing: he had trusted absolutely that class of woman who is

called a "rag" in that far country, and a "drab" in ours. But he was a judge of human nature, and judges of human nature know you are pretty safe to trust a woman who never trusts, no matter how bad she is, if she has no influence over you. He used to say that the better you are and the worse she is, the more you can trust her. Other men may talk, but Dicky Donovan knows.

What Dicky's aunt, the Dowager Lady Carmichael, would have said to have seen Dicky flaunting it in the clothes of a dancing-girl through the streets of vile Beni Hassan, must not be considered. None would have believed that his pink-and-white face and slim hands and staringly white ankles could have been made to look so boldly handsome, so impeachable. But henna in itself seems to have certain qualities of viciousness in its brownish-red stain, and Dicky looked sufficiently abandoned. The risk was great, however, for his Arabic was too good and he had to depend upon the gházeeyeh's adroitness, on the peculiar advantage of being under the protection of the mistress of the house as large as the Omdah's.

From one *café* to another they went. Here a snake-charmer gathered a meagre crowd about him; there an 'A'l'meh, or singing-girl, lilted a ribald song; elsewhere hashish-smokers stretched out gaunt, loathsome fingers towards them; and a Shá'er recited the romance of Aboo Zeyd. But Dicky noticed that none of the sheikhs, none of the great men of the village, were at these *cafés*; only the very young, the useless, the licentious, or the decrepit. But by flickering fires under the palm-trees were groups of men talking and gesticulating; and now and then an Arab galloped through the street, the point of his long lance shining. Dicky felt a secret, like a

troubled wind, stirring through the place, a movement not explainable by his own inner tremulousness.

At last they went to the largest *café* beside the Mosque of Hoseyn. He saw the Sheikh-el-beled sitting on his bench, and, grouped round him, smoking, several sheikhs and the young men of the village. Here he and the gházeeyeh danced. Few noticed them; for which Dicky was thankful; and he risked discovery by coming nearer the circle. He could, however, catch little that they said, for they spoke in low tones, the Sheikh-el-beled talking seldom, but listening closely.

The crowd around the *café* grew. Occasionally an Arab would throw back his head and cry, "*Alláhu Akbar!*" Another drew a sword and waved it in the air. Some one in front of him whispered one startling word to a camel-driver.

Dicky had got his cue. To him that whisper was as loud and clear as the "*Lá iláha illa-lláh!*" called from the top of a mosque. He understood Ibrahim the Orderly now; he guessed all: rebellion, anarchy, massacre. A hundred thoughts ran through his head: what was Ibrahim's particular part in the swaggering scheme was the first and the last of them.

Ibrahim answered for himself, for at that moment he entered the burning circle. A movement of applause ran round, then there was sudden silence. The dancing-girls were bid to stop their dancing, were told to be gone. The gházeeyeh spat at them in an assumed anger, and said that none but swine of Beni Hassan would send a woman away hungry. And because the dancing-girl has power in the land, the Sheikh-el-beled waved his hand towards the *café*, hastily calling the name of a favourite dish. Eyes turned unconcernedly towards the brown

clattering ankles of the two as they entered the *café* and seated themselves immediately behind where the Sheikh-el-beled squatted. Presently Dicky listened to as sombre a tale as ever was told in the darkest night. The voice of the tale-teller was that of Ibrahim, and the story: that the citadel at Cairo was to be seized, that the streets of Alexandria were to be swept free of Europeans, and that every English official between Cairo and Kordofan was to be slain. Mahommed Ibrahim, the spy, who knew English as well as Donovan Pasha knew Arabic, was this very night to kill Fielding Bey with his own hand!

This night was always associated in Dicky's mind with the memory of stewed camel's-meat. At Ibrahim's words he turned his head from the rank steam, and fingered his pistol in the loose folds of his Arab trousers. The dancing-girl saw the gesture and laid a hand upon his arm.

"Thou art one against a thousand," she whispered; "wait till thou art one against one."

He dipped his nose in the camel-stew, for some one poked a head in at the door—every sense in him was alert, every instinct alive.

"To-night," said Mahommed Ibrahim, in the hoarse gutturals of the Bishareen, "it is ordered that Fielding Bey shall die—and by my hand, mine own, by the mercy of God! And after Fielding Bey the clean-faced ape that cast the evil eye upon me yesterday, and bade me die. 'An old man had three sons,' said he, the infidel dog! 'one was a thief, another a rogue, and the third a soldier—and the soldier died first.' 'A camel of Bagdad,' he called me. Into the belly of a dead camel shall he go, be sewn up like a cat's liver in a pudding, and cast into the Nile before God gives to-morrow a sun."

Dicky pushed away the camel-stew. "It is time to go," he said.

The gházeeyeh rose with a laugh, caught Dicky by the hand, sprang out among the Arabs, and leapt over the head of the village barber, calling them all "useless, sodden greybeards, with no more blood than a Nile shad, poorer than monkeys, beggars of Beni Hassan!" Taking from her pocket a handful of quarter-piastres, she turned on her heels and tossed them among the Arabs with a contemptuous laugh. Then she and Dicky disappeared into the night.

II

When Dicky left her house, clothed in his own garments once more, but the stains of henna still on his face and hands and ankles, he pressed into the gházeeyeh's hand ten gold-pieces. She let them fall to the ground.

"Love is love, effendi," she said. "Money do they give me for what is no love. She who gives freely for love takes naught in return but love, by the will of God!" And she laid a hand upon his arm.

"There is work to do!" said Dicky; and his hand dropped to where his pistol lay—but not to threaten her. He was thinking of others.

"To-morrow," she said; "to-morrow for that, effendi," and her beautiful eyes hung upon his.

"There's corn in Egypt, but who knows who'll reap it to-morrow? And I shall be in Cairo to-morrow."

"I also shall be in Cairo to-morrow, O my lord and master!" she answered.

"God give you safe journey," answered Dicky, for he knew it was useless to argue with a woman. He

was wont to say that you can resolve all women into the same simple elements in the end.

Dicky gave a long perplexed whistle as he ran softly under the palms towards the *Amenhotep*, lounging on the mud bank. Then he dismissed the dancing-girl from his mind, for there was other work to do. How he should do it he planned as he opened the door of Fielding's cabin softly, and saw him in a deep sleep.

He was about to make haste on deck again, where his own nest was, when, glancing through the window, he saw Mahommed Ibrahim stealing down the bank to the boat's side. He softly drew-to the little curtain of the cabin window, leaving only one small space through which the moonlight streamed. This ray of light fell just across the door through which Mahommed Ibrahim would enter. The cabin was a large one, the bed was in the middle. At the head was a curtain slung to protect the sleeper from the cold draughts of the night.

Dicky heard a soft footstep in the companionway, then before the door. He crept behind the curtain. Mahommed Ibrahim was listening without. Now the door opened very gently, for this careful Orderly had oiled the hinges that very day. The long flabby face, with the venomous eyes, showed in the streak of moonlight. Mahommed Ibrahim slid inside, took a step forward and drew a long knife from his sleeve. Another move towards the sleeping man, and he was near the bed; another, and he was beside it, stooping over. . . . . !

Now, a cold pistol suddenly thrust in your face is disconcerting, no matter how well laid your plans. It was useless for the Orderly to raise his hand! a bullet is quicker than the muscles of the arm and the stroke of a knife.

The two stood silent an instant, the sleeping man peaceful between them. Dicky made a motion of his head towards the door. Mahommed Ibrahim turned. Dicky did not lower his pistol as the Orderly, obeying, softly went as he had softly come. Out through the doorway, up the stairs, then upon the moonlit deck, the cold muzzle of the pistol at the head of Mahommed Ibrahim.

Dicky turned now, and faced him, the pistol still pointed.

Then Mahommed Ibrahim spoke. "*Malaish!*" he said. That was contempt. It was Mahommedan resignation; it was the inevitable. "*Malaish*—no matter!" he said again; and "no matter" was in good English.

Dicky's back was to the light, the Orderly's face in the full glow of it. Dicky was standing beside the wire communicating with the engineer's cabin. He reached out his hand and pulled the hook. The bell rang below. The two above stood silent, motionless, the pistol still levelled.

Holgate, the young Yorkshire engineer, pulled himself up to the deck two steps of the ladder at a time.

"Yes, sir," he said, coming forward quickly, but stopping short when he saw the levelled pistol.

"Drop the knife, Ibrahim," said Dicky in a low voice. The orderly dropped the knife.

"Get it, Holgate," said Dicky; and Holgate stooped and picked it up. Then he told Holgate the story in a few words. The engineer's fingers tightened on the knife.

"Put it where it will be useful, Holgate," said Dicky. Holgate dropped it inside his belt.

"Full steam, and turn her nose to Cairo. No time

to lose!" He had told Holgate earlier in the evening to keep up steam.

He could see a crowd slowly gathering under the palm-trees between the shore and Beni Hassan. They were waiting for Mahommed Ibrahim's signal.

Holgate was below, the sailors were at the cables.

"Let go ropes!" Dicky called.

A minute later the engine was quietly churning away below; two minutes later the ropes were drawn in; half a minute later still the nose of the *Amenhotep* moved in the water. She backed from the Nile mud, lunged free.

"An old man had three sons; one was a thief, another a rogue, and the worst of the three was a soldier—and he dies first! What have you got to say before you say your prayers?" said Dicky to the Orderly.

"*Mafish!*" answered Mahommed Ibrahim, moveless. "*Mafish*—nothing!" And he said "nothing" in good English.

"Say your prayers then, Mahommed Ibrahim," said Dicky in that voice like a girl's; and he backed a little till he rested a shoulder against the binnacle.

Mahommed Ibrahim turned slightly till his face was towards the east. The pistol now fell in range with his ear. The Orderly took off his shoes, and, standing with his face towards the moon, and towards Mecca, he murmured the *fatihah* from the Koran. Three times he bowed, afterwards he knelt and touched the deck with his forehead three times also. Then he stood up.

"Are you ready?" asked Dicky.

"Water!" answered Mahommed Ibrahim in English.

Dicky had forgotten that final act of devotion of the good Mahommedan. There was a filter of Nile-water

near. He had heard it go drip—drip, drip—drip, as Mahommed Ibrahim prayed.

"Drink," he said, and pointed with his finger.

Mahommed Ibrahim took the little tin cup hanging by the tap, half filled it, drank it off, and noiselessly put the cup back again. Then he stood with his face towards the pistol.

"The game is with the English all the time," said Dicky softly.

"*Malaish!*" said Mahommed.

"Jump," said Dicky.

One instant's pause, and then, without a sound, Ibrahim sprang out over the railing into the hard-running current, and struck out for the shore. The *Amenhotep* passed him. He was in the grasp of a whirlpool so strong that it twisted the *Amenhotep* in her course. His head spun round like a water-fly, and out of the range of Dicky's pistol he shrieked to the crowd on the shore. They burst from the palm-trees and rushed down to the banks with cries of rage, murder, and death; for now they saw him fighting for his life. But the *Amenhotep's* nose was towards Cairo, and steam was full on, and she was going fast. Holgate below had his men within range of a pistol too. Dicky looked back at the hopeless fight as long as he could see.

Down in his cabin Fielding Bey slept peacefully, and dreamed of a woman in Cairo.

THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

In spite of being an Englishman with an Irish name and a little Irish blood, Dicky Donovan had risen high in the favour of the Khedive, remaining still the same Dicky Donovan he had always been—astute but incorruptible. While he was favourite he used his power wisely, and it was a power which had life and death behind it. When therefore, one day, he asked permission to take a journey upon a certain deadly business of justice, the Khedive assented to all he asked, but fearing for his safety, gave him his own ring to wear and a line under his seal.

With these Dicky set forth for El Medineh in the Fayoum, where his important business lay. As he cantered away from El Wasta, out through the green valley and on into the desert where stands the Pyramid of Maydoum, he turned his business over and over in his mind, that he might study it from a hundred sides. For miles he did not see a human being: only a caravan of camels in the distance, some vultures overhead, and the smoke of the train behind him by the great river. Suddenly, however, as he cantered over the crest of a hill, he saw in the desert-trail before him a foot-traveller, who turned round hastily, almost nervously, at the sound of his horse's feet.

It was the figure of a slim, handsome youth, perhaps twenty, perhaps thirty. The face was clean-shaven, and though the body seemed young and the face was unlined, the eyes were terribly old. Pathos and fanaticism were in the look, so Dicky Donovan thought. He

judged the young Arab to be one of the Holy Men who live by the gifts of the people, and who do strange acts of devotion; such as sitting in one place for twenty years, or going without clothes, or chanting the Koran ten hours a day, or cutting themselves with knives. But this young man was clothed in the plain blue calico of the fellah, and on his head was a coarse brown fez of raw wool. Yet round the brown fez was a green cloth, which may only be worn by one who has been a pilgrimage to Mecca.

"*Nehar-ak koom sâid*—God be with you!" said Dicky in Arabic.

"*Nehar-ak sâid, effendi*—God prosper thy greatness!" was the reply, in a voice as full as a man's, but as soft as a woman's—an unusual thing in an Arab.

"Have you travelled far?" asked Dicky.

"From the Pyramid of Maydoum, effendi," was the quiet reply.

Dicky laughed. "A poor tavern; cold sleeping there, Mahommed."

"The breath of Allah is warm," answered the Arab.

Dicky liked the lad's answer. Putting a hand in his saddle-bag, he drew out a cake of dourha bread and some onions—for he made shift to live as the people lived, lest he should be caught unawares some time, and die of the remembrance of too much luxury in the midst of frugal fare.

"Plenty be in your home, Mahommed!" he said, and held out the bread and onions.

The slim hands came up at once and took the food, the eyes flashed a strange look at Dicky. "God give you plenty upon your plenty, effendi, and save your soul

and the souls of your wife and children, if it be your will, effendi!"

"I have no wife, praise be to God," said Dicky; "but if I had, her soul would be saved before my own, or I'm a Dutchman!" Then something moved him further, and he unbuttoned his pocket—for there really was a button to Dicky's pocket. He drew out a five-piastre piece, and held it down to the young Arab. "For the home-coming after Mecca," he said, and smiled.

The young Arab drew back. "I will eat thy bread, but no more, effendi," he said quickly.

"Then you're not what I thought you were," said Dicky under his breath, and, with a quick good-bye, struck a heel into the horse's side and galloped away towards El Medineh.

In El Medineh Dicky went about his business—a bitter business it was, as all Egypt came to know. For four days he pursued it, without halting and in some danger, for, disguise himself as he would in his frequenting of the *cafés*, his Arabic was not yet wholly perfect. Sometimes he went about in European dress, and that was equally dangerous, for in those days the Fayoum was a nest of brigandage and murder, and an European—an infidel dog—was fair game.

But Dicky had two friends: the village barber, and the moghassil of the dead, or body-washer, who were in his pay; and for the moment they were loyal to him. For his purpose, too, they were the most useful of mercenaries: for the duties of a barber are those of a *valet-de-chambre*, a doctor, registrar and sanitary officer combined; and his coadjutor in information and gossip was

the moghassil, who sits and waits for some one to die, as a raven on a housetop waits for carrion.

Dicky was patient, but as the days went by and nothing came of all his searching, his lips tightened and his eyes became more restless. One day, as he sat in his doorway twisting and turning things in his mind, with an ugly knot in his temper, the barber came to him quickly.

"Saadat el basha, I have found the Englishwoman, by the mercy of Allah!"

Dicky looked at Achmed Hariri for a moment without stirring or speaking; his lips relaxed, his eyes softening with satisfaction.

"She is living?"

"But living, saadat el basha."

Dicky started to his feet. "At the mudirieh?"

"At the house of Azra, the seller of sherbet, saadat el basha."

"When did she leave the mudirieh?"

"A week past, effendi."

"Why did she leave?"

"None knows save the sister of Azra, who is in the harem. The Englishwoman was kind to her when she was ill, and she gave her aid."

"The Mudir has not tried to find her?"

"Will the robber make a noise if the horse he has stolen breaks free, effendi?"

"Why has she not flown the place?"

"Effendi, shall the broken-winged bird fly!"

"She is ill?" He caught the barber by the arm.

"As a gazelle with an arrow in its breast."

Dicky's small hand tightened like a vice on the barber's thin arm. "And he who sped the arrow, Achmed Hariri?"

Achmed Hariri was silent.

"Shall he not die the death?"

Achmed Hariri shrank back.

Dicky drew from his pocket a paper with seals, and held it up to the barber's eyes. The barber stared, drew back, salaamed, bowed his head, and put a hand upon his turban as a slave to his master.

"Show me the way, Mahommed," said Dicky, and stepped out.

Two hours later Dicky, with pale face, and fingers clutching his heavy riding-whip fiercely, came quickly towards the bridge where he must cross to go to the mudirieh. Suddenly he heard an uproar and saw men hurrying on in front of him. He quickened his footsteps, and presently came to a house on which had been freshly painted those rough, staring pictures of "accidents by flood and field," which Mecca pilgrims paint on their houses like hatchments, on their safe return—proclamation of their prestige.

Presently he saw in the grasp of an infuriated crowd the Arab youth he had met in the desert, near the Pyramid of Maydoum. Execrations, murderous cries arose from the mob. The youth's face was deathly pale, but it had no fear. Upon the outskirts of the crowd hung women, their robes drawn half over their faces, crying out for the young man's death. Dicky asked the ghaffir standing by what the youth had done.

"It is no youth, but a woman," he answered: "the last wife of the Mudir. In a man's clothes——"

He paused, for the head sheikh of El Medineh, with two Ulema, entered the throng. The crowd fell back. Presently the Sheikh-el-beled mounted the mastaba by

the house, the holy men beside him, and pointing to the Arab youth, spoke loudly:

"This sister of scorpions and crocodiles has earned a thousand deaths. She was a daughter of a pasha, and was lifted high. She was made the wife of Abbas Bey, our Mudir. Like a wanton beast she cut off her hair, clothed herself as a man, journeyed to Mecca, and desecrated the tomb of Mahomet, who hath written that no woman, save her husband of his goodness bring her, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

He paused, and pointed to the rough pictures on the walls. "This morning, dressed as a man, she went in secret to the sacred purple pillar for barren women in the Mosque of Amrar, by the Bahr-el-Yusef, and was found there with her tongue to it. What shall be done to this accursed tree in the garden of Mahomet?"

"Cut it down!" shouted the crowd; and the Ulema standing beside the Sheikh-el-beled said, "Cut down for ever the accursed tree."

"To-morrow, at sunrise, she shall die as a blasphemer, this daughter of Sheitan the Evil One," continued the holy men.

"What saith the Mudir?" cried a tax-gatherer.

"The Mudir himself shall see her die at sunrise," said the chief of the Ulema.

Shouts of hideous joy went up. At that moment the woman's eyes met Dicky's, and they suddenly lighted. Dicky picked his way through the crowd, and stood before the Sheikh-el-beled. With an Arab salute, he said:

"I am, as you know, my brother, a friend of our master the Khedive, and I carry his ring on my finger."

The Sheikh-el-beled salaamed as Dicky held up his

hand, and a murmur ran through the crowd. "What you have done to the woman is well done, and according to your law she should die. But will ye not let her tell her story, so it may be written down, that when perchance evil voices carry the tale to the Khedive he shall have her own words for her condemnation?"

The Ulema looked at the Sheikh-el-beled, and he made answer: "It is well said; let the woman speak, and her words be written down."

"Is it meet that all should hear?" asked Dicky, for he saw the look in the woman's eyes. "Will she not speak more freely if we be few?"

"Let her be taken into the house," said the Sheikh-el-beled. Turning to the holy men, he added, "Ye and the Inglesi shall hear."

When they were within the house, the woman was brought in and stood before them.

"Speak," said the Sheikh-el-beled to her roughly.

She kept her eyes fixed on Dicky as she spoke:

"For the thing I have done I shall answer. I had no joy in the harem. I gave no child to my lord, though often I put my tongue to the sacred pillar of porphyry in the Mosque of Amrar. My lord's love went from me. I was placed beneath another in the harem. . . . Was it well? Did I not love my lord?—was the sin mine that no child was born to him? It is written that a woman's prayers are of no avail, that her lord must save her at the last, if she hath a soul to be saved. . . . Was the love of my lord mine?" She paused, caught a corner of her robe and covered her face.

"Speak on, O woman of many sorrows," said Dicky.

She partly uncovered her face, and spoke again:

"In the long night, when he came not and I was

lonely and I cried aloud, and only the jackals beyond my window answered, I thought and thought. My brain was wild, and at last I said, 'Behold, I will go to Mecca as the men go, and when the fire rises from the Prophet's tomb, bringing blessing and life to all, it may be that I shall have peace, and win heaven as men win it. For behold! what is my body but a man's body, for it beareth no child. And what is my soul but a man's soul, that dares to do this thing!' . . ."

"Thou art a blasphemer," broke in the chief of the Ulema.

She gave no heed, but with eyes on Dicky continued:

"So I stole forth in the night with an old slave, who was my father's slave, and together we went to Cairo. . . . Behold, I have done all that Dervishes do: I have cut myself with knives, I have walked the desert alone, I have lain beneath the feet of the Sheikh's horse when he makes his ride over the bodies of the faithful, I have done all that a woman may do and all that a man may do, for the love I bore my lord. Now judge me as ye will, for I may do no more."

When she had finished, Dicky turned to the Sheikh-el-beled and said, "She is mad. Behold, Allah hath taken her wits! She is no more than a wild bird in the wilderness."

It was his one way to save her; for among her people the mad, the blind, and the idiot are reputed highly favoured of God.

The Sheikh-el-beled shook his head. "She is a blasphemer. Her words are as the words of one who holds the sacred sword and speaks from the high pulpit," he said sternly; and his dry lean face hungered like a wolf's for the blood of the woman.

"She has blasphemed," said the Ulema.

Outside the house, quietness had given place to murmuring, murmuring to a noise, and a noise to a tumult, through which the yelping and howling of the village dogs streamed.

"She shall be torn to pieces by wild dogs," said the Sheikh-el-beled.

"Let her choose her own death," said Dicky softly; and, lighting a cigarette, he puffed indolently into the face of the Arab sitting beside him. For Dicky had many ways of showing hatred, and his tobacco was strong. The sea has its victims, so had Dicky's tobacco.

"The way of her death shall be as we choose," said the Sheikh-el-beled, his face growing blacker, his eyes enlarging in fury

Dicky yawned slightly, his eyes half closed. He drew in a long breath of excoriating caporal, held it for a moment, and then softly ejected it in a cloud which brought water to the eyes of the Sheikh-el-beled. Dicky was very angry, but he did not look it. His voice was meditative, almost languid as he said:

"That the woman should die seems just and right—if by your kindness and the mercy of God ye will let me speak. But this is no court, it is no law: it is mere justice ye would do."

"It is the will of the people," the chief of the Ulema interjected. "It is the will of Mussulmans, of our religion, of Mahomet," he said.

"True, O beloved of Heaven, who shall live for ever," said Dicky, his lips lost in an odorous cloud of "ordinaire." "But there be evil tongues and evil hearts; and if some son of liars, some brother of foolish tales,

should bear false witness upon this thing before our master the Khedive, or his gentle Mouffetish——"

"His gentle Mouffetish" was scarcely the name to apply to Sadik Pasha, the terrible right-hand of the Khedive. But Dicky's tongue was in his cheek.

"There is the Mudir," said the Sheikh-el-beled: "he hath said that the woman should die, if she were found."

"True; but if the Mudir should die, where would be his testimony?" said Dicky, and his eyes half closed, as though in idle contemplation of a pleasing theme. "Now," he added, still more negligently, "I shall see our master the Khedive before the moon is full. Were it not well that I should be satisfied for my friends?"

Dicky smiled, and looked into the eyes of the Mussulmans with an incorruptible innocence; he ostentatiously waved the cigarette smoke away with the hand on which was the ring the Khedive had given him.

"Thy tongue is as the light of a star," said the bright-eyed Sheikh-el-beled; "wisdom dwelleth with thee."

The woman took no notice of what they said. Her face showed no sign of what she thought; her eyes were unwaveringly fixed on the distance.

"She shall choose her own death," said the Sheikh-el-beled; "and I will bear word to the Mudir."

"I dine with the Mudir to-night; I will carry the word," said Dicky; "and the death that the woman shall die will be the death he will choose."

The woman's eyes came like lightning from the distance, and fastened upon his face. Then he said, with the back of his hand to his mouth to hide a yawn:

"The manner of her death will please the Mudir. It must please him."

"What death does this vulture among women choose to die?" said the Sheikh-el-beled.

Her answer could scarcely be heard in the roar and the riot surrounding the hut.

A half-hour later Dicky entered the room where the Mudir sat on his divan drinking his coffee. The great man looked up in angry astonishment—for Dicky had come unannounced—and his fat hands twitched on his breast, where they had been folded. His sallow face turned a little green. Dicky made no salutation.

"Dog of an infidel!" said the Mudir under his breath.

Dicky heard, but did no more than fasten his eyes upon the Mudir for a moment.

"Your business?" said the Mudir.

"The business of the Khedive," answered Dicky, and his riding-whip tapped his leggings. "I have come about the English girl." As he said this, he lighted a cigarette slowly, looking, as it were casually, into the Mudir's eyes.

The Mudir's hand ran out like a snake towards a bell on the cushions, but Dicky shot forward and caught the wrist in his slim, steel-like fingers. There was a hard glitter in his eyes as he looked down into the eyes of the master of a hundred slaves, the ruler of a province.

"I have a command of the Khedive to bring you to Cairo, and to kill you if you resist," said Dicky. "Sit still—you had better sit still," he added, in a soothing voice behind which was a deadly authority.

The Mudir licked his dry, colourless lips, and gasped. for he might make an outcry, but he saw that Dicky would be quicker. He had been too long enervated by indulgence to make a fight.

"You'd better take a drink of water," said Dicky, seating himself upon a Louis Quinze chair, a relic of civilisation brought by the Mudir from Paris into an antique barbarism. Then he added sternly, "What have you done with the English girl?"

"I know nothing of an English girl," answered the Mudir.

Dicky's words were chosen as a jeweller chooses stones for the ring of a betrothed woman. "You had a friend in London, a brother of hell like yourself. He, like you, had lived in Paris; and that is why this thing happened. You had your own women slaves from Kordofan, from Circassia, from Syria, from your own land. It was not enough: you must have an English girl in your harem. You knew you could not buy her, you knew that none would come to you for love, neither the drab nor the lady. None would lay her hand in that of a leprous dog like yourself. So you lied, your friend lied for you—sons of dogs of liars all of you, beasts begotten of beasts! You must have a governess for your children, forsooth! And the girl was told she would come to a palace. She came to a stable, and to shame and murder."

Dicky paused.

The fat, greasy hands of the Mudir fumbled towards the water-glass. It was empty, but he raised it to his lips and drained the air.

Dicky's eyes fastened him like arrows. "The girl died an hour ago," he continued. "I was with her when she died. You must pay the price, Abbas Bey." He paused.

There was a moment's silence, and then a voice, dry like that of one who comes out of chloroform, said, "What is the price?"

The little touch of cruelty in Dicky's nature, working with a sense of justice and an ever ingenious mind, gave a pleasant quietness to the inveterate hate that possessed him. He thought of another woman—of her who was to die to-morrow.

"There was another woman," said Dicky: "one of your own people. She was given a mind and a soul. You deserted her in your harem—what was there left for her to think of but death? She had no child. But death was a black prospect; for you would go to heaven, and she would be in the outer darkness; and she loved you! A woman's brain thinks wild things. She fled from you, and went the pilgrimage to Mecca. She did all that a man might do to save her soul, according to Mahomet. She is to die to-morrow by the will of the people—and the Mudir of the Fayoum."

Dicky paused once more. He did not look at the Mudir, but out of the window towards the Bahr-el-Yusef, where the Fellaheen of the Mudir's estate toiled like beasts of burden with the barges and the great khiassas laden with cotton and sugar-cane.

"God make your words merciful!" said the Mudir. "What would you have me do?"

"The Khedive, our master, has given me your life," said Dicky. "I will make your end easy. The woman has done much to save her soul. She buries her face in the dust because she hath no salvation. It is written in the Koran that a man may save the soul of his wife. You have your choice: will you come to Cairo to Sadik Pasha, and be crucified like a bandit of your own province, or will you die with the woman in the Birket-el-Kurun to-morrow at sunrise, and walk with her into the Presence and save her soul, and pay the price of the English life?"

"*Malaish!*" answered the Mudir. "Water," he added quickly. He had no power to move, for fear had paralysed him. Dicky brought him a goolah of water.

The next morning, at sunrise, a strange procession drew near to the Birket-el-Kurun. Twenty ghaffirs went ahead with their naboots; then came the kavasses, then the Mudir mounted, with Dicky riding beside, his hand upon the holster where his pistol was. The face of the Mudir was like a wrinkled skin of lard, his eyes had the look of one drunk with hashish. Behind them came the woman, and now upon her face there was only a look of peace. The distracted gaze had gone from her eyes, and she listened without a tremor to the voices of the wailers behind.

Twenty yards from the lake, Dicky called a halt—Dicky, not the Mudir. The soldiers came forward and put heavy chains and a ball upon the woman's ankles. The woman carried the ball in her arms to the very verge of the lake, by the deep pool called "The Pool of the Slaughtered One."

Dicky turned to the Mudir. "Are you ready?" he said.

"*Inshallah!*" said the Mudir.

The soldiers made a line, but the crowd overlapped the line. The Fellaheen and Bedouins looked to see the Mudir summon the Ulema to condemn the woman to shame and darkness everlasting. But suddenly Abbas Bey turned and took the woman's right hand in his left.

Her eyes opened in an ecstasy. "O lord and master, I go to heaven with thee!" she said, and threw herself f ward.

Without a sound the heavy body of the Mudir lurched

forward with her, and they sank into the water together. A cry of horror and wonder burst from the crowd.

Dicky turned to them, and raised both hands.

"In the name of our Master the Khedive!" he cried.

Above the spot where the two had sunk floated the red tarboosh of the Mudir of the Fayoum.

A TREATY OF PEACE

I

MR. WILLIAM SOWERBY, lieutenant in the Mounted Infantry, was in a difficult situation, out of which he was little likely to come with credit—or his life. It is a dangerous thing to play with fire, so it is said; it is a more dangerous thing to walk rough-shod over Oriental customs. A man ere this has lost his life by carrying his shoe-leather across the threshold of a mosque, and this sort of thing William Sowerby knew, and of his knowledge he heeded. He did not heed another thing, however; which is, that Oriental ladies are at home to but one man in all the world, and that your acquaintance with them must be modified by a mush-rabieh screen, a yashmak, a shaded, fast-driving brougham, and a hideous eunuch.

William Sowerby had not been long in Egypt, and he had not travelled very far or very wide in the Orient; and he was an impressionable and harmless young man whose bark and bite were of equal value. His ideas

of a harem were inaccurately based on the legend that it is necessarily the habitation of many wives and concubines and slaves. It had never occurred to him that there might be a sort of family life in a harem ; that a pasha or a bey might have daughters as well as wives ; or might have only one wife—which is less expensive ; and that a harem is not necessarily the heaven of a voluptuary, an elysium of rosy-petalled love and passion. Yet he might have known it all, and should have known it all, if he had taken one-fifth of the time to observe and study Egyptian life which he gave to polo and golf and racquets. Yet even if he had known the life from many standpoints he would still have cherished illusions, for, as Dicky Donovan, who had a sense of satire, said in some satirical lines, the cherished amusement of more than one dinner-table :

" Oh, William William Sowerby
Has come out for to see
The way of a *bimbashi*
With Egyptian Cavalree.
But William William Sowerby
His eyes do open wide
When he sees the Pasha's chosen
In her " bruggam " and her pride.
And William William Sowerby,
He has a tender smile,
Which will bring him in due season
To the waters of the Nile—
And the cheery crocodile ! "

It can scarcely be said that Dicky was greatly surprised when Mahommed Yeleb, the servant of " William William Sowerby," came rapping at his door one hot noonday with a dark tale of disaster to his master. This was the heart of the thing—A languid, bored, in-

viting face, and two dark curious eyes in a slow-driving brougham out on the Pyramid Road; William's tender, answering smile; his horse galloping behind to within a discreet distance of the palace, where the lady alighted, shadowed by the black-coated eunuch. The same thing for several days, then a device to let the lady know his name, then a little note half in Arabic, half in French, so mysterious, so fascinating—William Sowerby walked on air! *Then*, a nocturnal going forth, followed by his frightened servant, who dared not give a warning, for fear of the ever-ready belt which had scarred his back erstwhile; the palace wall, an opening door, the figure of his master passing through, the closing gate; and then no more—nothing more, for a long thirty-six hours!

Mahommed Yeleb's face would have been white if his skin had permitted—it was a sickly yellow; his throat was guttural with anxiety, his eyes furtive and strained, for was he not the servant of his master, and might not he be marked for the early tomb if, as he was sure, his master was gone that way?

"*Aiwa, effendi*, it is sure," he said to Dicky Donovan, who never was surprised at anything that happened. He had no fear of anything that breathed; and he kept his place with Ismail because he told the truth pitilessly, was a poorer man than the Khedive's barber, and a beggar beside the Chief Eunuch; also, because he had a real understanding of the Oriental mind, together with a rich sense of humour.

"What is sure?" said Dicky to the Arab with assumed composure; for it was important that he should show neither anxiety nor astonishment, lest panic seize the man, and he rush abroad with grave scandal streaming from his mouth, and the English fat be in the

Egyptian fire for ever. "What is sure, Mahommed Yeleb?" repeated Dicky, lighting a cigarette idly.

"It is as God wills; but as the tongue of man speaks, so is he—Bimbashi Sowerby my master—swallowed up these thirty-six hours in the tomb prepared for him by Selamlik Pasha."

Dicky felt his eyelids twitch, and he almost gave a choking groan of anxiety, for Selamlik Pasha would not spare the invader of his harem; an English invader would be a delicate morsel for his pitiless soul. He shuddered inwardly at the thought of what might have occurred, what might occur still.

If Sowerby had been trapped and was already dead, the knowledge would creep through the bazaars like a soft wind of the night, and all the Arab world would rejoice that a cursed Inglesi, making the unpardonable breach of their code, had been given to the crocodiles, been smothered, or stabbed, or tortured to death with fire. And, if it were so, what could be done? Could England make a case of it, avenge the life of this young fool who had disgraced her in the eyes of the world, of the envious French in Cairo, and of that population of the palaces who hated her because Englishmen were the enemies of backsheesh, corruption, tyranny, and slavery? And to what good the attempt? Exists the personal law of the Oriental palace, and who may punish any there save by that personal law? What outside law shall apply to anything that happens within those mysterious walls? Who shall bear true witness, when the only judge is he whose palace it is? Though twenty nations should unite to judge, where might proof be found?—Inside the palace, where all men lie and bear false witness?

If Sowerby was not dead, then resort to force? Go to Selamlik Pasha the malignant, and demand the young officer? How easy for Selamlik Pasha to deny all knowledge of his existence! Threaten Selamlik —and raise a Mahommedan crusade? That would not do.

Say nought, then, and let Sowerby, who had thrust his head into the jaws of the tiger, get it out as best he might, or not get it out, as the case might be?

Neither was that possible to Dicky Donovan, even if it were the more politic thing to do, even if it were better for England's name. Sowerby was his friend, as men of the same race are friends together in a foreign country. Dicky had a poor opinion of Sowerby's sense or ability, and yet he knew that if he were in Sowerby's present situation—living or dead—Sowerby would spill his blood a hundred useless times, if need be, to save him.

He had no idea of leaving Sowerby where he was, if alive; or of not avenging him one way or another if dead. But how that might be he was not on the instant sure. He had been struck as with a sudden blindness by the news, though he showed nothing of this to Mahommed Yeleb. His chief object was to inspire the Arab with confidence, since he was probably the only man outside Selamlik's palace who knew the thing as yet. It was likely that Selamlik Pasha would be secret till he saw whether Sowerby would be missed and what inquiry was made for him. It was important to Dicky, in the first place, that this Mahommed Yeleb be kept quiet, by being made a confidant of his purposes so far as need be, an accomplice in his efforts whatever they should be. Kept busy, with a

promise of success and backsheesh when the matter was completed, the Arab would probably remain secret. Besides, as Dicky said to himself, while Mahommed kept his head, he would not risk parading himself as the servant of the infidel who had invaded the pasha's harem. Again, it was certain that he had an adequate devotion to his master, who had given him as many ha'pence as kicks, and many cast-off underclothes and cigarettes.

Thus it was that before Dicky had arranged what he should do, though plans were fusing in his brain, he said to Mahommed Yeleb seriously, as befitting the crime Sowerby had committed—evenly, as befitted the influence he wished to have over the Arab: "Keep your tongue between your teeth, Mahommed. We will pull him through all right."

"But, effendi, whom God honour, for greatness is in all thy ways, friend of the Commander of the Faithful as thou art—but, saadat el basha, if he be dead?"

"He is not dead. I know it by the eyes of my mind, Mahommed—yea, by the hairs of my head, he is not dead!"

"Saadat el basha, thou art known as the truth-teller and the incorruptible—this is the word of the Egyptian and of the infidel concerning thee. I kiss thy feet. For it is true he hath deserved death, but woe be to him by whom his death cometh! And am I not his servant to be with him while he hath life, and hath need of me? If thou sayest he is alive, then is he alive, and my heart rejoices."

Dicky scarcely heard what the Arab said, for the quick conviction he had had that Sowerby was alive was based on the fact, suddenly remembered, that

Selamlik Pasha, had only returned from the Fayoum this very morning, and that therefore he could not as yet have had any share in the fate of Sowerby, but had probably been sent for by the Chief Eunuch. It was but an hour since that he had seen Selamlik Pasha driving hastily towards his palace.

His mind was instantly made up, his plans formed to his purpose.

"Listen, Mahommed," he said to the Arab. "Listen to each word I say, as though it were the prayer to take thee into Paradise. Go at once to Selamlik Pasha. Carry this ring the Khedive gave to me—he will know it. Do not be denied his presence. Say that it is more than life and death; that it is all he values in the world. Once admitted, say these words—'*Donovan Pasha knows all, and asks an audience at midnight in this palace. Until that hour Donovan Pasha desires peace. For is it not the law, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth? Is not a market a place to buy and sell?*'"

Four times did Dicky make the Arab repeat the words after him, till they ran like water from his tongue, and dismissed him upon the secret errand with a handful of silver.

Immediately the Arab had gone, Dicky's face flushed with excitement, in the reaction from his lately assumed composure. For five minutes he walked up and down, using language scarcely printable, reviling Sowerby, and setting his teeth in anger. But he suddenly composed himself, and, sitting down, stared straight before him for a long time without stirring a muscle. There was urgent need of action, but there was more urgent need of his making no mistake, of his doing the *one thing*

necessary, for Sowerby could only be saved in one way, not many.

It was useless to ask the Khedive's intervention—Ismail dared not go against Selamlik in this. Whatever was done must be done between Selamlik Pasha the tigerish libertine and Richard Donovan, the little man who, at the tail end of Ismail's reign, was helping him hold things together against the black day of reckoning, "prepared for the devil and all his angels," as Dicky had said to Ismail on this very momentous morning, when warning him of the perils in his path. Now Dicky had been at war with Selamlik ever since, one day long ago on the Nile, he and Fielding had thwarted his purposes; and Dicky had earned the Pasha's changeless hatred by calling him "Trousers"—for this name had gone up and down throughout Egypt as a doubtful story travels, drawing easy credit everywhere. Those were the days when Dicky was irresponsible. Of all in Egypt who hated him most, Selamlik Pasha was the chief. But most people hated Selamlik, so the world was not confounded by the great man's rage, nor did they dislike Dicky simply because the Pasha chose to do so. Through years Selamlik had built up his power, until even the Khedive feared him, and would have been glad to tie a stone round his neck and drop him into the Nile. But Ismail could no longer do this sort of thing without some show of reason: Europe was hanging on his actions, waiting for the apt moment to depose him.

All this Dicky knew, and five minutes from the time Mahommed Yeleb had left him he was on his way to Ismail's Palace, with his kavass behind him, cool and ruminating as usual, now answering a salute in Turkish

fashion, now in English, as Egyptians or Europeans passed him.

II

There was one being in the Khedive's palace whose admiration for Dicky was a kind of fetish, and Dicky loathed him. Twice had Dicky saved this Chief Eunuch's life from Ismail's anger, and once had he saved his fortune—not even from compassion, but out of his inherent love of justice. As Dicky had said: "Let him die for what he has done, not for something he has not done. Send him to the devil with a true bill of crime."

So it was that Dicky, who shrank from the creature whom Ministers and Pashas fawned upon—so powerful was his unique position in the palace—went straight to him now to get his *quid-pro-quo*, his measure for measure.

The tall, black-coated, smooth-faced creature, silent and watchful and lean, stepped through the doorway with the footfall of a cat. He slid forward, salaamed to the floor—Dicky wondered how a body could open and shut so like the blade of a knife—and, catching Dicky's hand, kissed it.

"May thy days be watered with the dew of heaven, saadat el basha," said the Chief Eunuch.

"Mine eyes have not seen since thy last withdrawal," answered Dicky blandly, in the high-flown Oriental way.

"Thou hast sent for me. I am thy slave."

"I have sent for thee, Mizraim. And thou shalt prove thyself, once for all, whether thy hand moves as thy tongue speaks."

"To serve thee I will lay down my life—I will blow

it from me as the wind bloweth the cotton flower. Have I not spoken thus since the Feast of Beiram, now two years gone ? "

Dicky lowered his voice. " Doth Mustapha Bey, that son of the he-wolf Selamlik Pasha, still follow the carriage of the Khedive's favourite, and hang about the walls, and seek to corrupt thee with gold, Mahommed Mizraim ? "

" Saadat el basha, but for thy word to wait, the Khedive had been told long since."

" It is the sport to strike when the sword cuts with the longest arm, O son of Egypt ! "

The face of Mizraim was ugly with the unnatural cruelty of an unnatural man. " Is the time at hand, saadat el basha ? "

" You hate Selamlik Pasha ? "

" As the lion the jackal."

Dicky would have laughed in scorn if he might have dared—this being to class himself with lions ! But the time was not fit for laughter. " And the son of Selamlik Pasha, the vile Mustapha Bey ? " he asked

" I would grind him like corn between the stones ! Hath he not sent messages by the women of the bazaar to the harem of my royal master, to whom God give glory in heaven ! Hath he not sought to enter the harem as a weasel crawls under a wall ? Hath he not sought to steal what I hoard by a mighty hand and the eye of an eagle for Ismail the Great ? Shall I love him more than the dog that tears the throat of a gazelle ? "

The gesture of cruelty he made was disgusting to the eyes of Dicky Donovan, but he had in his mind the peril to Sowerby, and he nodded his head in careless approval, as it were.

"Then, Mizraim, thou son of secrecy and keeper of the door, take heed to what I say, and for thine honour and my need do as I will. Thou shalt to-night admit Mustapha Bey to the harem — at the hour of nine o'clock!"

"Saadat el basha!" The Eunuch's face was sickly in its terrified wonder.

"Even so. At nine."

"But, saadat——"

"Bring him secretly, even to the door of the favourite's room; then, have him seized and carried to a safe place till I send for him."

"Ah, saadat el basha——" The lean face of the creature smiled, and the smile was not nice to see.

"Let no harm be done him, but await my messenger, Mahommed Yeleb, and whatsoever he bids you to do, do it; for I speak."

"Ah, saadat el basha, you would strike Selamlik Pasha so—the great beast, the black river pig, the serpent of the slime . . .!"

"You will do this thing, Mizraim?"

"I shall lure him, as the mirage the pilgrim. With joy I will do this, and a hundred times more."

"Even if I asked of thee the keys of the harem?" said Dicky grimly.

"Effendi, thou wouldst not ask. All the world knows thee. For thee the harem hath no lure. Thou goest not by dark ways to deeds for thine own self. Thou hast honour. Ismail himself would not fear thee."

"See, thou master of many, squeak not thy voice so high. Ismail will take thy head and mine, if he discovers to-night's business. Go then with a soft

tread, Mizraim. Let thy hand be quick on his mouth, and beware that no one sees ! "

III

Upon the stroke of midnight Dicky entered the room where Selamlik Pasha awaited him with a malicious and greasy smile, in which wanton cruëlty was uppermost. Selamlik Pasha knew well the object of this meeting. He had accurately interpreted the message brought by Mahommed Yeleb. He knew his power; he knew that the Englishman's life was in his hands to do with what he chose, for the law of the harem which defies all outside law was on his side. But here he was come to listen to Dicky Donovan, the arrogant little favourite, pleading for the life of the English boy who had done the thing for which the only penalty was death.

Dicky showed no emotion as he entered the room, but salaamed, and said: " Your excellency is prompt. Honour and peace be upon your excellency ! "

" Honour and the bounty of the stars be upon thee, saadat el basha ! "

There was a slight pause, in which Dicky seated himself, lighted a cigarette, and summoned a servant, of whom he ordered coffee. They did not speak meantime, but Dicky sat calmly, almost drowsily, smoking, and Selamlik Pasha sat with greasy hands clasping and unclasping, his yellow eyes fixed on Dicky with malevolent scrutiny.

When the coffee was brought, the door had been shut, and Dicky had drawn the curtain across, Selamlik Pasha said: " What great affair brings us together here, sadaat el basha ? "

"The matter of the Englishman you hold a prisoner, excellency."

"It is painful, but he is dead," said the Pasha, with a grimace of cruelty.

Dicky's eyes twitched slightly, but he answered with coolness, thrusting his elbow into the cushions and smoking hard: "But, no, he is not dead. Selamlik Pasha has as great an instinct for a bargain as for revenge. Also Selamlik Pasha would torture before he kills. Is it not so?"

"What is your wish?"

"That the man be set free, excellency."

"He has trespassed. He has stolen his way into the harem. The infidel dog has defiled the house of my wives."

"He will marry the woman, with your permission, excellency. He loved her—so it would seem."

"He shall die—the dog of an infidel!"

Dicky was now satisfied that Sowerby was alive, and that the game was fairly begun. He moved slowly towards his purpose.

"I ask his life, as a favour to me. The Khedive honours me, and I can serve you betimes, excellency."

"You called me 'Trousers,' and all Egypt laughed," answered the Pasha malignantly.

"I might have called you worse, but I did not. You may call me what you will—I will laugh."

"I will call you a fool for bringing me here to laugh at you, who now would kiss Selamlik Pasha's shoe. I would he were your brother. I would tear out his finger-nails, pierce his eyes, burn him with hot irons, pour boiling oil over him and red cinders down his throat—if he were your brother."

"Remember I am in the confidence of the Khedive, pasha."

"Ismail! What dare he do? Every Egyptian in the land would call him infidel. Ismail would dare do nothing." His voice was angrily guttural with triumph.

"England will ask the price of the young man's life of you, excellency."

"England dare not move: is thy servant a fool? Every Mussulman in the land would raise the green flag—the Jehad would be upon ye!"

"He is so young. He meant no ill. The face of your daughter drew him on. He did not realise his crime—nor its penalty."

"It is a fool's reasoning. Because he was a stranger and an infidel, so has he been told of dark things done to those who desecrate our faith."

"Had he been an Egyptian or a Turk——"

"I should slay him, were he Ismail himself. Mine own is mine own, as Mahomet hath said. The man shall die—and who shall save him? Not even the Sultan himself."

"There are concessions in the Fayoum; you have sought them long."

"Bah!"

"There is the Grand Cordon of the Mejidîeh; there is a way to it, excellency."

"The man's blood!"

"There is a high office to be vacant soon, near to the person of the Khedive, with divers moneys and loans——"

"To see Donovan Pasha cringe and beg is better."

"There is that mercy which one day you may have to ask for yourself or for your own——"

"The fool shall die. And who shall save him?"

"Well, I will save him," said Dicky, rising slowly to his feet.

"Pish! Go to the Khedive with the tale, and I will kill the man within the hour, and tell it abroad, and we shall see where Donovan Pasha will stand to-morrow. The Khedive is not stronger than his people—and there are the French and others!" He spat upon the floor at Dicky's feet. "Go, tell the Khedive what you will, dog of an Englishman, son of a dog with a dog's heart!"

Dicky took a step forward, with an ominous flare of colour in his cheek. There was a table between him and Selamlik Pasha. He put both hands upon it, and leaning over said in a voice of steel:

"So be it, then. Shall I go to the Khedive and say that this night Mustapha Bey, eldest and chosen son of Selamlik Pasha, the darling of his fat heart, was seized by the Chief Eunuch, the gentle Mizraim, in the harem of His Highness? Shall I tell him that, Trousers?"

As Dicky spoke, slowly, calmly, Selamlik Pasha turned a greenish-yellow, his eyes started from his head, his hand chafed the air.

"Mustapha Bey—Khedive's harem!" he stammered in a husky voice.

"By the gentle Mizraim, I said," answered Dicky. "Is Mustapha Bey's life worth an hour's purchase? Is Selamlik Pasha safe?"

"Is—is he dead?" gasped the cowardly Egyptian, furtively glancing towards the door. Suddenly he fell back fainting, and Dicky threw some water in his face, then set a cup of it beside him.

"Drink, and pull yourself together, if you would save yourself," said Dicky.

"Save—save myself," said Selamlik Pasha, recovering; then, with quick suspicion, and to gain time, added quickly, "Ah, it is a trick! He is not a prisoner—you lie!"

"I have not a reputation for lying," rejoined Dicky quietly. "But see!" he added; and throwing open a door, pointed to where the Chief Eunuch stood with Mahommed Yeleb, Mustapha Bey gagged and bound between them. Dicky shut the door again, as Selamlik Pasha shrank back among the cushions, cowardice incarnate.

"You thought," said Dicky with a soft fierceness, "you thought that I would stoop to bargain with Selamlik Pasha and not know my way out of the bargain? You thought an Englishman would *beg*, even for a life, of such as you! You thought me, Donovan Pasha, such a fool!"

"Mercy, excellency!" said Selamlik, spreading out his hands.

Dicky laughed. "You called me names, Selamlik—a dog, and the son of a dog with a dog's heart. Was it wise?"

"Is there no way? Can no bargain be made?"

Dicky sat down, lighting a cigarette.

"To save a scandal in Egypt," answered Dicky drily, "I am ready to grant you terms."

"Speak—excellency."

"The life of the Englishman for the life of your son and your own. Also, the freedom of the six Circassian slaves whom you house now at Beni Hassan, ready to bring to your palace. Also, for these slaves two hundred Turkish pounds apiece. Also, your written word that you will bring no more slaves into Egypt. Is the bargain fair?"

"Mizraim may still betray us," said Selamlik, trembling, with relief, but yet apprehensive.

"Mizraim is in my power—he acts for me," said Dicky. "Whose life is safe here save my own?"

"*Malaish!* It shall be as your will is, excellency," answered Selamlik Pasha, in a shaking voice; and he had time to wonder even then how an Englishman could so outwit an Oriental. It was no matter how Mustapha Bey, his son, was lured; he had been seized in the harem, and all truth can be forsworn in Egypt, and the game was with this Donovan Pasha.

"Send to your palace, commanding that the Englishman be brought here," said Dicky. Selamlik Pasha did so.

Sowerby of the Mounted Infantry was freed that night, and the next day Dicky Donovan had six Circassian slaves upon his hands. He passed them over to the wife of Fielding Bey with whom he had shared past secrets and past dangers.

Selamlik Pasha held his peace in fear; and the Khedive and Cairo never knew why there was a truce to battle between Dicky Donovan and that vile Pasha called Trousers.

AT THE MERCY OF TIBERIUS

In a certain year when Dicky Donovan was the one being in Egypt who had any restraining influence on the Khedive, he suddenly asked leave of absence to

visit England. Ismail granted it with reluctance, chiefly because he disliked any interference with his comforts, and Dicky was one of them—in some respects the most important.

"My friend," he said half petulantly to Dicky, as he tossed the plans for a new palace to his secretary and dismissed him, "are you not happy here? Have you not all a prince can give?"

"Highness," answered Dicky, "I have kith and kin in England. Shall a man forget his native land?"

The Khedive yawned, lighted a cigarette, and murmured through the smoke: "*Inshallah!* It might be pleasant—betimes."

"I have your Highness' leave to go?" asked Dicky.

"May God preserve your head from harm!" answered Ismail in farewell salutation, and, taking a ring from his finger set with a large emerald, he gave it to Dicky. "Gold is scarce in Egypt," he went on, "but there are jewels still in the palace—and the Khedive's promises-to-pay with every money-barber of Europe!" he added, with a cynical sneer, and touched his forehead and his breast courteously as Dicky retired.

Outside the presence Dicky unbuttoned his coat like an Englishman again, and ten minutes later flung his tarboosh into a corner of the room; for the tarboosh was the sign of official servitude, and Dicky was never the perfect official. Initiative was his strong point, independence his life; he loathed the machine of ystem in so far as he could not command it; he revolted at being a cog in the wheel. Ismail had discovered this, and Dicky had been made a kind of confidential secretary who seldom wrote a line. By his influence with Ismail he had even more power at last than the chief

eunuch or the *valet-de-chambre,* before whom the highest officials bowed low. He was hated profoundly by many of the household, cultivated by certain of the Ministers, fawned upon by outsiders, trusted by the Khedive, and entirely believed in by the few Englishmen and Frenchmen who worked for decent administration faithfully, but without hope and sometimes with nausea.

It was nausea that had seized upon Dicky at last, nausea and one other thing; the spirit of adventure, an inveterate curiosity. His was the instinct of the explorer, his feet were the feet of the Wandering Jew. He knew things behind closed doors by instinct; he was like a thought-reader in the sure touch of discovery; the Khedive looked upon him as occult almost, and laughed in the face of the Mouffetish Sadik when he said some evil things of Dicky. Also, the Khedive told the Mouffetish that if any harm came to Dicky there would come harm to him. The Khedive loved to play one man off against another, and the death of Sadik or the death of Dicky would have given him no pain, if either seemed necessary. For the moment, however, he loved them both after his fashion: for Sadik lied to him, and squeezed the land dry, and flailed it with kourbashes for gold for his august master and himself; and Dicky told him the truth about everything—which gave the Khedive knowledge of how he really stood all round.

Dicky told the great spendthrift the truth about himself; but he did not tell the truth when he said he was going to England on a visit to his kith and kin. Seized by the most irresistible curiosity of his life, moved by a desire for knowledge, that a certain plan in his mind

might be successfully advanced he went south and east, not west and north.

For four months Egypt knew him not. For four months the Khedive was never told the truth save by European financiers, when truths were obvious facts; for four long months never saw a fearless or an honest eye in his own household. Not that it mattered in one sense; but Ismail was a man of ideas, a sportsman of a sort, an Iniquity with points; a man who chose the broad way because it was easier, not because he was remorseless. At the start he meant well by his people, but he meant better by himself; and not being able to satisfy both sides of the equation, he satisfied one at the expense of the other and of that x quantity otherwise known as Europe. And Europe was heckling him; the settling of accounts was near. Commissioners had been sent to find where were the ninety millions he had borrowed. Only Ismail and Sadik the Mouffetish, once slave and foster-brother, could reply. The Khedive could not long stave off the evil day when he must "pay the debt of the lobster," and Sadik give account of his stewardship. Meanwhile, his mind turned to the resourceful little Englishman with the face of a girl and the tongue of an honest man.

But the day Dicky had set for his return had come and gone, and Dicky himself had not appeared. With a grim sort of satisfaction, harmonious with his irritation, Ismail went forth with his retinue to the Dôsah, the gruesome celebration of the Prophet's birthday, following on the return of the pilgrimage from Mecca. At noon he entered his splendid tent at one side of a square made of splendid tents, and looked out listlessly, yet sourly, upon the vast crowds assembled—upon the

lines of banners, the red and green pennons embroidered with phrases from the Koran. His half-shut, stormy eyes fell upon the tent of the chief of the dervishes, and he scarcely checked a sneer, for the ceremony to be performed appealed to nothing in him save a barbaric instinct, and this barbaric instinct had been veneered by French civilisation and pierced by the criticism of one honest man. His look fell upon the long pathway whereon, for three hundred yards, matting had been spread. A field of the cloth of blood; for on this cloth dervishes back from Mecca, mad with fanaticism and hashish, would lie packed like herrings, while the Sheikh of the Dôsah rode his horse over their bodies, a pavement of human flesh and bone.

As the Khedive looked, his lip curled a little, for he recalled what Dicky Donovan had said about it; how he had pleaded against it, describing sickening wounds and pilgrims done to death. Dicky had ended his brief homily by saying—"And isn't that a pretty dish to set before a king!" To Ismail's amusement; for he was no good Mussulman, no Mussulman at all, in fact, save in occasional violent prejudices got of inheritance and association.

To-day, however, Ismail was in a bad humour with Dicky and with the world. He had that very morning flogged a soldier senseless with his own hand; he had handed over his favourite Circassian slave to a ruffian Bey, who would drown her or sell her within a month; and he had dishonoured his own note of hand for fifty thousand pounds to a great merchant who had served him not wisely but too well. He was not taking his troubles quietly, and woe be to the man or woman who crossed him this day! Tiberius was an hungered

for a victim to his temper. His *entourage* knew it well, and many a man trembled that day for his place, or his head, or his home. Even Sadik Pasha the Mouffetish —Sadik, who had four hundred women slaves dressed in purple and fine linen—Sadik, whose kitchen alone cost him sixty thousand pounds a year, the price of whose cigarette ash-trays was equal to the salary of an English consul—even Sadik, foster-brother, panderer, the Barabbas of his master, was silent and watchful to-day.

And Sadik, silent and watchful and fearful, was also a dangerous man. As Sadik's look wandered over the packed crowds, his faded eyes scarce realising the bright-coloured garments of the men, the crimson silk tents and banners and pennons, the gorgeous canopies and trappings and plumes of the approaching dervishes, led by the Amir-el-Haj or Prince of the Pilgrims, returned from Mecca, he wondered what lamb for the sacrifice might be provided to soothe the mind of his master. He looked at the matting in the long lane before them, and he knew that the bodies which would lie here presently, yielding to the hoofs of the Sheikh's horse, were not sufficient to appease the rabid spirit tearing at the Khedive's soul. He himself had been flouted by one ugly look this morning, and one from Ismail was enough.

It did his own soul good now to see the dervish fanatics foaming at the mouth, their eyes rolling, as they crushed glass in their mouths and ate it, as they swallowed fire, as they tore live serpents to pieces with their teeth and devoured them, as they thrust daggers and spikes of steel through their cheeks, and gashed their breasts with knives and swords. He watched the effect of it on the Khedive; but Ismail had seen all this before, and he took it in the stride. This was not sufficient.

Sadik racked his brain to think who in the palace or in official life might be made the scapegoat, upon whom the dark spirit in the heart of the Khedive might be turned. His mean, colourless eyes wandered inquiringly over the crowd, as the mad dervishes, half-naked, some with masses of dishevelled hair, some with no hair at all, bleached, haggard, moaning and shrieking, threw themselves to the ground on the matting, while attendants pulled off their slippers and placed them under their heads, which lay face downwards. At last Sadik's eyes were arrested by a group of ten dervishes, among them one short in stature and very slight, whose gestures were not so excited as those of his fellows. He also saw that one or two of the dervishes watched the slight man covertly.

Five of the little group suddenly threw themselves upon the matting, adding their bodies to the highway of bones and flesh. Then another and another did the same, leaving three who, with the little man, made a fanatical chorus. Now the three near the little man began to cut themselves with steel and knives, and one set fire to his jibbeh and began to chew the flames. Yet the faces of all three were turned towards the little man, who did no more than shriek and gesticulate and sway his body wildly up and down. He was tanned and ragged and bearded and thin, and there was a weird brilliance in his eyes, which watched his companions closely.

So fierce and frenzied were the actions of those with him, that the attention of the Khedive was drawn; and Sadik, looking at his master, saw that his eyes also were intently fixed on the little man. At that instant the little man himself caught the eye of the Khedive,

and Ismail involuntarily dropped a hand upon his sword, for some gesture of this dervish, some familiar turn of his body, startled him. Where had he seen the gesture before? Who was this pilgrim who did not cut and wound himself like his companions? Suddenly the three mad dervishes waved their hands towards the matting and shrieked something into his ear. The little man's eyes shot a look at the Khedive. Ismail's ferret eye fastened on him, and a quick fear of assassination crossed his face as the small dervish ran forward with the other three to the lane of human flesh, where there was still a gap to be filled, and the cry rose up that the Sheikh of the Dôsah had left his tent and was about to begin his direful ride.

Sadik the Mouffetish saw the Khedive's face, and suddenly said in his ear: "Shall my slave seize him, Highness whom God preserve?"

The Khedive did not reply, for at that moment he recognised the dervish; and now he understood that Dicky Donovan had made the pilgrimage to Mecca with the Mahmal caravan; that an infidel had desecrated the holy city; and that his Englishman had lied to him. His first impulse was to have Dicky seized and cast to the crowd, to be torn to pieces. Dicky's eyes met his without wavering—a desperate yet resolute look—and Ismail knew that the little man would sell his life dearly, if he had but half a chance. He also saw in Dicky's eyes the old honesty, the fearless straightforwardness—and an appeal too, not humble, but still eager and downright. Ismail's fury was great, for the blue devils had him by the heels that day; but on the instant he saw the eyes of Sadik the Mouffetish, and their cunning, cruelty and soulless depravity, their present search for

a victim to his master's bad temper, acted at once on Ismail's sense of humour. He saw that Sadik half suspected something, he saw that Dicky's three companions suspected, and his mind was made up on the instant—things should take their course: he would not interfere. He looked Dicky squarely in the face, and Dicky knew that the Khedive's glance said as plainly as words:

"Fool of an Englishman, go on! I will not kill you, but I will not save you. The game is in your hands alone. You can only avert suspicion by letting the Sheikh of the Dôsah make a bridge of your back. Mecca is a jest you must pay for."

With the wild cry of a dervish fanatic Dicky threw himself down, his head on his arms, and the vengeful three threw themselves down beside him. The attendants pulled off their slippers and thrust them under their faces, and now the *sáis* of the Sheikh ran over their bodies lightly, calling out for all to lie still—the Sheikh was coming on his horse.

Dicky weighed his chances with a little shrinking, but with no fear: he had been in imminent danger for four long months, he was little likely to give way now. The three men lying beside him had only suspected him for the last three days, and during that time they had never let him out of their sight. What had roused their suspicion he did not know: probably a hesitation concerning some Arab custom or the pronunciation of some Arab word—the *timbre* of the Arab voice was rougher and heavier. There had been no chance of escape during these three days, for his three friends had never left his side, and now they were beside him. His chances were not brilliant. If he escaped from the iron hoofs of the Sheikh's horse, if the weight did not

crush the life out of his small body, there was a fair chance; for to escape unhurt from the Dôsah is to prove yourself for ever a good Mussulman, who has undergone the final test and is saved evermore by the promise of the Prophet. But even if he escaped unhurt, and the suspicions of his comrades were allayed, what would the Khedive do? The Khedive had recognised him, and had done nothing—so far. Yet Ismail, the chief Mussulman in Egypt, should have thrown him like a rat to the terriers! Why he had acted otherwise he was not certain: perhaps to avoid a horrible sensation at the Dôsah and the outcry of the newspapers of Europe; perhaps to have him assassinated privately; perhaps, after all, to pardon him. Yet this last alternative was not reasonable, save from the standpoint that Ismail had no religion at all.

Whatever it was to be, his fate would soon come, and in any case he had done what only one European before him had done: he had penetrated to the tomb of Mahomet at Mecca. Whatever should come, he had crowded into his short life a thousand unusual and interesting things. His inveterate curiosity had served him well, and he had paid fairly for the candles of his game. He was ready.

Low moans came to his ears. He could hear the treading hoofs of the Sheikh's horse. Nearer and nearer the frightened animal came; the shout of those who led the horse was in his ears: "Lie close and still, O brothers of giants!" he heard the ribs of a man but two from his break,—he heard the gurgle in the throat of another into whose neck the horse's hoof had sunk. He braced himself and drew his breast close to the ground.

He could hear now the heavy breathing of the Sheikh of the Dôsah, who, to strengthen himself for his ride, had taken a heavy dose of hashish. The toe of the Arab leading the horse touched his head, then a hoof was on him—between the shoulders, pressing—pressing down, the iron crushing into the flesh—down—down—down, till his eyes seemed to fill with blood. Then another hoof—and this would crush the life out of him. He gasped, and nerved himself. The iron shoe came down, slipped a little, grazed his side roughly, and sank between himself and the dervish next him, who had shrunk away at the last moment.

A mad act; for the horse stumbled, and in recovering himself plunged forward heavily. Dicky expected the hind hoofs to crush down on his back or neck, and drew in his breath; but the horse, excited by the cries of the people, drove clear of him, and the hind hoofs fell with a sickening thud on the back and neck of the dervish who had been the cause of the disaster.

Dicky lay still for a moment to get his breath, then sprang to his feet lightly, cast a swift glance of triumph towards the Khedive, and turned to the dervishes who had lain beside him. The man who had shrunk away from the horse's hoofs was dead, the one on the other side was badly wounded, and the last, bruised and dazed, got slowly to his feet.

"God is great," said Dicky to him: "I have no hurt, Mahommed."

"It is the will of God. Extolled be Him who created thee!" answered the dervish, all suspicion gone, and admiration in his eyes, as Dicky cried his *Allah Kerim*—"God is bountiful!"

A kavass touched Dicky on the arm.

"His Highness would speak with you," he said.

Dicky gladly turned his back on the long lane of frantic immolation and the sight of the wounded and dead being carried away. Coming over to the Khedive he salaamed, and kneeling on the ground touched the toe of Ismail's boot with his forehead.

Ismail smiled, and his eyes dropped with satisfaction upon the prostrate Dicky. Never before had an Englishman done this, and that Dicky of all Englishmen should do it gave him an ironical pleasure which chased his black humour away.

"It is written that the true believer shall come unscathed from the hoofs of the horse. Thou hast no hurt, Mahommed?"

"None, Highness, whose life God preserve," said Dicky in faultless Arabic, with the eyes of Sadik upon him searching his mystery.

"May the dogs bite the heart of thine enemies! What is thy name?" said Ismail.

"Rekab, so God wills, Highness."

"Thine occupation?"

"I am a poor scribe, Highness," answered Dicky with a dangerous humour, though he had seen a look in the Khedive's face which boded only safety.

"I have need of scribes. Get you to the Palace of Abdin, and wait upon me at sunset after prayers," said Ismail.

"I am the slave of your Highness. Peace be on thee, O Prince of the Faithful!"

"A moment, Mahommed. Has thou wife or child?"

"None, Highness."

"Nor kith nor kin?" Ismail's smile was grim.

"They be far away, beyond the blessed rule of your Highness."

"Thou wilt desire to return to them. How long wilt thou serve me?" asked Ismail slowly.

"Till the two Karadh-gatherers return," answered Dicky, quoting the old Arabic saying which means for ever, since the two Karadh-gatherers who went to gather the fruit of the sant and the leaves of the selem never returned.

"So be it," said the Khedive, and, rising, waved Dicky away. "At sunset."

"At sunset after prayers, Highness," answered Dicky, and was instantly lost in the throng which now crowded upon the tent to see the Sheikh of the Dôsah arrive to make obeisance to Ismail.

That night at sunset, Dicky, once more clothed and shaven and well appointed, but bronzed and weather-beaten, was shown into the presence of the Khedive, whose face showed neither pleasure nor displeasure.

"You have returned from your kith and kin in England?" said Ismail, with malicious irony.

"I have no excuses, Highness. I have done what I set out to do."

"If I had given you to death as an infidel who had defiled the holy tomb and the sacred city——"

"Your Highness would have lost a faithful servant," answered Dicky. "I took my chances."

"Even now it would be easy to furnish—accidents for you."

"But not wise, Highness, till my story is told."

"Sadik Pasha suspects you."

"I suspect Sadik Pasha," answered Dicky.

"Of what?" said Ismail, starting. "He is true to me—Sadik is true to me?" he urged, with a shudder; for if Sadik was false in this crisis, with Europe clamouring for the payment of debts and for reforms, where should he look for faithful knavery?

"He will desert your Highness in the last ditch. Let me tell your Highness the truth, in return for saving my life. Your only salvation lies in giving up to the creditors of Egypt your own wealth, and Sadik's, which is twice your own."

"Sadik will not give it up."

"Is not Ismail the Khedive master in Egypt?"

"Sit down and smoke," said Ismail eagerly, handing Dicky a cigarette.

When Dicky left the Khedive at midnight, he thought he saw a better day dawning for Egypt. He felt also that he had done the land a good turn in trying to break the shameless contract between Ismail and Sadik the Mouffetish; and he had the Khedive's promise that it should be broken, given as Ismail pinned on his breast the Order of the Mejidîeh.

He was not, however, prepared to hear of the arrest of the Mouffetish before another sunset, and then of his hugger-mugger death, of which the world talks to this day; though the manner of it is only known to a few, and to them it is an ugly memory.

ALL THE WORLD'S MAD

I

Up to thirty-two years of age David Hyam, of the village of Framley, in Staffordshire, was not a man of surprises. With enough of this world's goods to give him comfort of body and suave gravity of manner, the figure he cut was becoming to his Quaker origin and profession. No one suspected the dynamic possibilities of his nature till a momentous day in August, in the middle Victorian period, when news from Bristol came that an uncle in chocolate had died and left him the third of a large fortune, without condition or proviso.

This was of a Friday, and on the Saturday following David did his first startling act: he offered marriage to Faith Marlowe, the only Quaker girl in Framley who had ever dared to discard the poke bonnet even for a day, and who had been publicly reproved for laughing in meeting—for Mistress Faith had a curious, albeit demure and suggestive, sense of humour; she was, in truth, a kind of sacred minuet in gray. Faith had promptly accepted David, at the same time taunting him softly with the fact that he had recklessly declared he would never marry, even saying profanely that upon his word and honour he never would! She repeated to him what his mother once replied to his audacious worldly protests:

"If thee say thee will never, never, never do a thing, thee will some day surely do it."

Then, seeing that David was a bit chagrined, Faith slipped one hand into his, drew him back within the

door, lifted the shovel hat off his forehead, and whispered with a coquetry unworthy a Quaker maid :

"But thee did not say, Friend David, thee would never, never, never smite thy friend on both cheeks after she had flouted thee."

Having smitten her on both cheeks, after the manner of foolish men, David gravely got him to his home and to a sound sleep that night. Next morning, the remembrance of the pleasant smiting roused him to an outwardly sedate and inwardly vainglorious courage. Going with steady steps to the Friends' meeting-house at the appointed time, the Spirit moved him, after a decorous pause, to announce his intended marriage to the prettiest Quaker in Framley, even the maid who had shocked the community's sense of decorum and had been written down a rebel—though these things he did not say.

From the recesses of her poke bonnet Faith watched the effect of David's words upon the meeting ; but when the elders turned and looked at her, as became her judges before the Lord, her eyes dropped ; also her heart thumped so hard she could hear it ; and in the silence that followed it seemed to beat time to the words like the pendulum of a clock, "Fear not—Love on ! Fear not—Love on !" But the heart beat faster still, the eyes came up quickly, and the face flushed a deep, excited red when David, rising again, said that, with the consent of the community—a consent which his voice subtly insisted upon—he would take a long journey into the Holy Land, into Syria, travelling to Baalbec and Damascus, and even beyond as far as the desolate city of Palmyra ; and then, afterwards, into Egypt,

where Joseph and the sons of Israel were captive aforetime. He would fain visit the Red Sea, and likewise confer with the Coptic Christians in Egypt, "of whom thee and me have read to our comfort," he added piously, looking at Friend Fairley, the oldest and heretofore the richest man in the community.

Friend Fairley rejoiced now that he had in bygone days lent David books to read; but he rejoiced secretly, for though his old bookman's heart warmed at the thought that he should in good time hear, from one who had seen with his own eyes, of the wonders of the East, it became him to assume a ponderous placidity—for Framley had always been doubtful of his bookishness and its influence on such as David. They said it boded no good; there were those even who called Fairley "a new light," that schism in a sect.

These God-fearing, dull folk were present now, and, disapproving of David's choice in marriage, disapproved far more of its consequence; for so they considered the projected journey into the tumultuous world and the garish Orient. In the end, however, an austere approval was promised, should the solemn commission of men and women appointed to confer with and examine the candidates find in their favour—as in this case they would certainly do; for thirty thousand pounds bulked potently even in this community of unworldly folk, though smacking somewhat of the world, the flesh and the devil.

If David, however, would stand to the shovel hat, and if Faith would be faithful forever to the poke bonnet and gray cloth, all might yet be well. At the same time, they considered that Friend David's mind was distracted by the things of this world, and they reasoned

with the Lord in prayer upon the point in David's presence.

In worldly but religiously controlled dudgeon David left the meeting-house, and inside the door of Faith's cottage said to his own mother and to hers some bitter and un-Quakerlike things against the stupid world—for to him as yet the world was Framley, though he would soon mend o' that.

When he had done speaking against "the mad wits that would not see," Faith laid her cool fingers on his arm and said, with a demure humour, "All the world's mad but thee and me, David—and thee's a bit mad!"

So pleased was David's mother with this speech that then and there she was reconciled to Faith's rebellious instincts, and saw safety for her son in the hands of the quaint, clear-minded daughter of her old friend and kinswoman, Mercy Marlowe.

II

Within three months David and Faith had seen the hills of Moab from the top of the Mount of Olives; watched the sun go down over the Sea of Galilee; plucked green boughs from the cedars on Lebanon; broke into placid exclamations of delight in the wild orchard of nectarine blossoms by the lofty ruins of Baalbec; walked in that street called Straight at Damascus; journeyed through the desert with a caravan to Palmyra when the Druses were up; and, at last, looked upon the spot where lived that Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.

In this land they stayed; and even now far up the Nile you will hear of the Two Strange People who travelled the river even to Dongola and some way back

—for a long time, only some way back. In particular you will hear of them from an old dragoman called Mahommed Ramadan Saggara, and a white-haired jeweller of Assiout, called Abdul Huseyn.

These two men still tell the tale of the two mad English folk with faces like no English people ever seen in Egypt, who refused protection in their travels, but went fearlessly among the Arabs everywhere, to do good and fear not. The Quaker hat and saddened drab worked upon the Arab mind to advantage.

In Egypt, David and Faith found their pious mission —though historians have since called it " whimsical and unpractical " : David's to import the great Syrian donkey, which was to banish the shame of grossly burdening the small donkey of the land of Pharaoh ; and Faith's to build schools where English should be taught, to exclude " that language of Belial," as David called French. When their schemes came home to Framley, with an order on David's bankers for ten thousand pounds, gray-garbed consternation walked abroad, and in meeting the following First Day no one prayed or spoke for an hour or more. At last, however, Friend Fairley rose in his place and said :

" The Lord shall deliver the heathen into their hands."

Then the spirit moved freely and severely among them all, and Friend Fairley was, as he said himself, " crowded upon the rails by the yearlings of the flock." For he alone of all Framley believed that David and Faith had not thrown away the Quaker drab, the shovel hat and the poke bonnet, and gone forth fashionable, worldly and an hungered, among the fleshpots of Egypt. There was talk of gilded palaces, Saracenic splendours and dark suggestions from the Arabian Nights.

Still, the ten thousand pounds went to David and Faith where they smilingly laboured through the time of High Nile and Low Nile, and khamsin and sirocco, and cholera, and, worse than all, the banishments to the hot Siberia of Fazougli.

But Mahommed Ramadan Saggara babbles yet of the time when, for one day, David threw away his shovel hat; and Abdul Huseyn, the jeweller, tells how, on the same day, the *Sitt*—that is, Faith—bought of him a ring of turquoises and put it on her finger with a curious smile.

That day David and Faith, the one in a pith helmet, the other with a turquoise ring on her left hand, went to dine with Kahoum Pasha, the Armenian Governor of the province, a man of varied talents, not least of which was deceit of an artistic kind. For, being an Armenian, he said he was a true Christian, and David believed him, though Faith did not; and being an Oriental, he said he told the truth; and again David believed him, though Faith did not. He had a red beard, an eye that glinted red also, and fat, smooth fingers which kept playing with a string of beads as though it were a rosary.

As hard as he worked to destroy the Quaker in David, she worked against him; and she did not fear the end, for she believed in David Hyam of Framley. It was Kahoum Pasha's influence, persistently and adroitly used for two years, which made Friend David at last put aside for this one day his Quaker hat. And the Pasha rejoiced; for, knowing human nature after a fashion, he understood that when you throw the outer sign away —the sign to you since your birth, like the fingers of your hand—the inner grace begins decadency and in due time disappears.

Kahoum Pasha had awaited this with Oriental patience. for he was sure that if David gave way in one thing he would give way in all—and with a rush, some day. Now, at last, he had got David and Faith to dine with him; he had his meshes of deceit around them.

When they came to dinner Kahoum Pasha saw the turquoise ring upon the finger of Friend Faith, and this startled him and pleased him. Here, he knew, was his greatest enemy where David was concerned, and yet this pretty Saint Elizabeth was wearing a fine turquoise ring with a poke bonnet, in a very worldly fashion. He almost rubbed his eyes, it was so hard to believe; for time and again he had offered *antichi* in bracelets, rings and scarabs, and fine cottons from Beni-Mazar; and had been promptly and firmly told that the Friends wore no jewellery nor gay attire. Kahoum Pasha, being a Christian—after the Armenian fashion—then desired to learn of this strange religion, that his own nature might be bettered, for, alas! snares for the soul are many in the Orient. For this Faith had quietly but firmly referred him to David.

Then he had tried another tack: he had thrown in his interest with her first school in his mudirieh; he got her Arab teachers from Cairo who could speak English; he opened the large schoolhouse himself with great ceremony, and with many kavasses in blue and gold. He said to himself that you never could tell what would happen in this world, and it was well to wait, and to watch the approach of that good angel Opportunity.

With all his devices, however, he could not quite understand Faith, and he walked warily, lest through his lack of understanding he should, by some mischance, come suddenly upon a reef, and his plans go shipwreck.

Yet all the time he laughed in his sleeve, for he foresaw the day when all this money the Two Strange People were spending in his mudirieh should become his own. If he could not get their goods and estates peaceably, riots were so easy to arrange; he had arranged them before. Then, when the Two Strange People had been struck with panic, the Syrian donkey-market, and the five hundred feddans of American cotton, and the new schools would be his for a song—or a curse.

When he saw the turquoise ring on the finger of the little Quaker lady he fancied he could almost hear the accompaniment of the song. He tore away tender portions of roasted lamb with his fingers, and crammed them into his mouth, rejoicing. With the same greasy fingers he put upon Faith's plate a stuffed cucumber, and would have added a clammy sweet and a tumbler of sickly sherbet at the same moment; but Faith ate nothing save a cake of dourha bread, and drank only a cup of coffee.

Meanwhile, Kahoum Pasha talked of the school, of the donkey-market, the monopoly of which the Khedive had granted David; and of the new prosperous era opening up in Egypt, due to the cotton David had introduced as an experiment. David's heart waxed proud within him that he had walked out of Framley to the regeneration of a country. He likened himself to Joseph, son of Jacob; and at once the fineness of his first purposes became blunted.

As Kahoum Pasha talked on, of schools, of taxes, of laws, of government, to David, with no hat on—Samson without his hair—Faith's mind was working as it had never worked before. She realised what a prodigious liar Kahoum Pasha was; for, talking benignly of

equitable administration as he did, she recalled the dark stories she had heard of rapine and cruel imprisonment in this same mudirieh.

Suddenly Kahoum Pasha saw the dark blue eyes fastened upon his face with a curious intentness, a strange questioning; and the blue of the turquoise on the hand folded over the other in the gray lap did not quite reassure him. He stopped talking, and spoke in a low voice to his kavass, who presently brought a bottle of champagne—a final proof that Kahoum Pasha was not an ascetic or a Turk. As the bottle was being opened the Pasha took up his string of beads and began to finger them, for the blue eyes in the poke bonnet were disconcerting. He was about to speak when Faith said, in a clear voice:

"Thee has a strange people beneath thee. Thee rules by the sword, or the word of peace, friend?"

The fat, smooth hands fingered the beads swiftly. Kahoum Pasha was disturbed, as he proved by replying in French—he had spent years of his youth in France:

"*Par la force morale, toujours, madame*—by moral force, always," he hastened to add in English. Then, casting down his eyes with truly Armenian modesty, he continued in Arabic: "By the word of peace, oh, woman of the clear eyes—to whom God give length of days!"

Kahoum Pasha smiled a greasy smile, and held the bottle of champagne over the glass set for Friend David.

Never in his life had David the Quaker tasted champagne. In his eyes, in the eyes of Framley, it had been the brew especially prepared by Sheitan to tempt to ruin the feeble ones of the earth. But the doublet

of David's mind was all unbraced now; his hat was off, his Quaker drab was spotted with the grease of a roasted lamb. He had tasted freedom; he was near to licence now.

He took his hand from the top of the glass, and the amber liquid and the froth poured in. At that instant he saw Faith's eyes upon his, he saw her hand go to the poke bonnet, as it were to unloosen the strings. He saw for the first time that turquoise ring; he saw the eyes of Kahoum Pasha on Faith with a look prophesying several kinds of triumph, none palatable to him; and he stopped short on that road easy of gradient, which Kahoum Pasha was macadamising for him. He put his hand up as though to pull his hat down over his eyes, as was his fashion when troubled or when he was setting his mind to a task.

The hat was not there; but Faith's eyes were on his, and there were a hundred Quaker hats or Cardinals' hats in them. He reached out quickly and caught Faith's hand as it undid the strings of her gray bonnet.

"Will thee be mad, Faith?"

"All the world's mad but thee and me, David, and thee's a bit mad," she answered in the tongue of Framley.

"The gaud upon thy hand?" he asked sternly; and his eyes flashed from her to Kahoum Pasha, for a horrible suspicion crept into his brain—a shameless suspicion; but even a Quaker may be human and foolish, as history has shown.

"The wine at thine elbow, David, and thine hat!" she answered steadily.

David, the friend of peace, was bitterly angry. He caught up the glass of champagne and dashed it upon the fine prayer-rug which Kahoum Pasha had, with a

kourbash, collected for taxes from a Greek merchant back from Tiflis—the rug worth five hundred English pounds, the taxes but twenty Turkish pounds.

"Thee is a villain, friend," he said to Kahoum Pasha in a voice like a noise in a barrel; "I read thee as a book."

"Through the eyes of your wife, effendi; she read me first—we understand each other!" answered the Governor with a hateful smile, knowing the end of one game was at hand, and instantly beginning another with an intelligent malice.

Against all Quaker principles David's sinful arm was lifted to strike, but Faith's hand prevented him, and Kahoum Pasha motioned back the Abyssinian slaves who had sprung forward menacingly from behind a screen.

Faith led the outraged David, hatless, into the street.

III

That evening the Two Strange People went to Abdul Huseyn, the jeweller, and talked with him for more than an hour; for Abdul Huseyn, as Egyptians go, was a kindly man. He had taught Arabic to David and Faith. He would have asked more than twelve pieces of silver to betray them.

The next afternoon a riot occurred around the house of the Two Strange People and the school they had built; and Kahoum Pasha would have had his spite of them, and his will of the donkey-market, the school, and the cotton-fields, but for Abdul Huseyn and three Sheikhs, friends of his—at a price—who addressed the crowd and quieted them. They declared that the Two

were mad folk with whom even the English folk would have naught to do ; that they were of those from whom God had taken the souls, leaving their foolish bodies on earth, and were therefore to be cared for and protected, as the Koran said, be they infidel or the Faithful.

Furthermore, said Abdul Huseyn, in proof of their madness and a certain sort of holiness, they wore hats always, as Arabs wore their turbans, and were as like good Mahommedans as could be, sitting down to speak and standing up to pray. He also added that they could not be enemies of the Faithful, or a Christian Mudir would not have turned against them. And Abdul Huseyn prevailed against Kahoum Pasha—at a price ; for Faith, seeing no need for martyrdom, had not hesitated to open her purse.

Three days afterward, David, with Abdul Huseyn, went to the Palace of the Khedive at Cairo, and within a week Kahoum Pasha was on his way to Fazougli, the hot Siberia. For the rage of the Khedive was great when he heard what David and Abdul Huseyn told him of the murderous riot Kahoum Pasha had planned. David being an honest Quaker—for now again he wore his shovel hat—did not realise that the Khedive had only hungered for this chance to confiscate the goods of Kahoum Pasha. Was it not justice to take for the chosen ruler of the Faithful the goods an Armenian Christian had stolen from the poor ? Before David left the Palace the Khedive gave him the Order of the Mejidîeh, in token of what he had done for Egypt.

In the end, however, David took three things only out of Egypt : his wife, the Order of the Mejidîeh, and Kahoum Pasha's pardon, which he strove for as

hard as he had striven for his punishment, when he came to know the Khedive had sent the Mudir to Fazougli merely that he might despoil him. He only achieved this at last, again on the advice of Abdul Huseyn, by giving the Khedive as backsheesh the Syrian donkey-market, the five hundred feddans of cotton, and Faith's new school. Then, believing in no one in Egypt any more, he himself went with an armed escort and his Quaker hat, and the Order of the Khedive, to Fazougli, and brought Kahoum Pasha penniless to Cairo.

Nowadays, on the mastaba before his grandson's door, Abdul Huseyn, over ninety "by the grace of Allah," still tells of the backsheesh he secured from the Two Strange People for his help on a certain day.

In Framley, where the whole truth never came, David and Faith occasionally take from a secret drawer the Order of the Mejidîeh to look at it, and, as David says, to "learn the lesson of Egypt once again." Having learned it to some purpose—and to the lifelong edification of old Friend Fairley, the only one who knew the whole truth—they founded three great schools for Quaker children. They were wont to say to each other, as the hurrying world made inroads on the strict Quaker life to which they had returned: "All the world's mad but thee and me, and thee's a bit mad."

THE MAN AT THE WHEEL

WYNDHAM Bimbashi's career in Egypt had been a series of mistakes. In the first place he was opinionated, in

the second place he never seemed to have any luck; and, worst of all, he had a little habit of doing grave things on his own lightsome responsibility. This last quality was natural to him, but he added to it a supreme contempt for the native mind and an unhealthy scorn of the native official. He had not that rare quality, constantly found among his fellow countrymen, of working the native up through his own medium, as it were, through his own customs and predispositions, to the soundness of Western methods of government. Therefore, in due time he made some dangerous mistakes.

By virtue of certain high-handed actions he was the cause of several riots in native villages, and he had himself been attacked at more than one village as he rode between the fields of sugar-cane. On these occasions he had behaved very well—certainly no one could possibly doubt his bravery; but that was a small offset to the fact that his want of tact and his overbearing manner had been the means of turning a certain tribe of Arabs loose upon the country, raiding and killing.

But he could not, or would not, see his own vain stupidity. The climax came in a foolish sortie against the Arab tribe he had offended. In that unauthorised *mêlée*, in covert disobedience to a general order not to attack, unless at advantage—for the Gippies under him were raw levies—his troop was diminished by half; and, cut off from the Nile by a flank movement of the Arabs, he was obliged to retreat and take refuge in the well-fortified and walled house, which had previously been a Coptic monastery.

Here, at last, the truth came home to Wyndham Bimbashi. He realised that though in his six years'

residence in the land he had acquired a command of Arabic equal to that of others who had been in the country twice that time, he had acquired little else. He awoke to the fact that in his cocksure schemes for the civil and military life of Egypt, there was not one element of sound sense; that he had been all along an egregious failure. It did not come home to him with clear, accurate conviction—his brain was not a first-rate medium for illumination; but the facts struck him now with a blind sort of force; and he accepted the blank sensation of failure. Also, he read in the faces of those round him an alien spirit, a chasm of black misunderstanding which his knowledge of Arabic could never bridge over.

Here he was, shut up with Gippies who had no real faith in him, in the house of a Sheikh whose servants would cut his throat on no provocation at all; and not an eighth of a mile away was a horde of Arabs—a circle of death through which it was impossible to break with the men in his command. They must all die here, if they were not relieved.

The nearest garrison was at Kerbat, sixty miles away, where five hundred men were stationed. Now that his cup of mistakes was full, Wyndham Bimbashi would willingly have made the attempt to carry word to the garrison there. But he had no right to leave his post. He called for a volunteer. No man responded. Panic was upon the Gippies. Though Wyndham's heart sickened within him, his lips did not frame a word of reproach; but a blush of shame came into his face, and crept up to his eyes, dimming them. For there flashed through his mind what men at Home would think of him when this thing, such an end to his whole career,

was known. As he stood still, upright and confounded, some one touched his arm.

It was Hassan, his Soudanese servant. Hassan was the one person in Egypt who thoroughly believed in him. Wyndham was as a god to Hassan, though this same god had given him a taste of a belt more than once. Hassan had not resented the belt, though once, in a moment of affectionate confidence, he had said to Wyndham that when his master got old and died he would be the servant of an American or a missionary, "who no whack Mahommed."

It was Hassan who now volunteered to carry word to the garrison at Kerbat.

"If I no carry, you whack me with belt, pasha," said Hassan, whose logic and reason were like his master's, neither better nor worse.

"If you do, you shall have fifty pounds—and the missionary," answered Wyndham, his eyes still cloudy and his voice thick; for it touched him in a tender nerve that this one Soudanese boy should believe in him and do for him what he would give much to do for the men under him. For his own life he did not care, his confusion and shame were too great.

He watched Hassan steal out into the white brilliance of the night.

"Mind you keep a whole skin, Hassan," he said, as the slim lad with the white teeth, oily hair, and legs like ivory, stole along the wall, to drop presently on his belly and make for some palm-trees a hundred yards away.

The minutes went by in silence; an hour went by; the whole night went by; Hassan had got beyond the circle of trenchant steel.

They must now abide Hassan's fate; but another peril was upon them. There was not a goolah of water within the walls!

It was the time of low Nile when all the land is baked like a crust of bread, when the creaking of the shadoofs and the singing croak of the sakkia are heard the night long like untiring crickets with throats of frogs. It was the time succeeding the khamsin, when the skin dries like slaked lime and the face is for ever powdered with dust; and the fellaheen, in the slavery of superstition, strain their eyes day and night for the Sacred Drop, which tells that the flood is flowing fast from the hills of Abyssinia.

It was like the Egyptian that nothing should be said to Wyndham about the dearth of water until it was all gone. The house of the Sheikh, and its garden, where were a pool and a fountain, were supplied from the great Persian wheel at the waterside. On this particular sakkia had been wont to sit all day a patient fellah, driving the blindfolded buffaloes in their turn. It was like the patient fellah, when the Arabs, in pursuit of Wyndham and his Gippies, suddenly cut in between him and the house, to deliver himself over to the conqueror, with his hand upon his head in sign of obedience.

It was also like the gentle Egyptian that he eagerly showed the besiegers how the water could be cut off from the house by dropping one of the sluice-gates; while, opening another, all the land around the Arab encampments might be well watered, the pools well filled, and the grass kept green for horses and camels. This was the reason that Wyndham Bimbashi and his Gippies, and the Sheikh and his household, faced

the fact, the morning after Hassan left, that there was scarce a goolah of water for a hundred burning throats. Wyndham understood now why the Arabs sat down and waited, that torture might be added to the on-coming death of the Englishman, his natives, and the "friendlies."

All that day terror and ghastly hate hung like a miasma over the besieged house and garden. Fifty eyes hungered for the blood of Wyndham Bimbashi; not because he was Wyndham Bimbashi, but because the heathen in these men cried out for sacrifice; and what so agreeable a sacrifice as the Englishman who had led them into this disaster and would die so well—had they ever seen an Englishman who did not die well?

Wyndham was quiet and watchful, and he cudgelled his bullet-head, and looked down his long nose in meditation all the day, while his tongue became dry and thick, and his throat seemed to crack like roasting leather. At length he worked the problem out. Then he took action.

He summoned his troop before him, and said briefly:

"Men, we must have water. The question is, who is going to steal out to the sakkia to-night, to shut the one sluice and open the other?"

No one replied. No one understood quite what Wyndham meant. Shutting one sluice and opening the other did not seem to meet the situation. There was the danger of getting to the sakkia, but there was also an *after*. Would it be possible to shut one sluice and open the other without the man at the wheel knowing? Suppose you killed the man at the wheel?—what then?

The Gippies and the friendlies scowled, but did not speak. The Bimbashi was responsible for all; he was an Englishman, let him get water for them, or die like the rest of them—perhaps before them!

Wyndham could not travel the sinuosities of their minds, and it would not have affected his purposes if he could have done so. When no man replied, he simply said:

"All right, men. You shall have water before morning. Try and hold out till then." He dismissed them.

For a long time he walked up and down the garden of straggling limes, apparently listless, and smoking hard. He reckoned carefully how long it would take Hassan to get to Kerbat, and for relief to come. He was fond of his pipe, and he smoked now as if it were the thing he most enjoyed in the world. He held the bowl in the hollow of his hand almost tenderly. He seemed unconscious of the scowling looks around him. At last he sat on the ledge of the rude fountain, with his face towards the Gippies and the Arabs squatted on the ground, some playing mankalah, others sucking dry lime leaves, many smoking apathetically.

One man with the flicker of insanity in his eyes suddenly ran forward and threw himself on the ground before Wyndham.

"In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful—water!" he cried. "Water—I am dying, effendi whom God preserve!"

"Nile water is sweet; you shall drink it before morning, Mahommed," answered Wyndham quietly. "God will preserve your life till the Nile water cools your throat."

"Before dawn, O effendi?" gasped the Arab.

"Before dawn, by the mercy of God," answered Wyndham; and for the first time in his life he had a burst of imagination. The Orient had touched him at last.

"Is not the song of the sakkia in thine ear, Mahommed?" he said.

"Turn, O Sakkia, turn to the right, and turn to the left.
The Nile floweth by night and the balasses are filled at dawn—
The maid of the village shall bear to thy bed, the dewy grey goolah at dawn,—
Turn, O Sakkia!"

Wyndham was learning at last the way to the native mind.

The man rose from his knees. A vision of his home in the mirkaz of Minieh passed before him. He stretched out his hands, and sang in the vibrating monotone of his people:

"Turn, O Sakkia, turn to the right, and turn to the left:
Who will take care of me, if my father dies?
Who will give me water to drink, and the cucumber vine at my door—
Turn, O Sakkia!"

Then he crept back again to the wall of the house, where he huddled between a Berberine playing a darabukkeh and a man of the Fayoum who chanted the *fatihah* from the Koran.

Wyndham looked at them all and pondered. "If the devils out there would only attack us," he said between his teeth, "or if we could only attack them!" he added, and he nervously hastened his footsteps; for to him this inaction was terrible. "They'd forget

their thirst if they were fighting," he muttered, and then he frowned; for the painful neighing of the horses behind the house came to his ear. In desperation he went inside and climbed to the roof, where he could see the circle of the enemy.

It was no use. They were five to one, and his Gippies were demoralised. It would be a fine bit of pluck to try and cut his way through the Arabs to the Nile—but how many would reach it?

No, he had made his full measure of mistakes, he would not add to the list. If Hassan got through to Kerbat his Gippies here would no doubt be relieved, and there would be no more blood on his head. Relieved? And when they were relieved, what of himself, Wyndham Bimbashi? He knew what men would say in Cairo, what men would say at the War Office in London town, at "The Rag"—everywhere! He could not look his future in the face. He felt that every man in Egypt, save himself, had known all along that he was a complete failure.

It did not matter while he himself was not conscious of it; but now that the armour-plate of conceit protecting his honest mind had been torn away on the reefs of foolish deeds, it mattered everything. For when his conceit was peeled away, there was left a crimson cuticle of the Wyndham pride. Certainly he could not attack the Arabs: he had had his eternal fill of sorties.

Also he could not wait for the relief party, for his Gippies and the friendlies were famishing, dying of thirst. He prayed for night. How slowly the minutes, the hours passed; and how bright was the moon when it rose! brighter even than it was when Hassan crept out to steal through the Arab lines.

At midnight, Wyndham stole softly out of a gate in the garden wall, and, like Hassan, dropping to the ground, crept towards a patch of maize lying between the house and the river. He was dressed like a fellah, with the long blue yelek, and a poor wool fez, and round the fez was a white cloth, as it were to protect his mouth from the night air, after the manner of the peasant.

The fires of the enemy were dying down, and only here and there Arabs gossiped or drank coffee by the embers. At last Wyndham was able to drop into the narrow channel, now dry, through which, when the sluice was open and the sakkia turned, the water flowed to the house. All went well till he was within a hundred yards of the wheel, though now and again he could hear sentries snoring or talking just above him. Suddenly he heard breathing an arm's length before him, then a figure raised itself and a head turned towards him. The Arab had been asleep, but his hand ran to his knife by instinct—too late, for Wyndham's fingers were at his throat, and he had neither time nor chance to cry *Allah!* before the breath left him.

Wyndham crept on. The sound of the sakkia was in his ears—the long, creaking, crying song, filling the night. And now there arose the Song of the Sakkia from the man at the wheel:

"Turn, O Sakkia, turn to the right, and turn to the left;
The heron feeds by the water side—shall I starve in my onion-field!
Shall the Lord of the World withhold his tears that water the land—
Turn, O Sakkia!"

. . . The hard white stars, the cold blue sky, the far-

off Libyan hills in a gold and opal glow, the smell of the desert, the deep *swish* of the Nile, the Song of the Sakkia. . . .

Wyndham's heart beat faster, his blood flowed quicker, he strangled a sigh in his breast. Here, with death on every hand, with immediate and fearful peril before him, out of the smell of the desert and the ghostly glow of the Libyan hills there came a memory—the memory of a mistake he had made years before with a woman. She had never forgiven him for the mistake—he knew it at last. He knew that no woman could ever forgive the blunder he had made; not a blunder of love but a blunder of self-will and an unmanly, unmannerly conceit. It had nearly wrecked her life: and he only realised it now, in the moment of clear-seeing which comes to every being once in a lifetime. Well, it was something to have seen the mistake at last.

He had come to the sluice-gate. It was impossible to open it without the fellah on the water-wheel seeing him.

There was another way. He crept close and closer to the wheel. The breath of the blindfolded buffalo was in his face, he drew himself up lightly and quickly beside the buffalo—he was making no blunder now.

Suddenly he leapt from behind the buffalo upon the fellah and smothered his mouth in the white cloth he had brought. There was a moment's struggle, then, as the wheel went slower and slower, and the patient buffalo stopped, Wyndham dropped the gagged, but living, fellah into the trench by the sakkia and, calling to the buffalo, slid over swiftly, opened the sluice-gate of the channel which fed the house, and closed that leading to the Arab encampment.

Then he sat down where the fellah had sat, and the sakkia droned its mystic music over the river, the desert, and the plain. But the buffalo moved slowly—the fellah's song had been a spur to its travel, as the camel-driver's song is to the caravan in the waste of sands. Wyndham hesitated an instant, then, as the first trickle of water entered the garden of the house where his Gippies and the friendlies were, his voice rose in the Song of the Sakkia :

" Turn, O Sakkia, turn to the right, and turn to the left :
Who will take care of me, if my father dies ?
Who will give me water to drink, and the cucumber vine at my door—
Turn, O Sakkia ! "

If he had but one hour longer there would be enough water for men and horses for days, twenty jars of water pouring all the time !

Now and again a figure came towards the wheel, but not close enough to see that the one sluice-gate had been shut and the other opened. A half-hour passed, an hour, and then the end came.

The gagged fellah had managed to free his mouth, and though his feet were bound also and he could not loose them, he gave a loud call for help. From dying fires here and there Arab sentries sprang to their feet with rifles and lances.

Wyndham's work was done. He leapt from the sakkia, and ran towards the house. Shot after shot was fired at him, lances were thrown, and once an Arab barred his way suddenly. He pistolled him and ran on. A lance caught him in the left arm. He tore it out and pushed forward. Stooping once, he caught up a sword from the ground. When he was within fifty yards of the

house, four Arabs intercepted him. He slashed through, then turned with his pistol and fired as he ran quickly towards the now open gate. He was within ten yards of it, and had fired his last shot, when a bullet crashed through his jaw.

A dozen Gippies ran out, dragged him in, and closed the gate.

The last thing Wyndham did before he died in the gray of dawn—and this is told of him by the Gippies themselves—was to cough up the bullet from his throat, and spit it out upon the ground. The Gippies thought it a miraculous feat and that he had done it in scorn of the Arab foe.

Before another sunrise and sunset had come, Wyndham Bimbashi's men were relieved by the garrison of Kerbat, after a hard fight.

There are Englishmen in Egypt who still speak slightingly of Wyndham Bimbashi, but the British officer who buried him, hushed a gossiping dinner-party a few months ago in Cairo by saying :

> " Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,
> And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him ;
> But little he'll re k, if they let him sleep on
> In the grave where his Gippies have laid him."

And he did not apologise for paraphrasing the famous ballad. He has shamed Egypt at last into a sort of admiration for Wyndham Bimbashi : to the deep satisfaction of Hassan, the Soudanese boy, who received his fifty pounds, and to this day wears the belt which once kept him in the narrow path of duty.

A TYRANT AND A LADY

I

WHEN Donovan Pasha discovered the facts for the first time, he found more difficulty in keeping the thing to himself than he had ever found with any other matter in Egypt. He had unearthed one of those paradoxes, which made for laughter—and for tears. It gave him both; he laughed till he cried. Then he went to the Khedivial Club and ordered himself four courses, a pint of champagne and a glass of '48 port, his usual dinner being one course, double portion, and a pint of claret. As he sat eating he kept reading a letter over and over, and each time he read he grinned—he did not smile like a well-behaved man of the world, he did not giggle like a well-veneered Egyptian back from Paris, he chuckled like a cabman, responding to a liberal fare and a good joke. A more unconventional little man never lived. Simplicity was his very life, and yet he had a gift for following the sinuosities of the Oriental mind; he had a quality almost clairvoyant, which came, perhaps, from his Irish forbears. The cross-strain of English blood had done him good too; it made him punctilious, and kept his impulses within secure bounds. It also made him very polite when he was angry, and very angry when any one tried to impose upon him, or flatter him.

The letter he read so often was from Kingsley Bey, the Englishman, who, coming to Egypt penniless, and leaving estates behind him encumbered beyond release, as it would seem, had made a fortune and a name in a curious way. For years he had done no good for him-

self, trying his hand at many things,—sugar, salt, cotton, cattle, but always just failing to succeed, though he came out of his enterprises owing no one. Yet he had held to his belief that he would make a fortune, and he allowed his estates to become still more encumbered, against the advice of his solicitors, who grew more irritable as interest increased and rents further declined. The only European in Egypt who shared his own belief in himself was Dicky Donovan. Something in the unfailing good-humour, the buoyant energy, the wide imagination of the man seized Dicky, warranted the conviction that he would yet make a success. There were reasons why sugar, salt, cotton, cattle, and other things had not done well. Taxes, the *corvée*, "undue influence" in favour of Pashas who could put his water on their land without compensation, or unearthed old unpaid mortgages on his land, or absorbed his special salt concession in the Government monopoly, or suddenly put a tax on all horses and cattle not of native breed;—all these and various other imposts, exactions or interferences engineered by the wily mamour, the agent of the mouffetish, or the intriguing pasha, killed his efforts, in spite of labours unbelievable. The venture before the last had been sugar, and when he arrived in Cairo, having seen his fields and factories absorbed in the Khedive's domains, he had but one ten pounds to his name.

He went to Dicky Donovan and asked the loan of a thousand pounds. It took Dicky's breath away. His own banking account seldom saw a thousand-deposit. Dicky told Kingsley he hadn't got it. Kingsley asked him to get it—he had credit, could borrow it from the bank, from the Khedive himself! The pro-

posal was audacious—Kingsley could offer no security worth having. His enthusiasm and courage were so infectious however, though his ventures had been so fruitless, that Dicky laughed in his face. Kingsley's manner then suddenly changed, and he assured Dicky that he would receive five thousand pounds for the thousand within a year. Now, Dicky knew that Kingsley never made a promise to any one that he did not fulfil. He gave Kingsley the thousand pounds. He did more. He went to the Khedive with Kingsley's whole case. He spoke as he had seldom spoken, and he secured a bond from Ismail, which might not be broken. He also secured three thousand pounds of the Khedive's borrowings from Europe, on Kingsley's promise that it should be returned fivefold.

That was how Kingsley got started in the world again, how he went mining in the desert afar, where pashas and mamours could not worry him. The secret of his success was purely Oriental. He became a slave-owner. He built up a city of the desert round him. He was its ruler. Slavery gave him steady untaxed labour. A rifle-magazine gave him security against marauding tribes, his caravans were never overpowered; his blacks were his own. He had a way with them; they thought him the greatest man in the world. Now, at last, he was rich enough. His mines were worked out, too, and the market was not so good; he had supplied it too well. Dicky's thousand had brought him five thousand, and Ismail's three thousand had become fifteen thousand, and another twenty thousand besides. For once the Khedive had found a kind of taxation, of which he got the whole proceeds, not divided among many as heretofore. He got it all. He made Kingsley a Bey, and

gave him immunity from all other imposts or taxation. Nothing but an Egyptian army could have removed him from his desert-city.

Now, he was coming back,—to-night at ten o'clock he would appear at the Khedivial Club, the first time in seven years. But this was not all. He was coming back to be married as soon as might be.

This was the thing which convulsed Dicky.

Upon the Nile at Assiout lived a young English lady, whose life was devoted to agitation against slavery in Egypt. Perhaps the Civil War in America, not so many years before, had fired her spirit; perhaps it was pious enthusiasm; perhaps it was some altruistic sentiment in her which must find expression; perhaps, as people said, she had had a love affair in England which had turned out badly. At any rate she had come over to Egypt with an elderly companion, and, after a short stay at the Consulate, had begun the career of the evangel. She had now and then created international difficulty, and Ismail, tolerant enough, had been tempted to compel her to leave the country, but, with a zeal which took on an aspect of self-opinionated audacity, she had kept on. Perhaps her beauty helped her on her course—perhaps the fact that her superb egotism kept her from being timorous, made her career possible. In any case, there she was at Assiout, and there she had been for years, and no accident had come to her; and, during the three months she was at Cairo every year, pleading against slavery and the *corvée*, she increased steadily the respect in which she was held; but she was considered mad as Gordon. So delighted had Ismail been with a quiet, personal attack she made upon him, that without malice, and with an obtuse and impulsive kindness, he

sent her the next morning a young Circassian slave, as a mark of his esteem, begging her through the swelling rhetoric of his messenger to keep the girl, and more than hinting at her value. It stupefied her, and the laughter of Cairo added to her momentary embarrassment; but she kept the girl, and prepared to send her back to her people.

The girl said she had no people, and would not go; she would stay with "my lady"—she would stay for ever with "my lady." It was confusing, but the girl stayed, worshipping the ground "my lady" walked on. In vain "my lady" educated her. Out of hearing, she proudly told whoever would listen that she was "my lady's slave." It was an Egyptian paradox; it was in line with everything else in the country, part of the moral *opéra bouffe*.

In due course, the lady came to hear of the English slave-owner, who ruled the desert-city, and was making a great fortune out of the labours of his slaves. The desert Arabs who came down the long caravan road, white with bleached bones, to Assiout, told her he had a thousand slaves. Against this Englishman her anger was great. She unceasingly condemned him, and whenever she met Dicky Donovan she delivered her attack with delicate violence. Did Dicky know him? Why did not he, in favour with Ismail, and with great influence, stop this dreadful and humiliating business? It was a disgrace to the English name. How could we preach freedom and a higher civilization to the Egyptians, while an Englishman enriched himself and ruled a province by slavery? Dicky's invariable reply was that we couldn't, and that things weren't moving very much towards a higher civilization in Egypt. But he asked

her if she ever heard of a slave running away from Kingsley Bey, or had she ever heard of a case of cruelty on his part? Her reply was that he had given slaves the kourbash, and had even shot them. Dicky thereupon suggested that Kingsley Bey was a government, and that the kourbash was not yet abolished in the English navy, for instance; also that men had to be shot sometimes.

At last she had made a direct appeal to Kingsley Bey. She sent an embassy to him—only Dicky prevented her from going herself; he said he would have her deported straightway, if she attempted it. She was not in such deadly earnest that she did not know he would keep his word, and that the Consulate could not help her—would have no time to do so. So, she confined herself to an elaborate letter, written in admirable English and inspired by most noble sentiments. The beauty that was in her face was in her letter in even a greater degree. It was very adroit, too, very ably argued, and the moral appeal was delicate and touching, put with an eloquence at once direct and arresting. The invocation with which the letter ended was, as Kingsley Bey afterwards put it, "a pitch of poetry and humanity never reached except by a Wagner opera."

Kingsley Bey's response to the appeal was a letter to the lady, brought by a sarraf, a mamour and six slaves, beautifully mounted and armed, saying that he had been deeply moved by her appeal, and as a proof of the effect of her letter, she might free the six slaves of his embassy. This she straightway did joyfully, and when they said they wished to go to Cairo, she saw them and their horses off on the boat with gladness, and she shook them each by the hand and prayed Heaven in

their language to give them long plumes of life and happiness. Arrived at Cairo these freemen of Assiout did as they had been ordered by Kingsley: found Donovan Pasha, delivered a certain letter to him, and then proceeded, also as they had been ordered, to a certain place in the city, even to Ismail's stables, to await their master's coming.

This letter was now in Dicky's hand, and his mirth was caused by the statement that Kingsley Bey had declared that he was coming to marry "my lady"—she really was "my lady," the Lady May Harley; that he was coming by a different route from "his niggers," and would be there the same day. Dicky would find him at ten o'clock at the Khedivial Club.

"My lady" hated slavery—and unconsciously she kept a slave; she regarded Kingsley Bey as an enemy to civilization and to Egypt, she detested him as strongly as an idealistic nature could and should—and he had set out to marry her, the woman who had bitterly arraigned him at the bar of her judgment. All this play was in Dicky's hands for himself to enjoy, in a perfect dress rehearsal ere ever one of the Cairene public or the English world could pay for admission and take their seats. Dicky had in more senses than one got his money's worth out of Kingsley Bey. He wished he might let the Khedive into the secret at once, for he had an opinion of Ismail's sense of humour; had he not said that very day in the presence of the French Consul, "Shut the window, quick! If the consul sneezes, France will demand compensation!" But Dicky was satisfied that things should be as they were. He looked at the clock—it was five minutes to ten. He rose from the table, and went to the smoking-room. In

vain it was sought to draw him into the friendly circles of gossiping idlers and officials. He took a chair at the very end of the room and opposite the door, and waited, watching.

Precisely at ten the door opened and a tall, thin, loose-knit figure entered. He glanced quickly round, saw Dicky, and swung down the room, nodding to men who sprang to their feet to greet him. Some of the Egyptians looked darkly at him, but he smiled all round, caught at one or two hands thrust out to him, said, "Business—business first!" in a deep bass voice, and, hastening on, seized both of Dicky's hands in his, then his shoulders, and almost roared: "Well, what do you think of it? Isn't it all right? Am I, or am I not, Dicky Pasha?"

"You very much are," answered Dicky, thrust a cigar at him, and set him down in the deepest chair he could find. He sprawled wide, and lighted his cigar, then lay back and looked down his long nose at his friend.

"I mean it, too," he said after a minute, and reached for a glass of water the waiter brought. "No, thanks, no whisky—never touch it—good example to the slaves!" He laughed long and low, and looked at Dicky out of the corner of his eye. "Good-looking lot I sent you, eh?"

"*Oosters*, every one of 'em. Butter wouldn't melt in their mouths. I learnt their grin, it suits my style of beauty." Dicky fitted the action to the word.

"You'll start with me in the morning to Assiout?"

"I *can* start, but life and time are short."

"You think I can't and won't marry her?"

"This isn't the day of Lochinvar."

"This is the day of Kingsley Bey, Dicky Pasha."

Dicky frowned. He had a rare and fine sense where women were concerned, were they absent or present. "How very artless—and in so short a time, too!" he said tartly.

Kingsley laughed quietly. "Art is long, but tempers are short!" he retorted.

Dicky liked a Roland for his Oliver. "It's good to see you back again," he said, changing the subject. "How long do you mean to stay?"

"Here?"

Dicky nodded.

"Till I'm married."

Dicky became very quiet, a little formal, and his voice took on a curious smoothness, through which sharp suggestion pierced.

"So long?—Enter our Kingsley Bey into the underground Levantine world."

This was biting enough. To be swallowed up by Cairo life and all that it involves, was no fate to suggest to an Englishman, whose opinion of the Levantine needs no defining. "Try again, Dicky," said Kingsley, refusing to be drawn. "This is not one huge joke, or one vast impertinence, so far as the lady is concerned. I've come back—b-a-c-k" (he spelled the word out), "with all that it involves. I've come *back*, Dicky."

He quieted all at once, and leaned over towards his friend. "You know the fight I've had. You know the life I've lived in Egypt. You know what I left behind me in England—nearly all. You've seen the white man work. You've seen the black *ooster* save him. You've seen the ten-times-a-failure pull out. Have I played the game? Have I acted squarely? Have I

given kindness for kindness, blow for blow? Have I treated my slaves like human beings? Have I—have I won my way back to life—life?" He spread out a hand with a little grasping motion. "Have I saved the old stand off there in Cumberland by the sea, where you can see the snow on Skaw Fell? Have I? Do you wonder that I laugh? Ye gods and little fishes! I've had to wear a long face years enough—seven hard years, seven fearful years, when I might be murdered by a slave, and I and my slaves might be murdered by some stray brigade, under some general of Ismail's, working without orders, without orders, of course—oh, very much of course! Why shouldn't I play the boy to-day, little Dicky Donovan? I am a Mahommedan come Christian again. I am a navvy again come gentleman. I am an Arab come Englishman once more. I am an outcast come home. I am a dead man come to life."

Dicky leaned over and laid a hand on his knee "You are a credit to Cumberland," he said. "No other man could have done it. I won't ask any more questions. Anything you want of me, I am with you, to do, or say, or be."

"Good. I want you to go to Assiout to-morrow."

"Will you see Ismail first? It might be safer—good policy."

"I will see My Lady first.... Trust me. I know what I'm doing. You will laugh as I do." Laughter broke from his lips. It was as though his heart was ten years old. Dicky's eyes moistened. He had never seen anything like it—such happiness, such boyish confidence. And what had not this man experienced! How had he drunk misfortune to the dregs! What unbelievable optimism had been his! How had he been at

once hard and kind, tyrannical and human, defiant and peaceful, daring yet submissive, fierce yet just! And now, here, with so much done, with a great fortune and great power, a very boy, he was planning to win the heart of, and marry, his avowed foe, the woman who had condemned him without stint.

II

On her wide verandah, a stone's throw from the banks of the Nile, My Lady sat pen in hand and paper-pad upon her knee. She had written steadily for an hour, and now she raised her head to look out on the swift flowing, muddy water, where broad khiassas floated down the stream, laden with bersim; where feluccas covered the river, bearing natives and donkeys; where faithful Moslems performed their ablutions, and other faithful Moslems, their sandals laid aside, said their prayers with their faces toward Mecca, oblivious of all around; where blue-robed women filled their goolahs with water, and bore them away, steady and stately; where a gang of conscripts, chained ankle to ankle, followed by a crowd of weeping and wailing women, were being driven to the anchorage of the stern-wheeled transport-steamer. All these sights she had seen how many hundred times! To her it was all slavery. The laden khiassas represented the fruits of enforced labour; the ablutions and prayers were but signs of submission to the tyranny of a religion designed for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many, a creed and code of gross selfishness—were not women only admitted to Heaven by the intercession of their husbands and after unceasing prayer? Whether beasts of burden, the girl with the goolah, women in the

harem, or servants of pleasure, they were all in the bonds of slavery, and the land was in moral darkness. So it seemed to her.

How many times had she written these things in different forms and to different people—so often, too often, to the British Consul at Cairo, whose patience waned. At first, the seizure of conscripts, with all that it involved, had excited her greatly. It had required all her common sense to prevent her, then and there, protesting, pleading, with the kavass, who did the duty of Ismail's Sirdar. She had confined herself, however, to asking for permission to give the men cigarettes and slippers, dates and bread, and bags of lentils for soup. Even this was not unaccompanied by danger, for the Mahommedan mind could not at first tolerate the idea of a lady going unveiled; only fellah women, domestic cattle, bared their faces to the world. The conscripts, too, going to their death—for how few of them ever returned?—leaving behind all hope, all freedom, passing to starvation and cruelty, at last to be cut down by the Arab, or left dying of illness in the desert, they took her gifts with sullen faces. Her beautiful freedom was in such contrast to their torture, slavery of a direful kind. But as again and again the kavasses came and opened midnight doors and snatched away the young men, her influence had grown so fast, that her presence brought comfort, and she helped to assuage the grief of the wailing women. She even urged upon them that philosophy of their own, which said "*Malaish*" to all things,—the "It is no matter," of the fated Hamlet. In time she began to be grateful that an apathetic resignation, akin to the quiet of despair, was the possession of their race. She was far from aware that something in their life, of

their philosophy, was affecting her understanding. She had a strong brain and a stronger will, but she had a capacity for feeling greater still, and this gave her imagination, temperament, and—though it would have shocked her to know it—a certain credulity, easily transmutable into superstition. Yet, as her sympathies were, to some extent, rationalized by stern fact and everlasting custom, her opposition to some things became more active and more fervid.

Looking into the distance, she saw two or three hundred men at work on a canal, draining the property of Selamlik Pasha, whose tyrannies, robberies and intrigues were familiar to all Egypt, whose palaces were almost as many as those of the notorious Mouffetish. These men she saw now working in the dread *corvée,* had been forced from their homes by a counterfeit Khedivial order. They had been compelled to bring their own tools, and to feed and clothe and house themselves, without pay or reward, having left behind them their own fields untilled, their own dourha unreaped, their date-palms, which the tax-gatherer confiscated. Many and many a time—unless she was prevented, and this at first had been often—she had sent food and blankets to these poor creatures who, their day's work done, prayed to God as became good Mahommedans, and, without covering, stretched themselves out on the bare ground to sleep.

It suggested that other slavery, which did not hide itself under the forms of conscription and *corvée.* It was on this slavery her mind had been concentrated, and against it she had turned her energies and her life. As she now sat, pen in hand, the thought of how little she had done, how futile had been all her crusade, came to her. Yet there was, too, a look of triumph in her eyes.

Until three days ago she had seen little result from her labours. Then had come a promise of better things. From the Englishman, against whom she had inveighed, had been sent an olive branch, a token—of conversion? Had he not sent six slaves for her to free, and had she not freed them? That was a step. She pictured to herself this harsh expatriated adventurer, this desert ruler, this slave-holder,—had he been a slave-*dealer* she could herself have gladly been his executioner—surrounded by his black serfs, receiving her letter. In her mind's eye she saw his face flush as he read her burning phrases, then turn a little pale, then grow stern.

She saw him, after a sleepless night, haunted by her warnings, her appeal to his English manhood. She saw him rise, meditative and relenting, and send forthwith these slaves for her to free. Her eye glistened again, as it had shone while she had written of this thing to the British Consul at Cairo, to her father in England, who approved of her sympathies and lamented her actions. Had her crusade been altogether fruitless, she asked herself. Ismail's freed Circassian was in her household, being educated like an English girl, lifted out of her former degradation, made to understand "a higher life"; and yesterday she had sent away six liberated slaves, with a gold-piece each, as a gift from a free woman to free men. It seemed to her for a moment now, as she sat musing and looking, that her thirty years of life had not been—rather, might not be—in vain.

There was one other letter she would write—to Donovan Pasha, who had not been ardent in her cause, yet who might have done so much through his influence with Ismail, who, it was said, liked him better than any Englishman he had known, save Gordon. True, Dono-

van Pasha had steadily worked for the reduction of the *corvée*, and had, in the name of the Khedive, steadily reduced private *corvée*, but he had never set his face against slavery, save to see that no slave-dealing was permitted below Assouan. Yet, with her own eyes she had seen Abyssinian slaves sold in the market-place of Assiout. True, when she appealed to him, Donovan Pasha had seen to it that the slave-dealers were severely punished, but the fact remained that he was unsympathetic on the large issue. When appealed to, the British Consul had petulantly told her that Donovan Pasha was doing more important work. Yet she could only think of England as the engine of civilization, as an evangelizing power, as the John the Baptist of the nations—a country with a mission. For so beautiful a woman, of so worldly a stock, of a society so in the front of things, she had some Philistine notions, some quite middle-class ideals. It was like a duchess taking to Exeter Hall; but few duchesses so afflicted had been so beautiful and so young, so much of the wordly world—her father was high in the household of an illustrious person. . . . If she could but make any headway against slavery—she had as disciples ten Armenian pashas, several wealthy Copts, a number of Arab sheikhs, and three Egyptian princes, sympathetic rather than active—perhaps, through her father, she might be able to move the illustrious person, and so, in time, the Government of England.

It was a delightful dream—the best she had imagined for many a day. She was roused from it by the scream of a whistle, and the *hoonch-hoonch* of a stern-wheel steamer. A Government boat was hastening into the bank, almost opposite her house. She picked up the field-glass from the window-sill behind her, and swept

the deck of the steamer. There were two figures in English dress, though one wore the tarboosh. The figure shorter and smaller than the other she recognized. This was Donovan Pasha. She need not write her letter to him, then. He would be sure to visit her. Disapprove of him as she did from one standpoint, he always excited in her feelings of home-sickness, of an old life, full of interests—music, drama, art, politics, diplomacy, the court, the hunting-field, the quiet house-party. He troubled her in a way too, for his sane certainty, set against her aspiring credulity, arrested, even commanded, her sometimes.

Instinctively, she put out her hand to gather in flying threads of hair, she felt at the pearl fastening of her collar, she looked at her brown shoes and her dress, and was satisfied. She was spotless. And never had her face shone—really shone—to such advantage. It had not now the brilliant colours of the first years. The climate, her work in hospital building, her labours against slavery, had touched her with a little whiteness. She was none the less good to see.

Who was this striding along with Donovan Pasha, straight towards her house? No one she had ever seen in Egypt, and yet in manner like some one she had seen before—a long time before. Her mind flashed back through the years to the time when she was a girl, and visited old friends of her father in a castle looking towards Skaw Fell, above the long valley of the Nidd. A kind of mist came before her eyes now.

When she really saw again, they were at the steps of the verandah, and Donovan Pasha's voice was greeting her. Then, as without a word, but with a welcoming smile, she shook hands with Dicky her look was held,

first by a blank arrest of memory, then by surprise.

Dicky turned for his office of introduction, but was stayed by the look of amusement in his friend's face and by the amazed recognition in that of My Lady. He stepped back with an exclamation, partly of chagrin. He saw that this recognition was no coincidence, so far as the man was concerned, though the woman had been surprised in a double sense. He resented the fact that Kingsley Bey had kept this from him—he had the weakness of small-statured men and of diplomatic people who have reputations for knowing and doing. The man, all smiling, held out his hand, and his look was quizzically humorous as he said :

" You scarcely looked to see me here, Lady May ?"

Her voice trembled with pleasure. " No, of course. When did you come, Lord Selden ? . . . Won't you sit down ? "

That high green terrace of Cumberland, the mist on Skaw Fell, the sun out over the sea, they were in her eyes. So much water had gone under the bridges since!

" I was such a young girl then—in short frocks—it was a long time ago, I fear," she added, as if in continuation of the thought flashing through her mind. " Let me see," she went on fearlessly ; " I am thirty ; that was thirteen years ago."

" I am thirty-seven, and still it is thirteen years ago."

" You look older, when you don't smile," she added, and glanced at his grey hair.

He laughed now. She was far, far franker than she was those many years ago, and it was very agreeable and refreshing. " Donovan, there, reproved me last night for frivolity," he said.

"If Donovan Pasha has become grave, then there is hope for Egypt," she said, turning to Dicky with a new brightness.

"When there's hope for Egypt, I'll have lost my situation, and there'll be reason for drawing a long face," said Dicky, and got the two at such an angle that he could watch them to advantage. "I thrive while it's *opéra bouffe*. Give us the legitimate drama, and I go with Ismail."

The lady shrank a little. "If it weren't you, Donovan Pasha, I should say that, associated with Ismail, as you are, you are as criminal as he."

"What is crime in one country, is virtue in another," answered Dicky. "I clamp the wheel sometimes to keep it from spinning too fast. That's my only duty. I am neither Don Quixote nor Alexander Imperator."

She thought he was referring obliquely to the *corvée* and the other thing in which her life-work was involved. She became severe. "It is compromising with evil," she said.

"No. It's getting a breakfast roll instead of the whole bakery," he answered.

"What do you think?" she exclaimed, turning to Kingsley.

"I think there's one man in Egypt, who keeps the boiler from bursting," he answered.

"Oh, don't think I undervalue his excellency," she said with a little laugh. "It is because he is strong, because he matters so much, that one feels he could do more. Ismail thinks there is no one like him in the world."

"Except Gordon," interrupted Kingsley.

"Except Gordon, of course; only Gordon isn't in

Egypt. And he would do no good in Egypt. The officials would block his way. It is only in the Soudan that he could have a free hand, be of real use. There, a man, a real man, like Gordon, could show the world how civilization can be accepted by desert races, despite a crude and cruel religion and low standards of morality."

"All races have their social codes—what they call civilization," rejoined Kingsley. "It takes a long time to get custom out of the blood, especially when it is part of the religion. I'm afraid that expediency isn't the motto of those who try to civilize the Orient and the East."

"I believe in struggling openly for principle," she observed a little acidly.

"Have you succeeded?" he asked, trying to keep his gravity. "How about your own household, for instance? Have you christianized and civilized your people—your niggers, and the others?"

She flushed indignantly, but held herself in control. She rang a bell. "I have no 'niggers,'" she answered quietly. "I have some Berberine servants, two fellah boatmen, an Egyptian gardener, an Arab cook, and a Circassian maid. They are, I think, devoted to me."

A Berberine servant appeared. "Tea, Mahommed," she said. "And tell Madame that Donovan Pasha is here. My cousin admires his excellency so much," she added to Kingsley, laughing. "I have never had any real trouble with them," she continued with a little gesture of pride towards the disappearing Berberine.

"There was the Armenian," put in Dicky slyly; "and the Copt sarraf. They were no credit to their Christian religion, were they?"

"That was not the fault of the religion, but of the

generations of oppression—they lie as a child lies, to escape consequences. Had they not been oppressed they would have been good Christians in practice as in precept."

"They don't steal as a child steals," laughed Dicky. "Armenians are Oriental through and through. They no more understand the Christian religion than the Soudanese understand freedom."

He touched the right note this time. Kingsley flashed a half-startled, half-humorous look at him; the face of the lady became set, her manner delicately frigid. She was about to make a quiet, severe reply, but something overcame her, and her eyes, her face, suddenly glowed. She leaned forward, her hands clasped tightly on her knees—Kingsley could not but note how beautiful and brown they were, capable, handsome, confident hands—and, in a voice thrilling with feeling, said:

"What is there in the life here that gets into the eyes of Europeans and blinds them? The United States spent scores of thousands of lives to free the African slave. England paid millions, and sacrificed ministries and men, to free the slave; and in England, you—you, Donovan Pasha, and men like you, would be in the van against slavery. Yet here, where England has more influence than any other nation——"

"More power, not influence," Dicky interrupted, smiling.

"Here, you endure, you encourage, you approve of it. Here, an Englishman rules a city of slaves in the desert and grows rich out of their labour. What can we say to the rest of the world, while out there in the desert"—her eyes swept over the grey and violet hills—"that man, Kingsley Bey, sets at defiance his

race, his country, civilization, all those things in which he was educated. Egypt will not believe in English civilization, Europe will not believe in her humanity and honesty, so long as he pursues his wicked course."

She turned with a gesture of impatience, and in silence began to pour the tea the servant had brought, with a message that Madame had a headache. Kingsley Bey was about to speak—it was so unfair to listen, and she would forgive this no more readily than she would forgive slavery. Dicky intervened, however.

"He isn't so black as he's painted, personally. He's a rash, inflammable sort of fellow, who has a way with the native—treats him well, too, I believe. Very flamboyant, doomed to failure, so far as his merit is concerned, but with an incredible luck. He gambled, and he lost a dozen times; and then gambled again, and won. That's the truth, I fancy. No real stuff in him whatever."

Their hostess put down her tea-cup, and looked at Dicky in blank surprise. Not a muscle in his face moved. She looked at Kingsley. He had difficulty in restraining himself, but by stooping to give her fox-terrier a piece of cake, he was able to conceal his consternation.

"I cannot—cannot believe it," she said slowly. "The British Consul does not speak of him like that."

"He is a cousin of the Consul," urged Dicky.

"Cousin! What cousin? I never heard—he never told me that."

"Oh, nobody tells anything in Egypt, unless he's kourbashed or thumb-screwed. It's safer to tell nothing, you know."

"Cousin! I didn't know there were Kingsleys in that

family. What reason could the Consul have for hiding the relationship?"

"Oh, I don't know, you must ask Kingsley. Flamboyant and garrulous as he is, he probably won't tell you that."

"If I saw Kingsley Bey, I should ask him questions which interest me more. I should prefer, however, to ask them through a lawyer—to him in the prisoner's dock."

"You dislike him intensely?"

"I detest him for what he has done; but I do not despise him as you suggest I should. Flamboyant, garrulous—I don't believe that! I think him, feel him, to be a hard man, a strong mad, and a bad man—if not wholly bad."

"Yet you would put him in the prisoner's dock," interposed Kingsley musingly, and wondering how he was to tell her that Lord Selden and Kingsley Bey were one and the same person

"Certainly. A man who commits public wrongs should be punished. Yet I am sorry that a man so capable should be so inhuman."

"Ah, your grandfather was inhuman," put in Kingsley "He owned great West Indian slave properties."

"He was culpable, and should have been punished—and was; for we are all poor at last. The world has higher, better standards now, and we should live up to them. Kingsley Bey should live up to them."

"I suppose we might be able to punish him yet," said Dicky meditatively. "If Ismail turned rusty, we could soon settle him, I fancy. Certainly, you present a strong case." He peered innocently into the distance.

"But could it be done—but would you?" she asked, suddenly leaning forward. "If you would, you could —you could!"

"If I did it at all, if I could make up my mind to it, it should be done thoroughly—no half measures."

"What would be the whole measures?" she asked eagerly, but with a certain faint shrinking, for Dicky seemed cold-blooded.

"Of course you never could tell what would happen when Ismail throws the slipper. This isn't a country where things are cut and dried, and done according to Hoyle. You get a new combination every time you pull a string. Where there's no system and a thousand methods you have to run risks. Kingsley Bey might get mangled in the machinery."

She shrank a little. "It is all barbarous."

"Oh, I don't know. He is guilty, isn't he? You said you would like to see him in the prisoner's dock. You would probably convict him of killing as well as slavery. You would torture him with prison, and then hang him in the end. Ismail would probably get into a rage—pretended, of course—and send an army against him. Kingsley would make a fight for it, and lose his head—all in the interest of a sudden sense of duty on the part of the Khedive. All Europe would applaud—all save England, and what could she do? Can she defend slavery? There'll be no kid-gloved justice meted out to Kingsley by the Khedive, if he starts a campaign against him. He will have to take it on the devil's pitchfork. You must be logical, you know. You can't have it both ways. If he is to be punished, it must be after the custom of the place. This isn't England."

She shuddered slightly, and Dicky went on: "Then,

when his head's off, and his desert-city and his mines are no more, and his slaves change masters, comes a nice question. Who gets his money? Not that there's any doubt about who'll get it, but, from your standpoint, who should get it?"

She shook her head in something like embarrassment.

"Money got by slavery—yes, who should get it?" interposed Kingsley carefully, for her eyes had turned to him for help. "Would you favour his heirs getting it? Should it go to the State? Should it go to the slaves? Should it go to a fund for agitation against slavery? . . . You, for instance, could make use of a fortune like his in a cause like that, could you not?" he asked with what seemed boyish simplicity.

The question startled her. "I—I don't know. . . . Oh, certainly not," she hastened to add; "I couldn't touch the money. It is absurd—impossible."

"I can't see that," steadily persisted Kingsley. "This money was made out of the work of slaves. Certainly they were paid—they were, weren't they?" he said with mock ignorance, turning to Dicky, who nodded assent. "They were paid wages by Kingsley—in kind, I suppose, but that's all that's needed in a country like the Soudan. But still they *had* to work, and their lives and bodies were Kingsley's for the time being, and the fortune wouldn't have been made without them; therefore, according to the most finely advanced theories of labour and ownership, the fortune is theirs as much as Kingsley's. But, in the nature of things, they couldn't have the fortune. What would they do with it? Wandering tribes don't need money. Barter and exchange of things in kind is the one form of finance in the Soudan. Besides, they'd cut each other's throats the very first

day they got the fortune, and it would strew the desert sands. It's all illogical and impossible——"

"Oh, yes, I quite see that," she interposed.

"But you surely can see how the fortune could be applied to saving those races from slavery. What was wrung from the few by forced labour and loss of freedom could be returned to the many by a sort of national salvation. You could spend the fortune wisely —agents and missionaries everywhere; in the *cafés*, in the bazaars, in the palace, at court. Judicious gifts: and, at last, would come a firman or decree putting down slavery, on penalty of death. The fortune would all go, of course, but think of the good accomplished!"

"You mean that the fortune should be spent in buying the decree—in backsheesh?" she asked bewildered, yet becoming indignant.

"Well, it's like company promoting," Dicky interposed, hugely enjoying the comedy, and thinking that Kingsley had put the case shrewdly. It was sure to confuse her. "You have to clear the way, as it were. The preliminaries cost a good deal, and those who put the machinery in working order have to be paid. Then there's always some important person who holds the key of the situation; his counsel has to be asked. Advice is very expensive."

"It is gross and wicked!" she flashed out.

"But if you got your way? If you suppressed Kingsley Bey, rid the world of him—oh, well, say, banished him," he quickly added, as he saw her fingers tremble—"and get your decree, wouldn't it be worth while? Fire is fought with fire, and you would be using all possible means to do what you esteem a great

good. Think of it—slavery abolished, your work accomplished, Kingsley Bey blotted out!"

Light and darkness were in her face at once. Her eyes were bright, her brows became knitted, her foot tapped the floor. Of course it was all make-believe, this possibility, but it seemed too wonderful to think of —slavery abolished, and through her; and Kingsley Bey, the renegade Englishman, the disgrace to his country, blotted out.

"Your argument is not sound in many ways," she said at last, trying to feel her course. "We must be just before all. The whole of the fortune was not earned by slaves. Kingsley Bey's ability and power were the original cause of its existence. Without him there would have been no fortune. Therefore, it would not be justice to give it, even indirectly, to the slaves for their cause."

"It would be penalty—Kingsley Bey's punishment," said Dicky slyly.

"Oh, I thought he was to be blotted out," she said ironically, yet brightening, for it seemed to her that she was proving herself statesmanlike, and justifying her woman's feelings as well.

"When he is blotted out, his fortune should go where it can remedy the evil of his life."

"He may have been working for some good cause," quietly put in Kingsley. "Should not that cause get the advantage of his 'ability and power,' as you have called it, even though he was mistaken, or perverted, or cruel? Shouldn't an average be struck between the wrong his 'ability and power' did and the right that same 'ability and power' was intended to advance?"

She turned with admiration to Kingsley. "How

well you argue—I remember you did years ago. I hate slavery and despise and hate slave-dealers and slave-keepers, but I would be just, too, even to Kingsley Bey. But what cause, save his own comfort and fortune, would he be likely to serve? Do you know him?" she added eagerly,

"Since I can remember," answered Kingsley, looking through the field-glasses at a steamer coming up the river.

"Would you have thought that he would turn out as he has?" she asked simply. "You see, he appears to me so dark and baleful a figure that I cannot quite regard him as I regard you, for instance. I could not realize knowing such a man."

"He had always a lot of audacity," Kingsley replied slowly, "and he certainly was a schemer in his way, but that came from his helpless poverty."

"Was he very poor?" she asked eagerly.

"Always. And he got his estates heavily encumbered. Then there were people—old ladies—to have annuities, and many to be provided for, and there was little chance in England for him. Good-temper and brawn weren't enough."

"Egypt's the place for mother-wit," broke in Dicky. "He had that anyhow. As to his unscrupulousness, of course that's as you may look at it."

"Was he always unscrupulous?" she asked. "I have thought him cruel and wicked nationally—un-English, shamefully culpable; but a man who is unscrupulous would do mean low things, and I should like to think that Kingsley is a villain with good points. I believe he has them, and I believe that deep down in him is something English and honourable after all—

something to be reckoned with, worked on, developed. See, here is a letter I had from him two days ago," —she drew it from her pocket and handed it over to Dicky. "I cannot think him hopeless altogether . . . I freed the slaves who brought the letter, and sent them on to Cairo. Do you not feel it is hopeful?" she urged, as Dicky read the letter slowly, making *sotto voce* remarks meanwhile.

"Brigands and tyrants can be gallant—there are plenty of instances on record. What are six slaves to him?"

"He has a thousand to your one," said Kingsley slowly, and as if not realizing his words.

She started, sat up straight in her chair, and looked at him indignantly. "I have no slaves," she said.

Kingsley Bey had been watching the Circassian girl Mata, in the garden for some time, and he had not been able to resist the temptation to make the suggestion that roused her now.

"I think the letter rather high-flown," said Dicky, turning the point, and handing the open page to Kingsley. "It looks to me as though written with a purpose.

"What a cryptic remark!" said Kingsley laughing, yet a little chagrined. "What you probably wish to convey is that it says one thing and means another."

"Suppose it does," interposed the lady. "The fact remains that he answered my appeal, which did not mince words, in most diplomatic and gentlemanly language. What do you think of the letter?" she said, turning to Kingsley, and reaching a hand for it.

"I'll guarantee our friend here could do no better, if he sat up all night," put in Dicky satirically.

"You are safe in saying so, the opportunity being lacking." She laughed, and folded it up.

"I believe Kingsley Bey means what he says in that letter. Whatever his purpose, I honestly think that you might have great influence over him," mused Dicky, and, getting up, stepped from the verandah, as though to go to the bank where an incoming steamer they had been watching was casting anchor. He turned presently, however, came back a step and said:

"You see, all our argument resolves itself into this: if Kingsley is to be smashed only Ismail can do it. If Ismail does it, Kingsley will have the desert for a bed, for he'll not run, and Ismail daren't spare him. Sequel, all his fortune will go to the Khedive. Question, what are we going to do about it?"

So saying he left them, laughing, and went down the garden-path to the riverside. The two on the verandah sat silent for a moment, then Kingsley spoke.

"These weren't the things we talked about when we saw the clouds gather over Skaw Fell and the sun shine on the Irish Sea. We've done and seen much since then. Multitudes have come and gone in the world—and I have grown grey!" he added with a laugh.

"I've done little—nothing, and I meant and hoped to do much," she almost pleaded. "I've grown grey too."

"Not one grey hair," he said, with an admiring look.

"'Grey in spirit sometimes," she reflected with a tired air. "But you—forgive me, if I haven't known what you've done. I've lived out of England so long. You may be at the head of the Government, for all I know.

You look to me as though you'd been a success. Don't smile. I mean it. You look as though you'd climbed. You haven't the air of an eldest son whose way is cut out for him, with fifty thousand a year for compensation. What have you been doing? What has been your work in life?"

"The opposite of yours."

He felt himself a ruffian, but he consoled himself with the thought that the end at which he aimed was good. It seemed ungenerous to meet her simple honesty by such obvious repartee, but he held on to see where the trail would lead.

"That doesn't seem very clear," she said in answer. "Since I came out here I've been a sort of riverine missionary, an apostle with no followers, a reformer with a plan of salvation no one will accept."

"We are not stronger than tradition, than the long custom of ages bred in the bone and practised by the flesh. You cannot change a people by firmans; you must educate them. Meanwhile, things go on pretty much the same. You are a generation before your time. It is a pity, for you have saddened your youth, and you may never live to see accomplished what you have toiled for."

"Oh, as to that—as to that . . ." She smoothed back her hair lightly, and her eyes wandered over the distant hills—mauve and saffron and opal, and tender with the mist of evening. "What does it matter!" she added. "There are a hundred ways to live, a hundred things to which one might devote one's life. And as the years went on we'd realize how every form of success was offset by something undone in another direction, something which would have given us joy and

memory and content—so it seems. But—but we can only really work out one dream, and it is the working out—a little or a great distance—which satisfies. I have no sympathy with those who, living out their dreams, turn regretfully to another course or another aim, and wonder—wonder, if a mistake hasn't been made. Nothing is a mistake which comes of a good aim, of the desire for wrongs righted, the crooked places made straight. Nothing matters so that the dream was a good one and the heart approves, and the eyes see far."

She spoke as though herself in a dream, her look intent on the glowing distance, as though unconscious of his presence.

"It's good to have lived among mountains and climbed them when you were young. It gives you bigger ideas of things. You could see a long way with the sun behind you, from Skaw Fell."

He spoke in a low voice, and her eyes drew back from the distance and turned on him. She smiled.

"I don't know. I suppose it gives one proportion, though I've been told by Donovan Pasha and the Consul that I have no sense of proportion. What difference does it make? It is the *métier* of some people of this world to tell the truth, letting it fall as it will, and offend where it will, to be in a little unjust maybe, measure wrongly here and there, lest the day pass and nothing be done. It is for the world to correct, to adjust, to organize, to regulate the working of the truth. One person cannot do all."

Every minute made him more and more regretful, while it deepened his feelings for her. He saw how far removed was her mind from the sordid views of

things, and how sincere a philosophy governed her actions and her mission.

He was about to speak, but she continued: "I suppose I've done unwise things from a worldly, a diplomatic, and a political point of view. I've—I've broken my heart on the rock of the impossible, so my father says. . . . But, no, I haven't broken my heart. I have only given it a little too much hope sometimes, too much disappointment at others. In any case—can one be pardoned for quoting poetry in these days? I don't know, I've been so long out of the world:

> Bruised hearts when all is ended,
> Bear the better all after-stings;
> Broken once, the citadel mended
> Standeth through all things.

I'm not—not hopeless, though I've had a long hard fight here in Egypt; and I've done so little." . . . She kept smoothing out the letter she had had from Kingsley Bey, as though unconsciously. "But it is coming, the better day. I know it. Some one will come who will do all that I have pleaded for—stop the *corvée* and give the peasants a chance; stop slavery, and purify the harem and start the social life on a higher basis; remove a disgrace from the commerce of an afflicted land; remove—remove once for all such men as Kingsley Bey; make it impossible for fortunes to be made out of human flesh and blood." She had the rapt look of the dreamer. Suddenly she recovered her more worldly mood: "What are you doing here?" she added. "Have you come to take up official life? Have you some public position—of responsibility? Oh, perhaps,"—she laughed almost merrily—"you are the

very man; the great reformer. Perhaps you think and feel as I do, though you've argued against me. Perhaps you only wanted to see how real my devotion to this cause is. Tell me, are you only a tourist—I was going to say idler, but I know you are not; you have the face of a man who does things—are you tourist or worker here? What does Egypt *mean* to you? That sounds rather nonconformist, but Egypt, to me, is the saddest, most beautiful, most mysterious place in the world. All other nations, all other races, every person in the world should be interested in Egypt. Egypt is the lost child of Creation—the dear, pitiful waif of genius and mystery of the world. She has kept the calendar of the ages—has outlasted all other nations, and remains the same as they change and pass. She has been the watcher of the world, the one who looks on, and suffers, as the rest of the nations struggle for and wound her in their turn. What does Egypt mean to you? What would you do for her—anything?"

There was no more satirical laughter in his eyes. He was deeply in earnest, disturbed, even excited.

"Egypt means everything in the world to me. I would do what I could for her."

"What has she done for you?"

"She has brought me to you again—to make me know that what you were by Skaw Fell all those years ago, you are now, and a thousand times more."

She parried the dangerous meaning in his voice, refused to see the tenderness in his manner.

"I'm very sorry to hear that," she added in a tone vainly trying to be unconcerned. "It is a pity that our youth pursues us in forms so little desirable. . . .

Who are they?" she added quickly, nodding towards the shore, from which Dicky was coming with an Egyptian officer and a squad of soldiers.

"H'm," he responded, laughing, "it looks like a matter of consequence. A pasha, I should think, to travel with an escort like that."

"They're coming here," she added and, calling to her servant, ordered coffee.

Suddenly Kingsley got to his feet, with a cry of consternation; but sat down again smiling with a shrug of the shoulders.

"What is it?" she asked, with something like anxiety, for she had seen the fleeting suspicion in his look.

"I don't know," he answered lightly, and as though the suspicion had gone. He watched Dicky and his companions closely, however, though he chatted unconcernedly while they stood in apparent debate, and presently came on. Dicky was whistling softly, but with an air of perplexity, and he walked with a precision of step which told Kingsley of difficulty ahead.

He had not long to wait, and as Dicky drew nearer and looked him in the eyes, he came to his feet again, his long body gathering itself slowly up, as though for deliberate action. He felt trouble in the air, matters of moment, danger for himself, though of precisely what sort was not clear. He took a step forward, as though to shield the lady from possible affront.

"I fancy they want to see me," he said. He recognized the officer—Foulik Pasha of the Khedive's household.

The Pasha salaamed. Dicky drew over to the lady, with a keen warning glance at Kingsley. The Pasha salaamed again, and Kingsley responded in kind.

"Good day to you, Pasha," he said.

"May the dew of the morning bring flowers to your life, excellency," was the reply. He salaamed now towards the lady, and Kingsley murmured his name to her.

"Will you not be seated?" she said, and touched a chair as though to sit down, yet casting a doubtful glance at the squad of men and the brilliant kavass drawn up near by. The Pasha looked from one to the other, and Kingsley spoke.

"What is it, Pasha? Her ladyship doesn't know why she should be honoured."

"Ah, that makes no difference," she interposed. "Here is coffee—ah, that's right, cigarettes too! But, yes, you will take my coffee, Pasha," she urged.

The insolent look which had gathered in the man's face cleared away. He salaamed, hesitated, and took the coffee, then salaamed again to her.

She had caught at a difficulty; an instinctive sense of peril had taken possession of her; and, feeling that the danger was for the Englishman who had come to her out of her old life, she had interposed a diplomatic moment. She wanted to gain time before the mystery broke over her. She felt something at stake for herself. Premonition, a troubling of the spirit told her that she was in the presence of a crisis out of which she would not come unchanged.

Dicky was talking now, helping her—asking the Pasha questions of his journey up the river, of the last news from Europe, of the Khedive's health, though he and Kingsley had only left Cairo a half-day before the Pasha.

The officer thanked the lady and salaamed again, then turned towards Kingsley.

"You wished to speak with me, perhaps, Pasha," said Kingsley.

"If a moment of your time may have so little honour, saadat el bey."

Kingsley moved down the verandah shoulder to shoulder with the Pasha, and the latter's men, responding to a glance, moved down also. Kingsley saw, but gave no heed.

"What's up, Pasha?" he asked in a low voice.

"The Khedive commands your return to Cairo."

"With you?"

"So, effendi."

"Compulsion, eh? I don't see quite. I'm an Englishman, not a fellah."

"But I have my commands, saadat el bey."

"What's the row, Pasha?"

"Is it for the servant to know the mind of his master?"

"And if I don't go?"

The Pasha pointed to his men, and motioned towards the boat where forty or fifty others showed

"Bosh, Pasha! That's no reason. That's flummery, and you know and the Highness knows it. That would have been all very well in the desert, but this is not the desert, and I'm not doing business with the Highness any more. What's the penalty if I don't go?"

"Twenty men will lose their heads to-morrow morning, a riot will occur, the bank where much gold is will be broken into, some one will be made poor, and——"

"Oh, never mind twaddle about my money—we'll see about that. Those twenty men—my men?"

" Your men, saadat el bey."

" They're seized ? "

" They are in prison."

" Where ? "

" At Abdin Palace."

Kingsley Bey had had a blow, but he was not dumfounded. In Egypt, the wise man is never surprised at anything, and Kingsley had gone from experience to experience without dismay. He realized the situation at once. The Khedive had been worked upon by some one in the circle, and had put on this pressure, for purposes of backsheesh, or blackmail, or whatever it might be called. His mind was made up at once.

" Very well, Pasha. Though there's no reason why I should go with you except to suit myself. You'll excuse me for a moment ? " He turned back.

Meanwhile Dicky had been distracting the mind of the lady with evasive and cheerful suggestion of urgent business calling Kingsley to Cairo. He saw the plot that had been laid, and it made him very angry, but nothing could be done until he met the Khedive. He guessed who had filled the Khedive's mind with cupidity. He had seen old Selamlik Pasha, who had lent the Khedive much money, entering the Palace as he left with Kingsley Bey thirty-six hours before. He had hope that he could save the situation, but meanwhile, he was concerned for the new situation created here at Assiout. What would Kingsley do ? He knew what he himself would do in the circumstances, but in crises few men of character do the necessary thing in exactly the same way. Here was comedy of a high order, a mystery and necessary revelation of singular piquancy. To his thinking the revelation was now overdue.

He looked at the woman beside him, and he saw in her face a look it never had had before. Revelation of a kind was there; beauty, imagination, solicitude, delicate wonder were there. It touched him. He had never been arrested on his way of life by any dream of fair women, or any dream of any woman. It did not seem necessary—no one was necessary to him: he lived his real life alone, never sharing with any one that of himself which was not part of the life he lived before the world. Yet he had always been liked by men, and he had been agreeable in the sight of more women than he knew, this little man with a will of iron and a friendly heart. But he laughed silently now as he saw Kingsley approaching; the situation was so beautifully invented. It did not seem quite like a thing in real life. In any other country than Egypt, it would have been comic opera—Foulik Pasha and his men so egregiously important; Kingsley so overwhelmed by the duty that lay before him; the woman in a whimsically embarrassing position with the odds, the laugh, against her, yet little likely to take the obvious view of things and so make possible a commonplace end. What would she do? What would Kingsley do? What would he, Dicky Donovan, do? He knew by the look in Kingsley's eyes that it was time for him to go. He moved down to Foulik Pasha, and, taking his arm, urged him towards the shore with a whispered word. The Pasha responded, followed by his men, but presently turned and, before Dicky could intervene—for he wanted Kingsley to make his own revelation—said courteously:

"May the truth of Allah be with you, I will await you at the boat, Kingsley Bey."

Dicky did not turn round, but, with a sharp exclamation of profanity, drew Foulik Pasha on his imbecile way.

As for Kingsley Bey, he faced a woman who, as the truth dawned upon her, stared at him in a painful silence for a moment, and then drew back to the doorway of the house as though to find sudden refuge.

Kingsley's head went round. Nothing had gone according to his anticipations. Foulik Pasha had upset things.

"Now you know—I wished to tell you myself," he said.

She answered at once, quietly, coldly, and with an even formal voice: "I did not know your name was Kingsley."

"It was my grandmother's name."

"I had forgotten—that is of no consequence, however; but——" she stopped.

"You realize that I am——"

"Oh, of course, Kingsley Bey—I quite understand. I thought you Lord Selden, an English gentleman. You are——" she made an impatient gesture—"well, you are English still!"

He was hit hard. The suggestion of her voice was difficult to bear.

"I am not so ungentlemanly as you think. I meant to tell you—almost at once. I thought that as an old friend I might wait a moment or two. The conversation got involved, and it grew harder every minute. Then Foulik Pasha came—and now. . . ."

She showed no signs of relenting. "It was taking advantage of an old—acquaintance. Against your evil influence here I have been working for years, while

you have grown rich out of the slavery I detest. You will pardon my plain speaking, but this is not London, and one has had to learn new ways in this life here. I do not care for the acquaintance of slave-drivers, I have no wish to offer them hospitality. The world is large, and it belongs to other people, and one has to endure much when one walks abroad; but this house is my own place, a little spot all my own, and I cherish it. There are those who come to the back-door, and they are fed and clothed and sent away by the hand of charity; there are those who come to the front-door, and I welcome them gladly—all that I have is theirs; there are those who come to a side-door, when no one sees, and take me unawares, and of them I am afraid, their presence I resent. My doors are not open to slave-drivers."

"What is the difference between the letter from the slave-driver's hand and the slave-driver himself?"

She started and flushed deeply. She took the letter slowly from her pocket and laid it on the table.

"I thought it a letter from a man who was *openly* doing wrong, and who repented a little of his wrong-doing. I thought it a letter from a stranger, from an Englishman who, perhaps, had not had such advantages of birth and education as came to you."

"Yet you had a good opinion of the letter. There seemed no want of education and all that there—won't you be reasonable, and let me explain? Give me half a chance."

"I do not see that explanation can mend anything. The men you sent me to free; that was a—well, call it a manœuvre, to achieve what, I cannot tell. Is it not so? The men are not free. Is it not so?"

"I am afraid they are not free," he answered, smiling in spite of himself.

"Your coming here was a manœuvre also—for what purpose I do not know. Yet it was a manœuvre, and I am—or was to be—the victim of the plot." She smiled scornfully. "I trust you may yet be the victim of your own conduct."

"In more ways than one, maybe. Don't you think, now that the tables are turned, that you might have mercy on 'a prisoner and a captive'?"

She looked at him inquiringly, then glanced towards the shore where Dicky stood talking with Foulik Pasha. Her eyes came back slowly and again asked a question. All at once intelligence flashed into them.

"You wished to see Kingsley Bey a prisoner; you have your wish," he said, smiling.

"Whose prisoner?" she asked, still coldly.

"The Khedive's."

A flash of triumph crossed her face. Her heart beat hard. Had it come at last, the edict to put down slavery? Had the Khedive determined to put an end to the work of Kingsley Bey in his desert-city—and to Kingsley Bey himself? . . . Her heart stopped beating now. She glanced towards Dicky Donovan, and her pulses ran more evenly again. Would the Khedive have taken such a step unless under pressure? And who in Egypt could have, would have, persuaded him, save Dicky Donovan? Yet Dicky was here with his friend Kingsley Bey. The mystery troubled her, and the trouble got into her eyes.

"You are going to Cairo?" she said, glancing towards the boat.

"It would seem so."

"And Donovan Pasha goes too?"

"I hope so. I am not sure."

"But he *must* go," she said a little sharply.

"Yes?"

"He—you must have somebody, and he has great power."

"That might or might not be to my benefit. After all, what does it matter?"—He saw that she was perturbed, and he pressed his advantage.

She saw, however, and retreated. "We reap as we sow," she said, and made as if to go inside the house. "You have had the game, you must pay for the candles out of your earnings."

"I don't mind paying what's fair. I don't want other people to pay."

She turned angrily on him, he could not tell why. "You don't want others to pay! As if you could do anything that doesn't affect others. Did you learn that selfishness at Skaw Fell, or was it born with you? You are of those who think they earn all their own success and happiness, and then, when they earn defeat and despair, are surprised that others suffer. As if our penalties were only paid by ourselves! Egotism, vanity! So long as you have your dance, it matters little to you who pays for the tune."

"I am sorry." He was bewildered; he had not expected this.

"Does a man stoop to do in a foreign land what he would not do in his own country—dare not do?—One is so helpless—a woman! Under cover of an old friendship—ah!" She suddenly turned, and, before he could say a word, disappeared inside the house. He spoke her name once, twice; he ventured inside the

house, and called, but she did not come. He made his way to the verandah, and was about to leave for the shore, when he heard a step behind him. He turned quickly. It was the Circassian girl, Mata.

He spoke to her in Arabic, and she smiled at him.

"What is it?" he said, for he saw she had come from her mistress.

"My lady begs to excuse—but she is tired," she said in English, which she loved to use.

"I am to go on—to prison, then?"

"I suppose. It has no matter. My lady is angry. She has to say, 'Thank you, good-bye.' So, good-bye," she added naïvely, and held out her hand.

Kingsley laughed, in spite of his discomfiture, and shook it.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am my lady's slave," she said proudly.

"Oh, no—her servant. You can come and go as you like. You have wages."

"I am Mata, the slave—my lady's slave. All the world knows that I am her slave. Was I not given her by the Khedive whose slave I was? May the leaves of life be green always, but I am Mata the slave," she said stubbornly, shaking her head.

"Do you tell my lady so?"

"Wherefore should I tell my lady what she knows? Is not the truth the truth?—good-night! I had a brother who went to prison. His grave is by Stamboul. Good-night, effendi. He was too young to die, but he had gold, and the Captain of the Citadel needed money. So, he had to die. *Malaish!* He is in the bosom of God, and prison does not last forever. Good-night, effendi. If you, effendi, are poor, it is well; no

man will desire your life. Then you can be a slave, and have quiet nights. If you are rich, effendi, remember my brother. Good-night, effendi. May sacrifices be yours . . . and my lady says good-night."

Kingsley gave her a gold-piece and went down to Foulik Pasha.

As they steamed away Kingsley looked in vain to the house on the shore. There was no face at window or door, no sign of life about the place.

"Well, my bold bey," said Donovan Pasha to him at last. "What do you think of Egypt now?"

"I'm not thinking of Egypt now."

"Did the lady deeply sympathize? Did your prescription work?"

"You know it didn't. Nothing worked. This fool Foulik came at the wrong moment."

"It wouldn't have made any difference. You see you were playing with marked cards, and that is embarrassing. You got a certificate of character by——"

"Oh, I know. That's what she said. Never mind. I've played as I meant to play, and I'll abide the result. I said I'd marry her, and I mean to, though she gently showed me the door—beautiful, proud person!"

"She is much too good for you."

"What does that matter, if she doesn't think so?"

"My opinion is she'll never touch you or your slave-gold with a mile-measure."

Dicky did not think this, but it was his way of easing his own mind. Inwardly he was studying the situation, and wondering how he could put Kingsley's business straight.

"She thinks I'm still a 'slave-driver,' as she calls it—women are so innocent. You did your part as well

as could be expected, I'm bound to say. I only wish I wasn't so much trouble to you. I owe you a lot, Dicky Pasha—everything! You got me the golden shillings to start with; you had faith in me; you opened the way to fortune, to the thing that's more than fortune, to success."

"I'm not altogether proud of you. You've messed things to-day."

"I'll set them right to-morrow—with your help. Ismail is going a bit large this time."

"He is an Oriental. A life or two—think of Sadik Pasha. Your men——"

"Well? You think he'd do it—think he'd dare to do it?"

"Suppose they disappeared? Who could prove that Ismail did it? And if it could be proved—they're his own subjects, and the Nile is near! Who can say him nay?"

"I fancy you could—and I would!"

"I can do something. I've done a little in my day; but my day, like Ismail's, is declining. They are his subjects, and he needs money, and he puts a price on their heads—that's about the size of it. Question: how much will you have to pay? How much have you in Cairo at the bank?"

"Only about ten thousand pounds."

"He'd take your draft on England, but he'll have that ten thousand pounds, if he can get it."

"That doesn't matter, but as for my arrest——"

"A trick, on some trumped-up charge. If he can hold you long enough to get some of your cash, that's all he wants. He knows he's got no jurisdiction over you—not a day's hold. He knows you'd give a good deal to save your men."

"Poor devils! But to be beaten by this Egyptian bull-dozer—not if I know it, Dicky!"

"Still, it may be expensive."

"Ah!" Kingsley Bey sighed, and his face was clouded, but Dicky knew he was not thinking of Ismail or the blackmail. His eyes were on the house by the shore, now disappearing, as they rounded a point of land.

"Ah!" said Donovan Pasha, but he did not sigh.

III

"Ah!" said a lady, in a dirty pink house at Assiout, with an accent which betrayed a discovery and a resolution, "I will do it. I may be of use some way or another. The Khedive won't dare—but still the times are desperate. As Donovan Pasha said, it isn't easy holding down the safety-valve all the time, and when it flies off, there will be dark days for all of us . . . An old friend—bad as he is! Yes, I will go."

Within forty-eight hours of Donovan Pasha's and Kingsley Bey's arrival in Cairo, the lady appeared there, and made inquiries of her friends. No one knew anything. She went to the Consulate, and was told that Kingsley Bey was still in prison, that the Consulate had not yet taken action.

She went to Donovan Pasha, and he appeared far more mysterious and troubled than he really was. Kingsley Bey was as cheerful as might be expected, he said, but the matter was grave. He was charged with the destruction of the desert city, and maintaining an army of slaves in the Khedive's dominions—a menace to the country.

"But it was with the Khedive's connivance," she said.

"Who can prove that? It's a difficult matter for England to handle, as you can see."

This was very wily of Dicky Donovan, for he was endeavouring to create alarm and sympathy in the woman's mind, by exaggerating the charge. He knew that in a few days at most Kingsley Bey would be free. He had himself given Ismail a fright, and had even gone so far as to suggest inside knowledge of the plans of Europe concerning Egypt. But if he could deepen the roots of this comedy for Kingsley's benefit—and for the lady's—it was his duty so to do.

"Of course," he made haste to add, "you cannot be expected to feel sympathy for him. In your eyes, he is a criminal. He had a long innings, and made a mint of money. We must do all we can, and, of course, we'll save his life—ah, I'm sure you wouldn't exact the fullest penalty on him!"

Dicky was more than wily; he was something wicked. The suggestion of danger to Kingsley's life had made her wince, and he had added another little barbed arrow to keep the first company. The cause was a good one. Hurt now to heal afterwards—and Kingsley was an old friend, and a good fellow. Anyhow, this work was wasting her life, and she would be much better back in England, living a civilized life, riding in the Row, and slumming a little, in the East End, perhaps, and presiding at meetings for the amelioration of the unameliorated. He was rather old-fashioned in his views. He saw the faint trouble in her eyes and face, and he made up his mind that he would work while it was yet the day. He was about to speak, but she suddenly interposed a question.

"Is he comfortable? How does he take it?"

"Oh, all right. You know the kind of thing: mud walls and floor—quite dry, of course—and a sleeping-mat, and a balass of water, and cakes of dourha, and plenty of time to think. After all, he's used to primitive fare."

Donovan Pasha was drawing an imaginary picture, and drawing it with effect. He almost believed it as his artist's mind fashioned it. She believed it, and it tried her. Kingsley Bey was a criminal, of course, but he was an old friend; he had offended her deeply also, but that was no reason why he should be punished by any one save herself. Her regimen of punishments would not necessarily include mud-walls and floor, and a sleeping-mat and a balass of water; and whatever it included it should not be administered by any hand save her own. She therefore resented, not quite unselfishly, this indignity and punishment the Khedive had commanded.

"When is he to be tried?"

"Well, that is hardly the way to put it. When he can squeeze the Khedive into a corner he'll be free, but it takes time. We have to go carefully, for it isn't the slave-master alone, it's those twenty slaves of his, including the six you freed. Their heads are worth a good deal to the Khedive, he thinks."

She was dumfounded. "I don't understand," she said helplessly.

"Oh, the Khedive put your six and fourteen others in prison for treason or something—it doesn't matter much here what it is. His game is to squeeze Kingsley's gold orange dry, if he can."

A light broke over her face. "Oh, now I see," she said, and her face flushed deeply with anger and indig-

nation. "And you—Donovan Pasha, you who are supposed to have influence with the Khedive, who are supposed to be an *English* influence over him, you can speak of this quietly, patiently as a matter possible to your understanding. This barbarous, hideous blackmail! This cruel, dreadful tyranny! You, an Englishman, remain in the service of a man who is guilty of such a crime!" Her breath came hard.

"Well, it seems the wisest thing to do as yet. You have lived a long time in Egypt, you should know what Oriental rule is. Question—is a bite of a cherry better than no bite of a cherry? Egypt is like a circus, but there are wild horses in the ring, and you can't ride them just as you like. If you keep them inside the barriers, that's something. Of course, Kingsley made a mistake in a way. He didn't start his desert-city and his slavery without the consent of the Khedive; he shouldn't have stopped it and gone out of business without the same consent. It cut down the Effendina's tribute."

He spoke slowly, counting every word, watching the effect upon her. He had much to watch, and he would have seen more if he had known women better.

"He has abandoned the mines — his city — and slavery?" she said chokingly, confusedly. It seemed hard for her to speak.

"Oh, yes, didn't you know? Didn't he tell you?"

She shook her head. She was thinking back—remembering their last conversation, remembering how sharp and unfriendly she had been with him. He had even then freed his slaves, had given her slaves to free.

"I wonder what made him do it?" added Dicky. "He had made a great fortune—poor devil, he needed

it, for the estates were sweating under the load. I wonder what made him do it ? "

She looked at him bewilderedly for a moment, then, suddenly, some faint suspicion struck her.

" You should know. You joined with him in deceiving me at Assiout."

" Oh, no," he responded quickly, and with rare innocence, " the situation was difficult. You already knew him very well, and it was the force of circumstances—simply the force of circumstances. Bad luck —no more. He was innocent, mine was the guilt. I confess I was enjoying the thing, because—because, you see he had deceived me, actually deceived me, his best friend. I didn't know he knew you personally, till you two met on that verandah at Assiout, and——"

" And you made it difficult for him to explain at once —I remember."

" I'm afraid I did. I've got a nasty little temper at times, and I had a chance to get even. Then things got mixed, and Foulik Pasha upset the whole basket of plums. Besides, you see, I'm a jealous man, an envious man, and you never looked so well as you did that day, unless it's to-day."

She was about to interrupt him, but he went on.

" I had begun to feel that we might have been better friends, you and I ; that—that I might have helped you more ; that you had not had the sympathy you deserved ; that civilization was your debtor, and that I——"

" No, no, no, you must not speak that way to me," she interposed with agitation. " It—it is not necessary. It doesn't bear on the matter. And you've always been a good friend—always a good friend," she added with

a little friendly quiver in her voice, for she was not quite sure of herself.

Dicky had come out in a new rôle, one wherein he would not have been recognised. It was probably the first time he had ever tried the delicate social art of playing with fire of this sort. It was all true in a way, but only in a way. The truest thing about it was that it was genuine comedy, in which there were two villains, and no hero, and one heroine.

"But there it is," he repeated, having gone as far as his cue warranted. "I didn't know he had given up his desert-city till two days before you did, and I didn't know he knew you, and I don't know why he gave up his desert-city—do you?"

There was a new light in her eyes, a new look in her face. She was not sure but that she had a glimmering of the reason. It was a woman's reason, and it was not without a certain exquisite egotism and vanity, for she remembered so well the letter she had written him, —every word was etched into her mind; and she knew by heart every word of his reply. Then there were the six slaves he sent to her—and his coming immediately afterwards. . . . For a moment she seemed to glow, and then the colour slowly faded and left her face rather grey and very quiet.

He might not be a slave-driver now, but he had been one—and the world of difference it made to her! He had made his great fortune out of the work of the men employed as slaves, and—she turned away to the window with a dejected air. For the first time the real weight of the problem pressed upon her heavily.

"Perhaps you would like to see him," said Dicky. "It might show that you were magnanimous."

"Magnanimous! It will look like that—in a mud-cell, with mud floor, and a piece of matting."

"And a balass of water and dourha-cakes," said Dicky in a childlike way, and not daring to meet her eyes.

He stroked his moustache with his thumb-nail in a way he had when perplexed. Kingsley Bey was not in a mud-cell, with a mat and a balass of water, but in a very decent apartment indeed, and Dicky was trying to work the new situation out in his mind. The only thing to do was to have Kingsley removed to a mud-cell, and not let him know the author of his temporary misfortune and this new indignity. She was ready to visit him now—he could see that. He made difficulties, however, which would prevent their going at once, and he arranged with her to go to Kingsley in the late afternoon.

Her mind was in confusion, but one thing shone clear through the confusion, and it was the iniquity of the Khedive. It gave her a foot-hold. She was deeply grateful for it. She could not have moved without it. So shameful was the Khedive in her eyes that the prisoner seemed Criminal made Martyr.

She went back to her hotel flaming with indignation against Ismail. It was very comforting to her to have this resource. The six slaves whom she had freed—the first-fruits of her labours: that they should be murdered! The others who had done no harm, who had been slaves by Ismail's consent, that they should be now in danger of their lives through the same tyrant! That Kingsley Bey, who had been a slave-master with Ismail's own approval and to his advantage, should now—she glowed with pained anger. . . . She would not wait till she

had seen Kingsley Bey, or Donovan Pasha again; she herself would go to Ismail at once.

So, she went to Ismail, and she was admitted, after long waiting in an anteroom. She would not have been admitted at all, if it had not been for Dicky who, arriving just before her on the same mission, had seen her coming, and guessed her intention. He had then gone in to the Khedive with a new turn to his purposes, a new argument and a new suggestion, which widened the scope of the comedy now being played. He had had a struggle with Ismail, and his own place and influence had been in something like real danger, but he had not minded that. He had suggested that he might be of service to Egypt in London and Paris. That was very like a threat, but it was veiled by a look of genial innocence which Ismail admired greatly. He knew that Donovan Pasha could hasten the crisis coming on him. He did not believe that Donovan Pasha would, but that did not alter the astuteness and value of the move; and, besides, it was well to run no foolish risks and take no chances. Also, he believed in Donovan Pasha's honesty. He despised him in a worldly kind of way, because he might have been rich and splendid, and he was poor and unassuming. He wanted Kingsley Bey's fortune, or a great slice of it, but he wanted it without a struggle with Dicky Donovan, and with the British Consulate—for that would come, too, directly. It gave him no security to know that the French would be with him—he knew which country would win in the end. He was preying on Kingsley Bey's humanity, and he hoped to make it well worth while. And all he thought and planned was well understood by Dicky.

Over their coffee they both talked from long distances

towards the point of attack and struggle, Ismail carelessly throwing in glowing descriptions of the palaces he was building. Dicky never failed to show illusive interest, and both knew that they were not deceiving the other, and both came nearer to the issue by devious processes, as though these processes were inevitable. At last Dicky suddenly changed his manner and came straight to the naked crisis.

"Highness, I have an invitation for Kingsley Bey to dine at the British Consulate to-night. You can spare his presence?"

"My table is not despicable. Is he not comfortable here?"

"Is a mud floor, with bread and water and a sleeping-mat, comfortable?"

"He is lodged like a friend."

"He is lodged like a slave—in a cell."

"They were not my orders."

"Effendina, the orders were mine."

"Excellency!"

"Because there were no orders and Foulik Pasha was sleepless with anxiety lest the prisoner should escape, fearing your Highness' anger, I gave orders and trusted your Highness to approve."

Ismail saw a mystery in the words, and knew that it was all to be part of Dicky's argument in the end.

"So be it, excellency," he said, "thou hast breathed the air of knowledge, thine actions shine. In what quarter of the Palace rests he? And Foulik Pasha?"

"Foulik Pasha sits by his door, and the room is by the doorway where the sarrafs keep the accounts for the palaces your Highness builds. Also, abides near,

the Greek, who toils upon the usury paid by your Highness to Europe."

Ismail smiled. The allusions were subtle and piercing. There was a short pause. Each was waiting.

Dicky changed the attack. "It is a pity we should be in danger of riot at this moment, Highness."

"If riots come, they come. It is the will of God, excellency. But in our hand lies order. We will quiet the storm, if a storm fall."

"There will be wreck somewhere."

"So be it. There will be salvage."

"Nothing worth a riot, Highness."

The Khedive eyed Dicky with a sudden malice and desire to slay—to slay even Donovan Pasha. He did not speak, and Dicky continued negligently: "Prevention is better than cure."

The Khedive understood perfectly. He knew that Dicky had circumvented him, and had warned the Bank.

Still the Khedive did not speak. Dicky went on. "Kingsley Bey deposited ten thousand pounds—no more. But the gold is not there; only Kingsley Bey's credit."

"His slaves shall die to-morrow morning."

"Not so, Highness."

The Khedive's fingers twisted round the chair-arm savagely.

"Who will prevent it?"

"Your Highness will. Your Highness could not permit it—the time is far past. Suppose Kingsley Bey gave you his whole fortune, would it save one palace or pay one tithe of your responsibilities? Would it lengthen the chain of safety?"

"I am safe."

"No, Highness. In peril—here with your own people in Europe with the nations. Money will not save you."

"What then?"

"Prestige. Power—the Soudan. Establish yourself in the Soudan with a real army. Let your name be carried to the Abyssinian mountains as the voice of the eagle."

"Who will carry it?" He laughed disdainfully, with a bitter hopeless kind of pride. "Who will carry it?"

"Gordon—again."

The Khedive started from his chair, and his sullen eye lighted to laughter. He paced excitedly to and fro for a minute, and then broke out.

"Thou hast said it! Gordon—Gordon—if he would but come again!—But it shall be so, by the beard of God's prophet! It shall. Thou hast said the thing that has lain in my heart. Have I had honour in the Soudan since his feet were withdrawn? Where is honour and tribute and gold since his hand ruled—alone without an army. It is so—*Inshallah!* but it is so. He shall come again, and the people's eyes will turn to Khartoum and Darfur and Kordofan, and the greedy nations will wait. Ah, my friend, but the true inspiration is thine. I will send for Gordon to-night—even to-night. Thou shalt go—no, no, not so. Who can tell—I might look for thy return in vain! But who—who, to carry my word to Gordon?"

"Your messenger is in the anteroom," said Dicky with a sudden thought.

"Who is it, son of the high hills?"

"The lady at Assiout—she who is such a friend to Gordon as I am to thee, Highness."

"She whose voice and hand are against slavery."

"Even so. It is good that she return to England—there to remain. Send her."

"Why is she here?" The Khedive looked suspiciously at Dicky, for it seemed that a plot had been laid.

Thereupon Dicky told the Khedive the whole story, and not in years had Ismail's face shown such abandon of humour.

"By the will of God, but it shall be," he said. "She shall marry Kingsley Bey, and he shall go free."

"But not till she has seen him and mourned over him in his cell, with the mud floor and the balass of water."

The Khedive laughed outright and swore in French. "And the cakes of dourha! I will give her as a parting gift the twenty slaves, and she shall bring her great work to a close in the arms of a slaver. It is worth a fortune."

"It is worth exactly ten thousand pounds to your Highness—ten thousand pounds neither more nor less."

Ismail questioned.

"Kingsley Bey would make last tribute of thus much to your Highness."

Ismail would not have declined ten thousand centimes. "*Malaish!*" he said, and called for coffee, while they planned what should be said to his Ambassadress from Assiout.

She came trembling, yet determined, and she left with her eyes full of joyful tears. She was to carry the news of his freedom and the freedom of his slaves to Kingsley Bey, and she—she, was to bear to Gordon, the foe of slavery, the world's benefactor, the message

that he was to come and save the Soudan. Her vision was enlarged, and never went from any prince a more grateful supplicant and envoy.

Donovan Pasha went with her to the room with the mud floor where Kingsley Bey was confined.

"I owe it all to you," she said, as they hastened across the sunswept square. "Ah, but you have atoned! You have done it all at once, after these long years."

"Ah, well, the time is ripe," said Dicky piously.

They found Kingsley Bey reading the last issue of the French newspaper published in Cairo. He was laughing at some article in it abusive of the English, and seemed not very downcast; but at a warning sign and look from Dicky, he became as grave as he was inwardly delighted at seeing the lady of Assiout.

As Kingsley Bey and the Ambassadress shook hands, Dicky said to her: "I'll tell him, and then go."

Forthwith he said: "Kingsley Bey, son of the desert, and unhappy prisoner, the prison opens its doors. No more for you the cold earth for a bed—relieved though it be by a sleeping-mat. No more the cake of dourha and the balass of Nile water. *Inshallah*, you are as free as a bird on the mountain top, to soar to far lands and none to say thee nay."

Kingsley Bey caught instantly at the meaning lying beneath Dicky's whimsical phrases, and he deported himself accordingly. He looked inquiringly at the Ambassadress, and she responded.

"We come from the Khedive, and he bids us carry you his high considerations——"

"Yes, 'high considerations,' he said," interjected Dicky with his eye towards a fly on the ceiling.

"And to beg your company at dinner to-night."

"And the price?" asked Kingsley, feeling his way carefully, for he wished no more mistakes where this lady was concerned. At Assiout he had erred; he had no desire to be deceived at Cairo. He did not know how he stood with her, though her visit gave him audacious hopes. Her face was ruled to quietness now, and only in the eyes resolutely turned away was there any look which gave him assurance. He seemed to hear her talking from the verandah that last day at Assiout; and it made him discreet at least.

"Oh, the price!" murmured Dicky, and he seemed to study the sleepy sarraf who pored over his accounts in the garden. "The price is 'England, home and beauty.' Also, to prop up the falling towers of Khedivia —ten thousand pounds! Also, Gordon."

Kingsley Bey appeared, as he was, mystified but he was not inclined to spoil things by too much speaking. He looked inquiry.

At that moment an orderly came running towards the door—Dicky had arranged for that. Dicky started, and turned to the lady. "You tell him. This fellow is coming for me. I'll be back in a quarter of an hour." He nodded to them both and went out to the orderly, who followed his footsteps to the Palace.

"You've forgiven me for everything—for everything at Assiout, I mean?" he said.

"I have no desire to remember," she answered.

"About Gordon—what is it?"

"Ah, yes, about Gordon." She drew herself up a little. "I am to go to England—for the Khedive, to ask Gordon to save the Soudan."

"Then you've forgiven the Khedive?" he said with apparent innocence.

"I've no wish to prevent him showing practical repentance," she answered, keenly alive to his suggestion, and a little nettled. "It means no more slavery. Gordon will prevent that."

"Will he?" asked Kingsley, again with muffled mockery.

"He is the foe of slavery. How many, many letters I have had from him! He will save the Soudan—and Egypt too."

"He will be badly paid—the Government will stint him. And he will give away his pay—if he gets any."

She did not see his aim, and her face fell. "He will succeed for all that."

"He can levy taxes, of course."

"But he will not—for himself."

"I will give him twenty thousand pounds, if he will take it."

"You—you!—will give him——" Her eyes swam with pleasure. "Ah, that is noble! That makes wealth a glory, to give it to those who need it. To save those who are down-trodden, to help those who labour for the good of the world, to——" she stopped short, for all at once she remembered—remembered whence his money came. Her face suffused. She turned to the door. Confusion over-mastered her for the moment. Then, anger at herself possessed her. On what enterprise was she now embarked? Where was her conscience? For what was she doing all this? What was the true meaning of her actions? Had it been to circumvent the Khedive? To prevent him from doing an unjust, a despicable, and a dreadful thing? Was it only to help the Soudan? Was it but to serve a high ideal, through an ideal life—through Gordon?

It came upon her with embarrassing force. For none of these things was she striving. She was doing all for this man, against whose influence she had laboured, whom she had bitterly condemned, and whose fortune she had called blood-money and worse. And now . . . !

She knew the truth, and it filled her heart with joy and also pain. Then she caught at a straw: he was no slave-driver now. He had——

"May I not help you—go with you to England?" he said over her shoulder.

"Like Alexander Selkirk 'I shall finish my journey alone,'" she said, with sudden but imperfectly assumed acerbity.

"Will you not help me, then?" he asked. "We could write a book together."

"Oh, a book!" she said.

"A book of life," he whispered.

"Oh, no, no, no—can't you see?—oh, you are playing me like a ball!"

"Only to catch you," he said, in a happier tone.

"To jest, when I am so unhappy!" she murmured.

"My jest is the true word."

She made a last rally. "Your fortune was made out of slave labour."

"I have given up the slaves."

"You have the fortune."

"I will give it all to you—to have your will with it. Now it is won, I would give it up and a hundred times as much to hear you say, 'Come to Skaw Fell again.'"

Did he really mean it? She thought he did. And it seemed the only way out of the difficulty. It broke the impasse.

It was not necessary, however, to spend the future in the way first suggested to her mind. They discussed all that at Skaw Fell months later.

Human nature is weak and she has become a slave-driver, after all. But he is her only slave, and he hugs his bondage.

A YOUNG LION OF DEDAN

I

LOOKING from the minaret the Two could see, far off, the Pyramids of Ghizeh and Sakkara, the wells of Helouan, the Mokattam Hills, the tombs of the Caliphs, the Khedive's palace at distant Abbasiyeh. Nearer by, the life of the city was spread out. Little green oases of palms emerged from the noisy desert of white stone and plaster. The roofs of the houses, turned into gardens and promenades, made of the huge superficial city one broken irregular pavement. Minarets of mosques stood up like giant lamp-posts along these vast, meandering streets. Shiftless housewives lolled with unkempt hair on the housetops; women of the harem looked out of the little mushrabieh panels in the clattering, narrow bazaars.

Just at their feet was a mosque—one of the thousand nameless mosques of Cairo. It was the season of Ramadán, and a Friday, the Sunday of the Mahommedan—the Ghimah.

The "Two" were Donovan Pasha, then English

Secretary to the Khedive, generally known as "Little Dicky Donovan," and Captain Renshaw, of the American Consulate. There was no man in Egypt of so much importance as Donovan Pasha. It was an importance which could neither be bought nor sold.

Presently Dicky touched the arm of his companion. "There it comes!" he said.

His friend followed the nod of Dicky's head, and saw, passing slowly through a street below, a funeral procession. Near a hundred blind men preceded the bier, chanting the death-phrases. The bier was covered by a faded Persian shawl, and it was carried by the poorest of the Fellaheen, though in the crowd following were many richly-attired merchants of the bazaars. On a cart laden with bread and rice two Fellaheen stood and handed, or tossed out, food to the crowd—token of a death in high places. Vast numbers of people rambled behind chanting, and a few women, near the bier, tore their garments, put dust on their heads, and kept crying: "*Salem ala ahali!*—Remember us to our friends!"

Walking immediately behind the bier was one conspicuous figure, and there was a space around him which none invaded. He was dressed in white, like an Arabian Mahommedan, and he wore the green turban of one who has been the pilgrimage to Mecca.

At sight of him Dicky straightened himself with a little jerk, and his tongue clicked with satisfaction. "Isn't he, though? isn't he?" he said, after a moment. His lips, pressed together, curled in with a trick they had when he was thinking hard, planning things.

The other forebore to question. The notable figure had instantly arrested his attention, and held it until it passed from view.

"Isn't he, though, Yankee?" Dicky repeated, and pressed a knuckle tightly in the other's waistcoat.

"Isn't he what?"

"Isn't he bully—in your own language?"

"In figure; but I couldn't see his face distinctly."

"You'll see that presently. You could cut a whole Egyptian Ministry out of that face, and have enough left for an American president or the head of the Salvation Army. In all the years I've spent here I've never seen one that could compare with him in nature, character, and force. A few like him in Egypt, and there'd be no need for the money barbers of Europe."

"He seems an *ooster* here—you know him?"

"Do I!" Dicky paused and squinted up at the tall Southerner. "What do you suppose I brought you out from your Consulate for to see?—the view from Ebn Mahmoud? And you call yourself a cute Yankee?"

"I'm no more a Yankee than you are, as I've told you before," answered the American with a touch of impatience, yet smilingly. "I'm from South Carolina, the first State that seceded."

"Anyhow, I'm going to call you Yankee, to keep you nicely disguised. This is the land of disguises."

"Then we did not come out to see the view?" the other drawled. There was a quickening of the eye, a drooping of the lid, which betrayed a sudden interest, a sense of adventure.

Dicky laid his head back and laughed noiselessly. "My dear Renshaw, with all Europe worrying Ismail, with France in the butler's pantry and England at the front door, do the bowab and the sarraf go out to take air on the housetops, and watch the sun set on the Pyramids, and make a rainbow of the desert? I am the

bowab and the sarraf, the man-of-all-work, the Jack-of-all-trades, the 'confidential' to the Oriental spend-thrift. Am I a dog to bay the moon?—have I the soul of a tourist from Liverpool or Poughkeepsie?"

The lanky Southerner gripped his arm. "There's a hunting song of the South," he said, "and the last line is, '*The hound that never tires.*' You are that, Donovan Pasha——"

"I am 'little Dicky Donovan,' so they say," interrupted the other.

"You are the weight that steadies things in this shaky Egypt. You are you, and you've brought me out here because there's work of some kind to do, and because——"

"And because you're an American, and we speak the same language."

"And our Consulate is all right, if needed, whatever it is. You've played a square game in Egypt. You're the only man in office who hasn't got rich out of her, and——"

"I'm not in office."

"You're the power behind the throne, you're——"

"I'm helpless—worse than helpless, Yankee. I've spent years of my life here. I've tried to be of some use, and play a good game for England; and keep a conscience too, but it's been no real good. I've only staved off the crash. I'm helpless, now. That's why I'm here."

He leaned forward, and looked out of the minaret and down towards the great locked gates of the empty mosque.

Renshaw put his hand on Dicky's shoulder. "It's the man in white yonder you're after?"

Dicky nodded. "It was no use as long as *she* lived But she's dead—her face was under that old Persian shawl—and I'm going to try it on."

"Try what on?"

"Last night I heard she was sick. I heard at noon to-day that she was gone; and then I got you to come out and see the view!"

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Make him come back."

"From where?"

"From the native quarter and the bazaars. He was for years in Abdin Palace."

"What do you want him for?"

"It's a little gamble for Egypt. There's no man in Egypt Ismail loves and fears so much——"

"Except little Dicky Donovan!"

"That's all twaddle. There's no man Ismail fears so much, because he's the idol of the *cafés* and the bazaars. He's *the* Egyptian in Egypt to-day. You talk about me? Why, I'm the foreigner, the Turk, the robber, the man that holds the lash over Egpyt. I'd go like a wisp of straw if there was an uprising."

"Will there be an uprising?" The Southerner's fingers moved as though they were feeling a pistol.

"As sure as that pyramid stands. Everything depends on the kind of uprising. I want one kind. There may be another."

"That's what you are here for?"

"Exactly."

"Who is he?"

"Wait."

"What is his story?"

"She was." He nodded towards the funeral procession.

"Who was she?"

"She was a slave." Then, after a pause, "She was a genius too. She saw what was in him. She was waiting—but death couldn't wait, so . . . Everything depends. What she asked him to do, he'll do."

"But if she didn't ask?"

"That's it. She was sick only seventeen hours—sick unto death. If she didn't ask, he may come my way."

Again Dicky leaned out of the minaret, and looked down towards the gates of the mosque, where the old gatekeeper lounged half-asleep. The noise of the procession had died away almost, had then revived, and from beyond the gates of the mosque could be heard the cry of the mourners: "*Salem, ala ahali!*"

There came a knocking, and the old porter rose up, shuffled to the great gates, and opened. For a moment he barred the way, but when the bearers pointed to the figure in white he stepped aside and salaamed low.

"He is stone deaf, and hasn't heard, or he'd have let her in fast enough," said Dicky.

"It's a new thing for a woman to be of importance in an Oriental country," said Renshaw.

"Ah, that's it! That's where her power was. She, with him, could do anything. He, with her, could have done anything. . . . Stand back there, where you can't be seen—quick!" added Dicky hurriedly.

They both drew into a corner.

"I'm afraid it was too late. He saw me," added Dicky.

"I'm afraid he did," said Renshaw.

"Never mind. It's all in the day's work. He and I are all right. The only danger would lie in the crowd

discovering us in this holy spot, where the Muezzin calls to prayer, and giving us what for, before he could interfere."

"I'm going down from this 'holy spot,'" said Renshaw, and suited the action to the word.

"Me too, Yankee," said Dicky, and they came half way down the tower. From this point they watched the burial, still well above the heads of the vast crowd, through which the sweetmeat and sherbet-sellers ran, calling their wares and jangling their brass cups.

"What is his name?" said Renshaw.

"Abdalla."

"Hers?"

"Noor-ala-Noor."

"What does that mean?"

"Light from the Light."

II

The burial was over. Hundreds had touched the coffin, taking a last farewell. The blind men had made a circle round the grave, hiding the last act of ritual from the multitude. The needful leaves, the graceful pebbles, had been deposited, the myrtle leaves and flowers had been thrown, and rice, dates, bread, meat, and silver pieces were scattered among the people. Some poor men came near to the chief mourner.

"Oh, effendi, may our souls be thy sacrifice, and may God give coolness to thine eyes, speak to us by the will of God!"

For a moment the white-robed figure stood looking at them in silence; then he raised his hand and motioned towards the high pulpit, which was almost underneath

the place where Dicky and Renshaw stood. Going over, he mounted the steps, and the people followed and crowded upon the pulpit.

"A nice jack-pot that," said Renshaw, as he scanned the upturned faces through the opening in the wall. "A pretty one-eyed lot."

"Shows how they love their country. Their eyes were put out by their mothers when they were babes, to avoid conscription. . . . Listen, Yankee: Egypt is talking. Now, we'll see!"

Dicky's lips were pressed tight together, and he stroked his faint moustache with a thumb-nail meditatively. His eyes were not on the speaker, but on the distant sky, the Mokattam Hills and the forts Napoleon had built there. He was listening intently to Abdalla's high, clear voice, which rang through the courts of the ruined mosque.

"In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful, children of Egypt, listen. Me ye have known years without number, and ye know that I am of you, as ye are of me. Our feet are in the same shoes, we gather from the same date-palm, of the same goolah we drink. My father's father—now in the bosom of God, praise be to God!—builded this mosque; and my father, whose soul abides in peace with God, he cherished it till evil days came upon this land. '*Be your gifts to this mosque neither of silver nor copper, but of tears and prayers,*' said my father, Ebn Abdalla, e'er he unrolled his green turban and wound himself in it for his winding-sheet. '*Though it be till the Karadh-gatherers return, yet shall ye replace nor stone nor piece of wood, save in the gates thereof, till good days come once more, and the infidel and the Turk be driven from the land.*' Thus spake my father. . . ."

There came a stir and a murmuring among the crowd,

and cries of *Allah Akbar!* "Peace peace!" urged the figure in white. "Nay, make no noise. This is the house of the dead, of one who hath seen God. . . . '*Nothing shall be repaired, save the gates of the mosque of Ebn Mahmoud, the mosque of my father's father,*' so said my father. Also said he, '*And one shall stand at the gates and watch, though the walls crumble away, till the day when the land shall again be our land, and the chains of the stranger be forged in every doorway.*' . . . But no, ye shall not lift up your voices in anger. This is the abode of peace, and the mosque is my mosque, and the dead my dead."

"The dead is our dead, effendi—may God give thee everlasting years!" called a blind man from the crowd.

Up in the tower Dicky had listened intently, and as the speech proceeded his features contracted; once he gripped the arm of Renshaw.

"It's coming on to blow," he said, in the pause made by the blind man's interruption. "There'll be shipwreck somewhere."

"Ye know the way by which I came," continued Abdalla loudly. "Nothing is hid from you. I came near to the person of the Prince, whom God make wise while yet the stars of his life give light! In the palace of Abdin none was preferred before me. I was much in the sun, and mine eyes were dazzled. Yet in season I spake the truth, and for you I laboured. But not as one hath a life to give and seeks to give it. For the dazzle that was in mine eyes hid from me the fulness of your trials. But an end there was to these things. *She* came to the palace a slave—Noor-ala-Noor. . . . Nay, nay, be silent still, my brothers. Her soul was the soul of one born free. On her lips was wisdom. In her heart was truth like a flaming sword. To the Prince she spoke

not as a slave to a slave, but in high level terms. He would have married her, but her life lay in the hollow of her hand, and the hand was a hand to open and shut according as the soul willed. She was ready to close it so that none save Allah might open it again. Then in anger the Prince would have given her to his bowab at the gates, or to the Nile, after the manner of a Turk or a Persian tyrant—may God purge him of his loathsomeness! . . ."

He paused, as though choking with passion and grief, and waved a hand over the crowd in agitated command.

"Here's the old sore open at last—which way now?" said Dicky in a whisper. "It's the toss of a penny where he'll pull up. As I thought . . . 'Sh!" he added, as Renshaw was about to speak.

Abdalla continued. "Then did I stretch forth my hand, and, because I loved her, a slave with the freedom of God in her soul and on her face, I said, 'Come with me,' and behold! she came, without a word, for our souls spake to each other, as it was in the olden world, ere the hearts of men were darkened. I, an Egyptian of a despised and down-trodden land, where all men save the rich are slaves, and the rich go in the fear of their lives; she, a woman from afar, of that ancient tribe who conquered Egypt long ago—we went forth from the palace alone and penniless. He, the Prince, dared not follow to do me harm, for my father's father ye knew, and my father ye knew, and me ye knew since I came into the world, and in all that we had ye shared while yet we had to give; yea, and he feared ye. We lived among ye, poor as ye are poor, yet rich for that Egypt was no poorer because of us." He waved his hand as though to still the storm he was raising. . . . "If ye call aloud, I will drive ye from this place of peace, this garden

of her who was called Light from the Light. It hath been so until yesterday, when God stooped and drew the veil from her face, and she dropped the garment of life and fled from the world. . . . Go, go hence," he added, his voice thick with sorrow. "But ere ye go, answer me, as ye have souls that desire God and the joys of Paradise, will ye follow where I go, when I come to call ye forth? Will ye obey, if I command?"

"By the will of God, thou hast purchased our hearts; we will do thy will for ever," was the answer of the throng.

"Go then, bring down the infidels that have stood in the minaret above, where the Muezzin calls to prayer;" sharply called Abdalla, and waved an arm towards the tower where Dicky and Renshaw were.

An oath broke from the lips of the Southerner; but Dicky smiled. "He's done it in style," he said. "Come along." He bounded down the steps to the doorway before the crowd had blocked the way. "They might toss us out of that minaret," he added, as they both pushed their way into the open.

"You take too many risks, effendi," he called up to Abdalla in French, as excited Arabs laid hands upon them, and were shaken off. "Call away these fools!" he added coolly to the motionless figure watching from the pulpit stairs.

Cries of "Kill! kill the infidels!" resounded on all sides; but Dicky called up again to Abdalla. "Stop this nonsense, effendi." Then, without awaiting an answer, he shouted to the crowd: "I am Donovan Pasha. Touch me, and you touch Ismail. I haven't come to spy, but to sorrow with you for Noor-ala-Noor, whose soul is with God, praise be to God, and may God

give her spirit to you! I have come to weep for him in whom greatness speaks; I have come for love of Abdalla the Egyptian. . . . Is it a sin to stand apart in silence and to weep unseen? Was it a sin against the Moslem faith that in this minaret I prayed God to comfort Abdalla, grandson of Ebn Mahmoud, Egyptian of the Egyptians? Was it not I who held Ismail's hand, when he—being in an anger—would have scoured the bazaars with his horsemen for Abdulla and Noor-ala-Noor? This is known to Abdalla, whom God preserve and exalt. Is not Abdalla friend to Donovan Pasha?"

Dicky was known to hundreds present. There was not a merchant from the bazaars but had had reason to appreciate his presence, either by friendly gossip over a cup of coffee, or by biting remarks in Arabic, when they lied to him, or by the sweep of his stick over the mastaba and through the chattels of some vile-mouthed pedlar who insulted English ladies whom he was escorting through the bazaar. They knew his face, his tongue, and the weight and style of his arm; and though they would cheerfully have seen him the sacrifice of the Jehad to the cry of *Alláhu Akbar!* they respected him for himself, and they feared him because he was near to the person of Ismail.

He was the more impressive because in the midst of wealth and splendour he remained poor: he had more than once bought turquoises and opals and horses and saddlery, which he paid for in instalments, like any little merchant. These, therefore, who knew him, were well inclined to leave him alone, and those who did not know him were impressed by his speech. If it was true that he was friend to Abdalla, then his fate was in the hand of God,

not theirs. They all had heard of little Donovan Pasha, whom Ismail counted only less than Gordon Pasha, the mad Englishman, who emptied his pocket for an old servant, gave his coat to a beggar, and rode in the desert so fast that no Arab could overtake him.

"Call off your terriers, effendi," said Dicky again in French; for Renshaw was restive under the hands that were laid on his arm, and the naboots that threatened him. "My friend here is American. He stands for the United States in Egypt."

Abdalla had not moved a muscle during the disturbance, or during Dicky's speech. He seemed but the impassive spectator, though his silence and the look in his eyes were ominous. It would appear as though he waited to see whether the Englishman and his friend could free themselves from danger. If they could, then it was God's will; if they could not, *Malaish!* Dicky understood. In this he read Abdalla like a parchment, and though he had occasion to be resentful, he kept his nerves and his tongue in an equable mood. He knew that Abdalla would speak now. The Egyptian raised his hand.

"In the name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful, go your ways," he said loudly. "It is as Donovan Pasha says, he stayed the hand of Ismail for my sake. Noor-ala-Noor, the Light from the Light, saw into his heart, and it was the honest heart of a fool. And these are the words of the Koran, That the fool is one whom God has made His temple for a season, thereafter withdrawing. None shall injure the temple. Were not your hearts bitter against him, and when he spoke did ye not soften? He hath no inheritance of Paradise, but God shall blot him out in His own time. *Bismillah!* God

cool his resting-place in that day. Donovan Pasha's hand is for Egypt, not against her. We are brothers, though the friendship of man is like the shade of the acacia. Yet while the friendship lives, it lives. When God wills it to die, it dies. . . ." He waved his hand towards the gateway, and came slowly down the steep steps.

With a curious look in his eyes, Dicky watched the people go. Another curious look displaced it and stayed, as Abdalla silently touched his forehead, his lips and his heart three times, and then reached out a hand to Dicky and touched his palm. Three times they touched palms, and then Abdalla saluted Renshaw in the same fashion, making the gestures once only.

From the citadel came the boom of the evening gun. Without a word Abdalla left them, and, going apart, he turned his face toward Mecca and began his prayers. The courtyard of the mosque was now empty, save for themselves alone.

The two walked apart near the deserted fountain in the middle of the courtyard. "*The friendship of man is like the shade of the acacia. Yet while the friendship lives, it lives. When God wills it to die, it dies!*" mused Dicky with a significant smile. "Friendship walks on thin ice in the East, Yankee."

"See here, Donovan Pasha, I don't like taking this kind of risk without a gun," said Renshaw.

"You're an official, a diplomat; you can't carry a gun."

"It's all very fine, but it was a close shave for both of us. You've got an object—want to get something out of it. But what do I get for my money?"

"Perhaps the peace of Europe. Perhaps a page of

reminiscences for the *New York World.* Perhaps some limelight chapters of Egyptian history. Perhaps a little hari-kari. Don't you feel it in the air?" Dicky drew in a sibilant breath. "All this in any other country would make you think you were having a devil of a time. It's on the regular 'menoo' here, and you don't get a thrill."

"The peace of Europe—Abdalla has something to do with that?"

"Multiply the crowd here a thousand times as much, and that's what he could represent in one day. Give him a month, and every man in Egypt would be collecting his own taxes where he could find 'em. Abdalla there could be prophet and patriot to-morrow, and so he will be soon, and to evil ends, if things don't take a turn. That Egyptian-Arab has a tongue, he has brains, he has sorrow, he loved Noor-ala-Noor. Give a man the egotism of grief, and eloquence, and popularity, and he'll cut as sharp as the khamsin wind. The dust he'll raise will blind more eyes than you can see in a day's march, Yankee. You may take my word for it."

Renshaw looked at Dicky thoughtfully. "You're wasting your life here. You'll get nothing out of it. You're a great man, Donovan Pasha, but others 'll reap where you sowed."

Dicky laughed softly. "I've had more fun for my money than most men of my height and hair——" he stroked his beardless chin humorously. "And the best is to come, Yankee. This show is cracking. The audience are going to rush it."

Renshaw laid a hand on his shoulder. "Pasha, to tell you God's truth, I wouldn't have missed this for anything; but what I can't make out is, why you

brought me here. You don't do things like that for nothing. You bet you don't. You'd not put another man in danger, unless *he* was going to get something out of it, or somebody was. It looks so damned useless. You've done your little job by your lonesome, anyhow. I was no use."

"Your turn comes," said Dicky, flashing a look of friendly humour at him. "America is putting her hand in the dough—through you. You'll know, and your country 'll know, what's going on here in the hum of the dim bazaars. Ismail's got to see how things stand, and you've got to help me tell him. You've got to say I tell the truth, when the French gentlemen, who have their several spokes in the Egyptian wheel, politely say I lie. Is it too much, or too little, Yankee?"

Renshaw almost gulped. "By Jerusalem!" was all he could say. "And we wonder why the English swing things as they do!" he growled, when his breath came freely.

Abdalla had finished his prayers; he was coming towards them. Dicky went to meet him.

"Abdalla, I'm hungry," he said; "so are you. You've eaten nothing since sunset, two days ago."

"I am thirsty, saadat el basha," he answered, and his voice was husky. "Come, I will give you to eat, by the goodness of God."

It was the time of Ramadán, when no Mahommedan eats food or touches liquid from the rising to the going down of the sun. As the sunset-gun boomed from the citadel, lids had been snatched off millions of cooking-pots throughout the land, and fingers had been thrust into the meat and rice of the evening feast, and

their owner had gulped down a bowl of water. The smell of a thousand cooking-pots now came to them over the walls of the mosque. Because of it, Abdalla's command to the crowd to leave had been easier of acceptance. Their hunger had made them dangerous. Danger was in the air. The tax-gatherers had lately gone their rounds, and the agents of the Mouffetish had wielded the kourbash without mercy and to some purpose. It was perhaps lucky that the incident had occurred within smell of the evening feasts and near the sounding of the sunset-gun.

III

A half-hour later, as Abdalla thrust his fingers into the dish and handed Dicky a succulent cucumber filled with fried meat, the latter said to him: "It is the wish of the Effendina, my friend. It comes as the will of God; for even as Noor-ala-Noor journeyed to the bosom of God by your will, and by your prayers, being descended from Mahomet as you are, even then Ismail, who knew naught of your sorrow, said to me, 'In all Egypt there is one man, and one only, for whom my soul calls to go into the desert with Gordon,' and I answered him and said, '*Inshallah*, Effendina, it is Abdalla, the Egyptian.' And he laid his hand upon his head—I have seen him do that for no man since I came into his presence—and said: 'My soul calls for him. Find him and bid him to come. Here is my ring.'"

Dicky took from his pocket a signet-ring, which bore a passage from the Koran, and laid it beside Abdalla's drinking-bowl.

"What is Ismail to me—or the far tribes of the Soudan! Here are my people," was the reply. Abdalla motioned to the next room, where the blind men ate their evening meal, and out to the dimly lighted streets where thousands of narghilehs and cigarettes made little smoky clouds that floated around white turbans and dark faces. "When they need me, I will speak; when they cry to me, I will unsheathe the sword of Ebn Mahmoud, who fought with Mahomet Ali and saved the land from the Turk."

Renshaw watched the game with an eagerness unnoticeable in his manner. He saw how difficult was the task before Dicky. He saw an Oriental conscious of his power, whose heart was bitter, and whose soul, in its solitude, revolted and longed for action. It was not moved by a pure patriotism, but what it was moved by served. That dangerous temper, which would have let Dicky, whom he called friend, and himself go down under the naboots of the funeral multitude, with a *Malaish* on his tongue, was now in leash, ready to spring forth in the inspired hour; and the justification need not be a great one. Some slight incident might set him at the head of a rabble which would sweep Cairo like a storm. Yet Renshaw saw, too, that once immersed in the work his mind determined on, the Egyptian would go forward with relentless force. In the excitement of the moment it seemed to him that Egypt was hanging in the balance.

Dicky was eating sweetmeats like a girl. He selected them with great care. Suddenly Abdalla touched his hand. "Speak on. Let all thy thoughts be open—stay not to choose, as thou dost with the sweetmeats. I will choose; do thou offer without fear. I would

not listen to Ismail; to thee I am but as a *waled* to bear thy shoes in my hand."

Dicky said nothing for a moment, but appeared to enjoy the comfit he was eating. He rolled it over his tongue, and his eyes dwelt with a remarkable simplicity and childlike friendliness on Abdalla. It was as though there was really nothing vital at stake. . . . Yet he was probing, probing without avail, into Abdalla's mind and heart, and was never more at sea in his life. It was not even for Donovan Pasha to read the Oriental thoroughly. This man before him had the duplicity or evasion of the Oriental; delicately in proportion to his great ability, yet it was there—though in less degree than in any Arab he had ever known. It was the more dangerous because so subtle. It held surprise—it was an unknown quantity. The most that Dicky could do was to feel subtly before him a certain cloud of the unexpected. He was not sure that he deceived Abdalla by his simple manner, yet that made little difference. The Oriental would think not less of him for dissimulation, but rather more. He reached over and put a comfit in the hand of Abdalla.

"Let us eat together," he said, and dropped a comfit into his own mouth.

Abdalla ate, and Dicky dipped his fingers in the basin before them, saying, as he lifted them again: "I will speak as to my brother. Ismail has staked all on the Soudan. If, in the will of God, he is driven from Berber, from Dongola, from Khartoum, from Darfûr, from Kassala, his power is gone. Egypt goes down like the sun at evening. Ismail will be like a withered gourd. To establish order and peace and revenue there, he is sending the man his soul loves, whom the nations trust,

to the cities of the desert. If it be well with Gordon, it will be well with the desert-cities. But Gordon asks for one man—an Egyptian—who loves the land and is of the people, to speak for him, to counsel with him, to show the desert tribes that Egypt gives her noblest to rule and serve them. There is but one man—Abdalla, the Egyptian. A few years yonder in the desert —power, glory, wealth won for Egypt, the strength of thine arms known, the piety of thy spirit proven, thy name upon every tongue—on thy return, who then should fear for Egypt ? "

Dicky was playing a dangerous game, and Renshaw almost shrank from his words. He was firing the Egyptian's mind, but to what course he knew not. If to the Soudan, well ; if to remain, what conflagration might not occur ! Dicky staked all.

" Here, once more, among thy people, returned from conquest and the years of pilgrimage in the desert, like a prophet of old, thy zeal would lead the people, and once more Egypt should bloom like the rose. Thou wouldst be sirdar, mouffetish, pasha, all things soever. This thou wouldst be and do, thou, Abdalla the Egyptian."

Dicky had made his great throw ; and he sat back, perhaps a little paler, than was his wont, but apparently serene, and earnest and steady.

The effect upon Abdalla could only be judged by his eyes, which burned like fire as they fixed upon Dicky's face. The suspense was painful, for he did not speak for a long time. Renshaw could have shrieked with excitement. Dicky lighted a cigarette and tossed a comfit at a pariah dog. At last Abdalla rose. Dicky rose with him.

"Thou, too, hast a great soul, or mine eyes are liars," Abdalla said. "Thou lovest Egypt also. This Gordon—I am not his friend. I will not go with him. But if thou goest also with Gordon, then I will go with thee. If thou dost mean well by Egypt, and thy words are true, thou also wilt go. As thou speakest, let it be."

A mist came before Dicky's eyes—the world seemed falling into space, his soul was in a crucible. The struggle was like that of a man with death, for this must change the course of his life, to what end God only knew. All that he had been to Egypt, all that Egypt had been to him came to him. But he knew that he must not pause. Now was his moment, and now only. Before the mist had cleared from his eyes he gave his hand into Abdalla's.

"In God's name, so be it. I also will go with Gordon, and thou with me," he said.

HE WOULD NOT BE DENIED

"HE was achin' for it—turrible achin' for it—an' he would not be denied!" said Sergeant William Connor, of the Berkshire Regiment, in the sergeants' mess at Suakim, two nights before the attack on McNeill's zeriba at Tofrik.

"Serve 'im right. Janders was too bloomin' suddint," skirled Henry Withers of the Sick Horse Depôt from the bottom of the table.

"Too momentary, I believe you," said Corporal Billy Bagshot.

At the Sick Horse Depôt Connor had, without good cause, made some disparaging remarks upon the charger ridden by Subadar Goordit Singh at the fight at Dihilbat Hill, which towers over the village of Hashin. Subadar Goordit Singh heard the remarks, and, loving his welted, gibbet-headed charger as William Connor loved any woman who came his way, he spat upon the ground the sergeant's foot covered, and made an evil-smiling remark. Thereupon Connor laid siege to the white-toothed, wild-bearded Sikh with words which suddenly came to renown, and left not a shred of glory to the garment of vanity the hillman wore.

He insinuated that the Sikh's horse was wounded at Hashin from behind by backing too far on the Guards' Brigade on one side and on the Royal Mounted Infantry on the other. This was ungenerous and it was not true, for William Connor knew well the reputation of the Sikhs; but William's blood was up, and the smile of the Subadar was hateful in his eyes. The truth was that the Berkshire Regiment had had its chance at Dihilbat Hill and the Sikhs had not. But William Connor refused to make a distinction between two squadrons of Bengal Cavalry which had been driven back upon the Guards' square and the Sikhs who fretted on their bits, as it were.

The Berkshire Regiment had done its work in gallant style up the steep slopes of Dihilbat, had cleared the summit of Osman Digna's men, and followed them with a raking fire as they retreated wildly into the mimosa bushes on the plain. The Berkshires were not by nature proud of stomach, but Connor was a popular man, and the incident of the Sick Horse Depôt, as reported by Corporal Bagshot, who kept a diary and

a dictionary, tickled their imagination, and they went forth and swaggered before the Indian Native Contingent, singing a song made by Bagshot and translated into Irish idiom by William Connor. The song was meant to humiliate the Indian Native Contingent, and the Sikhs writhed under the raillery and looked black—so black that word was carried to McNeill himself, who sent orders to the officers of the Berkshire Regiment to give the offenders a dressing down; for the Sikhs were not Fellaheen, to be heckled with impunity.

That was why, twenty-four hours after the offending song was made, it was suppressed; and in the sergeants' mess William Connor told the story how, an hour before, he had met Subadar Goordit Singh in the encampment, and the Subadar in a rage at the grin on Connor's face had made a rush at him, which the Irishman met with his foot, spoiling his wind. That had ended the incident for the moment, for the Sikh remembered in time, and William Connor had been escorted "Berkshire way" by Corporal Bagshot and Henry Withers. As the tale was told over and over again, there came softly from the lips of the only other Irishman in the regiment, Jimmy Coolin, a variant verse of the song that the great McNeill had stopped:

> "Where is the shame of it,
> Where was the blame of it,
> William Connor dear?"

It was well for Graham, Hunter, McNeill, and their brigades that William Connor and the Berkshires and the Subadar Goordit Singh had no idle time in which to sear their difficulties, for, before another khamsin

gorged the day with cutting dust, every department of the Service, from the Commissariat to the Balloon Detachment, was filling marching orders. There was a collision, but it was the agreeable collision of preparation for a fight, for it was ordained that the Berkshires and the Sikhs should go shoulder to shoulder to establish a post in the desert between Suakim and Tamai.

"D'ye hear that, William Connor dear?" said Private Coolin when the orders came. "An' y'll have Subadar Goordit Singh with his kahars and his bhistis and his dhooly bearers an' his Lushai dandies an' his bloomin' bullock-carts steppin' on y'r tail as ye travel, Misther Connor!"

"Me tail is the tail of a kangaroo; I'm strongest where they tread on me, Coolin," answered Connor. "An' drinkin' the divil's chlorides from the tins of the mangy dhromedairy has turned me insides into a foundry. I'm metal-plated, Coolin."

"So ye'll need if ye meet the Subadar betune the wars!"

"Go back to y'r condinsation, Coolin. Bring water to the thirsty be gravitation an' a four-inch main, an' shtrengthen the sowl of the Subadar wid hay cake, for he'll want it agin the day he laves Tamai behind! Go back to y'r condinsation, Coolin, an' take truth to y'r soul that there's many ways to die, an' one o' thim's in the commysariat, Coolin—shame for ye!"

Coolin had been drafted into the Commissariat and was now variously employed, but chiefly at the Sandbag Redoubt, where the condensing ship did duty, sometimes at the south-east end of the harbour where the Indian Contingent watered. Coolin hated the duty, and because he was in a bitter mood his tongue was like a leaf of aloe.

"I'll be drinkin' condinsed spirits an' 'atin' hay cake whin the vultures do be peckin' at what's lift uv ye whin the Subadar's done wid ye. I'd a drame about ye last noight, William Connor dear—three times I dramed it."

Suddenly Connor's face was clouded. "Whist, thin, Coolin," said he hoarsely. "Hadendowas I've no fear uv, an' Subadars are Injy nagurs anyhow, though fellow-soldiers uv the Quane that's good to shtand befront uv biscuit-boxes or behoind thim; an' wan has no fear of the thing that's widout fear, an' death's iron enters in aisy whin mortial strength's behoind it. But drames—I've had enough uv drames in me toime, I have that, Coolin!" He shuddered a little. "What was it ye dramed again, Coolin? Was there anything but the dramin'—anny noise, or sound, or spakin'?"

Coolin lied freely, for to disturb William Connor was little enough compensation for being held back at Suakim while the Berkshires and the Sikhs were off for a scrimmage in the desert.

"Nothin' saw I wid open eye, an' nothin' heard," he answered; "but I dramed twice that I saw ye lyin' wid y'r head on y'r arm and a hole in y'r jacket. Thin I waked suddin', an' I felt a cold wind goin' over me—three toimes; an' a hand was laid on me own face, an' it was cold an' smooth—like the hand uv a Sikh, William Connor dear."

Connor suddenly caught Coolin's arm. "D'ye say that!" said he. "Shure, I'll tell ye now why the chills rin down me back whin I hear uv y'r drame. Thrue things are drames, as I'll prove to ye—as quare as condinsation an' as thrue, Coolin; fer condinsation comes out uv nothin', and so do drames . . . There was Mary

Haggarty, Coolin—ye'll not be knowin' Mary Haggarty. It was mornin' an' evenin' an' the first day uv the world where she were. That was Mary Haggarty. An' ivery shtep she tuk had the spring uv the first sod of Adin. Shure no, ye didn't know Mary Haggarty, an' ye niver will, Coolin, fer the sod she trod she's lyin' under, an' she'll niver rise up no more."

"Fer choice I'll take the sod uv Erin to the sand uv the Soudan," said Coolin.

"Ye'll take what ye can get, Coolin; fer wid a splinterin' bullet in y'r gizzard ye lie where ye fall."

"But Mary Haggarty, Connor?"

"I was drinkin' hard, ye understand, Coolin—drinkin', loike a dhromedairy—ivery day enough to last a wake, an' Mary tryin' to stop me betoimes. At last I tuk the pledge—an' her on promise. An' purty, purty she looked thin, an' shtepping loight an' foine, an' the weddin' was coming an. But wan day there was a foire, an' the police coort was burned down, an' the gaol was that singed they let the b'ys out, an' we rushed the police an' carried off the b'ys, an'——"

"An' ye sweltered in the juice!" broke in Coolin with flashing eyes, proud to have roused Connor to this secret tale, which he would tell to the Berkshires as long as they would listen, that it should go down through a long line of Berkshires, as Coolin's tale of William Connor.

"An' I sweltered in the swill," said Connor, his eye with a cast quite shut with emotion, and the other nearly so. "An' wance broke out agin afther tin months' goin' wake and watery, was like a steer in the corn. There was no shtoppin' me, an'——"

"Not Mary Haggarty aither?"

"Not Mary Haggarty aither."

"O, William Connor, dear!"

"Ye may well say, 'O, William Connor dear.' 'Twas what she said day by day, an' the heart uv me loike Phararyoh's. Thrue it is, Coolin, that the hand uv mortial man has an ugly way uv squazin' a woman's heart dry whin, at last, to his coaxin' she lays it tinder an' ansuspectin' on the inside grip uv it."

"But the heart uv Mary Haggarty, Connor."

"'Twas loike a flower under y'r fut, Coolin, an' a heavy fut is to you. She says to me wan day, 'Ye're breakin' me heart, William Connor,' says she. 'Thin I'll sodder it up agin wid the help uv the priest,' says I. 'That ye will not do,' says she; 'wance broken, 'tis broke beyond mendin'.' 'Go an wid ye, Mary Haggarty darlin',' says I, laughin' in her face, 'hivin is y'r home.' 'Oh, I'll be goin' there, William Connor,' says she, 'I'll be goin' there betimes, I hope.' 'How will it be?' says I; 'be foire or wather, Mary darlin'?' says I. 'Ye shall know whin it comes,' says she, wid a quare look in her eye.

"An' ye did?" asked Coolin, open-mouthed and staring; for never had he seen Connor with aught on his face but a devil-may-care smile.

"Ordered away we was next avenin', an' sorra the glimpse of Mary Haggarty to me—for Headquarters is a lady that will not be denied. Away we wint overseas. Shlapin' I was wan noight in a troop-ship in the Bay uv Biscay; an' I dramed I saw Mary walkin' along the cliff by—well, 'tis no matter, fer ye've niver been there, an' 'tis no place to go to unheedin'. Manny an' manny a toime I'd walked wid Mary Haggarty there. There's a steep hill betune two pints uv land. If ye go low on't

ye're safe enough—if ye go high it crumbles, an' down ye shlip a hunder fut into the say. In me drame I saw Mary onthinkin', or thinkin' maybe about me an' not about the high path or the low—though 'tis only the low that's used these twinty years. Her head was down. I tried to call her. She didn't hear, but wint an an' an. All at wanst I saw the ground give way. She shlipped an' snatched at the spinifex. Wan minnit she held, an' thin slid down, down into the say. An' I woke callin' *Mary, Mary* in me throat."

"Ye dramed it wance only, Connor?" said Coolin, with the insolent grin gone out of his eyes.

"I dramed it three toimes, an' the last toime, whin I waked, I felt a cold wind go over me. Thin a hand touched me face—the same as you, Coolin, the same as you. Drames are thrue things, Coolin."

"It was thrue, thin, Connor?"

A look of shame and a curious look of fear crept into Coolin's face; for though it was not true he had dreamed of the hand on his face, and the cold wind blowing over him, it was true he had dreamed he saw Connor lying on the ground with a bullet-hole in his tunic. But Coolin, being industrious at his trencher, often had dreams, and one more or less horrible about Connor had not seemed to him to matter at all. It had sufficed, however, to give him a cue to chaff the man who had knocked the wind out of Subadar Goordit Singh, and who must pay for it one hour or another in due course, as Coolin and the Berkshires knew full well.

"It was thrue, thin, William Connor?" repeated Coolin.

"As thrue as that yander tripod pump kills wan man

out uv ivery fifty. As thrue as that y'r corn beef from y'r commysariat tins gives William Connor thirst, Coolin."

"She was drownded, Connor?" said Coolin in a whisper.

"As I dramed it, an' allowin' fer difference uv toime, at the very hour, Coolin. 'Tis five years ago, an' I take it hard that Mary Haggarty spakes to me through you. 'Tis a warnin', Coolin."

"'Twas a lie I told you, Connor—'twas a lie!" And Coolin tried to grin.

Connor's voice was like a woman's, soft and quiet, as he answered: "Ye'll lie fast enough, Coolin, whin the truth won't sarve; but the truth has sarved its turn this toime."

"Aw, Connor dear, only wan half's thrue. As I'm a man—only wan half."

"Go an to y'r condinsation, Coolin, fer the face uv ye's not fit fer dacint company, wan side paralytic wid lyin', an' the other struck simple wid tellin' the truth. An' see, Coolin, fer the warnin' she give ye fer me, the kit I lave is yours, an' what more, be the will uv God! An' what ye've told me ye'll kape to y'self, Coolin, or hell shall be your portion."

"He tuk it fer truth an' a warnin', an' he would not be denied," said Coolin to Henry Withers, of the Sick Horse Depôt, two hours afterwards, when the Berkshires and the Sikhs and the Bengalese were on the march towards Tamai.

"The bloomin' trick is between the Hadendowas and the Subadar," answered he of the Sick Horse Depôt.

"Ye take it fer a warnin', thin?" asked Coolin uneasily.

"I believe you," answered Henry Withers.

As for William Connor, when he left Suakim, his foot was light, his figure straight, and he sent a running fire of laughter through his company by one or two "insinsible remarks," as Coolin called them.

Three hours' marching in the Soudan will usually draw off the froth of a man's cheerfulness, but William Connor was as light of heart at Tofrik as at Suakim, and he saw with pleasure two sights—the enemy in the distance and the 15th Sikhs on their right flank, with Subadar Goordit Singh in view.

"There's work 'ere to-day for whoever likes it on the 'op!" said Henry Withers, of the Sick Horse Depôt, as he dragged his load of mimosa to the zeriba; for he had got leave to come on with his regiment.

"You'll find it 'otter still when the vedettes and Cossack Posts come leadin' in the Osnum Digners. If there ain't hoscillations on that rectangle, strike me in the night-lights!" said Corporal Bagshot, with his eye on the Bengalese. "Blyme, if the whole bloomin' parallogram don't shiver!" he added; "for them Osnum Digners 'as the needle, and they're ten to one, or I'm a bloater!"

"There's Gardner guns fer the inimy an' Lushai dandies fer us," broke in Connor, as he drove a stake in the ground, wet without and dry within—"an' Gardner guns are divils on the randan. Whin they get to work it's loike a self-actin' abbatoir."

"I 'opes ye like it, Connor. Bloomin' picnic for you when the Osnum Digners eat sand. What ho!"

"I have no swarms of conscience there, Billy Bagshot. For the bones uv me frinds that's lyin' in this

haythen land, I'll clane as fur as I can reach. An' I'll have the run uv me belt to-day, an——" he added, then stopped short as the order came from McNeill that the Berkshires should receive dinner by half-battalions.

"An' 'igh time," said Corporal Bagshot. "What with marchin' and zeribakin' and the sun upon me tank since four this mornin', I'm dead for food and buried for water. I ain't no bloomin' salamanker to be grilled and say thank-ye, and I ain't no bloomin' camomile to bring up me larder and tap me tank when Coolin's commissaryat hasn't no orders."

"Shure ye'll run better impty, Billy boy," said Connor. "An' what fer do ye need food before y'r execution?" he added, with a twist of his mouth.

"Before execution, ye turkey cock—before execution is the time to eat and drink. How shall the bloomin' carnage gore the Libyan sands, if there ain't no refreshment for the vitals and the diagrams?"

"Come an wid ye to y'r forage-cake, thin—an' take this to ye," added Connor slyly, as he slipped a little nickel-plated flask into Billy Bagshot's hand.

"With a Woking crematory in y'r own throat. See you bloomin' furder!" answered Billy Bagshot.

"I'm not drinkin' to-day," answered Connor, with a curious look in the eye that had no cast. "I'm not drinkin', you understand."

"Ain't it a bit momentary?" said Bagshot, as they sat down.

"Momentary be toimes," answered Connor evasively.

"Are you eatin' at this bloomin' swaree, then?"

"I'm niver aff me forage-cake!" answered Connor, and he ate as if he had had his tooth in nothing for a month.

A quarter of an hour later, the Sikhs were passing the Berkshire zeriba, and the Berkshires, filing out, joined them to cut brushwood. A dozen times the Subadar Goordit Singh almost touched shoulders with Connor, but neither spoke, and neither saw directly; for if once they saw each other's eyes the end might come too soon, to the disgrace of two regiments.

Suddenly, the forbidden song on William Connor and the Subadar arose among the Berkshires. No one knew who started it, but it probably was Billy Bagshot, who had had more than a double portion of drink, and was seized with a desire to celebrate his thanks to Connor thus.

In any case the words ran along the line, and were carried up in a shout amid the crackling of the brushwood—

> "Where was the shame of it,
> Where was the blame of it,
> William Connor dear?"

That sort of special providence which seems to shelter the unworthy, gave India and the Berkshires honour that hour when the barometer registered shame; for never was mercury more stormy than shot up in the artery of two men's wills when that song rose over the zeriba at Tofrik. They were not fifty feet apart at the time, and at the lilt of that chorus they swung towards each other like two horses to the bugle on parade.

"A guinea to a brown but Janders goes large!" said Billy Bagshot under his breath, his eye on the Subadar and repenting him of the song.

But Janders did not go large; for at that very moment there came the bugle-call for the working parties to get into the zeriba, as from the mimosa scrub came hun-

dreds upon hundreds of "Osnum Digners" hard upon the heels of the vedettes.

"The Hadendowas 'as the privilege," said Billy Bagshot, as the Berkshires and the Sikhs swung round and made for the zeriba.

"What's that ye say?" said Connor, as the men stood to their arms.

"Looked as if the bloomin' hontray was with the Subadar, but the Hadendowas 'as the honour to hinvite sweet William!"

"Murther uv man—look—look, ye Berkshire boar! The Bengals is breakin' line!"

"Hoscillations 'as begun!" said Bagshot, as, disorganised by the vedettes riding through their flank into the zeriba, the Bengalese wavered.

"'Tis your turn now—go an to y'r gruel!" said Connor, as Bagshot with his company and others were ordered to move over to the Bengalese and steady them.

"An' no bloomin' sugar either," Bagshot called back as he ran.

"Here's to ye thin!" shouted Connor, as the enemy poured down on their zeriba on the west and the Bengalese retreated on them from the east, the Billy Bagshot detachment of Berkshires rallying them and firing steadily, the enemy swarming after and stampeding the mules and camels. Over the low bush fence, over the unfinished sandbag parapet at the south-west salient, spread the shrieking enemy like ants, stabbing and cutting. The Gardner guns, as Connor had said, were "fer the inimy," but the Lushai dandies were for the men that managed them that day; for the enemy came too soon—in shrieking masses to a hand-to-hand *mêlée*.

What India lost that hour by the Bengalese the Sikhs won back. Side by side with them the Berkshires cursed and raged and had their way; and when the Sikhs drew over and laid themselves along the English lines a wild cheer went up from the Berkshires. Wounded men spluttered their shouts from mouths filled with blood, and to the welcoming roars of the Berkshires the Sikhs showed their teeth in grim smiles, "and done things," as Billy Bagshot said when it was all over.

But by consent of every man who fought under McNeill that day, the biggest thing done among the Sikhs happened in the fiercest moment of the rush on the Berkshire zeriba. Billy Bagshot told the story that night, after the Lushai dandies had carried off the wounded and the sands of the desert had taken in the dead.

"Tyke it or leave it, 'e 'ad the honours of the day," said Bagshot, "'e and Janders—old Subadar Goordit Singh. It myde me sick to see them Bengalesey, some of 'em 'ookin it to Suakim, some of 'em retirin' on the seraphim, which is another name for Berkshires. It ain't no sweet levee a-tryin' to rally 'eathen 'ands to do their dooty. So we 'ad to cover 'em back into the zeriba of the seraphim—which is our glorious selves. A bloomin' 'asty puddin' was that tournamong, but it wasn't so bloomin' 'asty that the Subadar and William Connor didn't finish what they started for to do when the day was young."

"Did Janders stick the b'y?" said Coolin, who had just come in from Suakim with the Commissariat camels. "Shure, I hope to God he didn't!" He was pale and wild of eye.

"Did a bloomin' sparrow give you 'is brains when

you was changed at birth? Stick William Connor—I believe you not! This is what 'appened, me bloomin' sanitary. When I got back be'ind the 'eavenly parapet, there was William Connor in a nice little slaughter-house of 'is own. 'E was doin' of 'isself proud—too busy to talk. All at once 'e spies a flag the Osnum Digners 'ad planted on the 'eavenly parapet. 'E opens 'is mouth and gives one yell, and makes for that bit of cotton. 'E got there, for 'e would not be denied. 'E got there an' 'e couldn't get back. But 'e made a rush for it——"

"A divil he was on rushes," broke in Private Coolin, wiping his mouth nervously.

"'E's the pride of 'is 'ome and the bloomin' brigade, bar one, which is the Subadar Goordit Singh. For w'en the Subadar sees Connor in 'is 'ole, a cut across 'is jaw, doin' of 'is trick alone, away goes Subadar Goordit Singh and two of 'is company be'ind 'im for to rescue. 'E cut with 'is sword like a bloomin' picture. 'E didn't spare 'is strength, and 'e didn't spare the Osnum Digners. An' 'e come back, an' he brought with him William Connor—that's all what come back."

"How long did William live?" said Coolin. "He was a good frind to me was Connor, a thrue frind he was to me. How long did the b'y live?"

"'E lived long enough to 'ave McNeill shake 'im by the 'and. 'E lived long enough to say to the Subadar Goordit Singh, 'I would take scorn uv me to lave widout askin' y'r pardon, Subadar.' And the Subadar took 'is 'and and salaamed, and showed 'is teeth, which was meant friendly."

"What else did Connor say?" asked Coolin, eagerly.

"'E said 'is kit was for you that's spoilin' a good name in the condinsation of the commissaryat, Coolin."

"But what else?" said Coolin. "Nothin' about a drame at all?"

"Who's talkin' about dreams?" said Bagshot. "'E wasn't no bloomin' poet. 'E was a man. What 'e said 'e said like a man. 'E said 'e'd got word from Mary—which is proper that a man should do when 'e's a-chuckin' of 'is tent-pegs. If 'e ain't got no mother—an' Connor 'adn't—'is wife or 'is sweetheart 'as the honour."

"Oh, blessed God," said Coolin, "I wish I hadn't towld him—I wish I hadn't towld the b'y."

"Told 'im wot?" said Bagshot

But Coolin of the Commissariat did not answer; his head was on his arms, and his arms were on his knees.

THE FLOWER OF THE FLOCK

I

"'E WAS a flower," said Henry Withers of the Sick Horse Depôt.

"A floower in front garden!" ironically responded Holgate the Yorkshire engineer, as he lay on his back on the lower deck of the *Osiris*, waiting for Fielding Pasha's orders to steam up the river.

"'E was the bloomin' flower of the flock," said Henry Withers, with a cross between a yawn and a sigh, and refusing to notice Holgate's sarcasm.

"Aw've heerd on 'em, the floowers o' the flock—they coom to a bad end mostwise in Yarkshire—nipped in t' bood loike! Was tha friend nipped untimely?"

"I'd give a bloomin' camomile to know!"

"Deserted or summat?"

"Ow yus, 'e deserted—to Khartoum," answered Withers with a sneer. "The 'owlin' sneak went in 'idin' with Gordon at Khartoum!"

"Aye, aw've heerd o' Gordon a bit," said Holgate dubiously, intent to further anger the Beetle, as Henry Withers was called.

"Ow yus, ow verily yus! An' y've 'eard o' Julius Cæsar, an' Nebucha'nezzar, an' Florence Noightingale, 'aven't you — you wich is chiefly bellyband and gullet."

"Aye, aw've eaten too mooch to-day," rejoined Holgate placidly, refusing to see insult. "Aw don't see what tha friend was doin' at Khartoum wi' Goordon."

"'E was makin' Perry Davis' Pain Killer for them at 'ome who wouldn't send Gordon 'elp when the 'eathen was at 'is doors a 'underd to one. 'E was makin' it for them to soothe their bloomin' pains an' sorrers when Gordon an' Macnamara 'ad cried *'elp!* for the lawst toime!"

"Aw've taken off ma hat to Goordon's nevvy—he be a fine man—head for macheens he has,"—Holgate's eyes dwelt on his engine lovingly; "but aw've heerd nowt o' Macnamara—never nowt o' him. Who was Macnamara?"

"'E was the bloomin' flower of the flock—'e was my pal as took service in the Leave-me-alone-to-die Regiment at Khartoum."

"Aw've never read o' Macnamara. Dost think tha'll ever know how he went?"

"I ain't sayin' 'as 'e *went,* an' I ain't thinkin' as 'e went. I'm waitin' like a bloomin' telegrapher at the end

of a wire. 'E was the pick o' fifteen 'underd men was Macnamara."

"What sent t' laad to Goordon?"

"A-talkin' of 'isself silly to two lydies at onct."

"Aye, theer's the floower o' the flock. Breakin' hearts an' spoilin' lives—aw've seen them floowers bloomin'."

"'E didn't break no witherin' 'earts, an' 'e didn't spoil no lives. The lydies was both married afore Macnamara got as far as Wady Halfar. 'E break 'earts—not much! 'E went to Khartoum to be quiet."

"Aw'm pityin' the laads that married them lasses."

"'Ere, keep your bloomin' pity. I wuz one. An' if your pity's 'urtin' yer, think of 'im as 'adn't no wife nor kid to say when 'ee's dead, 'Poor Peter Macnamara, 'e is gone.'"

"A good job too, aw'm thinkin'."

"An' a bloomin' 'ard 'eart y' 'ave. Wantin' of a man to die without leavin' 'is mark—'is bleedin' 'all-mark on the world. I 'ave two—two kids I 'ave; an' so 'elp me Gawd, things bein' as they are, I wouldn't say nothin' if one of 'em was Macnamara's—wich it ain't—no fear!"

"Was Macnamara here you wouldn't say thaat to his faace, aw'm thinkin'."

"I'd break 'is 'ulkin' neck first. I ain't puttin' these things on the 'oardins, an' I ain't thinkin' 'em, if 'ee's alive in the clutches of the 'eathen Kalifer at Homdurman. There's them as says 'e is, an' there's them as says 'e was cut down after Gordon. But it's only Gawd-forsaken Arabs as says it, an' they'll lie wichever way you want 'em."

"Aye, laad, but what be great foolks doin' at Cairo?

They be sendin' goold for Slatin an' Ohrwalder by sooch-like heathen as lie to you. If Macnamara be alive, what be Macnamara doin'? An' what be Wingate an' Kitchener an' great toolks at Cairo doin'?"

"They're sayin', 'Macnamara, 'oos 'e? 'E ain't no class. 'Oo wants Macnamara!'"

Holgate raised himself on his elbow, a look of interest in his face, which he tried to disguise. "See, laad," he said, "why does tha not send messenger thaself—a troosty messenger?"

"'Ere, do you think I'm a bloomin' Crosus? I've done the trick twice—ten pounds o' loot once, an' ten golden shillins another. Bloomin' thieves both of 'em—said they wuz goin' to Homdurman, and didn't—not much! But one of 'em went to 'eaven with cholery, an' one is livin' yet with a crooked leg, wich is less than I wuz workin' for."

Holgate was sitting bolt upright now. "Didst tha save them ten sooverins to get news o' Macnamara, laad?"

"Think I bloomin' well looted 'em—go to 'ell!" said Henry Withers of the Sick Horse Depôt, and left the lower deck of the *Osiris* in a fit of sudden anger.

II

Up in Omdurman Peter Macnamara knew naught of this. He ran behind his master's horse, he sat on his master's mat, he stood in the sun before his master's door, barefooted and silent and vengeful in his heart, but with a grin on his face. When Khartoum fell he and Slatin had been thrown into the Saier loaded with irons. Then, when the Mahdi died he had been made the slave of the

Khalifa's brother, whose vanity was flattered by having a European servant. The Khalifa Abdullah being angry one day with his brother, vented his spite by ordering Macnamara back to prison again. Later the Khalifa gave him to a favourite Emir for a servant; but that service was of short duration, for on a certain morning Macnamara's patience gave way under the brutality of his master, and he refused to help him on his horse. This was in the presence of the Khalifa, and Abdullah was so delighted at the discomfiture of the Emir that he saved the Irishman's life, and gave him to Osman Wad Adam, after he had been in irons three months and looked no better than a dead man. Henceforth things went better, for Osman Wad Adam was an Arab with a sense of humour, very lazy and very licentious, and Macnamara's Arabic was a source of enjoyment to him in those hours when he did nothing but smoke and drink bad coffee. Also Macnamara was an expert with horses, and had taught the waler, which Osman Wad Adam had looted from Khartoum, a number of admired tricks.

Macnamara wished many a time that he could take to the desert with the waler; but the ride that he must ride to Wady Halfa was not for a horse. None but a camel could do it. Besides, he must have guides, and how was he to pay guides? More than once he had tried to get a word with Slatin, but that was dangerous for them both—most dangerous for Slatin, who was now the servant of the Khalifa Abdullah himself. Slatin was always suspected, and was therefore watched carefully; but the Khalifa knew that Macnamara had no chance to escape, for he had no friends in Cairo, no money, and no more could have bought a camel than a kingdom.

Escaping from the city itself, he could but die in the desert.

He had only one Arab friend—little Mahommed Nafar the shoemaker. The shoemaker was friendly to him for a great kindness done in the days when they both lived in Khartoum and ere the Arab deserted to the camp of the Mahdi. But what help could Mahommed Nafar give him unless he had money? With plenty of money the shoemaker might be induced to negotiate with Arab merchants coming from Dongola or Berber into Omdurman to get camels, and arrange an escape down the desert to Wady Halfa; but where was the money to come from?

One day, at a great review, when the roar of the drums rivalled the hoarse shouts of the Mahdists, and the Baggaras, for a diversion, looted one quarter of the town, Macnamara was told by his master that Slatin had been given by the Khalifa to Mahommed Sherif, and was going to Darfûr. As a kind of farewell barbecue, whether or not intended by the Khalifa as a warning to his departing general, ten prisoners had their feet and hands cut off in the Beit-el-Mal, and five lost their heads as well as their hands and feet.

"It makes my blood run cold," said Slatin softly in English, as Macnamara passed him, walking at his master's stirrup.

"Mine's *boilin'*, sir!" answered Macnamara.

Slatin's eyes took on a more cheerful look than they usually carried, for it was many a day since he had been addressed with respect, and the "sir" touched a mellow chord within him—memory of the days when he was Governor of Darfûr. Suddenly he saw the Khalifa's eyes fixed on Macnamara, and the look, for

a wonder, was not unfriendly. It came to him that perhaps the Khalifa meant to take Macnamara for his own servant, for it flattered his vanity to have a white man at his stirrup and on his mat. He knew that the Khalifa was only sending himself to Darfûr that he might be a check upon Mahommed Sherif. He did not think that Macnamara's position would be greatly bettered, save perhaps in bread and onions, by being taken into the employ of the Khalifa. His life would certainly not be safer. But, if it was to be, perhaps he could do a good turn to Macnamara by warning him, by planting deep in the Khalifa's mind the Irishman's simple-minded trustworthiness. When, therefore, the Khalifa suddenly turned and asked him about Macnamara he chose his words discreetly. The Khalifa, ever suspicious, said that Macnamara had been thrown into prison twice for insubordination. To this Slatin replied:

"Sire, what greater proof could be had of the man's simplicity? His life is in your hands, sire. Would he have risked it, had he not been the most simple-minded of men? But you who read men's hearts, sire, as others read a book, you know if I speak truth." Slatin bent his head in humility.

The flattery pleased the Khalifa.

"Summon Osman Wad Adam and the man to me," he said.

In the questioning that followed, Macnamara's Arabic and his understanding of it was so bad that it was necessary for Slatin to ask him questions in English. This was a test of Macnamara, for Slatin said some things in English which were not for the Khalifa's knowing. If Macnamara's face changed, if he started, Abdullah's suspicions, ever ready, would have taken form.

But Macnamara's wits were not wool-gathering, and when Slatin said to him, " If I escape, I will try to arrange yours," Macnamara replied, with a respectful but placid stolidity : " Right, sir. Where does the old sinner keep his spoof ? "

It was now for Slatin to keep a hold on himself, for Macnamara's reply was unexpected. Ruling his face to composure, however, he turned to the Khalifa and said that up to this moment, Macnamara had not been willing to become a Mahommedan, but his veneration for the Mahdi's successor was so great, that he would embrace the true faith by the mercy of God and the permission of the Khalifa. When the Khalifa replied that he would accept the convert into the true faith at once, Slatin then said to Macnamara :

" Come now, my man, I've promised that you will become a Mahommedan — it's your best chance of safety."

" I'll see him on the devil's pitchfork first," said Macnamara ; but he did not change countenance. " I'm a Protestant and I'll stand be me baptism."

" You'll lose your head, man," answered Slatin. " Don't be a fool."

" I'm keepin' to what me godfathers and godmothers swore for me," answered Macnamara stubbornly.

" You must pretend for a while, or you'll be dead in an hour—and myself too."

" You !—that's a different nose on me face," answered Macnamara. " But suppose I buck when I get into the mosque ?—no, begobs, I'll not be doin' it ! "

" I'll say to him that you'll do it with tears of joy, if you can have a month for preparation."

" Make it two an' I'm your man, seein' as you've lied

for me, sir. But on wan condition : where does he keep his coin ? "

" If you try that on, you'll die bit by bit like the men in the Beit-el-Mal to-day," answered Slatin quickly.

" I'm carvin' me own mutton, thank ye kindly, sir," answered Macnamara.

" I've heard that part of his treasure is under his own room," went on Slatin quickly, for he saw that the Khalifa's eyes had a sinister look—the conversation had been too long.

" Speak no more ! " said Abdullah sharply. " What is it you say, my son ? " he added to Slatin.

" He has been telling me that he is without education even in his own faith, and that he cannot learn things quickly. Also he does not understand what to do in the mosque, or how to pray, and needs to be taught. He then asked what was impossible, and I had to argue with him, sire."

" What did he ask ? " asked the Khalifa, his fierce gaze on Macnamara.

" He wished to be taught by yourself, sire. He said that if you taught him he would understand. I said that you were the chosen Emperor of the Faithful, the coming king of the world, but he replied that the prophets of old taught their disciples with their own tongues."

It was a bold lie, but the Khalifa was flattered, and made a motion of assent. Slatin, seeing his advantage, added :

" I told him that you could not spare the time to teach him, sire ; but he said that if you would talk to him for a little while every day for a month, after he had studied Arabic for two months, he would be ready to follow your majesty through life and death."

"Approach, my son," said the Khalifa to Macnamara, suddenly. Macnamara came near. He understood Arabic better than he had admitted, and he saw in this three months' respite, if it were granted, the chance to carry out a plan that was in his mind. The Khalifa held out a hand to him, and Macnamara, boiling with rage inwardly and his face flushing—which the Khalifa mistook for modesty—kissed it.

"You shall have two moons to learn Arabic of a good teacher every day, and then for one moon I myself will instruct you in the truth," said Abdullah. "You shall wait at my door and walk by my stirrup and teach my horse as you have taught the English horse of Osman Wad Adam. Thy faithful service I will reward, and thy unfaithfulness I will punish with torture and death."

"I'll cut the price of the kiss on those dirty fingers from a Dervish joint," muttered Macnamara to himself, as he took his place that evening at the Khalifa's door.

One thing Macnamara was determined on. He would never pray in a Mahommedan mosque, he would never turn Mahommedan even for a day. The time had come when he must make a break for liberty. He must have money. With money Mahommed Nafar, who was now his teacher—Slatin had managed that—would move for him.

Under the spur of his purpose Macnamara rapidly acquired Arabic, and steadfastly tried to make Mahommed Nafar his friend, for he liked the little man, and this same little man was the only Arab, save one, from first to last, whom he would not have spitted on a bayonet. At first he chafed under the hourly duplicity necessary in his service to the Khalifa, then he took an interest in it, and at last he wept tears of joy over

his dangerous proficiency. Day after day Macnamara waited, in the hope of making sure that the Khalifa's treasure was under the room where he slept. Upon the chance of a successful haul, he had made fervid promises, after the fashion of his race, to the shoemaker Mahommed Nafar. At first the shoemaker would have nothing to do with it: helping prisoners to escape meant torture and decapitation; but then he hated the Khalifa, whose Baggaras had seized his property, and killed his wife and children; and in the end Macnamara prevailed. Mahommed Nafar found some friendly natives from the hills of Gilif, who hated the Khalifa and his tyrannous governments, and at last they agreed to attempt the escape.

III

A month went by. Lust, robbery, and murder ruled in Omdurman. The river thickened with its pollution, the trees within the walls sickened of its poison, the bones of the unburied dead lay in the moat beyond the gates, and, on the other side of the river, desolate Khartoum crumbled over the streets and paths and gardens where Gordon had walked. The city was a pit of infamy, where struggled, or wallowed, or died to the bellowing of the Khalifa's drum and the hideous mirth of his Baggaras, the victims of Abdullah. But out in the desert—the Bayuda desert—between Omdurman and Old Dongola, there was only peace. Here and there was "a valley of dry bones," but the sand had washed the bones clean, the vultures had had their hour and flown away, the *débris* of deserted villages had been covered by desert storms, and the clear blue sky and ardent sun were over all, joyous and immaculate. Out

in the desert there was only the life-giving air, the opal sands, the plaintive evening sky, the eager morning breeze, the desolated villages, and now and then in the vast expanse, stretching hundreds and hundreds of miles south, an oasis as a gem set in a cloth of faded gold.

It would have seemed to any natural man better to die in the desert than to live in Omdurman. So thought a fugitive who fled day and night through the Bayuda desert, into the sandy wastes, beyond whose utmost limits lay Wady Halfa, where the English were.

Macnamara had conquered. He had watched his chance when two of the black guard were asleep, and the Khalifa was in a stupor of opium in the harem, had looted Abdullah's treasure, and carried the price of the camels and the pay of the guides to Mahommed Nafar the shoemaker.

His great sprawling camel, the best that Mahommed Nafar could buy of Ebn Haraf, the sheikh in the Gilif Hills, swung down the wind with a long, reaching stride, to the point where the sheikh would meet him, and send him on his way with a guide. If he reached the rendezvous safely, there was a fair chance of final escape.

Moonlight, and the sand *swishing* from under the velvet hoofs of the camel, the silence like a filmy cloak, sleep everywhere, save at the eyes of the fugitive. Hour after hour they sprawled down the waste, and for numberless hours they must go on and on, sleepless, tireless, alert, if the man was to be saved at all. As morning broke he turned his eye here and there, fearful of discovery and pursuit. Nothing. He was alone with the sky and the desert and his fate. Another two hours and he would be at the rendezvous, in the cover of

the hills, where he would be safe for a moment at least. But he must keep *ahead* of all pursuit, for if Abdullah's people should get in front of him he would be cut off from all hope. There is little chance to run the blockade of the desert where a man may not hide, where there is neither water, nor feed, nor rest, once in a hundred miles or more.

For an hour his eyes were fixed, now on the desert behind him, whence pursuit should come, now on the golden-pink hills before him, where was sanctuary for a moment, at least. . . . Nothing in all the vast space but blue and gray—the sky and the sand, nothing that seemed of the world he had left; nothing save the rank smell of the camel, and the Arab song he sang to hasten the tired beast's footsteps. Mahommed Nafar had taught him the song, saying that it was as good to him as another camel on a long journey. His Arabic, touched off with the soft brogue of Erin, made a little shrill by weariness and peril, was not the Arabic of Abdin Palace, but yet, under the spell, the camel's head ceased swaying nervously, the long neck stretched out bravely, and they came on together to the Gilif Hills, comrades in distress, gallant and unafraid. . . . Now the rider looked back less than before, for the hills were near, he was crossing a ridge which would hide him from sight for a few miles, and he kept his eyes on the opening in the range where a few dom-trees marked the rendezvous. His throat was dry, for before the night was half over he had drunk the little water he carried; but the Arab song still came from his lips:

"*Doos ya lellee! Doos ya lellee!*
Tread, O joy of my life, tread lightly!
Thy feet are the wings of a dove,

And thy heart is of fire. On thy wounds
I will pour the king's salve. I will hang
On thy neck the long chain of wrought gold,
When the gates of Badgad are before us—
Doos ya lellee! Doos ya lellee!"

He did not cease singing it until the camel had staggered in beneath the dom-trees where Ebn Mazar waited. Macnamara threw himself on the ground beside the prostrate camel which had carried him so well, and gasped, "Water!" He drank so long from Ebn Haraf's water-bag that the Arab took it from him. Then he lay on the sands hugging the ground close like a dog, till the sheikh roused him with the word that he must mount another camel, this time with a guide, Mahmoud, a kinsman of his own, who must risk his life—at a price. Half the price was paid by Macnamara to the sheikh before they left the shade of the palm-trees, and, striking through the hills, emerged again into the desert farther north.

In the open waste the strain and the peril began again, but Mahmoud, though a boy in years, was a man in wisdom and a "brother of eagles" in endurance: and he was the second Arab who won Macnamara's heart.

It was Mahmoud's voice now that quavered over the heads of the camels and drove them on; it was his eye which watched the horizon. The hours went by, and no living thing appeared in the desert, save a small cloud of vultures, heavy from feasting on a camel dead in the waste, and a dark brown snake flitting across their path. Nothing all day save these, and nothing all the sleepless night, save a desert wolf stealing down the sands. Macnamara's eyes burned in his head with

weariness, his body became numb, but Mahommed Mahmoud would allow no pause. They must get so far ahead the first two days that Abdullah's pursuers might not overtake them, he said. Beyond Dongola, at a place appointed, other camels would await them, if Mahmoud's tribesmen there kept faith.

For two days and nights Macnamara had not slept, for forty-six hours he had been constantly in the saddle, but Mahommed Mahmoud allowed him neither sleep nor rest.

Dongola came at last, lying far away on their right. With Dongola, fresh camels; and the desert flight began again. Hour after hour, and not a living thing; and then, at last, a group of three Arabs on camels going south, far over to their right. These suddenly turned and rode down on them.

"We must fight," said Mahmoud, "for they see you are no Arab."

"I'll take the one with the jibbeh," said Macnamara coolly, with a pistol in his left hand and a sword in his right. "I'll take him first. Here's the tap off yer head, me darlins!" he added as they turned and faced the dervishes.

"We must kill them all, or be killed," said Mahmoud, as the dervishes suddenly stopped, and the one with the jibbeh called to Mahmoud:

"Whither do you fly with the white Egyptian?"

"If you come and see you will know, by the mercy of God!" answered Mahmoud.

The next instant the dervishes charged. Macnamara marked his man, and the man with the jibbeh fell from his camel. Mahmoud fired his carbine, missed, and closed with his enemy. Macnamara, late of the 7th

Hussars, swung his Arab sword as though it were the regulation blade and he in sword practice at Aldershot, and catching the blade of his desert foe, saved his own neck and gave the chance of a fair hand-to-hand combat.

He met the swift strokes of the dervish with a cool certainty. His weariness passed from him; the joy of battle was on him. He was wounded twice—in the shoulder and the head. Now he took the offensive. Once or twice he circled slowly round the dervish, whose eyes blazed, whose mouth was foaming with fury; then he came on him with all the knowledge and the skill he had got in little Indian wars. He came on him, and the dervish fell, his head cut through like a cheese.

Then Macnamara turned, to see Mahmoud and the third dervish on the ground, struggling in each other's arms. He started forward, but before he could reach the two, Mahmoud jumped to his feet with a reeking knife, and waved it in the air.

"He was a kinsman, but he had to die," said Mahmoud as they mounted. He turned towards the bodies, then looked at the camels flying down the desert towards Dongola.

"It is as God wills now," he said. "Their tribesmen will follow when they see the camels. See, my camel is wounded!" he added, with a gasp.

IV

Two days following, towards evening, two wounded men on foot trudged through the desert haggard and bent. The feet of one—an Arab—had on a pair of red slippers, the feet of the other were bare. Mahmoud

and Macnamara were in a bad way. They were in very truth "walking against time." Their tongues were thick in their mouths, their feet were lacerated and bleeding, they carried nothing now save their pistols and their swords, and a small bag of dates hanging at Macnamara's belt. Prepared for the worst, they trudged on with blind hope, eager to die fighting if they must die, rather than to perish of hunger and thirst in the desert. Another day, and they would be beyond the radius of the Khalifa's power: but would they see another day?

They thought that question answered, when, out of the evening pink and opal and the golden sand behind them, they saw three Arabs riding. The friends of the slain Dervishes were come to take revenge, it seemed. The two men looked at each other, but they did not try to speak. Macnamara took from his shirt a bag of gold and offered it to Mahmoud. It was the balance of the payment promised to Ebn Mazar. Mahmoud salaamed and shook his head, then in a thick voice said: "It is my life and thy life. If thou diest I die. If thou livest, the gold is Ebn Haraf's. At Wady Halfa I will claim it, if it be the will of God."

The words were thick and broken, but Macnamara understood him, and they turned and faced their pursuers, ready for life or death, intent to kill—and met the friends of Ebn Haraf, who had been hired to take them on to Wady Halfa! Their rescuers had been pursued, and had made a *détour* and forced march, thus coming on them before the time appointed. In three days more they were at Wady Halfa.

Mahmoud lived to take back to Ebn Mazar the other hundred pounds of the gold Macnamara had looted

from the Khalifa; and he also took something for himself from the British officers at Wady Halfa. For him nothing remained of the desperate journey but a couple of scars.

It was different with Macnamara. He had to take a longer journey still. He was not glad to do it, for he liked the look of the English faces round him, and he liked what they said to him. Also, he was young enough to "go a-roaming still," as he said to Henry Withers. Besides, it sorely hurt his pride that no woman or child of his would be left behind to lament him. Still, when Henry told him he had to go, he took it like a man.

"'Ere, it ain't no use," said Henry to him the day he got to Wady Halfa. "'Ere, old pal, it ain't no use. You 'ave to take your gruel, an' you 'ave to take it alone. What I want to tell yer quiet and friendly, old pal, is that yer drawfted out—all the way out—for good!"

"'Sh—did ye think I wasn't knowin' it, me b'y?" Macnamara's face clouded. "Did ye think I wasn't knowin' it? Go an' lave me alone," he added quickly.

Henry Withers went out pondering, for he was sure it was not mere dying that fretted Macnamara.

The next day the end of it all came. Henry Withers had pondered, and his mind was made up to do a certain thing. Towards evening he sat alone in the room where Macnamara lay asleep—almost his very last sleep. All at once Macnamara's eyes opened wide.

"Kitty, Kitty, me darlin'," he murmured vaguely. Then he saw Henry Withers.

"I'm dyin'," he said, breathing heavily. "Don't call anny one, Hinry," he added brokenly. "Dyin's that aisy—aisy enough, but for wan thing."

" 'Ere, speak out, Pete."

" Sure, there's no wan but you, Withers, not a wife nor a child av me own to say, ' Poor Pete Macnamara, he is gone."

" There's one," said Henry Withers firmly. " There's one, old pal."

" Who's that ? " said Macnamara huskily.

" Kitty."

" She's no wife," said Macnamara, shaking his head. " Though she'd ha' been that, if it hadn't been for Mary Malone."

" She's mine, an' she's 'as the marriage lines," said Henry Withers. " An' there's a kid—wich ain't mine —born six months after ! 'Oo says no kid won't remark, ' Poor Macnamara, 'ee is gone, wich 'ee was my fader ! ' "

Macnamara trembled ; the death-sweat dropped from his forehead as he raised himself up.

" Kitty—a kid av mine—and she married to Hinry Withers !—an' you saved me, too——" Macnamara's eyes were wild.

Henry Withers took his hand.

" 'Ere, it's all right, old pal," he said cheerfully.

" What's the kid's name ? " said Macnamara.

" Peter—same as yours."

The voice was scarce above a breath. " Sure, I didn't know at all. An' you forgive me, Hinry darlin', you forgive me ? "

" I've nothing to forgive," said Henry Withers.

A smile lighted the blanched face of the dying man. " Give me love to the b'y—to Peter Macnamara," he said, and fell back with a smile on his face.

" I'd do it again. Wot's a lie so long as it does

good ? " said Henry Withers afterwards to Holgate the engineer. " But tell *'er*—tell Kitty ? no fear ! I ain't no bloomin' fool. 'E's 'appy—that's enough. She'd cut me 'eart out, if she knowed I'd lied that lie."

THE LIGHT OF OTHER DAYS

I

DIMSDALE'S prospects had suddenly ceased by the productive marriage of a rich uncle late in life ; and then his career began. He went to Egypt at the time when men who knew things had their chance to do things. His information was general and discursive, but he had a real gift for science : an inheritance from a grandfather who received a peerage for abstruse political letters written to the *Times* and lectures before the Royal Institution. Besides, he had known well and loved inadvertently the Hon. Lucy Gray, who kept a kind of social kindergarten for confiding man, whose wisdom was as accurate as her face was fair, her manners simple, and her tongue demure and biting.

Egypt offered an opportunity for a man like Dimsdale, and he always said that his going there was the one inspiration of his life. He did not know that this inspiration came from Lucy Gray. She had purposely thrown him in the way of General Duncan Pasha, who, making a reputation in Egypt, had been rewarded by a good command in England and a K.C.B.

After a talk with the General, who had spent his Egyptian days in the agreeable strife with native

premiers and hesitating Khedives, Dimsdale rose elated, with his mission in his hand. After the knock-down blow his uncle had given him, he was in a fighting mood. General Duncan's tale had come at the psychological moment, and hot with inspiration he had gone straight off to Lucy Gray with his steamship ticket in his pocket, and told her he was going to spend his life in the service of the pasha and the fellah. When she asked him a little bitingly what form his disciplined energy would take, he promptly answered :

" Irrigation."

She laughed in his face softly. " What do you know about irrigation ? " she asked.

" I can learn it—it's the game to play out there, I'm sure of that," he answered.

" It doesn't sound distinguished," she remarked drily.

Because she smiled satirically at him, and was unresponsive to his enthusiasm, and gave him no chance to tell her of the nobility of the work in which he was going to put his life ; of the work of the Pharaohs in their day, the hope of Napoleon in his, and the creed Mahomet Ali held and practised, that the Nile was Egypt and Egypt was irrigation—because of this he became angry, said unkind things, drew acid comments upon himself, and left her with a last good-bye. He did not realise that he had played into the hands of Lucy Gray in a very childish manner. For in scheming that he should go to Egypt she had planned also that he should break with her ; for she never had any real intention of marrying him, and yet it was difficult to make him turn his back on her, while at the same time she was too tender of his feelings to turn her back on

him. She held that anger was the least injurious of all grounds for separation. In anger there was no humiliation. There was something dignified and brave about a quarrel, while a growing coolness which must end in what the world called " jilting " was humiliating. Besides, people who quarrel and separate may meet again and begin over again: impossible in the other circumstance.

II

In Egypt Dimsdale made a reputation; not at once, but he did make it. The first two years of his stay he had plenty to do. At the end of the time he could have drawn a map of the Nile from Uganda to the Barrages; he knew the rains in each district from the region of the Sadds to the Little Borillos; there was not a canal, from the small Bahr Shebin to the big Rayeh Menoufieh or the majestic Ibrahimieh, whose slope, mean velocity and discharge he did not know; and he carried in his mind every drainage cut and contour from Tamis to Damanhur, from Cairo to Beltim. He knew neither amusement nor society, for every waking hour was spent in the study of the Nile and what the Nile might do.

After one of his journeys up the Nile, Imshi Pasha, the Minister of the Interior, said to him: " Ah, my dear friend, with whom be peace and power, what have you seen as you travel? "

" I saw a fellah yesterday who has worked nine months on the *corvée*—six months for the Government and three for a pasha the friend of the Government. He supplied his own spades and baskets; his lantern was at the service of the Khedive; he got his own food as best he could.

He had one feddan of land in his own village, but he had no time to work it or harvest it. Yet he had to pay a house-tax of five piastres, a war-tax of five piastres, a camel-tax of five piastres, a palm-tax of five piastres, a salt-tax of nine piastres, a poll-tax of thirty piastres, a land-tax of ninety piastres. The canal for which he was taxed gave his feddan of land no water, for the pasha, the friend of the Government, took all the water for his own land."

Prince Imshi stifled a yawn. "I have never seen so much at one breath, my friend. And having seen, you feel now that Egypt must be saved—eh?"

This Pasha was an Egyptian of the Egyptians—a Turk of the Turks, oriental in mind with the polish of a Frenchman. He did not like Dimsdale, but he did not say so. He knew it was better to let a man have his fling and come a cropper over his own work than to have him unoccupied, excited, and troublesome, especially when he was an Englishman and knew about what he was talking. Imshi Pasha saw that Dimsdale was a dangerous man, as all enthusiasts are, no matter how right-headed; but it comforted him to think that many a reformer, from Amenhotep down, had, as it were, cut his own throat in the Irrigation Department. Some had tried to distribute water fairly, efficiently and scientifically, but most of them had got lost in the underbush of officialdom, and never got out of the wood again. This wood is called Backsheesh. Reformers like Dimsdale had drawn straight lines of purpose for the salvation of the country, and they had seen these straight lines go crooked under their very eyes, with a devilish smoothness. Therefore Imshi Pasha, being a wise man and a deep-dyed official who had never yet

seen the triumph of the reformer and the honest Aryan, took Dimsdale's hands and said suddenly, with a sorrowful break in his vioce:

"Ah, my friend, to tell the whole truth as God gives it, it is time you have come. Egypt has waited for you—the man who sees and knows. I have watched you for two years. I have waited, but now the time is ripe. You shall stretch your arm over Egypt and it will rise to you. You shall have paper for plans, and men and money for travel and works—cuttings, and pumps, and sand-bags for banks and barrages. You shall be second in your department—but first in fact, for shall not I, your friend, be your chief? And you shall say 'Go there,' and they shall go, and 'Come here,' and they shall come. For my soul is with you for Egypt, O friend of the fellah and saviour of the land. Have I not heard of the great reservoirs you would make in the Fayoum, of the great dam at Assouan? Have I not heard, and waited, and watched? and now . . ."

He paused and touched his breast and his forehead in respect.

Dimsdale was well-nigh taken off his feet. It seemed too wonderful to be true: a free hand in Egypt, and under Imshi Pasha, the one able Minister of them all, who had, it was said, always before resisted the irrigation schemes of the foreigners, who believed only in the *corvée* and fate!

Dimsdale rejoiced that at the beginning of his career he had so inspired the powerful one with confidence. With something very like emotion he thanked the Minister.

"Ah, my dear friend," answered the Pasha, "the love of Egypt has helped us to understand each other.

And we shall know each other better still by-and-by —by-and-by.... You shall be gazetted to-morrow. Allah preserve you from all error!"

III

This began the second period of Dimsdale's career. As he went forth from Cairo up the Nile with great designs in his mind, and an approving Ministry behind him, he had the feeling of a hunter with a sure quarry before him. Now he remembered Lucy Gray; and he flushed with a delightful and victorious indignation remembering his last hour with her. He even sentimentally recalled a song he once wrote for her sympathetic voice. The song was called "No Man's Land." He recited two of the verses to himself now, with a kind of unction:

"And we have wandered far, my dear, and we have loved apace;
A little hut we built upon the sand;
The sun without to brighten it—within your golden face:
O happy dream, O happy No Man's Land!

"The pleasant furniture of spring was set in all the fields,
And sweet and wholesome all the herbs and flowers;
Our simple cloth, my dear, was spread with all the orchard yields,
And frugal only were the passing hours."

A wave of feeling passed over him suddenly. Those verses were youth, and youth was gone, with all its flushed and spirited dalliance and reckless expenditure of feeling. Youth was behind him, and love was none of his, nor any cares of home, nor wife nor children; nothing but ambition now, and the vanity of successful labour.

Sitting on the deck of the *Séfi* at El Wasta, he looked

round him. In the far distance was the Maydoum Pyramid, "the Imperfect One," unexplored by man these thousands of years, and all round it the soft yellowish desert, with a mirage quivering over it in the distance, a mirage of trees and water and green hills. A caravan lounged its way slowly into the waste. At the waterside, here and there devout Mahommedans were saying their prayers, now standing, now bowing towards the east, now kneeling and touching the ground with the forehead. Then, piercing and painfully musical, came the call of the muezzin from the turret of the mosque a quarter of a mile away. Near by the fellah worked in his onion-field; and on the khiassas loaded with feddan at the shore, just out of the current, and tied up for the night, sat the riverine folk eating their dourha and drinking black coffee. Now Dimsdale noticed that, nearer still, just below the *Sêfi*, on the shore, sat a singing-girl, an a'l'meh, with a dark-faced Arab beside her, a kemengeh in his lap. Looking down, Dimsdale caught their eyes, nodded to them, and the singing-girl and the kemengeh-player got to their feet and salaamed. The girl's face was in the light of evening. Her dark skin took on a curious reddish radiance, her eyes were lustrous and her figure beautiful. The kemengeh-player stood with his instrument ready, and he lifted it in a kind of appeal. Dimsdale beckoned them up on deck. Lighting a cigarette, he asked the a'l'meh to sing. Her voice had the curious vibrant note of the Arab, and the words were in singular sympathy with Dimsdale's thoughts:

"I have a journey to make, and perils are in hiding,
Many moons must I travel, many foes meet;
A morsel of bread my food, a goolah of water for drinking,
Desert sand for my bed, the moonlight my sheet. . . .

Come, my love, to the scented palms;
Behold, the hour of remembrance!"

For the moment Dimsdale ceased to be the practical scientist—he was all sentimentalist. He gave himself the luxury of retrospection, he enjoyed the languorous moment; the music, the voice, the tinkle of the tambourine, the girl herself, sinuous, sensuous. It struck him that he had never seen an a'l'meh so cleanly and so finely dressed, so graceful, so delicate in manner. It struck him also that the kemengeh-player was a better-class Arab than he had ever met. The man's face attracted him, fascinated him. As he looked it seemed familiar. He studied it, he racked his brain to recall it. Suddenly he remembered that it was like the face of a servant of Imshi Pasha—a kind of mouffetish of his household. Now he studied the girl. He had never seen her before; of that he was sure. He ordered them coffee, and handed the girl a gold-piece. As he did so, he noticed that among several paste rings she wore one of value. All at once the suspicion struck him: Imshi Pasha had sent the girl—to try him perhaps, to gain power over him maybe, as women had gained power over strong men before. But why should Imshi Pasha send the girl and his mouffetish on this miserable mission? Was not Imshi Pasha his friend?

Quietly smoking his cigarette he said to the man: "You may go, Mahommed Melik; I have had enough. Take your harem with you," he added quickly.

The man scarcely stirred a muscle, the woman flushed deeply.

"So be it, effendi," answered the man, rising unmoved, for his sort know not shame. He beckoned to the girl. For an instant she stood hesitating, then

with sudden fury she threw on the table beside him the gold-piece Dimsdale had given her.

"*Magnoon!*" she said, with blazing eyes, and ran after the man.

"I may be a fool, my dear," he said after her; "but you might say the same of the pasha who sent you here."

Dimsdale was angry for a moment, and he said some hard words of Imshi Pasha as he watched the two decoys hurry away into the dusk. He thought it nothing more serious than an attempt to know of what stuff he was made. He went to bed with dreams of vast new areas watered for summer rice, of pumping-stations lifting millions of cubic metres of water per day; of dykes to be protected by bulrushes and birriya weeds; of great desert areas washed free of carbonates and sulphates and selling at twenty pounds an acre; of a green Egypt with three crops, and himself the Regenerator, the Friend of the Fellah.

In this way he soon forgot that he had remembered Lucy Gray, and the incident of the girl ceased to trouble. His progress up the river, however, was marked by incidents whose significance he did not at once see. Everywhere his steamer stopped people came with backsheesh in the shape of butter, cream, flour, eggs, fowls, cloths, and a myriad things. Jewels from mummy cases, *antichi*, donkeys, were offered him: all of which he steadfastly refused, sometimes with contumely. Officials besought his services with indelicate bribes, and by devious hospitalities and attentions more than one governor sought to bring his projects for irrigation in line with their own particular duplicities.

"Behold, effendi," said one to whom Dimsdale's honesty was monstrous, "may God preserve you from

harm—the thing has not been known, that all men shall fare alike. It is not the will of God."

"It is the will of God that water shall be distributed as I am going to distribute it; and that is, according to every man's just claim," answered Dimsdale stubbornly, and he did not understand the vague smile which met his remark.

It took him a long time to realise that his plans approved by Imshi Pasha were constantly coming to naught; that after three years' work, and extensive invention and travel, and long reports to the Ministry, and encouragement on paper, he had accomplished nothing; and that he had no money with which to accomplish anything. Day in, day out, week in, week out, month in, month out, when the whole land lay sweltering with the moist heat of flood-time, in the period of the khamsîn, in the dry heat which turned the hair gray and chapped the skin like a bitter wind, he slaved and schemed, the unconquerable enthusaist, who built houses which immediately fell down.

Fifty times his schemes seemed marching to fulfilment; but something always intervened. He wrote reams of protest, he made many arid journeys to Cairo, he talked himself hoarse; and always he was met by the sympathetic smiling of Imshi Pasha, by his encouraging approval.

"Ah, my dear friend, may Heaven smooth your path! It is coming right. All will be well. Time is man's friend. The dam shall be built. The reservoirs shall be made. But we are in the hands of the nations. Poor Egypt cannot act alone—our Egypt that we love. The Council sits to-morrow—we shall see." This was the fashion of the Pasha's speech.

After the sitting of the Council, Dimsdale would be sent away with unfruitful promises.

Futility was written over the Temple of Endeavour, and by-and-by Dimsdale lost hope and health and heart. He had Nilotic fever, he had ophthalmia; and hot with indomitable will, he had striven to save one great basin from destruction, for one whole week, without sleeping or resting night and day: working like a navvy, sleeping like a fellah, eating like a Bedouin.

Then the end came. He was stricken down, and lay above Assouan in a hut by the shore, from which he could see the Temple of Philæ, and Pharaoh's Bed, and the great rocks, and the swift-flowing Nile. Here lay his greatest hope, the splendid design of his life—the great barrage of Assouan. With it he could add to the wealth of Egypt one-half. He had believed in it, had worked for it and how much else! and his dreams and his working had come to naught. He was sick to death—not with illness alone, but with disappointment and broken hopes and a burden beyond the powers of any one man.

He saw all now: all the falsehood and treachery and corruption. He realized that Imshi Pasha had given him his hand that he might ruin himself, that his own schemes might overwhelm him in the end. At every turn he had been frustrated—by Imshi Pasha: three years of underground circumvention, with a superficial approval and a mock support.

He lay and looked at the glow, the sunset glow of pink and gold on the Libyan Hills, and his fevered eyes scarcely saw them; they were only a part of this last helpless, senseless dream. Life itself was very far away—practical, generous, hot-blooded life. This dis-

tance was so ample and full and quiet, this mystery of the desert and the sky was so immense, the spirit of it so boundless, that in the judgment of his soul nothing mattered now. As he lay in reverie, he heard his servant talking: it was the tale of the Mahdi and British valour and hopeless fighting, and a red martyrdom set like a fixed star in a sunless sky. What did it matter—what did it all matter, in this grave tremendous quiet wherein his soul was hasting on?

The voices receded; he was alone with the immeasurable world; he fell asleep.

IV

When he woke again it was to find at his bedside a kavass from Imshi Pasha at Cairo. He shrank inwardly. The thought of the Pasha merely nauseated him, but to the kavass he said: "What do you want, Mahommed?"

The kavass smiled; his look was agreeably mysterious, his manner humbly confidential, his tongue officially deliberate.

"*Effendina chôk yasha*—May the great lord live for ever! I bring good news."

"Leave of absence, eh?"—answered Dimsdale feebly, yet ironically; for that was the thing he expected now of the Minister, who had played him like a ball on a racquet these three years past.

The kavass handed him a huge blue envelope, salaaming impressively.

"May my life be thy sacrifice, effendi," he said, and salaamed again. "It is my joy to be near you."

"We have tasted your absence and found it bitter, Mahommed," Dimsdale answered in kind, with a touch

of plaintive humour, letting the envelope fall from his fingers on the bed, so little was he interested in any fresh move of Imshi Pasha. "More tricks," he said to himself between his teeth.

"Shall I open it, effendi? It is the word that thy life shall carry large plumes."

"What a blitherer you are, Mahommed! Rip it open and let's have it over."

The kavass handed him a large letter, pedantically and rhetorically written; and Dimsdale, scarce glancing at it, sleepily said: "Read it out, Mahommed. Skip the flummery in it, if you know how."

Two minutes later Dimsdale sat up aghast with a surprise that made his heart thump painfully, made his head go round. For the letter conveyed to him the fact that there had been placed to the credit of his department, subject to his own disposal for irrigation works, the sum of eight hundred thousand pounds; and appended was the copy of a letter from the Caisse de la Dette granting three-fourths of this sum, and authorising its expenditure. Added to all was a short scrawl from Imshi Pasha himself, beginning, "God is with the patient, my dear friend," and ending with the remarkable statement: "*Inshallah*, we shall now reap the reward of our labours in seeing these great works accomplished at last, in spite of the suffering thrust upon us by our enemies—to whom perdition come."

Eight hundred thousand pounds!

In a week Dimsdale was at work again. In another month he was at Cairo, and the night after his arrival he attended a ball at the Khedive's Palace. To Fielding Bey he poured out the wonder of his soul at the chance

that had been given him at last. He seemed to think it was his own indomitable patience, the work that he had done, and his reports, which had at last shamed the Egyptian Government and the Caisse de la Dette into doing the right thing for the country and to him.

He was dumfounded when Fielding replied: "Not much, my Belisarius. As Imshi Pasha always was, so he will be to the end. It wasn't Imshi Pasha, and it wasn't English influence, and it wasn't Caisse de la Dette, each by its lonesome, or all together by initiative."

"What was it—who was it, then?" said Dimsdale breathlessly. "Was it you?—I know you've worked for me. It wasn't *backsheesh* anyhow. But Imshi Pasha didn't turn honest and patriotic for nothing—I know that."

Fielding, who had known him all his life, looked at him curiously for a moment, and then, in a far-away sort of voice, made recitative:

"'Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray;
And when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.'"

Dimsdale gasped. "Lucy Gray!" he said falteringly.

Fielding nodded. "You didn't know, of course. She's been here for six months—has more influence than the whole diplomatic corps. Twists old Imshi Pasha round her little finger. She has played your game handsomely—I've been in her confidence. Wordsworth was wrong when he wrote:

'No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor:
The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door'——

For my wife's been her comrade. And her mate—would you like to know her mate?—she's married, you know."

Dimsdale's face was pale. He was about to reply, when a lady came into view, leaning on the arm of an Agency Secretary. At first she did not see Dimsdale, then within a foot or two of him she suddenly stopped. The Secretary felt her hand twitch on his arm; then she clenched the fingers firmly on her fan.

"Ah, Dimsdale," Fielding said, "you must let me introduce you to Mrs. St. John."

Dimsdale behaved very well, the lady perfectly. She held out both hands to him.

"We are old, old friends, Mr. Dimsdale and I. I have kept the next dance for him," she added, turning to Fielding, who smiled placidly and left with the Secretary.

For a moment there was silence, then she said quietly: "Let me congratulate you on all you have done. Everybody is talking about you. They say it is wonderful how you have made things come your way. . . . I am very, very glad."

Dimsdale was stubborn and indignant and anything a man can be whose *amour propre* has had a shock.

"I know all," he said bluntly. "I know what you've done for me."

"Well, are you as sorry I did it as I am to know you know it?" she asked, just a little faintly, for she had her own sort of heart, and it worked in its own sort of way.

"Why this sudden interest in my affairs? You laughed at me when I made up my mind to come to Egypt."

"That was to your face. I sent you to Egypt."

"You sent me?"

"I made old General Duncan talk to you. The inspiration was mine. I also wrote to Fielding Pasha —and at last he wrote to me to come."

"You—why——"

"I know more about irrigation than any one in England," she continued illogically. "I've studied it. I have all your reports. That's why I could help you here. They saw I *knew*."

Dimsdale shook a little. "I didn't understand," he said.

"You don't know my husband, I think," she added, rising slowly. "He is coming yonder with Imshi Pasha."

"I know of him as a—millionaire," he answered, in a tone of mingled emotions.

"I must introduce you," she said, and seemed to make an effort to hold herself firmly. "He will have great power here. Come and see me to-morrow," she added in an even voice. "Please come—Harry."

In another minute Dimsdale heard the great financier Mr. St. John say that the name of Dimsdale would be for ever honoured in Egypt.

GLOSSARY

Aiwa, effendi—Yes, noble sir.
Allah—God.
Allah-haly 'm alla-haly—A sing-song of river-workers.
Allah Kerim—God is bountiful.
Alldhu Akbar—God is most Great.
A'l'meh—Female professional singers, signifying "a learned female."
Antichi—Antiquities.

Backsheesh—Tip, douceur, bribe.
Balass—Earthen vessel for carrying water.
Basha—Pasha.
Bersim.—Grass.
Bimbashi—Major.
Bishareen—A native tribe.
Bismillah—In the name of God.
Bowab—A doorkeeper.

Corvée—Forced labour.

Dahabeah—A Nile houseboat with large lateen sails.
Darabukkeh—A drum made of a skin stretched over an earthenware funnel.
Dôash—(Literally) Treading. A ceremony performed on the return of the Holy Carpet from Mecca.
Dourha—Maize.

Effendina—Highness.
El aadah—The ordinary.
El Azhar—The Arab University at Cairo.

Fantasia—Celebration with music, dancing and processions.
Farshoot—The name of a native tribe.
Fatihah—The opening chapter of the Koran, recited at weddings, etc.
Feddan—The most common measure of land—a little less than an acre. Also dried hay.
Fellah, (Plu.) *Fellaheen*—The Egyptian peasant.
Felucca—A small boat, propelled by oars or sails.
Fessikh—Salted fish.

Ghaffirs—Humble village officials.

Ghawázee—The tribe of public dancing-girls. A female of this tribe is called "Gházeeyeh," and a man "Ghazee," but the plural Ghawázee is generally understood as applying to the female.
Ghimah—The Mahommedan Sunday.
Gippy—Colloquial name for an Egyptian soldier.
Goolah—Porous water-jar of Nile mud.

Hakim—Doctor.
Hanouti—Funeral attendants.
Hari-kari—An Oriental form of suicide.
Hashish—Leaves of hemp.

Inshallah—God willing.

Jibbeh—Long coat or smock, worn by dervishes.

Kavass—An orderly.
Kemengeh—A cocoanut fiddle.
Khamsin—A hot wind of Egypt and the Soudan.
Khedive—The title granted in 1867 by the Sultan of Turkey to the ruler of Egypt.
Khiassa—Small boat.
Khowagah—Gentleman.
Koran—The Scriptures of the Mahommedans.
Kourbash—A stick, a whip.

Lá iláha illa-lláh—There is no deity but God.

Mafish—Nothing.
Magnoon—Fool.
Malaish—No matter.
Mamour—A magistrate.
Mankalah—A game.
Mastaba—A bench.
Mejidieh—A Turkish Order.
Mirkaz—District.
Moghassils—Washers of the dead.
Mouffetish—High steward.
Mudir—A Governor of a Mudirieh or province.
Muezzin—The sheikh of the mosque who calls to prayer.
Mushrabieh—Lattice window.

Naboot—Quarter staff.
Narghileh—The Oriental tobacco-pipe.
Nehar-ak koom sâid—Greeting to you.

Omdah—The head of a village.
Ooster—One of the best sort.

Ramadán—The Mahommedan season of fasting.
Reis—Pilot.

Saadat el basha—Excellency.
Sáis—Groom.
Sakkia—Persian water-wheel.
Salaam—A salutation of the East; an obeisance, performed by bowing very low and placing the right palm on the forehead and on the breast.
Sarraf—An accountant.
Shadoof—Bucket and pole used by natives for lifting water.
Shá'er—A reciter. (The singular of

Sho'ara, properly signifying a poet.)

Sheikh-el-beled—Head of a village.

Shintiyán—Very wide trousers, worn by the women of the middle and higher orders.

Sitt—"The Lady."

Tarboosh—Fez or native turban.

Tarah—A veil for the head.

Ulema—Learned men.

Waled—A boy.

Wekeel—A deputy.

Welee—A favourite of Heave colloquially a saint.

Yashmak—A veil for the lower pa of the face.

Yelek—A long vest or smock, wo over the shirt and shint yán.

Zeriba—A palisade.

THE END

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE PRESS OF THE PUBLISHERS.

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