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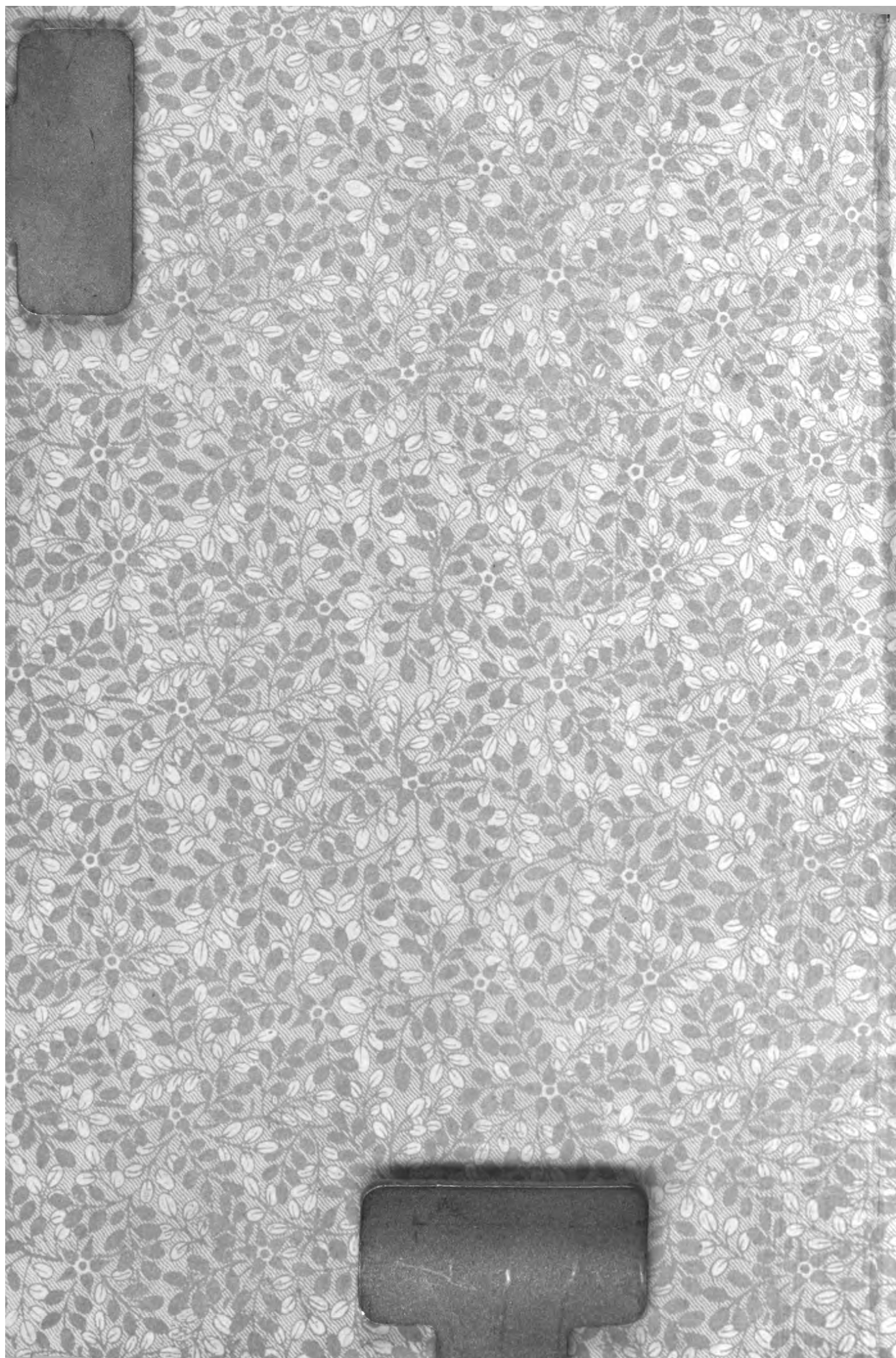
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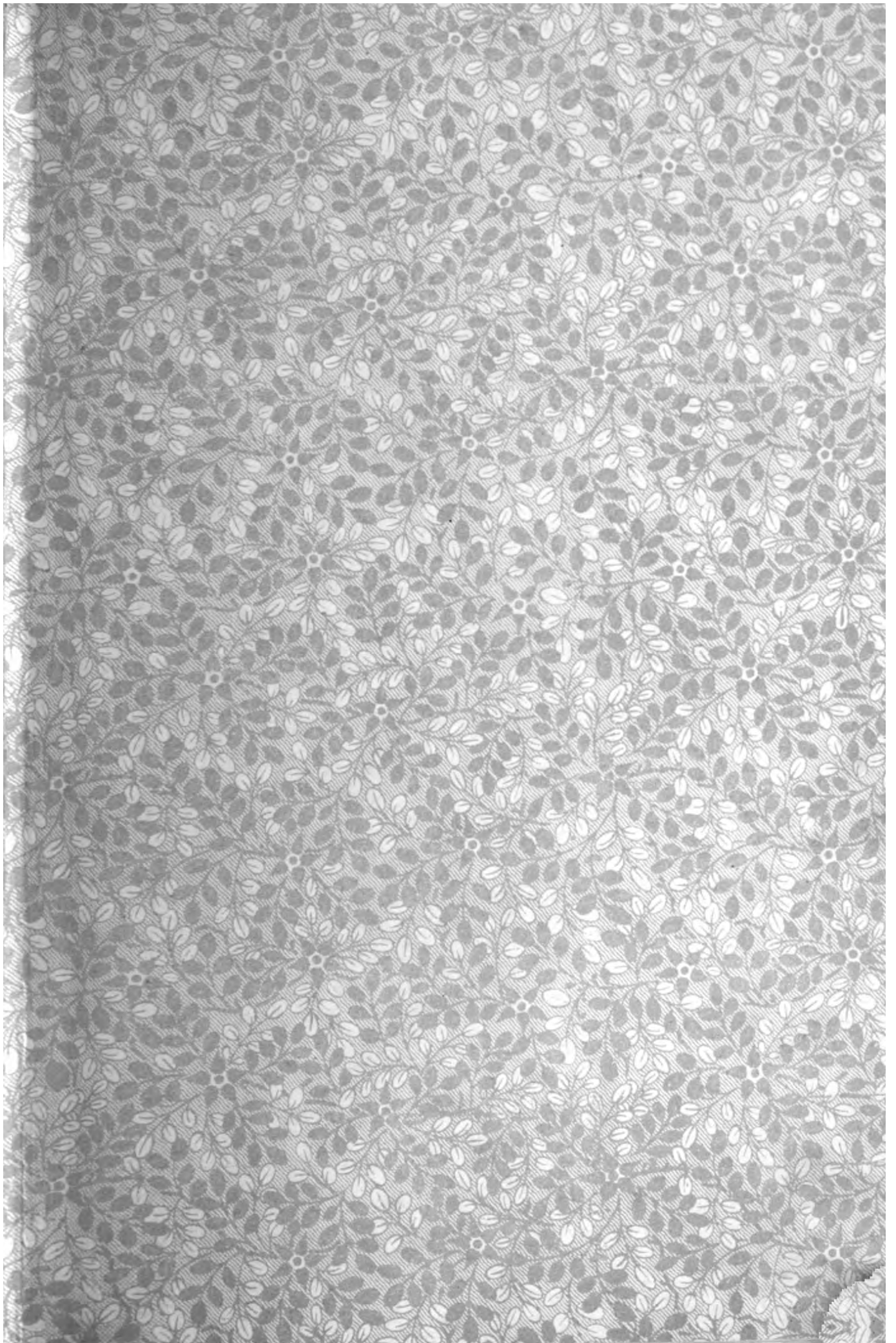
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THE DEVIL'S DIE

A Novel

BY

GRANT ALLEN

AUTHOR OF

"PHILISTIA," "STRANGE STORIES," "IN ALL SHADES," ETC.



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THE DEVIL'S DIE.

CHAPTER I.

“Now then, Sam,” the head porter muttered sulkily in an undertone to his mate; “lend a hand here, will you, lazy, to get out the black gentleman’s luggage.”

Dr. Mohammad Ali stood watching the porters very attentively as they disembarked the bags and boxes (with the regulation show of unnecessary vehemence) from the open van at Polperran Station on the tag-end of the Great Western Railway.

Carlyle was right: immense and unsuspected depths of importance lurk unseen in mere clothing. At Saharanpur, in the North-West Provinces, where Mohammad Ali had been born and bred, and where his respected father still lived upon his means as a native money-lender, the young doctor would have passed in the

crowd as a very decent Mohammedan gentleman of the stereotyped pattern. A turban and a cummerbund make all the difference. But at Polperran Station, in the county of Cornwall, a round felt hat of the newest model, a well-made cut-away tourist suit of grey homespun, a tie and collar of Bond Street perfection, and a white rosebud daintily stuck, with a sprig of maidenhair, in his topmost buttonhole, had almost transformed the handsome young Musulman into a genuine free-born, first-class passenger. As he stood there, holding out a tiny scrap of official paper in his small and neatly-gloved right hand, his own mother, good lady, mewed up in her zenana at Saharanpur, would hardly have recognized her metamorphosed son for a true and faithful follower of the Prophet of Islam.

Dr. Mohammad Ali was decidedly both good-looking and gentlemanly. Dark, of course; you expect a man whose parents live in the native town at Saharanpur to have a somewhat sombre cast of complexion; but strikingly handsome and pleasing, for all that, with his keen and piercing East Indian eyes, his delicately-moulded small features, his charming smile of perfect good-humour, and his two even

rows of dainty and faultless pearl-white teeth. Even the porters eyed him respectfully; they saw at a glance with professional instinct that he was black, but comely—one of the right sort in fact; good for half-a-crown down any day, if he was good for a penny.

“Genelman’s got a dog-ticket, Sam,” the head porter muttered, with a nudge to his underling.

“It’s not a dog, my friend,” Dr. Mohammad Ali answered, smiling, in English a great deal better than the porter’s own. “It’s that box over yonder—the one with the pierced holes and the stick-out handles to it. Take it gently by the handles only, and don’t put your fingers too near the holes on any account. There’s a snake inside it; in fact, a rattlesnake, one of the very deadliest creatures known to science.”

The young man spoke in a soft, low, musical voice, and didn’t seem to be at all aware that he was communicating a fact in the least out of the common; but the effect of his speech upon the two burly Cornish porters was instantaneous and magical. They had been preparing to swing out the box, live stock and all, with the usual generous and effusive recklessness of the suborned luggage-smasher; but at the

sound of that talismanic name, "rattlesnake," they laid down the handles gingerly with profound firmness, and respectfully, but very distinctly declined to proceed further with the act of clearing the entire compartment. "The company are not and don't undertake to be common carriers of rattlesnakes, sir," the head porter observed abstractedly; "and, what's more, at my time of life, it ain't to be expected as I'm going to take to 'em."

At that very moment the sudden apparition of a rapidly vibrating forked tongue, protruded like lightning through one of the drilled holes in the box, and showing an ominous vista behind of two grooved fangs, surmounted by a pair of watchful beady-black eyes in the dim background, gave added point and fresh emphasis to the head porter's decided protest.

Dr. Mohammad Ali observed the apparition of the tongue and fangs with evident relish. "Ha! that's right, old girl," he said, tapping the cover gently with his gloved finger, "so you're lively, are you? lively, lively! None the worse for your long journey down from Paddington, eh, my beauty? That's a good girl! Softly, softly! Put back your head now, and go to sleep again. You shall rest

in peace to-night in your furnished apartments, your own hired house, my lady. Do you happen to know where a gentleman by the name of Dr. Chichele lodges? Ah, there you are at last, my dear fellow! Delighted to see you. I've brought down the Begum as you see, for your behoof and instruction; but your porters here in this remote district appear to harbour an incomprehensible prejudice against venomous reptiles. They seem to be afraid the Begum 'll bite them. Lend me a hand with her highness, will you, Harry, and mind she doesn't get a chance with her fangs at you for all the universe?"

The young Englishman in boating flannels who had just come up took one of the handles firmly in his grasp, while Mohammad himself held the other daintily in his gloved fingers. Between them they lifted the box with gentle caution out of the luggage-van, and laid it down on the platform safely in front of them.

"Now, then!" shouted the station-master, with some asperity; "look alive, there, will you! Any more for the Penzance train? Got that vermin safe out of the van? All right! Go ahead, then, Bill!" And he sounded his whistle. "And you, sir," turning to the

smiling East Indian, "you can't take that beast back to London again, you know. The Great Western Railway Company hereby give notice that they are not and will not be——"

"I know, I know," Mohammad Ali answered, with a good-natured smile and wave of his hand. "But the Begum doesn't propose going back to town at all, Mr. Station-master. It's her highness's intention, as at present advised, to spend the short remainder of her days in observing nature here at Polperran. She's in splendid poison, Harry; in magnificent poison. I never saw a rattlesnake in finer fig anywhere in India. Rich and rare were the germs she wore—every germ of them all a deadly virus. If she was to bite you this moment—hi presto, before you could say the usual 'Jack Robinson,' it'd be all up with you." And he seated himself carelessly sideways upon the box, drew off his glove, and tapped at one of the round holes with his thumb and fore-finger, as if on purpose to excite and stimulate the half-dormant creature coiled up inside.

The Begum answered by darting her tongue out viciously as he withdrew his finger, and endeavouring to bury her fangs deep in the naked flesh of her ardent admirer.

“Naughty girl, naughty girl, be quiet now, will you?” the young Mussulman murmured playfully, in the voice in which one usually addresses a toy terrier. “Would she bite her master, then, would she; would she? She was a naughty, ungrateful, wicked, bad serpent, and she deserved to be taken straight home, and well whipped, and sent to bed supperless. How shall we get her up to your lodging, Harry?”

“There’s a sort of cab or omnibus somewhere in the place,” the Englishman answered, laughing; “but the ’busman will certainly decline to carry her, so we’d better borrow a truck and wheel it up with her. But you can’t go along through the streets of Polperran wheeling a truck in that hat, and coat, and buttonhole, Ali. You look for all the world, with your fine clothes, as if you were going to a fête or a flower show.”

Ali lighted a cigarette carelessly, “When I come into a fresh world,” he said, puffing it out in white clouds, “I dress myself in my best accordingly. I have come to explore the world of Cornwall. There will be houris in Polperran. Even the despised black man likes to do himself justice in the presence of houris. Am I not

a man and a brother?" And he looked up into his English companion's fair face with a comical expression of appealing humanity which made Harry Chichele laugh heartily.

"Well," the Englishman said, "at any rate, Ali, we'd better take the beast up—I beg your pardon, I mean the Begum. By the way, why do you call her such an odd name? She's handsome enough and vicious enough for it in all conscience, anyhow."

Ali helped him lift the box tenderly on to the trolley which the porter lent him. "She is," he said, removing his cigarette from his mouth for a moment, "wicked enough, and vicious enough, no doubt, or at least nearly. For she couldn't quite come up in wickedness and cruelty to the amiable old lady after whom I've ventured to call her."

"And who was that?" Harry Chichele asked carelessly, as they wheeled the truck between them away from the station.

"Oh, it's only a strange weird story of our own parts, but you'd better hear it, both because you're going in future to be the Begum's master, and because—well, because the Begum's story is somehow connected with certain English families of some social and domestic import-

ance. I called her after Begum Johanna of Deoband."

"And who was Begum Johanna?" Harry Chichele asked, with that faint show of interest which we all feebly pretend to feel in things Indian before the faces of those to whom they are living realities. "I seem to remember the name, I fancy. My father often spoke of her, I think. Perhaps he had something to do with her in India."

Mohammad Ali coughed. It was a dry cough with a peculiarly arid and Arab significance about it. "He had," he answered. "Your grandfather knew her. She was the wife of a French soldier of fortune in the wild freebooting days in the Punjaub. And it's about her they tell that terrible story of the buried slave-girl. Of course you know the story of the slave-girl!"

"We English are dreadfully ignorant of Indian affairs," Harry Chichele replied with obliquely apologetic confession of ignorance.

"Well, this is the story, and you ought to know it, Harry. It—it has some interest for some of the great Anglo-Indian families. Begum Johanna had once a beautiful slave girl whom she suspected of having intrigued with

her husband, the Frenchman. Whether she had intrigued with him, or whether she hadn't I can't tell you; but at any rate she was a very lovely girl from Cashmere, and the Frenchman admired her, and that alone was quite enough to rouse Begum Johanna's deadliest jealousy. So one night, when she imagined her husband had been talking with the girl, she got her bricklayers suddenly to excavate a great hole under her own bedchamber, and built a small brick vault, and put a trap door to it leading from her bedroom. Then she had the girl brought before her and flogged till she was almost insensible; and after that, a couple of servants lowered the poor creature down into the vault, with a jar of water but no food, and closed the trap door down tight, and put Begum Johanna's bed on the top of it. For nine days and nine nights that unhappy slave lay there, starving and dying slowly in the vault; and for nine days and nine nights Begum Johanna lay on her couch listening to the terrified creature's frantic shrieks, and gloating over her agony as they subsided at last till she died by inches. Harry, it's a terrible thing even to feel one belongs to a race in which such devilry as that was ever possible."

He said it earnestly and very sadly, as if the feeling of his kinship with that awful woman oppressed and weighed down his inmost spirit. Harry Chichele instinctively felt the genuineness of his black friend's expression, and answered hurriedly, as if to put him more at his ease, "Well, you know, after all, we ourselves, Ali, here in Europe, aren't so very much better either. It's not so very long ago, when one comes to think of it, that we, too, burnt and tortured our witches and our criminals; and I can remember myself the time when Lord Tom Noddy, and others of his caste, made parties of pleasure and hired rooms at vast expense to go and see a man die in his boots."

"Ah, yes," the Indian answered, with a faint toss of his head and a curl of his lip, "that's true enough, of course, my dear fellow; we're both in pretty much the same box. There's a great deal of human nature in all of us. The ape and tiger are only half bred out of us anywhere as yet. But the awful fact remains none the less awful because we all of us share in it alike. Rather is it only all the more awful, if it comes to that. The wider the condemnation, the worse for humanity. I regret that my ancestors only a generation or

two back, were hideous fiends in human form, and you console me by assuring me, with your graceful English condescension, that about the same time your own progenitors, too, were devils incarnate. A poor sort of topsy-turvy, 'You're another!' 'Father Confessor, I am dreadfully wicked.' 'Yes, dear son, but all the rest of us are really every bit as bad as you are.' There, there, old girl; keep quiet, keep quiet. Your Highness's troubles will soon be over. You'll find yourself now after ten minutes at Chichele's room in a congenial atmosphere of all the diseases and all the poisons."

"But, Ali, you don't mean to say you're descended yourself from Begum Johanna?"

The black doctor gave a sudden start of unfeigned horror. "Me?" he cried. "Me, did you say, Chichele? Heaven forbid it. No, not descended from her! Thank God, not a drop of that terrible woman's cursed blood flows in a single vein of mine, Harry. You forget her name — she was a Christian — Johanna. A converted Hindoo, I mean, not a Mohammedan. All my people are Moslems of the purest type, descendants of the Arab missionaries to India. But the Hindoos, who

believe in transmigration, you know, have a strange story that the Begum's soul took up its abode after death in the body of a rattlesnake. A very appropriate dwelling-place, indeed! She was that, and worse than it. So that's why I call our lady here the Begum. I sometimes fancy vaguely to myself—you know we Indians are an imaginative race—that the Hindoo theories are right after all, and that Begum Johanna's bloodthirsty soul lives to this day in my treacherous snake here. Look at her eyes! How deadly! how jealous! Look at her fangs! How sleek and cruel. Quiet, your highness; quiet, quiet; you're nearly home now."

They had reached the middle of the one long grey street of Polperran, and, as Ali spoke, a pony-carriage drove lightly past them, with a dark Cornish girl holding the reins. She smiled in much amusement at the incident of the truck, and bowed a hasty bow as she passed to Harry Chichele.

"Pretty girl, isn't she?" Harry Chichele said, raising his sailor's cap with a graceful movement. "That's Miss Tregellas, the rector's daughter. She's the belle of Polperran. Renders existence here endurable for the

present. Otherwise, I'm sure I don't know how I should have ever got through the summer without you, Ali."

"She's more than pretty," Mohammad Ali answered, his voice dropping to a chivalrous undertone. "She has a sweet face; good as well as beautiful. Your English women are goddesses, Harry. Why was I born in India, I wonder? Just fancy me marrying an Indian woman—a doll of a creature taken straight from the zenana to Middlesex Hospital! The idea's grotesque. I could never dream of it. An Englishwoman's the only woman fit for me. And yet no Englishwoman would ever for a moment think of taking me. Strange that a mere distinction of cuticle should so completely cut a man off from all his natural peers and helpmates! Brain and soul and spirit may be civilized and European as you please; but none of them will weigh one grain in the scales against a wrong sort of epidermis! I wonder, now, why the epidermis should be considered, socially speaking, such a very important part of human anatomy!"

Harry Chichele laughed an unconcerned laugh. "My dear fellow," he said, in a good-humoured tone, "your mistake lay in ever

divorcing yourself from your natural surroundings. You ought to have stopped in India, you know, and then you'd have been satisfied, like all your ancestors, with the good women of your own country. Now you've come to England, of course you won't put up with the type of beauty usually admired by the faithful of Islam."

"Never!" Mohammad Ali cried with a shudder. "Heaven forbid so great a degradation! But, for all that, I'm glad I came to England. To stop in India is to starve one's own moral and mental nature. To come here is growth, development, emancipation, freedom!" And he stroked his moustache meditatively with his dusky hand, as he stooped down once more to inspect in her close cage the now quiet and slumbering Begum.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning was a glorious English August day, calm and clear, with bright blue sky and glassy sea; and Harry Chichele took Mohammad Ali out for a walk along the beautiful weather-worn cliffs of Polperran.

The two young men had been students together at the Middlesex Hospital, where Harry Chichele was employed as junior house physician. Some months had passed, however, since they had last met, and Mohammad Ali, at the end of his medical course in London, had gone out to spend the winter in India, on a visit to his parents, and had only just returned to England, bringing with him an appropriate present for his old fellow-student, in the shape of the Begum. For Harry Chichele was allowed to be the greatest rising authority in England on germs and poisons, and he was just then engaged on a

series of minute researches into the bite of a common English viper as compared with that of various other venomous snakes and poisonous reptiles. It was the vipers, in fact, that had brought him for his summer holiday into Cornwall; for the wild heather-covered moors that surround Polperran on every side supply the very spots where the sun-loving adders delight to bask, and the lizards to bathe themselves in the broad sunshine on the sandy banks and open patches.

“The sea looks magnificent this morning,” Harry Chichele said, as they reached the summit of a jagged and pinnacled granite crag, that jutted out boldly into the deep emerald-green bay below. “What a lovely purple on the distant horizon, and what a perfect calm over the whole Channel. Not a ripple breaks the surface anywhere! Not a breath of wind dimples its cheek! I love to see it, vast and illimitable and silent like that! Some people say the sea is always so changeable. For my part, Ali, it’s rather the grand monotony and infinity of the ocean that makes it most sublime and beautiful to me.”

“Ugh, don’t speak of it, my dear boy,” Mo-hammad Ali cried with a sudden shudder. “If

you had been tossed about helpless upon the bosom of Biscay, as I've been for the last ten days or so, you'd never want to rhapsodize again about the sea as long as you live, I can tell you. Monotonous, indeed! I wish it *was* monotonous! It's the want of repose about it that *I* object to. Heaving and plunging and raving and dashing all the time, as if the human digestion was a cast-iron boiler, and the human nerves were entirely composed of brazen fibres. No, no, I want no more of the sea, thank you. That's a pretty sight that schooner over yonder, under full sail. Hand me your field-glass: I'd like to have a good look at her."

"A lovely morning," Harry Chichele went on musingly. "So still and breathless. Glorious weather for a rousing epidemic. How the conqueror germ would float and fatten on the stagnant air! How he'd spread and revel in this basking sunshine! What splendid chances one would have to watch the growth and development of a good popular plague, wouldn't one?"

Mohammad Ali levelled the glass and swept the horizon rapidly for a moment; then he said, in a quieter and more subdued voice, "There's a yacht over yonder I don't quite understand. She's only got a single sail spread. Everything

else in sight is under all canvas. There's hardly a breath of air stirring. Why on earth should she have no more canvas on?"

Harry Chichele took the glasses as Ali handed them, and looked intently at the shadowy yacht upon the dim horizon. "By George!" he murmured, "it's certainly curious. She hardly seems to be moving at all. And she's got her sail set most oddly. I don't understand what the dickens she's driving at. There seems to be something or other wrong about her."

Mohammad Ali raised the glasses to his eyes once more. "She gives one a creepy feeling, anyhow," he said, scanning her close. "The rigging looks all so bare and skeleton-like. I can make her out a great deal better now. She isn't drifting. She's not a derelict. There's a man at the tiller; a single man. I don't see anybody else on board. Let's go and have a look at her with the coastguard's telescope. I feel convinced there's something serious the matter."

The coastguard on the summit of the neighbouring peak was sweeping the sea idly with his glass, and evidently had not yet noticed this particular very suspicious-looking yacht, away

to westward. As soon as Mohammad Ali called his attention to her, however, he gave a sudden low whistle, and gazed at her long and curiously through his small pocket telescope. "There's something up," he exclaimed at once. "She ain't lost any of her masts or sails, that's clear. They're all reefed up quite regular and proper, and everything ship-shape as you'd wish to see it. But she's got the rummiest-looking sail set I ever clapped eyes on, and there's only one man visible anywhere aboard of her. Yacht o' that size and tonnage, I take it, ought to have at least three of a watch to manage her. He's single-handed, that's where it is. I can make him out now. He's holding the tiller and keeping a tight hand on the sheet at the same time. Seems as if he was master and mate and cabin-boy, all rolled into one. She ain't flying no distress signals neither: that's odd. But there's a red handkerchief flapping on the sheet—looks as if it was meant to attract attention."

Harry Chichele focussed the telescope on the doubtful yacht, and raked her over, fore and aft, with a close scrutiny. "She's in distress," he said at last, decisively. "Not a doubt in the world about that. The man's holding the tiller in one hand, and the sheet in the other. There's

a red handkerchief tied to the sheet, as you say, and he gives it a shake every now and again on purpose to be noticed. He's trying to signal us—I'm sure of that. Ha, now he's waving a handkerchief in his hand. He sees us, he sees us! He's making signs to us."

"Better go back to Polperran at once," Mohammad Ali suggested, hastily, "and put out a boat to see what's the matter."

They walked back at their best speed to the little cove—a bay of white sand, hemmed in on every side by granite cliffs—and hired a row-boat from a man on the beach. Two stalwart fishermen manned the boat for them, and took the oars. Harry Chichele and Ali leaned back in the stern, and kept their eyes fixed on the yacht with her one sail making slowly but steadily across the water towards them.

The men rowed hard, and the yacht sailed sluggishly on before the faint and almost imperceptible breeze until they had got nearly within hailing distance. Mohammad Ali held the field-glass in his hand. "There's only one man, sure enough," he said in a grave voice, eyeing him closely, "and even he seems scarcely fit to work a vessel. He's ghastly pale, and very feeble-looking. He totters about when he

moves on the deck. It's about the most mysterious ship I ever saw. Never a sign of life about her. She looks, somehow, like a plague-stricken city."

"Perhaps," Harry said, "the owner's trying to navigate her alone. You know people will go in for these foolhardy adventures."

They drew closer and saw the yacht, with all her sails, save that one solitary triangular piece of canvas, furled and reefed on the yards in due order—a bare hull, drifting slowly, slowly, slowly on, before that breathless and motionless air of August. Nothing but the current was bearing her along. The hot sun poured down from overhead. No breeze or quiver shook the silent sail. A sultry stillness held the cloudless expanse of heaven. Not a sound or a movement came from the yacht. The water hardly sheered off from her bows as she glided imperceptibly on. She seemed to slacken even as they approached, and to lie idle at last in perfect inaction upon the calm surface of that unruffled sea.

"I can make out her name," Mohammad Ali mused aloud. "The *Seamew*, of London. A pretty little craft, but deathly still. There must be some curious mystery about her."

"Mutiny, perhaps," one of the fishermen

suggested, leaning upon his oar. "Crew may have gone off and left her on the high seas; or deserted, might be, in the last port touched at."

"It certainly looks uncanny," Harry Chichele answered, with languid curiosity. "So much the better. I love an adventure. And this one has an element of the supernatural hanging about it vaguely, somehow."

As he spoke, Mohammad Ali laid down the field-glass with a cry of surprise. "The man's ill," he cried; "deadly ill. He looks almost as if he were dying. He can hardly hold himself up on the deck. Pull alongside, quick, will you? There, that'll do. *Seamew*, ahoy! ahoy! ahoy, there!"

The one occupant of the deserted yacht flung up his hands with a wild shout, and let go at once both sheet and tiller. "Ahoy! ahoy! ahoy!" he answered, in a hollow voice, with convulsive eagerness.

"What's up?" Mohammad Ali shouted, between his hands.

"Hold off," the stranger hailed back, in a terrible tone of tremulous warning, his hands held open deprecatingly before him. "Cholera! cholera!"

At the sound of that awful and dreaded word,

the two fishermen dropped their oars at once, as if by magic, and let the boat float idly of herself upon the glassy water. "The Lord preserve us!" one of them murmured, with sudden horror. "Stop where you are! Not another stroke! We can't go near her! We mustn't go near her!"

"Go on!" Mohammad Ali cried, in a tone of command. "The man's dying. We can't stop here. If you don't go on, you'll be too late to save him."

"Not another stroke," the first fisherman answered, doggedly.

"You're a coward," the Indian cried, seizing the oar, with a sudden burst of fiery indignation, and showing his pearl-white teeth like a dog in the heat of his anger. "Come along, Harry. Take the oars from them, quick, will you. We must pull alongside and help this poor fellow. Coward, I say! Cowards, both of you! I never knew before that seafaring men could be so cowardly."

"I'm not afraid of the worst storm that ever blew out of God's heaven," the fisherman answered, holding tight to his oar and disputing its possession; "but hang me if I'm ever going for you or for no man to bring the cholera home to Polperran."

Mohammad Ali glanced at him hard with unconcealed scorn. "My friend," he said, "we two are doctors. We're no more afraid of the cholera, we two, than you're afraid of a bit of a light sou'-wester. Is this the bravery you Englishmen boast of! In the country I come from the cholera walks abroad unseen in the streets, by day and by night, all the year round, like a ghost in a graveyard, and no man fears it any more than you'd fear a capful of wind here on the Channel. What would you do if we doctors were to shirk danger as you do? It's our work and our duty to face the cholera, and get the better of it, as it's your work and your duty to face and outlive the very fiercest hurricane that ever rode on the angry Atlantic. Pull us alongside, I tell you, at once, or let us pull ourselves if you're afraid of it. I'm not going to run away from danger now like a cowardly deserter."

"You may do as you like with the cholera yourself," the fisherman answered, still grasping the oar. "Of course, it's your business. But me and my mate 'll have nothing to say to it, so that's flat, and you may as well be satisfied."

He spoke firmly, with the dogged obstinacy of the Cornish race showing strong in his voice

and manner, and Mohammad Ali felt at once it was no use parleying further with him. Quick as lightning the sinuous young Indian stood up in the stern and shouted once more to the death-like figure in the *Seamew* opposite.

“How many on board?” he cried, with a loud cry.

“Only one more,” the stranger answered with a terrible effort. “And he’s dying.”

“Where?”

“On deck here.”

“And the rest?”

“All dead. Owner and eight hands of them. Cholera broke out on board the third day out from Santander. I’ve navigated the yacht myself alone since yesterday morning. Send out a doctor as quick as you can to save the boy here.”

Mohammad Ali answered nothing. He did not hesitate for a single second. Swift as thought, he pulled off his coat, flung it into the stern, jumped on to the thwart, raised his hands together high above his head, and plunged forthwith, like a practised diver as he was, into the calm and placid water below. A few dozen strokes brought him fairly alongside, for he breasted the sea with powerful arms, and swam

ahead with all the fierce and eager energy of a sudden resolution. The man on the yacht crawled feebly to the ship's side, fastened a rope with trembling fingers to a brass peg, and threw it over towards the Indian doctor with an evident effort. Mohammad Ali caught it lightly as it fell, and hauled himself up, hand over hand, with Eastern agility, till he stood at last, erect and dripping, but tall and straight as ever, on the deck of the *Seamew*. As he did so, the stranger flung himself down, tottering and faint, upon the deck, and pointing with his bloodless fingers to a huddled figure close to the mast, cried aloud with a voice of terrible entreaty, "Send out a doctor to save the boy, can you?"

"I'm a doctor myself," Mohammad Ali answered, laying his hand gently on the stranger's shoulder with quick perception of the situation. "There's hope yet. Don't despair. Harry, ahoy, there! Row back with those two cowards as fast as you can, and get some better men than them to come abroad and take charge of these poor sick fellows. I'll bring the yacht in round the headland there as well as I'm able, and drop anchor off the point till you come back to me."

“All right,” Harry Chichele answered from the boat, with professional coolness. “You’ll stop aboard, then, till I come again. Is it really cholera?”

“Yes; it’s cholera. Asiatic cholera.”

“How very interesting,” Harry Chichele murmured calmly to himself. “Now we shall have a good chance of watching the development of the disease properly.”

“Row back at once!” the Indian shouted aloud once more from the yacht. “There’s no time to be lost. Row back, I say, and bring out a medicine chest and some proper food for them. And, by the way, you may bring me some dry things at the same time, for these aren’t quite the kind of clothes to nurse a sick man in.”

Harry Chichele nodded assent, and gave a sign to go to the two fishermen. The men, nothing loth to leave that poisoned neighbourhood, seated themselves once more gladly upon the thwarts, and rowed with long strokes for the shore by the Cove of Polperran. Their oars gleamed and shimmered bright in the sunlight, and the splash of the water as it fell from the blades grew fainter and fainter from moment to moment in the receding distance. Mohan-

mad Ali, standing on the yacht, watched them gradually disappear round the corner of the headland, and felt himself left alone at last on that doomed ship, with those two gaunt and pestilence-stricken pallid fellow-creatures. Around him stretched the glassy, motionless sea; above him spread the cloudless blue of heaven; and all about, upon the heavy, breathless, August air, the faint sick odour of that ghastly plague he knew so well in the sultry lanes and alleys of his native town hung about visible as a lambent haze to encircle and pollute the floating pest-house.

As Henry Chichele had well said, it was indeed splendid epidemic weather.

A European suddenly and unexpectedly placed in such an appalling position would have found himself immensely incommoded and weighed down by his dripping garments. But Mohammad Ali, in spite of his English education and culture, still remained at heart an Indian of the Indians. Without a moment's hesitation he stripped off his wet clothes with incredible speed, wound the yacht's flag round his body like a native loin-cloth, and stood forth in the blazing sunlight in another minute, just the ordinary Indian Mohammedan gentle-

man in the simple undress of his own compound. The transformation took but a few seconds to produce, but at the end it was complete and perfect: he had gone back at a stroke from the coast of Cornwall to the blazing sunshine of the North-West Provinces.

Meanwhile the yacht, now left to herself, with her one canvas hardly flapping in the still air, and her rudder swaying at its own free will with the vague current, had drifted idly along towards the headland; for the one man who alone remained capable of guiding her course had collapsed at once the moment Mohammad touched the deck. The young Indian seized the sheet as soon as his metamorphosis was fairly concluded, and made it fast to a peg on the gunwale. Then he took the tiller and steered for the lee of the jutting headland, where two minutes later he dropped anchor in clear green water with a firm bottom.

Then for the first time since he came on board he was able to devote himself to his strange patients.

He did not trouble the man at first with questions. He was far too skilled a nurse for that. Without a single word he went down calmly into the stifling little cabin, still heavy

with the terrible fumes of disease, and brought up one by one the bedding and pillows from two of the bunks, with a few sheets, rugs, and blankets. He laid them down on deck with deft and careful hands, arranged them all as neatly as in a hospital, and stretched above the top of the two beds thus hastily prepared a sort of tent or awning, improvised off-hand with a square of canvas and a couple of marline-spikes. That done, he proceeded with a woman's gentleness to loosen the clothes of both his patients, and lift them tenderly in his arms to the beds prepared for them. It was, in fact, a little hastily-made out-door hospital; and the Indian doctor arranged it all as methodically and quietly in his single-handed state as if he had had the usual army of nurses and dressers all waiting obsequious for his merest wave or nod of suggestion.

It was not till his patients were both safely housed in their rough tents that Mohammad Ali turned at last to examine more closely the cases which a strange caprice of chance had thus handed over to his ministering care. The elder of the two strangers was a tall young man, handsome and gentlemanly, so far as one could judge in his present condition, but with a

keen sunken face through which the sharp bones already peeped, and deep-set eyes worn out and wasted by long anxiety and sleepless watching. Mohammad Ali knelt over him in silence, and scanned closely his mouth and twitching nostrils. The young man, opening his eyes for a second, seized the dark hand in a perfect fervour of unspoken gratitude. He could not utter a single word—his strength at last had failed him—but he pointed with a spasmodic effort of his lean arm toward the pale and insensible boy at his side.

The Indian soothed his wasted hand tenderly, and turned to the boy with a desponding gesture. He raised the lad's head a little on the pillow, just to ease his companion's mind—for he saw at once that that case was hopeless—and then went back again with a sympathetic face to the elder patient. He drew back the hair from his high forehead with a delicate touch, and laid his own cold hand upon the burning brow. Then he looked at the young man steadily for a moment, and whispered in a low distinct voice, "How long since you left Santander?"

The patient moistened his parched lips to reply, and raised his head; but the words seemed

somehow to stick in his throat. At last he managed to gasp out in a weak whisper, "Three weeks ago."

"And the dead?" Mohammad Ali asked softly.

"Threw them overboard."

"Good," the Indian replied, with a satisfied nod. "You did well. That's right, anyhow. You shall be properly nursed. We'll pull you through yet, my friend and I, with the help of Allah, the All-wise, the All-Merciful One."

The young man's hand dropped listlessly upon the hard pillow. Mohammad Ali seated himself, cross-legged, beside him on the deck. His native habits seemed to return at once with that simple unencumbering native dress. He fanned the sufferer gently with his hand. For a long while he sat and watched in unbroken silence. Both the patients, relieved by the change and the loosening of their clothes, seemed half to drop into the drowsy condition.

After a while, he spoke in a low voice again. "Your name?" he asked simply, as the patient opened his eyes for a moment.

"Ivan Royle," the young man answered, as in a dream.

The Indian bowed his head and said nothing.

He only shaded his eyes with his hands from the glare of the sun, and gazed across the unruffled expanse of sea towards the Cove of Polperran, on the eager look-out for Harry Chichele's expected arrival.

“I hope he'll remember to bring fresh water,” he murmured, half to himself. “The water on board must all be horribly infected by this time. I hope he'll remember to bring everything. But, thank goodness, Harry has a clear head. We need it, too, with a case like this on hand. But we'll pull him through still, with the help of Allah.”

CHAPTER III.

FOR full two hours the Indian doctor sat, cross-legged, on the yacht's deck, under the awning of his improvised tent, closely watching the pinched faces of his two new and unknown patients. He sat there all the time with the true East Indian cat-like patience, fanning their faces alternately with his hands, and listening eagerly for the dip of oars upon the distant water. At last, a faint plash from beyond the second headland seemed to fall upon his quick senses. He stood up, put his open palm, shell-shaped, to his ear, and strained his hearing to its utmost pitch of absorbed attention. Yes, yes, it was the plash of oars, undoubtedly. Harry Chichele must be coming, at length, to aid and relieve him.

The plash of oars grew nearer and nearer, and men's voices could be distinctly heard round the sharp corner of the granite headland.

Presently, they turned the point of serpentine rock, and emerged, at last, into full view. There were two boats, one behind the other. In the first sat four stout Cornish fishermen. In the second, towed behind it by a rope, Harry Chichele was seated alone, in solemn silence.

The boats drew up about two hundred yards from the yacht's moorings. Then the men leaned upon their oars, and threw off the rope with which they were towing Harry Chichele. Harry had a pair of light sculls in his own boat. With them he rowed himself hastily alongside, and Mohammad Ali, leaning over the gunwale, flung out a hawser, and hauled him on board. They made the small boat fast, in silence, to the stern. Then the four fishermen waved them adieu once more with their hands, and glided away in hot haste from the infected purlieus, leaving those two once more alone, and face to face with the deadly pestilence.

Mohammad Ali's lip curled as before with inexpressible contempt as he gazed back upon the retreating boat's crew. "These fellows were afraid for their own skins, I suppose," he said, with a scornful gesture, as he turned away. "Wouldn't come within half a mile of the danger of infection!"

“No,” Harry Chichele answered, still making fast the ropes, and pulling in his belongings from the small boat. “Not a soul could I get to come aboard. If you want to see what cowards men can be upon occasion, just ask them to face an unknown epidemic. Most men are brave enough in the presence of a danger that you can fight to the face with thews and muscles and active energy; but when it comes to a danger that you have to oppose passively and unresistingly, the best of them will back out of it as gracefully as possible. We medical men are the only ones who will take a risk of this sort upon ourselves without a moment’s hesitation.”

“Nobody would come?”

“No, nobody. The whole village is simply mad with terror. That is to say, nobody, except Miss Tregellas, the rector’s daughter. She volunteered to come and help us nurse—she’s been trained in one of these local institutions, I fancy—but as there was no other woman willing to chance it, of course, her father couldn’t allow her to come aboard with us.”

“What have you done, then, and what do you propose doing?”

“ Oh, I just telegraphed up to the authorities at Falmouth, asking them if they could send us a couple of men to take the yacht round into Falmouth Harbour for the necessary quarantine, and, meanwhile, if they don't hurry, I propose we should lie by here for to-night; we're pretty well under shelter where we are, and, unless the wind rises, which doesn't seem likely, we ought to manage very well till morning.”

“ You've brought water?”

“ Yes. Water, medicines, food, and disinfectants.”

“ That's well. Now we must get to work in earnest. One of the cases is already in collapse, the other may be saved if we take it in hand systematically and promptly.”

Without wasting another minute on talk, the doctors went silently and quietly to work, and soon had treated both their patients with all the care modern science has been able to suggest. They kept them still bivouacked on the open deck—that was far better than the stuffy little cabin—and there they tended them with ceaseless attention till noon was passed, and evening began to draw in upon them. Harry had brought provisions in the boat, and fresh

clothes for Mohammad Ali. But it was not till the heat of the day was fairly past that the Indian consented to put them on and give up the freedom of his simple costume.

By five o'clock they had made themselves quite at home upon the yacht, and had even brewed themselves a cup of tea, with water from the cask Harry brought with him. The evening was warm, though a slight breeze had now risen, and, after a short consultation, they both decided it would be better to leave their patients on deck than entrust them to the mercies of the stuffy little cabin.

All through the evening they sat and watched, talking in a low tone one to the other, and attending to the many wants of their charges. The boy, as Mohammad Ali had perceived from the first, was slowly sinking; but the man Royle, revived by the powerful medicines Harry had brought, showed signs of throwing off the poison of the disease. And as they sat and talked, the breeze grew gradually fresher and fresher, and the yacht began to sway about, with a long swinging motion, on the lippy surface.

“Good thing for the patients, this nice cool wind,” Mahammad Ali observed complacently.

“ But I hope it won't get up much stronger before morning, for it's veered around to the east, I see, and we're lying here off a lee shore now. It'd be awkward if it were to come on to blow hard. We neither of us know much about yachting.”

“ Oh, no fear,” Harry Chichele answered, in an unconcerned tone, with a glance to windward. “ The breeze won't rise, and, if it does, I understand enough about sailing to keep the *Seamew* beating about afloat till morning. You should see this coast in a good storm ; it's just magnificent. I wouldn't like a blow, though, myself, for one thing. These are two very interesting cases. You've watched cholera before, of course, in India, so it doesn't matter very much to you ; but for me this is a rare opportunity. It'd be a nuisance to have the cases disturbed, and be prevented from seeing them out to their full conclusion. Now, you couldn't possibly have two nicer or more typical cases than these ; because the boy'll die, and the man, I expect, will pull through somehow. So, if nothing untoward intervenes to prevent it, I shall have a splendid chance of seeing the course of the disease in both directions—death and recovery.”

The Indian looked at him with a strange and doubtful gleam in his large mild eyes. "Harry," he said, "you're a very strange fellow. I never saw any man in my life so professional as you are. You seem to take only a scientific interest in all your patients; you never regard them for a moment, it seems to me, as objects of living human sympathy."

Harry laughed. "Medicine is medicine, after all, my dear boy," he answered lightly. "One's first business is to watch one's case; and I do love a good case. I don't deny it. It's an acquired taste, but it's necessary—it's necessary. Without it, we could have no true science—nothing but a sort of generous and unsatisfactory sympathetic guess-work."

Mohammad Ali looked at him and mused. "Begum Johanna of Deoband," he began at last——

"Oh, bother Begum Johanna of Deoband," the young Englishman interrupted hastily. "No offence meant to your country, Ali; but this is hardly the moment, I take it, for particulars as to Begums, past, present, or future."

Mohammad Ali answered nothing. He merely stroked his meditative chin in silence, very much Arab fashion, and watched his

English friend again with close attention. "Your grandfather, Sir Isaac Chichele," he began once more, "when he was governor of the North-West Provinces——"

But before he could get any further with his sentence, Ivan Royle, the elder of their two unknown patients, raised his head feebly from his pillow, and, in a parched voice, asked querulously for a drop of water.

Harry rose quick and light at once to fetch it, and held it to his dry and fevered lips with care and patience almost equal to Mohammad Ali's own. The grateful light shone once more in Royle's sunken eyes, and he muttered "Thank you," with a fervent earnestness which meant far more than the words conveyed of heartfelt gratitude.

The evening was now closing in fast, and the sea was rising everywhere around them. It was indeed a strange and weird situation. They lay alone there, two landmen together, in sole charge of that pestilential yacht, with two patients, smitten with a terrible disease, huddled on deck helpless before them. All round, the sea was beginning, under the influence of light and fitful gusts, to lop and shiver. White crests were gathering on the

higher waves. In front stretched that iron-bound Cornish coast, beset with crag and pillar and pinnacle, a terror to far more experienced seamen. The stars came out one by one in the sky overhead. The long lights glimmered in lines across the dancing waves from the houses of Polperran. A shrill breeze whistled now and again through the bare rigging. Everything spoke of solitude and danger. But those two brave men, unconscious of it still, moved about quietly from bed to bed, and ministered with hands unshaken to the wants and necessities of the two poor creatures whom, till that very day, they had never even beheld before.

“If the wind goes on rising like this,” Mohammad Ali murmured, as he fixed a light unsteadily to the foremast, “we shall have to take them downstairs to the cabin, or she’ll be shipping seas, and they’ll probably get a fatal wetting.”

“It’ll be hard if we must,” Harry Chichele answered, balancing himself, landsman-like, on the rolling deck; “for they won’t have half such a chance below as they have up here in the full fresh air.”

On shore that night the gossips of Polperran

sat late, discussing the strange yacht in the little roadside village public. Sensations were rare indeed at Polperran. Sometimes, to be sure, in the height of the pilchard season, an ill-fated smack went down on the serried sunken rocks about the end of the Lizard; and sometimes, in thick November weather, a great West Indian or American liner lost her way hopelessly among the bays and coves, and dashed her huge bulk to pieces at last upon the solid cliffs of those grim and gloomy granite headlands. But such a lurid sensation as a cholera ship standing off the cove itself was quite a novelty to the village wiseacres; and they sat far beyond the legal hours (on plea of public necessity constraining them) in eager conclave as to the action likely to be taken by the Falmouth authorities.

It was a wild night on the English Channel. The storm came on with almost tropical rapidity. All through the evening the wind kept rising with increasing force, till at last, as the church clock of Polperran tolled out eleven, the solitary coastguardman turned to his report-sheet, and marked it down on the Admiralty paper as "half a gale," with official accuracy. A minute later a sudden gust burst with fierce violence against the walls of his shelter. The coast-

guardsman toiled alone up the dark path—it was a moonless night—that led along the brow of the jagged precipices, marked out by white-washed stones at even distances, and looked anxiously out to sea for signs of distress from any passing smack or schooner.

“Wonder how that there cholera yacht gets on through this,” he thought to himself, as he neared the crag that hemmed in the bay where the *Seamew* was riding alone at anchor. “Bad weather to-night on a lee shore. Hard living for a yacht in a squall like this. She’s got no sea-room, and they’re raw hands. Shouldn’t be surprised if she dragged her anchor.”

He hurried on with blind steps to the summit of the jutting crag, and carefully approaching the steep edge of that tremendous precipice, where the cliff toppled over with a sheer descent into six hundred feet of thick darkness, he peered cautiously down into the black abyss at his feet to spy out the whereabouts of the suspicious *Seamew*.

Down, down, down, yards and yards and yards below, in that dizzy black chasm that yawned beneath him, a single light, fastened at a mast-head, swayed and tottered, like a will-o’-the-wisp, through the gloom and mystery of that tem-

pestuous evening. The coastguard lay on his face upon the edge of the cliff, and gazed over in horror on that solitary gleam cast feebly up from the abysmal darkness. The *Seamew* must have dragged her anchor, indeed, and must now be on the very verge of dashing, alone and unmanned save by those two unskilful landmen, against the naked base of those terrific precipices. It was a terrible situation. She was slowly nearing the dangerous crags. By the dim light of the single lamp he could even make out the reflection on the white spray that broke in sheets of beaten foam against the fierce line of granite barriers. The *Seamew* was hardly holding off at all; another gust must surely dash her against them, and grind her to atoms between the raging waves and the solid wall of uprearing precipice.

“She can’t hold off, no matter how they handle her!” the coastguardsman cried aloud to himself, as he stumbled back into the path by the white-washed landmarks, and hurried down, with trembling footsteps, to the cove of Polperran.

Before he got there, the wind, swooping down upon the bay from the dales and valleys, was raving wildly upon the little beach. No man

at Polperran had ever beheld such a night before. For suddenness and fierceness the onslaught was terrific; the full fury of the gale had broken forth with the turn of the tide, and nothing now could save the *Seamew*. Even if the most experienced hands in Polperran had manned her that night, there was no living, on a lee shore, in so terrible a tempest. The storm, in its might, could have lifted her up and dashed her against the precipices, as a child might dash a bottle against the wall. It was all up with the dreaded cholera vessel.

The folk at the public-house rose at once, as the coastguard pushed his white face in at the door, and cried aloud of the danger to the *Seamew*. One moment before, the gossips of Polperran had had no thought, save how to keep that hateful cholera ship at a safe distance. But, with the first breath of peril from the sea, the seaman's instinct rose strong and irrepressible within them, and every man cried with one accord, "Come on to the cove! We must launch the lifeboat!"

The two fishermen, who had rowed out Harry and Mohammad Ali that morning, were the first to rush down eagerly to the shore, and help out with the boat on her mission of mercy. The

others followed in hot haste, and pushed the big craft, creaking and groaning, through the roaring surf, that now beat in huge breakers upon the narrow cove and its guardian headlands. The coxswain stood up at his place in the stern, the crowd on shore cheered lustily, and the lifeboat, driven ahead by twenty strong arms, ploughed her way, baffled and dashed back, with stout endurance through the foam and spray of the white-crested billows.

It was hard work to round the first headland into the outer bay, where the *Seamew* that morning had fixed her moorings. The wind dashed the lifeboat wildly towards the solitary stacks that rose in tall pinnacles from the end of the point, and the sea, bursting over them time and again, threatened to wash the rowers bodily from their seats. The storm took the very breath out of their bodies. But those stout Cornish hearts endured for all that, and by sheer dint of thews and muscles, straining and labouring, battled the fierce fury of that sudden gale, till they almost reached the stranded side of the now drifting and helpless *Seamew*. Every man nerved his arms to the work, and every heart on shore stood still with awe, as the two lights on the stormy water, tossing and

wavering on the crest of the spray, drew nearer and nearer one to the other.

Would they ever reach her? Could they ever lie by her? Had she not got too far among the breakers?

At last, in the deep trough of the long swelling wave, the lifeboat, taking advantage of a momentary lull, drove herself close alongside, and the coxswain, rising eager in his place, caught hold of a hawser, flung out to him with all the mad energy of despair by an unseen hand on the deck of the *Seamew*.

She was lying close under the black rocks, just held off by the back-current force of the undertow, and ready in one moment to grate awfully against the dark stacks that rose to the abyss of darkness above. The surf was hammering and pounding against her sides; spray and brine blinded their eyes; the roar of the breakers deafened their ears. Boiling and seething wildly in its swirling rage, the sea seemed ready to swamp and founder them.

What happened in the next eventful five minutes, no single actor in that terrible scene could ever have recovered. A wild phantasmagoria of foam and rocks and driven water floated with horrible vividness and reality before them.

A fierce wind whistled madly through the torn and tattered rigging of the yacht. A great black wall of rock and crag rose ominous in front to the dusky vault of heaven overhead. Below, two helpless hulls tossed and rolled with infinite jars and shocks and colliding broadsides one against the other. And out of it all, dimly perceived, and but half realized, two dark figures, encircled in spray, loomed uncertain upon the heaving and groaning deck of the *Seamew*—two dark figures, etched out against the sky, erect and strong, but bearing each in his stout arms a strange burden, wrapped up in swathes of muffling bed-clothes. How they ever got into the lifeboat nobody knew. These great critical moments of our lives pass too fast and absorb our inmost energies too profoundly to be ever consciously recognized or perceived by us. But a minute later, one thing was certain; the lifeboat had headed around once more through the boisterous billows for Polperran Cove, four strange objects cowered and huddled at the bottom by the stern, and the wreck of the *Seamew*, a helpless derelict, was shivering and crashing its snapped timbers in a mad onslaught against the iron wall of those gigantic overhanging granite precipices.

They heard her crash against the crags in one fierce burst of assault. Even above the roar and howling of wind and sea, the groans of her beams, as they broke short, like twigs, grated upon their ears. Next moment, they saw the *Seamew* no more, but a rushing mass of white water in her place, and a black wall of rock beyond it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE lifeboat made her way back more easily than she had come, for the sea was running high towards land, and carried them on its crest, with a rush and a roar, into the little cove. They beached her, with a run, on the shelving shingle, and then disembarked, wet and cold, upon the solid land, amid a circling crowd of sympathizing and eager men and women.

All Polperran by this time, indeed, was on the beach to receive them. But as they landed, the crowd fell back awe-struck to right and left, in the dim light of lamps and lanterns, and sidled off wider and wider on either hand from that terrible infection. Even the men from the lifeboat themselves, now their self-imposed work of mercy was over, slunk away one by one, appalled at the danger, from the four passengers of the doomed *Seamew*. To be sure, while the task of rescuing them was still to be

done, all thought of contagion had been banished from their minds; the seaman's spirit had nerved and inspired them; but the moment they stood once more on dry land, face to face with the fear of pestilence, their natural terror reasserted itself afresh, and they shrank away from those four plague-stricken men, till at last Harry Chichele and Mohammad Ali stood alone, with their unconscious charges, in the midst of an ever-widening and distant ring of terrified spectators.

For a minute or two an awful silence, save for the roar and dash of the sea upon the beach, reigned all around. Then Harry Chichele, looking about upon the mute white faces that everywhere surrounded him, asked in a simple, straightforward voice, "Where can we take these poor people?"

The crowd of fisherfolk turned one to another in eager debate, but nobody volunteered to give an answer. It was clear that not a soul in Polperran was willing to take in the dreaded cholera patients to his own home. They might die on the beach, for all the crowd cared, before any man out of charity would house them.

"Is there no cottage-hospital or anything of the sort?" Mohammad Ali asked impetuously.

The crowd whispered and fidgeted uneasily again, but nobody attempted to suggest a reply.

Harry Chichele looked around him with a puzzled air. "What on earth are we to do, Ali?" he exclaimed at last. "This is almost as bad as the sea, isn't it?"

As he spoke, a fresh figure glided suddenly through the closed circle, and, without a moment's hesitation, came up to his side. It was a delicate girl, dressed in a simple dark evening dress of some thin material, with a garden hat confining her dark hair, and a pretty white Shetland woollen wrap thrown lightly in a fold around her slender neck and shoulders. Her bright black eyes gleamed like diamonds in the rays of the lantern, and her white hand, laid with feminine pity on Ivan Royle, as he lay huddled and muffled in the rugs and wrappings, seemed small and beautiful as some fairy's in a fairy tale. Mohammad Ali recognized her at once. It was the girl whom Harry had pointed out the day before as Miss Tregellas, the rector's daughter.

"They must come to the rectory, Dr. Chichele," she said in a quiet, self-possessed tone, which contrasted well with the slavish terror of those demoralized fisherfolk. "There's

nowhere else in Polperran you could possibly take them. We can make them comfortable and nurse them there. Bring them up immediately."

"My dear Olwen!" her father cried, hurrying up behind her; "to the rectory, did you say? Do you think you ought to take them there? Consider the risks, my dear; consider yourself; consider the servants."

The girl turned to him with the same quiet, unterrified manner as before. "It's the only possible place, papa," she answered simply. "There's no help for it. We can isolate them there, and nowhere else. Besides, none of the villagers seem willing to have them. There's no time to be lost. We can't leave them out here in the cold any longer."

"But, my dear, for your own sake——"

"I am not afraid, papa. I'd rather they came to us. There would be far less chance of its spreading to the village. I'm so glad we happened to be sitting up so late to-night."

"But, Dr. Chichele, what do you think yourself? Do you think we ought to let them come to the rectory?"

"They must go somewhere, and at once," Harry answered stoutly; "if not, they'll die

here, right off, of cold and exposure, if they're not dead as it is already. In common humanity you must take them in ; and if nobody else will give them shelter, why, as clergyman of the parish——”

Olwen Tregellas did not wait, for her part, to argue the question. She beckoned to one of the fishermen with her small white hand. The man, with a frightened look still settled on his face, came forward a little way in front of the group, and then stopped, as if afraid to approach nearer. “What do you want, miss?” he asked uneasily.

“The hand-cart,” Olwen answered, with a quiet smile. “Bring it down here and leave it there at the side immediately. You needn't come nearer. Let nobody else expose himself to the infection. We will do all ourselves. We must try to confine it as narrowly as possible.”

The man turned and darted off at full speed to the village. “I see,” Mohammad Ali murmured at her side, “you understand how to deal with such cases.”

Olwen looked up into his face for a moment, and started with surprise at the sudden apparition. Till that moment she had not noticed his presence. The dark skin, the pearly white

teeth, the black eyes, with their light setting, all for the time took away her breath. Under such peculiar circumstances, they made her heart beat fast for a second; then, with a little shudder, she recollected the facts, and said hastily, "I beg your pardon. I didn't somehow remember you just at first. You're Dr. Chichele's friend, of course. I think I met you yesterday, coming from the station."

The Indian noticed the startled, half-frightened expression on her face, and shrank back into himself, as a man of colour always does at the evident repugnance of whites, and especially of women, to his complexion. "My name is Mohammad Ali," he said somewhat stiffly; "I ought to have introduced myself. I'm a doctor, too, and I've been helping Chichele on the yacht with these poor patients of ours."

"Oh, yes, I know," Olwen answered, with a gentle, reassuring smile. "I've heard all about you, of course; the whole village has been talking of nothing else all day but your wonderful bravery. Everybody says it was so splendid of you to swim to the yacht, and try to save these poor people. But, just for the moment, in the excitement of the landing,

you know, I forgot entirely all about your being——”

She paused embarrassed. Mohammad Ali, with oriental quickness, supplied the rest. “About my being an Asiatic,” he said (it saved her ingeniously from the awkward need for saying “a black man”). “I can easily understand. But here comes the hand-cart. Lay them in gently, Harry; so, so. Take care.” And he whispered something aside in his ear. It was not till after they reached the rectory that Olwen knew one of the burdens they lifted so gently and reverently into the cart had ceased to breathe before they landed from the tossing lifeboat.

In another minute they started on their way. Harry and Mohammad Ali pushed the cart; the rector and his daughter walked slowly by the side. The crowd fell back to right and left, and made an aisle for them as they passed up in solemn procession to the rector's house. Not a soul dared to come near them as they went; only the boldest and bravest of the men followed behind at a great distance, and watched the little cortége pass up the long narrow street of whitewashed houses, and out of the village to the solitary rectory.

“This is a real crisis,” Harry Chichele said in a low voice to Olwen Tregellas, as they went along. “Much depends upon our care and success. If we can isolate this case, well and good. If not, we may have upon our shoulders the full responsibility of bringing the cholera in force to England.”

“We will do our best,” the girl answered, in an unfaltering voice. “And even if we fail, it’ll be a comfort to think, you know, Dr. Chichele, we only tried to do what we thought our duty.”

They reached at last the rectory gates, and turned into the porch—a sweet, low porch, thickly draped, Mohammad Ali observed as he entered, with clambering clematis and long sprays of jasmine—and there at last, with infinite care, they disembarked their ghastly burden. The white-faced servants who opened the door stood aghast at Miss Olwen’s firm and quiet order, “Show them up to my own room, and the spare bedroom.” But they were too much overcome with terror and surprise to offer any effective remonstrance. They led the way without a single word, as Harry Chichele and Mohammad Ali carried up Ivan Royle, half-conscious, between them, to Miss Tregellas’s own little bedroom.

That done, the young men descended once more; and this time, with quieter footsteps, carried up a senseless burden in their arms to the adjoining room. They laid the boy upon the bed in silence, and smoothed his limbs with decent care. "Poor fellow," Mohammad Ali said, looking at the lifeless and nameless body, tenderly, "I wonder who he is? He'll need no more nursing, anyhow. He's well out of it all early."

Harry turned to go down once more. "This has been an awful night, Ali," he said, with a quiet smile; "the most awful night I ever remember; but I wouldn't have missed it for a thousand pounds. I'm glad we got them safely ashore. Now I shall be able to make researches on my own account upon these precious germs. I wanted to try independently of Pasteur. This is a splendid chance; no man ever had a better. Germs! Why, I can have whole gallons and bucketsful of them, if I choose. I shall simply settle the entire cholera question."

The black man looked at him once more, with the same uneasy glance as once before. "My dear Harry," he said, wearily, "you are too much of an enthusiast. I could almost wish you were a trifle more human and a trifle less absorbedly scientific."

CHAPTER V.

How quickly these awful memories die away ! A fortnight later, the little world of Polperran was once more plodding its familiar round, exactly as though the ghastly episode of that fatal cholera ship had never flitted across the horizon of its sky, to disturb the wonted quiet of the peaceful fishing village.

Ivan Royle's convalescence, too, was incredibly rapid. The removal from all the tainted surroundings of the *Seamew*, the shock and surprise of that sudden night adventure in the lifeboat, the return to fresh, wholesome, English air, and the breezy coolness of those free Cornish moorlands, soon restored him to a health and vigour that would have seemed at first sight utterly impossible. And then there was Olwen Tregellas's careful nursing to second nature, aided by the constant and friendly attention of the two young London doctors. They all became firm friends in twenty-four hours, and

before the first week was well out felt as if they had known one another for a whole lifetime. It was no wonder, therefore, that Ivan progressed favourably and rapidly. Long before the fortnight's seclusion was over, he looked and felt quite himself again, after that short and sharp attack of deadly illness.

Indeed, to say the truth, the night landing from the *Seamew* was a heroic remedy of the kill-or-cure order, and it had turned out rather in favour of curing than of killing. The cholera, and all that belonged to it, went down in a body in the doomed vessel, and Ivan Royle alone survived to tell the story of that terrible voyage.

He told it to Olwen, like the hideous dream that it was, one bright morning in that sunny bedroom, with the pretty oriental cretonne coverings, where the Banksia roses clambered in by hundreds at the open window, and the trumpet creeper hung in long flowery sprays from the pointed gables. It seemed like an echo of some horrible world they had all left well behind them for ever—that ghastly pestilence-stricken world of the *Seamew*, which had gone down bodily in the English Channel. What need now to recall it further?

He had set out on the *Seamew*, so Olwen learned, for a spring cruise in the Mediterranean, sketching—for he was an artist by trade, he said, of some repute in London galleries—with his cousin Mayne, the owner of the yacht, and Mayne's fifteen-year-old boy, Theodore. They three made up the entire party—the rest were the crew—and Theodore was the eldest son—his mother's darling. All went well as they cruised and sketched round the Ægean and Sicily, Algeria and Spain, till they turned homeward at last, with the warmer weather, into the open Atlantic. At Santander, where no cholera was known to exist at the time they called there, they took on board the tainted water which had proved their ruin. The barrel containing it had floated ashore on the night of the storm from the wreck of the *Seamew*, and Harry Chichele, examining a sample under the microscope with his usual cool scientific precision, had found it simply swarming with the comma-shaped cholera germs. Mayne, the owner, was the first to sicken, and after him the crew gave way one by one, till at last Ivan Royle himself was left alone on board to navigate the yacht, with only the sick boy Theodore for sole companion.

“And then,” he said, with his eyes wide open and his pupils dilated, “after all those horrors I had but one idea left in my head—to bring the boy safe to land again. I gave up all care of life for myself. I am almost alone, as it happens, in the world—to me, to live or to die is nothing—but Theodore was his mother’s one joy and delight. It seemed to me, through all that terrible night and morning, when I navigated the yacht single-handed, as if the universe were all narrowed down to a single purpose, and that purpose was to save him for his mother. Oh, Miss Tregellas, you can’t picture to yourself what a terrible day and night it was. I drank as little of the poisoned water as I could—our wines and spirits had all gone long ago—and I had nothing else to moisten my lips with. But I wanted to escape the very worst till I saw the land of England ahead, and could bring the boy safe into harbour. I knew I must fail sooner or later; I knew the horrible thing would overtake me; but I hoped it would be later rather than sooner, for the boy’s sake, and for his sake only. I hoped I could keep up till I sighted land, and then I must leave him in the hands of the doctors. I would have been amply satisfied if only I had brought

him in alive, and fallen myself as I reached harbour."

"And how long were you alone?" Olwen asked with trembling lips, half afraid of further exciting her convalescent.

"Twenty-four hours: from Tuesday morning till Wednesday morning, when we reached Polperran. But every hour was a whole eternity. The last of the crew died on Tuesday, and then I was left alone with the boy, hopeless and helpless, on the wide Atlantic. If only there had been a wind; but not a breath stirred, and the yacht hardly made any headway. I could take no observations. I felt myself sickening; all I could do was to steer vaguely, at a guess, by the compass in the general direction where I knew the land lay. All day and all night we steered slowly on, the faint breeze hardly filling the sail, and I looked out for land—looking, looking, looking, and hoping—through the dark hours, expecting every moment to see the Lizard loom up at last on our port bow. Oh, Miss Tregellas, it was too terrible! Every moment was as long as a lifetime. Hour after hour the night wore away, and the day dawned, streak by streak, pale and faint on the eastern horizon; and I strained my eyes for the land of Cornwall,

and no land rose upon the water. And there the poor boy lay, with the hand of death heavy upon him, and not a thing could I do for him but pray for land, with the remnant of the breeze dying away, and the yacht going always slower and slower. I began at last to despair of ever bringing him to shore alive, when a dim outline seemed to show itself indistinctly away to the north: and my heart jumped, and I steered as well as ever I could for the cliffs of Polperran. Even then it was an endless time to wait. I waved my handkerchief, tied to the sheet, and tried to attract some fisherman's notice. But not a fisherman hove in sight. I never saw Biscay or the English Channel so utterly deserted. Never a boat could I signal anywhere, till Chichele and his friend noticed me from the cliffs and hurried down, and that dear black fellow jumped from his boat and swam out to meet me, like the man he is. And after all it was all useless! It was too late to save poor Theodore!"

"But we mean to save you, at least," Olwen answered gently, with tears in her eyes at the poor fellow's unavailing earnestness; "so we mustn't allow you to talk any more and over-excite yourself."

“Me!” Ivan Royle answered with a profound sigh. “Ah, that’s quite different. For myself, I don’t mind. But that poor boy—that fresh young life—I *did* want to save him for his mother.”

As he spoke, the bedroom door opened slowly, and Mohammad Ali, noiseless and gentle as ever, glided with oriental quietness into the room.

“It’s my watch now, Miss Tregellas,” he said in his soft low tone, glancing at the sofa; “and I’m afraid this wicked patient of ours has been exciting himself again. He’s convalescent, but he’s by no means well. How do you feel now, Royle?”

“Wonderfully better since that last mixture,” Ivan Royle answered, as his pretty nurse went off relieved, with a smile of farewell.

The Indian nodded a pleased nod, and assuming for a second, half in jest and half in earnest, the familiar Mussulman attitude of devotion, murmured aloud, “That’s well. Allah is great, and the man of science is nowadays his prophet.”

Ivan Royle glanced at him surprised. “Ali,” he said, “you’re a good fellow. I owe you much, though you couldn’t save poor Theodore.

But you did your best, and it was grand of you to come out as you did and help us. I didn't know your people were so good. For your sake, I shall always think differently in future of your countrymen."

The Mohammedan sighed a deep-drawn sigh. "Allah is great," he murmured again, with a bow of his head, "and the universe is a vast and wonderful mystery. Why on earth should you alone, who do not value your own life, be preserved out of all that living shipload, while all the rest, who clung to this world so passionately, no doubt, went down at once before the angel of the pestilence? Your life must have been spared to you, I believe, for some good purpose. Otherwise it wouldn't have been so fated. Kismet, kismet! there's a deal of truth after all, you know, in our simple old-fashioned oriental philosophy."

"A philosophy that comes in the end, Ali, merely to saying things are, on the whole, rather bad and utterly inscrutable."

"Exactly, exactly, my dear fellow. I don't deny it. Nobody recognizes it more than I do. Pessimism, pessimism, pure hopeless pessimism—pessimism masquerading as a belief in the inscrutability of the infinite, and as perfect

resignation to its incomprehensible will—pessimism veiled under a thin theistic disguise by attributing everything directly to Allah, who, of course, is always inscrutable. And yet it suits us, you know; it suits our idiosyncrasy. It's hereditary, I suppose; everything's hereditary. We are all just what our fathers made us. Take me over to London, and cram me, and educate me, and fill me full with assorted facts, and arts, and sciences, till I am learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, not to mention the Greeks, Romans, Germans, French, English, and other miscellaneous Europeans generally—stuff me with Mill and Spencer, and Comte and Hartmann, and Hermann's physiology; and yet in the end what am I still? Why, Mohammad Ali, an Arab of the Arabs, none the less Arab for all the years my people have rusted down yonder at Saharanpur, or all the years I myself have been ground and polished and oiled over here among your people in England. And what is still the burden of my song? Why, Allah is great! Kismet! Bismillah!"

He spoke sadly and half scornfully of himself, yet with a certain evident undercurrent of pride in his time-honoured old Arabian ancestry.

What he said, however, was quite true, and Ivan Royle, after a week's acquaintance, at once recognized its truth and justice. With all his acuteness, and gentleness, and ability, Mohammad Ali, after swallowing and digesting all the latest ideas of all the western sciences and philosophies, remained still, as he said, in his heart of hearts, an Arab of the Arabs—pessimistic, fatalist, urbane, chivalrous, acquiescent, humane, but utterly and wholly oriental in sentiment. In spite of his B.A. and his medical diploma; in spite of round hat, cutaway coat, lavender tie, and rosebud in buttonhole; the amiable young Indian was yet as he began, head and heart a Moslem, with the Moslem philosophy and cast of thought deeply printed upon the very fabric and fibre of his nature. Ivan Royle—now nearly himself again—looked at the pensive Indian face, half in admiration and half in pity, a few seconds. The restless, energetic Anglo-Saxon mind, with its eager, forward Aryan impulse, can hardly fathom the calm, restful, uncomplaining content of the oriental spirit.

“You're quite right, Ali,” he murmured at last; “we're all of us at bottom what our fathers made us. The new philosophy of

Darwin and Haeckel brings us back pretty much to the old philosophy of the Hebrew preachers. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children indeed, unto the third and fourth generation. Determinism, after all, is only fatalism the other way on."

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes," Mohammad Ali repeated solemnly, "and the children's teeth are set on edge. I know a terrible case of that myself. Begum Johanna of Deoband"—and then with a start he checked himself suddenly. Evidently Begum Johanna was for some reason or other running in his head, and he sadly wanted to disburden himself, but refrained. "Royle," he went on, in an altered tone, "it's always so, you know, with us Easterns. Time makes no difference to our innate philosophy. Read in your own Bibles your Book of Job; what is it but the very thought and creed and poetry of modern Islam? Kismet, kismet. Allah is great: the world is very full of evil, but we cannot fathom it, we cannot help it! There is nothing new under the sun. All these problems existed already, and were answered in just the same fatalist fashion, three thousand years ago, in the tents of the sheikhs and ameers of Edom, as they are

to-day at Mecca or at Agra. Men saw that all things were very evil, and they said in reply, 'Allah is great; let Him alone, it is His doing: we cannot understand Him.' As your own Tennyson despondently puts it—why, he might almost have been a Moslem himself—'I have not made the world, and he that made it shall guide.' Isn't that just pure orientalism—the philosophy of kismet? And yet it's strange what we are to be in life should depend so much, not upon ourselves, but upon the mere accident of our great-great-grandfathers!"

"In fact," Ivan Royle said, somewhat more lightly, "the most important question after all in a man's life is just the choice he makes beforehand of a proper and suitable father and mother."

"True," the Indian replied, gravely smiling. "I wonder what Miss Tregellas's mother could have been like now? An angel, I should think, to judge by her daughter. But there, I forget myself. I'm talking now like a born Englishman, without remembering the great gulf that yawns for ever and ever between us." And he relapsed at once, with a deep sigh, into his accustomed oriental gravity of silence.

CHAPTER VI.

IT was once more a glorious August day, and the joy of the summer pulsed full and free in Harry Chichele's bounding veins. He sat out in a garden chair under the big lime tree on the rectory lawn, reading a novel, and hearing the hum of the myriad bees, busily buzzing among the heavy-scented flowers. Ivan Royle, now thoroughly convalescent, sat in another chair beside him, and sketched at his leisure a dainty little water-colour of the rectory porch, with its clambering growth of clematis and jasmine. They had all taken up their abode there for the present, so as to isolate the case till the fear of infection was well over.

“What are you reading?” Ivan asked at last, after a long pause, putting his head warily on one side, and surveying his half-finished sketch with critical approbation.

“Oh, merely a novel, ‘Percival's Tryst.’ I

suppose you've seen it. It's wonderfully clever—so weird and poetical."

" 'Percival's Tryst!' " Ivan answered with a start. "Why, that's by Seeta Mayne! Seeta Mayne's a cousin of my own, you know. She's a sister of Mayne, who owned the *Seamew*, and aunt of my poor boy Theo, whom you buried down yonder."

Harry looked up at him with an appreciative glance. "It must be a great privilege," he said, seriously, "to know a woman like Seeta Mayne. She's marvellously able. I can't say how much I admire her work. I should like to meet her. Is she personally agreeable? Is she clever in talk? Is she handsome or ugly?"

"Oh, well, she's handsome, decidedly handsome, in a grand, awful, commanding sort of way," the young artist answered, still touching up his picture. "And she's clever, too. Yes, certainly clever. And she's agreeable as well, decidedly agreeable—whenever she chooses. But she can't hold a candle, you know, in any way to our Miss Tregellas."

He said it proudly, with a certain manifest air of proprietorship in Olwen, and Harry Chichele, who had been the first comer of the

three to Polperran, resented it accordingly. He looked up with a sudden flash from his book. The two men's eyes met for a second, and each read the other's secret dimly. But men are reticent to one another on such points. Neither spoke. Each looked down again with furtive haste, and continued his own avocation in silence.

A minute later, Olwen Tregellas tripped lightly across the close-mown lawn, in a simple morning dress and hat, and moved gracefully towards her two visitors. Ivan glanced at her with artistic approbation—her every movement was so bright and fairy-like—and made a mental note of her tripping step for future use in an imagined picture. She came up and glanced over his shoulder at the sketch. “Oh! how lovely,” she cried with unfeigned admiration. “What a delicate touch you've got, Mr. Royle; and how exquisitely you've caught the spirit of the long, lithe curves in the jasmine!”

“I'm glad you like it,” Ivan cried delighted. “I wanted you to like it. It is yours. I'm pleased it meets its owner's approbation.”

“Mine! The sketch! Oh, how awfully kind of you! I never had a real picture of my own

in my life before. I shall prize it so much. It's really too good of you."

She stood long praising it and admiring it, and Harry Chichele felt half annoyed at the fervour of the thanks she gave to Ivan. Who was Ivan that he should thus come in, at the eleventh hour, as it were, interloping? He, Harry, and he alone, had discovered Olwen. What business had any other fellow thus to go meddling, without his leave, with his original discovery?

By-and-by Olwen herself turned and spoke to him. "I came out, Dr. Chichele," she said, in her timid little way, "to see if you would care to take a stroll on the cliffs with me. Papa thinks we might venture away from the grounds now, as the danger is practically all over, and I thought you'd like a blow on the moorland."

Harry's face flushed up with pleasure, and he felt at once that he had more than distanced that interloping Ivan. "It would be too delightful," he cried enchanted. "How kind of you to ask me. I wanted a walk, and with such companionship——"

Olwen blushed. Harry laid down his book with his sentence unfinished, and they waved a friendly farewell to Ivan, who was still far

too weak to dream of walking. "Royle tells me he's a cousin of Seeta Mayne's," Harry began, as they turned together out of the garden gate. "I've just been reading 'Percival's Tryst,' you know. It's a wonderful book. And it seems that Seeta Mayne's a cousin of Royle's, and a sister of the poor fellow who owned the *Seamew*."

"How nice it must be to know people like that," Olwen cried simply. "And how nice to be like Seeta Mayne herself, and be able to write such wonderful novels. Mr. Royle must think very little of us quiet Cornish folk if he's accustomed to mixing with such great, clever, accomplished London people."

Harry glanced at her askance with an almost shy and frightened look. It was a summer day, and she was very beautiful. "One star differeth from another in glory," he answered simply. "I dare say Seeta Mayne's awfully clever, and all that sort of thing; but she can have no good ground, whatever she may be, to think little in any way of 'quiet Cornish people.'"

Olwen toyed with her light parasol. "You know I don't care for Seeta Mayne," she went on quickly, as if to glide fast over the thin ice. "She's rather too much up in the clouds for me."

She never comes down from her high horse. She lives in a world too grand, and grandiose, and noble, and ethereal for ordinary humanity."

"For my part, I admire her work very much," Harry answered carelessly, plucking a wayside flower and pulling it idly to pieces as he went. "But I can easily understand that *you* don't care for her, Miss Tregellas. You two move upon such different planes. Her mind deals wholly with an ideal world, which her fancy peoples with strange and bright and glorious creations. Your footsteps rather tread this solid earth of ours, which you strive to make better and happier and purer for every one of us. Between two such natures there is a certain great gulf fixed. Yet I believe I, from my intermediate masculine standpoint, can admire and appreciate and understand both natures equally."

"Hers is the highest, though, of course," Olwen murmured, half self-consciously. "When we are young, we always love to hear ourselves talked about."

"I'm not so sure of that, either," Harry answered, in dubious tones. "You remember Wordsworth's 'Phantom of Delight'? I'm not certain in my own mind that, in the end, the

'creature not too bright and good for human nature's daily food' doesn't after all deserve best of humanity. It is such as those that seem always brightest to me 'with something of the angel-light,' as Wordsworth puts it."

They were treading dangerously near the edge of a precipice now. When a young man and a young woman begin to quote poetry together, the end is usually not far off. But they fluttered still, like a pair of eddying moths, about the edge of the candle, flitting for ever round and round it, and trying hard, as young people will do, to go as near the flame as possible without actually singeing their wings in it.

Soon they turned out upon the open moorland. "How glorious the views are to-day!" Harry cried, with delight, sniffing in the breath of the golden gorse and the fainter perfume of the large Cornish heather. "A morning like this makes one feel the meaning of the joy of living! How the moorland smiles at us from a thousand faces! How delightful it is to come among so many old friends once more! They look lovelier than ever after a short absence—foxgloves, and harebells, and rampion, and gorse, and this beautiful large-belled Cornish heath of

yours! To my mind, there's no heath on earth one half so lovely as the Cornish heather."

"It only grows for a few miles just about here, you know," Olwen cried, delighted at the London doctor's praise of their local product.

"Yes; Polperran has more than one rare flower of its own," Harry answered significantly, with a side glance at Olwen. Then he feared he had gone too far. He stooped and picked a little pinky-white bell, the autumnal scilla, to divert the thread of talk. "What a sweet little blossom, this one," he cried, admiring it; "in shape, as graceful as an Etruscan vase; in colour, as beautiful as—as an English maiden. I'm sure I can say nothing prettier than that. And what a sultan your botanist is, to be sure, with endless sultanas and Circassian slaves for ever springing fresh and fair from earth for him, and all to please and sate his curious taste, as Milton says, 'from the first of January to the thirty-first of December.'"

Olwen pushed the brushes aside with her parasol timidly. "Indeed," she said, "in weather like this the world is very, very beautiful."

Harry smiled. "It needs no Columbus, Miss Tregellas," he muttered, half in irony, "to dis-

cover that continent. On such a summer day, I come out of town and go into the world, a regular optimist, to find it everywhere rich and glorious with varied beauty. The play seems to be in full swing, and we have front seats everywhere reserved for us. I love to watch it all as it works itself out—the rabbits twinkling off in haste to their burrows; the larks tossing up their full hearts to the sky; the swifts flying in long curves round the old church tower; the very worms, and bees, and beetles all quick and instinct with the joy of living. The world wags on in its own quaint way, eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, by every lane, and moor, and hedgerow; and I love to see it, and to feel myself one with it.” And then, with the young blood still beating fuller and hotter than ever in his veins, he flew off half unconsciously into that vague, high-flown, poetical talk that first love kindles of itself in every one of us. The moorland was lovelier than its wont that morning, and Harry knew what it was that made it so. He talked on, half in rhapsody and half in seriousness, of everything beautiful, or grand, or exquisite that met their eyes in that enchanted fairyland. He talked of the birds, and the beasts, and the

flowers ; he talked of the cliffs, and the rocks, and the islands ; he talked of the ships, and the bay, and the ocean ; but most of all he talked, as young people always do talk in such special circumstances, of their own two selves, circling round and round that delicious central question for ever, yet never quite arriving at it.

“How beautifully you put things, Dr. Chichele,” Olwen cried at last, admiring him. “Nobody else ever talks as you do.”

Harry smiled. Her incense was grateful to him. He recognized that he was talking better than himself. He didn't know, however, that it wasn't he who was putting things so beautifully that cloudless morning ; but the hot young blood and the summer-tide within him. At such times, to say the truth, a man talks better than his own nature. Harry Chichele knew he was in love ; he didn't also know that what he called love was just one half selfish self-admiration only.

They had reached the summit of a seaward rock, looking down on the bay where the *Seamew* had foundered. Olwen rested for a moment against a weathered peak of bluff rock, by the side of a profound gorge cut out in the solid granite by the dashing waves. Below, lay

a great broken precipice, whose dark cliffs of hornblende and serpentine were crumbled above by wind and rain, and smoothed beneath by the ceaseless dashing of the winter waves. "See," Harry cried, pointing down to it with his hand. "Up to the limit of the breakers the hard rock shines down there like polished Egyptian syenite; but beyond that point it's all fissured by frost, and air, and rain, and storm, and covered over with its dappled coat of grey and silvery and yellow lichen."

"It's always like that in Cornwall," Olwen answered, looking up at him timidly. "You see it so, you know, in Brett's pictures."

"Yes," Harry went on. "I know it is; I know it. You can trace the origin of all these lovely little Cornish coves from small rills, just like this, which have worn themselves gorge-like valleys through the hard rock, or else from fissures which finally give rise to sea caves, like the one where Mohammad Ali and I rowed this morning for our early swim in the clear green water. The waves penetrate for a couple of hundred yards into the bowels of the rock, hemmed in by walls and roofs of dark serpentine, with interlacing veins of green and red. At last, by constant dashing, they produce a

blow-hole at the top ; and the blow-hole communicates with the open air above ; either because the fissure crops up just there to the surface, or because the rain-water percolates and disintegrates the granite. Then, in process of time, the roof falls in ; the boulders get washed away by the waves ; and we find in the end a long and narrow cove like yours at Polperran, still bounded on either side by tall cliffs, whose summits the air and rainfall slowly wear away into your exquisite and fantastic Cornish pinnacles."

Olwen stood and looked at him in blank admiration. He talked for all the world just like a book ! How clever he was, and how wisely and beautifully he explained everything ! She had seen them all a thousand times herself before—the caves, and the blow-holes, and the bays, and the pinnacles—and she had never even thought for a single moment of the connection between them, or the natural play of cause and effect that linked them together. To her, too, the full heart of youth was setting the key-note ; she loved the familiar Cornish cliffs and long tresses of purple seaweed all the better because Harry Chichele was pointing out their beauties to her now in a new light.

“But what makes the beautiful little islands,” she asked, “where the gulls and cormorants sit alone above the big waves upon their precipitous perches?” She longed to make him talk, he talked so wisely.

“Oh, that’s just the slow action of the water still,” Harry answered airily; “always beating against the solid wall of crystalline rock, till it eats it away into stacks and needles, like the ones where we nearly got dashed to pieces that awful evening with the wreck of the *Seamew*.” He paused a moment and glanced idly inland, and then again turned his eye seaward. “Do you know, Miss Tregellas,” he began once more—it had trembled on his lips for a moment to call her Olwen, but he refrained for the time being out of pure reverence—“I like to think that all this loveliness has been produced by the sea out of pure accident on the barren moors of your Cornish uplands. Nothing, after all—if I dare speak ill of anything in Cornwall—could be flatter or more desolate than the level waste whose seaward escarpment gives rise to all your romantic coves and pyramidal islets. The wind and the waves carved out this coast into varied shapes by force of blind currents, working unseen in endless play on

hidden veins of harder or of softer crystal. Isn't there some force like that at work upon our own lives somehow, which similarly at times takes all the dull prosaic details of our daily existence and moulds and informs them with some heavenly glory? Where have I read those lines, I wonder—

“ ‘The white and common daylight streaming through
Some rich cathedral window, dim with saints,
Falls on the clasped hand of some stony knight
In palpitating crimson’ ? ”

They were quivering upon the very verge of the precipice now. Olwen prevented the fatal plunge once more by a momentary silence, which she broke by saying in a very different tone, “What on earth can the boys be doing down there by the cove, I wonder ? ”

“They're throwing stones at something in the water,” Harry answered carelessly, not over-pleased at the diversion she had given to their talk. “Upon my word, now I come to think of it, I believe it must be the masts of the *Seamew*.”

He drew his little field-glass from its case at his side, and focussed it straight on the suspected object. “The young fiends !” he exclaimed at last angrily. “It is the *Seamew*, as

clear as day. And what do you think those little brutes are doing? The masts are standing up above the water's edge just where she sank, and the rats have clustered on the top of the rigging, and these young wretches are positively stoning the poor terrified creatures. How needlessly cruel!—and how perfectly English! On a spring morning, the French always declare, your Englishman rises and says to himself, 'It's a fine day; let's all go out and kill something.' As you and I are walking along the moor here together, our hearts full of the delight of summer, and sympathy with the beasts and birds and living things, discoursing as we go of the joy of living, these abominable little wretches are amusing themselves with trying to maim the terror-stricken rats who are clinging for dear life in their last despair to the tops of the rigging. I've been too near drowning at sea myself not to know what that means. The poor creatures must have been clinging there with fear and trembling all these days and nights in cold and darkness, on the look-out for a passing piece of wreckage on to which to leap and make good their escape to the mainland. A doctor's business is to save life. We must go down at once and save these poor mute fugitives."

They scrambled down the steep pathway by the little rill to the white beach, where Harry's boat, which he hired for the bathing, lay drawn up on the sand by the little side cove. Harry pushed it down by main force to the sea, and rowed with the hot speed of fiery indignation to the masts of the *Seamew*, just overtopping the summer ripple. The boys, astonished and surprised, ceased their bombardment of stones as the strange gentleman from London approached the wreck. There, some eight or ten rats, with the curious instinct of their kind, had climbed their way up from the hold to the royals, and crouched together in abject fear, one beside the other, huddled together in that doubtful situation. Harry Chichele, with incautious haste, put out his hand to seize the foremost. The frightened brute, always savage by nature, and now alarmed beyond its wont by the cannonade of stones, unable to distinguish friend from foe, made a fierce dash at his well-meaning hand, and gashed his thumb deeply with its projecting incisors. Harry withdrew his hand in haste, and bound round the bleeding wound hurriedly with his pocket-handkerchief. Then, with the imperturbable good humour of his profession, he made a

sudden dash once more at the nape of the offending animal's neck, and, before it had time to recover from its breathless surprise, dropped it like a kitten on the floor of the dingey.

The other rats, with the usual sagacity of ratkind, having watched this incident with profound interest, and satisfied themselves, in their own wise heads, that no immediate harm of any sort had come to their comrade, decided to accept the doubtful risk at all hazards, and prefer the hospitality of the boat to the chance of drowning. They suffered Harry to lift them quietly, one by one, from the rigging into the dingey without further resistance; and, as he rowed back again to the shore, the great brown beasts grouped themselves expectant in the bows of the boat, waiting, all alert, for the very first chance of landing. As the dingey touched the shore with her bows, with one accord they leaped out wildly on to the shingle, and without so much as waiting to thank their benefactor, scampered away at the top of their speed for the friendly shelter of the bracken and underbush.

Harry pulled the boat up by himself on to the beach, while Olwen, looking with uncon-

cealed anxiety at his wounded hand, inquired, in an eager and timid tone, whether the rat had seriously hurt it.

“Oh no,” Harry answered, with an unconcerned smile, unwinding the handkerchief and bathing the wound with fresh water from the little rill that flowed down the broken chine to form the cove. “The poor brute was so awfully terrified between the risk of drowning and the boys’ bombardment that he hadn’t a notion of what he was doing. But it’s nothing—nothing. Please don’t talk about it. Perhaps you would kindly bind it up for me.”

Olwen, who knew well how to make a surgical bandage, took the handkerchief he offered her, delighted with the chance of making herself useful to him, and wound it round the wounded part with native dexterity. “You don’t think,” she said, with an evident anxiety which flattered Harry’s sense of self-importance, “that a bite from a creature, mad with terror like that, would be really serious and dangerous, do you? Not like a rabid animal’s, for example?”

Harry laughed off the suggestion lightly. It is so delightful to be made much of. “Oh, dear no,” he said; “it’s quite unimportant.

Medical men are accustomed to these small injuries. It'll be all right again to-morrow morning."

Olwen walked on beside him for a while in silence. Presently she gave a timid glance once more into his handsome face. "Dr. Chichele," she said with some hesitation, "I know it's awfully nervous, awfully stupid of me; but could that rat possibly have got—germs, or anything like that,—connected with the cholera about him anyhow?"

Harry's heart leaped up at the suggestion. How sweet that she should thus be ferreting out for herself, as it were, every possible source of danger for him. "Oh, dear no," he answered, with perfect confidence. "Dismiss the idea at once from your mind, I beg of you. The wound's nothing at all to speak of. It'll heal, in my present vigorous condition of health, in less than no time. But it's very kind indeed of you, Miss Tregellas, to take so much personal interest in the matter."

Olwen blushed, and wondered vaguely in her own heart whether she had said too much. They walked on a little further, still without speaking. Then Harry paused and said suddenly, aloud, but as if to himself, "I'm sorry I

let those rats go, after all. I might have kept them and given them to the Begum."

"Given them to whom?" Olwen asked, in wonder. A rat would be such an incomprehensible present.

"Oh, nothing," Harry answered, evasively, recollecting himself. He didn't care to speak about the snake to Olwen. Snakes are such very uncanny possessions. "But, perhaps,"—he ransacked his brains for an excuse—"perhaps it wasn't exactly right of me to let them go as I did among the farmers' corn and gardens."

As they walked in at the rectory gate on their return from their stroll, Mohammad Ali, seated on the garden chair beside Ivan Royle, scanned them both closely with his keen and piercing oriental scrutiny. "They've been talking a great deal to one another," he muttered, half aloud; "but, thank heaven! the man hasn't yet proposed to her."

Ivan Royle lifted his eyes in hasty inquiry. They met Mohammad Ali's full in front for a single second. Once more the same little pantomime went on as before with Harry. Then Ivan looked down again, hot and red, at his drawing. In that indivisible point of time the two men had read one another's ideas aright.

They said nothing, but rose and moved to the house together.

They were all three in love at once with Olwen Tregellas, each man after his own fashion.

CHAPTER VII.

As Ivan Royle sat sketching in the garden again the morning after, while Mohammad Ali leaned back with Eastern indolence in the easy chair beside him, puffing a cigarette between his pearl-white teeth, the Englishman suddenly looked up with a curious glance from his piece of work, and said abruptly, without preface or apology, "Ali, why on earth did you say that yesterday?"

"Say what?" the Indian asked, with pretended unconsciousness, though he knew perfectly well in his own mind to what Ivan alluded.

"Say, 'Thank heaven he hasn't yet proposed to her,'" the artist continued quietly.

Mohammad Ali held his peace for a moment. Then he flung away the end of his cigarette with petulant haste, raised himself on his elbows in the easy chair, and leaned across nearer to Ivan.

“Because I don't want Harry Chichele to mar that divine being's beautiful life for her,” he answered softly, almost whispering.

Ivan started. He pretended for a moment to trifle with his lights and shades. “Why not?” he asked presently, with a furtive look sideways at Ali.

“Because *you* would make her a far better husband, Royle,” Mohammad Ali answered incisively, after a short pause.

The words were said with an evident struggle. They took Ivan Royle quite by surprise. “*Me?*” he cried. “*Me*, did you say? Why me? Why should you think of me at all in the matter, Ali?”

“Because, Royle, I know you love her.”

“You know I love her! But——” And he hesitated.

“Yes. What? Don't be afraid. Who am I? A poor black! I don't count. You needn't be nervous before me. What is it? Tell me! Tell me all about it!”

“But, Ali—I thought—you, too—admired her.”

Mohammad Ali leaned back in his chair with a pained face, and clenched his fists hard and tight together. “Admire her!” he cried. “I

adore her! I worship her! I kiss the very ground she walks upon! She is to me a divine creature! Royle, I would die for her! I would give my life up to make her happy."

"And yet——"

"And yet I want to see you marry her. Yes, I do. I spoke the truth to you. Is that too deep for your sober, matter-of-fact English brain? It's not too deep for the inferior intelligence of the mere unsophisticated natural black man. I admire and respect and worship that heavenly apparition far too profoundly ever to let her know herself the feelings I bear towards her."

The Englishman looked at him with searching eyes. "That—that is very noble of you, Ali," he answered at last.

Mohammad Ali's lip quivered a little. "You know what one of yourselves, a poet of your own, has written," he murmured. "'My spirit is too deeply laden ever to burden thine.' A black man, of course, has no right to love her. But he may at least keep his love to himself; he may feel for her in silence that 'devotion to something afar from the sphere of his sorrow,' that Shelley talks about."

Ivan Royle's fingers trembled visibly on the

sheet of paper. "I can forgive you, Ali," he said. "It's very natural. No man on earth could ever see her and not fall in love with her."

"Not even a black man," the Mussulman assented fervently.

"But, Ali, why do you want *me* to marry her?"

"Because," Ali answered, "I've watched you here all these days—oh, so closely—you don't know how closely—no Englishman could ever watch as we do; as the cat watches the mouse's hole, so we Easterns watch people—and I see you're a good man and true; a man who would try to make her happy."

"But why do you think, then, that Chichele wouldn't also? You and he have been old friends. Why do you back me against him, as it were? Why did you say, 'Thank heaven!' yesterday?"

Mohammad Ali paused and deliberated. "Royle," he said at last, with a burst of confidence, "you're a genuine fellow, a good man and true, I do believe. I'll tell you all I know. It may be the merest prejudice on my part. Heaven knows we're all of us one mass of prejudices, black people and white people all

alike; there isn't much to choose between us. But I feel the prejudice and I won't deny it. Did you ever hear of Begum Johanna of Deoband?"

Ivan shook his head decidedly. "You mentioned her once the other day," he said. "But what on earth has Begum Johanna of Deoband got to do with this question between myself and Chichele?"

"Listen first, while I tell you her story," Mohammad Ali interposed with oriental gravity. And then, in his quiet Arab fashion, he told Ivan at full length the episode of the slave girl, very much as he had told it to Harry Chichele himself on the morning of his first arrival at Polperran.

Ivan listened with curious interest as the Indian retailed to him that ghastly tale of incredible Eastern cruelty and barbarism. When Ali had finished, he asked in a puzzled way, "But what on earth has all this to do, my dear fellow, with me and Chichele? What connection has he with your people in India?"

Mohammad Ali looked him hard in the face. He answered slowly and very distinctly, growing hot in the cheeks with surprise and horror, "My people, did you say, Royle? My people?"

My people? No, no, my dear friend; I have neither scot nor lot with Hindoos like that—me, a genuine freeborn Arab of the Arabs. *His* people, you mean; his people, it is rather. For Harry Chichele, white as he looks, is a lineal descendant in the fourth degree of Begum Johanna, who buried alive the slave girl.”

“Impossible!” Ivan exclaimed, laying down his brush in his surprise and incredulity. “The Chicheles are a well-known Anglo-Indian family; and Harry’s grandmother was one of the Peytons of Yorkshire, he tells me—a daughter, you know, of Lord St. Maurice’s.”

“Exactly,” Mohammad Ali went on, with merciless precision. “His grandmother, as you say, was one of the Peytons of Yorkshire. And the Peytons sold themselves, body and soul, for Begum Johanna’s broad gold mohurs. This is just how it all happened—you can look it up for yourself, if you choose, in the ‘Peerage.’ Begum Johanna’s husband—let us call him, for convenience sake, her husband—was a certain adventurer of the name of K  rouac, a Breton Frenchman, a sailor by trade, and a soldier of fortune by predilection; and it was he who founded the estate of Deoband. Now, the Begum had a son by him, one Philippe

Kérouac, a half-caste of course, neither one thing nor the other, who inherited his mother's vast fortune, worth eighty thousand sterling a year if it was worth a penny. This Philippe Kérouac was educated in England, and married there. He had one daughter, Philippa Pindi, whom he called after her father and her grandmother; for though the Begum at her conversion (I hope I use the correct expression) was baptized as Johanna, her native name was first Pindi. Well, Lord St. Maurice's eldest son married our friend, Philippa Pindi de Kérouac—it had grown to an aristocratic *de* by that time, if you please—and with her all the estate of Deoband. Or rather he married the estate of Deoband, encumbered as it was with the awkward necessity for taking a brown-skinned half-caste Miss de Kérouac into the bargain. And that's how Harry Chichele, white as he looks, comes to be lineally descended in the fourth degree from that unspeakable woman, Begum Johanna."

"I see," Ivan Royle answered slowly. "But surely, Ali, you don't mean to say you distrust Harry Chichele merely—merely because he has in his veins some trifling fraction of the blood of your own people?"

Mohammad Ali started aghast once more. "My own people," he cried, half angrily. "Again you say my own people! No, no. Thank heaven, no drop of that fearful woman's accursed blood flows in one vein of mine, my dear fellow. We orientals have long memories. But there's one thing that's perfectly charming about you Englishmen, Royle, especially when you're talking to one of those poor inferior creatures who happens to have the misfortune to be born a foreigner—and that is your evident anxiety not to let him feel quite too acutely the loss nature has imposed upon his destiny in not making him be born an Englishman like yourselves. You're careful never to impress upon him too vividly the consciousness of his own immeasurable native inferiority."

"Well, Ali, I confess for my part I'd rather not be descended from that dreadful Begum of yours."

"That Begum of mine! Again you repeat it! How you persist in your national error! You mean that Begum of yours and of Harry Chichele's! After all, the Begum was Hindoo by birth and Christian by religion—your own Aryan sister in race, while I am pure unadulterated Semite. We, who are Moslems of the

old rock in the North-West Provinces, we have nothing to do with either Hindoos or Christians. We have lived among the heathen for twenty generations, exactly as the Jews have lived among you English, intermarrying only with our own stock, and keeping ourselves as separate still in blood as in religion. And just as the Jews are better than the English, so do we Moslems flatter ourselves in our own hearts we are of better blood than the heathen Hindoos who live around us."

Ivan paused irresolute a moment; then he said, "But, Ali, have you any more definite reason than that to give for distrusting Chichele?"

"Well," Mohammad Ali answered, "I've known Chichele for a good many years now, and till lately I've always thought I liked him immensely. But the way you regard a man undergoes a decided change, of course, when you think—when you think what effect his life would have upon the life of a woman whom you respect and honour with all the force and energy of your nature. Of late it has often occurred to me, I confess, that Harry Chichele has two sides—an English side, and a side derived from his ancestress, the Begum. It's

perfectly well known in India that every one of that terrible woman's descendants, of whatever race, down to the third and fourth generation, is as cold as steel and as cruel as a tiger. Now there's a certain keen, cold, scientific deliberate-ness about much Harry Chichele does, that sometimes makes me tremble for the happiness of any woman who might have to pass her life tied up to him. Harry Chichele is good enough and pleasant enough in his own way to make a friend of; he isn't good enough, if you ask me that, to entrust with the keeping of Miss Tregellas's entire future."

"Ali," the young Englishman said with a sudden impulse, "I'm glad you say so, for I've half fancied it once or twice myself; and then I've been ashamed of myself for even fancying it after all that you and he have done together for me. I've said to myself, 'Is it only my own selfish feeling that makes me think I would make that beautiful pure woman a better husband than Harry Chichele?' I've hesitated and doubted in my own mind whether it wouldn't be a mean and wicked action on my part to try and win her if—if, as I thought, he wished to marry her. For one thing, I said to myself, wasn't it ungrateful of me; for another

thing, I said, could I ever do as much for her in life as he could do. And then I imagined I saw in him underlying signs of a cruel, hard, cold disposition, and I was angry with myself for venturing to see them, lest I should be doing the man a real injustice."

"He isn't exactly cruel," Ali answered slowly. "Nobody could fairly call him cruel. There are ways in which he's one of the kindest and most tender-hearted men I ever met with. He overflows with goodness and humanity. Not a patient at our hospital but loves and praises him. Nobody gentler to women and children. Yet, underlying it all, as you say, in some odd corner of his idiosyncrasy there's a vein of pitiless, remorseless determination (derived, I verily believe, from that awful ancestress of his, the Begum) that would drive him on through fire and water, through blood and treachery, if once he fixed his mind with absolute resolution upon anything. He'd spend long patient hours without complaint in tending a poor sick dog or a wounded rabbit; but he'd sacrifice a hundred human lives, I do believe, without one pang of remorse or regret, if they came between him and the object of his whim, his love, or his

ambition. Have you ever suspected anything of the sort in him?"

"Well, Ali," the Englishman replied, "when you two fellows first began to nurse me, I did notice you were both awfully kind and all that sort of thing; but I did notice, too, after a short time, that while you seemed anxious to do your best for me and make me well, Chichele seemed interested in the case as a case mainly, not in me myself as a human being. Do you remember the day that I felt so down—the day you buried poor Theodore? Well, that day you and Miss Tregellas were so sympathetic, and Chichele was very kind in his way, too; but he seemed so anxious about securing the bottle of water from the barrel washed ashore from the wreck of the *Seamew*. And in the evening, when Miss Tregellas was sitting with me, and taking such care of me (as if I was worth it!), I heard Chichele working at his microscope out there on the verandah. And, by-and-by, when you came in, you said something to him about poor Theodore. And he answered nothing, but went on, I could feel somehow, though I couldn't see him, working at his slides. And, by-and-by he said to you, with such delight, 'Why, Ali, they're here—

they're here by thousands! I can see them wriggling all up and down everywhere in the water. Myriads of queer little squirming things, like microscopic tadpoles each with a round bullet-shaped head, and a small, vibrating curved tail, for all the world as if they were animated commas. Oh, it's beautiful! beautiful! beautiful! I shall keep the lot of them for future use—extract of best bottled cholera! And it did seem to me terribly cruel! It made my heart turn sick within me. The very day our poor boy was buried! That may be science, you know; it may be science, but it's not humanity."

Ali spoke with singular earnestness. "Harry Chichele's a very good fellow in his way," he said again; "but heaven forbid, while you and I live, he should ever marry Olwen Tregellas. I ought to have spoken to you sooner about it. I was wrong to wait, out of foolish shrinking. May Allah grant it isn't now too late! Royle, Royle, for that good woman's dear sake, you must try to save her from Harry Chichele."

There was a long pause, which Ivan broke at last by saying abruptly, "Ali, you're a better man after all, ten thousand times, than either of us! The utter way you sink yourself and your

own hope in this matter makes me feel ashamed of my dreadful selfishness."

Mohammad Ali smiled a bitter smile. "My dear fellow," he answered, with a feeble attempt at forced gaiety, "I deserve no credit at all for that. *Kismet*: it is fated. No other course is possibly open to me. It's all that destiny about which I spoke to you. I admire and respect Miss Tregellas immensely. Her happiness is to me a matter of great moment. I would give my very eyes, if I could, to serve her. I fear and mistrust Harry Chichele. I don't want to see her make over her precious life to his tender mercies. I recognize you as a better, a truer, and a gentler man. I would like to see you, therefore, make her happy. For myself, who and what am I? A blank! A nobody! A nothing! A cypher! Why are we two talking together as we do talk together now? Because I am a black man, while you are a white one. Otherwise, the thing would be impossible. Could you have talked so with any white man? Never, never! Why can you unburden yourself so to me? Why can I unburden myself so to you? Because we both know in our own hearts that, so far as Miss Tregellas or any other English-

woman is concerned, a man of my colour is no man at all, but a thing, a being, an abstract conception. Look at me, Royle. I'll tell you the whole simple truth. I love that beautiful divine apparition with all the profoundest love of which my nature is capable. Well, then, it's my plain duty—never while she lives to let her know it. The knowledge of it could only distress her. Why should I hurt her tender heart by allowing it to see the scars on mine? I have but one thought for her—to make her happy. I fear and tremble for her if she accepts Chichele. Won't you trust your own heart, man, and step in between them in time to save her?"

"Ali," the Englishman cried, "you are too good, you are too noble, you are too generous, you are too chivalrous! I wish I was half such a fellow as you are! In my love there is too much selfishness. Yours seems to be all pure devotion."

Mohammad Ali smiled sadly again. "It's easy to be generous and chivalrous, my friend," he said, "when you are only a black man. If I were white as you are to-day, Royle, I would speak for myself. I would speak quite otherwise. As it is, I have only one desire—to

make Miss Tregellas's life happy. I really believe you are worthy of her. I really doubt Harry Chichele. What else can I do but act upon my belief? Don't lose another moment, I beg of you. For her own sake as well as for yours, don't let Chichele carry her off undefended."

"But, Ali, am I fit for her? Am I good enough? Am I worthy of her?"

Mohammad Ali looked hard at him. "No man is worthy of her," he said shortly. "No man deserves her. No man is good enough. But you will do as well as another, and a great deal better than Harry Chichele. If I did not think so, I would not have spoken to you."

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT evening Ivan Royle had tea in the garden for the first time with the rest of the party. The rector was there with his portly presence, discussing the poor-law with Harry Chichele; and, after tea, the three men wandered off upon the moor together, the rector wishing to show Harry and Ali a remarkable logan-stone, and Ivan and Olwen were left alone for a while in the garden.

Ivan had never before seen the beautiful Cornish girl look so purely beautiful as she did that evening. Her eyes were brighter and clearer than ever, and a colour like peach blossom played about her cheeks in the most provokingly elusive manner. Ivan would have given his right hand to fix it as it stood upon imperishable canvas. Evidently Olwen was at her best to-night, and she blushed and dropped her eyes from time to time in a delicious way

that made her even more bewitchingly pretty than ever.

“You seem yourself this evening,” the young painter began tentatively. “I don’t think I’ve seen you look so well and happy ever since we came to Polperran to bring you trouble.”

“Perhaps,” Olwen said, a little archly, “that’s because you’re getting better.”

Ivan was pleased. So small a thing pleases us in those supreme moments of a lifetime. “I owe you a great deal,” he said. “But for your nursing and Mohammad Ali’s care I believe I should never have recovered.”

“And Dr. Chichele’s help,” Olwen suggested gravely.

“And Dr. Chichele’s help,” Ivan assented, not quite so well pleased now. “Miss Tregellas, will you do me a great favour? Will you let me sketch you just as you stand there?”

Olwen laughed a merry little laugh. “As you please,” she said. “But what will you do with it? Will you send me in, full length, to the Academy? How funny it’d look to see one’s self there, stuck up on the walls for everybody to gaze at—‘Portrait of a Lady!’”

“I shall send it to the Academy,” Ivan answered, quite seriously arranging his easel;

“and, if I do my sinner anything like justice, it ought to attract immense attention.”

“Why, now, Mr. Royle you’re really convalescent. You’re beginning to say pretty things to me.”

Ivan Royle looked up at her with admiring eyes. He had fixed his canvas straight upon the little easel, and was sketching in the beautiful outlines of that graceful figure. He worked rapidly and with practised deftness. Olwen looked back at him and smiled in return. He had never seen her so frank and engaging as she was that evening. She seemed to have forgotten her usual girlish, blushing timidity, and to treat him more with cordial unreserve as she might have treated her own brother.

Ivan’s face was growing fuller and rounder now with returning health, and Olwen noticed more than ever to-night how strikingly handsome the young painter really was. A light man, with earnest blue eyes and artistic features, rendered all the more artistic in general effect by his pale straw-coloured Vandyke beard. His expression was very gentle and sympathetic—quite different from Harry Chichele’s clear-cut and intellectually scientific features. It was a face, indeed, in which the softer side of

human nature predominated over the sterner—yet perfectly masculine, without any sacrifice of manliness or firmness. As he stood there, wielding the brush with a free sweep in his bold right hand, he looked every inch a man whom any girl might well be pardoned for falling in love with.

Olwen kept her place opposite him, exactly as he had posed her, and watched him steadily as his hand ran free in easy curves over his square of canvas. The young painter went on with his work for a while in silence; then, with an irresistible impulse, he laid down the brush and came over to her quite suddenly. “Miss Tregellas,” he said, without any preface, his voice trembling slightly as he spoke; “you have saved my life. Will you make it happy for ever by sharing it?”

Olwen drew back, astonished at his abruptness. She looked up into his handsome face with wondering surprise. This was indeed an attempt to carry her by storm. “Mr. Royle,” she said, simply, “I didn’t know you meant that. Oh no; I cannot, I cannot.”

Ivan Royle looked her back in the face with unspoken inquiry in the depths of his deep, earnest, blue eyes. Olwen had never noticed

before how deep, and true, and gentle those eyes were. She shrank a little before them; they seemed to look her through and through, with some infinite yearning—so tenderly and so profoundly. “Why not?” he asked, in the same soft voice. “Have I been too precipitate only, or is there—is there some other reason?”

Olwen raised her eyes once more till they met his. She hardly dared to look him in the face and answer him back. “There is another reason,” she whispered at last very softly.

Ivan spoke not another word. Her eyes had told him plainly what it was. He saw it; he knew it. Harry Chichele had been beforehand with him.

He let his hand drop idly by his side. The gesture was full of unspoken despondency. His eyes for a moment grew very dim. “Miss Tregellas,” he said, “I’m truly sorry for it. But if it is so, I dare not regret it. I hope it’s for the best for you. Forgive my audacity. Forget what I have said. I hope we may still be friends always.”

Olwen raised her eyes once more, with timid lashes, and met the young man’s fully and frankly. “We shall be friends always,” she

answered, taking his hand with not unwomanly kindness. "I feel I have a sort of right in you now. Don't let this mistake come up as a shadow between us. I shall always remember with pleasure the happy time we have all spent here this year together."

"Thank you," Ivan said simply, pressing her hand in his, like a friend's. "It's very good of you indeed to say so. It was presumptuous of me ever to have hoped as I did; but a man will sometimes hope presumptuously. Let us say not a word more about it. You will give me your friendship, you say. That alone is more than I dare ask; I shall prize it above everything, absolutely everything, that any one else could ever give me."

Olwen stood still half irresolute on the lawn, holding his hand even yet in hers. She knew that she ought to leave him at once—that any other girl would instantly leave him; and yet she could not bear in her heart to do it. He had been so ill, and he seemed so sorry. She stood and looked at him irresolutely again and again. Ivan Royle would have given the whole world if he had dared to lift her hand to his lips and kiss it once. They faced one another there long in perfect silence, like a

pair of lovers, hearing their own hearts beat violently. Ivan knew that his beat for love. As for Olwen, she hesitated and doubted.

That very morning she had given her future life away to Harry Chichele.

Why did she wait there? Why did she not go? Why did she trifle with the poor young painter? Who knows the windings of a woman's soul? She never knew herself why, not even long after, when the truth might surely have dawned upon her. But the human heart is a marvellous and a complex maze—each heart to its owner—and few of us know our own way about our own specimen. Olwen Tregellas fancied herself in love with Harry Chichele—the fluent talker, the clever admirer. In that belief she had that morning answered an almost inaudible “Yes” to his ardent questioning. As she faced Ivan Royle there now on the lawn, she did not know—even she herself—that the beating of her heart told her she had answered the wrong person.

And yet she could not choose but stop. Some invisible power that she knew not of compelled her to wait against her will and linger on the lawn. She roused herself at last from her strange reverie, and dropped the painter's hand

as if half guilty, "Let us go on with the picture," she said softly.

Ivan Royle, recalled to himself by the word and action, took up his brush again, and began in some half-hearted mechanical way to pretend acquiescence with her strange command. How odd of her to wish him to go on at present! At first, he could not fix his mind upon the picture. But after a while, as he looked again and again at that pure, sweet face, the light in Olwen's eyes burned so bright, and the colour in her cheeks came and went so daintily, that he could not help himself from getting interested at last, and hastily painting in the whole face—just as it had rejected him. He was glad, now, she had asked him to do it. He wanted to keep it for a memento of Olwen.

He stopped there painting, with fiery energy, till the light failed, and the shades of evening began to draw in round the rectory garden. Then he brought in his easel on his arm to the verandah, and took a seat under the broad roof outside the open drawing-room window. But still Olwen did not go away. She sat on the verandah, and looked out into the evening, waiting for her father and the two young men to return from the logan-stone. There was a

certain unwonted pensiveness in her tone, she knew not why. She was very sorry for Ivan Royle. Poor fellow! She began to see now how deeply he was grieved. She began to see it, and for his sake she regretted it bitterly.

If she had only had two hearts to give, she could have given one of them then to Ivan.

As for Ivan, he sat there as in a dream, realizing to himself for the first time in his life that this beautiful girl, whom he had barely known for a fortnight yet, was henceforth and for ever a component element in his being and his happiness. He could understand Mohammad Ali better now. Henceforth he, too, must live for one object—to make Olwen Tregellas happy.

By-and-by voices sounded at the gate, and the rector and the two young men strolled lightly up the little avenue. Harry Chichele and Ali joined the silent couple on the verandah. "What! sitting out in the twilight," Harry cried half banteringly in his cheery voice, already with the very tone of assured possession. "How delightfully romantic. And with the moon rising behind the clouds, too. What a lucky fellow you are, Royle. And what have you been doing this afternoon? Sketching Miss Tregellas, I do declare! Oh,

let me see it. Why, my dear fellow, this is just magnificent! You must finish this. It's gloriously begun. We haven't seen you do anything one half so good. Your flesh tones are simply splendid. Figure must be your forte. Why do you go and waste yourself on landscape?"

"Perhaps," Ivan said, smiling regretfully, "the subject inspired me."

Harry darted a quick glance at him as he stood, somewhat dejected, by the shadowy sketch with his brush in his hand. "And well it might," he answered quickly, as Olwen, blushing, pretended to busy herself with a rose from the verandah. "This is a beautiful picture. You must finish it in detail. And you must let me have it when it's all done, Royle. I shall buy it to begin my collection."

Ivan glanced back at him a trifle coldly, not to say haughtily. "I have begun it for myself," he answered, with a forced smile. "An artist is not a common huckster. I want to keep it as a memento of Polperran. But if Miss Tregellas would like it herself, of course, that's quite another matter. I shall be happy to give it to her, and paint myself a replica from the original as soon as it's completed."

Mohammad Ali, glowering from behind, said nothing, but stood in the background with his impenetrable oriental eyes fixed steadily in a keen gaze upon the three chief actors. He was scanning them all with that close and cat-like Eastern scrutiny of which he had himself spoken to Ivan. Presently Olwen pulled out her watch, and rose with a start. "I shall be late for dinner, if I don't make haste," she said simply.

Harry went up to his own room, too, and Ivan and the Mussulman were left alone in the twilight under the verandah.

As soon as they were by themselves Mohammad Ali came up like a shadow to his new friend's side, and passing his arm through his with silent sympathy, led him gently and unresistingly into the drawing-room. Then he sat down beside him on the sofa in the corner, and said, in his soft, quiet voice, instinct with all a woman's delicate feeling, "My dear, dear fellow, I'm very sorry. For your sake, I'm unfeignedly sorry; but for *hers*—for hers—ten thousand times more so."

"Why, how do you know it all?" Ivan cried, in surprise.

Mohammad Ali smiled a profound smile of oriental inscrutability. "Have I not eyes?"

he answered with a shrug. "Have I not ears? Have I not senses? Do I not know all—all that has happened? I have read it on the open book of your three faces—English faces, easy to read as a church clock or a flaring advertisement. This evening, while Harry Chichele and I were out, you asked Miss Tregellas—asked her boldly. And Miss Tregellas told you in her frank way she could not be yours, kindly, but decidedly. And you asked her why: and she answered you at once, or, at least, she let you know by acquiescent silence, that she'd accepted Harry Chichele this very morning. And then Miss Tregellas, instead of going away, stopped on the lawn, and you went on painting her picture for all that, for very love of her. And you painted it well, because you loved her; a last regretful memento of Polperran. Is that not so? Eh, my patient? Have I not correctly read the symptoms?"

"It is so," Ivan answered with a quiet sigh. "You have read them only too correctly."

"But I can tell you more than that," the Indian went on, with flashing eyes and an almost excited air that was very different from his usual passivity. "I can tell you something that you yourself do not know—that even Miss

Tregellas, in her own soul has never guessed at. I only know it—I alone. Miss Tregellas loves you.”

“Oh no,” Ivan cried, with a sudden gesture of profound dissent. “You’re wrong there, Ali. If she did, she would never have accepted Chichele’s proposal.”

The Indian smiled his calm smile of Eastern superiority once more. “I said, she did not know it herself,” he answered. “If she knew it, she would not have taken him. But many a woman misinterprets her own mind. The heart speaks often a foreign language. If I read her right, Royle, I tell you for a truth it is you she loves—you, not Chichele. She has made a fatal, fatal error. But it may not yet be too late to correct it.”

CHAPTER IX.

Two months had come and gone, and a November fog with its black pall had taken possession of the heart of London. In the top room of a wretched lodging-house tenement in Marylebone, a girl of twelve sat by herself late at night on a rough wooden box, which did duty at once for chair and cupboard. It was an unplanned deal box, that had once held coarse bars of soap at the neighbouring grocer's; and with the trifling exception of a bundle of rags in the far corner, regarded for practical purposes as a bed, it formed the whole and sole furniture of that miserable attic. A cheap candle, stuck in an old ink-bottle on the floor by the bedside, diffused a darkness visible through the vile room. The one window was broken and stuffed with brown paper; the floor lay bare and littered with bits of broken glass; and the last remnants of the afternoon's rain still dripped slowly,

drop by drop, through the joints in the loose tiles, into a tin pan of very dirty water. An open staircase led up to the attic from below; the noise of oaths and quarrelling resounded dimly from the other apartments of the wretched lodging-house.

The girl herself, though she would have given her age, if asked, as "going thirteen," had a face that might easily have passed for thirty, and a stumpy, stunted, undeveloped little body that would have done but scanty justice to ten years old. Her poor small hands were thin and skinny, her matted hair appeared never to have made acquaintance with the domestic comb, and the tattered clothes that hardly covered her sharp angular little limbs and wizened bones were full of holes, and wretchedly insufficient in number and thickness. The child crouched almost double on the box, and gnawed her nails hungrily as she crouched, perhaps, because she had nothing else in particular then, or generally, to exercise her teeth upon.

For a long time the unhappy little atomy sat there in silence, brooding to herself over Heaven knows what awful childish vagaries, and never stirring or moving on her hard seat

for a single moment. At last, the bundle of clothes in the corner quivered and shook, and the child turned sharply round at the rustle, with the precocious alert attention of children who know that a savage blow is the sure result of a passing second's dereliction of duty.

A woman's head and arm raised themselves feebly above the bundle of rags. It was a face of the most horrible bloated description—one of those puffy, crimson faces out of which the very semblance of our common humanity seems to have been pounded long ago by drink and ill-usage. It had no distinct features to speak of; frequent smashing had reduced them all by gradual stages to a general livid, pulpy equality. A few old scars diversified the otherwise regular surface; but for those, the whole face consisted just of one raw red mass, with little pig's eyes half obliterated by the swollen eyelids, and a feeble mouth that opened slowly whenever it spoke, in slobbering stupidity. Nevertheless, the voice, though hoarse, was still powerful and rasping; it dealt in tones of angry command, and in the vilest variety of low London accent.

“Where did you put the gin, Lizbeth?” the

voice asked, with loud querulousness, as the puffy red hand fumbled round and round on the floor close by, groping eagerly after the expected bottle.

The child raised her head to reply. "Put it away where you can't get none, mother," she said. "You ain't to 'ave no more gin. It's the gin as is a-killing of you."

The woman made no immediate answer. She groped around still with her hand, till she came at last upon some solid object. It was the old ink-bottle, that served the office of candlestick. She took out the candle with trembling fingers, and held it shakily in her left hand. Then, raising herself with an effort, in her bundle of rags, and balancing the empty earthenware bottle dexterously in her right, she flung it across the room with all her force, and with deliberate aim at the shrinking child's unhappy head.

The girl made no attempt in any way to shirk or dodge it. She knew too well the consequences of defending herself. She simply crouched closer than ever, and let the frightful missile hit her on the temple above the left ear with a blow that rang through the whole unsteady attic. In a moment the blood flowed

freely from the wound, and the child, half-stunned and sobbing to herself, held up the nearest rag of her clothes to staunch the bleeding.

“That warmed you up, I bet, anyways,” the woman cried hoarsely from the bed of rags. “That’ll learn you for to disobey your mother another time, image. ’Old that row, and git me the gin, will yer? If you don’t, I’ll rise up from the bed, as sick as I am—blowed if I won’t—and break every precious bone in your cursed body!”

Lizbeth rose, sobbing at the word, and crawled slowly across to the bed, the wound on her head still bleeding profusely.

“Bring me that there candlestick,” the woman said, aiming a savage blow at her cowering daughter.

The child went once more and fetched the bottle, with blood and hair still sticking in a clot to its sharp angle.

Somewhat appeased by this prompt obedience, the mother replaced the candle in its impromptu socket, and said again, in her querulous tone, “Git me the gin, Lizbeth.”

Lizbeth trembled, but went across the room, and produced the bottle from a hole in the

wall, where the lath and plaster had peeled off, and formed a natural cave, or cupboard.

The woman took the bottle lovingly in her bloated hands, poured out a couple of wine-glassfuls of raw spirits into the tin mug that Lizbeth handed her, and drained it off at a single gulp, without one drop of water to qualify its fiery flavour.

“There,” she said, mollified, as she finished her drink, “that does me more good than nothink. That warms up the ’eart and the inwards, that does. There’s no medicine like a drop of Old Tom. ’Eaven’s best gift, I calls it. It’s all good alike, in ’ealth or in sickness.”

And she dozed off gradually in a drunken sleep, while poor little Lizbeth, relieved for the moment, crept off to her box and mounted guard there, silent as before, with her wounded scalp still sore and bleeding.

By-and-by, a neighbour’s head popped above the floor at the open staircase—a frizzy red head, adorned with endless twists of unkempt carrotty hair, and a good-natured Irishwoman’s face smiling broad beneath them.

“An’ how is she now, honey?” the good-natured Irishwoman asked in a loud whisper. “Is it dhrunk she is agin, thin! Och, more’s

the pity! The dhrink 'll be the deaths of her, anyway. An' how do you think she does the night now?"

"She's awful bad," Lizbeth murmured low. "The fever's took her worse'n ever. I don't know as she can live long." And the child began to sob afresh, as if her little heart would break.

"Och, don't cry, thin, darlint," the Irish-woman said, advancing a step up the open staircase. "Sure, an' she'll get better, niver fear. She's not the koind that's given to dying. Why, whatever ails yer poor head, thin? She'll not be afther sthriking ye wid the bottle, will she?"

"Oh, don't, Mrs. Flynn!" the child cried piteously. "Don't you touch it. It's that painful. Poor dear, she took an' threw the bottle at me."

Mrs. Flynn examined the wound carefully, and washed it as well as she was able in her existing state—having herself partaken of a dhrop of the craytur—with the dirty water in the tin pan. She washed it twice, and dressed it roughly with a wet rag. Then, nodding farewell to the little sentinel, with a good-humoured smile, and many exhortations not to

take on about it (as if these things must be expected everywhere in the course of nature), she disappeared down the steep steps again, and left Lizbeth once more alone with her own reflections.

It was half an hour later when a man's step was heard on the stairs—a heavy step, with hobnailed boots—and a loud voice gave out a bold street cry, sung in swinging measure to a curious monotonous lilting sing-song.

“Penny-wink, penny-wink, penny-wink, oh! Take a pin; stick him in; turn him round; pull him out; penny-wink, penny-wink, penny-wink, oh!”

It was a jovial, rollicking, brutal voice, and it resounded like a hearty uproarious echo through the broken walls and tumbledown corridors of that neglected human piggery. A minute later, a head and shoulders hove in sight above the open top of the staircase, with a wooden tray poised in very unstable equilibrium above, and covered by a few dozen remaining periwinkles. The man to whom these appurtenances belonged was coarse and large, and florid and brutal-looking, a perfect type of the burly blackguard of low London slums. He was considerably drunk into the bargain, and

he reeled into that miserable attic room with a rough air of besotted good fellowship that seemed sadly out of place with the starved and utterly woe-begone condition of the poor little skinny waif who sat there cowering and crouching to receive him.

“Well, Lizbeth,” the man growled out, flinging her a small piece of stale bread from his pocket as one might fling a bone to a street dog. “’Ow’s Sal? Fever took her off? Wot’s she up to? Dead yet? eh, gal?”

The child gnawed the dirty crust eagerly, as a dog might gnaw it, and answered with her mouth full of dry bread, “She’s awful bad, father. She’ve took more gin, she ’ave.”

“She’s a sight of a long time dying, anyhow, confound her!” the man grumbled, laying down his tray, and stirring the animated bundle of rags in the corner with his foot, as if it had been a mere lifeless object.

The woman opened her eyes once more sleepily, and sat up in her rags. “Well, Bill,” she said in a husky voice, “you’ve come home to see me die, ’ave yer?”

Bill stirred her up a second time with his thick boot. “Plaguey long time you take about it, anyways, missus,” he muttered in a

sulky tone. "Wot's the good o' wastin' one's 'ard earned money on a woman like you? If you was worth anythink, you'd ought to a died a clear week ago."

"'Ow's trade?" Lizbeth interposed quite seriously.

"Trade's bad," her father responded with good-humoured pessimism. "This 'ere depression's told on the winkle business; 'ardly earn enough to get a man a drink. Where's the gin, Lizbeth? 'And me over the bottle!"

Lizbeth handed it over as ordered, and retired once more to her station on the box.

"Who's been a-drinking like this 'ere?" the man cried angrily, regarding the bottle held up to the light, and marking with his thum the height of the spirit. "Lizbeth, why do yer go an' let 'er 'ave it? Wot's the use of me keepin' yer and feedin' yer like a fightin' cock if you don't exercise some kind of authority in the 'ouse? She's took too much, she 'as; there ain't nothink left for a 'ard-workin' man as 'as tramped the streets ever since sun-up, almost, sellin' penny-winkles at no profit, an' wearin' out twice the worth of it in good shoe-leather! I've done a roarin' trade, I 'ave; all roarin' the whole day long, and nothink to take by it!"

You good-for-nothink varmint, why do you go an' let 'er 'ave it, drat yer? Wot do you mean by it, eh, girl? eh, girl? Wot do yer mean by it?"

He emphasized each of these hasty questions in his own way by pulling the poor child's thin red ears, and cuffing her cheek at each clause of his repeated inquiry. Lizbeth sobbed and showed her head. "She made me give it 'er," she answered, cowering. "She threwed the bottle at me and cut my 'ead open."

Her father turned in drunken indignation, half real, half humorous, to the bed where the sick woman lay. "Oh, you're a pretty one," he cried in a tone of dogged and brutal good-humour, draining off a mugful of the gin as he spoke. "You're a beauty, you are, an' no mistake, missus, to go treatin' your own flesh and blood, an' my daughter, that way! But I'll larn you for to meddle with my child; oh yes, I will! I'll do for yer! I'll murder yer, Sal, you see if I don't! Pretty sort of a wife you are, lyin' at 'ome 'ere, lazy in bed, for a 'ard-workin' British workin'-man in the penny-winkle business! But I'll improve yer! I'll smash yer! Bust my bones, if I don't swing for yer, my beauty!"

He took up the empty bottle that had held the gin, and with his powerful arm raised it aloft; then, in mere 'gleeful boisterous drunken recklessness, he dashed it down with all his force upon the woman's head. Sal put up her arm hastily to avert it. The bottle broke into a hundred fragments, and the blood spurted out in one hideous splash from a dozen separate horrid gashes on the wretched woman's bloated face and neck and shoulders. At the sight Lizbeth gave a loud scream of horror and alarm, and rushed over with outstretched arms to screen and protect the unfortunate creature as far as her thin little body would allow her. But Bill had finished his work now, and attempted no further act of violence. His brutality was not sullen or vindictive; it belonged rather to the easy-going, rollicking order of lawlessness. He merely stood with his hands in his pockets, singing low to himself in a mocking voice his usual street cry of "Penny-wink, penny-wink, oh!" and smiling benignly at the awful picture of blood and misery wrought by his action among the rags in the corner.

As a rule, screams, however loud or frequent, attracted but little attention in that vile lodg-

ing-house. The inmates simply took it for granted when they heard unearthly noises from one another's dens that Sam, or Tom, or Dick, as the case might be, had come home jolly, and was displaying his jollity by the usual formalities of kicking his wife, or beating his sister, or knocking the children's heads savagely against the lath and plaster partition. But Lizbeth's one wild scream of terror was a scream of a totally different category—the sort of scream which the inhabitants of the tenement immediately recognized by native instinct as calling for the necessity of police intervention. In another minute the miserable attic was thronged full of inquiring men and women, half-clad or wrapped in dirty shawls, some of whom held up Sal in bed and endeavoured feebly to staunch her bleeding; while others eagerly interrogated the immovable Bill or poor cowering and almost speechless Lizbeth. Bill, however, firm upon the constitutional right of every Englishman to answer no incriminating question, contented himself, unmoved and unconcerned, with still humming “Penny-wink; penny-wink, oh!” and politely requesting his attentive fellow-lodgers to “fetch the police for that there intoxicated female over yonder.”

These remarks were relieved at intervals by a cordial invitation to any beggar who chose to come forward and have his blooming eyes blacked. But as no beggar present seemed anxious to avail himself of this generous offer, Bill relapsed once more at last into the penny-wink chorus, and awaited with patience the expected arrival of the ministers of the executive.

Before long, the police indeed arrived, three constables strong, and immediately cleared the decks for action. The crowd of ragged men and women all hurried forward with anxious faces, every one talking at once in a Babel of voices, and eager each to give their own version of the strange affair of which, of course, they knew, and could know absolutely nothing. The policemen waved them quietly aside, and with professional instinct proceeded in a sober business-like way to collar the unresisting Bill, who stood there still with his hands in his pockets, inanely smiling at the havoc he had wrought, and apparently even more jolly than ever. Two of them went out and fetched a stretcher. "Take the woman to the Middlesex Hospital," the leader said, in his official way. One constable and two or three of

the lodgers took up the stretcher. The woman opened her eyes as they lifted her up. "Bill," she cried hoarsely through her set teeth, with a savage oath unfit to be recorded, "you shall swing for this! You shall! You shall swing for it, you beggar!"

"Shouldn't be surprised if I did," the man muttered, gazing back in her face with imperturbable brutal carelessness. "That'd be just like the law of England now! 'Ang me for smashing a woman to-night as 'ud 'ave to 'ave died anyhow to-morrer. That's wot the beaks calls administration of justice! Justice, indeed! I'd justice 'em, wigs an' all, the 'ole blooming addle-'eaded lot of 'em!" And he laughed a loud half-tipsy laugh, while he submitted to be led away quietly and unresistingly between the two stout and resolute-looking policemen.

As he went down the steps, the last words that resounded in the bare corridor were the mocking echoes of Bill's cry, "Take a pin; stick him in; turn him round; pull him out; penny-wink, penny-wink, penny-wink, oh!"

As for Lizbeth, she rose from beside the bed of rags when they took her mother, and followed the stretcher close like a dog, till she reached the steps of the Middlesex Hospital.

CHAPTER X.

THAT evening, in Harry Chichele's comfortable room at the Middlesex Hospital, Harry and Mohammad Ali sat late by the fireside discussing the very remarkable results that Harry had deduced, by the aid of the microscope, from his study of the germs in the polluted water from Santander, washed ashore in the cask from the wreck of the *Seamew*.

"Yes, the rabbits, every one of them, died within twenty-four hours," Harry Chichele remarked with much animation. "I'm cultivating their germs now in a new medium, after Pasteur's method, and after my own. My own, as I suspected, is infinitely superior—infinately superior. It modifies the virus far more perfectly."

It was a curious place, that neat private sitting-room of Harry Chichele's. The Begum,

whom he had brought back, after all, in her box from Cornwall, despite the protestations of the Great Western Railway Company and its accredited agents, could have had no reasonable cause to complain of the want of that congenial poisonous atmosphere which Mohammad Ali had so confidently promised her. The whole place, in fact, fairly reeked of infusion, germs, viruses, and poisons. The big cupboard at the far end of the room was all divided out into small drawers, doubly locked with ingenious combinations, and lettered like a druggist's, with bright gold letters, in words of the deadliest and most ominous import. The mystic symbols for prussic acid were mingled with the abbreviated Latin names of strychnine and arsenic, of copperas and antimony, on the long brown labels. Here a jar, closely bolted, unblushingly proclaimed itself to be Australian arrow drug; there a box, as jealously guarded, announced its contents as Haitian obeah medicine; and yonder again three clear bottles of exquisitely limpid amber-coloured liquid gloried in their gilt advertisement of respective shame as the extracted venom of the scorpion, the boletus, and the hooded cobra. Everywhere poisons and everywhere antidotes. It was, in

fact, the private laboratory of an able and enthusiastic scientific poison fancier.

Mohammad Ali had just returned to town, six weeks later than Harry Chichele, after a round of visits to country houses, among old friends and college acquaintances. He had been to stop with Ivan Royle, among others, at a place in Warwickshire, where he had made the acquaintance of Seeta Mayne, the well-known novelist, sister of the ill-fated owner of the *Seamew*. Ali had taken rather a dislike at first sight to Seeta Mayne, he knew not why. She was one of those terrible women, he said to Harry, who oppress you at once with a burdensome sense of their cleverness and their greatness. A woman to admire, indeed, from a safe distance; better known in her books than in her proper person. "So different from Miss Tregellas," Ali added with a sigh, looking hard at Harry, and ruminating inwardly.

"I should like to meet her, all the same," Harry answered offhand, rising from his velvet-covered easy-chair, and opening the window half an inch, as he candidly remarked, to let in a little of the brown fog, and let out the fumes of that nasty Calabar bean he had been experi-

menting upon. "I can't tell you how much I admire her books. She's a wonderful delineator of human nature."

A decanter of pale wine stood upon the table, with a paper slip pasted as label across the outside. Mohammad Ali took it up carelessly in his hand. "I don't mind taking a glass of your sherry," he said, pouring it out, "the Koran to the contrary, notwithstanding. Of all the Prophet's laws, I've always found that the easiest broken." And he poured himself out a glassful with casual ease, into a wine-glass that stood beside it on the table.

"Sherry!" Harry Chichele cried, in a tone of alarm, rushing forward just in time to prevent his friend from raising it to his lips. "Goodness gracious, Ali, what in the name of heaven are you doing or thinking of! Never, for your life, eat or drink anything, however seemingly harmless, that you find lying about loose in this laboratory of mine. The very cups and saucers are poisonous. That's suspected sherry, sent in last night for my critical opinion by the Government analyst. A barrister fellow over at Reigate popped off suddenly day before yesterday—you must have seen the case in the *Times*. His wife and he weren't on the best of terms, it seems.

Question of an actress—the usual story. He went to bed at night happy and jolly, and woke up early next morning to find himself dead for the last three hours. Analyst suggests possibility of aconitine. Nasty thing to deal with, the vegetable alkaloids! He can't make anything out of it himself, but he gave half a glassful to an unhappy dog, and the poor brute died in great pain an hour after. That's the Government analyst's idea of what he calls analysis. Here's a probable poison. Dear me! how very curious! Happy thought! Let's try it on somebody, and see if it kills him. Goodness gracious, what a strange result! The poor beast's actually dying! That's what some people call experiment! I call it the last resource of incompetence. As if a doctor were to kill a patient in order to see what his symptoms were driving at! If you'd drunk that glassful off, I dare say, Ali, you'd have been as dead by this time as the dog and the barrister."

"Very likely," Mohammad Ali answered, with his usual Eastern calmness of demeanour, as his friend touched the electric bell at his side for a glass of sherry that was not suspected. "That shows that the Prophet was right, after all. Avoid all appearance of evil. You've got

some new things here, Harry, since I went away, I see by the labels."

"Oh, pretty well," Harry Chichele answered in the half-affected depreciatory voice of the connoisseur who exhibits his treasures to an intelligent spectator. Whatever a man's particular vanity may be, whether blue china, Roman coins, tropical butterflies, or venomous reptiles—he feels bound to assume a modest demeanour as regards their charms when a friend congratulates him with complimentary politeness upon the success of his collection.

Mohammad Ali paced up and down the room with a critical air before the mysterious jars and cupboards. "Canadian poison ivy," he murmured softly, reading the labels; "that's new now, isn't it? Ah, yes, I thought so; those sumach extracts are so extremely interesting. Thorn-apple again—four fresh varieties. I saw your paper about those in *Nature*. Yield an insipid narcotic alkaloid allied to atropine. Beautiful, beautiful! Your experiments and results were exceedingly pretty. Have you ever noticed, by the way, that deadly nightshade grows nowhere in England except about the ruins of your old monasteries? Speaks badly for the morality of the mediæval fathers

that, doesn't it? Unless, indeed, they only used it for the painless removal of Jews, Turks, heretics, and infidels."

"Of whom you would have been one," Harry Chichele interposed, smiling.

"Of whom I should have been one, no doubt," the Mohammedan went on with grave composure. "The monks would have converted me with great pleasure, from the error of my ways, at least into a corpse, if not into a Christian. What's this here? American hemlock—paralyzes the muscles of respiration, I fancy. Manchmeal, Indian hemp, Madagascar Ordeal Poison. What's the antidote? They must have something the medicine men give them to counteract the evil effects of that whenever necessary, or it couldn't possibly be used for an ordeal. All ordeals admit of dodging, that's what they're for; the medicine men always work the oracle."

"Of course," Harry Chichele answered, pouring out the unsuspecting sherry, and glancing casually towards a box in the corner, unobserved by Ali, where the Begum lay coiled with head erect, and staring open eyes, in an attitude she had persistently preserved ever since that morning. In the far corner of her box, in fact,

paralyzed with fear, and trembling like an aspen leaf, a terrified pigeon huddled and cringed, with its eyes fixed in fatal fascination on the deadly snake's, and every muscle of its body strained and alert with its long spell of deadly terror. Harry had put it in there to feed the Begum at ten o'clock, and for twelve long hours it had lain there motionless in mortal dread and agony, expecting the snake every moment to pounce upon it. But the Begum, after the cruel fashion of her race, having secured her victim, was in no hurry to devour it and be done with it. She preferred to gloat over its abject fright, and to feast her eyes on the spectacle of its quivering agitation. The Begum, indeed, enjoyed the exercise of her frightful power, and rather liked to feel that the pigeon was afraid of her.

"Upas tree," Ali went on, running them over. "That's new, again. I've seen that in India. Affects the spinal cord instantaneously, and causes death by universal tetanus. And here's aconitine, the same as in the sherry there. Whatever did your barrister go and use such stuff as that for, I wonder?"

"I can't imagine," Harry answered lightly. "The more fool he. A man must be a fool in

the nineteenth century if he has reasons for wishing to get rid of anybody, to go and do anything so clumsy as poison him. Poison can be always detected nowadays. And especially when there are so many other better ways now possible that absolutely and utterly defy detection."

"What ways?" Mohammad Ali asked glancing up hastily, with some curiosity.

"Oh, physiological and pathological ways, I mean, of course. Why, if you or I, who are practised medical hands, had any good grounds for wishing to disembarrass our career of any obnoxious person or persons, do you mean to say we couldn't find a thousand ways ready to hand for dexterously removing them without arousing undue suspicion? Of course we could, my dear fellow, put them out of the way as soon as look at them."

"I couldn't, thank heaven," Ali answered, drawing a long breath. "And what's more, I shouldn't like to be able, either. Knowledge of the means of crime is a dangerous thing—even for a Moslem."

"But not for the emancipated," Harry Chichele interposed airily. "The masses, of course, might misuse their information—they're not to

be trusted with knowledge like that; but the emancipated would never dream of employing it except in the interests of humanity and of science. Well, now, I'll tell you about these lovely germ researches of mine, Ali. I've arrived at really wonderful results. I'm just on the very verge, do you know, of establishing a totally new conception of the entire question."

Mohammad Ali seated himself, all ears, beside the table, while Harry Chichele pulled forward his microscope, and drew from his drawers a number of slides and several sheets of pencil diagrams. In two minutes, the pair of enthusiasts were deep in a profound professional discussion, Harry Chichele demonstrating with immense ardour, while Mohammad Ali, attentive and eager, listened and criticized with obvious admiration.

At last the Indian leaned back in his chair with an air of complete though half-unwilling conviction. "You've proved your point, Harry," he cried; "not a doubt about it; you've fairly proved it. There's only one thing you want now, and that's a patient who dies in the final collapsing stage of lodging-house fever. If the germs there—microbes or bacteria,

or whatever else you choose to call them—do really exhibit this jointed condition which you suspect, then your theory of their origin from fungoid sporules will be simply and solely a mathematical demonstration. It's a great discovery—a splendid discovery. You're lucky to have made it. Your series of slides is just magnificent—especially the germs from the cholera-water and the rinderpest in cattle.”

“Yes,” Harry Chichele answered in a voice of modest self-congratulation. “I flatter myself it's a neat demonstration. I'm only waiting for that final test—a case of which is sure to drop in before long—and then I shall read a paper on the subject before the Royal Society. I'm anxious about this paper, and about the result of the investigation, because, to tell you the truth, I think, Ali, it'll make my fortune. And, as you know, I have certain special and exceptional reasons for wishing just now to get my fortune made.”

The Indian smiled a grave smile of uneasy acquiescence, and glanced at the pretty cabinet photograph of Olwen Tregellas, framed in a dark blue velvet mount, which hung above the centre of Harry Chichele's mantelpiece.

Harry followed him closely with his eyes.

“Of course,” he went on, perceiving the drift of Mohammad Ali’s thoughts, “I could marry even now, if I chose, on my own little means—my grandmother’s money—which would be enough to support us in ‘genteel economy,’ as the porter calls it; but I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to impose upon my wife a ‘genteel economy.’ I want to make myself a place in the world first, and make it a place fit for Olwen herself to occupy.” He called her “Olwen,” quite unconcernedly now, and it grated on Mohammad Ali’s ear to hear him. “Now, if I can succeed in proving the truth of my theory, I shall have put myself at once in the very first ranks of the profession, shan’t I? Since Jenner discovered vaccination, in fact, no bigger thing’s been done in medicine than this new hypothesis. And for Olwen’s sake, I should like to do it. I should like to think I had a chance of ending by becoming some day President of the Royal College of Physicians, and making my wife into Lady Chichele.”

“I have no doubt at all you will,” Mohammad Ali answered abstractedly. “You’re cut out for it. It’s your natural goal. You’re by far the ablest man in the profession that I know of.

Harry, did Miss Tregellas give you that portrait of herself that Royle did for her?"

"No," Harry replied, glancing once more with a depreciating look at the photograph on the mantelpiece, "or else it'd been standing where that wretched likeness does now; for I must say Royle caught her expression and her graceful figure quite admirably—a most life-like portrait. But Olwen didn't think she ought to let me have it—at present—she said. Royle seemed a little stand-offish about it, you remember: spoke rudely to me, not to say foolishly; and she felt as if she were in honour bound to keep it herself, as he gave it to her and refused it to me, until—well, until, in short, it naturally comes into my possession, with everything else that belongs to Olwen. She was quite right, and I perfectly agreed with her; but I must say I should have liked all the same to have had that picture."

Mohammad Ali drummed upon the table. "Your grandmother's money," he said, reverting. "You get your income from her, do you? She was a Peyton, if I recollect aright—a Yorkshire Peyton. Harry, do you happen to know anything about your grandmother's family?"

"Well, not very much, if you ask me that.

I'm anything but curious in these matters. Genealogies have precious little interest for me. I am what I am. I care very little about who went before me. Science disregards families and pedigrees."

"You are what you are! No, no, Harry," the Mussulman cried, with a sudden gesture of disapprobation. "You speak neither like a Moslem nor a scientific man. Has not the whole burden of our own age been simply that—hereditary genius, hereditary insanity, hereditary morals, hereditary crime? You fancy you stand alone in the world; that you can break with the past and create the future. You think you can make yourself what you choose yourself. My dear fellow, you're grievously mistaken. We're each of us but a new incarnation of our fathers and mothers—a fresh creator, as our Hindoos would call it, of the ancestral spirit. It behoves us all to know somewhat of our progenitors; we are bone of their bone, blood of their blood, and their sins shall be visited on us—aye, and repeated by us, too, in our own persons—unto the third and fourth generation."

At that very moment, as Harry opened his lips to reply, a gentle tap sounded upon the

door, and a nurse, in her white cap and regulation apron, putting in her head, said briefly, "Doctor, you're wanted, if you please, in the fever ward. A complicated case. Fever and accident."

The two men, disturbed at the news, ran upstairs hastily, and arrived at once in the crowded fever ward. On a cot at the far end a ghastly sight met their eyes—a woman with a bloated pulpy-looking face, all hacked and cut about the cheeks and forehead, with open wounds, still raw and red and bleeding faintly. The surgeon in attendance stood at the head of the bed. "Good evening, Chichele," he said, as they entered. "Good evening, Ali. Why, I'm glad to see you back again in England. I've sent for you, Chichele, to look at this woman—new case—just admitted. Sarah Wilcox, they give her name, from a low lodging den in the slums of Marylebone. It's a police case, you see, of the ordinary character; but it's very complicated—very complicated. Man's assaulted his wife with an empty gin bottle, and cut her all over the head and shoulders with the broken pieces. At the same time, the woman's dying already—in the last stage of lodging-house fever. It's a neat forensic

question, as you perceive; and I shall want you to help me in watching the thing through carefully, for, if the patient dies of the wounds, of course, or of gangrene or blood-poisoning arising from them, why, then, as you know, it'll be wilful murder, or, at least, manslaughter. But if she only dies of the fever itself, without death having been in any way accelerated by the row, why, then, it's merely the common case of aggravated assault—our time-honoured national British amusement of every man walloping his own womankind on his own premises. We shall have to be very accurate in observing it, for the question's almost sure to be raised sooner or later before a jury."

Harry Chichele looked down on the woman with unfeigned and unconcealed delight. "I'll take every care of her," he said, "every possible care of her, you may be sure, Macpherson. The case, as it happens, is just one I was anxious to observe in connection with these new germ researches of mine. Ali, this is really a wonderful bit of luck—some people would call it distinctly providential. The very thing we wanted to see. A case of collapse in lodging-house fever."

They went to work speedily with the usual

precautions, and soon had settled the unconscious patient fairly in her bed. She was, indeed, a loathsome object now to look upon—her livid face all scarred with wounds and covered with bandages, her swollen eyelids white and puffy, her thick lips almost black with congestion, and her breath coming and going from her heaving chest with stertorous distinctness. It needed all a doctor's resolution and experience to make any man handle gently such a hideous caricature of feminine humanity.

"She's the very case I wanted," Harry Chichele murmured to Ali again, as they finished their task and paused for a moment. "As soon as she's dead, she'll give me the exact opportunity needed to complete the outline of my new theory."

"But suppose she doesn't die, though?" Mohammad Ali put in with malicious dryness.

Harry Chichele looked up at him sharply. "But she *will* die," he answered in a short, quick, decisive tone. "There's no 'suppose' at all about the matter. When a patient reaches such a stage as this, the thing's as good as settled already. Miracles are out of date nowadays. The only question is, which cause will she die of—accident or the fever. I shall hold

the post-mortem myself at ten to-morrow. Nurse, whatever hour of day or night this case goes off, send down at once, please, and have me knocked up to certify cause of death immediately."

CHAPTER XI.

It was long past twelve when Harry Chichele lounged down to the big front door of the Middlesex Hospital to see Mohammad Ali safely off the premises.

On the stone steps, an altercation was in full progress in loud tones between the stout porter and a bundle of rags that lay in a huddled heap beside the portico pillars.

"Git up, will you, and go off 'ome," the porter exclaimed in his angriest voice. "You ain't no call to go sleepin' 'ere. If you don't git out, I'll whistle for the police for you."

The bundle of rags moaned piteously. "I ain't got no 'ome to go to now," it replied in childish misery. "Father, he's run in, and took off to the lock-up for murderin' mother; an' mother, she's inside 'ere, where they've took 'er, a-dying in the 'ospital."

"That ain't no business of mine, I tell you,"

the stout porter rejoined, with official dignity. "If you ain't got no 'ome to go to, why, then apply to the parochial authorities for relief—git took into the union, you know—but don't go incommodin' the committee an' the public by sleepin' out on the steps of the 'ospital."

Harry Chichele ran down bareheaded to inspect the poor little terrified morsel of humanity. He raised up the bundle of rags in his hands with gentle forbearance and an entire absence of that involuntary appearance of disgust which most of us display, almost by instinct, towards very dirty and tattered children. Old experience in a London hospital had taught him long since to accept dirt in a philosophical spirit as a natural concomitant of the residuum of our species. He clasped the poor thin little hand good-naturedly in his own, and asked the small outcast in a quiet soothing voice where she lived and what she wanted.

"I don't live nowheres," the child answered, "and I want mother."

Harry Chichele looked more closely at the girl's head. "Why, goodness gracious," he said in a shocked tone, "what's this? You've got a bad wound on it, little woman—a wound

that ought to be dressed at once. The idea of your exposing yourself on a night like this to the open air with such a wound as that upon you! Why, it's enough to kill you outright. Come in at once, there's a good girl, and let's see what we can do for you."

Surprised at the unexpected kindness of his manner, Lizbeth followed him, nothing loth, up the big steps, and through the lighted corridor, into Harry Chichele's own cosy and comfortable sitting-room.

Within, a bright fire blazed merrily in the grate; a couple of lamps shed a soft light over the curtains and the walls; a Persian cat dozed doubled up on the rug of her country before the glowing hearth; and the kettle still hummed and hissed with cheerful garrulity upon the shining brass hob at the side of the fireplace. Everything spoke of untold luxury to poor neglected little Lizbeth. She had never seen such a room in her life before; she had never even dreamt of such truly regal and oriental magnificence. Taken aback at the sight, she stood timidly shivering in her rags by the door, and gazed awe-struck at the evident signs of Harry Chichele's princely hospitality.

"Are you hungry, little one?" Harry asked,

going straight to the point with the first great need of starving humanity.

The child nodded an eager assent. He had hit the bull's-eye. She was far too frightened by the light and glare to open her lips, but she understood at once that a rare prospect of food loomed visibly in the middle distance.

"Sit down, my child," Harry said, pushing her a chair beside the centre table, with a kindly gesture. The girl seated herself with silent awe upon the extreme edge. Harry went over to the cheffonier in the corner, and brought out, one after another, a cold tongue, a box of biscuits, a cut sponge cake, and some apricot jam. Lizbeth's eyes glittered strangely. Harry had seen the same sort of glitter before. He knew where. In the eyes of the greater carnivores at the Zoo, when their daily dole of meat is being served out to them.

He cut her a slice or two of the tongue, laid it on a plate, and gave it to the child with a knife and fork. She took them up so awkwardly, and with such evident doubt, that Harry saw at once she had never handled those dangerous implements of advanced civilization in her life before. "I've no bread in the house," he said apologetically, "so I must ask you kindly to

put up with biscuits," and as he spoke he handed her a couple. The child stuffed one into her mouth whole, with a huge piece of tongue to keep it company, and appeared for the moment absolutely lost in supreme and unutterable ecstasies of happiness.

Harry lifted the kettle with a smile from the hob, and mixed her a very weak glass of claret and water, with a big lump of sugar in it. "It's against my principles," he said, with solemn gravity, to the poor small mite, "to administer alcohol to any child under sixteen; but your present condition warrants an exception, and I give it to you on strictly medical grounds."

Lizbeth took a long pull at the nice hot sweet mixture, and laid it down with a deep breath. "It's better'n gin," she said, with cordial approbation. "It ain't 'alf so strong an' fiery like."

She ate a supper that fully satisfied Harry Chichele's benevolent intentions, from tongue and biscuits to sponge cake and apricot jam; and when she had quite finished, he set her in a chair beside the blazing hearth, and examined the wound on her head with closer attention. After a short examination, he rang the bell. "Send a nurse here," he said to the servant.

The nurse came with the promptitude of a big organization. "Nurse," Harry Chichele began, "I want you to take this poor little thing away and cut her hair off. Cut it all off quite close to the head, and give her a bath, and then—well, then, what can we do for her? We can't put her back into her rags again, can we?"

"Is she a patient, doctor?" the nurse inquired.

"No," Harry Chichele answered promptly. "She's here as my friend. I want to see to the wound on her head privately. Could you get anything in the way of clothes to rig her up in?"

"I've no doubt we could borrow some," the nurse replied, with official coolness. "Come along with me, child. We'll do our best for her."

Lizbeth loitered as if loth to go. "Where's mother?" she asked at last, beginning to sob again with the fresh strength the unwonted food and drink had given her. "I want to go and see mother."

"Is your mother's name Sarah Wilcox?" Harry asked, sympathetically.

"Yes," the child answered, beginning to cry. "Leastways, it's Sal, an' Mrs. Wilcox."

“ Well, your mother’s upstairs, then,” Harry replied, with soothing calmness. “ She’s under my care, and I’m the doctor of this hospital. She’s been put to bed in a nice warm cot, and her wounds have been dressed, and she’s had everything she could possibly want, and now she’s sleeping. Go along with nurse, and do as she tells you ; and you shall see mother the very first thing to-morrow morning.”

“ Thank you,” the child said simply. So much kindness fairly took her breath away. She had never met anything like it in her life before. It reminded her vaguely of what she had once heard when she stopped one Sunday evening in a side alley, and listened, amazed and open-mouthed, to a street preacher. The man had spoken in his emotional way about some beautiful, glorious place, where everything was lovely, and everybody was good and kind and helpful. She rather thought now, in her poor little heart, he must have been describing the Middlesex Hospital.

She went with the nurse very reluctantly, and followed her into the matron’s room.

“ Who’s this ? ” the matron asked, looking up in surprise.

The nurse tossed her head superciliously.

“Oh, only a gutter-child,” she answered with a coarse laugh. “Another of Dr. Chichele’s philanthropic ideas. He’s always full of his fads and his fancies.”

In half an hour Lizbeth returned again, an odd little figure indeed, washed, and cropped, and queerly rigged out in various collected articles of clothing, all of them more or less too large for her, borrowed here and there among the different nurses. Harry Chichele, smiling at her metamorphosis, dressed her wound with great care, and made it beautifully cool and comfortable.

“She must sleep here somewhere,” he said, in an undertone to the nurse, when he had finished. “We must make her up a rough bed somehow on the sofa.”

They made it up, and laid her down there, wrapped round in a rug, and in her new clothes just as she stood, and in ten minutes more the poor gutter-child, wearied out with pain and with the day’s events, and filled with unwonted meat and drink, was lying sound asleep on her improvised couch in the deep unbroken sleep of childhood.

She never opened her eyes again till next morning, when the servant came in to lay the

table for Harry Chichele's breakfast. Such a breakfast! Rich beyond all the dreams of esurient avarice! Big brown sausages, and honey in the comb, and hot rolls, and steaming coffee of delicious aroma! Lizbeth's eyes revelled in the spectacle, her nostrils sniffed up the fragrance of the coffee. And when the kind gentleman himself came in, and sent her off with nurse to be washed, and then set her down at table by his own side, and helped her to all the good things in turn, as if she was the Queen of England in person, Lizbeth's delight, and joy, and admiration were positively unbounded.

After breakfast, however, she began to ask once more with painful persistence to see her mother. Harry temporized. He pacified her with promises for the moment; he would go upstairs himself first, and see how mother was getting on, he told her.

In the small bed at the far end of the fever ward, the new case, Sarah Wilcox, lay breathing heavily, but with her eyes open. Harry glanced at her, and then looked up at the nurse in surprise. "Why, how's this?" he asked, in a voice by no means over-pleased. "The woman's alive! Alive and vigorous! And what's

more, she's a trifle better, too! Nurse, nurse, what have you been doing to her?"

"Nothing but what you ordered, doctor," the nurse answered, a little surprised. "We've changed the poultices every two hours. She rallied in the night. She's taken beef-tea and jelly frequently."

"Confound her," Harry murmured to himself, turning away disappointed. "Just like the disgusting perversity of things. If we'd wanted to cure the wretched creature, she'd have gone and died, of course, to spite her relations. But just because she's an interesting case to investigate, she must go and rally, to spite scientific medicine. A wretched, animated gin-bottle like that! What possible good can she be to the world, I wonder, except, indeed, to experiment upon? Talk about the *corpus vile*, forsooth! What *corpus vilis* could you get than her miserable carcase?" And he went downstairs muttering to himself in righteous indignation against the unhappy being, because she wouldn't die fast enough at the right moment, to oblige science.

"Your mother's better," he said to Lizbeth, with a pleasant smile, as he reached his own room. "A nurse will take you up presently to

see her. How's the poor head this morning? Ah, that's well! Filming over nicely. Wonderful recuperative power in the family, evidently. How did you get it? Father again? Was he practising gymnastics on you, too, my friend, with his empty gin-bottle?"

The child hesitated. "N—no," she said. "It wasn't him; it was mother as done it. She took the ink-bottle and throwed it at my 'ead. But it wasn't no fault of her'n, poor dear. She was angry with me, acoz I didn't git her the gin quick enough when she wanted it."

Harry set his lips firm. "The old fiend!" he muttered shortly to himself. "She looks as if she was every inch capable of it. Must be a family trait, I suppose, to utilize bottles by smashing one another's heads in with them when empty. Saves the expense of buying a more precisely adapted weapon of offence, and comes equally serviceable in the long run, after all, I should imagine. So the being of a mother did it, did she? A creature like that to block the way of science! It's too absurd! The world would be more than well rid of her! And yet, a ridiculous Puritanical law——" He paused significantly. "Well, well, Lizbeth," he went on, after a minute's reflection,

“you can ring the bell now, if you like, for nurse to take you up to see to mother.”

It was ten minutes to ten by the hospital clock when Mohammad Ali knocked at the door, and entered the room, smiling and business-like.

“Why, Ali, you’re early,” his friend cried, surprised at his appearance.

“Oh yes, I’m early,” Ali answered unabashed, with a quiet smile. “The pursuit of science has roused me betimes from my virtuous couch at the hotel round the corner. To tell you the truth, the virtuous couch was rendered far from satisfactory through the night watches indeed by the number and agility of its permanent population. But let that pass. I’ve come round early to see the theory justified. You mentioned ten sharp, I think, for the post-mortem.”

Chichele’s face fell abruptly. He was in no humour just then for professional chaff. The incredible perversity of Sarah Wilcox in persisting to live against all medical advice and prevision, had somewhat ruffled his usual repose. “I did,” he replied with sardonic irony; “but an unexpected hitch has meanwhile arisen. The subject obstinately declines

to put herself in a proper position for the furtherance of scientific investigation. I regret to say she's positively and absurdly better this morning."

"I thought as much," Mohammad Ali answered, with that annoying smile of his—a most unsympathetic man at times, Mohammad Ali. "She looked a particularly tough subject, I fancied. It takes a great deal to kill these tough subjects of the lowest social strata. The germs and they have a hard tussle over it. So she's better, is she? Well, well, that's well. The first business of medical science is to prolong life."

"Ali, if you fling your miserable little moral platitudes of the profession at my head this morning, I will arise and slay you with my hands, as King Arthur observed on a critical occasion to the bold Sir Bedivere. He was a blameless king, was good King Arthur; so I suppose there can be no particular harm in adopting, or adapting, a casual remark of his. But I never, for the life of me, could see the morality of the professional platitudes in that respect. Why prolong a life of abject misery? Why prolong a life of anti-social tendencies? Why prolong a life that's of no sort of use, or

good, or advantage, to itself or anybody else that comes across it? For my own part, I don't mind candidly confessing to you that I don't want this tough subject to go on living any longer. A miserable, bloated, drunken creature, who stupefies herself with gin, and mauls her husband, and makes her abject little child's life utterly unhappy by her gross cruelty. Why, it was she who scalped the poor girl's temple. You should just see the wound—a raw place as big as the palm of my hand—grazed with the sharp edge of an earthenware ink-bottle. Pah! it's just sickening to think of it! The squalid abomination, cutting open her own child's head with a savage blow like that. It makes me angry even to realize that such things can be in this nineteenth century England of ours."

Mohammad Ali bowed his head. "England is perhaps not absolutely perfect," he admitted candidly.

"And then to think," Harry Chichele continued, bridling up with genuine enthusiasm, "of all the good that would result to the world from the establishment of my theory! The valuable lives that would be saved for humanity! The wrenches that would be spared

to parents and children! The hold we should gain over epidemic diseases! Why, our entire principles and practice of hygiene would be revolutionized offhand. Fever would be banished, cholera dispelled, diphtheria and scarlatina held at arm's length! Earth would become a really habitable planet, and the triumphant germ who now walks up and down this oblate spheroid of ours like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, would have his fangs drawn and his claws pared by the calm, cool, dispassionate prevision of prophylactic science! All these good things would come to mankind—and I should be able to marry Olwen Tregellas! But no! That bloated, pasty-faced drunken old reprobate, lying in bed in her sins upstairs there, stops the way for all future progress! She sets up her tottering tipsy notice-board of 'No thoroughfare!' against the full tide of advancing science. And till she, or some other grotesque monstrosity like her, chooses to go and die in a ditch of lodging-house fever in the last stage, within the circle of my observation, the whole world must stand at gaze like Joshua's moon at Ajalon, and patient science must bide its time with its hands in its pockets, baulked of its

only reasonable chance for legitimate investigation! Why, a woman with a conscience would die to order under such circumstances; but creatures like that have nine lives and no conscience. I hope to goodness she's arrived at the ninth and last of hers by this time!"

CHAPTER XII.

THAT long day through the woman Wilcox dragged on dubiously, hanging by a slender thread the whole time between life and death, but never dying—as in reason she ought to have done. From time to time Harry Chichele ran upstairs and watched her, while Mohammad Ali hung about the hospital (where he was well known of old) “to see fair between science and the patient,” as he himself quaintly phrased it.

About three in the afternoon the house-surgeon asked them to step round with him to the neighbouring police-court, where he had to give evidence in the case of assault against the woman's husband. Harry dropped in and listened to the hearing, his little charge, in her quaint rig-out, being naturally one of the principal witnesses. As her acquaintance with the nature of an oath seemed evidently both

profound and exhaustive, her testimony was, of course, received as indubitably valid. The man Wilcox—fish merchant, of Little Walpole Street, Marylebone, he called himself on the charge-sheet—was charged for the present with aggravated assault; but the police intimated, in their cautious way, that the case might turn out, “with eventualities,” to widen out into one of wilful murder. Such a picturesque collection of ragged and unwashed brutality as the lodging-house witnesses, Harry had never before beheld; nor did the personal appearance of the prisoner William Wilcox himself, fish-merchant, of Little Walpole Street, prepossess him largely in favour of his doubtful patient at the Middlesex Hospital. The accused fish-merchant was most undeniably fishy. A more unmitigated ruffian of his own type it would have been hard to find outside Newgate; and as he strolled out of the dock on remand, with his jaunty air of perfectly unruffled and unperturbed good-humour, his hands in his pockets, and still humming to himself his usual strictly mercantile refrain; “Take a pin; stick him in; turn him round; pull him out; penny-wink, penny-wink, penny-wink, oh!” Harry Chichele thought in his own soul that if the

world could be well rid of the entire precious pair of them at once the world, on the whole, might rather be congratulated than otherwise on the salutary process.

“What will become of the child?” the magistrate asked with some interest, after remanding the prisoner. “A bright girl, and gave her important evidence well and clearly.”

“For the present,” Harry said, laying his kindly hand upon the child’s head, “I undertake to look after her. What we shall do with her in the end must depend, of course, upon the eventualities.”

The magistrate smiled. The court smiled. Bill himself smiled most prodigiously. *Eventualities* is such a very fine word to describe the chance of your getting hanged or not. Even though the odds were heavy on hanging, Bill would have his smile over it, with the rest of the world, like a courteous gentleman.

As the afternoon wore away, however, and the critical period of the disease seemed to be passing by, without the woman getting noticeably worse, or noticeably better for that matter, either, Harry Chichele began to reason with himself on the chances of her death quite seriously. What was this wretched woman’s

life worth, compared with the universal good and benefit of the whole world—with his own and Olwen Tregellas's happiness? How foolish to believe one might lawfully kill an open foe, but not get rid, when occasion demanded, of these morbid excrescences, these tumours and cancers, upon the very fabric and organism of society! Who on earth would ever miss her—an object like that, a criminal in the inmost warp and woof of her nature—a creature utterly wicked and bad to the core in every strand and fibre of her being? If science and humanity could gain—were it ever so little—by her immediate death, why should science and humanity conspire together artificially to defraud themselves of their own advantage by indefinitely prolonging her miserable existence? No, no; the thing was as clear as day. It was expedient that this one sordid life should be offered up on the altar of society—and of the new germ theory.

For his own sake, Harry Chichele would not have entertained the notion, perhaps, nor even for society's. Society, no doubt, at the cost of some thousand valuable lives or so, could still wait a month or two longer; for society, you see, has waited so long, and is, after all, such

a pure abstraction. But for Olwen's—for Olwen's! He stood trembling now on the very verge of a great, a glorious, and an epoch-making discovery. If he completed it at once, well and good. Olwen's future would be amply secured to her. But if he didn't, some obscure German or other, in some out-of-the-way university laboratory among the wilds of Saxony, might get wind of it and be beforehand with him, and prove his discovery a week earlier than he himself had succeeded in proving it. These obscure Germans are always anticipating our best ideas in their cold-blooded, grasping, Teutonic fashion. And then, there would be an end at once of his splendid dream of fame and competence. Olwen would never be Lady Chichele. Germs, you know—germs are “in the air” at present, as people say; and sooner or later somebody or other was sure to hit upon this very notion—all the more so because it was a new and a true one. Hundreds of the acutest and ablest minds in scientific Europe were all just then busily engaged in investigating this precise question. The chances were, therefore, a hundred to one that if he did not take time by the forelock, and get his theory worked out at once, some other person would steal a march

upon him, and do him out of the hard-earned honours of discovery. Yes, yes, there was no denying it, the woman must go; humanity and science, and Olwen's future, all alike imperatively demanded it.

But how? That was the question. Pooh! as he himself had said last night in passing to Mohammad Ali, if you really want to get rid of anybody, there are a thousand ways—physiological ways and pathological ways—in which a competent medical man can dexterously remove an obnoxious person without for one moment arousing undue suspicion.

What ways? Oh, easy enough! The first thing is to make up your mind. That done, the rest comes all as pat as the alphabet. The real question was now, did he or did he not mean to do it?

So Harry ruminated, sometimes stretched back in his easy-chair, sometimes pacing up and down his room now and again, and surprising little Lizbeth with his deep-drawn breath, as she sat at the table, quiet as a mouse, looking over the big bundle of children's picture-books that Harry had borrowed from one of the nurses for her amusement.

Up and down the room he paced, time after

time, absorbed in thought, and paused at last with knitted brows before Olwen Tregellas's photograph. His stern set lips relaxed at once at the sight. It was a pretty photograph, but it didn't do that sweet face full justice. Nothing on earth could do dear Olwen justice, not even Ivan Royle's delicious half-length portrait. Yet what could be lovelier, after all, than the delicate half-unconscious smile upon those parted lips? so pure, so maidenly, so innocent, so charming! Harry's whole soul went out with a sigh to that treasured photograph. He loved her! He loved her! She *must* be his! She *should* be his! He would make her his own! She should live yet to be Lady Chichele!

That object upstairs stand for one moment in his angel's way! Heaven forbid! Never! never!—ten thousand times never! If the creature had as many lives as the sands on the shore, there should never a life of them stand in the way for Olwen! for Olwen!—for his own bright, beautiful, innocent Olwen!

When he turned away from that smiling photograph of the simple, pretty, tender-hearted Cornish girl, Sarah Wilcox's fate was sealed irrevocably—as irrevocably as if sentence of death had been pronounced against her in due

form by the highest tribunal in this realm of England.

He took up the evening paper listlessly for a moment, and glanced with casual unconcern at the leaders. As chance would have it, one of them referred to a trial of the moment—the trial of some blundering lower-class criminal for the usual vulgar murder of brutal violence. “It is not often,” said the leader-writer, with the luminous platitude of all his class, “that an educated man of wealth or position deliberately plans and executes a deep-laid scheme for getting rid of a fellow-creature. To this it may be replied, indeed, that when an educated man seriously devotes himself to such a task, he takes his measures with too much cleverness to be ever detected. But it is a more pleasant and more comfortable doctrine to hold with the bard, that ‘Minds cultivated and correct glide seldom into crime!’” Harry Chichele, running his eye over this interesting passage, laid down the paper with a gentle smile playing about the corners of his cultivated and correct mouth. How amusingly quaint was the leader-writer’s humorous way of putting it! And how grotesque the incongruous collocation of the educated man’s deliberate design with the mere

coarse, self-seeking brutality of the common, sordid, everyday murderer!

“Ring the bell, little woman, will you?” he said with his winning voice softly to Lizbeth. “I want to ask nurse something about your mother.”

Lizbeth rose at once with her mechanical obedience, and pressed the knob of the electric bell. That fairy-tale bell had proved a ceaseless source of delight to her ever since she came into Harry Chichele's rooms. She had never seen a house-bell of any sort before; and the magical effect of touching the knob and hearing a distant gong sound mysteriously somewhere away in the lower premises in instantaneous response to her light touch charmed and delighted her childish mind. She would have dearly loved to keep on ringing it without intermission the whole day long, from breakfast hour to bed-time.

A servant answered the bell immediately. “Will you kindly ask the nurse in the fever ward,” Harry Chichele said in his politest manner, “when Sarah Wilcox's poultices will next be changed?”

The man came back again in two minutes. “At half-past six, sir,” he said briefly. Harry

Chichele nodded a satisfied nod. "Good," he answered; "that will do perfectly. Please get me a basket from the porter, Thomas."

When the basket arrived, Harry looked across with a pleasant smile to Lizbeth. "My child," he said kindly, "I'm going out now on an errand for five minutes. I have to get something from the chemist for your mother. You can amuse yourself while I'm away, I suppose, with all these toys and picture-books and things?"

Lizbeth looked up at him with a puzzled smile. "I never was so 'appy in all my born days afore," she said simply. "I think you're the kindest gentleman as ever lived. I'd like to stop 'ere for ever and ever."

Harry nodded his genuine pleasure at her words, and left the room abruptly. He walked along the street with his even pace to the nearest chemist's, where he bought a couple of waterproof india-rubber bags, such as are commonly used for putting sponges in; one of the very largest size, the other about half an inch smaller. Then he strolled quietly on to the fishmonger's and bought a couple of pounds of ice, which he put inside the larger bag, and carried home to his own rooms in the basket.

They had always plenty of ice and to spare at the hospital, but Harry didn't care to ask for any just then. In these little matters, it is best, as far as possible, to avoid exciting attention or arousing suspicion. What can a man want with ice in his own rooms on a chilly damp November evening? He quoted to himself the "Bab Ballads:" "The novelty would striking be, and must excite remark." To excite remark was just what he wished to avoid; he must manage this little affair for himself in the strictest secrecy.

When he got home again, he carried the basket into his own bedroom, and proceeded noiselessly to crush the ice small with a pestle and mortar. As soon as he had crushed it to the proper size, he put it into the larger india-rubber bag, and laid the smaller one loose within it. Then he sewed them both together at the top, so that the whole arrangement made a dry double waterproof ice bag (with the ice inside), into which a man could thrust his hand and keep it stone-cold as long as he wanted, without its getting wet or otherwise attracting attention. That done, he rolled the entire apparatus up in the blanket on his own bed, and went out once more into the warm sitting-

room. Lizbeth noticed, when he came back, that he had changed his coat. He was now wearing his loose brown velveteen jacket, with very wide and capacious side pockets.

In the sitting-room he sat down to his Davenport at once, and, finding he had still ten minutes to spare, filled up the time by continuing his half-written letter to Olwen, which he had interrupted when he first began to think over this little scheme for—well, for aiding and abetting Nature in getting rid of that miserable, bloated, drunken object.

“And then, my own heart’s darling,” he was writing hastily, “I shall be able at last, more truly than ever, to call you in very truth my own. Of course you are my own, my very own, already, I know; my own in heart and thought and feeling; my own in every inmost thrill of your nature; but I want you to be still more intimately mine; to live with you and watch you all day long; to do my best to make you happy; to let your life ennoble mine, to let my life strengthen and enrich yours; as every true and perfect union—man’s and woman’s—ought mutually to do. Oh, Olwen, my darling, my own dearest one, I wish I could tell you how every hour of the day——”

At that exact moment the muffled hospital clock struck slowly the single note of half-past six. That dull sound recalled Harry to himself with a start. He replaced the letter instantly in the desk, locked the lid down, and hurried off at once into his own bedroom. When he emerged his right hand was plunged deep in his coat pocket, and a resolute smile played ominously about the firm-set corners of his thin pale lips.

In the fever ward above, Mohammad Ali, the nurse, and the house-surgeon were all waiting for him by the patient's bedside. Sarah Wilcox lay half insensible on her narrow cot with rolling eyes, that showed the whites and part of the iris; and her breathing was still loud and stertorous. "We must be very careful," the house-surgeon said as Harry approached. "Life and death hang upon it, you see, both for the woman herself and for her husband too. The slightest chill would instantly kill her, I think. What do you say, eh, Chichele?"

"Wants great care," Harry answered, in a slow deliberate tone, inspecting her closely. "Come round here, Ali. You stand over at this side and help me. I'll support her back while nurse gets ready the flannel bandage.

Now, nurse, quick! Have the things handy. Don't lose a minute! A chill may be fatal!"

"Are your hands warm?" Mohammad Ali asked suspiciously, with his oriental quickness. Harry held out his left with the utmost frankness for his friend to feel. Ali clasped it in his, and nodded satisfied. It was warm as a toast. The right hand lay still in the right-hand pocket—buried deep in the stone-cold ice-bag. Mohammad Ali, with all his sharpness, didn't think or ask to feel that one.

"Take off the poultice!" Harry said shortly.

The nurse removed it. Harry withdrew his right hand at once from the bag, and supported the woman with his broad palm on the small of her back. A cold shudder seemed to run like lightning through the wretched creature's spine. She opened her eyes and gasped for breath. For a second some mumbling word appeared to tremble inaudibly on her bloated lips. It was a hideous oath—an oath of the foulest and vulgarest profanity. She couldn't utter it—her strength was too low—but the house-surgeon, eyeing her sternly, on her quivering mouth saw her frame it visibly with a final effort, and shuddered his unaffected disgust. "She's a bad lot," he muttered, relaxing his

hold. "Even at this last moment, Chichele, she's flinging horrible filthy oaths and names at us."

Harry Chichele smiled contented. That vile end justified to himself his own action. Who could care to save such a woman as that? Surely the world would be well rid of her.

They bound up the bandage and laid her down with care on the bed once more. The cold tremors still coursed convulsively down the creature's back. Harry regarded her awhile with close attention. "She won't pull through," he said. "She's too far gone. There's no chance now of her living till morning."

Mohammad Ali shook his head. "I can't understand it at all," he answered moodily. "Half an hour ago she seemed as if she were really rallying. Now she's going off with startling rapidity."

Harry smiled again, a calm wise smile, and went downstairs to his own room. It was more seemly so. Indecent anxiety would too readily betray itself. He would wait below for final news to be brought from the fever ward. In one more day the theory would be vindicated.

He didn't feel like a would-be murderer. He didn't consider himself in that light at all. People were always dying in the hospital; sometimes unavoidably, sometimes from the result of operations or from the carelessness or stupidity of nurses. One more death among so many mattered but little. It merely went in with the general average.

Half an hour passed slowly by upstairs, and the house-surgeon still watched with patient eyes the last struggles of the dying woman. Mohammad Ali stood by his side. "It's very odd," he whispered. "I can see what's happened, but I can't in the least account for it. We were careful to the last degree, yet some sudden chill must have congested the kidneys."

As he spoke, the woman lifted her hand uneasily from the bed. She was groping about now as if feeling for something. Her fingers fumbled with the folds of the bedclothes. Presently, she raised her head a little. "Gin!" she cried in an audible voice, opening her eyes in one last flickering rally. "Gim'me some gin, gim'me some gin, you beggar!" And then, with a sudden ghastly collapse, she fell back speechless on the hospital pillow.

The nurse looked hard at her and nodded to

the surgeon. The surgeon answered in his stereotyped voice, "Go down and tell Dr. Chichele." They were all so accustomed to strange deaths in that house of mercy that even this horrible one did not greatly affect them.

Harry Chichele was seated comfortably by his own table, giving Lizbeth a first lesson in the mysteries of backgammon, when Mohammad Ali and the nurse entered. "Sixes," he cried gaily, as the child threw. "You take those four times, you see, because it's a doublet. That's a good throw, Lizbeth; a capital throw. I couldn't have done it better myself. I believe you'll beat me after all, little woman. You're getting on famously. You'll make a first-rate backgammon player."

"Doctor," the nurse said, opening the door, without one word of preface or warning, "Sarah Wilcox is just dead. You said you wished to be told of it the moment it happened."

Harry Chichele's hand was upon Lizbeth's backgammon men, showing her how to take her doublets to the best advantage; and he would have gone on to make the four moves

for her, in spite of the nurse's startling intelligence (as Mohammad Ali noticed from behind with his keen quick eye) had he not been interrupted even as she spoke by a terrible, heartrending outburst of grief from poor, orphaned, and lonely little Lizbeth. She cried once, and then was silent. It was, indeed, a piercing and agonized cry—the short sharp wail of a broken heart that has lost its all at a single venture. Next moment the child threw back her head and stiffened her limbs. Her whole body grew stark and rigid. Her upturned eyes gleamed dull and deathlike. For a second she seemed almost as if really dead, so cold and stiff and motionless she lay, with her neck flung back, and her breath held long in deep unconsciousness.

Harry Chichele seized her tenderly in his arms, as a man might seize his own daughter. “Brandy!” he whispered quietly to Mohammad Ali. “Fan her, nurse! Fresh air! Fresh air! Don't crowd about her! Give her room to breathe! Poor little thing! poor little thing! What a soft little soul she must have, after all? Who would ever have thought she'd take it to heart like that? A miserable wretch of a woman such as her mother!

Not fit to be mother to any living human creature!"

The child opened her eyes vaguely. "She was all the mother I 'ad," she muttered to herself in a slow deep voice, and then relapsed once more into perfect rigidity.

CHAPTER XIII.

MOHAMMAD ALI was right when he declared that Harry Chichele was by no means cruel or unfeeling in the grain. As the keen-eyed Moslem watched the Englishman assiduously nursing that poor motherless helpless little waif the evening through with unceasing tenderness, he could not but think more than once to himself, "After all, my suspicions must have been ill-founded, and Harry's really a thorough good fellow in spite of everything." Could he still continue to believe him stern and hard-hearted? Could he hesitate to entrust even Olwen's happiness to a man who could lavish such gentle and patient excess of care upon a mere ragged small London outcast? Surely, surely, he must have been mistaken in his first estimate of the man's character.

For Harry undressed the child and laid her to rest with gentle arms in his own bed. The

sofa would do well enough for himself to-night, he said. He sat beside her and held her thin small hand softly in his own; he put eau-de-Cologne upon her poor hot forehead; he fed her himself from a spoon with beef-tea, and milk-food, and essence, and jelly, as he had fed Ivan Royle, a couple of months before, away down at Polperran. No good Samaritan was ever more patient, more watchful, more self-forgetting, or more tender. If Lizbeth had been the heiress-apparent to a throne, instead of a wretched little London street child, he could not have treated her with more profound respect and care and attention. He was all kindness and goodness and professional gentleness—the very embodiment of the ideal doctor.

Could Harry have done all this if he had really and truly—as Ali somehow vaguely suspected—in some way or other shortened the life of Lizbeth's miserable drunken mother.

Ali was inclined at first sight to answer, No. The paradox seemed almost incredible. No man could so completely possess two natures. And yet, was it really two natures after all? What more conceivable than that a person should be tender, sympathetic, lovable, gentle, should loathe cruelty or unnecessary pain, and

yet should be absolutely devoid of any regard for the sanctity of human life as such; should sacrifice it as ruthlessly, when occasion demanded, as he sacrificed the rabbits, and cats, and pigeons he used in his frequent physiological experiments? Such a character was at least possible. To Mohammad Ali, with his varied Indian experience, it was far more than possible—it was a real and familiar type of humanity.

And then, with a sudden and ghastly distinctness, there rose once more, in vivid colours, before his mind's eye, a terrible picture—the picture of Begum Johanna of Deoband, Harry Chichele's ancestress in the fourth degree, lying on her bed with a smile on her lips, above the starving slave-girl's living tomb—and with a flash the riddle seemed easy indeed to solve. The man was a complex of jarring elements. On the one side, the sensitiveness, the delicacy, the refinement, the sympathy of European moral ideas; on the other side, the unscrupulousness, the treachery, the suppressed and concealed but ever-present cruelty of the Hindoo native. Of such strange components, in varying proportions, was Harry Chichele's character ultimately built up. What wonder

he should be as Ali knew him? Under ordinary circumstances, so Ali thought, the Englishman on the whole preponderated; but on certain occasions, when things so willed it, the nature and instincts of Begum Johanna came out strong in him; and the moment of the woman's death, Ali believed, was one of these worse and more awful moments.

He had little time, however, for speculating on his friend's psychology, for the next few days were full and busy ones for both Harry and Ali. Lizbeth, indeed, shortly began to mend, and as she did so, her dog-like love for her wretched drunken mother, the one being she had ever known round whom the tendrils of her poor small heart could timidly twine themselves, seemed all to turn vicariously with sudden energy upon her new protector, Harry Chichele. He had been kind to mother—that was her one great thought; he had taken her in and cared for her at the hospital; he had tried to cure her, though he hadn't succeeded; he had done his best at the end for mother. The child's gratitude was almost painfully fervid. It burnt with a clear and bright light in her very face. Such a misplaced feeling would have smitten a weaker man than Harry

Chichele with profound remorse. But Harry, like the strong sinner that he was, accepted it all with good-humoured amusement as a tribute due to him. She was a poor, miserable, houseless, little stray, he said, laughingly; and as she was good enough to honour him with her friendly confidence, she should never have any cause to regret it. If Bill was unfortunately hanged—which little accident must not happen, if possible, for the woman had died distinctly of the fever, not of the assault—why, then, he would take over Lizbeth himself without consulting her natural guardian, the parish. If, on the other hand, Bill wasn't hanged, which happy consummation we must all strive to our utmost to bring about, why, in that case, doubtless, Bill could be persuaded by a solid solatium in coin of the realm (not exceeding forty shillings) to forego his profound parental feelings, and to make over Lizbeth in perpetuity to the care and guardianship of her present protector. So all would come out right in the end. Nothing could be simpler, easier, or more perfectly satisfactory.

Not that the young doctor proposed to adopt Lizbeth; Harry Chichele had no such quixotic notions in his head as that. He admitted no

sentiment and no responsibility; he didn't think of thus taking her future into his own hands in any way in the light of a restitution or a compensation for the loss of her miserable and cruel mother. Oh, dear no; nothing approaching it. *He* was not goaded or tortured by remorse. The child interested him, that was all; she was thrown in his way by the providence of chance; if he didn't undertake to provide for her somehow, she might starve or die or drift into Heaven knows what nameless and unspeakable evil. And after having once given her the shelter of his roof, it would have revolted all Harry Chichele's finer feelings—for he *had* finer feelings—to let her go again upon the wide and treacherous sea of London. He had put his hand to the plough and he must not look back. His sense of self-respect would alone have prevented it. He would bring up the girl as a servant about the house, and perhaps in time, when she was old enough and wise enough, train her as a nurse under his own eye here at the hospital. She would be well provided for, but only as an act of pure generosity. He owed her nothing, and he would pay her handsomely.

But there were many other things at the

same time to occupy Harry Chichele's more serious attention. First of all, there was the inquest, and then there was the important question of the germs. As the eventualities would have it, of course, an inquest was necessary; and though Harry and the surgeon gave their evidence strongly in favour of death being due to the fever alone, the coroner's jury, exercising its undoubted and cherished British privilege of setting aside cavalierly the opinion of the experts, and much moved by Lizbeth's graphic description of the scene in the attic, which she reproduced with theatrical fidelity, brought in a verdict of wilful murder against William Wilcox, fish merchant, of Little Walpole Street, Marylebone, the husband of the deceased. Little Lizbeth was absolutely in her element in giving evidence, which she gave with a will against her drunken father. "'E come in an' 'e says, 'I'll murder yer,' says 'e," the child deposed with much dramatic force, assuming the very tone and accent of the placidly smiling prisoner. "'I'll do for you,' says 'e. 'You see if I don't; you tarmagan. I'll teach yer to 'urt 'er. You're a beauty, you are. I'll swing for you, Sal,' says 'e, 'I'll smash you; I'll murder you.' An' then 'e up

with the bottle, and bangs it down, like this—so; an' bashes in 'er 'ead with a great blow; and the poor dear, she just lays 'erself back an' done this way; an' the blood come a' spurtin' out of 'er poor cut face; an' 'e stands up, an' 'e smiles, an' 'e smiles, an' 'e sticks 'is 'ands a-smiling in 'is pockets, an' 'e never takes no more notice or nothink. An' there 'e is, just as you sees 'im." No wonder a susceptible British jury, moved by this clear testimony to the prisoner's deliberate determination to kill his wife, should bring in a verdict of wilful murder.

Nevertheless, the verdict somewhat astonished and perturbed Harry Chichele; and Mohammad Ali noticed, with a deepening sense of uncomfortable suspicion against his English friend, that Harry was evidently uneasy in his own mind about it, as if he himself were in some way responsible for the eventuality. "It doesn't much matter, you know," he said apologetically more than once, in an awkward, shuffling way to Ali. "Coroner's juries always do prejudge a case against the suspected person. The cause of death had really nothing to do, as you know and I know, with the man's atrociously brutal violence. In my opinion, he

didn't shorten the miserable creature's life by ten seconds. He's a brute and a ruffian and a vile wretch, of course; but still, for all that, justice is justice, and one doesn't like to see a man hanged in error for a crime for which he isn't in any way responsible. However bad he may happen to be, a miscarriage like that revolts one's ingrained sense of equity. But it doesn't matter: the jury at the trial 'll set all that perfectly right. It'll take a more serious view of its responsibilities than a mere amateurish ineffective body like a coroner's jury."

"The palladium of British liberty is always absurdly emotional," Mohammad Ali answered, watching the effect of his words upon his hearer intently with his usual oriental keenness of observation. "I shouldn't be surprised for my part if they convicted the man, merely on the strength of the girl's evidence. It's a fine sensational scene, as she describes it—the fellow smashing in his sick wife's head with the empty gin bottle—and it loses nothing from that queer little imp's straightforward small mouth and theatrical manner. She'll produce an effect, I'll bet you a quid, upon any jury in all England."

Harry's face grew white and pasty. "Pooh, pooh!" he said. "The trial 'll be a pure formality. Judges are always sensible men. They're not carried away by mere emotion, like coroner's juries. They take care that due importance shall be attached to technical and scientific evidence. Juries always find in these cases according as the judges sum up. The man 'll get off on the capital charge, I don't doubt, though he'll receive what he deserves—six months in prison—for the assault and battery. Even in moments of exuberant spirits, people shouldn't play upon one another's heads with empty gin-bottles. It leads in the end to complications."

Nevertheless, in spite of all his airy protestations, Mohammad Ali could see clearly by the frequency with which he reverted to the subject, that Harry was by no means easy about it in his own mind, and that his conscience pricked him, not indeed for accelerating the woman's death (if, as Ali more and more definitely began to suspect, he had in fact somehow accelerated it), but for helping to let unjust suspicion fall upon that worthless and abject creature, her husband. For it is one thing to assist nature in the interests of science, and quite another

thing to aid injustice in hanging the wrong man by misadventure.

However, being happily for himself a person of varied and many-sided interests, not apt to be wholly preoccupied by such small matters as the ultimate results of his own little action, Harry let the question lie by for the present, and occupied himself for the most part, meanwhile, with his investigation into the ultimate nature of the lodging-house fever germs.

At this congenial task he worked hard with his microscope in all his lesiure hours, developing and observing those precious germs—the germs that had cost that miserable woman Wilcox the tag end of her unhappy and useless existence. He was greatly excited about the result—more excited, Mohammad Ali acutely observed, than even the intrinsic importance of the subject to science and himself could well account for. Mohammad Ali had a certain vague and unfounded suspicion floating through his brain that Harry, in fact, wanted the germs to justify his action—wanted them to yield an adequate result in order that he might not feel to himself he had wasted his crime all for nothing. When you so far depart from conventional morality as

to kill somebody for an experimental purpose, you would at least like your costly experiment to turn out successful, rather than to end in a wretched fiasco. For it was borne in more and more forcibly upon the Indian's mind as each moment went by that Harry Chichele, in some inconceivable but very subtle way, had somehow or other been instrumental in accelerating the woman Wilcox's awful death.

As the investigation drew towards its close, Harry's excitement became almost painfully intense. He sat patiently for hours at a time with his eye at his microscope, never withdrawing it for a single second, and feeding himself through a tube with beef-tea, waiting to see the germs in their new "culture liquid"—the artificial medium in which he had placed them to aid their development—assume that jointed necklace-like condition which was the essential point for the proof of his new theory. If only that one last link in the chain of evidence could be supplied—if only segmentation would take place in the way he expected, the theory would have become a triumphant success, and he, Harry Chichele, would be the greatest discoverer in medical science since the days of Jenner and vaccination.

How small a matter, comparatively, was the death of that bloated drunken being!

He saw it all floating vaguely before his own mind, this vast future that awaited his grasp, this glorious destiny laid up beforehand by fate for himself—and Olwen. Nothing like it, he fancied in his heated imagination, had ever yet been done in modern medicine. Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, Hunter's magnificent anatomical demonstrations, Sydenham's improvements in sanitary regimen—what were they all beside this fundamental question of the utter stamping out of infectious disease—the annihilation of fevers and smallpox and cholera? It was the beginning of a great sanitary millennium. He saw, in his waking vision, a Chichele society founded at Burlington House for the study and development of the new medical principles. He saw a Chichele statue duly adorning the imposing front of its splendid edifice. He saw himself president of the College of Physicians, receiving distinguished visitors in his chair of office. And through the fabric of his day-dream, thus dancing visibly before his heated brain, as he pored for hours together ceaselessly through the microscope, Olwen's graceful little figure

flitted ever like a beautiful phantom, hallowing and consecrating the very crime by which he had made it all possible. He loved her now, profoundly and unspeakably—for had he not dared, for her sake, the utterly unspeakable?

Then, again, as he sat in this heroic mood, waiting and watching, waiting and watching, waiting and watching for the final result, and just supporting himself on beef-tea and brandy, which Ali supplied him, sucked through the tube, at times a terrible wave of reaction would come slowly over him, and he would begin to fear, with a certain awful sinking terror, that the things were never going to segment at all, and that his glorious theory, from which he had hoped and expected so much, for which he had faced such horrible possibilities, was going to turn out in the end a dismal failure, and disappoint him utterly of his legitimate triumph. At such times, his heart failed fearfully within him, and a gnawing horror, that was not remorse, nor yet repentance, but rather a mere wearied and sickening sense of futile criminality, took possession throughout of his nerves and muscles. He could hardly hold the focussing-screws of the microscope aright for trembling; he could hardly distinguish the dim and

shadowy objects that flitted and flickered on the illuminated slide, for failure of vision to follow them properly. The idea that he might have dared and done it all to no purpose was too utterly unmanly. He couldn't bear in his own heart to face it—he could never outlive that shame and horror and humiliation, if, after murdering the woman for science's sake, the things persistently refused to assume the jointed condition.

But, no! he would never even allow the bare possibility of such a misfortune. The theory was true. He knew it. He was sure of it. The wretched little objects *must* segment. They *would* segment. He would make them. He would compel them. He would force them against their will to do it.

Hour after hour went slowly by, and still the germs showed no sign or trace of jointing or dividing. Harry's excitement grew more and more intense with every moment. Mohammad Ali watched him narrowly. He sat with his eye fixed hard on the eye-piece of the instrument, and his hand trembling with nervous agitation upon the screw that alters and varies the focus. Cold perspiration gathered in large round drops on his clammy brow. No scientific

experiment was ever before watched with such profound, such intense, such absorbing interest. At last he looked up curiously at Ali. "It would be horribly disappointing," he said, with some vain attempt at preserving his usual impassive scientific coolness, "if these beastly things were never to group or segment at all. One wouldn't like to think even that wretched woman's life was just simply fooled away, as it were, all for a stupid, unsuccessful experiment!"

"One would not," Mohammad Ali answered, drily. Harry started. Their eyes met for a single second. Mohammad Ali's were full of meaning. Then Harry withdrew his own uneasily, with a sudden movement, and applied them once more, weary with watching, to that fatiguing and disappointing eye-piece. He had said too much. He had spoken out his thoughts with too frank suggestiveness.

The field of the microscope grew giddy before his vacant gaze. He could hardly distinguish the tiny objects that swam so aimlessly and vaguely about in it. They were swimming in such enormous numbers now—thousands and thousands of them joined together, in a sort of long jointed beady necklace pattern. So profound was his agitation, and so eager his desire

to attain the wished-for result, that he looked at them long with vague speculation in his wearied pupils before it even began to dawn upon his dulled and numbed intelligence that this was really the very sight for which he had been so long and so ardently looking. They were segmenting! Yes, they were segmenting! Great chains and strings and criss-cross rows of them, in endless array, filling up the entire field of vision! A sudden thrill ran through and through him. It was too good to be true; too glorious, too magnificent! The theory was proved! The germs were jointed!

He dared not believe or trust his own eyes. He dared not think they saw aright. Everything swam before them so terribly now. Perhaps it was only an optical illusion. Perhaps it was fancy, hallucination, insanity. How could he be calm at so supreme a crisis of his life as this? Fame, reputation, Olwen's happiness, all trembled together visibly in the balance for a moment. He could not confide in his own observation for very terror. He could not hope it was really true. He called Mohammad Ali to help him look. "For Heaven's sake, come and see them, Ali," he cried. "Am I mad, or are they really jointed?"

The Indian put his eye somewhat sceptically to the eye-piece. "Yes," he answered at last, after a long gaze, with slow deliberation. "The theory is true. There can be no doubt at all in the world about it. The germs are lengthening out one by one into long jointed worm-like strings. I can see them rapidly and distinctly segmenting before my own eyes this very moment."

Harry sank back exhausted in a chair. "Brandy! brandy!" he murmured faintly. Thank goodness, thank goodness, it was not all in vain! Then his crime had not been committed for a pure chimera. Science was saved—and Olwen should yet be Lady Chichele.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FEW weeks only elapsed before the advent of that "pure formality," William Wilcox's trial for the wilful murder of his wife Sarah. Time flies when one's going to be hanged or married. Harry Chichele spent the brief interval in preparing his paper for the Royal Society, and working up in detail his great discovery, now almost secure of a triumphant recognition.

He worked it up with all his fiery energy, and in a perfect exaltation of exaggerated enthusiasm. The strange events of the last few weeks had combined to throw him into a vigorous access of feverish excitement. The theory possessed him heart and soul now; he could think and talk and write of nothing else, even in his daily letters to Olwen. It was to him the one great fact of the age, the panacea for all the various ills of humanity, the vastest revolution ever yet effected in the whole course

of medical science. He wrote about it in his paper with contagious zeal; he was drunk with the imaginary grandeur and magnificence of his own conception. It would give a death-blow, he felt, to zymotic disease, that most awful scourge of our modern civilization; it would bring health and happiness to the vilest purlieus of our crowded towns, and rid the world at once of all the ghastliest terrors still known to suffering human nature. How glad he felt now that he had not shrunk, like an able general that he was, from sacrificing that single miserable useless life in order to fight and win so great a victory. How pleased he was that he had not allowed that one wretched bloated drunken creature to stand in the way of the whole world and of Olwen's happiness. Olwen's happiness! Olwen's happiness! Yes, yes; for himself he did not greatly care; but he was jealous indeed of Olwen's happiness.

So the weeks rolled quickly and easily by till the evening before William Wilcox's trial. On that very evening he had arranged to read his paper to a crowded meeting of the Royal Society. He knew it would be crowded, for his name was already well known in scientific London, and the fact that he had made some

new observations of prime importance on the germs of cholera and other epidemic diseases had already leaked out into medical society. Besides, he had woken up and found himself famous after the episode of the *Seamew*. All the world had been talking about the wonderful voyage of the cholera-ship; and he and Mohammad Ali had returned to London to discover themselves the heroes of a historical adventure. Everybody, indeed, who was anybody in the scientific world was there that night to hear him propound his great theory. He went down to Burlington House enthusiastic, well primed, and fully prepared; he took with him his slides and his germs and his liquids and his diagrams; and he did himself, as he always did, ample justice, both in the manner and the matter of his weighty contribution. Everybody listened in attentive silence. It was an able paper, ably delivered. At the end, the men of many letters, F.R.S. and D.C.L. and Ph.D., and all the rest of them, crowded forward eagerly to see the slides he had brought down in illustration of his novel theory. There was a general buzz and hum of discussion around the microscopes. The whole world of science looked and talked and reflected and debated. A moment of

terrible suspense intervened for Harry Chichele. Then the greatest physiological authority there present, Sir Roderic Brinton, bending his brows to their severest arch, and pursing his lips up with critical dignity, said abruptly to the trembling young man, "I shouldn't like to commit myself too far at this early stage, Dr. Chichele, but there seems to me to be a great deal in it."

At that, the storm of assent began in earnest. The world had got its cue, and, as usual, acted at once blindly upon it. Here and there, to be sure, a doubter or a scoffer held aloof conspicuously in sceptical hesitation, or assumed the favourite scientific attitude of suspended judgment through a pair of neatly-balanced and critical eye-glasses. But, on the whole, the sense of the society was evidently in favour of Harry Chichele. Germs are catching; and as one man after another crowded up with sympathetic smile, and told him in varied language what a big thing this really was, or how important he considered the final result of these beautiful and accurate investigations of years, Harry grew fairly intoxicated with delight at last, and longed to retire, sated and wearied, from this increasing tide of polite congratulation. The room whirled and twirled around

him. It was late, however, before he could get away from the infinite hand-shakings at Burlington House; and then Mohammad Ali bundled him somehow into a cab, and drove him off, inebriated with the subtle fumes of success, from the giddy scene of his earliest great scientific triumph.

When he reached home, he sat down the first thing, drunk with love and flattery, and wrote one line only in pencil to Olwen. "My darling,—The meeting has gone off well. The germs have triumphed. The theory turns out a complete success. Even Sir Roderic gives in his adhesion, and everybody declares it a marvellous discovery.—Yours ever, H. C."

Then he went to bed and lay awake the whole night through, tossing and turning, and thinking to himself of the remote results of his glorious theory. It was indeed a splendid and entrancing prospect. The world would now be freed from its worst terrors, and Olwen should ride in her own carriage.

Next day the inevitable reaction set in. It was the morning of William Wilcox's trial. Harry rose fatigued from his sleepless couch, dressed himself slowly with evident carelessness, and lounged round late in a morning coat to

the Central Criminal Court to answer to his subpoena.

The trial was already in full swing. A fat little judge, with face half buried in his ample wig, filled the bench. Twelve good men and true, of undoubted respectability, but to guess by their looks of most dubitable intelligence, occupied the place usually assigned to the peers of the prisoner, empanelled by law and the sheriff's caprice to judge of the culprit's guilt or innocence. In the dock stood the amiable periwinkle merchant himself, jaunty, cold-blooded, and unconcerned as usual, but looking as obvious and as predestined a murderer as ever stood for his posthumous portrait to the ingenious artists employed by Madame Tussaud. His bearing alone would have been enough to hang him. Any impartial person of sound judgment, summoned to consider his verdict offhand, without waiting for the absurd formality of hearing the evidence, would unhesitatingly have brought him in guilty on the strength of his features and his hob-nailed boots. Thick-set, low-browed, ill-clad, ill-shaven, with his usual good-natured and brutal jollity, the fellow stood there confronting the twelve good men and true like a cheap stoic

who considers his condemnation a foregone conclusion, and has made up his mind beforehand to die game and not to blubber about nothing, like a woman. In his own heart, in fact, William Wilcox, fish merchant, of Little Walpole Street, Marylebone, thought himself guilty. How, indeed, could he think otherwise? He knew he had smashed the gin-bottle across his wife's head, he knew he had made her face and neck bleed profusely, he knew she had died (presumably of the wounds) next day in the hospital; and not being by nature given to casuistry or skilled in nice medical inquiries as to the cause of death, he had very little doubt in his own simple and vulgar mind that, as he himself would have delicately phrased it, he must have "done for Sal" that night with the gin-bottle. So he stood there callous, self-condemned already, humming a brutal comic song inaudibly to himself, and waiting in patience with grotesque unconcern for the due development of the verdict and sentence.

Little Lizbeth, now decently clothed and in her right mind, was the first witness called for the Crown; and the Crown, as Harry Chichele saw to his immense relief, was evidently very lukewarm in the prosecution. That impersonal

entity, in fact, had made its mind up from its previous inquiries that Bill had not really murdered his wife ; and it was therefore prosecuting him chiefly for form's sake, to carry out the finding of the coroner's jury. But it didn't believe one bit in its own case, and it put forward its witnesses with the perfunctory formalism of an unwilling advocate. Little Lizbeth, however, soon showed that she for her part by no means coincided in the Crown's lenient view of the matter. The child was clear, emphatic, and damnatory. Judge and jury saw at once from her excited manner that Lizbeth by no means loved her father, and that she regarded him chiefly as the wicked person who had brought about her mother's death. She was not vindictive, but she was righteously indignant ; and at sight of Bill, standing there in the dock, doggedly and brutally jolly as ever, her indignation burned up bright into white heat of angry accusation. At first she could hardly be got to answer counsel's questions coherently, so firm-set was she in her one vigorous and distinct but too generalized opinion that "it was 'im as did it." After a while, however, the Crown lawyers brought her by gentle and dexterous pressure to a more

tractable frame of mind, and she told her story then, though evidently much embarrassed by the constant interruption of question and answer, with remarkable coherence, straightforwardness, and animus. So far as Bill's safety was concerned, the last point weighed at least as much against him as either of the others; for nothing would have impressed the jury more than this evident belief in the prisoner's guilt on the part of his own orphaned and ill-treated daughter.

As Lizbeth passed successfully through the dangerous ordeal of cross-examination, Harry Chichele's heart began once more to sink within him. Suppose, after all, they were to bring the man in guilty! The girl's vehemence and persistency and certainty were producing a marked effect upon the minds of the jury. Most people don't care a straw for the matter of evidence; they are far more forcibly and profoundly impressed by its manner. If you tell them anything with an air of perfect confidence and knowledge, they believe you at once—especially if already inclined in the same direction. And Bill's demeanour in the dock undoubtedly did incline the twelve good men and true against him. He preserved

throughout an unflinching attitude of careless and defiant good-humoured indifference. Juries don't approve of indifference; it implies a slight upon the profound importance of their own high constitutional functions. If you wish to conciliate a jury, be humble; treat them as if you knew they could hang you. Humility flatters them; defiance annoys them.

He laughed once, laughed loudly. That was when Lizbeth described in her graphic way how, after the incident of the bottle, he stood, drunk, in their miserable attic, "with 'is 'ands in 'is pockets, same as 'e's standing now, my lord," and sang aloud in his rollicking voice, "Take a pin; stick 'im in; turn 'im round; pull 'im out; penny-wink, penny-wink, penny-wink, oh!" before the very face of the dying woman. That one callous inhuman laugh shocked the jury inexpressibly. It exhibited as nothing else could have done the utter native brutality of the man's nature.

After Lizbeth and the policemen had been duly examined, Harry Chichele was put into the box by the defendant's counsel. As his name was given, the fat little judge's round face lighted up agreeably with a pleasant smile of instantaneous recognition. The *Times*, in

fact, had had a laudatory leader on Harry's great discovery in that morning's issue, with a full account of last night's meeting at the Royal Society. Judges are even (if possible) a shade more omniscient than most other people; and the judge observed, leaning forward towards Harry, with an appreciative smile on his broad features, that he supposed they might take it for granted Dr. Chichele was the celebrated expert in zymotic diseases, of whose ideas so much had been written of late. Harry modestly admitted the charge of having engaged in some recent researches on that difficult question. The judge smiled again, a sphinx-like smile, and looked wisely at the jury, as who should introduce to them in mute pantomime an able and distinguished man of science. The jury pricked up their ears and endeavoured to assume an intelligent and attentive expression of countenance, as befits twelve respectable British householders, who are about to hear, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the technical evidence of a scientific witness.

As long as the examination in chief continued, Harry Chichele got on swimmingly enough. To be sure, he asserted a little too vehemently his belief that the wounds on the

face had nothing at all to do with the cause of death, and that the woman would have died all the same anyhow, whether Bill had hit her with the bottle or not; for the jury, which admired vehemence in little Lizbeth, naturally disliked it in Harry Chichele, as savouring too much of scientific arrogance. Juries never do like the man of science to be too cocksure about anything. Who is he, forsooth, that he should set himself up as knowing so much more on a plain question of ordinary fact than all the rest of his even Christians? Juries are jealous of the privileges of common sense. They represent the wisdom of the many, and they refuse to believe that scientific men are quite as wise or quite as infallible as they themselves pretend to be. Because a man has invented a theory of germs, largely talked about in the papers this morning, does that give him a right, we should like to know, to thrust his own ideas and opinions wholesale down the unwilling throats of twelve impartial and intelligent British tradesmen? By no means: let us all stand up in unison manfully for the right of private judgment against this preposterous dogma of scientific infallibility.

But when it came to cross-examination,

counsel for the Crown, a well-known scientific Q.C., now warming up to his work with professional interest, and seeing a chance for the favourite forensic amusement of heckling and badgering a technical witness, began with a perfect torrent of questions as to Harry Chichele's peculiar medical ideas and theories?

Was he a specialist in zymotic diseases?

Harry immediately admitted, with a smile, that he was.

Was he an enthusiast as to their effect and universality?

Well, yes, in a sense, he must candidly allow that he thought much of their power and importance.

Had he recently conducted a series of experiments upon germs derived from this very case?

He had.

Was it essential to the proof of his *so-called* theory—with a prodigious force of sarcasm thrown into the stress laid on the word “so-called”—that the woman Wilcox should be held to have died in the last stage of collapse in lodging-house fever?

Undoubtedly it was.

Had Harry stated that conviction of his own

as an ascertained fact last night at a meeting of the Royal Society? (Where, indeed, the distinguished Q.C. had with his own ears heard him so state it).

He had (somewhat nervously).

The distinguished Q.C. smiled a profoundly meaning smile, and glanced, with immeasurable import in his look, at the jury. The jury, puzzled, but dimly conscious of what was expected from them, smiled back responsive, with an assumed air of the most penetrating wisdom. The judge shut his small fat eyes and ruminated inwardly. Bill, who had woke up with a start for a while at the first part of Harry's evidence into a passing show of interest in the case, derived from a sudden gleam of conviction that the doctor cove was going, by some miracle or other, to help him out of this 'ere blooming predicament, now relapsed once more, with sullen good humour, into his primitive indifference, and gave up the case as wholly unworthy his exalted consideration.

The more the Q.C. plied Harry with questions, all tending to show that he was prejudiced in favour of a belief in death from zymotic diseases, and against the guilt of the woman's husband, the more vehement and

earnest did Harry become, and the more profoundly and unreservedly did the jury distrust him. To call a man a theorist, to say he has theories, is to raise at once all the dearest suspicions of practical men. The Q.C. had carried his point—the professional desire to gain a conviction had hurried him on—he had made the scientific witness hot and eager now; and the hotter a scientific witness becomes, the less importance do twelve cool-headed British jurymen ever attach to his anxious evidence. To say the truth, Harry was getting at last into a perfect agony of fear and remorse for the fate of that wretched callous vendor of periwinkles. He knew in his own heart—knew beyond the shadow or possibility of a doubt, that with reasonable care (bar accidents and ice-bags) the woman's life might have been indefinitely prolonged. He knew that the wounds had absolutely nothing on earth to do with her death. He knew that the man Wilcox, blackguard and bully and brute as he was, though he meant to kill his wife with the gin-bottle, was yet entirely free, in a technical sense, at least, of the crime of murder. He knew, though he hardly admitted so much even to himself—for murder is a word of such ugly sound that no man

can ever willingly apply it to his own actions—that if anybody at all ought to stand in the dock for that woman's death, it was not the prisoner, William Wilcox, but himself, the famous physiologist, Harry Chichele. He knew all this, and it drove him wild to see that, in spite of it all, the jury were going to hang the wrong man, no matter what science, with its absolute certainty, might say or do in the vain effort to save him. Now, Harry would willingly sacrifice the woman Wilcox, in a medical way, and for a scientific purpose; but the idea of such a gross miscarriage of justice as this revolted and horrified him through the profoundest abysses of his inmost nature.

Great heavens! could they really mean to hang him?

By-and-by his excitement began to grow positively intense. The events of the last few days had all worked him up to a high pitch of overwrought emotion, and now the strain of this final unexpected result was rapidly wearing out the very soul within him. His earnestness became painfully apparent at last to judge and jury and observant counsel. Bill himself, lolling there in the dock, and watching the witness closely with his fishy eye, began to

wonder in his own dull, stupid heart what possible interest this queer doctor cove could have in saving him, to make his voice quiver like that, and the cold sweat gather in great clammy drops, as it was doing now, upon his beaded forehead. Only Mohammad Ali, standing by observant in the body of the court, could guess the hidden reason of Harry Chichele's inward horror, and Mohammad Ali silently noted it down on his mental tablets as one more link of moral weight in that strange chain of damnatory evidence which he was slowly forging in his own mind against his old friend and college companion.

At last, in answer to one of the Q.C.'s final probing questions, Harry Chichele cried out with petulant eagerness, "The man is wholly innocent of this charge. To hang him for it would be nothing short of a judicial murder!"

The judge opened his closed eyes sharply. The jury whispered and nudged one another. The eminent Q.C., putting his head a little on one side, with a calm, cool, malicious smile, observed in a sarcastic voice to the witness, "You may stand down now, thank you. After that very rhetorical expression of your private opinion, there's nothing more I have to ask you."

Harry Chichele stood down, flushed and indignant. Counsel for the defence, observing his condition, thought it wisest, in the prisoner's interest, not to re-examine. Indeed, the young doctor was terribly perturbed in his soul. He knew he had managed his evidence badly. He knew he had made a mess of the business. He knew he had done more harm than good. He knew he had succeeded in prejudicing the jury against the prisoner's case. He felt his face grow hot and fiery, while those big beads still stood cold and chill on his forehead. He would have given anything to leave the court that moment, but some inexorable attraction compelled him to wait and hear the verdict. He could not tear himself away without it. Cost what it might, he must see this thing out to the bitter end. He must know whether justice was going to make him, in spite of himself, into a double murderer.

For Harry Chichele was not by any means without a conscience. His conscience, indeed, had been built on very unusual lines, and refused to follow the stereotyped pattern. But where it spoke out to him at all, it spoke in clear and unmistakable accents, which he could not choose but hear, be he ever so unwilling.

And now he stood face to face with that inner accuser in the awful consciousness that, unless he had succeeded in persuading the jury as to the cause of death being an accident arising out of lodging-house fever, they would convict the man Wilcox of the murder which he himself, if anybody, had committed.

But as he listened to Mohammad Ali and the house-surgeon giving their evidence with far more coolness and deliberation than he had done, his hopes began to revive once more, and the terror of that awful possibility of the verdict to be raised for awhile from his agonized conscience. For the two other medical witnesses, having no special case of conscience to guard them, could bear their testimony far more quietly and soberly in every way, and as they had also no special theory to support, it was less easy for the hostile counsel to make light of their important evidence. They both agreed with Harry that the wounds had nothing at all to do with the woman's collapse, and that the real cause of death was most undoubtedly chill and fever. The jury nodded sagaciously among themselves, and Bill once more assumed afresh some languid interest in this indifferent amusement.

When all was said and done, the rotund little judge summed-up, with luminous impartiality of the familiar stereotyped non-committing character. It was not denied (with fat right-hand forefinger solemnly uplifted) that severe wounds had been inflicted by the prisoner upon the deceased with a broken gin-bottle. It was not denied (with abrupt change to the left forefinger) that deceased at the time of this murderous assault was already lying in a precarious condition from natural causes, with lodging-house fever. The evidence of the child (recapitulated at full with demonstrative quill) went far to show that the prisoner had been animated by homicidal intent, and had deliberately designed to kill his wife with his singular but extremely effective weapon. The only real question for their consideration was, had he or had he not succeeded in carrying his design into execution? If they thought the wounds had accelerated death, then, and in that case, they must, of course, bring in a verdict of guilty. But if they believed the medical evidence, and if they thought death would have occurred when it did occur under any circumstances, then they must naturally find a verdict in accordance with that more lenient and merciful opinion. Of the

medical witnesses, Dr. Chichele was a physician of immense and undoubted scientific attainments; it would be for the jury to decide (with a knowing smile from the fat small eyes) how far he might have been influenced in his views on this case by his well-known and almost sentimental attachment to the zymotic diseases. The zymotic diseases, in fact, were at one and the same time his forte and his foible. Dr. Mohammad Ali, again, was a medical gentleman from Hindoostan, who had taken the oath after the fashion of his faith, on a copy of his sacred book, the Koran, and who had given his evidence, the judge must say, with great care, straightforwardness, and fidelity. It would be for the jury, however, to decide how far he might have been influenced in his ideas on the subject by his close connection with his distinguished European colleague, Dr. Chichele. The same remark would, of course, apply, *mutatis mutandis* (at which the jury looked particularly clever), to the other medical witness, Mr. Macpherson, the house-surgeon of the hospital. Judicial wisdom, adjusting its wig, left the matter wholly to the discretion of the jury, trusting that, on the one hand, they would not attribute excessive importance to the antipathies of a

child of tender years and small experience, nor, on the other hand, attach undue weight to the emotional utterances of an amiable and accomplished professional gentleman, whose task it was to preserve life under all circumstances, and who, perhaps, might be tempted by pure goodness of heart to carry too far that natural bias into a peculiar sphere of thought and action in which it was no longer justly applicable.

Primed and enlightened by this lucid statement, the jury retired to consider their verdict; and Harry Chichele, with parched lips and haggard eyes, broken down by the reaction after last night's unnatural triumph and exaltation, was left alone for twenty minutes in that crowded court with his own conscience.

Two men stood there together, indeed, both equally on their trial, though not both in the same manner. The prisoner at the bar stood cool and careless, his hands in his pockets, unmoved as ever. But Harry Chichele, the true culprit, leaned for support faintly against the rail of the dock, and awaited with feverish and breathless anxiety the return of the jury. His face was pale and white as death. A terrible fixed expression sat upon his features. His

eyes turned eagerly towards the door of the jury-room. An awful moment of doubt tormented him. He knew whose case was most truly in jeopardy. He could never let that unhappy man be hanged in his own place. It was for his own verdict that he was really waiting. His own verdict—his own, and Olwen's.

For if the jury brought it in guilty, it would be all up with himself and with Olwen.

CHAPTER XV.

FOR twenty minutes the suspense was terrible. Harry waited there, worn and pale, haggard with sleeplessness, hearing his own heart beat each moment in his breast meanwhile, and drawing his breath deep and irregularly. What an eternity it seemed, that long, slow interval, while the twelve good men and true in their own room sat debating the case at their leisure by themselves, and deciding with thorough-going British stolidity upon their verdict of life and death for William Wilcox and for Harry Chichele. He hardly dared to glance around him even, so awfully did the horrible chances of mishap weigh upon his soul. He kept his eyes firmly fixed the whole time upon the prisoner at the bar, who had so much less to lose by the verdict than he, and could lose it all ten thousand times more carelessly. If only Harry could have thought him guilty! If only

he could have believed it was the wounds that killed her! But he knew him to be innocent—he knew him to be innocent; and to let an innocent man suffer at the hands of offended justice in his own place would indeed have revolted the inmost and most sacred feelings of his nature.

It is hard to have such a character as his; hard to be able to sin so boldly, and yet to pay for it like the veriest tyro.

What would he do if the jury brought in a verdict of guilty? He did not know. He could not determine. How, or where, or when to confess the truth, and to save that brutal ruffian from amply-merited—yet unjust—punishment, he could not decide; but save him he must, and at all hazards. Strong as he was, he was not hardened. It would be terrible for Olwen! Death for Olwen! But justice must be done, though the heavens fall in upon us. Come what might, he must secure plain justice for the man Wilcox.

At last the jury filed slowly back into their accustomed place. A hushed stillness fell upon the court. Harry Chichele, pale as death, leaned eagerly forward on the rail to listen. Even Bill himself, though impassive still, and desirous as ever to preserve his wonted

equanimity, yet showed signs of a certain suppressed internal anxiety to hear their decision. A heightened colour flushed his florid cheek, and the corners of his heavy square-set mouth were twitching nervously.

“Gentlemen of the jury, are you all agreed upon your verdict?”

“We are.”

“Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty of wilful murder?”

Dead silence prevailed through the room as the foreman answered in slow and measured tones—

“We find him guilty.”

At the words, an awful horror darkened for the moment Harry Chichele's eyes. He clutched the rail to keep himself from falling. The room reeled and swam around him. His heart was beating violently now, and his breath came and went in short sharp snaps, with feverish rapidity. He hardly heard the rest of the proceedings. It was as in a dream, vaguely, that he thought he saw the judge, with solemn formality, assume the black cap, and pass sentence of death upon William Wilcox for the murder that he himself had really committed.

Things had indeed come to a terrible pass.

When Harry Chichele accelerated the departure of that miserable creature in the cot at the hospital, he had never dreamt of such an end as this. He had taken it for granted that the clear and certain medical evidence which he and his colleagues could produce in court would exonerate her husband from all possibility of blame in the matter. He had imagined that a jury would accept his statement of the cause of death as absolutely infallible. And now—he opened his eyes in terror. A ghastly phantasmagoria floated before his face. Solemn sounds echoed dimly in his ringing ears. It was the judge's voice passing sentence. "And there hanged by the neck till dead," it said with grave emphasis. "And may the Lord have mercy upon your soul!"

May the Lord have mercy upon your soul! May the Lord have mercy upon your soul! Whose soul? That creature Bill's? No, no, his own; Harry Chichele's. For it was Harry Chichele's condemnation that he heard echoing through that phantom court; the judge was really passing sentence, he felt, not upon Bill, not upon Bill, that miserable ruffian, but upon him, upon him—upon the real culprit, Harry Chichele!

A buzz and bustle possessed the room. The prisoner was led down doggedly from the dock. The crowd melted away piecemeal, its excitement over, from the body of the court. A fresh prisoner was brought up to the bar. New witnesses crowded into their place by the door. Counsel and judge, beginning over again, assumed fresh attitudes for their altered parts. Another drama was being enacted now on the scene of that ever-changing theatre. But Harry Chichele stood there still, incapable of movement, thought, or action; and Mohammad Ali stood beside him, with his hand set hard upon his trembling arm, half pitying the man in his alarm and terror. For a while he seemed as if rivetted to the spot. At last Ali led him gently away, hurried him once more into a hansom at the kerb, and drove him back, silent and moody, to the Regent's Park Hospital.

How all the world had utterly changed its face since yesterday! Then he saw it opening up so bright, and fair, and glorious before him, and Olwen's future secured for ever. He saw everything coloured with a roseate light, and everybody eager to praise and honour him. To-day, a black abyss of despair yawned dark before his terrified eyes instead, and he knew

not where to turn for comfort. He could not confess. He dared not confess. For Olwen's sake, he must keep all quiet. He dared not brand himself a murderer before her eyes. Yet, on the other hand, he could not let that wretched man be hanged in his place. Conscience rose up in revolt at the idea. Come what might, he must save him somehow. He must save him. He must save him. But how, he knew not. It was too, too terrible. He dared not face it.

In his rooms, little Lizbeth met him, jubilant. "Well, they're a-goin' for to 'ang 'im," she said, triumphantly. "I'm just glad as they're a-goin' for to 'ang 'im. Some of 'em say the Queen'll pardon 'im, becoz o' the medical evidence bein' for 'im. But I 'ope she won't. She's got no call to. They'd ought to 'ang 'im for murderin' mother!"

The child's exclamation brought a gleam of hope to Harry's bewildered mind. He had been too pre-occupied even to think of that obvious loophole. A pardon! A pardon! The Home Secretary was no British juryman. He, at least, was an educated gentleman; a person of responsibility; a man of sense and experience and judgment. He would recognize

at once it was a foolish miscarriage. He would listen to the voice of medical science. He would hear what those who knew had to say upon the subject. He would prevent this gross perversion of justice.

Burning with eagerness, he turned to consult Mohammad Ali. "We must see the Home Secretary this very day," he cried. "The man must not be hanged. It's wicked. It's incredible."

"'E smashed 'er 'ead in," Lizbeth put in manfully, "'an 'e said 'e'd do for her. 'E meant for to kill 'er, and they'd ought to 'ang him for it. That's wot the laws is for, ain't it?"

"No zeal, my dear fellow," Mohammad Ali answered, endeavouring to restrain him. "You lost the case in court by too much zeal. Don't lose it out of court by the same indiscretion."

But Harry was not to be restrained now. His whole life concentrated itself at once on that one point, with the usual fiery concentration of his nature when once aroused. He lived only for the moment for that single purpose, to get that atrocious verdict set aside, and to secure a free pardon for William Wilcox.

For the next week, indeed, he lived for nothing else. Of course, he was met at every

turn by red tape in endless profusion ; but when Harry Chichele once took a thing fairly into his head red tape was not a strong enough material to prevent him from carrying his design into execution. One morning shortly after, as he walked with fiery earnestness down Whitehall, he met Ivan Royle, now a different man, strolling up from Westminster to Pall Mall. Ivan, just back in town, was struck at once with the change in his appearance. "Why, my dear fellow," he cried, "who has painted you all out, and put you in again several tones lower?"

Harry explained with eager heat the nature of the situation—suppressing, of course, the unessential detail of the ice-bag.

His evident sincerity impressed Ivan most favourably as to his humane sentiments. "The black man was wrong," the painter thought to himself, with generous appreciation of his rival's merits. "Chichele's a kind-hearted man at bottom. What an enthusiasm of humanity he's flung himself into all about this common backslum ruffian, who, on his own showing, when one comes to think of it, richly deserves to be hung in any case, for having done the very best he knew to murder the woman. Very few good

men, even, would take so much trouble or interest themselves so deeply about such a worthless good-for-nothing fellow."

And therein, indeed, he thought truly; for only the goad of an accusing conscience could so have driven Harry Chichele on, in his eager endeavour to save the periwinkle man from that high station in life which he was naturally predestined to adorn—the gallows. A philanthropist, believing the man unjustly condemned on the particular charge, would, no doubt, have done his best to obtain by ordinary means a free pardon for the miserable creature; but only Harry Chichele could have thrown into the task the fiery eagerness of a criminal who sees another about to be punished for the very crime of which he knows himself to be really guilty.

In his profound anxiety to see substantial justice done to the poor periwinkle man, he took no notice even of the fate of his own germ theory. The scientific papers were now each day hotly debating every inch of the subject; the scientific societies were eagerly discussing the pros and cons of "the Chichele hypothesis," as people began familiarly to call it; the French Academy of Sciences had devoted the whole of a single sitting to a battle royal over his great

discovery. But the author of the famous theory himself had flung it to the winds. He had forgotten it all in his one eager burning desire to save the periwinkle man from an unjust punishment.

At last, by almost superhuman efforts, he broke through the endless barriers of red tape that block up the doors and gateways of Whitehall and Downing Street, and obtained a personal interview from the Home Secretary for himself, the house surgeon, and Mohammad Ali.

That was a real step in advance. The medical evidence was too unanimous for even a Home Secretary to disregard. Home Secretaries, it is true, will venture on much; they will sell their souls for ten minutes' peace, but they will not hang an innocent man for the murder of a person whom three several medical authorities declare positively to their certain knowledge to have died from purely natural causes. When Harry Chichele emerged into Whitehall once more that morning it was with a positive promise from the elusive and evasive right honourable gentleman that her Majesty would be graciously pleased to pardon William Wilcox for the crime which, in fact, he had never committed. That is the utmost to which British justice can ever nerve

itself. So firm and inflexible and infallible is it, that when once it has found a man guilty, right or wrong, the angel Gabriel himself could never prevail to have the prisoner declared really innocent. British justice can never reverse a sentence; it can only grant a free pardon. It saves its consistency at the expense of its victim.

Armed with even that insufficient assurance, however, Harry Chichele stepped forth into Whitehall another being. He felt a free man now. A terrible burden had been lifted from his shoulders. Olwen was saved, and he himself need never confess that—well, that unfortunate little indiscretion of the ice-bag.

Once more the reaction was sudden and violent. Harry Chichele's gaiety became, in fact, ludicrously extreme. Mohammad Ali noticed it with profound suspicion. Why should the man have thrown himself so fervidly into this work of mercy? Why should he have embraced it with such fiery eagerness? Why should he exhibit the recoil and relief of his strained feelings with such boyish exuberance of delight and freedom? It looked all the same way. Surely there was the sense of personal danger and personal escape expressed in his violent and overwrought emotion.

When they reached home, Harry flung himself down in his easy-chair, laughed and talked with almost hysterical hilarity, and astonished Ivan Royle, who had dropped in to see his Polperran friends, by the unwonted boisterousness of his conversation. The cloud was fairly lifted from his life now, and he and Olwen might be happy together. After all, he almost wondered he had been such a fool as to take things to heart so seriously as he had done. He might have known the Home Secretary, at least, would listen to reason. These politicians are sensible men—men of the world—not mere pettifogging pedants like the English judges. Everything was going so well, now, that he could hardly understand his own terrors and alarms yesterday. The case was finished; the man was pardoned. His theory was proved. The Royal Society had virtually accepted it and stamped his doctrine with the seal of their approval. He would be rich and famous and honoured still; and before long he would doubtless be able to marry Olwen.

The intoxication of success had come over him once more. The little episode of the ice-bag was already dismissed with sublime indifference from his brain and his conscience.

For, after all, it was all right now. No harm had been done—or none worth speaking of; and endless good had accrued in the end to humanity at large, and to himself and Olwen. To be sure this awkward little hitch had intervened, as hitches will sometimes unexpectedly intervene in all human designs and operations. “The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang oft agley,” as the poet has told us. But that was an accident—a passing accident; the solid good remained untouched behind it. A glorious means of averting epidemic disease had now been found; and he and Olwen might be all the happier for it.

No possibility of detection, at least, existed. That question caused him not one moment's anxiety, then or ever. No human eye had seen him pound the ice or sew the bag up. No soul on earth could ever bring his hidden crime to the light of day again. Not that he thought of it even as a crime to himself; now that all the possible evil results had been happily averted, he gloried in it rather as an eminently successful and able exhibition of practical ingenuity. It was a medical experiment; that was all. He had procured the means of proving his case without ultimate harm to anybody anywhere—except the woman. And even she, after all,

was better dead and buried quietly than bullying poor harmless, helpless little Lizbeth in the rooms at Marylebone.

Still, he admitted grudgingly to himself at times that these extreme necessities are apt to involve awkward consequences. Bill's trial, for example, had been undoubtedly awkward, and had cost him much in expenditure of energy and in mental tension. You don't pass through a crisis like this for nothing; it leaves its mark pressed deep and hard upon your constitution for ever. Well, well, the result, at any rate, was well worth the trouble. It is something to discover a new theory of germs, and to make a name for one's self and for Olwen.

"And yet," he said aloud at last, after a long pause, to Ivan Royle, "this business has given me a lesson, anyhow. I shall steer clear in future of all these murder cases. They're too much anxiety for a professional man. They involve such a lot of trouble and bother."

"But how can you steer clear of them?" Mohammad Ali interposed with a puzzled air. "You couldn't possibly have avoided this one, for instance. It was thrust upon you, without your seeking. You didn't know it would end in a trial."

“True,” Harry answered, a little uneasily. He was far too candid in speaking out his thoughts. It was so hard to bear in mind always how others looked at this little matter. He must be more guarded in his language in future, or that sharp fellow, Ali, with his Indian acuteness, would begin to suspect him of knowing more than he said about it.

There was one comfort, however; let Ali prick up his ears and pick up his hints as much as he liked, he could never have more than the merest and vaguest suspicion in the matter. The crime itself—he supposed conventional people would call it a crime in their absurd way—was absolutely trackless. The ice was melted. He had unstitched the waterproof bags ages ago, and not a particle of evidence anywhere remained to bring the facts of the case home to him. He had managed it cleverly; very cleverly. When a bungler tries this sort of thing, you know, he makes a miserable mess of it, of course; but with the cool, collected brain and hands of the man of science, success in a physiological and personal experiment of this sort becomes almost an absolute certainty.

He was quite proud of the result now. He

had never, in his whole professional course, managed a difficult and doubtful case more cleverly and successfully.

As he sat in his rooms a little later with Ivan Royle and Ali, by that evening's post a letter arrived for him, "On Her Majesty's Service." Letters on her Majesty's service were uncommon events with Harry Chichele; and after the manifold changes and turns of circumstances, with their varying emotions, in the last few weeks, this one caused him no little momentary anxiety. He looked at it cautiously front and back, before he dared to break the big red official seal, or to open and read what it had to say to him. Could that perfidious Home Secretary have played him false after all, and violated his doubly-pledged right honourable word in the matter of the pardon? Could he mean to hang the man Bill? Was this whole sickening and ghastly episode to be lived right over again from the very beginning? Harry Chichele turned deadly pale at the bare idea, and his delicate fingers trembled visibly as he tried to tear open that mysterious letter. Mohammad Ali, still watching him close with his cat-like gaze, noticed how he fumbled and boggled over the seal, and how his bloodless lips were

quivering tremulously with suppressed excitement.

At last he tore the letter open. Its contents were short, plain, and startling. This was what Harry Chichele read, to his utter surprise, in the large, round, legible official hand on the big sheet of clean white foolscap with the ample allowance of folded margin :—

“ SIR,

“ I am directed by the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Home Department, to inform you that her Majesty has been graciously pleased to approve of your name as first occupant of the new professorial chair of medical ætiology recently founded at University College, London. The emoluments of the chair will be £800 (eight hundred pounds) per annum.—I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ RALPH ORMEROD.”

Harry dropped the letter, speechless with surprise. So this was what that curious little episode had brought him. He saw Sir Roderic's finger in it all. How could he ever have been such an idiot as to take so much to heart the small inconveniences it had momentarily entailed

upon him. Great enterprises invariably require skill and patience. But this was the reward of his courage and his research. After all, the old maxim holds good as ever still, and wisdom is justified of all her children.

By his own hand, by his own hand, he had done it. A fool would have let the opportunity slip, and allowed the miserable obscure German to walk off unobserved with the honours of discovery. A coward would have shrunk from putting the well-designed plan into execution, and would have failed at the last moment in the courage of his convictions. But he, Harry Chichele, by his own hand, had done it. He had boldly conceived and successfully carried out that admirable experiment for proving or disproving the truth of his theory. He had planned wisely and ventured well. And, verily, now he had his reward—a Royal professorship of eight hundred per annum.

Ivan Royle, directed by a nod from Harry, was reading the letter. “My dear fellow,” he cried, with a hearty and heartfelt shake of the hand, “I’m awfully glad. I congratulate you most sincerely on your good luck. You deserve it all. But what in heaven’s name is medical ætiology?”

CHAPTER XVI.

WHAT is one solitary human life to a true philosopher? In a week or two more the "little episode," as Harry always called it in his own mind, was as clean dead and buried and forgotten as Sal herself in her nameless pauper grave at Kensal Green Cemetery. When once the turmoil and trouble of the trial were over; when Bill, much to his own blank astonishment, had duly received his free pardon; when a couple of pounds lawful coin of the realm, transferred from Harry Chichele's pocket, had purchased the entire fee simple of little Lizbeth, besides setting the periwinkle business once more afloat as a going concern, with new properties and decorations throughout—when all these things had satisfactorily happened in turn, Harry Chichele had so much to occupy his mind in other ways that he almost ceased to think of the little episode itself at all in the hurry and bustle of his manifold engagements.

For first of all, there was the new professorship to undertake—that mysterious professorship of the ætiology of disease, the very meaning of whose name he was obliged to explain with profuse learning to everybody he came across for the next six months. “What the dickens is ætiology?” became to him so familiar a question at clubs, as “Oh, Dr. Chichele, *do* please tell us what ætiology means!” became in drawing-rooms, that before long he learnt to recognize instinctively the very purse of the lips that ushered it in, and could answer the unspoken query offhand before it was even fairly propounded. The chair of ætiology, it may be readily imagined, is a very serious chair indeed for a man to fill; and Harry felt in his heart that so young and inexperienced a person as he was must do his level best in eye-glasses and deportment to fill it with becoming grace and dignity. So the “duties of his office,” as he loved to say with much gusto, occupied the larger part of his time and energy at present—at least, the larger part of the residue left over after the alternative and equally important duties of his onerous daily correspondence with Olwen Tregellas.

For love, too, is an exacting taskmaster; he

imposes upon whomever he catches in his firm clutch no mean amount of literary labour. And now that these elusive germs were fairly settled, and the question of the pardon fairly solved, and the chair of ætiology fairly set up in working order on its own four solid and sensible legs, Harry Chichele, looking about him with a freer glance at the world at large, began to reflect with a sigh of relief that a place had at last been created worthy of Olwen, and that Olwen herself might now not ungracefully be invited in her own good time to come and fill it. He mentioned this reflection casually one morning to Mohammad Ali; and Mohammad Ali, shaking his head in a somewhat oracular fashion, answered that he had expected as much himself, and answered, Harry somehow fancied to his surprise, as if he didn't exactly relish the prospect either.

Next day Mohammad Ali called early at Ivan Royle's studio in old Kensington. He found the painter in his velveteen coat and Rembrandt cap, busily engaged in putting the finishing touches to a Cornish picture. It was a pretty little glimpse of dark red rock and blue sea in a tiny cove, not far from Polperran, and the foreground was occupied by a light

and graceful girlish figure in a flowery summer dress, shading her eyes with her small white hand, and gazing eagerly to seaward for some expected vessel. On an easel by the side stood the original study of a Cornish girl, from which the figure itself had been filled in—a careful and delicately appreciative study of Olwen Tregellas. There was poetry in every detail of her pose; there was soul in every line and turn of her features.

Mohammad Ali looked at it long and smiled sadly. “Still working at her, Royle,” he said at last, with a gentle and almost melancholy cadence.

“Still working at her, my dear fellow,” Ivan Royle replied, looking up from his palette; “and I shall work at her, I suppose, more or less now, as long as I remain in the land of the living. A face like that, once seen, burns itself into the very fabric of a painter’s brain; he can never long keep it out of his thoughts or his canvas.”

“Harry Chichele’s going to be married,” Mohammad Ali broke out brusquely. He made no sort of introduction or apology for his sudden speech. He flung the fact, as it were, full in Ivan Royle’s face, and then waited for him to resent it and retaliate.

“So I expected,” Ivan answered with a quiet sigh, standing back a pace or two off from the easel, and inspecting his handicraft with modest complacency. “It can’t be helped. Perhaps—I don’t know—it’s all for the best. Perhaps he’s worthier of her, Ali, than I am.”

“It is *not* for the best,” Mohammad Ali replied bitterly. “It’s for the worst, for the worst, very much for the worst. Royle, my heart sinks within me to think of it. I distrust that man. I disbelieve in that man. I fear that man, for Miss Tregellas. Can’t we do anything anyhow to prevent it?”

“I don’t see that we can,” Ivan answered after a short pause. “She loves him and prefers him. Her will is law in such a matter. It would be ungenerous and unmanly of me even to try to interfere between them, supposing I saw my way to doing it. Why do you mistrust him, Ali? Why do you disbelieve in him? Have you seen or heard anything fresh to set you against him? Or is it still only the old Begum business?”

Mohammad Ali took a seat by the window, and began by very delicate side hints to impart his latest suspicion to Ivan. He didn’t say what he thought or fancied outright, but told

his story carefully and suggestively, dwelling upon each suspicious point exactly as it had struck him. Before he had got half way through with it, however, he became dimly aware that the tale was falling quite flat on Ivan's simple, straightforward English nature. The Englishman listened with polite incredulity. He could not believe so much harm of any one so transparently kind-hearted and well-meaning as Harry Chichele. When Mohamad Ali, by well-pieced hints and scattered fragments of Harry's conversation, had fairly brought out the true nature of his profound suspicion, Ivan clapped his hand on the Indian's shoulder with a smile of something like genuine amusement, and exclaimed heartily, "My dear friend, this won't do. You're on the wrong tack—on the wrong tack entirely. Your cleverness positively overshoots itself. You're allowing your own predilections, and your own subtlety and ingenuity of mind to run away with you and lead you at last into very queer and impossible places. This kind of thing may be believed in India, you know, but it's too diabolically and horribly clever to go down in England."

He didn't add—how could he?—that in his

own heart the very fact of Mohammad Ali's having hit upon such a black suspicion had prejudiced him a little against the Indian himself. Nobody had a right to start such ideas about other people. Even if a white man had hinted so ghastly a thing as that to him about anybody else, it would have given him a worse opinion of his informant; when a black man does it, all the profoundest and cruelest race instincts of our nature are aroused against him, and we say to ourselves with our European complacency, "No Englishman would ever have invented anything so grotesquely wicked and so utterly inadequate."

Ivan Royle, indeed, recoiled a little from Ali's suggestion, as everybody always must recoil from the imputation of serious crime against a man with whom we have ever lived on terms of intimate familiarity; and the recoil made him look more favourably than before upon Harry Chichele's pretensions and wishes. In his own manly, straightforward English way, he was quite ready to confess himself beaten, in love or war, without casting imputations on his rival's character, or listening to horrible, ill-founded hints that told against his probable future conduct. He laughed down

Ali's recondite speculations ; and Ali himself, seeing how Ivan's bright and sunny nature could brush away the very imputation of evil, felt himself for the moment half reassured by the interview, and ventured still to hope the best for Olwen.

If only he could have forgotten the story of the Begum !

For, after all, he might be easily mistaken. And even if he were not, Harry, who was in most things a gentle, humane, affectionate man, might, in spite of everything, make Olwen a good and tender husband. Many bad men lead exemplary lives in their domestic relations. Cold and cruel and stern outside, they are full of gentleness and love by their own firesides. But it was with many misgivings, none the less, that he looked to the future. He felt like the one prophet of evil in the midst of so many hopeful and happy young English spirits.

Kismet, kismet. It was all kismet. Perhaps it was his creed that made him take this gloomy pessimistic view of things. Your Englishman is far less dependent on fate than an oriental ; he shapes his own destiny for himself by his own hand, where the disciple of Islam stands by, as it were, like an interested spectator, and

watches his life unrolling itself irresistibly and passively before him. Well, well; he would be English, too, for once. He would try to see the bright side only, and to accept events as manfully as Ivan Royle accepted them.

Two days later Harry Chichele stepped round in exuberant spirits to his friend's studio to inform Ivan that a date had now been fixed for the wedding, and to ask him whether, as the happy event was to take place at Polperran, he would assume the arduous duties of best man in memory of their first meeting in Cornwall.

Would fate intervene to prevent the marriage? Fate can never be trusted at a pinch. So it came to pass before many weeks were over that Olwen Tregellas was really married to Harry Chichele.

Harry had altogether forgotten now everything about the little episode. He had never from the first had any shadow or fear of detection—detection, indeed, was morally impossible: and now that the difficulty about Bill was well overcome, and little Lizbeth decently settled in life, he had ceased to trouble his philosophic head any more about the matter. Being by nature an even-tempered and light-hearted person (save when profound emotions inter-

vened to stir his soul to its inmost depths), he had cast aside the entire subject once for all; and now, intoxicated with success and in the full flush of love and happiness, he looked and really was as handsome, open, and proud a bridegroom as any girl within the four sea walls of Britain could wish to marry.

Ivan Royle, too, accepted his doubtful duties as best man (for no authority has ever yet been able satisfactorily to define the precise nature of a best man's functions) with much manful kindness and good nature. Olwen had blushed a little, indeed, when Harry first mentioned to her that he had selected Ivan for that particular post; but Ivan himself had greeted her on his arrival with so much frank cordiality and genuine good feeling that Olwen gladly recognized in him a true friend, and forgot her first little timid hesitancy.

To the crass and thick-headed male intelligence, all weddings seem very much alike. Olwen Tregellas's did not conspicuously differ in the eyes of man from the remainder of the species. The bride's dress, which was described in minute detail in the *Queen* of the succeeding week, exactly resembled every other bridal dress ever yet invented, being composed

entirely of an underlying layer of some glossy white stuff, with a pervading external atmosphere of gauzy fluffiness. Nearer than this, the crass male intelligence will not presume to go in the matter of dress, but will content itself instead with chronicling the undoubted fact (true for both divisions of the human kind) that Olwen herself, embowered in the midst of it, looked as sweetly and simply beautiful as any girl that morning in the county of Cornwall. So Harry Chichele said to himself, in quiet pride of assured possession, as he walked beside his wife, after the ceremony was over, into the crowded little vestry. So Ivan Royle thought in his own heart, as he stole regretful glances at Olwen sideways, and envied Harry in his simple manly fashion. And so Mohammad Ali felt silently as with his hopeless chivalrous Arab passion he cast a wistful look at her from his big grey eyes, and realized more bitterly and painfully than ever the sense of that abiding race barrier between them which had made Harry prefer, even for his best man, a comparative stranger like Ivan Royle to his old companion and fellow-student. For a black man stands so far from us all in the scale, that he cannot even be properly associated

as a subsidiary personage with a European wedding.

In the vestry, three or four of the men guests claimed their usual privilege of a kiss from the bride. Ivan Royle did not avail himself of the old custom. He contented himself with taking her hand courteously in his, and making her his heart-felt congratulations on her marriage. Olwen raised her eyes timidly and met his own. They dropped behind the fringing lashes once more with a delicious shyness that was simply ravishing. He was a dear good fellow, she said to herself frankly ; and it was very kind of him not to wish to kiss her.

As for Mohammad Ali, he touched her fingers gently with the tips of his glove—what right has a black man to do more than that?—and murmured half beneath his breath some inaudible but very earnest prayer for her future happiness. He felt like a skeleton at the feast that day, and wished indeed he could have felt otherwise. *Kismet, kismet*; he must leave it all to Allah. What was predestined, must come to pass. He envied these Europeans their happier easier creed. For him the end was fated already.

The end! The end! What a fatalist notion!

Why should there be any end at all? That terrible creed of *Respice finem!*

Among the wedding presents, by far the handsomest was a set of antique oriental dessert knives and forks—solid silver, with exquisite inlaid ivory handles — bearing in rather Arabesque letters on the cover of the box a neat inscription, “H. O. C.—from Mohammad Ali.” Harry Chichele looked at them with admiration and surprise. Mohammad Ali was comfortably off, that much he knew ;—the old native banker at Saharanpur, proud of his handsome Europeanized son, had always made him a most ample allowance, drawn from the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind ;—but Harry had hardly imagined till then that the Indian doctor could afford so valuable and costly a present. As a matter of fact, Mohammad Ali could not afford it; he had stretched a point for this special occasion, and wasted a whole month’s income on a fitting gift for Olwen’s wedding. Harry looked at the costly oriental things with a softening heart. On one’s wedding day, one sees the world through rose-coloured spectacles.

“After all,” he said to himself gaily, “Ali’s a good fellow, and a great deal fonder of me than I ever thought, or he wouldn’t have bought me

such a beautiful present. Of late, I've been inclined to fancy sometimes he wasn't quite so friendly and pleasant as he used to be. I almost suspected him, indeed, of suspecting me! Pooh! What nonsense. I laid my plans too deep for that. Conscience makes cowards of us all, I suppose; though not, thank goodness, of me, at any rate. Pretty reflections these for a man at his wedding! It's a comfort to know I was mistaken after all, and that Ali's really the same good fellow and good friend as ever."

He never even thought of it as a present to Olwen. So much do we all read things from our own side alone. So much does every one of us misinterpret the springs of action in the motives of others.

Another very pretty wedding present of Olwen's was a little water-colour of a Cornish garden, with a girl's light figure standing out in the foreground, between clambering sprays of clematis and jasmine; and visitors from a distance whispered to one another, "It's her own ideal portrait, you know, by Mr. Royle, the well-known artist, who was Dr. Chichele's best man, and whom he and the Hindoo gentleman, with the Mahommedan name, saved, you re-

member, from the wreck of that famous cholera ship last autumn. You must have read all about it at the time in the papers."

But during the course of the wedding breakfast, when Harry Chichele's health was proposed in a most eulogistic speech, the Hindoo gentleman, with the Mahomedan name, felt a curious shudder come creeping over him, and a cold tremour down the spinal cord overtake him with a rush, at a painful thought that just then flashed unexpectedly across his mental horizon. For all of a sudden, in the midst of all that din, bustle, and gaiety, as everybody was talking and thinking about Harry Chichele, and what a wonderfully clever fellow he had proved himself, and what important medical discoveries he had made, and what a great and famous man he was and would be, that old suspicion about the cause of Sarah Wilcox's death recurred with startling vividness, as if by direct external suggestion, to Mohammad Ali's preoccupied mind; and like a flash of lightning it came over him to think that on that fatal night he had never felt Harry Chichele's other hand—the hand he had kept so long concealed in his pocket and laid at last upon the dying woman. And then, with the instantaneous and instinctive conviction of his

Arab nature, the hideous truth came clearly home to him in a burst of intuitive certainty, that, in spite of all these fair speeches and praises, they were all assembled there that day to see Olwen Tregellas married to a murderer.

It was too late now to think any more of it. She was married to him at last—irrevocably married to him. The moment for action was long gone past; there was only time in future for regret and repentance. For Olwen's sake, he must never again breathe his suspicions to any man. For Olwen's sake, he must still try to believe in her husband.

The champagne bubbled and beaded merrily in his glass. Everybody was smiling and bowing and nodding. The word went round, "The Bridegroom's Health." All the guests raised their glasses and drank. Mohammad Ali raised his with the rest. When they set them down again, there was one glass untasted among them. "You haven't drunk happiness to the bridegroom," the lady beside him murmured low with a smile. Ali answered her with an evasive prevarication. "I'm a Moslem," he said, "and you know the Koran forbids the faithful to taste of wine." It was the first time since he came to England he had ever

pleaded Islam as an excuse for abstemiousness.

And with that double evil augury, Olwen Chichele's married life began.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE first twelve months of Olwen Chichele's married life passed quietly and happily enough. Of course she and Harry did not live entirely in an earthly paradise. Ante-nuptial expectations of a perpetual honeymoon break down on trial before the stern realities of mundane house-keeping. There are no "books to pay" in the forecast of the betrothed. Still, when judged by the more modest and realistic standard of the actually married, the two young people jogged along very happily together in their matrimonial harness. If their wedded life was not at all times quite as ecstatically blissful as they had imagined it would be in the days when they wandered side by side, with thrilling hearts, among the gorse and heather at dear old Polperran, at least they were, as averagely comfortable and sympathetic with one another as

any ordinary husband and wife can ever expect in this work-a-day world of ours. Harry was really and truly fond and proud of his sweet little wife ; and when he took her out to dinner at great houses in London, and heard the oft-whispered inquiry, " Who's that awfully pretty dark girl in the white dress over yonder ? " his bosom swelled within him with the pride of possession at the usual flattering answer, " That's Mrs. Chichele, wife of the clever doctor fellow who invented germs, and so forth, don't you know ; her husband's professor of something-or-other unpronounceable at University College." On such occasions, Harry Chichele's heart felt itself, indeed, an exceptionally lucky vascular organ ; for Harry Chichele was very much in love, indeed, with Olwen, and even more in love with his own name and fame and reputation.

Olwen, too, for her part, was exceedingly happy. Harry seemed kindness and goodness itself to her ; and although, of course, like most other women, she had to come down in time off that earlier pedestal of the engaged angel to walk the solid earth, in due course, a prosaic married woman of flesh and blood, much preoccupied with weighty questions of

the weekly bills or the new housemaid's Sunday out arrangements, she, nevertheless, found him always as attentive and demonstrative as a mere husband can ever, in the nature of things, be expected to show himself. Nor is the fault, after all, entirely the man's. Men wish their wives to remain always angels; it is the women themselves who voluntarily embrace the more hereditary position of household drudges. For Olwen, moreover, it was indeed a great change to come straight from the simple out-of-the-way Cornish rectory into the very thick and crush of a London season—to dine with the President of the Royal Society, to receive tickets for the Private View at the Academy, to assist on First Nights at the Lyceum or the Haymarket, and to entertain at her own table the solemn and portentous dignitaries of scientific circles. But every woman is potentially a duchess. Men sometimes rise to the occasion; women always do; and Olwen bore her blushing honours lightly on her—as lightly as if she had been accustomed all her life long to give her arm to a real live philosopher as the servants announced “Dinner's ready, mum,” and to discuss the Absolute and the Unknowable between the courses with an eminent psycholo-

gist and a distinguished member of the French Academy.

And the germs? Well, the germs continued to survive, and to pervade society much the same as ever. Epidemic diseases were not yet altogether stamped out, it is true, and diphtheria and scarlatina still floated invisible upon the summer breeze very much as they had done since the beginning of time, before the woman Wilcox had been offered up on the altar of humanity as a vicarious sacrifice to the all-conquering germ for the remainder of her species. Still, the theory—the theory was proved, and that, after all, is the great thing. In time, you know, we shall proceed to practice. Nature never takes a jump. Evolution, my dear sir, evolution, you must steadily bear in mind, is the order of the day. Now, evolution is never abrupt. We must go to work slowly, securely, tentatively, gradually. The first thing to be done, of course, is to gain a clear conception in our own minds of what the germs really are in their own essence; and that done, we may then proceed in due order to make war upon them piecemeal with sanitary strategy. It was generally understood in scientific circles that the man to tell you all about germs, and

the man to lead science on by gradual steps to ultimate victory in the struggle against them, was Professor Chichele, of University College, who made that very extraordinary discovery about the fungoid nature of the epidemic bacteria. The words alone are worth all the money! Fungoid nature of the epidemic bacteria! Why, "Mesopotamia" itself sinks into comparative insignificance, and even that sweet word "environment" is nowhere beside them.

This is generally the way with all great medical discoveries. They go up like a rocket and come down like a stick. First, they are cocksure to revolutionize science. Next—though very important within a certain limited range of diseases, don't you know—they are not quite so universally valuable as some people were rash enough to imagine at the first outset. Last of all, they are quietly forgotten, and relegated without one word of recantation to the infinite limbo of exploded remedies. In this natural life-history of a medical theory, Harry Chichele's great and successful germ doctrine was rapidly reaching the second stage of modified appreciation.

Nevertheless, the professorship still remained

intact, a very tangible and visible monument of the brilliant hopes at first aroused by the promulgation of "the Chichele hypothesis." Eight hundred a year, payable quarterly, and a chair in University College, London, no doubt consoles a man for a certain amount of disappointed forecasts and lessened ideals for the future of humanity. Of the two ends Harry Chichele had originally proposed to himself, one at least had been well attained. Epidemics were not yet entirely abolished by Act of Parliament, but Olwen did most indubitably ride in her own carriage. Its coat-of-arms might have been three comma-shaped germs rampant, on a field gules, with the appropriate motto, *In morte triumpho*.

The Chicheles had taken a comfortable house, not beyond their means, at Happy Hampstead. Harry's little patrimony—his final share of Begum Johanna's ill-gotten wealth—helped to eke out the income from the chair; and between the two they lived in a way which to Olwen seemed almost culpably luxurious, and which even Harry, with his more expensive metropolitan tastes, considered extremely gentlemanly, convenient, and satisfactory. In a separate laboratory at the back of the house, moreover,

Harry was able to dabble to his heart's content in the fashionable medical amusement of germ culture. There, in a low brick-built room, abutting on the lane that ran behind the house, among the poisons and infusions, the viruses and decoctions, removed from Regent's Park Hospital, he "grew cholera, cultivated scarlet fever, and raised the finest varieties of typhoid from the egg," as he loved to inform timid lady visitors. For the germs had now ceased to be a mere dilettante occupation with Harry Chichele; the professorship had turned them rather into the serious business and purpose of his life. He was established and endowed to grow germs. The cultivation of diseases in the naked form was what he was paid for. It was his duty to keep bottled diphtheria always on hand, and to ensure a ready supply at all times of the year of fine vigorous yellow-fever microbes.

In the new household at Queen Anne's Road, Hampstead, little Lizbeth formed a conspicuous component element. When Harry Chichele married—a step which little Lizbeth already regarded with some disfavour, as introducing an unknown factor into the family of which she now considered herself an aliquot part—Lizbeth had quietly taken it for granted that

she would migrate, as a matter of course, like the Begum and the Emir, Harry's Persian cat, to the new home as soon as it was established. For little Lizbeth was now a fixture, identifying herself completely with Harry Chichele, and utterly forgetful not only of Bill but also even of her dead mother. Indeed, Lizbeth's affections were curiously strange and dog-like in their character. She didn't seem capable of recognizing more than one special friend at a time, as a dog has always only one real master. And now that Sal was dead and gone, Lizbeth accommodated herself with canine fickleness and canine fidelity to the whims and fancies of her new owner. Her position in the household was somewhat undefined. She was not cook, or parlourmaid, or scullery-girl, or housemaid. She fulfilled more or less the nondescript functions usually performed by a boy about the place; but she regarded herself, for her own part, strictly in the light of Harry Chichele's personal slave and chattel. Olwen she tolerated in a general vague and indefinite way, as a dog tolerates his master's family and his master's friends; but Harry Chichele she loved and obeyed, watching closely for his merest word or nod, and ready always whenever he wanted

her, with her keen little eye answering at once to his merest passing idea or fancy. If Harry went out, it was Lizbeth who handed him his stick or his umbrella, and brushed his hat, and took his last orders, and closed the door lightly behind him. If Harry came in, it was Lizbeth who recognized his ring at the bell; Lizbeth who lay in waiting to open for him at once; Lizbeth who set his slippers by the fire, and brought him the letters or the evening paper. At first she had considered Harry Chichele mainly as the person who had been kind to mother when mother was dying. Now that feeling had gradually merged into another—a more personal and possessive one; and it was for his own sake, as her master and owner, that Lizbeth clung to the young doctor, with the intense clinging of her strangely perverted savage little nature.

Mohammad Ali also lived not far away. He, too, dogged his lady like a faithful spaniel. True to his determination to watch well over Olwen's happiness, come what might, he had taken rooms at a house hard by in Queen Anne's Road, and pretended to practice in a half-amateur way among the comparatively large Indian and Mohammedan connection

which lives and shivers in modern London. He was not entirely without patients, indeed, for the mild Hindoos, lungy to a man, preferred on the whole a native doctor, to whom they could narrate their pulmonary symptoms in all the rich detail of their own language, to any foreign and unsympathetic Christian leech; and as supplies came in as readily as ever from the gold mohurs of Saharanpur, Mohammad Ali had no need to trouble over that filthy lucre which causes most men so much anxiety and worry in life. But the practice, after all, was mostly a transparent pretence for all that. The greater part of Mohammad Ali's time he really spent in Harry Chichele's experimental laboratory, where he worked away contentedly at the germs and infusions, amply satisfied if, once in a while, it gave him a stray chance of seeing Olwen, and observing the course of her current relations with her husband. Not a few of the delicate and minute experiments which gained Harry Chichele so much kudos when embodied in those striking and original papers of his at the Royal Society were really due, as intimate friends knew, in great part to the handy and careful manipulation of the patient, self-forgetful Mohammedan doctor. But Ali, indeed, cared

less than nothing for fame; he was glad to help Harry to the utmost of his power for love of the occupation and for love of Olwen. If Harry gained credit for anything his Indian friend had done, why Olwen was pleased at it; and if Olwen was pleased at it, Mohammad Ali had more than his due share of reward and repayment for all his passing toil and trouble. *Kismet, kismet.* He lived for Olwen.

A black man had no right to anything else. Enough for him that Olwen was happy. He could see her and talk with her time and again. She smiled at him sometimes as Harry's friend. Mohammad Ali asked no more. He wasn't a child that he should cry for the moon. The moon and white women must be praised and admired from a distance only. Mohammad Ali accepted his fate, and pocketed his pretensions, like a wise Moslem.

As for Ivan Royle, he was not a black man; and being thus denied Mohammad Ali's strong bulwark of defence against Olwen's eyes, he judged it on the whole more manly and prudent to keep as far as possible fairly out of range of them. He stopped but little in town now, and went off a great deal, sketching and painting, to Scotland in summer, and along his

favourite Mediterranean in the winter months. There he found subjects suited to his pencil; and there also he found the sunlight which he loved and worshipped with artistic fervour.

The first Christmas after Olwen was married Ivan Royle took up his quarters for a time at an hotel at Cannes. It was a cold December in England—colder than even the English wont—and there was skating on the Serpentine before Christmas day. Such a winter is too much altogether for our Indian brother. The cold nipped up Mohammad Ali. For the first time in his life he felt his lungs getting out of order, and judged it prudent to strike south at once, on a visit to Royle on the Mediterranean. So he moved away early in the year, and pitched his tent, like his Semitic forefathers, on the sunny shores of the inland sea.

A week later, as Harry Chichele sat at breakfast one morning, grumbling a little at a passing sore throat, and poring over an enthusiastic and descriptive letter from his Indian friend, he laid down his coffee with an air of determination, and, looking up from the page he was reading, cried abruptly, "I say, Olwen, let's start to-night for Cannes and sunshine."

Olwen's colour heightened somewhat. She

hardly liked this hasty resolve. Ivan Royle was at Cannes; and she liked Ivan Royle so very much that on the whole she would rather have avoided him. "That's very sudden, Harry," she answered, with a conscious flush. "Why go so hurriedly? Don't you think you'd better wait and turn it over?"

But Harry, on his side, rather preferred precipitate action. He hated indecision and shilly-shallying of every sort. When all the elements of a problem are once fairly set before you, it's womanish to hesitate and debate and haggle over detail. A philosopher sees at a glance where the indications point, and makes up his mind at once and irrevocably. "Why no," he replied, "I don't see it. Why shouldn't we start offhand to-night? Everything goes for it straight as a needle. The south's the place for a Christmas holiday. Lectures don't begin for another three weeks. Why muddle and mug in foggy, muggy, muddy London, when one can breathe pure air and see bright sunshine and hear birds sing on the Riviera? Listen here to what Mohammad Ali says, little woman. 'Blue skies, green grass, purple sea, and perfect basketsful of Banksia roses! The hotel garden's an exquisite picture—reminds me of Polperran

in August weather, except that even at Polperran we didn't have huge agaves and aloes towering with their crowns of golden blossom to the cloudless sky, or date palms recalling the valley of the Jumna. There are attractions, too, in the way of society; friends of Royle's who are well worth knowing. Why don't you come, and bring Mrs. Chichele? She had a nasty cough, I fancy, when I left London,'—Ali's quite right, Olwen, you *have* a cough; I've noticed it myself sometimes in the morning; how awfully observant these Indian fellows are, to be sure—'and a week or two in this delicious summer-like air would set her up thoroughly and bring the Cornish roses back into her cheeks again.' Upon my word, Olwen, Ali's an awfully kind and thoughtful fellow. I believe he's right, after all. A week or two in the south would do you worlds of good. There's nothing I love like an unexpected trip. Why, it was at ten minutes' notice, you know, that I went to Polperran. I met a friend in the Strand, and I said to him, 'I'm going down to Cornwall to look for adders. Where shall I find 'em?' And he said, 'At Polperran.' So I went right off on his recommendation, and I found *you* there instead of an adder—so

there's a precedent for you, if you like, darling." And he leant across and kissed her hand tenderly.

"You mustn't repeat the performance at Cannes, Harry," his pretty little wife replied, smiling. "I want you all for myself now. You must find nobody to take my place there. But how on earth shall we ever get the packing done? When do you mean to leave? There's positively no time for it."

"Oh, nothing easier," Harry cried offhand, already deep in the study of Bradshaw, which he had fetched, as she spoke, from the drawer in the sideboard. "Here you are: Leave Charing Cross, 8.5 p.m.; arrive Paris, 5.50 morning. That's our train. Bundle a few things into a portmanteau for me; take your own best bib and tucker, a dinner dress or two, and a bonnet for yourself; wire across to Ali to secure us rooms at the hotel at Cannes; stop a couple of nights on the way south; and there you are, as plain as a pikestaff. Run upstairs after breakfast, darling, and get ready at once. No need to make a mountain out of a molehill."

When Harry said a thing he generally meant it. So they packed hurriedly, and took the night mail that very evening for Paris. Little

Lizbeth stood at the door to see them off, very particular about Harry's comforter, and specially anxious that he should have a foot-warmer to keep his throat from turning worse. As the cab drove away Lizbeth fairly burst out crying. "'E's goin' right across the sea," she said, "an' perhaps 'e won't never come back again." A year's residence under a respectable roof had considerably improved Lizbeth's personal appearance—her bones were now fairly covered with an inch deep of solid flesh, and her cheeks were getting quite plump and rosy—but it had produced no appreciable effect of any sort upon her grammar and vocabulary. Even Olwen's earnest missionary efforts on behalf of the poor neglected letter "h," had fallen upon very barren ground indeed, and Lizbeth continued still as guiltless of the aspirate as in the early days of her Marylebone existence.

At the bookstall at Charing Cross Harry paused to buy himself a book for reading on the journey. Olwen had chosen her own already—a shilling dreadful—the last thing published. Harry glanced about among the paper covers for something or other a little more to his mind. After conning over the titles of three or four, he found at last a volume to suit him.

“What have you got?” Olwen asked, as he turned to pay for it.

“Oh, just Seeta Mayne’s last. You’ve seen it reviewed. They says it’s superb. ‘The Price of Wisdom.’”

“Always that woman! I never did care for Seeta Mayne,” Olwen rejoined, half pettishly. “She seems to me so strained, so high-flown, so quixotic, so unnatural. Her ideals of life are all impossibly high. She wants to live in a Utopian world of magnificent abstractions. She pervades infinity too much for me. I prefer people who confine their attention, as a rule, to the solar system and their own planet.”

“Ah, that’s because you don’t care for pure romance,” Harry answered sententiously. “Of course *you* don’t see things as Seeta Mayne does. For her, all earth and air and sky and ocean are purpled over with ‘the light that never was on sea or land.’ She looks at everything with the eye of a born poet. You can’t expect, you know, to read the world as a woman like Seeta Mayne reads it.”

A sharp little knife ran unseen, as he spoke, through Olwen Chichele’s tender heart. In a moment, a memory had broken suddenly over her. Twelve months ago; eighteen months

ago! A picture rose before her dim eyes of how she and Harry had wandered alone among the Cornish heather, and how she had spoken like things of Seeta Mayne, and how very differently he had then answered her. But that was eighteen months since! Every wife on earth has felt that pang, some rightly and some wrongfully. Olwen Chichele felt it with bitter keenness then, and treasured it up, as women will treasure up their dearest wounds, in a special chamber of her soft small bosom.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THEY broke the journey at Paris and Marseilles, leaving only the short and beautiful bit along the Mediterranean as a sort of *bonne bouche* for the third morning. It is a lovely ride, that sun-smitten strip of rocky coast, between the mountains and the sea, from Marseilles to Toulon; then on through the glorious hills and dales of the Maures inland to Fréjus; and finally among the magnificent red porphyry peaks of the ramping Esterel to Cannes itself, where they were to end for the time their hasty journey. Olwen, who had never been in the south before, was in ecstasies of enjoyment at every turn. There was so much to see that was new and delightful—the hoary green olives, with their gnarled trunks; the vineyards straggling down the steep hillsides; the orange groves nestling with their broad shade beside the dry pebbly beds of the winter torrents. Every

here and there a glowing white village gleamed high upon some solitary mountain peak, clustering with its group of sunlit houses around the very summit, from whose topmost crag a ruined castle frowned down upon them with mediæval sternness. Now and again, as the train wheeled round some sharp curve, running high up on a cliff-like ledge of the hills, they would catch for a moment passing glimpses of some blue bay, deep, deep below, where white waves tumbled upon sand and cliffs, and a picturesque fishing village, embowered in palm woods, sent forth its tale of quaintly-rigged vessels to fleck the bosom of the purple sea. It was all like a glorious fairy tale to Olwen; not even in her own beloved Cornwall had she ever seen anything one half so beautiful.

There was only one slight drawback to her pleasure; she couldn't get Harry fully to enjoy it with her. Time after time, indeed, at her exclamations of surprise and delight he would lay down his book on the seat for a moment and step by her side to the open window to look out upon some glorious sea-girt headland, or some sunny stretch of olive-clad hillside, terraced with endless human industry. But except when she seized him bodily by the arm

and cried, "Oh, Harry! Harry! You *must* look! It's just too beautiful!" he could hardly be got to leave his reading; and once, at the very moment when they were passing a lovelier peacock-blue bay than any yet, he put down his novel impatiently and said with a sigh, "Seeta Mayne is really a most wonderful writer."

"Oh, bother Seeta Mayne!" Olwen couldn't help exclaiming in half angry tones. "Did you ever see anything so exquisite as that, Harry?"

"It *is* lovely," Harry answered, far too grudgingly to satisfy his little wife's enthusiastic mood. What melting zones of colour on the calm sea! Seeta Mayne has a scene placed just along this coast, you know. Her description of the country's simply wonderful. You never read anything like it, Olwen; you must look at it yourself when we get to Cannes."

Olwen was privately piqued in her own mind that Harry should think so much more of Seeta Mayne's second-hand description than of her own delight at the exquisite scenery which was just then unrolling itself in long panorama before their own two very eyes. It was really too bad of him. She determined not to call his attention to anything again, however lovely the

something might happen to be, just to punish him for his indifference; and even as she made her mind up to that stern inner resolve, a grey rocky crag, with clambering grey houses hanging on its stairlike flanks, and a mouldering grey citadel towering to the sky on its topmost platform, broke her resolution before it was even well formed; and, seizing her husband's sleeve once more in her excitement, she cried aloud with delight, "Oh, Harry, Harry, do look! Here's a lovelier bit than anything at all we've seen, so far. It just appears as if it had been all cut out of a single solid block of greystone; it's so precisely like throughout in shape and tone and shade and sentiment! Isn't it just wonderful!"

"Beautiful! beautiful!" Harry answered, unconcernedly, and betook himself once more to that horrid novel of his.

So they whirled along in their comfortable *coupé*, past the Coudon and the Faron, those twin gaunt white guardian giants of the Provençal coast; past the long green valleys of the tumultuous billowy Maures; past the broken Roman amphitheatre of Fréjus and the shattered triumphal arches of provincial towns, till they struck, at last, upon the high crimson

pinnacles of the Esterel at St. Raphael, jutting sharp and clear from the dark green slopes of maritime pines that clambered one above another up the rapid slides, till they halted at last with sudden abruptness against the rearing wall of solid red porphyry.

Ivan Royle and Mohammad Ali had told them by postcard to the Louvre at Marseilles (where the Chicheles had slept the night before) that they would walk across the Esterel by the footpath from Cannes and pick them up at St. Raphael station. But when the train stopped short at last beside a glorious bay, looking across broad belts of intervening sea to the ragged schistose cliffs of the St. Tropez headlands, and the regulation blue notice board on the platform showed distinctly the name of St. Raphael, no English artist and no Indian doctor were anywhere to be seen among the scanty passengers. They must have changed their minds or missed their path, Harry imagined: so the Chicheles made their way alone to Cannes, without further disturbing themselves as to the non-appearance of their promised fellow-travellers.

At the hotel, they learned from the proprietor on their arrival that Ivan and Ali had

indeed started early that morning to meet them on their way. Monsieur's friends must have miscalculated the time or mistaken the road, the proprietor fancied. It was a long walk from Cannes to St. Raphael—a long walk among the trackless mountains. Monsieur's friends would doubtless return by the next train, too late for *table d'hôte*; they were often belated.

So Harry and Olwen washed off the dust of travel from their faces at their leisure, and descended at once to the large and well-filled *salle-à-manger* for dinner.

They remembered that dinner for ever afterward. Opposite them at the table sat a very striking and handsome woman, who at once attracted and seemed instinctively to rivet Olwen's closest attention. She was tall and well-built, with faultlessly clear-cut and regular features—a countess of the old school, Olwen thought to herself, looking almost as if she had just stepped down by accident from some canvas of Sir Joshua's, or Romney's, or Gainsborough's. Her forehead was remarkably high and white and even, and she wore her hair brushed back from the brow on every side, so as to show to the full its very unusual breadth

and expansiveness. Her complexion was of a certain indescribable clear olive tint, not in the least dark, yet faintly creamy, like the earliest stage of coffee-coloured laces. Her eyes were large, grey, and splendid. When they lighted upon you with a rapid flash they seemed to pierce you through and through, and read intuitively your inmost nature. A placid smile played for the most part about her beautiful mouth, as though she felt herself serenely at peace with mankind and with the universe generally. If any fault could have been found with her face, it would, no doubt, have been that her lips were perhaps just a trifle too thin, her arched eyebrows just a trifle too regular, her chiselled features just a trifle too cold, her delicate small chin just a trifle too strong and rigid and projecting. But only a cynical critic could have raised these hypercritical objections to an exquisite profile; the face as it stood was an eminently beautiful one, in the high calm intellectual style of feminine beauty.

As Olwen looked at her again and again, she soon observed the stranger's hands were almost as expressive and high-born looking in their own way as even her features; there was something about the long and graceful tapering

fingers that irresistibly reminded one, at first sight, of Lely's frail and exquisite models. Her figure was perfect; her bust well moulded, but far from voluptuous; her arms and neck, just faintly suggested rather than seen through her simple dark grenadine dinner dress, were of sculpturesque roundness and grace of outline. Even her costume had something quaint and artistic in it that seemed to smack remotely of the last century; her lace was fine and of antique make, and her hair was arranged with some dim reminiscence of the style of arrangement one sees in portraits of the time of Vanloo and Boucher and Fragonard. Everything about her at once attracted and repelled Olwen; the little Cornish rosebud felt awed and abashed in the presence of this majestic full-blown flower of queenly womanhood.

The countess, as Olwen called her at once in her own mind with girlish simplicity, was the first to speak. Olwen herself would never have ventured upon taking such a liberty with so great a lady. "You're new arrivals," she said, with a royal smile, "just come to-day! We were expecting friends from England ourselves by the same train, but they haven't turned up, I see. You've had a lovely journey,

I should think, along our beautiful coast in this glorious sunny weather." She spoke somehow with an expansive wave, as if the coast belonged to herself personally, and as if she had specially arranged with the authorities of the atmosphere for the supply of glorious weather at will, to her private order.

Olwen flushed with pleasure at her friendly notice, so grand and beautiful and condescending was she. "Yes, indeed," she answered, "it was just *too* lovely; I never in my life saw anything to equal it."

The countess flooded her with the light of her eyes. "I'm glad you like our scenery," she said simply. But she said it with the air of one whose own handiwork is being duly appreciated.

"Do you live here always, then?" Olwen ventured to ask, in somewhat trembling accents.

"Always, in winter. In Switzerland for half the year, and here for the other half. I'm a confirmed sun worshipper, faithful still to the oldest and most poetical of human creeds. I hate the mists and fogs and drizzles of London. I love not your fogs, your bogs, and your frogs. And, besides, I fly hither from English despotism."

“From English *what?*” Harry asked, looking up in surprise with a hasty glance from his soup-plate.

“From English despotism,” the countess repeated in the same sweet measured tones as before, transfixing him in turn with those clear grey eyes of hers. “You have a sovereign in England, an inexorable potentate, whom I try to avoid for one half at least of every twelve-month. Of late, I’ve avoided her altogether. No other despotism existing on earth can be so watchful or so exacting as that English sovereign of yours. A Russian czar may dictate to his subjects their political creed and their religious opinions; he may send them off to the mines of Siberia, or hand them over to the tender mercies of the Third Section; but he doesn’t dictate to them what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or wherewithal they shall be clothed, does he? An oriental despot may order about his sultanas and his Circassian slaves; may tax his people’s salt and ghee and marriages; may send this man to a lingering death, and despatch that man to a thousand strokes of the bastinado; but he doesn’t interfere in every petty action of his lieges in their daily life, or poke his nose in at the windows

of their huts at the moment when they're engaged upon the domestic dinner. Now, your English potentate does all this; her Argus eyes are ever upon you; her spies are watching you all day long; nothing is too small or too private for her notice; nothing is too sacred for her open criticism and her public animadversion." The countess paused, and looked hard at Harry. Olwen felt herself called upon to answer something.

"And her name?" she said, with some little wonderment.

"Is Mrs. Grundy," the countess retorted sharply. "You English, in solemn conclave assembled, fall down and worship Mrs. Grundy. All other despotisms are feared and hated; but Mrs. Grundy is faithfully served on every side by willing victims. Queen and Parliament would be powerless to touch the minute matters of everyday existence which Mrs. Grundy regulates for you all with a rod of iron. No legislative enactment could ever compel you yourself, for instance, to wear clothes which you didn't like, or to buy a bonnet which you didn't think 'so very becoming.' Mrs. Grundy issues her sumptuary edict, and forthwith you array yourself in an inflated balloon, or gird

yourself round with iron cage-work, or drape yourself in skirts that cling about your limbs like a wet bathing dress. Your husband would like to wear a soft felt hat instead of the orthodox shining chimney-pot in the streets of London—but what would Mrs. Grundy say? The thing's impossible. The eyes of England and of the Grundys are upon you. It would be pleasant to ride home to-day on top of the omnibus; but Mrs. Grundy walks, ten thousand strong, down Regent-street, the Strand, and Piccadilly; and in deference to her understood opinions, you take a cab instead and go home half-a-crown the poorer. For my part, I hate Mrs. Grundy. She drives me an exile from my own land. I prefer to escape her by spending the winter here on the Riviera, and flying for the summer to the breezy heights of free Switzerland."

"I wonder who Mrs. Grundy is?" Olwen murmured, inquiringly.

"Don't you know?" the countess cried, with an accent of surprise. "I thought everybody knew that! Why, she's just the farmer's wife in the old play of 'Speed the Plough'—nothing but the next-door farmer's wife—no more, I assure you; the personification and embodiment

of petty everyday female tyranny. And observe the correctness of popular instinct! It rightly envisages the Grundian potentate as a feminine rather than a masculine deity. Nobody cares about Mr. Grundy; nobody ever asks what *he* will say, or inquires his probable views and hypothetical strictures upon the important subject of carrying home your own parcels or wearing a hat where etiquette demands that you should wear a bonnet. Mr. Grundy, poor soul, is a cypher in the world for this matter, and Mrs. Grundy, his wife and sovereign lady, reigns supreme in her chosen domain of law and morals. That's genuine! that's truth! that involves a profound and far-reaching principle. This ceremonial government, which sums itself up in Mrs. Grundy's name, is really and truly a petticoat government, a system of life devised, maintained, enforced, and carried out solely by women. Men go to Parliament and make the laws. What does that matter? Women stop at home and constitute collectively that grand impersonal absolute despotism which sums itself up as Mrs. Grundy. All the endless regulations that clog and dog us at every turn of life, all the foolish hampering rules as to who may call upon whom; how many cards should be left,

and why; when and where gloves are necessary, obligatory, desirable, or optional; how you must bow, and nod, and fold a napkin, and dish-up vegetables—the horrid code of ‘good form,’ in fact—these are wholly and solely the creation of women, the digest of the prescriptions of the divine Mrs. Grundy. There are three kinds of government in the world, invented respectively by men, by priests, and by women. Political government—the masculine form—hurts nobody; after all, it has no effect. Ecclesiastical government—the epicene form—hurts us somewhat; but we’ve lived it down, and we can, all of us, escape it if we choose nowadays. Ceremonial government—the feminine form—presses upon us every day of our lives, from the cradle to the grave, with all the petty minute persistence and persecution of women. It is woman’s invention, and it bears upon its face the unmistakable mint mark of feminine intolerance.”

“You’re hard upon women,” Olwen said with a smile. “For my part, I like my own sex.”

“I don’t,” the countess responded frankly. “Man is really worth a hundred thousand of us. If you want breadth of view, go to man for it. If you want wide sympathy, go to

man for it. If you want geniality, toleration, expansiveness, justice, go to man for them. But if you prefer narrow-mindedness, intolerance, petty criticism, restricted sympathies, harsh injustice, positive cruelty, go to woman for them; go to woman, and verily I say unto you, you will not be disappointed."

She poised an olive on the end of a dessert fork as she spoke, and glanced up at Harry for approbation.

"Most women would be afraid to admit it," Harry replied complacently. He liked to be included in the ranks of a sex which possessed so many delightful characteristics.

"Most women, true; but I am not most women. I am myself, and I have the courage of my convictions," the countess answered with a delicious smile. For the rest of dinner time she addressed her remarks mainly to Harry, and Olwen was glad of it. Such conversation she had never heard before. It subdued and annihilated her. The countess flowed on like a majestic river. Her speech never faltered or hesitated for a moment. It came out always in an even stream with all the regular ease and balanced rhythm of a practised orator's.

As they finished their last raisins and oranges,

the countess rose with stately complacency. "Shall we go into the drawing-room?" she said to Olwen, sweeping up her train with her hand as she spoke. Olwen, afraid of her and half-repelled still, attempted to follow. The countess motioned her imperiously in front with a regal wave of her beautiful hand. "Married ladies first," she said; "Mrs. Grundy wills it." Olwen obeyed, but half mistrusted herself even for obeying. She must be a countess in her own right then, Olwen thought to herself; she had yielded precedence to the doctor's wife on the ground of being a single woman.

They had scarcely seated themselves in the comfortable easy chairs by a small table in a retired corner, the countess just toying lazily with her Louis Quinze fan, and Olwen, for the very first time in her whole life, feeling dimly conscious of a certain awkward doubt as to how to manage the conduct of her hands, when the big door from the main corridor opened suddenly, and in walked Ivan Royle and Mohamad Ali.

Ivan advanced towards them all at once, with his frank smile and hearty welcome. "How well you're looking, Chichele," he cried, delighted. "And Mrs. Chichele, too, as fresh and

bright and light as ever. This is just jolly. We're so enchanted to see you. Ali and I barely missed the train at St. Raphael by thirty seconds. Lost our way among the hills, and couldn't get right again. However, it doesn't matter, I see, for you've made yourselves acquainted even in our absence. You couldn't be mistaken, of course," turning to the countess, "as to this being Harry and Mrs. Chichele."

The countess bit the top of her fan in dubious acquiescence. "On the contrary," she said at last, after an awkward pause, with marked coldness, "I concluded these *couldn't* be your friends, Ivan. Indeed, the very first thing I ever said to them was just that—that the people we expected this afternoon hadn't turned up. To my mind, Mrs. Chichele doesn't at all answer to the description you gave me of her. You always used to be so bad at description."

Ivan and Olwen both coloured up with some embarrassment. The countess perceived it, and having shot her bolt and seen it fall on the weak spot, she was woman of the world enough to retrieve her position at once with feminine strategy. "I didn't expect any one half so young, and girlish, and fresh," she went on, with a charming smile towards Olwen. "You know,

Ivan, you hadn't in the least led me to look out for a Spenserian idyl in pink muslin. So, of course, we haven't dreamt of introducing ourselves to one another. Now, my dear boy, will you have the goodness to be master of the ceremonies?"

Ivan laughed an uneasy laugh. "Mrs. Chichele," he said, "you will, of course, have guessed that this is my cousin, Miss Seeta Mayne, to whom you have been talking. You know, Seeta, Harry Chichele is a sworn admirer of all your novels."

Miss Mayne bowed; the countess had disappeared forthwith from the scene as if by magic. "Not to know Dr. Chichele," she said in her courtly grand manner, still wielding the fan as if it had been a sceptre, "argues one's self unknown, I'm afraid. But you must remember," she added, half apologetically, "I see so little in my humble way of the great scientific world of London."

Olwen noticed in a moment two small points—first, that Seeta Mayne thought only of Harry and entirely ignored his poor little wife as a mere adjunct of the clever doctor; second, that she knew as if by instinct exactly where to flatter her husband's vanity. In a vague way, Olwen was already afraid of this great, clever,

beautiful woman—afraid of her, not, of course, for herself, but for Harry—for Harry.

Three minutes after, while Harry and Olwen were exchanging notes by the centre table with Mohammad Ali, Seeta Mayne drew Ivan Royle aside into a quiet corner. “My dear boy,” she said to him in a bantering undertone, yet half accusingly, “how on earth could you ever dream of so absurdly misleading me about that poor little Mrs. Chichele of yours? Why, Ivan, you told me she was pretty!”

“So she is,” Ivan answered stoutly, with his plain, simple, masculine common-sense. “The prettiest girl I ever saw anywhere.”

Seeta Mayne’s lip curled an almost imperceptible and delicate curl. “That insignificant baby-faced little doll!” she murmured with a bland and tolerant smile. “My dear Ivan, you will never be a judge of beauty in women! A poor little pink-and-white atomy like that! Pretty indeed! And you call yourself a painter! May the shade of La Fornarina mercifully forgive you!”

And as she drew herself up to her full height, no Fornarina that ever lived on earth looked in her time one half so beautiful.

When Olwen sat for a moment by the olive-wood fire in their own room late that evening, she said, as lightly as she could, but still with a faltering heart, to Harry, "Well, Harry, and what do you think of Seeta Mayne now you've actually seen her?"

"Think!" Harry echoed, stirring the fire with a dash into a rousing flare of wild sparks, "there's only one thing one could possibly think, my child, that she's just exactly what one would have expected her to be from her grand writings. But, Olwen, did you ever in your life see such eyes? They seem to pierce right through and through one."

END OF VOL. I.

