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The Island of Fantasy

A Romance

By FERGUS HUME

Author of "When I Lived In Bohemia," "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab," "The Man Who Vanished," etc.

Sorrow and weariness,
Heartache and dreariness,
  None should endure;
Scale ye the mountain peak,
Vale 'o the fountain seek,
  There is the cure.

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THE ISLAND OF FANTASY.

CHAPTER I.

A MIND DISEASED.

Your Eastern drugs, your spices, your perfumes,
Are all in vain;
They cannot snatch my soul from out its glooms,
Nor soothe the brain.
My mind is dark as cycle-sealèd tombs,
And must remain
In darkness till the light of God illumes
Its black inane.

It was eight o'clock on a still summer evening, and, the ladies having retired, two men were lingering in a pleasant, indolent fashion over their wine in the dining-room of Roylands Grange. To be exact, only the elder gentleman was paying any attention to his port, for the young man who sat at the head of the table stared vaguely on his empty glass, and at his equally empty plate, as if his thoughts were miles away, which was precisely the case. Youth was moody, age was cheerful, for, while the former indulged in a brown study, the latter cracked nuts and sipped wine, with a just appreciation of the excellence of both. Judging from this outward aspect of things, there was something wrong with Maurice Roylands, for if reverend age in the presentable person of Rector Carriston could be merry, there appeared to be no very feasible reason why unthinking youth should be so ineffably dreary. Yet woe was writ largely on the comely face of the moody young man, and he joined but listlessly in the jocund conversation of his companion, which was punctuated in a very marked manner by the cracking of filberts.

Outside, a magical twilight brooded over the landscape, and the chill odors of eve floated from a thousand sleeping flowers into the mellow atmosphere of the room, which was irradiated by the soft gleam of many wax candles rising white and slender from amid the pale roses adorning the dinner-table. All was pleasant, peaceful, and infinitely charming; yet Maurice Roylands, aged thirty, healthy, wealthy, and not at all bad-looking, sat moodily frowning at his untasted dessert, as though he bore the weight of the world on his shoulders.

In truth, Mr. Roylands, with the usual self-worship of latter-day youth, thought he was being very hardly treated by Destiny, as that all-powerful goddess had given him everything calculated to make a mortal happy, save the capability of being happy. This was undeniably hard, and might be called the very irony of fate, for one might as well offer a sumptuous banquet to a dyspeptic, as give a man all the means of enjoyment, without the faculty of taking advantage of such good fortune. Roylands had

considerable artistic power, an income of nearly six thousand a year, a fine house, friends innumerable—of the summer season sort; yet he neither cared about nor valued these blessings, for the simple reason that he was heartily sick of them, one and all. He would have been happier digging a patch of ground for his daily bread, than thus idling through life on an independent income, for Ennui, twin sister of Care, had taken possession of his soul, and in the midst of all his comforts he was thoroughly unhappy.

The proverb that "The rich are more miserable than the poor," is but a trite one on which to preach a sermon, for did not Solomon say all that there was to be said in the matter? It was an easier task to write a new play on the theme of Hamlet, than to compose a novel discourse on the "All is vanity" text; for on some subjects the final word has been said, and he who preaches thereon says nothing new, but only repeats the ideas of former orators, who in their turn doubtless reiterated the sayings of still earlier preachers, and so on back to Father Adam, to whom the wily serpent possibly delivered a sermon on the cynically wise saying illustrated so exhaustively by Solomon ben David. Therefore, to remark that Maurice was miserable amid all his splendors is a plagiarism, and they who desire to study the original version for themselves must read Ecclesiastes, which gives a minute analysis of the whole question, with cruelly true comments thereon.

When Roylands ten years before had gone to London, against the desire of his father, to take up the profession—if it can be called so—of a sculptor, he was full of energy and ambition. He had fully determined to set the Thames on fire by the creation of statues worthy of Canova, to make a great name in the artistic world, to become a member of the Academy, to inaugurate a new era in the history of English sculpture; so, with all this glory before him, he turned his back on the flesh-pots of Egypt and went to dwell in the land of Bohemia. In order to bring the lad to his senses, Roylands senior refused to aid him with a shilling until he gave up the pitiful trade—in this country squire's opinion—of chipping figures out of marble. Supplies being thus stopped, Maurice suffered greatly in those artistic days for lack of an assured income; yet in spite of all his deprivations, he was very happy in Bohemia until he lived down his enthusiasms. When matters came to that pass, the wine of life lost its zest for this young man, and he became a victim to melancholia, that terrible disease for which there is rarely—if any cure. He lived because he did not agree with Addison's Cato regarding the virtues of self-destruction, but as far as actual dying went it mattered to him neither one way nor the other. If he had done but little good during his life, at least he had done but little harm, so, thinking he could scarcely be punished severely for such a negative existence, he was quite willing to leave this world he found so dreary, provided the entrance into the next one was not of too painful a nature.

It is a bad thing for a young man to thus take to the pessimistic school of philosophy as exemplified by Schopenhauer, as, having nothing to look back at, nothing to look forward to, and nothing to hold on by, the scheme of his life falls into a ruinous condition, so, being without the safety anchor of Hope, he drifts aimlessly through existence, a nuisance to himself and to every one around him. Maurice, listless and despairing, did no more work than was absolutely necessary to earn a bare subsistence, and lived his life in a semi-dreamy, semi-lethargic condition, with no

very distinct idea as to what was to be the ultimate end of all this dreariness. When night fell he was then more at rest, for in sleep he found a certain amount of compensation for the woes of his waking hours. As to his modelling, he took a positive dislike to it, and for this reason improved but little in his work during the last years of his Bohemian existence. Profoundly disgusted, without any positive reason, with himself, his art, the world, and his fellow-men, heaven only knows what would have become of him, had not an event happened which, by placing him in a new position, seemed to promise his redemption from the gloomy prison of melancholia.

The event in question was none other than the death of his father, and Maurice, as in duty bound, came down to the funeral. When the will of the late Squire was read, it was discovered that, with the exception of one or two trifling bequests, all the real and personal property was left to his only son; thus this fortunate young man at the age of thirty found himself independent of the world for the rest of his days, provided always he did not squander his paternal acres, a thing he had not the slightest intention of doing. Maurice had no leanings towards what is vulgarly termed a "fast life," for he detested horse-racing, cared but little for wine, and neither cards nor women possessed any fascination for him. Not that he was a model young man by any means, but his tastes were too refined, his nature too intellectual, to admit of his finding pleasure in drinking, gaming, and their concomitants. As to love, he did not know the meaning of the word,—at least not the real meaning,—which was rather a mistake, as it would certainly have given him an interest in life, and perhaps have prevented him yielding so readily to the influence of "black care," which even the genial Venusian knew something about, seeing he made her an equestrian.

Of course, he was sorry for the death of his father, but there had been so little real sympathy between them, that he could not absolutely look upon the event as an irreparable calamity. Maurice had always loved his mother more than his father, and when she died as he was leaving home for college he was indeed inconsolable; but he saw the remains of the late Mr. Roylands duly committed to the family vault without any violent display of grief, after which he returned to live the life of a country gentleman at the Grange, and wonder what would be the upshot of this new phase of his existence.

Solitude was abhorrent to him, as his thoughts were so miserable; therefore, for the sake of having some one to drive away the evil spirit, he invited his aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Dengelton, to stay at the Grange for a week or so. She came without hesitation, and brought her daughter Eunice also, upon which Maurice, finding two women more than an unhappy bachelor could put up with, asked the new poet Crispin, for whom he had a great liking, to come down to Roylands, which that young man did very willingly, as he was in love with Eunice, a state of things half guessed and wholly hated by Mrs. Dengelton, who much desired her daughter to marry the new Squire.

On this special evening, the Rev. Stephen Carriston, Rector of Roylands, had come to dinner, and, Crispin having retired to the drawing-room with the ladies, he found himself alone with his former pupil, much to his satisfaction, as he wished greatly to have a quiet talk with Maurice. Mr. Carriston was the oldest friend the young man had, having been his tutor in the long ago, and prepared him for college. Whatever success Maurice gained at Oxford—and such success was not inconsiderable—was due to the admirable way in which he had been coached by the rubicund divine.

Certainly the Rector loved the good things of this life, and looked as if he did, which is surely pardonable enough, especially in a bachelor; for at sixty-five years of age the Rector was still single, and much beloved by his parishioners, to whom he preached short, pithy sermons on the actions of their daily lives, which was assuredly much better than muddling their dull brains with theological hair-splitting. Being very fond of Maurice, he was greatly concerned to see the marked change which six years of London life had made in the young fellow. The merry, ambitious lad, who had departed so full of resolution to succeed, had now returned a weary-looking, worn-out man; and as the Rector, during the intervals of his nut-cracking, glanced at his former pupil, he was struck by the extreme melancholy which pervaded the whole face. Comely it was certainly, of the fresh-colored Saxon type, but the color had long since left those haggard cheeks, there were deep lines in the high forehead, the mouth was drawn downward in a dismal fashion under the trim mustache, and from the eyes looked forth an unhappy soul.

Yes, the Rector was considerably puzzled to account for this change, and resolved to find out what ailed the lad, but he hardly knew how to set about this delicate task, the more so, as he feared the consolations of religion would do but little good in this case; for Maurice, without being absolutely a sceptic, yet held opinions of a heterodox type, quite at variance with the declarations of the Thirty-Nine Articles in which the good Rector so firmly believed.

At length Mr. Carriston grew weary of cracking nuts and sipping port wine without the digestive aid of pleasant conversation, and therefore began to talk to his quondam pupil, with the firm determination to keep on talking until he discovered the secret of the young man's melancholy.

"Are you not going to fill your glass, Maurice?"

"No, thank you, sir. I am rather tired of port."

"Inexplicable creature!" said the Rector, holding up his glass to the light. "Ah, well, '*De gustibus*,' my dear lad. I have no doubt you can finish the quotation. Why not try claret?"

"I'm tired of claret."

"It seems to me, sir," observed Mr. Carriston leisurely, "that you are tired of all things."

"I am—including myself."

"Strange! A young man of thirty years of age, sound of mind and body, who is fortunate enough to inherit six thousand a year, ought to be happy."

"Money does not bring happiness."

"Ah, that proverb is quite worn out," replied the Rector cheerily; "try another, my boy, try another."

Maurice, leaning forward with a sigh, took a handful of nuts, which he proceeded to crack in a listless fashion. The Rector said nothing, but waited for Maurice to speak, which he was obliged to do out of courtesy, although much disinclined to resume the argument.

"I've tried everything, and I'm tired of everything."

"Even of that marble-chipping you call art?"

"I am more tired of that than of anything else," said Maurice emphatically.

"A bad case," murmured the Rector, shaking his gray head; "a very bad case, which needs curing. 'Nothing's new! nothing's true! and no matter,' says my Oxford fine gentleman. Maurice, I must assert my privilege as an old friend, and reason with you in this matter. I am sadly afraid, my dear lad, that you need whipping."

The ghost of a smile played over the tired face of the young man, and he assented heartily to the observation of his old tutor—nay, even added an amendment thereto.

"I do, sir, I do!" he said sombrely; "we all need whipping more or less—men, women, and children."

"I am afraid the last-named get the most of it," replied Carriston, with dry humor.

"With the birch, yes. But 'tis not so pleasant to be whipped by Fate."

"My dear lad, you cannot say she has whipped you."

"To continue your illustration, Rector, there are several modes of whipping,—the birch which pains the skin, poverty which pains the body, and despair which pains the soul. The latter is my case. I have health, wealth, and youth; but I feel the stings of the rod all the same."

"Yes?" queried Carriston interrogatively; "in what way?"

"I have not the capability of enjoying the blessings I possess."

"How so? Explain this riddle."

"I cannot explain it. I simply take no pleasure in life. Rich or poor, old or young, well or ill, I would still be as miserable as I am now."

"Hum! Let us look at the question from three points of view—comprehensive points. The legal, the medicinal, the religious. One of these, if properly applied, will surely solve the enigma."

"I doubt it."

"Ah, that is because you have made up your mind to doubt. 'None so blind as those who won't see.'"

"Who is quoting proverbs now, Mr. Carriston?"

"I am, sir, even I who dislike such arid chips of wisdom; but 'tis an excellent proverb, which has borne the wear and tear of centuries. Come now, Maurice, are you in any trouble connected with money? are you involved in any law-suit, or—or—well," said the Rector, delicately eying his glass, "I hardly know how to put it,—er—er—are you involved in any love affair?"

"No; my worldly position is all right, and I am not mixed up in any feminine trouble."

"Good! that settles the legal point. Now for the medical. Your liver must be out of order."

"I assure you, sir, I never felt better in my life."

Mr. Carriston's face now assumed a grave expression as he put the last question to his host.

"And the religious point?"

"I am not troubled on that score, sir."

The Rev. Stephen looked doubtful.

"Whatever my religious views may be," resumed Maurice, seeing the Rector was but half convinced, "and I am afraid they can hardly be called orthodox, I at least can safely say that my past life is not open to misconstruction."

"Good! good! I always had confidence in you, Maurice. Yours is not the nature to find pleasure in gutter-raking. Well, it seems that none of those three points meet the case. Can you not give me some understandable reason for this melancholy which renders your life so bitter?"

"No. I went to London full of joy, energy, and ambition; but in some way—I cannot tell you how—I lost all those feelings. First joy departed, then ambition fled away, and with these two feelings absent I felt no further energy to do anything. It may be satiety, certainly. I have explored the heights and depths of London life, I have read books new and old, I have studied as far as in me lay my fellow-men, I have tried to fall in love with my fellow-women—and failed dismally. In fact, Mr. Carriston, I have exhausted the world, and find it as empty as this."

He held up a nut which he had just cracked, and it contained no kernel—an apt illustration of his wasted life.

The rector shook his head again in some perplexity, and filled himself another glass of port, while Maurice, rising from his seat, sauntered to the window, and looked absently at the peaceful scene before him. The moon, rising slowly over the tree-tops, flooded the landscape with her pale gleam, so that the gazer could see the glimmer of the white marble statues far down in the dewy darkness of the lawn, the sombre woods black against the clear sky, and away in the distance the thin streak of silver, which told of the restless ocean. A salt wind was blowing overland from thence, and, dilating his nostrils, opening his mouth, he inhaled the vivifying breeze in long breaths, while dully in his ears sounded the sullen thunder of the far-away billows rolling backward in sheets of shattered foam.

"Oh, Mother Nature! Demeter! Tellus! Isis!" he murmured, half closing his eyes; "tis only from thee I can hope to gain a panacea for this gnawing pain of life. I am weary of the world, tired of this aimless existence, but to thee will I fly to seek solace in thine healing balms."

"Maurice!"

"Yes, sir."

It was the rector who spoke, and the sound of his mellow voice roused the young man from his dreaming; therefore, resuming his normal manner, he lighted a cigarette and prepared to listen to the conversation of his old tutor.

"Are you still as good a German scholar as you used to be?" asked the rector deliberately.

"Not quite. My German, like myself, has grown somewhat rusty."

"Can you translate the word *Selbstschmerz*?"

"Self-sickness."

"Yes; that is about as good an English equivalent as can be found. Well, that is what you are suffering from."

"Oh, wise physician," retorted Roylands, with irony. "I know the cause of the disease myself, but what of the cure?"

"You must fall in love."

"No one can fall in love to order."

"Well, you must make the attempt at all events," said Carriston, with a genial laugh; "it is the only cure for your disease."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because it is your egotism makes you miserable. You care for no one but yourself, and are therefore bound to suffer from such selfishness. True happiness lies in self-abnegation, a virtue which all men preach, but few men practise. 'Every man,' says Goethe, 'thinks himself the centre of the universe.' This is true—particularly true in your case. You have been so much taken up with your own woes and troubles that you have had no time to see those of your fellow-creatures, and such exclusive analysis of one's inner life leads naturally to self-sickness. You are torturing yourself by yourself; you have destroyed the sense of pleasure, and can therefore see nothing good on God's earth. You would like to cut the Gordian knot by death, but have neither the courage nor resolution to make away with yourself. Oh, I know the reason of such hesitation.

''Tis better to endure the ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.'

I have no doubt that is your feeling about the hereafter. Well, with all this you feel you are in prison and cannot escape, because a last remnant of manliness forbids you opening the only door by which you can go hence. Therefore you are forced to remain on earth, and condemned yourself to supply the tortures from which you suffer. Have I not described your condition accurately?"

"You have," replied Maurice, rather astonished at the rector's penetration. "I do torture myself, I know, but that is because I cannot escape from my own thoughts. Pin-pricks hurt more than cannon balls, and incessant worries are far more painful than great calamities. But all you have said touches on the disease only, it does not say how the cure you propose will benefit me."

He had come back to his seat, and was now leaning forward with folded arms, looking at the benevolent face of his friend. The discussion, having roused his interest, made him forget himself for the moment, and with such forgetfulness the moody look passed away from his face. The rector saw this, and immediately made use of it as a point in his favor.

"Ah, if you could but behold yourself in the glass at this moment," he said approvingly, "you would see the point I am aiming at without need of further discussion. I have interested you, and consequently you have forgotten for the moment your self-torture. That is what love will do. If you love a woman, she will fill your whole soul, your whole being, and give you an interest in life. What she admires you will admire, what she takes an interest in you will take an interest in; and thus, being busy with other things, you will forget to worry your brains about your own perfections or imperfections. And if you are happy enough to become a father, children will give you a great interest in life, and you will find that God has appointed you work to do which is ready to your hand. When you discover the work, aided by wife and children, you will do it, and thus be happy. Remember those fine words of Burns,—

‘To make a happy fireside clime
For weans and wife,
That’s the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.’”

“What you say sounds fine but dull. I don’t care about such wearisome domesticity.”

“What you call wearisome domesticity,” said the Rector in a voice of emotion, “is the happiest state in which a man can find himself. Home, wife, children, domestic love, domestic consolations—what more can the heart of man desire? Laurel crowns cure no aching head, but the gentle kiss of a loved wife in time of trouble is indeed balm in Gilead.”

Maurice looked at the old man in amazement, for never had he seen him so moved.

“You speak feelingly, Rector,” he said at length, with a certain hesitation.

“I speak as I feel,” replied Carriston with a sigh. “I also have my story, old and unromantic-looking as I am. Come over to the Rectory to-morrow, my dear lad, and I will tell you something which will make you see how foolish it is to be miserable in God’s beautiful world.”

“I am afraid it will give you pain.”

“No; it will not give me pain. What was my greatest sorrow is now my greatest consolation. You will come and see me to-morrow?”

“If you wish it.”

“I do wish it.”

“Then I will come.”

There was silence for a few moments, each of them being occupied with his own thoughts. The Rector was evidently thinking of that old romance which had stirred him to such an unwonted display of emotion; and Maurice saw for the first time in his selfish life that other men had sorrows as well as he, and that he was not the only person in the world who suffered from *Selbstschmerz*.

“But come, Maurice,” said the Rector, after a pause, “I was talking about curing you by marriage.”

“Love!”

“Well, marriage in your case, I hope, will be love,” observed Carriston, a trifle reproachfully. “I would be sorry indeed to see you make any woman your wife unless it was for true love’s sake.”

“Well, whom do you want me to love?”

“Ah, that is for you to decide. But, if I may make a suggestion, I should say, Eunice.”

“Eunice!”

“She is a charming girl. Highly educated, good-looking”—

“But so prim.”

“Oh, that is but a suspicion of old maidism, which will wear off after a month or two of married life.”

“Do you think she would make me a good wife?”

“I am sure of it.”

"So am I," said Maurice, with a faint sneer. "She would look well at the head of my table; she would always be dressed to perfection; she would doubtless be an excellent mother; but there is one great bar to our union."

"And that is?"

"We only love each other as cousins."

"It may grow into a warmer feeling."

"I'm certain it won't; and, Rector," continued Maurice, laying his hand on the old man's arm, "could you advise me to have a mother-in-law like Mrs. Dengelton?"

The Rector laughed heartily, and Maurice joined in his mirth, much to Carriston's delight.

"Ah, now you are more like the boy I knew!" he said, slipping his arm into that of Roylands, and leading him to the door; "did I not tell you I would cure you? I will complete the cure to-morrow."

"But it might give you pain."

"No, no; don't think about that," said Carriston hastily. "If I can do you a service, I don't mind a passing twinge of regret. But here we are at the drawing-room door. Let us join the ladies."

"And Crispin."

"By the way," said the Rector, placing his hand on Roylands as he was about to open the door, "who is Crispin?"

"Every one in London has been trying to find that out for the last two years."

"What is he?"

"The new poet; the coming Tennyson, the future Browning. No one knows who he is, or where he comes from. He is called Crispin *tout court*."

"A most perplexing person. Are you quite sure"—

"If he is fit for respectable society? Oh yes. He goes everywhere in London. Like Disraeli, he stands on his head, for his genius—and he has great genius—has opened all the drawing-rooms of Belgravia to him. Oh, he is quite proper."

"Still, still!" objected the Rector.

"Well, what objection have you yet to him, my dear sir?"

"I'm afraid, I'm afraid," whispered Carriston, looking apprehensively at Maurice, "that he loves Eunice."

"Impossible!"

"Oh, I'm not so old but what I can see the signs and tokens of love; and, placed on my guard by a casual glance, I noticed Eunice and your poet particularly at dinner."

"In that case," said Maurice coolly, "I'm afraid Crispin will have to put up with Mrs. Dengelton as a mother-in-law."

The Rector laughed again, and they entered the drawing-room.

CHAPTER II.

DE RERUM PARVULA.

The smallest actions in a life
Betray the calm or inward strife:
From idle straws, as persons know,
One learns the way the breezes blow;
You love those Florentine mosaics,
Yet tiny stones the picture makes.
Complying with this rule's demand,
Whate'er is meant you'll understand,
So follow carefully this chatter,
And you'll discover what's the matter.

The three persons who occupied the drawing-room were all employed according to their different natures, for Crispin, being an ardent musician, was seated at the piano, playing softly. Eunice, who rarely spoke, was listening, and the Hon. Mrs. Dengelton was talking as usual. She was always talking, but never by any chance said anything worth listening to. With her it was all quantity and no quality. For, wherever she was, in drawing-room, theatre, or park, her sharp strident voice could be heard all over the place. Certainly she was silent in church, but it must have been an effort for her to hold her tongue, and she fully made up for it when she was outside the door, by chattering all the way home. Scandal said she had talked her husband dead and her daughter silent; and certainly the Hon. Guy Dengelton was safe in the family vault, while Eunice, as a rule, said very little. Mrs. Dengelton knew every one and everything, and, were it the fashion to write memoirs, after the mode of the eighteenth century, she could have produced a book which would have made a sensation, and been suppressed—after the first edition. Owing to her incessant stream of small talk, she was known in society as "The Parrot," a name which exactly fitted her, as she had a hook nose, beady eyes, and always dressed in gay colors. Add to this description her *esprit*, as she called it, but which scandal said was French for the vulgar American word "jaw," and you have a faithful portrait of the most dreaded woman in London.

Reasons? two! She knew stories about every one, which she retailed to their friends at the pitch of her voice; and she was always hunting for a husband for Eunice. Eldest sons had a horror of her, and the announcement that Mrs. Dengelton was to be at any special ball was sufficient to keep all the eligible young men away. Consequently, no one asked "The Parrot" to a dance unless the invitation was dragged out of them; but Mrs. Dengelton was skilful at such work, and went out a good deal during the season. Hitherto she had not been successful in her husband-hunting, as no one would marry

Eunice, with the chance of having Mrs. Dengelton as mother-in-law. Crispin certainly was daring enough to pay his addresses, but Crispin had neither name, title, nor family, nothing but his genius, and Mrs. Dengelton therefore frowned on his suit. When Maurice came in for the Roylands estate, his aunt thought it would be splendid for Eunice to marry her first cousin, "just to keep the property in the family," as Mrs. Dengelton put it, though how such a saying applied in this case it is rather difficult to see. However, The Parrot gladly accepted her nephew's invitation,—when she arrived, he regretted having asked her—and came down with Eunice, with the firm determination to talk Maurice into matrimony.

She was very angry when Crispin arrived, and forbade Eunice to encourage the young man, but she could scarcely turn him out of the house, as she would have liked to do, so put up with his presence as best she could, and never lost an opportunity of saying disagreeable things to him in a covert fashion.

Eunice herself was a charmingly pretty girl, who very much resented the way in which her mother put her up to auction, but, being rather weak-willed, could not combat Mrs. Dengelton's determination, and submitted quietly to be dragged about all over the place, with the hope that some day a modern St. George would deliver her from this dragon.

St. George, long looked for, unexpectedly appeared one day in the person of Crispin, and, though Mrs. Dengelton laughed at the idea of her daughter throwing herself away on a pauper, Eunice, nevertheless, fell in love with the poet. Crispin would have married her at once, but, in spite of her anxiety to get beyond the clack of Mrs. Dengelton's tongue, she was too much afraid of that strong-willed lady to break out into open mutiny, so poor St. George had to adore her in secret, lest the dragon should pounce down on him.

Crispin! who ever heard of such a name? being the more singular as it had neither head nor tail. If he had been Henry Crispin, or Crispin Jones, people could have put up with the oddness of the sound; but Crispin, all alone by itself, sounded heathenish, to say the least of it. No one knew who Crispin was, or where he came from, for he had suddenly flashed like a meteor into literary London, two years previous, with a book of brilliant poems, which made a great success. For once the critics were unanimous in praising good work, and pronounced "The Roses of Shiraz, and Other Poems" to be the finest series of poetical Eastern tales since Lord Byron had enchanted the world with "The Giaour" and "The Bride of Abydos." For the critics' praise or blame Crispin seemed to care but little, nor did he satisfy the curiosity of those up to date people who desired to meet him. Sometimes he would appear in a Belgravian drawing-room, but only for a moment, and would then leave England for a tour in his beloved East. Just when the world would begin to forget him, he would suddenly reappear in society, and fascinate one and all by his charming manners. Handsome some he was not, being small and dark, but he was as lithe as a serpent, and his dark eyes flashed with the fierce fire of genius. All sorts of stories were told about him, and none of them were correct, though Mrs. Dengelton was ready to swear to the truth of at least half a dozen. In fact, he puzzled society very much, and, as society always takes to that which is not understandable, Crispin was quite the lion of the season.

An article called "The Lord Byron of our days" appeared in a leading society paper, which retailed wonders about this unknown poet; but Crispin neither contradicted nor affirmed the truth of these statements, therefore became more of a puzzle than ever. He was a brilliant musician; he talked several languages, and seemed to have been all over the world; but beyond this he was a mystery. To no one, not even to Maurice, who was his closest friend, did he tell the story of his life, and even Mrs. Dengelton, who was an adept at finding out things people did not want known, could make nothing of him.

Then Crispin met Eunice, and all his heart went out to this dainty, dark-haired girl, who spoke so seldom, but whose eyes and gestures were so eloquent. "The Fairy of Midnight," he called her, and often wondered how such a woman as Mrs. Dengelton ever came to have so silent and lovely a daughter. To Crispin, steeped in the lore of the East, she was like a Peri, and her love inspired him with wondrous love poems, some of which appeared in *The Nineteenth Century* and *The Fortnightly Review*. Whether he told her who he was is doubtful—if he did, Eunice never betrayed his confidence, for she was a woman who could keep a secret, which was a miracle, seeing her mother was such a gossip. They loved and suffered in silence with such discretion, that even keen-eyed Mrs. Dengelton did not guess the understanding which existed between them, and was hard at work trying to arrange a marriage with Maurice, quite unaware that her meek daughter had made up her mind to marry no one but this mysterious Crispin.

Sitting at the piano, Crispin was playing a wild Eastern air with the soft pedal down, and looking at Eunice, whose eyes responded eloquently to his glances. Neither of them paid much attention to the chatter of The Parrot, who was quite ignorant of the love-making going on under her nose, for both Eunice and Crispin had arrived at the stage of complete union of souls which renders words superfluous while eyes can talk.

Mrs. Dengelton was doing a parrot in beadwork for a screen, and the gaudy bird might have passed for her portrait, so like her did it seem. Luckily, the beadwork parrot could not talk, but its creator could, and did, with as few pauses as possible.

"As I was saying, my dear Eunice, there is something very strange about this silence of my dear nephew. I've no doubt it is smoking too much,—so many young men smoke in that dreadful place, Bloomsbury, where he lived,—or perhaps he feels a little out of society after living so long away from it. Oh, I know Bloomsbury! yes! I sometimes visit the poor there. How strange I never came across poor dear Maurice! He is so sadly altered, not gay like he used to be. I do not really think he knows how to laugh, and"—

At this moment, as if to give the lie to Mrs. Dengelton's assertion, her nephew entered the room, laughing, in company with the Rector; but the good lady did not know that she was the cause of this hilarity, and at once began to deluge the new-comers with the fountain of her small talk.

"Now, my dear Rector and my dear Maurice, what are you laughing at? Is it some amusing joke? Oh, I am sure it is! Eunice, Mr. Crispin, we are going to be told something funny"—

"But really, my dear lady," began the Rector, with uplifted hand, "I"—

"Now you need not tell me it is not funny, because it has made Maurice laugh, and he has been as grave as a judge since we came down. I was just saying to Eunice when you came in"—

"My dear aunt, the joke is not worth telling you," said Maurice, in desperation cutting her short.

"Ah, I knew there was a joke! Do tell it to Eunice! she is so fond of amusing stories, especially from you."

Maurice flushed angrily.

"I don't tell amusing stories," he said curtly, and walked across to the piano.

"Such a bad temper!" sighed the Parrot, shaking her head; "so like his poor dear father, who foamed at the mouth when in a rage."

"Oh, come, not so bad as that," said the Rector good-naturedly.

"My dear Rector, I assure you I have seen Austin"—And then Mrs. Dengelton began a long, rambling story, which had no beginning and certainly did not appear to have an end, for she droned on until the poor Rector was quite weary, and was much put to to conceal his yawns.

Meanwhile, Maurice, remembering what the Rector had told him about the young couple, looked keenly at the poet and then at his cousin, at which inspection they naturally felt somewhat embarrassed.

"Yes?" said Eunice at length, in an interrogative fashion.

"Oh, nothing, nothing!" he responded hastily; "I was only wondering what you were talking about."

"We were not talking at all," said Crispin, running his fingers over the keys; "on the contrary, we were listening to Mrs. Dengelton."

Maurice smiled absently, and tugged moodily at his mustache.

"You have a charming place here, Roylands," remarked Crispin, more for the sake of saying something than for the importance of the remark; "I would like to settle down in this quiet village."

"You!" said Maurice in astonishment; "the bird of passage who is never off the wing! Why, you would die of ennui in a week."

"Ah, that depends on the company," answered Crispin, stealing a glance at Eunice, who sat silently playing with her fan.

"I am afraid I am not very lively company," observed Maurice, with a sigh, not noticing the glance; "there is so little to talk about nowadays."

"Poetry."

"I'm tired of poetry."

"Music."

"Too much music is dreary. I heard such a lot in London."

"Then you must love scandal."

"Ah, that is a hint that my dear aunt can amuse me."

"Maurice!" said Eunice, with a frown.

"Now don't be angry, my dear cousin. Talking scandal is a very harmless occupation, and, as the Rector seems interested, I think I will go and hear the latest story of Belgravia. But, Crispin, I wish you would take my cousin on to the terrace—the sky is worth looking at with moon and clouds."

Crispin darted a look of gratitude at him, and Maurice, delighted at thus foiling his aunt's schemes, went off to hear that lady's conversation.

The two lovers at the piano were afraid to move for a time, lest they should attract Mrs. Dengelton's attention, and thus be stopped from leaving the room; but when they saw her deep in conversation with the two gentlemen, they stole quietly to the French window at the end of the room, through which they speedily gained the terrace.

"Do you feel cold, Eunice?" asked Crispin, noticing his companion shiver.

"A little."

"Wait a moment, then. Your mother left a shawl near the window, I'll fetch it to you at once."

"Take care she does not see you."

"Not much fear of that; she has an audience, and is happy."

He went off laughing quietly; and Eunice, leaning on the balustrade of the terrace, stared at the wonderful beauty of the sky. Away in the west shone the silver round of the moon, and below her were gigantic black clouds, the edges of which were tipped with light. They looked like gigantic rocks piled up from earth to heaven, and above them shone the serene planet in an expanse of blue, as if she scorned their efforts to veil her face. Far below Eunice heard the musical splash of the fountains, and the chill odors of flowers floated upward, as though drawn by the spell of her beauty. She looked wonderfully lovely with her delicate face turned upward to the moon, and so thought Crispin, as he came lightly along the terrace with the fleecy shawl over his arm.

"I shall no longer call you the Fairy of Midnight," he whispered, wrapping the shawl round her shoulders; "your name will be the 'Moon Elf.'"

"Ah, what a charming title for a fairy story!" said Eunice, who was anything but silent when away from her mother. "Why do you not write a fairy story?"

"Because I am living one now."

"Flatterer!"

"No; I am speaking the truth. I adore a lovely princess, who is guarded by an elderly dragon breathing the fire of scandal"—

"You must not talk of my mother like that."

"Then I will not. She is the most charming lady I know."

"Oh!"

"What! you are not pleased at that? My dearest Eunice, how cruel you are! But indeed I do not love your mother. She will not let me marry you."

"No; she wants me to marry Maurice," said Eunice, with a sigh.

"I am afraid that ambition will never be gratified. Maurice is our friend."

"Do you think he knows we love one another?"

"I am sure he does. But he knows to-night for the first time; I saw it in his eyes when he looked at us."

"How can he have guessed?"

"He did not guess. No; Roylands has never been in love, and only a lover can recognize the silent eloquence of love. But I think that keen-eyed old Rector"—

"What! Mr. Carriston? Impossible! How could he tell we loved one another?"

"Well, going by the theory I have propounded, he must have at one time of his life been in love himself, and therefore intuitively guessed our hidden romance."

"But he is a bachelor."

"Ah, then he has had a romance also! An extinct volcano perhaps."

"And Maurice?"

"Is not a volcano at all—at least, not so far as I know. He has never been in love yet, but he will be some day."

"When?"

"Pardon me, I cannot lift the veil of the future. But I admit Maurice with his melancholia puzzles me."

"Well, you puzzle every one yourself. They call you the riddle of London."

"I will explain my riddle self to you when we marry."

"I am afraid that will never be."

"Indeed it will," he said gayly. "But you need not be afraid of my mystery; I have no Bluebeard chamber to keep locked, I assure you. Do you hesitate to marry me on account of my so-called mystery?"

"No; I trust you too much for that."

"My dearest!"

At this moment the moon veiled her face discreetly behind a wandering cloud, and their lips met in a kiss—a kiss of pure and enduring love. Then Crispin tenderly wrapped the shawl closer round the shoulders of Eunice, and arm in arm they strolled up and down the terrace, talking of their present despairs, their future hopes, and their possible marriage.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Dengelton, quite unaware of the way in which all her matrimonial schemes were being baffled by this audacious poet, was holding forth to Maurice and the Rector on the subject of a family romance. For once in her life she proved interesting, for Maurice only knew the skeleton of Roylands by name, and was quite unaware of the reason it was locked up in the cupboard. It was wonderful what a lot of good the conversation of the Rector had done him, and now, having been once roused out of his melancholia, he was quite interested by the story which his aunt was telling. The Rev. Stephen Carriston noticed the bright look on his usually sad face, and was delighted thereat.

"I will complete the cure to-morrow," he repeated to himself; and then prepared to listen to Mrs. Dengelton's story, which interested him very much, the more so as he knew the principal actor concerned therein.

"Of course I only speak from hearsay, my dear Rector," she said, laying aside her beadwork so as to give her eloquence every chance; "at the time these events took place I was just a baby in long clothes. You, Rector, perhaps know the story better than I do."

"No; I had just left college when Rudolph Roylands ran away, but I knew him at the university."

"Ah yes; of course. You were very friendly with both my brothers, I believe, so it is curious they never told you of their love for Rose Silverton."

"Well—I heard something about it," said the Rector, with a hesitating glance at Maurice.

"Oh, my dear Rector, I am going to say nothing against my sister-in-law. She was a very charming woman."

"She was all that was good and pure," remarked Maurice abruptly; annoyed, he knew not why, at the tone adopted by Mrs. Dengelton in speaking of his dead mother.

"Yes, I know she was. Still, my dear Maurice, you must pardon my plain speech, but she did flirt terribly with Rudolph."

"My lost uncle? Ridiculous!"

"It is not ridiculous at all," said the lady, drawing herself up; "it was on your mother's account Rudolph left England."

"Who said so?" demanded Maurice indignantly.

"Every one; even your father."

Maurice was about to make some remark, when he caught sight of a warning look on Carriston's face, therefore held his peace.

"What I was about to remark," pursued Mrs. Dengelton, choosing her words carefully, "was that, when my brothers, Rudolph and Austin, came home,—the first from his regiment, the second from college,—they both fell in love with Rose Silverton, whose father was a retired captain in the army. Rudolph, as you know, Rector, was the heir to Roylands, and Captain Silverton naturally wanted Rose to marry him, as the match was such a good one. She, however, preferred Austin."

"Love *versus* Money, and Love was triumphant," said Maurice, smiling.

"If you put it like that, I suppose it was," replied his aunt frigidly. "Well, Rose, as I have said, flirted considerably with Rudolph, though she loved my brother Austin best. Oh, you need not shake your head, Rector—Rose did flirt!"

"My dear aunt, spare the dead," observed Maurice, with a groan, for this old lady was really terrible with her malignant tongue.

"I hope I am too good a churchwoman to speak evil of any one, dead or alive," said Mrs. Dengelton, with dignity. "But I will make no further remarks if they are so displeasing to you, though why they should be displeasing I cannot conceive. Well, to gratify her father, Rose appeared to favor Rudolph, but in secret she met Austin. Such duplicity! I beg your pardon, Maurice, but it was duplicity."

The Rector sighed, and Mrs. Dengelton looked curiously at him, as if she guessed the meaning of the sigh, then resumed her story without commenting thereon, to Carriston's evident relief.

"Rudolph in some way came to hear of these stolen meetings, and surprised Austin walking with Rose one June evening. The brothers came, I regret to say, to blows, while Rose looked on in horror. Austin, being the younger and weaker, could not stand against the furious onslaught of Rudolph, who stunned him with a blow, then, thinking he had killed him, kissed Rose, who had fainted, and disappeared forever. He returned to London, left the army, and went away to the East, with a considerable sum of money which he inherited from his mother."

"And my father and mother?" asked Maurice breathlessly.

"Were found by some laborers insensible; the one from fear, the other from the blow given to him by his brother. They were taken to their respective homes, and when Austin got well again, he married Rose in due course. I believe your father and mother were very happy in their married life, Maurice, but they were singularly unfortunate in the fate of their children. Your brothers and sisters, four of them born during the early period of the marriage, all died; and you, who came into the world nearly twenty years after the marriage, were the only child who lived."

"And how long ago did all this happen, aunt?"

"Cannot you think it out for yourself?" said Mrs. Dengelton tartly. "You are now thirty-five; you were born—let me see—about fifteen years after the marriage, so altogether Rudolph disappeared fifty years ago."

"And has not been heard of since?"

"No; all inquiries were made, but nothing came of them," replied the lady, shaking her head. "I suppose Rudolph thought he had killed Austin, and left England to avoid arrest. At all events, not a soul has heard of him since. Where he went, no one knows; but by this time, I have no doubt he is dead."

"Poor Uncle Rudolph, what an unhappy fate!" said Maurice thoughtfully.

"Ah, I always did blame Rose for that quarrel!" cried Mrs. Dengelton sourly.

"My mother"—began Maurice indignantly, when the Rector stopped him.

"Your mother was not to blame, my dear Maurice," he said, rising to his feet. "I know more about this story than Mrs. Dengelton thinks."

A sniff was the Hon. Mrs. Dengelton's only reply, which was vulgar, but eloquent of disbelief.

Carriston's face, generally ruddy, looked somewhat pale, and Maurice wondered what could be the reason for such a loss of color. The old man saw his inquiring look, and arose to take his leave.

"I must say good-night, my dear Maurice," he said, giving his hand to Mrs. Dengelton. "I am not so young as I once was, and keep early hours."

At this moment, as if guided by some happy fate, Eunice, in company with Crispin, entered the room at the back of Mrs. Dengelton, and returned to their seats without her having noticed their absence.

"Good-night, sir," said Crispin, coming forward to shake hands with the Rector.

"How quiet you have been!" remarked Mrs. Dengelton suspiciously. "Where is my daughter?"

"Here, mamma;" and Eunice came forward in the demurest manner.

"Were you listening to my story?" asked her mother inquiringly,—"my story about your Uncle Rudolph leaving England?"

"No," interposed Crispin quickly, before Eunice could speak; "we were discussing photographs on yonder sofa."

"Photographs, eh?" said Mrs. Dengelton, with a frown, for she knew what looking over a photograph album meant in this case, but did not see her way to make further remark.

The Rector said good-night to every one, and then departed, accompanied by Maurice, who walked with him as far as the park gates. Here they separated, after Maurice had promised faithfully to call at the Rectory the next day, and the old clergyman went home, while his pupil returned to the Grange in a thoughtful manner.

"I wonder," he said to himself, pausing for a moment in the shadowy avenue,—"I wonder if my uncle is still alive. If he is, I am wrongfully in possession of Roylands. Suppose he came back and claimed it, I would once more be penniless. Well," he sighed, resuming his walk, "perhaps that would be the best thing that could happen, for work means happiness, and earning one's bread forces a man to take a deep interest in life whether he will or no."

CHAPTER III.

THE RECTOR'S ROMANCE.

In pity for our painful strife
God aids us from above,
And every mortal in his life
Plucks once the rose of love.
The flower may bloom, the flower may fade,
As love brings joys or woes,
Still in the heart of youth and maid
That sacred blossom grows.
'Tis cherished through declining years,
Amid death's coming glooms,
And watered by regretful tears,
The flower eternal blooms.
Nor death that rose from us can part,
For when the body dies,
All broken on the broken heart,
That bud of heaven lies.

Roylands Rectory was a comfortable-looking house, distant about a mile from the Grange, and near the village, which was an extremely small one. Indeed, although the parish was large, the Rector's congregation was not, and his clerical occupation did not entail much work. Nevertheless, Stephen Carriston did his best to attend to the spiritual welfare of the souls under his charge; and if the hardest day's work still left him with plenty of spare time on his hands, that could hardly be called his fault. The Rector abhorred idleness, which is said to be the mother of all the vices, and managed to fill up his unoccupied hours in a sufficiently pleasant manner by indulging in occupations congenial to his tastes. He was now engaged in translating the comedies of Aristophanes into English verse, and found the biting wit of the great Athenian playwright very delightful after the dull brains of his parishioners. For the rest, he pottered about his garden and attended to his roses, which were the pride of his heart, as well they might be, seeing that his small plot of ground was a perfect bower of loveliness.

It is at this point that the pen fails and the brush should come in; for it would be simply impossible to give in bald prose an adequate description of the paradise of flowers contained within the red brick walls which enclosed the garden on three sides. The fourth side was the house, a quaint, low-roofed, old-fashioned place, with deep diamond-paned lattices, and stacks of curiously-twisted chimneys. Built in the reign

of the Second Charles, it yet bore the date of its erection, 1666, the *annus mirabilis* of Dryden, when half London was swept away by the fire, and half its inhabitants by the plague. Rector Carriston liked this house,—nay, like is too weak a word, he loved it,—as its antiquity, matching with his own, pleased him; and besides, having resided within its red-tiled roof for over thirty years, it was natural that he should be deeply attached to its quaint walls and still quainter rooms.

But the garden! oh, the garden was a miracle of beauty! and only Crispin, who deals in such lovelinesses, could describe its perfections, as he did indeed long afterwards, when the good Rector was dead, and could not read the glowing verse which eulogized his roses. Three moderately high brick walls, one running parallel to the high road, so that the Rector could keep a vigilant eye on the incomings and outgoings of his villagers, fenced in this modern garden of Alcinous, and these three walls were almost hidden by the foliage of peach and apricot and nectarine, for it was now midsummer, and nature was decked out in her gayest robes. A dial in the middle of the smooth lawn, with its warning motto, which the Rector did not believe, as Time only sauntered with him; a noble elm, wherein the thrush fluted daily, and a bower of greenery, in which the nightingale piped nightly: it was truly an ideal retreat, rendered still more perfect by the roses. The roses! oh, the red, white, and yellow roses! how they bloomed in profusion under the old red wall, which drew the heat of the sun into its breast, and then showered it second-hand on the delicate, warmth-loving flowers. Great creamy buds, trembling amid their green leaves at the caress of the wind, gorgeously crimson blossoms burning incense to the hot sun, pale-tinted flowers, which flushed delicately at the dawn hour, and bright yellow orbs, which looked as though the touch of Midas had turned them into gold. All the bees for miles around knew that garden, and the finest honey in the neighborhood owed its existence to the constant visits they paid to that wilderness of sweets.

Such a bright morning as it was! Above, the blue sky, in which the sun burned lustily, below, the green earth, pranked with flowers, and between these two splendors, the Rector, armed with a pair of scissors, strolling contentedly about his small domain. From the adjacent fields, where the corn was yet young, sprang a brown-feathered lark, which arose higher and higher in spiral circles, singing as though his throat would burst with melody, until, the highest point attained, he ceased his liquid warblings, and fell earthward like a stone. Indeed, the Rector had no lack of music, for the larks awoke him in the morning, the thrushes piped to him at noon, and when night fell the divine nightingale pouring forth her impassioned strains wooed him from his study, where he was reading the Aristophanic rendering of her song, to listen to the reality, before which even the magical Greek verse seemed harsh. 'Twas an ideal place, and in it the Rector lived an ideal existence, far away from the noise and restlessness of our modern civilization. In his study he had the books of genius, which he greatly loved, but in his garden he possessed the book of God, which he loved still more; and even had not he been a devout believer in the goodness of the Almighty, surely that garden would have converted him with its dewy splendors.

An odd figure looked Mr. Carriston, shuffling about in a pair of comfortable old slippers, a very raven in blackness, save for the wide-brimmed straw hat shading his gray hairs, his benevolent-looking face. With a green watering-pan in one hand, and the scissors in the other, he pried and peered among his beloved flowers, with his two

pets—a cat and a magpie—at his heels, and clipped off a dead leaf here, plucked a withered blossom there, with the tenderest anxiety for the well-being of the roses.

"Dear, dear!" sighed the Rector, pausing before a drooping-looking Gloire de Dijon; "this does not seem at all healthy. It needs rain—in fact, I think the flowers would be none the worse of a shower or so; but there's no sign of rain," looking anxiously up to the cloudless sky. "I wonder if a little manure"—

Down went the Rector on his knees, and began grubbing about the roots of the plant, much to the discomfort of the magpie, who hopped about near him in an agitated manner.

"A brass thimble," said Mr. Carriston, making a discovery, "a copper, and three blue beads. The roots of the plant wounded, too, with scratching. This is your work, Simon. I wish you would hide your rubbish somewhere else."

The magpie, otherwise Simon, made a vicious peck at the Rector's hand, to revenge himself for the discovery of his treasure; then, anxious to save something, snatched up the thimble and made off hastily.

"Too bad of Simon," murmured Mr. Carriston, rubbing his nose in a vexed manner. "I will have to ask Mukle to keep him in the back yard. Ah, Mukle! what is it?"

Mukle—to the rector, Mrs. Mukle to her friends—was a hard-featured, bony woman, who looked as if she had been cut out of a deal board. Her cooking was much more agreeable than her appearance, and, having been with the rector—whom she adored—for many years, she knew to a turn what he liked and what he did not like, therefore suited him admirably in her double capacity of cook and housekeeper.

"Mr. Roylands, sir!" announced Mukle grimly.

"Oh, where is he?"

"Study, sir," responded Mukle, who was a lady with a firm belief in the golden rule of silence.

"Ask him to come here."

An assenting sniff was Mukle's only reply, and, turning on her heel in a military fashion,—the late Mr. Mukle had been a soldier,—she strode back to the house like a grenadier.

Meanwhile, Mr. Carriston, having risen to his feet, was dusting his knees, and, while thus engaged, saw Maurice coming towards him. Assuredly the master of the Grange was a fine specimen of humanity, for he was over six feet in height, and, being arrayed in shooting-coat, knickerbockers, and deerstalker's hat, looked a remarkably striking figure. He would have looked better had his face borne a smile, but, as it was, he came solemnly forward and took the rector's outstretched hand as if he was chief mourner at a funeral.

"You shouldn't be a country gentleman, Maurice," said Mr. Carriston, after the usual greetings had been exchanged. "The occupation of a monk would suit you better."

Maurice said nothing, but sighed wearily.

"Come now, my dear lad; if you sigh in that fashion, I shall suspect you of being a lover, in spite of your asseveration to the contrary."

"A man can't marry his aunt, and as Crispin wants to marry Eunice, no one is left for me but my honorable relation."

"Try Mukle."

"Too much of a grenadier."

"I think you are the same—in height," said the Rector, looking approvingly at his tall friend. "If old Father Fritz had seen the pair of ye, I think he would have insisted upon the marriage, so as to breed a race of giants. But, dear, dear! what nonsense we talk! Come and sit down, my lad. Will you smoke?"

"No, thank you, sir. I'm tired of smoking."

"Maurice, if you go on in this fashion, I will be angry with you. It's a beautiful day, so you ought to have a beautiful smile on your face. Listen to that lark! Does not its gush of song thrill your heart? Admire my roses! Where, even in the gorgeous East, will you see such splendor? The birds sing, the sun shines, the flowers bloom, and yet you are as discontented as if you were shut up between four bare walls. Maurice, I'm really and truly ashamed of your ingratitude to God for His many gifts." Maurice made no reply, but punched holes in the gravel with his walking-stick. "Now you wait here, my lad," said the Rector, recovering breath after his little lecture, "and see if yon lark will sing you into a better frame of mind. It may be the David to your Saul, and drive the evil spirit out of you. I am going away to wash my hands, which are somewhat grubby with my gardening, and will return in a few moments."

Off went the Rector with a light step, as springy as that of a young man, and Maurice looked after him in sheer envy of such light-heartedness.

"Why cannot I be happy like that?" he sighed, baring his head to the cool breeze.

Did ever a man ask himself so ridiculous a question? Here was a healthy young man, of good personal appearance, with a superfluity of the gifts of fortune, yet he commiserated himself for nothing at all, and propounded riddles to himself which he was unable to answer. But all such misery came from incessant brooding and self-analysis, which is bound to make even the most complacent person dissatisfied with his advantages in the long-run. If Maurice, throwing aside his books, art, broodings, and everything else, had gone in for fishing, hunting, dancing, rowing, as he did in his earlier youth, his mind would soon have resumed its normal healthiness. Unluckily, the ten years' life in Bohemia, where he had no money nor time to indulge in such sports, had weakened his interest in them, and he by no means seemed inclined to take up the broken thread of his life. This was a great mistake, as, had he reverted to his earlier mode of living, he would in a short time have come to look upon that weary decade as but a bad dream, and ultimately have recovered this *mens sana in corpore sano* condition, which is so essential to the happiness of one's existence. If there is a person to be envied, 'tis a healthy man with an average stock of brains, for he does not live with shadows, he has no torturing dreams, he does not rack his soul with thinking out the problems of life; but simply takes the goods the gods provide, enjoys them to the full measure of his capacity, and throws all disturbing influences to the winds. Maurice Roylands was a man of this sort in many respects, but he had a trifle too much brain power, and therefore, in accordance with the great law of compensation, suffered from the excess, by using it to torture his otherwise healthy mind. Unfortunately, he did not reason in this way, but, feeling that he was miserable, hastily decided that such misery was incurable. Not a wise way of looking at the matter certainly, but then Maurice, though no fool in many ways, was not a Solomon for wisdom; and besides, Melancholia, who places all things in a dull light, had him in her grip, which prevented him from giving his diseased mind the medicine it required.

However, in accordance with his old tutor's instructions, he sat there in silence, drinking in the odors of the flowers, and listening to the music of the lark. Not only that, but a thrush in the tree above him began to pour forth his mellow notes; and though it was nigh mid-June, he heard the quaint call of the cuckoo sound in the distance. Nature and Nature's voices exercised their benign influence on his restless spirit, and even in that short space of time soothed him so much that, when Mr. Carriston returned, he missed the frowning face with which Maurice had greeted him.

"Ah," said the Rector, with a nod of satisfaction, "you have benefited by the music of the birds already. I would undertake to cure you, if you would only let me be your physician. Now your soul is more at rest, but I have no doubt your nerves need soothing, so try this churchwarden and this excellent tobacco."

Maurice burst out laughing at this odd cure for melancholy, but did not refuse the Rector's hospitality; and any one who entered the garden a few minutes afterwards, would have discovered the venerable Rector and the youthful Squire puffing gravely at long clays, like two cronies in a village taproom.

They chatted in a desultory manner of little things, such as Mrs. Dengelton,—who would have been very angry to find herself placed in such a category,—Eunice, love-making, Crispin, the home farm, and such like trifles, when, after a short pause, Maurice abruptly turned to the Rector, who, lying back in luxurious ease, was watching the trembling of the leaves above his head.

"And the story, Rector?"

This question brought Mr. Carriston from heaven to earth, and he looked at the young man with a grave smile on his face.

"Ah, the story," he repeated, laying aside his pipe. "Yes, I promised to tell you the one romance of my life. I am afraid it is a very prosaic romance, still it may show you how a man can find life endurable even after his heart is broken."

"Why, Rector, is your heart broken?"

"I thought it was once, but I'm afraid 'twas mended long ago. *Et ego in Arcadia fui*, Maurice, although you would never think so to look at me. Tush! what has an old man pottering about among his flowers in common with Cupid, god of love? Yet I, too, have sported with Amaryllis in the shade, and piped love-songs to the careless ear of Neæra."

He sighed a trifle sadly, very probably somewhat regretful of that dead and gone romance which still looked bright through the mists of forty years, and glanced sorrowfully at the wrinkled hands which had once played with the golden tresses of Chloe. Ah, Chloe was old now, and her famous golden locks were white with the snows of many winters; or perchance she was dead, with the gentle winds blowing across her daisied grave, and piping songs as beautiful as those of her faithful shepherd. Is it not a painful thing to be old and gray and full of sad memories of our fine days? yet, mingled with such melancholics, we recall many bright dreams which then haunted our youthful brains. Alas, Arcady! why are we not permitted to dwell forever in thy flowery meadows, beneath thy blue sky, instead of being driven forth by the whip of Fate to crowded cities and desolate wastes, wherein sound no gleeful melodies.

"It was at Oxford that I first met her," said the Rector in his mellow voice, which was touched with vague regret; "for she, too, dwelt in that grave scholastic city. I was

not in holy orders then! No; my ambition was to be a soldier, and win the V.C.; but, alas! such dreams came to naught. You may not believe it, Maurice, but I was wild and light-hearted in those days—to be sure, it was Consula Planco, and youth is ever foolish. Her name was Miriam, and she was a dressmaker. Ah, you are astonished that I, Stephen Carriston, fixed my eyes on such a lowly damsel; but then, you see, I loved her dearly, and that, I think, is a sufficient answer to your unspoken objection. Love knows nothing of rank or position, and sees beauty in the wayside daisy as well as in the costly hothouse plant. I need not tell you she was very beautiful, for that is the common saying of lovers, who see no loveliness save in the nymph of their affections. What is it the poet says about a lover seeing Helen's beauty in the brow of Egypt? Sure, my memory is weak with age, and I misquote. Still, the saying is true. Miriam was very beautiful, and I think must have had some Jewish blood in her veins, for her dark, imperial beauty was that of the East. Her hair was as dark as the wing of a raven, her eyes liquid wells of light, and her mouth was as the thread of scarlet spoken of in the song of the wise king. You see, Maurice, old as I am, I can still rhapsodize on Chloe's perfections, though she basely deceived me. Alas, Strephon! how the years have destroyed thy goddess!—nay, she destroyed herself by her own act."

"I did not know you were a poet, Rector."

Mr. Carriston, whose brow was dark with bitter memories, aroused himself with a forced laugh, and strove to speak lightly of the past.

"Live and learn, Maurice. I no poet? Why, my dear lad, I am even now courting the Nine, and turning Aristophanes into good English verse. No poet? Why, every man is a poet when in love; and if he does not write a poem, he at least lives a poem. I, alas, have been in love these many years with a shadow—the shadow of Miriam before she left me!"

"Left you?"

"Yes. I call it my romance, but it is a painful story. A deceitful woman, a wronged man, a treacherous friend—a common enough tale, I think. Though, indeed, I need not include 'friend,' for to this day I know not for whom she left me."

"She was your wife?"

"Yes. Wild as I was in those days, I was too honorable to deceive a woman. In spite of the difference of our position, I married her, and we were happy together for ten years."

"Ten years!" replied Maurice in surprise. "Surely she did not leave you after all that time of married happiness."

"Who knows the ways of women?" said the Rector bitterly. "Yes, she left me—took from me all I loved in the world, herself and her child."

"Was there a child?"

"Yes. He was born in the tenth year of our marriage, just when I had given up all hope of being a father. If he is still alive, Maurice, he will be just five years younger than you,—thirty years old,—and for that I love you, my dear lad; you stand to me in the place of the son I have lost."

"Did you not suspect any one of taking her away?"

"Yes; one man," answered the Rector gloomily. "He was a tall, black-bearded fellow, who had just come back from the East; but I only saw him once. I was a hard-worked London curate in those days, and had but little time to spare. My wife met

him—I think his name was Captain Malcolm—at the house of a mutual friend; but perhaps I am wrong, and it was not he who destroyed my happiness. She had so many friends. I can hardly wonder at that, for she was then in the full pride of her womanly beauty. There was a Frenchman, the Count de la Tour, I also suspected, but I was sure of no one. I suppose she grew tired of our poor life; for, in spite of the way in which she went into society, we were poor—that is, comfortable for a quiet life, but too poor for a social one. I, never suspecting any evil, was only too glad that she should go out and enjoy herself, although at times I remonstrated with her, saying that such gayety was not suited for the wife of a poor clergyman. She said she would give up such frivolities shortly, and I, like a fool, believed her. Then I was called down to see my father, who was very ill. At length he died, and I remained to attend to the funeral; but when I came back to London after a three weeks' absence, I found she had gone with the child. She left no letter behind her to palliate her guilt; all I knew was that she had gone with some gentleman who had called for her in a brougham. The servants could not describe the man, as he did not enter the house, but remained in the carriage. My false wife told the servants she was called away by me, as her father-in-law was dying; and it was only when I returned that they learned the truth."

"Did you ever see this Captain Malcolm again?"

"No, nor the Count de la Tour; so that is why I suspect one of those men as being the ruin of my life. Besides, I heard afterwards that she went a great deal about with them, sometimes with one, sometimes with the other. One of them I am sure it was, but I know not which. So you see, at one blow, Maurice, I was bereft of wife, child, home, and happiness. Afterwards I was offered this living, and, wishing to leave the scene of my former happiness, my former sorrow, my former disgrace, I accepted it, and came down here, where I have lived in peace for thirty years."

"Did you get a divorce?"

"Yes; for the sake of my guilty wife. I did not wish to marry again myself, but I desired to leave her free, so that she might marry the partner of her guilt. I hope he behaved honorably to her and did so; but, alas! I know not."

"And the boy?"

"I have never heard of him since. I was left rich by the death of my father, and all that money could do was done, but I heard nothing of either wife or child. Is it not a sad story, Maurice?"

"Yes, very sad! You must have suffered terribly."

"I did suffer terribly; but I tell you this, dear lad, to show you how a man can force himself to be cheerful, even when he thinks life has no further joys for him. Look at me! When my wife left me, I thought that the sun of my life had set forever. I looked forward to years of misery; and probably my existence would have been miserable, had I not, with the aid of God, resisted the evil one. I did resist him, by accustoming myself to take an interest in all things; and, by schooling myself into patience, I found life, if not blissful, at least endurable. I now love my work among my parishioners, I enjoy my Greek studies, I interest myself in my garden, and am thus able to live a comparatively happy life. Had I given way weakly to my misery, I would have been an unhappy man all my life, and have done no good in my generation; but I fought against the evil spirit, with the aid of God I conquered him, and now can look back with thankfulness to the calamity which tried and chastened my soul."

"And you are happy now?"

"Yes," said the Rector firmly. "I am as happy as any mortal can hope to be. 'Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward,' says Job; but if we did not fight against these troubles they would overwhelm us. So, my dear lad, do as I have done, fight against the evil spirit, and, with God's grace, you will be victorious."

"I thank you for your advice, sir, and I will try and follow it."

"My story is but a dull one, I am afraid," resumed the Rector, after a pause,—"dull and prosaic, with no romance to render it captivating; but I only told it to show to you what a man can do if he fights against his troubles, and does not yield weakly at the first attack of the enemy. You have no unhappy love, you have no regrets; therefore, my dear lad, show yourself to be a man, and do not thus weakly yield to a phantom of your own creation. Try to be interested in life, fall in love and marry if you can, and I promise you all will yet be well with you. Your troubles are but dreams of a disordered brain, which can be banished by an effort of will; so rouse yourself, Maurice, conquer your weak spirit, and with God's help you will be a happy man."

"Thank you, sir," said Maurice, grasping the Rector's hand; "I will do what you say. I have been weak, but I will be so no longer. I will take up the duties of life, and do my best to perform them well. Your sermon, your story, has done me good, Mr. Carriston; and I feel that I would be indeed a coward to flinch from the fray in which you have so bravely fought and conquered."

"Good lad! good lad!" replied the delighted Rector. "I knew you would see things in their right light. But come, the lesson is over, and now is the time for play. You must look round at my roses, and the finest bud of the garden will adorn your buttonhole as 'a reward for your determination.'"

Maurice gladly fell in with the Rector's humor, and together they strolled round the garden to examine and admire his floral treasures. Carriston was like a child in his garden, and his bursts of delight at this or that particular rose tree would have made many a person smile. But Maurice did not smile; he loved his old tutor too well to smile at his simple pleasures, and took scarcely less interest than the Rector himself in the momentous question of transferring this tree over there, or ingrafting a hardy shoot in this sickly-looking plant. Suddenly the Rector stopped, and began to rummage in the pockets of his long black coat.

"Dear dear!" he said in a vexed tone; "it is not here, and yet I am sure I placed it in this pocket."

"Placed what, sir?"

"A letter! a letter! No, I can't find it. Maurice, I wish you to stay to luncheon. I have a friend coming."

"Indeed?"

"Well, not exactly a friend; but, the fact is, a young man has arrived in the village with a letter of introduction to me from a mutual friend in London. He is at present staying at the Royland Arms, and sent his letter this morning, so I wrote back and asked him to come to luncheon. You must stay and meet him, Maurice, for I hear he is a most delightful man."

"What is his name?"

"I cannot remember. He is a Greek. The letter must be in my study, so we will go and look for it. This young Greek is a great traveller, and is now on a visit to England.

He had a letter of introduction to my friend, the Archdeacon of Eastminster, who gave him one to me."

"But what does he come to this out-of-the-way place for?" asked Maurice, with that inherent suspicion he had acquired in Bohemia.

"I don't know. I expect he will answer that question for himself at luncheon. Ah, here is the letter—I left it on the table."

"Well, what is his name?" asked Maurice again.

The rector adjusted his *pince-nez*, and, smoothing open the letter, read the name aloud:—

"Count Constantine Caliphronas."

CHAPTER IV.

A MASTERPIECE OF NATURE.

The pride of the human
  Does nature diminish,
With spiteful acumen,
  She roughly will finish
A man or a woman,
  He stout and she thinnish,
Till one is not fair, nor the other a true man.
But Nature's conception
  May not be pernicious,
For know her perception
  At times is capricious;
Her work bears inspection,
  In manner judicious,
For sometimes she turns out a man near perfection.

The above jingle of verses may sound somewhat abstruse, but he who has the patience to search until he discovers the kernel of this rhyming nut, will certainly find it to be a truism. Nature does finish the mass of humanity in a somewhat rough and ready fashion; true, she may equip them with all the necessary limbs and organs necessary to the enjoyment of life, but she does not trouble herself to put in those delicate touches which go to the making of a perfectly handsome man, or a faultlessly beautiful woman. At times, however, just to show what she can do in the way of creative beauty, she gives her whole mind to the task, and lo! Achilles, and Helen of Troy. But such perfect specimens of humanity are few and far between; therefore when Maurice, who had an artistic eye, met Count Constantine Caliphronas for the first time, he recognized with delight that he saw before him one of Nature's masterpieces.

There is nothing more detestable than that society horror, "a beauty man," who resembles a wax figure in his unnatural perfectibility of face and form. Flawless he may be in every part, but the ensemble is nevertheless unpleasing both to eye and mind, for, in aiding Nature to show herself at her best, he soon becomes a mere artificial figure, which ought to be placed in a glass case for the edification of school misses and gushing society ladies. This man, however, did not belong to that over-civilized class, as at a glance one could see he was a child of Nature, a nursling of the winds and waves, whose physical perfections were kept in their pristine beauty by the constant care of the great mother herself. Caliphronas had all the grace and untamed

beauty of a wild animal, looking as if he claimed kinship with the salt sea, the fresh woods, the strong sunlight, and the bracing air of snow-clad mountain-tops. His physical beauty was truly wonderful, and was as much the outcome of perfect health, as of perfect creation. He lacked that self-restrained air which is stamped on the face of every civilized man, and in the modest little dining-room of the Rectory looked like some graceful panther caged against its will. Nature's child was only in his right place with Nature herself, and in our dull respectable England he seemed an exile from the healthful solitudes which had given him birth.

"It is impossible to describe Caliphronas," said Maurice many years afterwards, in speaking of this man. "I can tell you that his figure was as perfect as the Apollo Belvedere, and say that his face was as flawless in its virile beauty as the Antinous of the Vatican, but this will give you no idea of his physical perfection. His body seemed to be instinct with the lawless fierceness of wind and wave; he moved with the stately grace of a nude savage unaccustomed to the restraint of clothing. I never understood the phrase 'child of Nature' until I saw Caliphronas, and it is the only way in which he can be explained. I believe his mother was a Nereid and his father a hunter, for he was the offspring of earth and ocean—the consummate flower of both. Yet I do not think he had what we call brains—true, he possessed the cunning and instinct of a wild animal, but that was all. I think, myself, brains and culture would have spoiled him; he was born to be a wild, free thing, happy only on the hills, a type, a visible incarnation of Nature in a male form. If you ask me whom he resembled in real life, I cannot tell you, as I never saw any one in the least like him. But in fiction—well, study the character of Margrave in 'A Strange Story,' and Donatello in Hawthorne's 'Marble Faun,' and by blending the two you may arrive at some conception of Count Caliphronas."

Such was the man who now sat at the table of the Rector, chatting gayly with his host and Maurice Roylands. Being a hot day, the Rector had wisely provided a cold luncheon, and himself presided over a noble piece of beef, which looked as though it had been taken from one of Apollo's oxen. There was also a capital salad,—the Rector was famous for his salads,—fruit, wine, cheese, and bread. A simple repast, truly, but then the Rector was simple in his tastes, and detested those highly-spiced dishes, which but create thirst, and whose chief merit seems to be that the diner cannot tell of what they are composed. An artificial life creates artificial tastes, and the principal mission of cookery now seems to lie in the direction of tickling the palate, not of satisfying the stomach, with the result that gout and dyspepsia have it all their own way. If half, nay, if the whole of the French cooks now engaged in ruining the healths of Englishmen and Englishwomen were bundled back to their beloved Paris, the income of every doctor in London would decrease with the rapidity of lightning. As before mentioned, the Rector liked the good things of this life, but he thought the simplest food the most enjoyable, in which he was right, though epicures may doubt the truth of such an opinion. Yet, after all, do not epicures hold the simplicity of a well-roasted leg of mutton to be a dish fit for a king.

If the Rector was simple in his eating, however, Count Constantine was still simpler, for he hardly touched his meat, and confined his attention to bread, cheese, salad, and wine—the latter being some excellent claret, on which the Rector prided himself.

"My dear sir," he said in agony, as he saw Caliphronas about to mingle water with his wine, "you will spoil the flavor of the claret."

"Pardon me, sir," replied the Count, who spoke English admirably, "but we Greeks are partial to such mingling. We worship the Naiad with her urn as well as Bacchus with his flask, and the union of both produces a drink fit for Father Zeus."

"You don't seem to care much for meat," said the Rector, relinquishing the point about the wine, though it went to his soul to see such a spoiling of the finest qualities of his claret.

"No," answered Caliphronas carelessly; "oddly enough, I do not care much for flesh. I live so much in the open air that, like Nature, I live on the simplest things. Bread, cheese, and wine I love; add honey, and I want nothing better to satisfy my appetite. Country fare for a country man, you know."

"You are a shepherd of Theocritus," said Maurice, with a smile.

"No; save in such tastes perhaps; otherwise I am no Sicilian of the Idylles."

"You speak English wonderfully well, Count," remarked the Rector politely.

"Thank you for the compliment, sir; yet it is the first time I have been in England."

"What! do they teach English in the schools of Athens?"

"Alas, no. The schools of modern Athens are not those of the old Greek days. Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, have gone to the blessed isles in company with the heroes of Salamis, and our Greek culture of to-day is primitive in the extreme. No; I learned English from a roving Englishman—a scholar and a gentleman who grew weary of this respectable England of yours, and came back to the freer life of the Greek islands."

"He taught you admirably," said Roylands, wondering why the Greek eyed him so keenly while making this speech. "Do you come from Athens?"

"I have been there," answered Caliphronas, pushing away his plate, "but I am an islander. Yes, I was born in Ithaca, therefore am I a countryman of Ulysses."

"Achilles, perhaps," observed the Rector, fascinated by the clear-cut features of the young man,—"the godlike Achilles."

"Ah no," replied the Greek, with a shade of melancholy in his tone; "I am like no hero of those times. Our ancestors have transmitted to us their physical forms, but not their brains, not their heroism."

"Come now," remonstrated Maurice. "I am sure your countrymen behaved bravely in the War of Independence."

"Yes, I agree with you there. Canaris, Mavrocordato, Botzaris, were all brave men. I accept the rebuke, for I have no right to run down my own countrymen. Perhaps in England I may learn the meaning of the word patriotism."

"Or Jingoism."

"Your pardon?" queried the Count, a trifled puzzled.

"Jingoism," explained Maurice gravely, "is a spurious patriotism, composed of music-hall songs, the Union Jack, and gallons of beer—it begins with a chorus and ends with a riot. Tom, Dick, and Harry are very fond of it, as it expands their lungs and quenches their thirst. But there, I am only jesting. Do you stay long in England?"

Again the Greek eyed Maurice keenly, and hesitated a moment before replying.

"I can hardly tell yet," he said, with emphasis. "Mr. Carriston, will you show me your garden?" he added, turning to the Rector.

"I will be delighted," said Carriston eagerly; "we will stroll round it. Do you smoke?"

"No, thank you," returned the count, waving away with a gesture of repugnance the cigarette Maurice held out to him. "I never smoke."

"That is strange."

Caliphronas shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps so, sir. For myself, I do not care about it."

"Curious creature," murmured Maurice reflectively, as he followed the Rector and his guest into the garden. "I wonder why he looks at me so keenly, and what he is doing down here. Humph! I would like to find out your little game, my friend."

Ten years of fighting with the world had turned Maurice from a frank, open-hearted fellow into a cold, suspicious man, and he always doubted the motives of every one. This is a disagreeable way of looking at things, but in many cases it is a very necessary one, owing to the double lives which most people seem nowadays to live. Social intercourse, whether for pleasure or business, is no longer as simple as it used to be in the old days, and our complex civilization has introduced into every action we perform that element of distrust which is at once disagreeable and necessary. Maurice knew nothing about Caliphronas, and had he met him in London would doubtless have accepted him for what he appeared to be—a foreign nobleman on his travels; but for this man to visit a quiet village like Roylands was peculiar, and there must be some motive for his doing so.

"I'll ask him how he likes England, and lead up to his unexpected arrival here," thought Maurice, as he walked along smoking his cigarette. "He seems sharp, but I think I'm able to distinguish between the real and the false."

Caliphronas was loud in his expressions of admiration for the Rector's roses, and his delight seemed genuine enough even to Maurice, who stood listening to his raptures with a grim smile, as if he would like to cast over this bright being the shadow of his own melancholy nature.

"I have a perfect passion for flowers," said the Count, with a gay smile, as he placed a red bud in his coat, "and roses are my favorites. Were they not the flowers of pleasure in classical times? did they not wreathe the brows of revellers at festivals?—the flowers of love and of silence!"

"I am pleased you like flowers," observed the Rector, looking at the joyous figure before him, which was bathed in sunshine; "'tis an innocent pleasure."

"I love all that is of Nature," cried Caliphronas, throwing himself on the smooth sward; "Nature is my mother—my true mother. Yes, I am a man born of woman, but such maternity does not appeal to me. Nature is at once my mother, my nurse, my goddess."

"You were born in Ithaca," said Maurice quietly.

"Was I born at all?" replied Caliphronas, throwing himself back with a joyous laugh and letting the sun blaze on his uncovered head. "I do not know! I cannot tell. Perchance some nymph bore me to one of the old gods, who Heine says yet walk the earth in other forms."

"What do you know of Heine?" asked the Rector in some surprise.

"Nothing!—absolutely nothing. I never heard his name till the other day, when some one told me a story of the Gods in Exile, and said one Heine had written it."

"Are you fond of reading?"

"I never read. I care not for books—all my knowledge comes from the mouth of my fellow-men and from Nature. Such culture is enough for me."

"You will get a sunstroke if you don't cover your head," said Maurice, somewhat tired of this pseudo-classicism.

"No! I am a friend of Apollo's. He will hurl no darts at me, and your pale sun in England is but a shadow of the glorious Helios of our Greek skies."

And, lying on his back, he began to sing a strange, wandering melody, of which the words (roughly translated) were as follows:—

"The sun is my father:
He kissed my mother the sea,
And of their wooing the fruit am I."

Both the Englishmen were strangely fascinated by this stranger. He conducted himself in quite an unconventional fashion, and seemed to follow the last thought that suggested itself to his capricious brain.

"Come!" he cried, springing to his feet with a bound like a deer. "Come, Mr. Maurice—are you a runner? I will race you round this garden."

"Really, Count," said the Rector, somewhat startled.

"Eh! Am I wrong, sir?" replied Caliphronas apologetically. "I ask your pardon! I do not know your English ways; you must teach me. I act as I feel. Is it wrong to do so?"

"Well, we English like to see a little more self-restraint," said Maurice, looking at the graceful figure of the young man. "By the way, are you going to stay here long?"

The smile faded from the bright face of the Count, and he turned half away with an abrupt movement.

"Who can tell?" he said lightly. "I am a bird of passage. I alight here and there, but fly when I am weary of the bough. You wonder at my coming down here, do you not, Mr. Maurice?"

Thus addressed directly, Roylands was rather taken aback, and reddened perceptibly through the tan of his skin.

"Well, for a gay young man like you, Count, I thought London would have pleased you better."

Caliphronas burst out laughing, and, putting his hands behind his head, leant back against the trunk of the elm.

"Do you hear your friend, sir?" he said to the Rector. "He thinks that I prefer that dull, smoky town to the country. Why, Athens is too narrow for me! I love the open lands, the plains, the mountains, the seas. Up in that city of yours I was weary, and I spoke to the priest of my friend. 'Oh,' I cried, 'I will die of want of air in this place. Take me to the woods, where I can breathe and see the sun.' So he gave me that letter to you," addressing the Rector, "and I came here at once."

So this was the explanation of his presence in the little village—a very natural one surely, and Maurice felt somewhat ashamed of his late suspicions; but a new thought had entered his head, suggested by the statuesque pose of the Greek leaning against the tree, and he came forward eagerly.

"Count Caliphronas," he said quickly, "I am a sculptor, and I have the idea for a statue of Endymion—would you—would you"—

"Ah, you want me to be a model, sir?" said the Count, laughing. "Eh, well, I do not mind in the least—you may command me."

"Thank you very much, if I"—

"If you could only introduce me to a Diana, that would indeed be perfect."

"I suppose you are a kind of general lover, Count," said the rector, turning round from a rose-tree with a smile.

"I am not as bad as that, sir. No! I love! I love!" He stopped abruptly, and a shade came over his face. "Yes, I love," he resumed quickly; "but my love is unfortunate."

"What! is any woman cold-hearted enough to refuse you?" observed Maurice, looking at him in amazement; for indeed a woman would be hard to please were she not satisfied with this splendid-looking youth.

"There are women and women," said Caliphronas enigmatically. "This one does not love me yet, but she will."

"When?"

The Greek shot a keen glance at Maurice, and then observed, in an indifferent voice,—

"When I do what I am requested to do."

Both men looked steadily at one another, and it seemed to Maurice as though there were a certain amount of menace visible on the face of Caliphronas, but such look speedily passed away, and he bounded lightly across the turf to where the cat was sitting.

To the surprise of both the Rector and Maurice, she let this stranger take her up in his arms and smooth her fur.

"Dear, dear!" said the Rector in an astonished tone; "what power do you possess over the animal world, Count? That cat will not let any one touch her as a rule."

"Oh, all animals take to me," replied Caliphronas lightly, letting the cat down gently on the ground. "I can do anything with horses and dogs."

"Donatello!" whispered Maurice to himself. "He looks innocent enough, and yet that look—I must speak to Crispin, and ask his opinion of this man."

Meanwhile the Count was giving Carriston a description of his miseries at the Royland Arms.

"Such a small room to sleep in," he said in a disgusted tone. "I know I will be smothered if I stay in it. No; I shall wrap myself up in a blanket and sleep under the moon like Endymion, which will be training for your friend's statue."

"That will be dangerous," objected the Rector.

"Not at all! In Greece—I mean my native islands—I sleep out very often. Oh, there is nothing more beautiful than slumber in the open air. I cannot bear houses; they stifle me; they crush me. I love no roof lower than the sky. And then to wake at dawn, to see the east glow with rosy tints, to watch the dew moisten every blade of grass, the awakening of the animals, the first songs of the birds, and the rising of the sun. Oh, I worship the sun! I worship him!"

The Rector was a trifle shocked at this peroration, as he was not quite sure whether this fantastic being was not a sun-worshipper in downright earnest; the more so as in a

sudden freak he flung himself down on his knees and held out his arms to the glorious luminary.

"You are joking," he said gravely.

"Not I," replied Caliphronas, springing to his feet. "You are not angry, are you, sir? Eh! I forgot myself you were a priest in this country. I must explain. I am of the Greek Church—yes! oh, I have been baptized."

The Rector smiled, and said no more, for it was impossible to talk seriously with a man who possessed so childish a soul. Meanwhile, Maurice, who had been thinking over matters, came to the conclusion that he would ask Caliphronas to stay at the Grange for a few days. At first sight this seemed rather injudicious, but when he remembered the high character of the man who vouched for the respectability of the Greek, all his scruples vanished. Besides, Caliphronas was such a peculiar character that he desired a closer acquaintance with him; and, above all, he could not hope anywhere to find such a perfect model for his Endymion. Taking, then, all these facts into consideration, he speedily made up his mind to ask the Count to be his guest, and did so without delay.

"Count," he said politely, "I am afraid you will find that inn very uncomfortable, so I would be glad to see you at the Grange for a week or so, where I think you will find yourself in more civilized quarters."

The Count's eyes flashed with what looked uncommonly like triumph, but he dropped the lids over them rapidly for the moment, so as to prevent this look being seen, and shook Maurice heartily by the hand.

"Thank you very much! oh, very much indeed!" he said effusively. "I hope I will not trouble you. I will be glad to come—yes, that place in the village would kill me."

"That's all right," replied Maurice, who had an Englishman's horror of a scene. "I will send over for your traps, and you can come to the Grange in time for dinner. We dine at seven o'clock."

"Thank you, sir. I will be at your home to-night."

The Rector, who had fully intended to ask Caliphronas to be his guest, was rather startled by Maurice's precipitancy, but, on the whole, was not ill-pleased, for two reasons: the first being that he did not much care about burdening himself with this eccentric foreigner; and the second, that he was delighted that, during the stay of the Count at the Grange, Maurice would take to his modelling again.

"By the way," said Maurice, turning suddenly to the Count, "do you know any one called Crispin?"

"Creespeen!" repeated Caliphronas, with his foreign accent; "no, I do not know that name."

"He is a gentleman who is staying with me," replied Roylands carelessly; "and, as he is pretty well acquainted with your part of the world, I thought you might have met him."

The Greek smilingly denied that he had the honor of Crispin's acquaintance, but it seemed to Maurice as though there was a shade of apprehension on his face which somewhat puzzled the young man.

"Can't make this fellow out," was his mental comment. "Hope I'm not making a mistake in asking him to the Grange. Still, the Archdeacon's letter to Carriston is a sufficient guarantee that he is not a swindler, so I will chance it."

“I must now say good-by,” said Caliphronas to the Rector, “and thank you for your kindness. Of course I will see you soon again.”

“Oh yes. You must come here as often as you can.”

“That will not be much if I am to sit for this artist,” laughed Caliphronas, turning to Maurice. “Good-by, sir; I will see you to-night at six o’clock.”

He turned away gayly and left the garden, followed by the admiring eyes of the two men, especially of Maurice, who congratulated himself on his good fortune in obtaining such a perfect model.

Meanwhile Caliphronas was walking swiftly in the direction of the Royland Arms.

“Good!” he muttered to himself in Greek. “The first step is taken, so I have no fear now.”

CHAPTER V.

CRISPIN IS PUZZLED.

I've seen you before
But where I forget,
Yet somewhere of yore
I've seen you before;
You meet me once more,
A stranger—and yet
I've seen you before,
But where I forget.

Up and down the long terrace in front of the Grange walked Crispin, and, from the rapt expression of his face, it would seem as though he were composing poetry; but, as a matter of fact, he was thinking about Eunice. The course of their true love did not run smooth by any means, for Mrs. Dengelton, having found her daughter in the company of the poet, had marched off the former in order to lecture her about the latter. The substance, therefore, having been taken away, Crispin was left with only the shadow; in other words, from speaking to Eunice, he was reduced to thinking of Eunice, which was not by any means so pleasant a position of affairs.

This uncomfortable state of things was due to the discovery made by Mrs. Dengelton, that her daughter had the previous evening been engaged in moongazing with the poet, a fact which the astute Parrot extracted with wonderful dexterity from her reluctant daughter. Mrs. Dengelton had talked a good deal about the family romance, as related to the Rector and Maurice, whereupon Eunice, having been asked questions concerning the same, was forced to admit that she had been absent during the recital. Her mother at once pounced down on this damaging admission like a hawk, and pressed the poor girl so mercilessly with questions, that she was obliged to tell of that pleasant half-hour on the terrace in company with Crispin.

On making this discovery, Mrs. Dengelton was too wise to reproach her daughter, and thereby run the risk of making her deaf to the voice of the charmer, *i.e.*, resist her mother's desires in connection with matrimony. No, the elder lady said nothing about what she considered to be an act of madness, but privately determined to keep Crispin and Eunice apart by every means in her power. She was on the watch this morning, and, having finished the daily papers,—for Mrs. Dengelton prided herself on her universal knowledge of what was going on in the world,—went out to look for Eunice, who had disappeared. As she expected, she found her in the company of the poet, whereupon she made some ladylike excuse,—Mrs. Dengelton was an adept at

telling white lies,—and took Eunice away to her room, where she kept her busy with letter-writing.

Crispin, therefore, deprived of the company of his inamorata, was by no means in a cheerful mood, and regretted that Eunice had not sufficient strength of mind to defy her mother, and end all his trouble by marrying him without delay. He had a very impulsive nature, and would have liked to sweep away these obstacles by sheer force of insistence that the marriage should take place at once; but his impulses were in a great measure restrained by experience in the school of the world, and he saw that it would be wiser to watch and wait. Already he was seriously thinking of ending his visit, and returning to town, in order to enlist his great friend, Lady Bentwitch, on his side, as such a fashionable personage might be able to talk Mrs. Dengelton into assenting to the marriage; but in spite of his strength of character he was reluctant to leave Eunice even for the short space of a week. So, like the ass between two bundles of hay, he could not quite make up his mind which course to take, when he saw Maurice coming leisurely along the terrace, and the conversation which ensued between them enabled him to at once settle his future movements.

When the master of Roylands reached his side, Crispin was struck with the unusual vivacity of his face. The gloomy look which it generally wore had quite disappeared, and in its place was an alert, eager expression, which showed that Maurice was deeply interested in some important matter.

"My dear Roylands," cried Crispin in astonishment, "why this transformation? Yesterday you were plunged in gloom, to-day Romeo on his way to Juliet looked not so happy. Who is the enchanter—or shall I say enchantress—who has worked this miracle?"

"The Rector has been giving me a lecture," said Maurice gayly, lighting a cigarette; "a terrible lecture, which reminded me of the days when I made false quantities in Latin verse, and translated good Greek into bad English."

"Ah, you ought to have a lecture every day if it benefits you in this way. You are much pleasanter as Sancho Panza than as Don Quixote."

"Explain!"

"Well, the squire was always merry, and the knight doleful; so I like you as the former more than the latter."

"I am afraid we have changed characters, Crispin. You are the Knight of the Rueful Countenance now."

"Eunice"—

"*Cela va sans dire*," said Maurice, leaning his elbows on the balustrade. "Oh, do not look so astonished, Monsieur Cupid! I am not so blind but what I can see how things stand between you and Psyche."

"You take credit to yourself when none is due," replied Crispin significantly. "Mr. Carriston drew your attention to our position. You did not see it for yourself."

"That is true enough; but how did you guess that the Rector told me?"

"Because you were too much wrapped up in yourself to notice unhappy lovers."

"Unhappy lovers?"

"Yes. I love Eunice, and my affection is returned; but there is an obstacle which prevents our marriage."

"And this obstacle?"

"Is yourself."

"I?"

"You! Mrs. Dengelton wants Eunice to marry you."

"There's always two to a bargain," said Maurice grimly. "I don't want to marry Eunice."

"Oh, you don't love her?"

"As a cousin, yes; as a possible wife, no."

"Then there is some chance for me?"

"I should say there was every chance for you," remarked Roylands in a friendly manner. "You are young and famous, you know every one, you go everywhere, you are the adored of the gentle sex; so what more can Eunice or her mother desire."

"Eunice desires nothing—except myself; but as for Mrs. Dengelton, she thinks I am poor."

"Oh! and are you poor?"

"No; on the contrary, I am very well off."

"Then why don't you place all your perfections before my dear aunt, and persuade her into consenting to the match."

"I don't want to do so—yet," said Crispin, with some hesitation.

"Why all this mystery?"

"I cannot tell you just now, but you may be certain there is nothing wrong about the mystery. I will satisfy Mrs. Dengelton on all points shortly, and then, perhaps, I will have the felicity of being your cousin-in-law."

"I wish you good luck."

"You would not object to my marrying your cousin?" asked Crispin timidly.

"I?" said Maurice in amazement. "Certainly not! I believe in love matches; but, of course,—though I have but little to say in the matter,—I would like to know who you are, where you come from, and all that, before you become the husband of Eunice."

"I will explain everything to your satisfaction—shortly."

"The sooner the better for your own sake."

"I don't understand you," said Crispin, with some hauteur.

"I mean as regards Eunice," explained Maurice quickly. "If you don't tell my aunt of your intentions, and put yourself right as regards money and position in her eyes, she will marry Eunice to some one else. Failing me,—and I have not the slightest intention of marrying my dear cousin,—she will angle for another rich man, who will probably not be so blind to the charms of Eunice as I am. In that case, my poor Crispin, I am afraid it will be all up with you."

"What you say is very true," replied Crispin reflectively. "I will speak to Mrs. Dengelton before I leave the Grange."

"I cannot understand what you are making all this mystery about."

"Because I am proud," rejoined the poet, with a flush on his dark cheek. "I cannot explain myself now, but I will some day, and then you will see I have a good reason for my reticence."

"So be it. But at present you are a riddle."

"Well, I suppose I am," said Crispin smilingly; "but one which will shortly be explained, and, like all riddles, turn out to be very disappointing. By the way, you might offer me one of those excellent cigarettes."

"Certainly," answered Maurice, holding out his open case. "Unlike Caliphronas, you are fond of smoking."

"Caliphronas! Who is he? what is it? man, woman, or child, or something to eat?"

"The first—a Greek. Count Constantine Caliphronas."

"Phœbus! what a name!" ejaculated Crispin, lighting his cigarette. "Who is he?"

"A Greek nobleman."

"Humph! I mistrust Greek noblemen."

"Well, they have got a bad name," said Maurice quite apologetically; "but I don't think this one is a *chevalier d'industrie*."

"The exception which proves the rule, perhaps," replied Crispin idly; "but really I have no right to call the Greeks names, as on the whole they are not bad. I have a good many friends among the countrymen of Plato."

"Do you know Caliphronas?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell until I see him."

"Well, you will see him soon, as he is coming to stay here for a few days."

"Stay here!" said Crispin in some surprise. "My dear Roylands, is not this a very sudden friendship?"

"It is not a friendship at all."

"Well, when a man asks another to his house to stay—to be introduced to his relatives—it is uncommonly like friendship."

"I am not so conventional as most Englishmen," said Maurice impatiently, "and therefore do not act by rule. I daresay I should have made inquiries about the past of this Greek before asking him to my house; but, as far as that goes, you are a riddle yourself."

Crispin's sallow cheek flushed at this home thrust, but he had great self-command, and replied quietly enough,—

"That is rather a hard thing to say of me. I thought you were my friend."

"Pardon me, old fellow," said Roylands penitently. "I did not mean to be so rude. I have an abominable temper, and should be kicked for saying such a thing in my own house."

"I will let you off the kicking," replied Crispin, recovering his good-humor. "As you very truly say, I am a riddle; but I will explain myself soon. Still, this Count Caliphronas"—

"Do you know the name?"

"I have a faint idea I have heard it before."

"In Greece?"

"Most probably. I know the isles of Greece very well."

"Ah, is that a quotation from Byron, or a pointed remark? In other words, is it serious or a chance shot?"

"The latter—I only quoted from 'Don Juan.' Why do you ask?"

"Because this Count does come from the isles of Greece. He says he was born in Ithaca."

"Ah, he is not reticent about himself," said Crispin dryly. "I will tell you what I think of him when I see him. At present I cannot recall the name precisely, though I fancy I have heard it before. Meanwhile, tell me all you know about him."

"I am afraid that is but little. He arrived this morning at Roylands, with a letter of introduction to the Rector from the Archdeacon of Eastminster, and came to luncheon at the Rectory. During our conversation, he complained of how badly he was put up at the Royland Arms, and as I knew Carriston would ask him to stay at the Rectory, a thing I know he dislikes doing, as he hates strangers in his house, I took the bull by the horns, and asked Caliphronas to come here for a time. He accepted, and is coming with his traps this evening."

"Was it only for the sake of taking the burden off Mr. Carriston's shoulders that you gave your invitation?"

"Not exactly. This Caliphronas is a splendid-looking fellow, and I asked him to sit to me for my statue of Endymion."

"Oh! is he worthy to be a model?"

"My dear Crispin, he has the most perfect figure for a man I ever saw in my life; wonderfully handsome, and with a wild, untamed air about him that is quite unique."

Crispin listened to this speech without moving a muscle, but a strange look came into his eyes.

"Have you ever read 'A Strange Story,' by Lytton?" he asked abruptly.

"Yes, several times," replied Maurice, somewhat astonished at the irrelevancy of the question.

"Then does this man resemble Margrave, the hero of the book?"

"In what way?"

"In every way except the mysticism. Is he an ardent lover of Nature? Does he talk a lot about classical times? Is he impulsive and utterly selfish?"

"As to the last quality, I have not yet had an opportunity of judging, but for the rest, you have described him exactly."

"Caliphronas!" murmured Crispin in a pondering manner.

"Do you know him?"

Crispin did not answer at once, and seemed to be making up his mind as to what he would say. At last he turned to Maurice with an enigmatic smile on his face, and shrugged his shoulders.

"Not as far as I can recollect. That description I have given as applied to Margrave would suit a good many Greeks. They are mostly handsome, and, especially among the islands, from living so much in the open air, imbibe a great love for Nature. Naturally, as they have no modern glories to talk about, they boast of ancient times and ancient heroism. They are all impulsive, so you see I simply described the Greek at large, not this one in particular."

"But you have described him exactly."

"I tell you the description suits any Greek, as I have explained."

"Then you don't know this man?"

"No; I know no one of the name of Caliphronas," replied Crispin, with a slight emphasis on the last word.

Maurice did not notice the quibble, and with cheerful good-humor dismissed the subject from his mind, as, after all, this mystery, with which he enveloped the Count, might turn out to be but an unworthy suspicion. Plenty of Greeks come to England, and one more or less did not matter. He would trouble his head no more about this man who had dropped from the clouds into this dull little village, but make use of him

as a model, and then say good-by to him with the best grace in the world. Once he left the Grange, it was unlikely he would ever cross his path again, as Maurice had not the slightest intention of going to Greece, and looked forward to a humdrum life at Roylands for the next few years. How little did he know what was in store for him, and that from this appearance of Count Caliphronas dated a new era in his life.

Meanwhile, Crispin, who in reality knew a good deal more than he chose to tell, was watching him keenly. "You must not relapse into your gloomy fits again," he said, laying his hand lightly on his friend's arm.

"I do not intend to," replied Maurice cheerfully. "No; I now see the excellence of the Rector's advice. Take an interest in life, and you will be happy. I am taking an interest in life—in your wooing of Eunice, and in Caliphronas."

"Why Caliphronas?"

"Because he is my Endymion in the flesh. I am going to create a wonderful statue, Crispin, the like of which has not been seen since the days of Canova. As to this riddle of Caliphronas, we will solve him together."

"Perhaps the solution may be easier than you think."

"Crispin, you know something about this man!"

"Nonsense! I tell you I know no one called Caliphronas."

"Names may be assumed," said Maurice shrewdly, "and I am sure you have met the owner of this one before."

"I meet so many people," replied Crispin carelessly, "it is probable I may have seen him; but really I can tell you nothing about him—yet."

"Ah! then you will some day?"

"My dear Roylands," said Crispin impatiently, "Caliphronas and his past life is becoming quite a mania with you. I don't know the man, but from your description, I fancy I have met him, though, as I said before, such description would apply to dozens of other Levantine Greeks. When I see him I will tell you if I recognize him; but what then? he may be only a casual acquaintance, and therefore I will not know his history. If you mistrusted his looks, you should not have asked him to the Grange."

"My dear fellow, it was on account of his looks I did ask him. He is my Endymion, remember. But you are right; I am making a mountain out of a molehill, still, there is some excuse for me. A unique specimen of humanity like Caliphronas does not appear every day in a village like Roylands, so it is natural I should be curious about him. But there, we will say no more about your brother mystery. I am going to have an interview with my bailiff, and you may thank your stars, my friend, you are a poet, and not a landed proprietor."

Maurice sauntered away laughing, looking by no means the kind of man to overburden himself with work; but Crispin remained leaning over the balustrade of the terrace, gazing absently at the silver spray of the fountain glittering in the sunlight, and thinking deeply.

"I wonder what he wants here," thought the poet, with a frown on his expressive face. "A man like that does not come down to a quiet village for nothing. Can it be to see me? No! that is impossible, as he could not know I was here. Curious I never saw him in London, for he must have been there at the same time as myself, unless, indeed, he has just arrived in England. He has some scheme in his head, I am certain

—if I could only see him alone and fathom his motives! Oh, you fox you! Cunning as you are, I will foil you. It is no good. You are after my friend, I'm sure of that."

He walked forward a few paces, still pondering, then resumed his soliloquizing in a muttered tone.

"Roylands said this Caliphronas was coming over about six o'clock. He is staying at the Royland Arms, so I think I will walk over there and see him; but no, that will attract attention, and I wish to tell Roylands nothing yet. I will send a note; no, that will not do. Ah! I have it. I will wait at the park gates and speak to him before he comes up to the house. No one will know, and I can find out the reason of his presence here."

Decidedly this poet was a remarkably mysterious person, not only as concerned his own personality, but also as regarded this brilliant stranger who was so equally enigmatic. If Maurice found his life dull now, it evidently was not going to be so for any length of time; and, although he knew it not, the elements of romance had come into it in the most unexpected way in the persons of Crispin and Constantine Caliphronas.

Having made up his mind, the poet thought no more about the Greek, but strolled round the side of the house to see if Eunice was at her window. He knew that Mrs. Dengelton especially affected a small boudoir in the left wing of the Grange, the window of which was only slightly raised above the terrace, and at this window Crispin felt sure Eunice would be. Fortunately for himself, he was right in his conjecture, for on arriving in sight of the casement, he saw Eunice sitting at it in a dejected attitude, evidently expectant of a visit from her lover.

"Miss Dengelton!" he said cautiously, not knowing but that the dragon might be within hearing, and therefore adopting society manners.

"She has gone out of the room for a few minutes," said his lady in a frightened whisper. "Do go away."

"What! when the coast is clear! Not if I know it."

"I expect her back every minute."

"Very well; till she arrives we can talk about ourselves, and even when she does we can surely chat about the weather."

"I heard you laughing with Maurice."

"Yes; he is quite gay to-day. He has found a model for his statue of Endymion."

"Some village bumpkin?"

"No, a Greek gentleman."

"A Greek! and pray what is a Greek doing down here?"

Crispin shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm sure I don't know. You will see him to-night, so don't fall in love with him."

"Why should I?"

"He is very handsome."

"I don't care for handsome men, they are so conceited."

"Humph! that is not a compliment to me."

"Well, you are not conceited, are you?"

"Nor handsome."

"You are handsome enough for me, at all events," said Eunice coquettishly.

“What a charming compliment!” replied Crispin gayly; “for that I will give you a rose.”

“Hush! here comes my mother.”

But Crispin, alas! had not heard the warning, and, having plucked the finest rose he could see, returned to the window, to find himself confronted by the gaudy figure of The Parrot, whose beady eyes sparkled maliciously as he approached.

“What! a rose for me, dear Mr. Crispin?” she said, stretching out her hand, in which Crispin was unwillingly compelled to place his flower; “how kind of you! The young men of to-day are gallant after all. Look, Eunice, is not this flower charming? almost as charming as you are, Mr. Crispin. The Rose of Sharon—oh, Shiraz—you see I’ve read your book. Now, I have no time to talk, my dear Mr. Crispin, so you must go away for the present at all events. We will meet at luncheon, and if you are very good you may bring me in another rose.”

Mrs. Dengelton, having thus vanquished the enemy, disappeared with her daughter and shut the window, upon which poor Crispin walked away in a rage.

“Old cat!” he said, which was certainly neither polite nor poetical.

CHAPTER VI.

SUB ROSA.

Secrets absurd
Leading to woes,
Only are heard
Under the rose.
Maidens refuse,
Lovers propose,
Just as they choose,
Under the rose.
How scandals spread
Nobody knows,
For they are said
Under the rose.

When anything marvellous occurs in real life, wiseacres shake their heads, and say, "Wonderful! extraordinary! Truth is stranger than fiction." But when a novel contains any incident out of the common, these same inconsistent people refuse to believe it on the plea that "Fiction is not stranger than truth." They entirely forget that fiction is but a reflection of real life, and that man can imagine nothing, but merely reproduces what he sees around him. The sceptic will object,—"Fairy tales!" Well, my dear doubter, how do you know that fairy tales do not contain a germ of truth? there may have been fairies in the earlier ages of the world, and if so, the chronicles of Fairyland are as authentic as those of England—perhaps more so, seeing all histories are tinctured more or less with partisanship. Who would have believed in the mammoth, had not the huge beast been reconstructed by Cuvier? or in the moa, had not the skeleton of that gigantic bird been discovered in New Zealand? Nay, there is doubtless much truth in those extravagant travels of Marco Polo, Sir John Mandeville, and such-like wanderers. The middle ages were times of improbability, not of impossibility, for but little was known of the geographical world. Well, we of this nineteenth century have discovered all possible continents, and assume that we know everything; but such is not the case, for, though we may have exhausted the geographical world, we know comparatively few of the secrets of Nature. The pebble parable of Sir Isaac Newton will here occur to many minds, and it applies as truly to our times as to his own. Earth, sky, and water are full of secrets, many of which yet defy our efforts to learn and catalogue them. This century has been prolific of discoveries, but even add another hundred years of fresh revelations, and Nature will still give us riddles to solve out of her exhaustless store.

Therefore, when a coincidence occurs in a fiction, though it may be improbable, it is not impossible, and he who takes the trouble to keep his eyes open, his mental as well as his physical eyes, will, in nearly every case, find the counterpart of the ideal in the real. Here, then, are two mysterious individuals, who, masquerading under the names of Crispin and Caliphronas, meet one another in the most unexpected manner in the most unexpected place. Wiseacres will at once say "Impossible!" but, going on the theory set forth as before, such a meeting is not impossible, but probable. Fate, Destiny, Fortune,—whatever be the name of the power which guides our circumstances,—delights in surprises quite as much as does the novelist; therefore, why should we believe the first and doubt the second? This is inconsistent! Therefore, if you who read are wise in your generation, and broad in your views of probability, you will see nothing impossible in this unexpected meeting of poet and adventurer.

Caliphronas was an adventurer pure and simple, of course, as regards his vocation as free lance, but not as touching his moral or physical qualities. He had come to England with a distinct end in view, and already had made the first step to the accomplishment of that end. Whether his intentions were good or bad remains to be seen, and if, my dear reader, you cannot tell the quality of his designs from the character of the man as before described, you must perforce remain in ignorance, even as Crispin remained, for, truth to tell, that astute individual was for once in his life really and truly puzzled. He knew Caliphronas in Greek waters, under another name, and, having had considerable experience of his character, was quite confident that he had some object in view for thus making his appearance at Roylands. With the determination of finding out that object, and thwarting it if he could,—for Crispin had no very great love for the Greek,—our poet walked down to the park gates between the hours of five and six, with the intention of having an interview with this mysterious stranger.

In his own mind he was by no means certain of the identity of this Caliphronas with the person he thought he was, and such a doubt could only be solved by a personal view of the Greek himself; but the description given by Maurice so tallied with the image of a certain individual, that Crispin felt sure that the conclusion he had arrived at was a correct one. In order, however, to end all doubt on the subject, he wanted to personally interview the Count before he set foot in Roylands Grange, and had with considerable dexterity carried out his plan without exciting suspicion, a thing which he was anxious to avoid if possible.

Pleading a headache,—that convenient excuse,—he had managed to give his friend the slip, though, truth to tell, he took more trouble over securing such secrecy than was absolutely necessary, for Maurice, fired by the idea of recommencing work, had retreated to his studio, and remained there all the afternoon. Mrs. Dengelton still kept a watchful eye upon her daughter, and, on one plea or another, kept her away from the too-fascinating poet: so, in reality, Crispin was left entirely to his own devices, therefore utilized such good fortune by seeking this important interview with the unknown Greek.

So hot had been the day, that Crispin felt a certain sense of relief when the coolness of night approached, and, lingering under the mighty oaks which bordered the avenue, luxuriated in that delightful twilight, which is neither wholly of night nor day, but partakes equally of both. The air was still warm, and there was a pleasant shade over

the sky, as Night gradually drew her dusky veil across the glaring blue from east to west. Shafts of crimson light shot through the wood and through the dense foliage. Crispin could see at times the rosy flames of the setting sun. Still vocal were the birds, for they were now singing their good-night to day, and in a short time nothing would be heard but occasional chirps from some belated thrush, until with the moon came the divine nightingale to flood the thickets with song. Restless gnats were dancing in front of his face as he strolled down the avenue, and at times a bat would flit noiselessly through the warm air, while, mellowed by distance, the chimes of Roylands church rang musically on his ear.

"Six o'clock," said the poet to himself, glancing at his watch. "I suppose this Caliphronas will be here shortly. Roylands sent the dog-cart, but if this is the man I imagine, he will send on his traps in charge of the groom, and walk over to the Grange on such a perfect evening."

At this moment he heard the noise of approaching wheels, and shortly afterwards the dogcart, drawn by a fast-trotting mare, flashed past him, containing only the groom and some luggage. Finding his conjecture thus prove correct, Crispin did not trouble himself to go farther on his way to seek Caliphronas, as that gentleman was bound to meet him in the avenue; so, lounging against the mighty trunk of an oak, he lazily waited the approach of the individual concerning whose intentions he entertained such doubts.

"I will crown myself with roses
To meet thee, beloved.
Why dost thou fly at the sight of my wreath?
The hot sun hath withered it truly.
And my heart is burnt up by thine eyes.
Dead heart! dead roses! but love undying."

Caliphronas was singing these words in Greek, and Crispin at once recognized the voice of the singer, a recognition which immediately confirmed his suspicions as to the identity of this gentleman.

"We will live in the woods, my beloved,
And berries will be our food;
On berries and kisses could I live always,
Till Fate destroyed us,
And robbed us of berries, and kisses, and life forever."

"I've heard him singing that song at Melnos," muttered Crispin quietly to himself. "It is he! What can he be doing here?"

At this moment the singer came in sight, walking rapidly up the avenue with a springy step, swinging his stick to and fro as he sang. He was indeed a sight worth looking at, as he bounded lightly over the earth, Antæus-like, drawing fresh vigor at every pressure of his foot on the ground; yet his undeniable beauty but excited a feeling of repulsion in the breast of Crispin, who now knew him only too well. They were a strange contrast, these two men: the poet small, dark, and unhandsome, but the

fire of intellect in his eyes; the adventurer a splendid animal, with nothing but his physical perfections to recommend him.

Caliphronas did not notice the poet leaning against the tree, and came on, carelessly singing as he walked,—

> "What will I do for thee, beloved?
> Oh, I will do many deeds of daring!
> I will slay the Turk in his pride,
> And his head will be my wedding gift.
> Behold I"—

Here he stopped suddenly, catching sight of Crispin, but, instead of being astonished at the unexpected meeting, as the poet expected, he simply stood still, leaning on his stick, and laughing at the look on the other's face.

"Ah, ah, Creespeen!" he said in Greek, with a smile; "you did not expect to see me in this place."

"Certainly I did not," retorted Crispin in the same language, marvelling at the self-possession of the man; "and I've no doubt the meeting is unexpected on both sides."

"Not with me; oh no! That priest—the Papa I saw this morning told me you were here, and your friend also informed me of your presence."

"What are you doing here?"

"Ah, that is a long story, my good Creespeen," replied Caliphronas coolly, "and one I do not choose to tell."

"You have some design in your head."

"Assuredly," said the Count mockingly; "I would not come to this cold island for pleasure."

"Ah, I see you are as great a scoundrel as ever!"

Caliphronas laughed, and seemed in no wise offended at the scornful tone of the other. For such an epithet an Englishman would have struck its utterer, but Caliphronas did not even frown. The only notice he took of Crispin's rudeness was to raise his eyebrows in mocking surprise.

"You have still a bad opinion of me, I see."

"The very worst!"

"What a truly good young man you are!" said the Count sardonically. "I regret that you should be forced to keep company with such a scamp as I am; but I am afraid you will have to make up your mind to that or—go away."

"I shall certainly not do the latter until I find out the reason of your presence in this place."

"Then, my dear friend, you will have to stay here forever."

"Are you going to stay here forever?"

"I! no. I am down here on business."

"With the Rector?—with Roylands? with whom?"

The Count looked at him with a provoking smile, and flung himself on the grass at the foot of the oak against which Crispin was leaning.

"Perhaps with both; perhaps with neither."

"Now you listen to me, Caliphronas,—as that is the name you choose to go by; both Mr. Carriston and Mr. Roylands are friends of mine, and if you have come down here with any bad design in your head against either of them, I will make it my business to thwart you."

"Do so by all means, if you can."

"I can do so by a very simple means, though you seem to doubt it," said Crispin quietly. "You brought an excellent letter of introduction to Mr. Carriston, though how you came by it I do not know. You have made friends with Roylands, who is a simple fellow, by consenting to be his model for Endymion"—

"And a very good model too," interrupted Caliphronas, looking at himself complacently.

"I don't deny your outward goodliness;—it is a pity your mind is not in keeping. But to come back to what I was saying. You have made friends with both the gentlemen I speak of, and perhaps such friendship is necessary to your plans; if so. I will end it."

"How will you manage that?" said the Count coolly, but with a nasty glitter in his eyes.

"Simply by telling them who you are and what you are."

"You will not do that!"

"I will, if your designs are bad."

"How do you know my designs are bad?"

"Because to a man of your nature goodness is impossible."

"I would not go so far as to say it is impossible," said Caliphronas, with a sneer, "but I agree with you that it is improbable. To my mind, goodness is a weakness."

"One you don't possess, I'm afraid."

"I do not; nor do I wish to possess it," replied the Count insolently. "But may I not draw your attention to the fact that it is long past six, that Roylands dines at seven, and that I am terribly hungry?"

"You can call my attention to all these facts," retorted Crispin promptly, "but you don't enter that house until I know what you are going to do."

"Pay a visit. Sit for the Endymion."

"I am tired of this fencing. Don't go on like this with me, An"—

"Caliphronas," said the other quickly.

"Well, one name is as good as another; but you needn't waste all this diplomacy on me, my friend. I know you too well to believe you would waste your time in coming here for nothing. Now tell me what your schemes are, or I will reveal all I know of you to Maurice Roylands."

The Count was thus driven into a corner, and all his suave manner vanished as he sat up on the turf with a scowl on his handsome face, and a significant movement of his right hand toward his waist.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of that, you scamp," said Crispin quickly; "you wear not the fusanella here, nor have you knife or pistol with you. You are in a civilized country, my noble Count, so must act in a civilized manner."

The Greek, recovering his temper, burst out laughing, and beckoned Crispin to sit down beside him on the soft green turf.

"You have the whip-hand of me, Creespeen," he said lightly; "and I am too wise a man to waste time in argument, so I will tell you the reason of my presence here. You were quite right in thinking I did not come for pleasure; on the contrary, I wish to carry out a very delicate affair, and perhaps it is as well you should know, as I may want your assistance in the matter."

"I will help you in none of your villanies."

"By St. Theodore, how pious you have become! Oh, I forgot! you are Misterr Creespeen, the famous poet, the new Chrysostom of the Golden Mouth. Eh yes; I heard all about you in London. No one would think this great poet was ever"—

"Hold your tongue!" said Crispin, roughly grasping the Greek by the wrist; "whatever I have been, whatever I am, I have done nothing to be ashamed of."

"Indeed! would you like them to know all?" retorted the Count, jerking his hand in the direction of the house.

"I intend to tell them all when I choose; but not before."

"Suppose I anticipate you?"

"Do so, by all means. You will relate the story of my life, and I will relate the story of your life. I wonder which will prove the more interesting."

"Oh, I wonder," rejoined Caliphronas, with consummate impudence; "but do not let us quarrel, as I may want your assistance. Oh, you need not frown; I have no ill intentions towards your precious friends. In fact, to put you completely at your ease, I may as well tell you Justinian sent me to England."

"Justinian!" repeated Crispin, with a start. "Well, what of that?" he resumed carelessly. "You know I am not now friends with Justinian,—I have not seen him for nearly"—

"Three years, eh?" said Caliphronas quickly; "of course, that is just about the time you came here. Oh, I heard all about you in London; and Justinian will have heard also by this time, for I wrote and told him all."

"I trust he is pleased," said Crispin grimly.

"As to that, I don't know. True, his goose has turned out a swan, and now, unlike a swan, sings songs the world listens to; but such glory can hardly compensate him for the ungrateful manner in which you treated him."

"Enough!" cried Crispin hotly, his dark face flushing with anger; "I can justify my conduct amply, but I do not choose to do so to you. Leave Justinian, and Melnos, and all the old life alone. I want to know the reason of your presence in Roylands."

"Well, you shall know. But do not get furious over nothing," said Caliphronas mockingly. "I am afraid you have lost all your old Hellenic calm, and now resemble one of these bad-tempered Englishmen, devoured with the spleen, and greedy of money."

"I am not greedy of money."

"Eh? oh, I see! you sing your songs for the smiles of women, not for the gold of their husbands, fathers, and brothers. Well, I agree with you; the smiles of women are very delightful, but one cannot live on them, so I would like to know how you exist."

"Would you, indeed?"

"Yes; and so would Justinian."

"Well, you will neither of you be told. Come, now, it is growing late, and I wait for your confession."

"No one will hear us?"

"Of course not; besides, we speak in Greek, which is not so common in England as in Hellas."

Caliphronas let the smile die away from his lips, and looked keenly at Crispin.

"You will not reveal what I have now to tell you?"

"Not unless it is some villany."

"It is no villany. It is an act of justice. Listen."

The story, which did not take long to tell, drew forth many exclamations of surprise from Crispin, who for once in his life was astonished at the revelations of Caliphronas, and believed he was speaking the truth. Indeed, he could hardly help believing it, as many points of the story coincided with what he himself knew in connection with the Roylands family. When Caliphronas finished his recital, he flung himself back on the turf, and waited for Crispin to speak, which the young man did after a long pause.

"What you have stated astonishes me very much," he said deliberately; "but, as far as I can see, there does not seem to be any harm intended to my friend."

"None in the least," said the Count eagerly. "You do not like Justinian now, for some mysterious reason, but I think you know enough about him to trust him."

"I know enough about him not to trust him overmuch," replied Crispin coolly; "but with regard to your scheme and his scheme"—

"Yes?" cried the Count breathlessly.

"I will remain neutral."

Caliphronas drew a long breath of relief, and sprang to his feet.

"That is better than nothing; but I wish you would help me."

"No; I will remain neutral."

"You can see for yourself there is no harm intended."

"I tell you I will remain neutral," said Crispin for the third time, also rising from his recumbent attitude. "I will neither help you nor thwart you; so you can do as you please, but I don't think you'll succeed in your schemes."

"Don't you?" replied Caliphronas provokingly, as they walked up to the house together. "Well, that remains to be seen. If a man of my capacity"—

"Cunning."

"Well, cunning if you like. If a man of my cunning cannot circumvent this dull-headed"—

"Cautious."

"Oh, is he cautious? Well, I will make this cautious Englishman do as I wish. But here we are nearly at the house, and I wait to know on what footing we stand."

"You are an acquaintance of mine. I met you at Athens. Talk of the best-known Athenians as our mutual friends."

"And you will say nothing about Melnos?"

"No."

"Nor about Justinian?"

"No."

"Nor Alcibiades?"

"I tell you I won't say a word about any one or anything," said Crispin impatiently. "You can carry out your plan if you like. It does no harm to Roylands as far as I can

see; but if I find you playing double, my friend, I'll put an end to your games."

"I always play fair when it is to my benefit to do so," retorted the Greek, with an unpleasant smile.

"What a pity it is not always to your benefit to do so!" said the poet cruelly; "you would then be an honest man."

"I am what I am," answered Caliphronas sullenly; "had I created myself, I might have made an improvement."

"Not in your appearance," observed Crispin, looking at the splendid beauty of the man beside him. "I suppose you are as vain as ever?"

"Possibly; but I never let my vanity interfere with my business."

"Ah, there is some sense in that splendid head of yours, but precious little."

"Quite enough to accomplish my wishes."

"I doubt it. However, here we are, and here is Mr. Roylands."

It was indeed Maurice, who, arrayed in evening dress, advanced to meet them, and greeted Caliphronas with a smile.

"I had quite given you up, Count," he said, shaking hands with the Greek; "your luggage arrived, but not you, and the dinner is now due. However, as neither of you gentlemen is ready, I have just put it off for half an hour, so you will just have time to dress. You know Mr. Crispin, Count?"

"Yes; you must blame him for my unpunctuality," said Caliphronas gracefully. "I walked over here, and sent on my luggage by your groom. In the avenue I met Mr. Creespeen, and we talked of old times."

"Ah, you know one another!" cried Maurice, flashing a keen glance at Crispin, which that gentleman sustained without blenching.

"Oh yes," answered the poet calmly; "I was afraid I did not know the name of Count Caliphronas, but my memory played me false. I know it and him very well. We met at Athens."

"Three years ago," continued the Count, laughing. "You have no idea, Mr. Maurice, how astonished I was to meet my friend here. By the way, you must allow me to call you Mr. Maurice; I make such a mess of your English names."

"I think you speak English wonderfully well, Count. Where did you learn, may I ask, if it is not a rude question?"

"I had an English tutor," replied Caliphronas, stealing a glance at Crispin; "and I have been accustomed to your tongue since a lad."

"Ah, that accounts for it. Well, come with me, Count, and I will show you your room. Crispin, Mrs. Dengelton and her daughter are already in the drawing-room, so you had better make haste."

Crispin went off as quickly as possible, and Maurice hospitably conducted his guest to the room prepared for him, where Roylands' valet was already spreading out the Count's evening dress. This duty having been performed, Mr. Roylands hurried away to his guests in the drawing-room, and the Count was left alone with the valet, whom he speedily dismissed.

"Thank you; I won't require anything else," he said, when the servant had arranged all his clothes. "I am accustomed to wait on myself. Dinner is in half an hour?"

"Yes, sir," replied the valet, and retired quietly.

The fact is, Caliphronas had a habit of thinking aloud, and, as he had a good many matters to consider, he was afraid of committing himself if a second person were in the room; therefore, having got rid of the servant, he began to dress slowly for dinner, thinking deeply all the time.

"I do not think Creespeen will say anything," he said aloud in Greek, as he arranged his white tie; "very likely he will help me, if I can manage him. How upright he is now—how very upright, and to think"—

Here the Count went into a fit of silent laughter, which lasted until he arrived at the door of the drawing-room, when he controlled his risible muscles, and went in gravely to be introduced to the ladies.

CHAPTER VII.

SOUVENT FEMME VARIE.

Woman's a weathercock,
Full of frivolity.
Men may together mock
At her heart's quality.
But if a heart she steals,
Worth all the smart she feels,
There then her place is;
Lo, then the nether rock
Less firm of base is.

Needless to say, Count Constantine Caliphronas was much admired by the two ladies, which was scarcely to be wondered at, seeing his charm of manner was almost as great as his physical perfection. Attracted in the first instance by his good looks, they were quite prepared to find the kernel of such a handsome nut somewhat disappointing; in other words, they fancied that Nature could scarcely be so profuse in her gifts, as to give this man great mental powers in addition to his comely exterior. To their surprise, they found the Greek to be a charming conversationalist, and were much astonished at the purity with which he spoke the English tongue.

It would be ridiculous to say that Caliphronas was a man of any great intellectual powers; for, as before stated, he was gifted with more cunning than brains, still, such cunning enabled him to conceal his educational deficiencies, and by a dexterous use of the little knowledge he possessed, he managed to pass for a very intelligent man. Shallow Caliphronas was, without doubt, and his education in many ways had been wofully neglected; but he had travelled a great deal, he was acute enough in picking up unconsidered trifles of general information, he had plenty of small talk, so all these advantages, in conjunction with his undeniable good looks and ready wit, enabled him to fascinate the ordinary run of people. A clever man or a brilliant woman would have discovered the smallness of his intellectual powers at once; but every-day folk are not so difficult to please, and both Mrs. Dengelton and her daughter, being ordinary folk, gifted with ordinary brains, found the flashy, frivolous chatter of the Count infinitely charming.

Maurice, having got over his first suspicions of the Greek, soon liked him extremely, as he was a pleasant companion, and always in a good humor. On the other hand, Crispin, who knew what Caliphronas really was, and how mean and vile a soul inhabited that splendid body, was much put to in order to conceal his distaste for the society of this brilliant stranger. He saw through the thin veneer of good manners and

facile accomplishments, into the true nature of the man, and was well aware that this apparently charming child of Nature, all impulse and simplicity, was in reality a crafty, selfish, sensual scoundrel, whose only aim in life was to benefit himself at the expense of others.

"If we were only in the Palace of Truth now!" thought the poet, as he sat silently watching the dexterous way in which Caliphronas was using his small stock of accomplishments. "I wonder what they would say were that man compelled to give utterance to his real thoughts. They would fly in horror from him as a vile thing, a beautiful flower, whose appearance is exquisite, yet whose odor is death. Still, he has improved wonderfully since the old days. I wonder where he picked up these good manners—not from Justinian or Alcibiades, I'll be bound; but perhaps he has been learning the art of pleasing from Helena."

As this thought came into his mind, and he remembered the charming woman who bore that name, knowing what Caliphronas was, he could not restrain a shudder, which, immediately drew the eyes of the Greek towards him.

"Eh, my friend, Mr. Creespeen," he said slowly; for Caliphronas, in spite of his intimate acquaintance with the English tongue, picked up, heaven only knows where, could never pronounce proper names without a strong foreign accent,—"eh, my friend, you shudder. Some one is walking over your grave."

"Oh, what a horrible idea!" cried Mrs. Dengelton in her liveliest manner, for the Count's good looks had made a deep impression on her elderly heart. "I declare, my dear Count, you make me shudder also. It is exactly the kind of thing my brother Rudolph would say. Ghouls, vampires, omens, dreams, and all those grewsome things, he used to revel in. Yes, positively revel in. Never shall I forget being told how he brought some lady friend a book to read, called 'Footprints on the Borders of Another World.' It nearly frightened her into convulsions, and she threw it out of the window."

"My Uncle Rudolph must have been an interesting kind of person," said Maurice dryly.

"Oh, my dear Maurice, he was so terribly wild! Yes! Why, in the old days, he would have been a buccaneer or a pirate—it is just the kind of thing he would have liked to be."

At this last remark, Crispin looked straight at the Count, who met his gaze with an uneasy laugh, and tried to turn the conversation.

"This gentleman, madam? He was very adventurous, I presume?"

"Oh dear me, yes! Your uncle, Eunice, I am speaking of—your uncle, Maurice."

"Yes, mamma—yes, aunt," said both the cousins together.

"He had a fiery eye, and was over six feet in height. I always thought him the image of the Templar in 'Ivanhoe;' but, of course, I speak from hearsay, as I was a babe when he left England. Is there not a portrait of him somewhere, Maurice?"

"It is just behind you, aunt, over the piano."

Both Caliphronas and Crispin arose with a simultaneous movement, and strolled across the room to look at this modern Captain Kidd, for that style of man he appeared to have been, judging from Mrs. Dengelton's highly-colored description.

The portrait was a full-length one of a handsome young man in the old-fashioned costume *à la d'Orsay* of the early Victorian age, and assuredly he appeared to be a

dandy of the first water. But his strong commanding face, his eagle glance, firm mouth, and prominent nose marked him at once as a born leader of men. A man who, in Elizabethan times, would have sailed the Spanish main and thrashed the Dons; who, in later years, would have delighted in Jacobite conspiracies; who would have fought his way to a marshal's baton when Napoleon led the armies of France: in fact, one of those men who find no outlet for their energies in the leading-strings of civilization, but who, in a lawless life, develop those qualities whereof heroes are made. Maurice was good-looking enough in an ordinary fashion, but he had none of the power and daring in his face, such as showed so conspicuously in his uncle's countenance.

The Count and Crispin remained looking at the portrait an unconscionably long time, considering the original was unknown to them, and glanced meaningly at one another as they went back to their seats.

"Your description is an admirable one, Mrs. Dengelton," said Crispin, as that lady evidently desired his opinion of the portrait; "the face is that of a man who would be either a hero or a scoundrel according to circumstances, but always brave."

"My dear Mr. Crispin!" cried the lady, somewhat scandalized at the epithet applied to a Roylands.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Dengelton; I am speaking of the type more than the man. Rudolph Roylands has the bearing of a born leader of men, and I do not wonder he left England for wider fields. He must have been stifled in this narrow island."

"How do you know he left England?" asked the lady sharply.

"Why, your story of last night"—

"But you were not here when I told it. Ah, my dear Mr. Crispin, I am indeed very angry at you for taking my daughter out onto the terrace. She might have caught her death of cold—but we will not speak of that. At all events, you could not have heard my story."

Crispin looked rather uncomfortable, as if he feared he had committed himself; but, as Mrs. Dengelton's beady eyes were fastened shrewdly on his face, he had to make some answer, though, truth to tell, he did not know what to say.

"Well, really, Mrs. Dengelton, I hardly know how to reply," he said, coloring. "I did not hear all your story; but, if you remember, just before the Rector said good-night, you talked about your brother leaving England."

"Dear me, yes, so I did!" said Mrs. Dengelton, and would have liked to add something anent the story of the photographs, the falsehood of which she had discovered. Maurice, however, guessed how the land lay, and feeling sorry for Crispin, who was really very uncomfortable, made the first remark that came into his head. Caliphronas, tired of the conversation, had gone to the piano, where Eunice was playing softly, and talked to her in an undertone. This attention, however, was not noticed by Crispin, who was too busy trying to extricate himself from his dilemma with Mrs. Dengelton, to think about anything else. How he would have managed to evade the photograph question, which Mrs. Dengelton was bent on asking, it is difficult to say, but that Maurice came to his aid with the apparently irrelevant remark, —

"My dear Crispin, you say that, judging from his face, my uncle would either be a hero or a scoundrel. Now what do you mean by that remark?"

"Oh, I hope I haven't offended you by making it," said Crispin, with a grateful smile, for he saw through Roylands' stratagem; "but if a man like your uncle has such qualities as he seems to possess, strongly developed, they are bound to break out in some direction. Place him in the army, and he will be a hero in time of war, but supposing he was born in Whitechapel, I am afraid his heroic qualities would be dangerous to society."

"Then you think a hero and a thief are composed of the same qualities?"

"I will not say a thief, but use the milder term, 'adventurer.' If the great Napoleon had not been an adventurer of that quality, he would never have mounted the throne of France. Sforza, the Duke of Milan, was of the same species; so was William the Conqueror, and Roger de Hauteville, King of Sicily. All these men, through force of circumstances which aided the development of their commanding qualities, obtained thrones—they were adventurers who became kings. On the other hand, look at Benvenuto Cellini. He had the same instincts for fighting, commanding, and daring, the same longing for fame, riches, adventures; yet, to the end of his life, he was but a quarrelsome swashbuckler, simply because his circumstances did not permit his qualities developing in the right direction. Cromwell had these qualities and mounted a throne, Rienzi had them and died on the scaffold—all through circumstances. Believe me, my dear Maurice, whatever qualities a man may possess, the development of them in the right or the wrong direction depends on his surroundings. It is a common saying that genius can override all obstacles—a mistake which anyone who reads history can perceive. Circumstances are sometimes too strong for the greatest soul, and that genius which should have created empires dies in obscurity."

"Quite a historical lecture, I declare," tittered Mrs. Dengelton, who found this long speech a trifle wearisome; "but, how does all this apply to my brother?"

"If your brother, Mrs. Dengelton, went to South America, he probably rose to be president of one of those petty republics; if he went as a free lance into the service of some Eastern potentate, he very likely ended his life as a pasha of three tails; but if he stayed in England, I feel certain that his violent temperament, his adventurous longings, must have brought him into trouble."

"I don't think he stayed in England," replied Mrs. Dengelton, shaking her head, "or we certainly would have heard of his death. Probably he is a president, or a pasha, or some of those dreadful things you speak of."

"Do you think he is dead, aunt?" asked Maurice, who had been listening quietly to this argument.

"I'm sure I don't know. I haven't heard of him for years and years; but the Roylands are always long-living people, so perhaps he is still alive. It is now fifty years since he went away, at the age of twenty-five, so if he is still alive he must be quite seventy-five years of age."

"Seventy-five years of age," repeated Crispin, and relapsed into silence.

"Who is seventy-five years of age?" asked Caliphronas, overhearing the remark.

"My Uncle Rudolph, if alive," said Maurice lazily.

"Oh, indeed!" replied Caliphronas carelessly, but his words conveyed volumes as he tried to catch the eye of Crispin. In this, however, he was not successful, as Crispin was wrapt up in a brown study, so the Greek turned towards Eunice and asked her to sing something.

"I am passionately fond of music," he said, turning over some songs, "and nothing so delights me as to hear a woman's voice."

Eunice blushed at this compliment to her sex, and, not knowing how to answer it,—for she was still afflicted with the shyness of the bread-and-butter age,—took up the first song that came to hand.

"Do you know this song?" she said, placing the music before her—"'The Star Sirius;' it is the new scientific style of song, now all the rage."

"A scientific song," repeated Caliphronas, rather puzzled.

"Yes, blending instruction with pleasure," said Crispin, rousing himself out of his revery and walking over to the piano. "The public are tired of love-songs, sea-songs, sacred songs, comic songs, and sentimentalities of all kinds; so some ingenious person has invented the scientific song. In this song astronomy is brought to the aid of eroticism, and the result is peculiar, to say the least of it. I presume such ditties are written for musically-inclined Girton girls. Shall I play your accompaniment, Miss Dengelton?"

"If you would be so kind," said Eunice, vacating her seat at the piano, which action brought a frown to the face of her watchful mother. "I can sing better standing up."

Crispin played the prelude in sufficiently good style, and Caliphronas, sinking into a chair near the singer, looked up into her face in a somewhat bold fashion, as she sang the latest up-to-date song of the day.

THE STAR SIRIUS.

I.

A glowing star of ardent ray
  In midnight skies we trace,
It is a central sun, they say,
  Enshrined in distant space.
Around it giant planets turn,
  In motion constant roll,
With fiery force its splendors burn,
  As for thee burns my soul.
Oh, star ascendant at my birth!
For tears, for sadness, or for mirth,
You rule my destiny on earth.

II.

Oh, star of stars! in thee no flaw
  The telescopes reveal;
Thine orbs obey attraction's law,
  And round thy centre wheel.
Beloved, thou and I are one,
  Nor parted e'er can be;
I am thy planet, thou my sun,
  For all eternity.
Oh, star ascendant at my birth!
For tears, for sadness, or for mirth,
You rule my destiny on earth.

"Thank you, Miss Dengelton," said Caliphronas, when the song ended; "I like your singing much better than the words. They are somewhat perplexing."

"They are up-to-date words," remarked Crispin calmly; "the music is also up to date, of the most advanced school, a blending of Dvoräk and Rubinstein."

"What awful names!" cried Caliphronas, with a shudder; "they grate on the ear."

"So does their music in some cases; there is nothing like consistency. Still, some of the advanced school of music's efforts are delightful. This dance of Dvoräk's, for instance."

Bringing down his hands on the keys with a crash, he played one of those weird gypsy dances of the Bohemian musician, which thrill the listener with their wild capriciousness, and conjure up pictures of a mode of life quite alien to our prosaic respectability. That strange chord resounds loudly through the room, and at once we see the wild horses flying across the illimitable gray plain, the fierce voices of their gypsy riders pealing up to the sombre sky of midnight. That rapid medley of sounds, and lo! the fires burn redly under the trees, while round them bound tawny women with flashing eyes, tossing their arms and clashing their tambourines to the wild rhythm of the music. Death on the cards, love in the stars, and the muttered prophecies of crouching hags, terrified at the omen of flying bat, of shrieking night-bird. Another whirl of glittering notes scatter themselves through the air, crash, crash, crash, chord upon chord sounds fiercely, with intervals of sparkling chromatic runs like the falling of broken spray, and then one final chord, bringing the red of the dawn, the chill winds of morning, and the uprising of the cheerful sun.

"Wonderful!" cried Mrs. Dengelton, who knew nothing about music, but admired Dvoräk because he was the fashion, and not intelligible to the ordinary mind.

"So fantastic," added Eunice, whose accomplishments did not soar above the mild singing of a mild drawing-room ballad, such as "Daddy's Dancing," or "Oh, if to thee my heart is Welcome!"

"Well, for my part," said the Count, shrugging his shoulders, "I think your new music is horrible."

"Ah, it does not appeal to your Hellenic spirit," replied Crispin carelessly. "Mephistopheles felt out of place at the classical Walpurgis Night, so you, my dear Caliphronas, feel equally at sea among this diablerie of a Northern composer, so suggestive of the festival on the Bröcken."

"I don't know what you are taking about," said the Count uneasily, having a vague idea he was being laughed at.

"Of course you don't," replied Crispin coolly. "You have never read 'Faust,' either the first or the second part."

Caliphronas knew that Crispin did not like him, and, thinking he wanted to ridicule him in the presence of the ladies, would have made some angry answer, but that Eunice, quite unaware of this storm in a teacup, asked him to sing a Greek song.

"Yes, do, dear Count!" said Mrs. Dengelton gushingly. "I do so love foreign songs! They go to the soul."

"And the soul—at least the English soul—does not understand them," observed Maurice, with a yawn, for he was growing somewhat tired of this musical discussion.

"If the song is in Italian, French, or German, I can certainly understand it," said the lady, with dignity; "but Greek I can hardly be expected to know."

"I do not think you would care much for the words if you did understand modern Greek," remarked Crispin with a smile. "The sonorous tongue of Hellas invests the most commonplace poems with a dignity and a charm which they would lose if translated. Come, Count, and sing that love-song you used to be so fond of in Athens."

"Athens!" repeated the Count, with a significant smile, as he rose to comply with this request.

"Yes, Athens!" repeated Crispin, with emphasis. "I was accustomed to play your accompaniment. How does it go?"

He began playing a simple melody, which, wild though it was, sounded quite poverty-stricken after the wealth of harmonies which had so distinguished the music of Dvoräk. Caliphronas watched the player's fingers for a little time, and then began to sing in an uncommonly fine tenor voice, though of course somewhat rough for want of training. What he lacked in delicacy, however, he made up in force and fire; and the wonderful language he sang in also assisted him greatly, though, as regards the song itself, neither melody nor words were particularly striking.

> Daphne, this summer night is full of singing;
> I hear my comrades sigh at the windows of those they worship;
> The windows are open, but thy lattice is closed.
> "Love!" calls the lover to his beloved.
> "Love!" answers the beloved with smiling lip.
> But from your window you call not "Love!"
> Wherefore the night is empty of singing to me:
> Lean from your lattice, capricious one,
> And I will sing the strain of the nightingale to the rose.
> Yes! you have heard me: you open your window,
> I can see the silver daggers gleam in your hair;
> And you throw me a rose, which sighs "I love thee."
> Ah, you have spoken to the rose, and the message is told.
> Good-night, my Daphne, sleep with the sound of my voice in thine ears;
> But for me there is no slumber,
> For all night will I demand of the rose your message,
> And the rose will reply, "I love thee! I love thee!"

"Thank you so much," said Eunice, coming over to the piano. "I do not know what it means, but it sounds wonderfully charming."

"It is a love-song."

"I wish I had a translation of it."

"I will translate it if you wish, Miss Dengelton," said Crispin, by no means relishing the attention which Eunice was paying to the Greek.

"What! do you know Greek?"

"Modern Greek; yes. I have been in Greece a great deal."

"A great deal," echoed Caliphronas, with an evil smile.

Crispin faced round abruptly, and was about to say something in an undertone, but, after a moment's deliberation, turned slowly away. The Count looked after him with a

smiling face, and then devoted himself to Eunice, who was by no means averse to receiving his attentions.

Now, Eunice must not be misjudged. It is true that she felt flattered by the attentions of such a strikingly handsome man as Caliphronas; but she was not, as Crispin in his jealousy thought, attracted in any marked degree by this stranger. In fact, she was playing a little comedy for the blinding of her lynx-eyed mother; for, afraid lest that lady should discover that she was secretly engaged to Crispin, with the instinctive craft of womankind, Eunice pretended to be more taken up with the Greek than with the poet. By following this course, she thought her mother's mind would be set at rest concerning the rivalry of Crispin with Maurice. Alas! the plan was a good one, and excellently well carried out; but such diplomacy met with but an ill reward, as in avoiding Charybdis she fell into the clutches of Scylla; for, in place of an angry mother, she had to put up with an angry lover.

Crispin was puzzled to account for her sudden desertion of him and this marked attention to Caliphronas, so at once with masculine stupidity, deemed that the outward graces of the Count had rendered her false to him. Had Crispin been fortunate enough to possess a female friend to whom he could have talked on such a serious matter, his suspicions would speedily have been lulled to rest; for no one but a woman can understand a woman, and, as Crispin was of the masculine gender, he therefore failed to grasp the situation. Eunice chatted gayly with Caliphronas, smiled on him, sang songs to him, and quite neglected poor Crispin, who grew towards the end of the night almost as melancholy as Maurice, in his despair at such unlooked-for behavior on the part of the girl he loved.

As to Caliphronas, that gentleman, who possessed a considerable amount of vanity, and an overweening sense of his own perfections, saw nothing in the conduct of Miss Dengelton otherwise than what should be. He was so accustomed to be petted and made much of by women, that it became a matter of habit with him, and he would have been considerably astonished had Eunice acted otherwise than she did. At the same time, he was secretly very pleased at making an impression in this quarter, as he saw at once from intercepted glances that the poet was violently enamoured of this fair English maiden. Caliphronas hated Crispin with all the strong venomosity of a little soul, and if he could do him an ill turn would certainly take advantage of the opportunity. Thinking Eunice had succumbed to his fascinations, he was quite prepared to take advantage of his conquest, and deprive the poet of his ewe lamb, the more so as Crispin's ill-concealed jealousy added considerably to the charm of the flirtation. Poor Eunice, who never thought her motives would be misconstrued by her jealous lover, was quite astonished when he permitted Caliphronas to present her with her bedroom candle, and wished her a frosty good-night. She would have liked to obtain an explanation, but Mrs. Dengelton was at her heels, so she was obliged to retire to bed, considerably disconcerted over the strange behavior of this stupidly-jealous poet.

Caliphronas also went to bed very shortly, as he did not smoke, and, alleging that it was his custom to retire early and rise early, went off to his room, leaving Crispin alone with Maurice. As soon as they were by themselves, Crispin turned at once to his friend.

"Did you see Eunice to-night?"

Maurice leisurely filled his pipe.

"Yes; I saw her. You are jealous of our friend Caliphronas."

"Well, I certainly think Eunice gave me good cause to be. What is the reason of this sudden change?"

Roylands shrugged his shoulders and lighted his pipe.

"I don't know; unless Francis I. was right," he said calmly,—"'*Souvent femme varie*.'"

CHAPTER VIII.

ENDYMION.

Oh, goddess wise,
Disdainful of the sultry sun,
Thou waitest till his course is run
Then stealing where Endymion
In slumber lies,
With am'rous sighs
Awake him in that secret nest,
All drowsy with enchanted rest,
To lie upon thy silver breast;
While daylight dies,
In western skies,
And shyly peering one by one,
The stars gaze on that meeting blest.

For the next week or so life passed very agreeably at the Grange, and its inmates, becoming habituated to one another's society, settled down into a lotus-eating existence, which, if not a useful one, was at least infinitely charming. Caliphronas played his part in this country house comedy in the most admirable manner, and, owing to his good looks, his good manners, and his good temper, soon established himself as a universal favorite. This splendid flower of humanity which had bloomed to such beauty under the serene skies of the East fascinated Maurice greatly, and he took a genuine pleasure in modelling the Endymion from the Count; though at times, in spite of his artistic capabilities, he almost despaired of being able to mould the soft clay into a perfect representation of this virile perfection. At the same time the intercourse between the sculptor and his model was very pleasant, as Caliphronas was a most delightful companion, and told stories of his adventures in a manner worthy of Ulysses or Munchausen. Yet, though he seemed to grow quite confidential over his past life, he nevertheless withheld many episodes which might have prejudiced his host against him. Maurice, who was simple in many ways, despite his ten years' experience of Bohemia, thought Caliphronas was laying bare his whole soul, whereas the wily Greek only revealed the best side of that very complex article. This setting forth of his moral excellences was of course in keeping with the impression he was anxious to produce, and he thus made himself very agreeable to Maurice, who took the Count for what he represented himself to be, not for what he really was.

Caliphronas was an excellent conversationalist, and during the sittings beguiled the time with many stories of his countrymen, and not infrequently of his countrywomen,

for this Apollo had achieved many conquests in the fields of Venus, and seemed very proud of his prowess during some charming campaigns. Probably most of his stories were exaggerations, and at times even simple Maurice doubted their truth, but so gracefully were these lies told that they sounded as delightful as the tales of Boccaccio. The Count, with considerable imaginative power, supplied to his host a charming history of himself and his early life, which was more or less fictitious; but, of course, his listener never dreamed that a man could string together such a quantity of consistent lies, and therefore believed those romances worthy of Dumas the Elder. Maurice was no fool, but his own nature was so simple and honorable, that he thought every one else was like himself, and at the worst only deemed that these histories were perhaps highly colored, but true in the main.

Meanwhile, Eunice had demanded at the most convenient opportunity an explanation from Crispin, regarding his inexplicable behavior on that first night of the Greek's visit, and had received one which considerably startled her, as it plainly showed that Crispin was disposed to be jealous. This rather pleased Eunice, as no woman cares about a meek lover, and the more jealousy a man displays, the more his beloved feels complimented at the power she exercises over his affections. However, the situation between her and Crispin being somewhat strained, Eunice, deeming honesty to be the best policy, confessed all about her little scheme of misleading Mrs. Dengelton regarding the true position of affairs. On learning the truth, Crispin felt very much ashamed of his groundless suspicions, and apologized profusely for having doubted his intended, whereat, being satisfied with this humbling of the proud, she took him into favor again, so the course of true love once more ran smooth.

Notwithstanding the unpleasantness of such a thing, Crispin rather approved of Eunice treating him with coldness in the presence of Mrs. Dengelton, as it would probably lull the suspicions of that lady, but he was not so sure about his intended accepting the very pointed attentions of Caliphronas. Crispin knew the Greek thoroughly. Eunice was absolutely ignorant of his real character; but as, owing to his being behind the scenes, he could make Caliphronas to a certain extent do what he desired, he hinted very plainly to this Hellenic Don Juan that his attentions were unwelcome to Miss Dengelton, and that he was to give up the *rôle* he had elected to play. At first the Count was disposed to rebel against this fiat, which put an end to a very pleasant flirtation, but as he really did not care about Eunice, and moreover Crispin was too dangerous to be provoked lightly, he made a virtue of necessity, and ceased to overwhelm the shy English girl with his florid compliments. At the same time he promised himself to be revenged on Crispin at the first opportunity, and Crispin, knowing this, could not help feeling a trifle uneasy, for it was a difficult matter to fight with an absolutely unscrupulous scoundrel like the Count, whose laws were neither those of God nor man, but of his own making. However, Crispin's knowledge of his errand to Roylands proved an effective weapon, and he was satisfied that the Greek would do nothing to jeopardize the success of his mission, even though his vanity demanded some revenge for being thus slighted.

Of course, Mrs. Dengelton still contemplated a match between her daughter and nephew, but Maurice evaded her hints with great dexterity, yet at the same time, to protect Crispin from a less complaisant rival, made such pointed remarks about the necessity of marriage as led Mrs. Dengelton to believe that he seriously contemplated

entering into the matrimonial state. Never was the good lady so puzzled in her life, for she could not make up her mind as to what Maurice really meant, with his blowing hot one day and cold the next, but, being a great believer in the efficacy of time, deemed it the wisest plan to wait the development of events, and in order to watch the same kept her beady eyes wide open. Owing to the neglectful manner in which Eunice had lately treated Crispin, she apprehended no danger from that quarter, and, as Maurice was very attentive to his cousin, the Hon. Mrs. Dengelton felt sure that in the end she would obtain her heart's desire, and install Eunice as mistress of Roylands Grange.

The Rector sometimes came over to the Grange, and was friendly with every one saving Caliphronas, as for some inexplicable reason he professed to heartily dislike that brilliant gentleman. It was certainly a kind of Dr. Fell-ish aversion, of which Mr. Carriston felt rather ashamed, as he could give no plausible reason for such distrust. In reply to a question of Maurice's he simply said that, much as he admired the physical beauty of the Greek, he was by no means sure that his soul corresponded to the perfection of the body. Indeed, on one occasion, while Mrs. Dengelton was eulogizing the charms of Caliphronas from a feminine point of view, the Rector pointedly quoted that line from the *Odyssey* which says,—"Faultlessly fair bodies are not always the temples of a godlike soul;" but as this remark was made in Homeric Greek, the significance of it was lost upon the lady. It may be that some subtle instinct warned him against this man, whose evil nature was concealed under the semblance of good; but at all events the Rector was always on his guard against the Count, and delicately warned Maurice against trusting him too far. Evidently Mr. Carriston had studied the character of Ulysses to no small purpose, and found in Caliphronas a reproduction, body, brain, and soul, of the most crafty of the Greeks.

Regarding the outward appearance of Caliphronas, the Rector was too deeply steeped in the serene literature of Hellas to be unimpressed with the physical splendor of the man. Making allowances for the subduing influence of modern clothing, which detracts from the most perfect beauty either in man or woman, Mr. Carriston at times, seeing Caliphronas in the dazzling sunlight, thought he beheld, as in a vision, the phantom of some joyous Hellenic divinity untouched by sorrow or care. This man, gifted with exceptional beauty, might have been Hylas, Hyacinth, or Theoxenos, and strayed by chance from some unknown Arcadian vale into the rush and turmoil of the modern world, with its worship of money and position, so alien to the adoration of Beauty and Genius which formed the cult of antique Hellas. In truth, Caliphronas was out of place in England;—our gray rainy skies, smoky air, stifling cities, and domesticated Nature, formed but a dark background for this strongly vitalized being, tingling from head to foot with the healthfulness of wild life. He should have dwelt in the burning south, beside the tideless ripples of serene seas, under the cloudless blue of Attic skies, with the silver-gray olives, the shining temples of the gods, and headland, mountain peak, and island melting into phantom forms of aërial grace far beyond the expanse of the laughing ocean. He was an anachronism in this nineteenth century, the physical survivor of Hellas as Keats was the mental survivor—one had the body of Alcibiades, the other the brain of Theocritus, and both were equally alien to the modern world.

Well was it for the Rector that he could see only the splendid casket, and not the soul contained therein, for, in spite of his instinctive distrust, the fancy he had that this Count was not to be trusted fell far below the actual moral degradation of the man. Caliphronas was as vain as a peacock, absolutely ignorant of the morality of right or wrong, lazy in every way save what touched his own desires, and crafty as a fox. Crispin could have pointed out to the Rector all these flaws, but Crispin had promised to hold his peace so long as Caliphronas abstained from actual harm; therefore he remained quiescent, and only reminded the Greek now and then that there was a watchful eye on his doings.

Maurice believed in the Greek, the Rector doubted him, and Crispin knew his worthlessness thoroughly, so among the three of them the character of Caliphronas was pretty well analyzed. From Maurice, the steady, respectable Englishman, with occasional lapses of artistic wildness, to Caliphronas, the brilliant cosmopolitan adventurer, was a long step. Crispin stood midway between the two, as he had a certain amount of British phlegmatism, with at times those wild impulses which come from a wandering life and an intellectual nature. Still, he could control his spontaneity, while Caliphronas, obeying his own undisciplined mind, did whatever came into his head; yet, if any one was scandalized by such unconventionality, he would at once obtain forgiveness by the graceful way in which he apologized.

"It is impossible to be angry with you," said Maurice to him one day, when the Count had been guilty of some ridiculous escapade, "and yet you deserve to be sharply spoken to. But you are a child in many ways, and we cannot be angry with a child."

"There you are right, my dear Mr. Maurice," replied Caliphronas, smiling. "I am a child, but that is as much as to say, I am a Greek. You remember what the Egyptian priest said to Solon,—'You Greeks are always children.' Therefore, if I am a child, and act impulsively like a child, blame my nationality, not myself."

"I expect you could be a very bad child if you wanted to!" said Crispin, overhearing this defence.

Caliphronas darted a spiteful look at the speaker.

"Very likely," he replied in a meaning tone; "but those who dread stings should not disturb the wasps' nest."

There was a distinct menace in his tone, but Crispin felt too confident of having the upper hand to take much notice of this venom, and merely laughed, much to the wrath of the Greek. However, as the time was not yet ripe for action, he restrained his anger, and behaved so amiably to Crispin that it was only the knowledge the poet possessed of his true character that made him mistrust the suave smiles and kindly actions of this Greek Machiavelli.

Caliphronas was an amphibious creature, and lived quite as much in the water as on the shore. Whenever he had the time to spare, he went off to Brasdimir for a dip in the sea, and would plunge and wallow in the water like a dolphin. Fortunately that summer at Roylands was unusually hot, and what with the cloudless skies, the burning sun, and the delicate emerald tints of foliage, grass, and herb, Caliphronas might well have imagined that he was still in his beloved Greece, bathing off some pebbly beach of the Ægean.

Brasdimir was a somewhat peculiar place, and was in reality an arm of the sea (*bras de mer*) which ran up like a long tongue into the land, where it met the waters of the Roy river. In olden times, Roylands, which was its Norman-French name, had been the property of the crown, and had been used by the Plantagenets for their favorite pastime of hunting. Henry II. bestowed it on one of his barons who was strongly suspected of being a son of the king, but who on receiving this royal gift dropped his former name of Fitzroy and took that of Roylands. It was certainly a splendid property, and through all the turbulence of succeeding reigns the descendants of the first Roylands had succeeded in keeping their hold on these rich acres; so it was very little diminished in size from the time of its bestowal on Fitzroy. Brasdimir, which was a kind of estuary, ran about half a mile up into the estate, and into it flowed the little river Roy, which was a placid stream of no great beauty. All round Brasdimir lay fat meadows containing some of the finest land in the country, and clumps of beech and elm and oak, remnants of the old hunting-forest of Plantagenet kings, dotted their broad expanse of daisied sward.

Near the upper part of Brasdimir, where it met the waters of the Roy and blended salt with fresh, stood a quincunx of noble oaks which grew close to the bank. From thence the smooth turf of the meadow sloped down to the turbulent waters, and it was here that Caliphronas came to bathe, not only every morning, but often three times a day. Being in the middle of the estate, Brasdimir was far away from all human habitation, and might have been the navel of some great wilderness, so lonely it was. The Greek loved this blending of fresh and salt water, as the softness of the one assuaged the harshness of the other, and under the hot sun would frequently cool himself in this unique pool, which was neither river nor stream, but a mixture of both.

Very often Crispin and Maurice would come with him for a morning dip just before sunrise, and then walk back to the Grange with a tremendous appetite for breakfast.

One morning they set out for their usual walk, just as the east was flushing redly with the dawn, and the chill morning air nipped them keenly as they strolled along in the direction of Brasdimir. That is to say, the poet and the sculptor strolled, for Caliphronas simply danced along, as if to rid himself of his superabundant energy. Across the dewy meadows he bounded fawn-like, singing as gayly as the lark already saluting the sun in the fresh blue sky. Like some wild being of the woods, he leaped here and there from very light-heartedness, with his head bare and his arms tossing in the air. A number of horses pasturing in the field rushed away at his approach, nor, though he called them loudly, did they pause in their wild career.

"What a child he is!" said Maurice, watching the graceful figure of the Greek bounding lightly towards the water.

"Yes, a nice child truly," sneered Crispin, with strong disfavor.

"You don't seem to like Caliphronas?"

"Well, no, I cannot say I do. As an acquaintance he is all very well, but as a friend"—Here Crispin shrugged his shoulders in lieu of words.

"I suppose all he says about himself is true?"

"I suppose so," replied the poet curtly.

"Do you think he will stay long down here? I hope he will not go away before I finish modelling my Endymion."

"I think you can safely depend on his staying till then," rejoined Crispin significantly, and the conversation ended—a conversation which left an odd feeling of discomfort in the mind of Maurice, which—why he could not tell—seemed to revive his old distrust of this fascinating Greek. He would have questioned Crispin further, but as they were now on the edge of the bank, and Caliphronas was within hearing, he had no opportunity of so doing, therefore put off such examination till a more convenient season.

Caliphronas was already in the water, swimming like a fish, and indeed he was as much at home there as on the land. The two gentlemen undressed leisurely on the bank, Maurice making fun of the Greek as he revelled in his favorite element.

"You had better beware, Caliphronas, as the nymphs might take a fancy to you as they did to Hylas."

"River nymphs, sea nymphs, I do not mind in the least!" cried the Greek gayly; "ladies are always charming, whether they have tails or limbs."

At this moment he reached the opposite bank and climbed on the fallen trunk of a tree. As he stood there with his arms raised above his head, the first yellow ray of the sun flashed on his white body and enveloped him in glory, as though he were indeed a stray Olympian. Then, with a shout of glee, he shot downward like an arrow, cleaving the blue water with a dash of snowy spray, which sprang upwards glittering like diamonds in the yellow sunlight. By this time Maurice and his friend were also enjoying their bath in the cool element, and the three rollicked about like schoolboys. Crispin swam down the estuary in the direction of the sea with Maurice, and soon the surface of the water roughened by the wind began to dash salt spray in their faces. Caliphronas stayed where he was, amusing himself with fancy strokes, but after a time he became tired, and when the others came back, breathless with their long swim, they found the Count standing on the bank drying himself.

As they also were tired, they also sought the bank, but at this moment one of the horses, a powerful black one, came timidly near them. Caliphronas, with that wonderful power he had over all animals, advanced, nude as he was, up the bank, and called to the horse in a coaxing tone. The animal let him get quite close to it and lay his hand on the mane, when with a sudden spring the Greek leaped on its back, and the horse, startled by the action and by his shout, galloped away at full speed. Round and round the meadow went horse and man, forming so striking a sight that Maurice and Crispin paused in their dressing to look at it. As the horse at full gallop came sweeping past, with Caliphronas laughing and holding on by the mane, Maurice involuntarily thought of the frieze of the Parthenon, where nude youths ride fiery steeds in a long serene procession of marble figures. The Greek rode like a Red Indian, with the most consummate ease, and as the horse for the third time darted past the quincunx of oaks, he dropped lightly off, by some trick known only to himself, and the steed galloped wildly away, while the Greek came back laughing to his friends.

"What a child you are, Caliphronas!" said Maurice in a vexed tone; "riding a bare-backed steed in that reckless manner. You might have broken your neck."

"Small loss if he had," muttered Crispin under his breath.

"Oh, I can stick on anything," answered Caliphronas carelessly, taking no notice of Crispin's remark, which his keen ears immediately heard; "besides, that gallop has

done me good. See, I am quite dry."

When they were dressed, the three of them walked quickly back to breakfast, for the morning air had developed their appetites enormously. Mrs. Dengelton and Eunice awaited them on the terrace, and they were soon seated round the well-spread table. Caliphronas, touching neither coffee nor tea, drank water only, and confined his eating to bread, honey, and eggs. His were the tastes of primeval man, and he strongly disliked elaborate dishes which were pleasing to the cultured palates of his more civilized neighbors.

"I do not know how you can eat such things," he said in some disgust, as Eunice took some curry. "Does it not make you ill?"

"Not in the least, Count," she replied, laughing. "It is a very depraved taste, I suppose, but I am very fond of curry."

"And tea—hot tea," retorted Caliphronas quickly. "I have heard it said that tea is bad for the nerves. Ladies always complain of nerves, yet they drink tea."

"I could not do without my tea," said Mrs. Dengelton, who was given to surreptitious cups of tea at odd hours of the day, "and yet I have nerves. Oh, those dreadful nerves! You don't know what it is to be so afflicted, Count."

"No, I do not. I never had an illness in my life, but then that is because I live a natural life, whereas all you highly civilized people live an artificial existence. If you gave up your highly-spiced dishes, your strong wines, your late hours, your breathing of poisonous air, you would be as healthy as I am."

"Well, you can hardly call the air of Roylands poisonous," said Maurice indolently.

"No, the air here is delightful because you live near the sea. I could not dwell inland myself. I would die. I must breathe the sea air, see the wide waste of waters, hear the thunder of waves on the beach. That is the only life for a healthy man."

"You could not live in London, I suppose," said Mrs. Dengelton, frowning on Eunice, who was talking in a quiet tone to Crispin.

"London!" cried the Count, with scorn. "I would as soon live at the bottom of the sea. Indeed, I believe it would be healthier there. London, that crushed-up mass of houses inhabited by pale-faced people—I wonder they can exist. Oh, I saw and heard a good deal of London when I was there. Your people in the East End never leave those narrow streets from one year to the other. They know nothing of sunrise or sunset, for they only see those marvels through a smoky veil. They cannot tell a bird by its song—they know nothing of animals or their habits. Of the wonderful life of Nature which is born and lives and dies in the woods, in the seas, in the mountains, they are ignorant. They are born blind, they live blind, they die blind, and call such blindness life."

"But what about the people in the West End?" asked Mrs. Dengelton, with the air of making a crushing remark.

"They are scarcely better," retorted Caliphronas promptly; "they sit half the night in theatres breathing hot air, they go to balls where there is such a crowd of people that no one can dance, they walk for an hour in the Park and call it exercise, they poison themselves at the clubs with cigarettes, and in the boudoirs with tea—and all this feverish, unreal life is called 'the season.' When they go abroad it is to Monte Carlo and those sorts of places, where they lead the same life on a smaller scale. No, the West End is no better than the East End!"

"But you forget," said Crispin, more from a desire to contradict the Count than because he disagreed with him, "plenty of people go mountaineering, game-shooting, yachting, exploring."

"I know all that, my dear friend, but the number of people who do those things is very small. I am talking of the great mass of the English people, and as far as I can see, whether they are rich or poor, the life they lead is in both cases equally opposed to health and enjoyment."

"Here endeth the first reading," said Maurice, rising from the table, his example being followed by all his guests. "Caliphronas, you are quite eloquent on the subject."

"Yes! I am not usually so eloquent," replied the Count, going out on to the terrace, "but on all sides I hear from your people complaints of being ill. Well, the remedy is in their own hands. Why don't they use it?"

"My good sir," remarked Crispin, who had lighted a cigarette, "you cannot overturn the whole complex civilization of the West in that manner. Man can no more go back to the simplicity of the existence you eulogize, than you could settle down to a fashionable life in London and enjoy it."

"Well, you at least can be cured easily," said the Count, with emphasis, for, as they were now beyond earshot of the rest of the party, he could talk freely; "you all your life have lived the life of a natural man, but now you smoke that horrible tobacco, drink all kinds of wines, eat all kinds of dishes, and will soon become as artificial as those people around you."

"Perhaps I will come back to the primeval existence you praise."

"With that young lady, I suppose?"

"Perhaps."

"Ah, she is very charming! She is"—

"Thank you, I don't want to hear your opinion of Miss Dengelton," said Crispin haughtily; "your primeval simplicity at times verges on rudeness. How long are you going to stay here?"

"I can't tell you that; but I am going to take my first step to-day."

"In order to get Roylands to Melnos?"

"Yes. Oh, I have a lure, my friend. Yes; I have described the fairyland of the islands, and that it is fairyland you must admit. He is even now seized with a desire of going there, so to-day I will get him to make up his mind to go to the Levant with me."

"How?"

"I will show him this."

Crispin looked at the portrait the Count held out, which was that of a marvellously beautiful woman in a Greek dress.

"Helena!" cried the poet, recognizing the face. "When did she get this taken? Has she been to Athens?"

"No. I took it myself. Oh, I am not absolutely the barbarian you think me. I have gone in for photography. Yes; this is one of my best efforts."

"And do you think that face will lure Maurice to the East?"

"It ought to," said Caliphronas, gazing at the picture with a burning light in his eyes; "she is as lovely as her namesake of Troy, and I love her, oh, how I love her!"

"Is it wise, do you think, to introduce a possible rival?"

"That does not matter to me," replied the Count, slipping the picture into his pocket. "I have Justinian's promise."

"Yes, but you have not got Helena's."

"Oh, she won't refuse to marry me."

"For the sake of her happiness, I hope she will."

"You are very complimentary," retorted the Greek ironically, turning away. "Well, I must leave your delightful society, my friend. It is time for me to go to the studio."

"Wait a minute! I have not thwarted your plans, because, as far as I can see, they are innocent, but if you induce Maurice to go to the Levant"—

"Well?" demanded Caliphronas insolently.

"I will go also."

"And your reason?"

"A very simple one. I do not trust the scamp called Andros."

"Better known, at least in England, as Constantine Caliphronas," replied the Count coolly. "Well, come if you like, to watch over your precious friend. I do not wish him harm, but he, and you also, had better beware of Justinian."

CHAPTER IX.

THE PORTRAIT.

Dreary life,
Aching fears,
Endless strife,
Bitter tears,
Lo, a lovely face I see,
Changing all the world to me.
Love's delight,
Beauty's face,
Smilings bright,
Woman's grace,
Thus beholding these in thee,
Thou hast changed the world to me.

The studio which Maurice had fitted up for himself at the Grange was a very workmanlike apartment, as it was quite barren of the artistic frippery with which painters love to decorate their rooms. Sculpture is a much more virile art than painting, and, scorning frivolous adornments of all kinds, the artist of the chisel devotes himself to the severest and highest forms of beauty, so that, he finds quite enough loveliness in his coldly perfect marble figures, without furnishing his studio like a Wardour Street toy-shop. Of course, he who works in colors loves to gaze on colors; and therefore a fantastic Eastern carpet, a quaint figured tapestry, a gold-broidered curtain of Indian silk, a yellow shield of antique workmanship, a porous red jar from Egypt, and such like brilliances, are pleasing to the artistic eye, and the constant sight of their blended hues keeps the sense of color, so to speak, up to the mark. The sculptor, however, has but one color, white, which is not a color; and the less luxurious his studio, the more likely is he to concentrate his attention on the statue growing to perfection under his busy chisel.

These sentiments, which would seem to narrow down a sculptor to the severest and least graceful form of art, were uttered by Crispin in approval of that bare barn attached to the Grange which Maurice called his studio. But then Crispin knew nothing about art, and a painter or a sculptor reading the above views of their profession will probably laugh to scorn such fanciful notions. Yet it is true that the sculptor by his art is shut off from the world of color, unless, like the old Greeks,—according to some critics,—he tints his statues, and thereby turns them into wax figures. But doubtless those Hellenic sculptors who wrought nude gods and draped goddesses from the marbles of Paros and Pentelicus, did not fail to notice how the

background of the blue Attic sky enhanced the beauty of their creations, and therefore must have concluded that the world of color, to which they were strangers, could accentuate the fairness and beauty of their statues. Again these are the artistic sentiments of Crispin the poet, delivered to Maurice with much daring, seeing the speaker was ignorant of the world of art, and but promulgated his ideas in a purely poetical fashion. But Crispin's crude view of art and artists may doubtless fail to interest many people; therefore, to come back in a circle to the starting-point of the disquisition, Maurice's studio was a very workmanlike apartment.

The floor consisted merely of bare boards, although at one end, in front of the fireplace, there was an oasis of carpet, on which rested a table for pipes and tobacco, together with two comfortable arm-chairs. Scattered here and there were statues finished and unfinished, some completed in marble, others incomplete in clay. Maurice had gratified his artistic desires for the perfection of sculpture by surrounding himself with copies in marble of some famous statues, for now, as he was wealthy, he could afford to do so. Here danced the Faun with his grotesque visage and lissome pose; there smiled Hebe, holding her cup for the banquet of the gods; Bacchus with his crown of vine-leaves gazed serenely on the sad face of the draped Ariadne in the distance; Apollo watched the lizard crawling up the tree-trunk; and Hermes, with winged feet, poised himself on his pedestal as if for flight. The whole studio was filled with the fair and gracious forms of Greek art, and no wonder at times Maurice despaired of producing anything worth looking at beside these immortal productions of the Hellenic brain and hands. The great necessity now is, not to know what one can do, but what one cannot do; and if these complacent artists, poets, sculptors, novelists, only abode by this rule, the world would be spared the perpetration of many an atrocity in marble, verse, or on canvas, which the conceited creators think perfection. Maurice Roylands had a pretty taste for chipping marble, but he was by no means a genius, and his statues, while perfectly wrought in accordance with the canons of art, yet lacked that soul which only the true sculptor can give to his creations. It was a fortunate thing for him that he was a rich man, for assuredly he would never have become a great sculptor. His ideas were excellent, but he could not carry them out in accordance with the figment of his brain, as he lacked the divine spark of genius which alone can fully accomplish what it conceives.

At present, clad in a blouse, he was standing in front of a mass of wet clay, manipulating the soft material with dexterous fingers into a semblance of the fanciful Endymion of his brain and the real Endymion of Caliphronas. That gentleman was posed on the model's platform in the distance, and was beguiling the time by incessant chattering of this, that, and the other thing.

The artist had based his conception of this statue of Endymion on these lines of Keats, poet laureate to Dian herself,—

> "What is there in the Moon that thou shouldst move
> My heart so potently?"

He intended to represent the shepherd sitting on Latmos top, chin on hand, gazing at the moon with dreamy eyes, his mortal heart thrilling at the thought that he would see the inviolate Artemis incarnate in the flesh. In accordance with the Greek ideas of

nudity, Maurice did not drape his statue; but the shepherd sat on his chlamys, which was lightly thrown over a rock, while beside him lay scrip, and flask, and pastoral crook. Caliphronas was seated thus,—with his elbow resting on his knee and his chin on his hand, gazing presumably at the moon, in reality at Maurice, while the other hand lightly hung down by his side, and his right leg was drawn back so that the foot bent in a delicate curve calculated to show its full beauty. This pose showed all the perfect lines of his figure, and with his nude body, his clean-shaven face, and dreaming eyes, he looked the veritable Endymion who was waiting the descent of the goddess from high Olympus. Though it was a warm day, a fire burned in the grate, for the Greek was very susceptible to cold, and after working for some time Maurice was fain to rest, so great was the heat; whereupon Caliphronas flung himself back on the chlamys, placed his hands behind his head, and began to talk.

"Will you be long at your work to-day, Mr. Maurice?" he asked with a yawn.

"No, not if you are tired," replied Roylands, throwing a cloak over the Count. "You had better wrap yourself up, or you will catch cold. If you don't care to sit any more to-day, we can leave off now."

"Well, I have some letters to write, but I will wait another half-hour."

"All right!"

Maurice lighted his favorite pipe and established himself in a comfortable chair, upon which the Count, finding the rock of Endymion somewhat hard, forsook the platform, and, wrapping the cloak closely round him, sat down opposite the sculptor.

"I wonder you don't smoke, Caliphronas," said Maurice, idly watching the Greek with half-closed eyes. "You will find it an excellent way of passing the time."

"Of killing time, I suppose you mean; but I have no need to do that. At least, not when I am at home in Greece. Here, yes, it is rather difficult to get through the day comfortably; if it were not for these sittings, I really do not know what I would do with myself."

"I am afraid I will never be able to carry out my conception of Endymion," said Maurice, paying no attention to this remark.

Caliphronas shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, your work is very good," he said politely, "very good indeed; but of course it is not perfect."

"I know that, but practice makes perfect."

"Not in the world of art. You may learn to paint in strict accordance with the rules of art. You may sculpture to the inch every portion of the human body, but that is only the outward semblance of the picture or the statue. The great thing which makes a great work is the soul."

"Quite true. And you think I cannot create the soul of my statues?" said Maurice, rather nettled at the outspoken criticism.

"I say nothing, my friend. I know but little of art, so it would be an impertinence of me to talk about that of which I am ignorant."

"The longer we live the less we discover we know," said Roylands sententiously.

"I suppose that is true," replied Caliphronas indolently; "but, thank heaven, I have not the soul of an artist, for it seems to cause its owner perpetual anxiety. No; I live healthy, joyous, and free, like the other animals of Nature, and I am quite satisfied."

"Is that not rather ignoble?"

"Perhaps; but that is nothing to me. I am happy, which is, to my mind, the main aim of life. Why should I slave for money? I do not wish it. Why should I toil for years at art, and gain at the end but ephemeral fame? Besides, when one dies, what good does fame do? A large marble tomb would not please me."

"Still, the fame of being spoken of by succeeding generations."

"Who would do nothing but wrangle over their different opinions regarding one's work. Present happiness is what I wish, not future praise; but in this narrow island of yours you cannot understand the joy of life. Come with me to the isles of Greece, and you will be so fascinated with the free, wild life that you will never return to your prison-house."

"If all men thought like you, the world would not progress."

"I don't want all men to think the same as I do," replied the Count selfishly. "I suppose there must be slaves as well as freemen. I prefer to be the last."

"Slaves!"

"Yes. I do not mean the genuine article, but all men are slaves more or less, if they don't follow my mode of life. Slaves to gain, slaves to art, slaves to conventionality, slaves to everything; and what do they gain by such slavery? Nothing but what I do—a tomb—annihilation."

"Well, you are a slave to your passions."

"You mean I obey my impulses. Well, I do; but it is a very pleasant kind of slavery."

"And you believe in that horrible theory of annihilation?"

"Well, I don't know what I believe. I trouble myself in no-wise about the hereafter. I am alive, I am strong, I am happy. The sun is bright, the winds are inspiriting,—I draw delight from mountain and plain,—so why should I trouble myself about what I know nothing? The present is just enough for me. Let the future take care of itself."

"A selfish philosophy."

"A very enjoyable one. Come with me to the East, and you will adopt my creed. Are you happy here?"

"No."

"I can see that. You are melancholy at times, you are devoured with spleen, you find the life you lead too dreary for your soul. If you let me be your physician, I will cure you."

"And how?"

"By a very simple means. I will make you lead the same life as I do myself,—open-air life,—and in a few months you will find these nightmares of the soul completely disappear. No prisoner can be happy; and as you are a prisoner in this dungeon of conventionality, and are swathed in the mummy cloths of civilization, you cannot hope to be happy unless you go out into the wilderness."

"The life you describe is purely an animal one. What about the intellect?"

"Intellect! pshaw! I know more about Nature than half your scientific idiots with their books."

"What an inconsistent being you are, Caliphronas!" said Maurice in an amused tone. "You say you love art, admire pictures, adore statues; yet, if every man followed the life you eulogize, such things would not be in existence."

"I tell you, I don't want all the world to follow my example. I would be very sorry to lose all these delights of the senses, so I am glad there are men sufficiently self-denying to slave at such things for my delight; but as regards myself, I desire to live as a natural man—an animal, as you say. It is ignoble—yes; but it is pleasant."

This speech somewhat opened the eyes of Maurice to the kind of soul which was enshrined in the splendid body of this man; and he saw plainly that the sensual part of Caliphronas had completely conquered the spiritual. But with what result?—that this ignoble being was happy. What an ironical comment of Fate on the strivings of great beings to subordinate the senses to the soul. The soul agitated by a thousand fears, the brain striving ever after the impossible—what do these give their possessor, but a feeling of unrest, of unsatisfied hunger; whereas the body, untortured by an inquiring spirit, brought contentment, happiness—ignoble though they were—to the animal man.

By this time, Caliphronas, having made up his mind to sit no more that day, was slowly dressing himself, singing a Greek song in his usual gay manner.

> "Three girls crossed my path in the twilight;
> One did I love, but the others were nothing to me:
> She frowned at my greeting, but her friends smiled sweetly,
> Yet was she the loveliest of them all,
> And I loved her frown more than their smiles inviting."

"How happy you are, Caliphronas!"

"Thoroughly. I have not a care in the world. Come with me to the Island of Fantasy, and you also will be happy."

"The Island of Fantasy!"

"Yes; that is what Justinian calls it."

"Who is Justinian? anything to do with the Pandects?"

"Pandects?" reiterated Caliphronas, puzzled by the word.

"Yes. Is he a ruler—a law-giver?"

"Oh yes; he is the king of the Island of Fantasy."

"Which, I presume, exists only in your brain," said Roylands jestingly.

"Pardon me, no," replied the Count seriously, resuming his seat. "The Island of Fantasy, or, to call it by its real name, Melnos, does exist in the Ægean Sea. It is a but little known island, and Justinian, who is my very good friend, rules over it as a kind of Homeric king. Ulysses was just such another; and there you will find the calm, patriarchal life of those antique times, which you of the modern world think has vanished forever. My friend, the Golden Age still exists in Melnos, and if you come with me, you will dwell in Arcady."

"My dear Count," said Maurice, much impressed by the fluency of the man's speech, "I have never yet heard a foreigner speak our tongue with such ease as you do. Where did you learn such fluency—such a good accent?"

"Ah, I will tell you that when we arrive at Melnos."

"You are almost as much a riddle as is Crispin," said Maurice, chafing at this secrecy, which seemed to be so senseless.

"Doubtless; but if you are curious to know about us both, come to the Ægean with me."

"About you both?" repeated the Englishman: "why, do you know anything of Crispin?"

Caliphronas knew a good deal about Crispin, but he was too wise to say that he did. Silence regarding the past on his part was the only way to secure silence on the part of Crispin; and much as Caliphronas, in his enmity to the poet, would have liked to reveal what Crispin desired to be kept secret, he had too much at stake to risk such a gratification of his spite, and therefore passed off the question with a laugh.

"Know anything about Creespeen?" he reiterated, smiling. "I'm afraid I know nothing more than you do. I met him at Athens, truly, but we were but acquaintances, so I never made any inquiries about him. He was as much a riddle there as here. Oh yes, I heard all the romances about him in London; and no doubt one story is as true as another. The reason I made such a remark as I did, was that, as Crispin says himself, he came from the East like a wise man of to-day; you will probably learn his past history in those parts."

"And as to yourself?"

"Eh! I have told you all my past life, with the exception of Melnos, and that I did not think worth while relating. But it is a charming place, I assure you; and if you come with me, I am sure you will find a community under the rule of Justinian, which is quite foreign to this century."

"I have a good mind to accept your offer," said Maurice musingly; "there is nothing to keep me in England, and a glimpse of new lands would do me good. Besides, Count, one does not get such an excellent guide as you every day."

"Oh, I know every island in the Ægean," replied Caliphronas, smiling his thanks for the compliment. "I have sailed all over the Archipelago, and am quite a sailor in a small way. Lesbos, Cythera, Samos, Rhodes,—I know them all intimately; so if you are fond of ruins, and the remains of old Greece, I can show you plenty, tell you the legends, arrange about the inns, and, in fact, act as a dragoman; but, of course, without his greed for money."

"It seems worth considering."

"It will be a visit to paradise," cried Caliphronas enthusiastically, springing to his feet. "Here you do not know the true meaning of the word beauty. Only under the blue sky, above the blue waves of the Ægean, is it to be seen. Aphrodite arose from those waters, and she was but an incarnation of the beauty which meets the eye on all sides. You have been my host in England. I will be your host in Greece, and will entertain you in my ruined abode,—misnamed a palace,—which is all that remains to me of my forefathers. Together we will sail over those laughing waters, and see the sun-kissed islands bloom on the wave. Paradise! It is the Elysian fields of foam where rest the spirits of wearied mariners. What says the song of the Greek sailors?

‘I will die! but the earth will not hold me in her breast,
For the blue sea will clasp me in its arms.
I will die! but let my soul not find the heaven of the orthodox.
Nay, let it wander among the flowery islands,
Where I can see my home and the girl who mourns me.
That only is the paradise I long for.’”

“You forget I do not know modern Greek,” said Maurice, smiling at the enthusiasm of the Count; “nor indeed much ancient Greek, for the matter of that. But see, Count, you have dropped a photograph.”

“You can look at it,” said the Count, who had let it fall purposely; “I have no secrets.”

“Oh!”

“Ah, you think it a charming face?”

“Charming is too weak a word. It is Aphrodite herself.”

“Alas!” cried Caliphronas. with a merry laugh; “that goddess lived before the days of sun-pictures, else Apollo might have photographed her. No; that is no deity, but a mortal maiden whom I saw at Melnos. It is not bad for an amateur effort, is it?”

“Oh, very good, very good!” replied Maurice hurriedly; “but the face—what a heavenly face!”

“Ah, you see my paradise has got its Eve.”

“And its Adam, doubtless?”

“No, there is no Adam to that Eve,” said Caliphronas, shaking his head; “at least, there was not when I was in Melnos six months ago. Why should there be? You will find plenty of women as beautiful as Helena.”

“Helena—is that her name? Yes, I have no doubt you will find beautiful women in Greece,—’tis their heritage from Phryne, Lais, and Aspasia; but none can be as beautiful as Helen of Troy.”

“Possibly not; but that woman is Helena of Melnos, not of Troy.”

“I’ll swear she is as beautiful as the wife of Menelaus, whom Paris loved.”

“You seem quite in raptures over this face,” said Caliphronas, with but ill-concealed anger. “Pray, do you propose to be Menelaus or Paris!”

“Why, are you in love with her yourself?” asked Maurice, looking at the Greek in some surprise.

This question touched Caliphronas more nearly than Maurice guessed, but, whatever passion he may have felt for the lady of the picture, he said nothing about it, but laughed in a somewhat artificial manner.

“I in love with her, my friend? No; she is beautiful, I grant you, but I look upon her as I would an exquisite picture. She is nothing to me. Did I not tell you I have a future bride in the East? Yes—in Constantinople; a daughter of the old Byzantine nobles, a Fanariot beautiful as the dawn, who dwells at Phanar.”

“Then I need fear no rivalry from you, Caliphronas?”

“Certainly not. But you seem to have fallen in love with this pictured Helena.”

“I will not go so far as to say that; but you know I have the artistic temperament, and therefore admire beauty always.”

"Of course—the artistic sense," sneered Caliphronas in such a disagreeable way, that Maurice again looked at him in astonishment.

The fact is, that Roylands' admiration of the portrait seemed to ruffle Caliphronas very much, and quite altered his usual nonchalance of manner. Never before had Maurice seen his joyous nature so changed, for he had now a frown on his usually smiling face, and appeared to be on the verge of an angry outbreak. All the wild beast in his nature, which was so carefully hidden by the civilized mask, seemed to show in the most unexpected manner, and with flashing eyes, tightly drawn lips, and scowling countenance, he looked anything but the serene Greek with whom Roylands was acquainted. Maurice was astonished and rather annoyed at this exhibition of temper, so, rising from his seat, he gave the picture back to his guest with a dignified gesture.

"I have no wish to pry into your secrets, Count," he said quietly, walking towards the door; "you showed me that portrait of your own free will, and if I admire it somewhat warmly, surely the beauty of the face is my excuse. At present I will say *au revoir*, as I have some business to do, and will be in my study till luncheon."

When Maurice disappeared, the Greek stamped about the room in sheer vexation at having betrayed himself, for he could not but see that for once this simple Englishman had caught a glimpse of his real nature, hitherto so carefully concealed.

"I am a fool, a fool!" he said savagely in Greek; "everything was going well, and I spoil all by letting my temper get the better of me. Why did I not let him admire Helena and say nothing? When we get to Melnos, that will be a different thing, for Justinian cannot go back from his word; and if I perform my part of the bargain, and bring this fool to Melnos, he must perform his, and give me his daughter. I must recover my lost ground if possible,—bah! it will not be difficult. I can see he is in love with Helena, so that will smooth everything. In love with my goddess!" he said ardently, gazing at the lovely face. "Ah, how can he help being so?—there is much excuse; but he can only worship you at a distance, my Venus, for you are mine—mine—mine!"

He thrust the picture into his pocket, and, recovering his serene joyousness of mood, pondered for a few moments as to what was the best course to pursue. At last he decided, and walked towards the door of the studio with the air of a man who had made up his mind.

"I will give him the picture," he said, with a great effort, "and I feel sure he will make peace on those terms."

Maurice was sitting at his desk, wondering why the even-tempered Greek had thus given way to anger over the picture.

"If he is engaged to a lady of Stamboul, he cannot be in love with this Helena," he said to himself. "Perhaps he was jealous of my admiring the beauty of a woman more than his own. All Greeks are vain, but, as far as I can see, Caliphronas is simply mad with vanity. Come in."

In answer to his invitation, the Count entered smiling, and laid the picture on the desk before Maurice.

"You must not be angry with me, my friend," he said volubly; "I am like a child, and grow bad-tempered over nothing. This Helena is nothing to me, and, to prove this, I give you her portrait, which I do not care to keep. Come, am I forgiven?"

“Of course you are,” said Roylands hastily; “and I will not deprive you of your picture.”

“No, no, I do not want it back,” replied Caliphronas, spreading out his hands in token of refusal; “you love the face, so keep it by all means.”

“She is very beautiful,” said Maurice, gazing longingly at this modern Helen.

“Is she worth a journey to the East?” asked Caliphronas in a soft voice, like the sibilant hiss of a serpent.

Maurice made no reply; he was looking at the portrait.

CHAPTER X.

A MODERN IXION.

Oh, beware
Of a snare!
'Tis a phantom fair
Who will tangle your heart in her golden hair.
Tho' he vowed
Would be bowed
Heaven's Hera proud,
Ixion was duped by a treacherous cloud.
But in sooth,
Fate hath ruth,
And this dream of youth
May change from a dream to immutable truth.

"What is truth?" asked Pilate, but to this perplexing question received no answer, not even from the Divine Man, who was best able to give a satisfactory reply. In the same way we may ask, "What is love?" and receive many answers, not one of which will be correct. The reason is simply, no one knows what love is, though every one has felt it. The commonest things are generally the most perplexing, and surely love is common enough, seeing it is the thing upon which the welfare, the pleasure, nay, the continuity, of the human race depends. Yet no one can define this every-day passion, because it is undefinable. "'Tis the mutual feeling which draws man and maid together." True, but that may be affection, which is a lesser passion than love. "'Tis the admiration of a man or a woman for each other's beauty." Nay, that is but sensuality. "'Tis the longing of two people of the opposite sexes to dwell together all their life." Why, that is only companionship. Affection, sensuality, companionship, all three very pleasant, very comforting, but Love is greater than such a trinity. He may not give pleasure, he may not bring comfort, but, on the contrary, may make those to whose hearts he comes very unhappy. Love is no mischievous urchin, who plays with his arrows; no, he is a great and terrible divinity, who comes to every mortal but once in life. We desire him, we name him, we delight in him; but we know not what he is, where he comes from, or when he will leave us.

These reflections were suggested to Maurice by the extraordinary feelings with which this dream-face of Helena inspired him. Never before had he felt the sensation of love—not affection, not admiration, not desire, but strong, passionate love, which pervaded his whole being, yet which he could not describe. He had not seen this woman in the flesh, he was hardly certain if she existed, for all the evidences he had

to assure him that there was such a being were the portrait and the name, yet he felt, by some subtle, indescribable instinct, that this was the one woman in the world for him. Maurice, who had hitherto doubted the existence of love, was now being punished for such scepticism and was as love-sick as ever was some green lad fascinated by a pretty face. "He jests at scars who never felt a wound;" but Maurice did not jest at scars now, for the arrow of Cupid, shot from some viewless height, had made a wound in his heart which would heal not till he died; or, even granting it would heal, would leave a scar to be seen of all men.

It was the old story of Ixion over again. Here was a man embracing a cloudy phantom of his own imagination, for, granting that this beautiful face belonged to a real woman, Maurice knew nothing about her, yet dowered her with all the exquisite perfections of feminality. He dreamed she would be loving, tender, and womanly, yet, for aught he knew, the owner of that lovely face might be a very Penthesilea for daring and masculine emulation. But no; he could not believe that she would unsex herself by taking upon her nature the rival attributes of manly strength, for the whole face breathed nothing but feminine delicacy. That broad white brow, above which the hair was smoothed in the antique fashion; those grave, earnest eyes, so full of sympathy and purity; that beautifully shaped mouth, like a scarlet flower, speaking of reticence and womanly shrinking. No; he was quite sure that she was an ideal woman, so therefore worshipped her—unseen, unheard—with all the chivalrous affection of a mediæval knight.

Day and night that faultless face haunted his brain like some perfect poem, and, waking or sleeping, he seemed to hear her voice, full and rich as an organ-note, calling on him to seek her in that Island of Fantasy whereof the Greek had spoken. Was she indeed some fairy princess, detained in an enchanted castle against her will? was this mysterious Justinian, whose personality seemed so vague, indeed her jailer, guarding her as the dragon did the golden fruit of the Hesperides? and was Caliphronas a messenger sent to tell him of the reward awaiting him should he take upon him vows of releasing her from such thraldom, and accomplish his quest successfully? Curious how the classic legends and the mediæval romances mixed together in his brain, yet one and all, however diverse in thought, pointed ever to that beautiful woman dwelling in an enchanted island sea-encircled by the murmurous waves of the blue Ægean.

True, he had fallen in love, and thus regained in one instant the interest in life which he had lost erstwhile; but the object of his adoration seemed so far away, her personality, about which he could only obscurely conjecture, was so lost in dream-mists, that the cure of his melancholia seemed worse than the disease itself. He again became sad and absent-minded, grieving—not, as formerly, for a vague abstraction, for something, he knew not what—but for an actual being, for an unfulfilled passion which seemed in itself as elusive a thing as had tormented him formerly. The indistinct phantom which had engendered melancholia had taken shape—the shape of a beautiful, smiling face, which mocked him with the promise of delight probably never destined to be fulfilled.

All his guests noticed this lapse into his former melancholy, but none of them guessed the reason save Caliphronas, who was beside himself with rage at the discovery. The stratagem with which he proposed to draw Maurice to Melnos had

succeeded beyond his highest expectations, but he was very dissatisfied with his success, and began to wonder if Crispin was not right after all concerning the folly of presenting a possible rival to the woman he desired for himself. The woman was to be the reward of his success; he had made use of that woman's pictured loveliness to achieve that success, and by so doing had complicated the simplicity of the affair by introducing a third element, that of a rival's love, which might place an obstacle in the way of his receiving the reward. It was Mephistopheles showing Faust the phantom of Gretchen, and the same result of love for an unseen woman had ensued; but then, Mephistopheles was not enamoured of the loveliness he used as a bait to catch his victim, whereas Caliphronas was. However, it was too late now to alter the matter, for the Greek could see that Maurice had almost made up his mind to go in search of this new Helen of Troy, and if he succeeded in gaining her heart, circumstances might arise with which it would be difficult to grapple.

After all, when Caliphronas compared the Englishman's every-day comeliness with his own glorious beauty, he felt that no woman would refuse him for such a commonplace individual as his possible rival. But, again, Caliphronas was aware that Helena valued the inward more than the outward man, in which case he suspected he had but little chance in coming off best. Pose as he might to the world, Caliphronas knew the degradation of his own soul, and when this was contrasted with the honest, proud, straightforward nature of Maurice Roylands, it could be easily seen which of them the woman would choose as best calculated to insure her happiness. Besides, the love which had been newly born in Maurice's heart was a highly spiritual passion, with no touch of grossness, whereas the desires of Caliphronas were purely animal ones for physical beauty. In point of outward semblance, he would have been a fitter husband for the exquisite beauty of this woman, but as to a marriage of souls, which after all is the only true marriage, the one was as different from the other as is day from night.

Maurice said nothing to Crispin about the portrait, and though the latter guessed from his abstraction that Caliphronas had played his last card with that hidden loveliness, he made no remark, for the time was not yet ripe to unfold the past. If, however, Maurice went to Melnos, Crispin, as he had told Caliphronas, determined to accompany him, as much on his own account as on that of his friend. Truly this poet was a riddle, and so also was the Greek; but it is questionable if Maurice, with his open and above-board English life, was not a greater riddle than either of these mysterious men, seeing that his perplexity was a thing of the soul, vague and intangible, the solving of which meant the settling of his whole spiritual life; whereas the lighting of the darkness with which Caliphronas and Crispin chose to enshroud themselves was simply a question of material existence. The Parcæ held the three tangled skeins in their hands: Clotho now grasped the intricate threads; Lachesis was spinning the actions which were to lead to the unravelling of these riddles of spiritual and material things; and Atropos was waiting grimly with her fatal scissors to clip the life-thread of one of the three. But the question was, which? Ah, that was yet to be seen! for the middle Destiny was yet weaving woof and warp of words, actions, and desires, the outcome of which would determine the judgment of the Destroying Fate.

Of all this intrigue, in which he was soon to be involved, Roylands was quite ignorant, as he already had his plan of action sketched out. He would go to Melnos

with Constantine Caliphronas, he would see this dream-woman in the flesh, and if she came up to his ideal, he would marry her, at whatever cost. Alas for the schemes of clever Mrs. Dengelton! they were all at an end, simply because a man had seen a pretty face, which he elevated into the regions of romance, and made attractive with strange mysteries of fanciful attributes. But Mrs. Dengelton did not know this, and, ignorance being bliss, still hinted to Maurice of matrimony, still threw him into the company of Eunice; while, as a checkmate to her plans, and to aid Crispin, Maurice still puzzled the good lady with hints of marriage one day, and neglect of Eunice the next. Eunice herself saw through it all, and was duly grateful to Maurice; so the only blind person was Mrs. Dengelton, who but perceived the delightful future which might be, not the disturbing present that was; if she had, her lamentations would have surpassed those of Jeremiah in bitterness and violence.

On such an important matter as going to the East in search of a mistress for Roylands Grange, Maurice felt naturally anxious to consult his old tutor, and accordingly one morning walked over to the Rectory, where he found Mr. Carriston as usual pottering about among his rose-trees. The hot sun of July blazed down on that garden of loveliness, and the sweet-smelling roses burned like constellations of red stars amid the cool green of their surrounding leaves.

"This is decidedly a rose-year," said the good Rector approvingly, as he looked at the brilliance around him; "I have never seen such a fine show of flowers. My nightingales should sing their sweetest here, if the tale of their love for the rose be true. Did you ever see such a glow of color, Maurice?

'Vidi Paestano candere rosaria cultu
Exoriente novo roscida Lucifero.'

But I don't think the poet saw finer roses than mine, even in Southern Italy."

"'*Rosa regina florum*,'" remarked Maurice, smiling.

"Eh! you match my quotation from Ausonius with a wretched little saying culled from your first Latin reading-book. My dear lad, I am afraid my labor has been in vain, for your Latin is primitive."

"No doubt it is," assented Maurice cordially, "but I have not the gift of tongues. I would that I had, as it will be necessary in the East."

"The East!" repeated Carriston, sitting down under his favorite elm-tree. "What is this? Are you thinking of visiting the cradle of humanity?"

"Yes; the summer is nearly over, so like a swallow I wish to fly south to the blue seas of Greece."

"'Tous les ans j'y vais et je niche
Aux mētopes du Parthenon,'"

quoted the Rector genially. "Do you know Gautier's charming poem? I wish I could go with you to see the land of Aristophanes."

"Why not come?"

"Nay, I am too old a tree to be transplanted. The comedies alone must take me on the wings of fancy to Athens. What would my parishioners do without me? or my roses, for the matter of that? Still, I would like to be your travelling companion, and

we could visit together those places which we read of in your days of pupilage. You will see Colonos, where the Sophoclean nightingales still sing; and the Acropolis of Athena Glaucopis, the ringing plains of windy Troy, and the birthplace of the Delian Apollo. Truly the youth of to-day are to be envied, seeing how easy travel has been made by steam. Happy Maurice! the Iron Age will enable you to view the Golden Age with but small difficulty."

"Yes, I will be delighted to see all those famous places you have mentioned, sir; but I have a stronger reason."

"Indeed! And that reason?"

"Is this."

Maurice placed the portrait of Helena in the hands of his old tutor, and awaited in silence his next remark. Mr. Carriston adjusted his *pince-nez*, and gazed long and earnestly at the perfect beauty of the woman's countenance.

"'Is this the face that launched a thousand ships?'" he quoted from Marlowe; "upon my word, I would not be surprised to hear it was. A beautiful woman, Maurice; she has the loveliness of the Argive Helen."

"And the name also; she is called Helena."

"Ah! then I understand she is a real woman?"

"Flesh and blood, according to Caliphronas."

The Rector put down the picture with a sudden movement of irritation quite foreign to his usual courtly manner.

"I do not like Count Caliphronas," he said abruptly. "Did he give you this portrait?"

"Yes."

"Humph! And may I ask whom it is intended to represent?"

"A Greek girl, called Helena, who lives in the Island of Fantasy."

"The Island of Fantasy?" repeated the Rector in a puzzled tone.

"I mean the Island of Melnos, in the southern archipelago of Greece."

"How did it come by the extraordinary name of Fantasy?"

"Caliphronas called it so," said Maurice carelessly.

There was silence for a few moments, and the Rector rubbed his nose in a vexed manner, as he by no means approved of the frequent introduction of the Greek's name into the conversation, but hardly saw his way how to prevent it. At length he determined to leave the matter in abeyance for the present, and reverted to the question of Helena.

"Is it for the sake of this woman you are going to the Levant?" he asked, picking up the picture and tapping it with his *pince-nez*.

"Yes."

"Is this not rather a mad freak?"

Maurice did not answer for a moment, but moved uneasily in his seat; for, although he was quite prepared to be discouraged in his project by the Rector, he by no means liked the displeased tone in which he spoke. Mr. Carriston waited for an answer to his question, so Maurice was at length forced to give him one, and burst out into a long speech, so as to give his tutor no opportunity of making any remark until he had heard all the views in favor of such Quixotism.

"I daresay it is a mad freak, sir, but not so very insane if you look upon it from my point of view. You know I have never been in love—true, I have always been fond of

women and delighted in their society, but I have never had what you would call a passionate attachment in my life, nor did I think, until a few days ago, I was capable of such a thing. But when Caliphronas was sitting to me for Endymion, he happened to let fall that portrait, and told me it was one he had taken of a Greek girl at Melnos. As I admired the beauty of the face, he made me a present of the picture, and my admiration has merged itself in a deeper feeling, that of love. Oh, I know, sir, what you will say, that such a passion is chimerical, seeing I have never beheld this woman in the flesh, but I feel too strongly on the subject to think I am the victim of a heated imagination. I love this woman—I adore her! she is present with me day and night. Not only her face—no! It is very beautiful, but I can see below that beauty. She has a soul, a lovely pure soul, which I worship, and I am anxious to see the actual living, breathing woman, so as to make her my wife."

"Your wife! Are you mad, boy?"

"No, I am not mad, unless you call love a madness. Oh, I know it is easy for one to advise calmly on the woes of others. But can you not feel for me? You have been in love, Mr. Carriston, and you know how such a passion overwhelms the strongest man. Caution, thought, restraint, prudence, are all swept away by the torrent. It is no use saying that this passion I feel will pass, for I know it will not; it is part of my life. Till I die I will see that face before me, sleeping or waking. Why, then, should I pass the rest of my days in torture when I can alleviate such mental suffering? I am going to this unknown island, I will see this unknown woman, and if she comes up to the ideal being I have created from the picture in my mind, I will marry her. It may not be wise, it may not be suitable; but it is, and will be inevitable."

The old man listened in astonishment to this lava-torrent of words which swept everything before it. He could hardly recognize his former calm-tempered pupil in this young man, whose flashing eyes, eloquent gestures, and rapid speech betrayed the strength of the passion which consumed him.

"'*Ira brevis est*,'" quoth the Rector wisely; "I think love is the same."

"My madness of love will last all my life—yes, forever!"

"Forever is a long time."

"Rector," said Maurice entreatingly, "what do you advise?"

"I advise nothing, dear lad," replied Carriston quietly; "what is the use of my giving advice which is opposed to your own desires, and therefore will be rejected?"

"True! true!" muttered Maurice, frowning. "I must go to Melnos and convince myself of the truth of the matter. See here, sir, at present I am worshipping a creature of my own creation, with the face of that picture, but with the attributes of fancy. This chimera of the brain, as you will doubtless term her, haunts me night and day, so the only way to lay this feminine ghost is to see her incarnate in the flesh. She may be quite different from what I conceive, in which case I will be cured of my fancy; on the other hand, she may realize entirely my conception of beauty, purity, and womanliness: if she does, I will make her my wife, that is, of course, if she will have me for her husband."

"As you put the matter in that light," said Mr. Carriston, after a pause, "I advise you to go to Melnos."

"You do?"

"Decidedly! It is best to end this torture of the imagination, which I also know only too well. See this woman, if you like, but be sure she is all you desire her to be before making her your wife."

"There is no fear that I will let my heart govern my brain in such an important matter."

"There is a great fear," replied the Rector gravely, glancing at the picture; "a young man's heart is not always under his control, and this woman has the beauty which inspires madness. Helen of Troy, Cleopatra of Egypt, Mary of Scotland, Ninon de l'Enclos of France, they were all Lamiæ, and their beauty was ever fatal to their victims."

"Lovers," corrected Maurice quickly.

"Victims," reiterated Carriston firmly; "or, if you will, lovers, for the terms are synonymous."

"Well, I will take your advice, sir, and go to the East in search of this lovely Helena of Melnos, but I promise you I will not be a victim."

"I hope not, but I fear so."

"You need not," said Roylands gayly, delighted to have won over the Rector to his side. "I will come back alone, cured, or with a wife, and more in love than ever."

"How will you find this island?"

"Oh, Caliphronas"—

"As beautiful and as false as Paris of Troy," interrupted the Rector quickly, whereat Maurice shrugged his shoulders.

"Possibly he is, but I do not think I have anything to fear from him."

"There is certainly no reason why he should be your enemy, yet I feel convinced he is so."

"Why?"

"I cannot tell you unless I advance the Dr. Fell theory as an argument; but, to speak openly, my dear Maurice, this Greek seems to me to be like a sleek, soft-footed panther, beautiful to look on, but dangerous to meddle with."

"I am not going to meddle with him. He is simply returning to his home in Greek waters, and I will go with him. After we reach Melnos, very likely he will return to Ithaca."

"Perhaps."

"My dear old tutor," cried the young man, laughing, "you are full of fears, first of this Helena, again of this Greek. Ten to one I will find both equally harmless."

"I trust so; but I do not like your travelling alone with this Count Constantine."

"I am not going to do so. Crispin is coming also."

"Ah!" said Carriston in a satisfied tone; "I am glad of that, for I like that young man very much. I am sure he is an honorable, straightforward fellow."

"You are inconsistent. His life is as mysterious as that of Caliphronas, yet you trust the one and mistrust the other."

"I do; it is a matter of instinct. Well, here is your Helena; I hope you will find the original as beautiful as the picture."

"I hope so too," answered Maurice, restoring the photograph to his pocket.

"By the way," observed the Rector abruptly, "what about Eunice?"

"Oh, she will not mourn me, for she has already consoled herself with Crispin."

"Humph! I thought as much; and what does your aunt say?"

"She says nothing because she knows nothing."

"Do you think that is wise?"

"No, I do not; so I am going to ask Crispin to explain who he is, what he is, and all about himself, before he leaves with me for the East. If his replies are satisfactory, I will try and persuade my dear aunt to consent to the match; but you may depend upon it, my dear Rector, if I find anything wrong with our poet, I will do my best to prevent his marriage with my cousin."

"That is as it should be, but I fancy you will find Crispin an honest man."

"You seem quite taken with him."

"Yes; I am curiously drawn to that young man. Why, I do not know; but, from the frequent conversations I have had with him, he seems very honest and good-hearted, whereas your handsome Greek is, I am convinced, a worthless scamp."

"Well, we will see how your predictions are fulfilled. But I must be off," continued Maurice, glancing at his watch, "it is past one o'clock. Will you not come over to luncheon with me?"

"What! and leave my roses, which need water in this hot sun! Go away, sir, and don't ask impossibilities."

Maurice laughed and went away, while the Rector returned to his roses, and thought over the interview. He was doubtful as to the result of Maurice's quest for a wife, but, knowing the sterling good sense and honorable nature of his pupil, judged it best to let him take his own way.

"Everyman must dree his weird," said Carriston, watering-pot in hand. "However this journey turns out, it will do Maurice good, for if it does not gain him a wife, it will at least banish the evil spirit which is spoiling his youth."

Meanwhile the object of this soliloquy was striding up the avenue of the Grange at a rapid pace, and whistling gayly, out of sheer light-heartedness. Never before had he felt so happy, a circumstance which suddenly made him pause in his lilting, as he thought of the saying of an old Scotch nurse.

"I hope I am not fey," he said to himself; "surely this joy does not prognosticate sorrow. No; I will not look on it in that gloomy light. I am going in search of Helen,—Cœlebs in search of a wife,—and if I find her as lovely as she seems to be, why, then"—

And he began whistling again, from sheer inability to express his feelings in cold, measured words. As he neared the house, the rich tenor voice of Caliphronas rang vibrating through the still air. His song was, as usual, one of those Greek fragments he was so fond of singing, and even the modern Greek tongue, debased as it was by centuries of foreign influences, sounded pliable and liquid as the vowelled words soared upward like swift-darting swallows. How bare and bleak seems the translation, bereft of its Hellenic sonorousness of speech!—

"I will sail in a beakèd ship, impelled by rowers,
Over the waters to westward, where Helios sinks nightly in splendor,
And there in a hidden island of dreams
Will I see ray belovèd smiling with starry eyes.
Her arms will enfold me—oh, they will clasp me so closely,
I will kiss her lips which burn like scarlet of sunset,
Till the nest of our love will flow over—flow over,
With delicate singing, and sighings of lover to lover."

Caliphronas was standing on the steps of the terrace, with his classic face uplifted to the serene sky, and, as he sang the song, with his hand resting lightly on the white marble vase near him, he looked the incarnation of blooming adolescence.

"Ha!" he cried, as Roylands nimbly mounted the steps; "I was just wondering where you were. What have you been doing, Mr. Maurice?"

"I have been talking to the Rector, and for the last few moments I have been watching you, my Attic nightingale. Modern costume spoils you, Caliphronas, as it would spoil any one, so hideous is it. You should be draped in white robes, bear an ivory lyre, and minister to Apollo the Far-Darter."

"Alas!" sighed the Greek, with sudden sadness in his eyes; "Pan is dead, and with him Apollo. I have been born too late, for my soul is Athenian, and longs for the plane-trees of Ilissus. But enough of this classicism, and tell me why you look so merry."

"Because I have made up my mind to go with you to Melnos."

Caliphronas smiled in an enigmatic manner, and sang two lines from his song,—

"And there in a hidden island of dreams
Will I see my belovèd smiling with starry eyes."

"What do those words mean?" asked Maurice abruptly.

"Ah, that you will discover when we reach Melnos!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE CREED OF A MOTHER-IN-LAW.

In all good faith I do believe
That sons-in-law their wives deceive;
So, seeing marriage is a snare,
My daughter needs her mother's care;
And if this couple young be wise,
Their life they'll let me supervise.
For I can show the wife the way
To make the servants her obey,
Nor fail the husband's acts to see,
And rob him of his midnight key,
Improve his faults with frown and snub,
Insist he should give up his club;
And if he's an obedient boy,
His home will be a place of joy.
Thus ruling husband, home, and wife,
I will secure a home for life.

"So you have decided upon Eastward Ho?" said Crispin, as Maurice enveloped himself in clouds of smoke.

They were seated in the smoking-room by themselves, for the ladies had long since retired; and Caliphronas, unable to bear the fumes of nicotine, which, he averred, made his eyes sore and his head swim, had just gone off to bed. Thus, left to that sweetest hour of the night which is somewhere about the stroke of twelve P.M., the poet and his host had established themselves in two comfortable arm-chairs, and, each armed with a pipe, were incensing the Muse of Fancy, who is frequently invoked by such worship. But the talk of the two was anything but fanciful, as they were engaged in discussing their projected tour in Levantine waters. Maurice was rather glad Caliphronas retired so early, as he was anxious to have a quiet conversation with Crispin, and what better time or place could he have, than nearly midnight in the smoking-room, with the soothing weed, and the exhilarating whiskey diluted with soda, to stimulate the drowsy brain.

It is wonderful how men at this mystic hour unbosom themselves the one to the other, and tell secrets which they certainly would not reveal in the daytime. Maurice knew this peculiarity of midnight confabulations, and perhaps thought that Crispin would take him into his confidence; but if he did think so he was disappointed, for

Crispin kept his own counsel and held his tongue, save indeed to talk generally about things Maurice was well acquainted with.

"So you have decided upon Eastward Ho?" said Crispin for the second time, finding that Maurice did not reply immediately, which negligence was due to the fact that he wished to speak to the poet about Eunice, and was doubtful of the wisdom of such a step. The second time of asking this question, however, aroused him from his musings, and he answered at once.

"Yes. I had a conversation with the Rector this morning, and I have decided to travel abroad for a year or so."

"Do you mean a general tour of the world, or a special part?"

"A special part. I am going to Greece."

"Oh! The mainlands or the islands?"

"The latter."

"In that case, I know where you are going," said Crispin, carefully shaking the ashes out of his pipe; "your destination is the Island of Melnos."

"It is," replied Maurice in some surprise. "Do you know Melnos?"

"Very well. I also know the woman you are going to see."

"Helena? How do you know that? I have told you nothing about it."

"No; but Caliphronas mentioned something about your spiritual passion for that picture."

This was mere guess-work, as Caliphronas had mentioned nothing of the sort; but Crispin was so well aware of the deep game which the Greek was playing, that he had no difficulty in arriving at a fair conclusion concerning his tactics. Maurice was, however, ignorant of Crispin's knowledge, and at once assumed that Caliphronas had been discussing his passion for this pictured Helena with the poet, perhaps laughing at it, and his pride was up in arms at once.

"Caliphronas has no right to speak to you about my private affairs," he said angrily. "I intended to tell you myself, but now he has forestalled me. I did not know he was such a gossip."

"Nor is he. I said he told me, and so he did, indirectly; but if I did not know Caliphronas, Helena, and Melnos, I would still be in the dark concerning your projected journey."

"Where is this Island of Fantasy?"

Crispin looked up with a quick smile.

"Oh, he told you the name Justinian calls it! The Island of Fantasy in imagination, and Melnos in reality, is situated in the southern portion of the Ægean Sea, beyond Paros, beyond Amorgos, nay, even beyond Anapli. As a matter of fact, it is a little-known island, hidden, to speak exactly, in the Cretan Sea, between Telos and Crete."

"I thought I was rather good at geography, but I never heard of the Island of Melnos before. Has it anything to do with the Island of Melos?"

"No; that is more to the north. But I do not wonder at your ignorance, as Melnos is known only to the sailors and shepherds who are thoroughly acquainted with that portion of the Archipelago."

"What kind of an island is it?"

"A mountain—a volcanic mountain, extinct of course for the present, though I would not be surprised if it blew up one day and sent Justinian flying in the air with

all his subjects."

"Is this Justinian a king, that you talk about his subjects?"

"Well, a kind of minor king, such as Odysseus might have been. I know him very well."

"And Helena?"

"Is his daughter."

"His daughter!" repeated Maurice gravely. "Is she as beautiful as this portrait shows her to be?"

"I should say more so," replied Crispin, taking the photograph. "Here you only get absolute stillness; the great charm of Helena lies in the changeful expression of her face, and in her bright manner. Yes, she is altogether charming, and I do not wonder you have fallen in love with her face, even though this photograph fails to do justice to the original."

In spite of his passion for Helena, which should have made him delight in these praises of her beauty, Maurice did not pay much attention to Crispin's speech, as he was thinking deeply, and the current of his thoughts was indicated by his next remark.

"Crispin, you said Caliphronas was merely a chance acquaintance you met at Athens; but, as far as I can judge from the hints you drop, I believe you know him very well."

"That is the real truth," replied Crispin, without flinching. "I did meet this Greek at Athens, but I knew him before that—in Melnos. Oh, I can tell you many things which would astonish you, but I cannot do so yet."

"Why not?"

"Because I have strong reasons for such reticence," said the poet coldly; "either trust me in all or not at all. This journey you are undertaking means more than you think, but I will not fail you, and as long as I am by your side you will take no hurt."

"Are we in the Middle Ages? Is Caliphronas a freebooter, that you talk as if I were in danger?"

"I will explain all some day, and you will be rather astonished at my story."

"I suppose there is nothing wrong in your story?"

"No. When I tell all about myself and my past life, I think it will satisfy not only you—but Mrs. Dengelton."

"It is on her account that I made that rather rude remark, for, unless you can prove your name, your position, and your income to be satisfactory, she will never consent to your marriage with Eunice."

"As to my name," said Crispin, coloring a little at such plain speaking, "I hope to prove that spotless, my position will be beyond reproach, and my income is larger than your own."

"You are wealthy, then?"

"I am certainly well off, and I will give you my story at some later date, but at present I will answer no more of your questions."

"And Mrs. Dengelton?"

"I am going to speak to her to-morrow morning, so as to put things right before I leave England. Oh, I am not afraid of being absent. Eunice loves me, and will be true, while as to her mother, I can win that lady on to my side, and will do so to-morrow."

"You are an enigma, Crispin."

"I am; but, as I said before, I can explain myself to your satisfaction, and intend doing so when I consider it wise. But you must trust me."

"I do trust you."

"I am afraid you ask too many questions for absolute trust," said the poet dryly, relighting his pipe.

"I will ask you no more—save one."

"Well?"

"Is Caliphronas to be trusted?"

"As long as I am with you, yes."

"Ah, you have some power over him?"

"Now you are asking questions again."

"I beg your pardon; but do tell me about Caliphronas!"

Crispin paused for a moment, as if to consider how he would reply to this remark.

"Caliphronas," he said at length slowly, "is a man who is a slave to his own vices, and gratifies himself at all costs. He lets no one stand in the way of such self-gratification; but whether you are an obstacle or not remains to be seen. At all events, you have elected to trust me, mysterious as I am, and I promise you on my word of honor that you shall have no reason to regret that trust. I foresee difficulties ahead, but these you need not be afraid of as long as I am by your side. You will leave Roylands with me, and you will return with me, and I give you my word you will not be a bit the worst for your journey, nay, I hope you will be the better."

"One would think we were going to Timbuctoo, the way you talk," said Maurice crossly. "You have no idea how these enigmatic speeches pique my curiosity."

"Well, such curiosity I will gratify—shortly."

"But"—

"You said you would trust me, and ask no more questions."

"I do trust you, and I will not."

Certainly he could not complain of a lack of interest in life now: this mysterious woman Helena, these equally mysterious individuals, Crispin and Caliphronas,—all three riddles. Surely the son of Laius was never so bothered by enigmas as was this young country squire. However, it added new zest to the wine of life, and gave him something to look forward to, so on the whole Maurice was enjoying himself.

"By the way," said Crispin lazily, after a pause, "how are you going to Melnos?"

"Oh, I don't know exactly. Go by train to Venice, I suppose, and take an Austrian Lloyd steamer from there, or leave Marseilles by the French packet which goes to Athens. Once at the Piræus, and there won't be much difficulty in exploring the Archipelago in search of your Island of Fantasy. To tell you the truth, however, as I only made up my mind this morning, I have not yet looked up routes, steamers, and all that sort of thing, but intend to go to town next week and find out all about them."

"There will be no need," said Crispin quietly; "you can come to Greece in my yacht."

"Your yacht! Why, I did not know you had one."

"I know you didn't. Because I am a poet, you necessarily think I am poor, which is a mistake. I am sufficiently well off to keep a hundred and fifty ton steam yacht, which is at present lying at Southampton, ready to start when I wish. A poet and a yacht sound incongruous, I admit; and I suppose I am the first rhyme-stringer who

ever possessed such an article, unless you except Shelley's boat partnership with Trelawny. But that was a small boat; my craft is a genuine steam yacht, and in it I explore unknown seas. You look astonished."

"I am astonished. You are a poet-millionnaire."

"Not quite as wealthy as that, and I need hardly tell you I did not pay for the yacht out of my poems. But, of course, you will come with me to Greece in The Eunice."

"Eunice?"

"Yes; she was called The Aphrodite, but I rechristened her The Eunice out of compliment to you know whom."

"Have you any more surprises in store?"

"Plenty," replied Crispin, rising with a yawn; "but this one is quite enough to keep you awake for a night. Oh dear, I am so sleepy!"

"Wait a minute. Does Caliphronas know you are a yacht-owner?"

"No; I expect he will be surprised and confoundedly jealous."

"Jealous! Why?"

"Because he thinks all the good things of this life should go his way. But you have not yet given me your answer."

"Oh, I will come by all means."

"And so will our mutual friend, the Greek. What a happy family we will be! Well, good-night. I wish Eunice was coming in her namesake."

"And Mrs. Dengelton," said Maurice mischievously, lighting his candle.

"No; in my wildest dreams I never wished that. She would want to be captain of the ship. However, I am going to astonish my future mother-in-law to-morrow; so I must take a good night's rest, and husband my strength for the encounter. Good-night, once more."

"Good-night, Crispin."

They both retired to their respective rooms, and Maurice fell asleep wondering who Crispin was, from what source he derived wealth enough to keep a yacht, and what connection he had with Caliphronas. All these things mixed together in his drowsy brain until the real world faded away, and he dreamed he was at Melnos, trying, like another Paris, to carry off Helena, while Caliphronas, in the guise of Menelaus, prevented such elopement.

Next day the brilliant sun had disappeared, and there was a gray veil of clouds drawn across the sky, which neutralized the brilliant tints of the summer's luxuriance of foliage and flowers. Caliphronas, ever impressionable to atmospheric changes, shivered at the dreary look which now spread over the earth, and it needed all his animal spirits to sustain his normal condition of careless joy. Even then he lacked his ordinary exuberance of life, and it appeared as if a great portion of his vitality disappeared with the sun.

"St. Theodore!" he said to Mrs. Dengelton, as they looked out of the window at the gray landscape; "do you often have this weather here?"

"No, not often," she replied, in a tone of regret; "I wish we did."

"What! this dulness, this melancholy, this want of color!"

"Why, my dear Count, it is a most beautiful day!" cried the lady, with great vivacity; "what have you to complain of?"

"Complain of?" The Greek's face was a study as he repeated her words, and he stared at her in surprise. "Why, I complain of this want of sunlight; it is not like yesterday, which was passable."

"Passable!" echoed Mrs. Dengelton, surprised in her turn. "Why, Count, since you have come to Roylands, the weather has been simply perfection. How long have you been in England?"

"Two months."

"Then you must have had this lovely weather all along. You are an exceptionally lucky man, Count Constantine, for you have seen England at her best."

"Why, have you worse days than this?" asked Caliphronas, with a shudder.

"Infinitely worse," said Eunice, who at this moment joined them with Crispin: "fog, snow, rain, hail, mist—oh, you don't know the capabilities of the English climate!"

"I am glad I am going away," observed Caliphronas, with a sigh of relief; "this place would kill me. Gray skies, small cultivated landscapes, ugly cities, sad-looking men and women. Oh, great saints! what do you know of life or pleasure?"

"I assure you, my dear Count," began Mrs. Dengelton sweetly, "that in the season"—

"What is the season?"

"The London season, which begins in May."

"Oh, that is what I have seen. Up all night, tired all day, crowded rooms, unhealthy dinners, plenty of talk about nothing, and no rest—is that what you call the season? is that what you term life? St. Theodore! let me go back to Greece, there at least I can live."

"But Greece is not like London," said Crispin, with the intention of provoking the Greek.

"No, thank the saints, it is not, as you know well, Mr. Crispin; there, at least, are fresh air, laughing seas, wide plains, lofty mountains—one can breathe there—one can live and delight in living, but here—oh, pardon me, I cannot talk of it. I must go to Mr. Maurice for the Endymion, and I am glad I leave your dull grayness soon."

When Caliphronas with this parting shot had vanished, Mrs. Dengelton turned to Crispin with a pitying smile.

"What an impulsive creature, is he not, Mr. Crispin? To talk about such barbaric lands, and call existence there life! Ah, he does not know what enjoyment is."

"I think he does in his own way," replied Crispin dryly, thinking of the difference between the free, open-air existence of the one, and the narrow, petty life of the other.

"Well, of course, you know a blind man never misses color because he does not know what he loses," said the lady apologetically. "That poor dear Count is in exactly the same plight. Eunice, my dear, I wish you would go and write that letter to Lady Danvers at once. I want it to catch the noonday post. We go to Lady Danvers when we leave here," she added, as Eunice left the room. "For my part, I would have been glad to stay here till the autumn, but dear Maurice has been ordered abroad for his health."

"Yes, I know he is going," said Crispin coolly; "he is coming with me."

"Coming with you?" repeated Mrs. Dengelton, indignantly, wondering at the presumption of this, as she thought, poor poet.

"Yes," replied Crispin equably, as he prepared to startle the lady; "he is going to the East in my yacht."

"Your yacht!" gasped Mrs. Dengelton, in the same tones in which she would have said, "Your throne!" "I did not know you—you"—

"Were rich enough to possess one," said Crispin dryly, seeing the lady hesitated. "Oh, I have had a yacht for many years. I hope you and Miss Dengelton will do me the favor of coming a cruise in her some day."

"Oh, I should be delighted!" cried Mrs. Dengelton, with a shudder, for she was a very bad sailor; "but does it not take a great deal of money to keep up such an expensive luxury?"

"A great deal," assented the poet, suppressing a smile as he saw the dexterous way in which Mrs. Dengelton was trying to find out the extent of his income; "but, fortunately, I can afford it."

"How lucky you are!" sighed the lady, now adopting a more polite tone towards this wealthy young man. "Ah, it is a splendid thing to be rich. My late husband was of good birth, but poor, and he did not leave me very well off. However, I have a sufficiently good income to live comfortably, and of course my dear daughter for a companion."

"What will you do when Miss Dengelton marries?"

"Oh, I will live with her still. You see, young wives are inexperienced, and I could take all that sort of thing on my shoulders."

Crispin shuddered, for the prospect of living under the same roof with this lady was anything but an inviting one.

"Of course, I do not mind speaking freely to you, dear Mr. Crispin," pursued Mrs. Dengelton, determined to crush all thoughts Crispin might have regarding Eunice, "because you are such a friend of dear Maurice. You know I wish him to marry his cousin, it would be a perfect match."

"Would it?" said Crispin grimly.

"Yes; it would keep the property in the family," said Mrs. Dengelton, who had arrived at this remarkable conclusion by some means known only to herself; "and then, of course, this would be my home, and I could live here with my dear children. You see, I speak openly to you, because I know you would like to see dear Maurice happily married."

"I would indeed, Mrs. Dengelton, but not to your daughter."

"Indeed, Mr. Crispin! and why not?"

"Because I want to marry her myself."

"Mr. Crispin!"

If a bombshell had dropped through the roof, Mrs. Dengelton could not have been more astonished. She half guessed that this audacious poet admired Eunice, but to speak thus so boldly, and after she had given her views as to the future settlement of her daughter in matrimony—it was too horrible! Who was this man? Nobody knew. He had not even two names like respectable people, and to propose to bestow the only one he possessed on her daughter, was too much for Mrs. Dengelton's powers of endurance. She was actually dumb with astonishment, and those who had once heard this lady's tongue could have seen from that alone how she was thunderstruck. For a minute she gazed at Crispin with horror-struck eyes, but as he did not turn into stone before that Medusa gaze, or even have the grace to blush, Mrs. Dengelton recovered her powers of speech with a weak laugh.

"Oh, of course you are jesting!"

"I am not jesting. I wish to marry your daughter."

"Impossible!"

"Why is it impossible?"

"Oh, because—because"—Mrs. Dengelton could not really bring herself to give the real reasons, so fenced dexterously,—"Because you see, I wish her to marry her cousin, and keep the property in the family."

"The property will remain in the family without such a marriage," said Crispin provokingly; "and as for your daughter, she does not love Maurice."

"Not love Maurice!" screamed Mrs. Dengelton wrathfully.

"No, she loves me."

"Loves you!" gasped the good lady faintly, feeling for her smelling-salts. "Oh, this is some horrible dream!"

"By no means," replied Crispin quietly; "I really do not see why you should make such an uncomplimentary remark. I love your daughter, and I wish to marry her. Is there anything extraordinary in that?"

"Eunice could marry any one."

"No doubt, but she will not. I am the only man she will marry."

"Indeed! You forget her mother's consent is necessary."

"At present, yes, because she is under age—but afterwards"—

"Eunice Dengelton will obey me all her life," said the lady furiously; "and I will never, never consent to her marriage with you, sir!"

"Why not?"

"Because I do not know who you are," retorted Mrs. Dengelton tartly.

"I will satisfy you on that point before the marriage."

"Then I do not know if you can support a wife."

"If I can support a yacht, I can certainly support a wife," said Crispin ironically; "but if you want me to be exact as to figures, my income is twelve thousand a year."

"Twelve thousand a year!" gasped Mrs. Dengelton in amazement; "why, you are richer than Maurice!"

"Yes, twice as rich. Is there any other question you would like to ask?"

"Well, I would like to know about your parents."

"I have no parents. I am an orphan."

"And where do you come from, Mr. Crispin?"

"From the East"

"Heavens!" cried Mrs. Dengelton, as a dreadful thought struck her; "you are not a Hindoo, or a negro, or a Hottentot?"

"Well, I am certainly dark," replied the poet, laughing, "but I am, as it happens, a pure-blooded Englishman. But come now, Mrs. Dengelton, I have answered your questions, so in common fairness you must answer mine. Will you let me marry your daughter?"

"I—I—really I don't know what to say," said Mrs. Dengelton, unwilling to let the chance of such a wealthy match slip, and yet doubtful as to the position of the suitor. "I must think it over. Tell me who you are."

"Not now. I will satisfy you fully concerning my family when I return from Greece."

"Ah! am I right in saying you are going to the East to see your relatives about this marriage?" said Mrs. Dengelton archly.

"Partly right. I am going as much on your nephew's account as my own."

"And what is *he* going for?"

"That I cannot tell you, Mrs. Dengelton," replied Crispin mendaciously, "you must ask him that yourself. But as to this marriage"—

"I cannot give you an answer now—really I cannot."

"Will you give me an answer when I return from the East?"

"When will you return?"

"In three months."

"Yes, I will give you an answer then," said Mrs. Dengelton glibly, having quite determined to throw Crispin over, should she meet with a more desirable match for her daughter. Crispin guessed this double dealing, and at once met the feminine plot by a masculine counterplot.

"Mrs. Dengelton," he said solemnly, "I love your daughter, and she loves me. When I return in three months from the East, I will satisfy you on all points you desire to know. If those questions you ask are answered to your complete satisfaction, will you agree to our marriage?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Dengelton, all the volubility frightened out of her, "I will."

"Then give me your word that during my absence you will not try to induce your daughter to marry any one else."

"I hardly think it is necessary to ask that," said the lady, with dignity, though in her heart of hearts she knew it was very necessary, as also did Crispin, who still pressed his request.

"Perhaps it is not necessary; still I would like your word for it that such a thing will not occur."

"Well, well, I promise," remarked Mrs. Dengelton peevishly, rising to her feet. "What a pertinacious man you are, Mr. Crispin! Mind, I will not consent to this marriage unless I am thoroughly satisfied about your position, income, and family."

"I will satisfy you on all those points," rejoined Crispin, with a bow, as he held the door open for her to pass through.

"I feel quite upset," said the good lady, as she hastily departed. "I am sure I don't know what Maurice will say."

"I do," thought Crispin, as he closed the door; "he will be delighted. I talk very confidently, but I am doubtful. Position—yes, that is all right, I am a poet; money—well, she can hardly complain of twelve thousand a year, safely invested; family—ah, that is the difficulty! I wonder if I can get the truth out of Justinian, he alone knows. I cannot marry with only one name, but I will have two before I return from Melnos, or else"—

He paused, and struck his fist hard against his open hand.

"I will force Justinian to tell me," he muttered between his clinched teeth. "I also hold cards in this game he is playing, and even with him and Caliphronas as adversaries I will win. Maurice Roylands is Justinian's stake, Helena is the stake of Caliphronas, as he chooses to call himself, but Eunice is mine, and with such a prize to gain I am desperate."

His eyes fell on an open volume of Thomas à Kempis, which Mrs. Dengelton, in strange contrast to her usual worldliness, was fond of reading, and he saw the following sentence:—

"Love desires to be aloft, and will not be kept back by anything low and mean."

"I accept the omen," he said, closing the book slowly. "I desire Eunice, and no lowness or meanness of Justinian and Andros will keep me back. I accept the omen."

CHAPTER XII.

THE NEW ARGONAUTS.

From distant isles of tropic blooms,
Enthroned on seas of hyaline,
Across the waters smaragdine,
The weak winds waft us faint perfumes
Of incense, musk, and fragrant balms,
That shed their scents 'mid lasting calms,
Beneath the shade of bending palms.
These perfumes rouse lethargic brains
From idle dreams and visions pale.
As modern Argonauts we sail
Far o'er the vast mysterious main;
We wish no golden fleeces sleek,
But in these islands of the Greek,
A woman's lovely face we seek.

All preparations having been made, it was decided to start for Greece about the end of July; and these modern Argonauts were in the highest spirits at the prospect of the coming voyage,—Caliphronas because his object was gained, and Roylands would soon be on his way to the island of Melnos; Crispin because he had come to a comfortable understanding with Mrs. Dengelton; and Maurice for the simple reason that he was going to see in the flesh this beautiful vision of fancy which haunted his brain. The Grange was to be left to the guardianship of the housekeeper, and its master, giving up, at least for the present, a life of ease, was about to embark on one of those adventurous expeditions so dear to the hearts of our restless young Englishmen. Mrs. Dengelton and Eunice had arranged to stay with Lady Danvers in London, and the good old Rector still remained in his sleepy village, looking after his parishioners, his Aristophanic translation, and his beloved roses.

In company with Maurice, the poet had taken a journey to Southampton to see if the yacht was all in order for the projected voyage, and had stayed there three days to attend to all necessary matters. The Eunice was a beautiful little craft, schooner-rigged fore and aft, and was manned by an excellent crew; so with all this luxury the three adventurers looked forward to having a very pleasant time. It was now the season when the halcyon broods on the waves, so they expected a smooth passage to Melnos, and as all three were capital sailors, even if they did have stormy weather they cared very little for such a possibility. Caliphronas, delighted at leaving this dull island for

his own brilliant skies, was beside himself with delight, and talked incessantly of the pleasures in store for them on the Island of Melnos.

On the evening before they left England, Maurice invited the Rector to a farewell dinner; and the company assembled round the hospitable table of the Grange were very merry indeed, perhaps with the exception of Eunice, who was somewhat sad at the prospect of parting from her poet. The weather was still dull and gray, and it was only the prospect of a speedy departure that kept Caliphronas bright; but as that departure took place next day, he was in the gayest spirits.

"We are the New Argonauts," he said merrily, with the affectation of classicism which distinguished him; "we sail for the Colchian strand."

"It is to be hoped we find no Medea there," observed Crispin with a smile.

"No; our Medea is no sorceress, but a daughter of Venus, the modern Helen of Troy. Mr. Maurice is her Jason. You, Crispin, are Orpheus."

"And you, Count?" asked Maurice, amused at this fancy.

"I?" said Caliphronas lightly. "Well, I hardly know. Shall I say Hercules?"

"Or Hylas," suggested the Rector idly.

"Neither!" interposed Crispin pointedly. "We will take a passenger from another famous ship, and call him Ulysses, the craftiest of the Greeks."

Caliphronas frowned at this somewhat uncomplimentary remark, but immediately recovered his gayety, and burst out laughing.

"Oh, I do not mind in the least. Ulysses, by all means. After all, he had some very pleasant times with Circe, Calypso, and such-like ladies."

"You seem to know your Homer, Count," said the Rector, rather surprised at the classical knowledge of this ignorant young man.

"Or his Lemprière," muttered Crispin significantly.

Decidedly Crispin was not polite; but, truth to tell, the prospect of a voyage in company with a man he disliked was almost too much for him, and it took all his self-restraint to prevent him breaking out into open war against the Greek. Caliphronas knew this, but, appearing to take no notice of such a hostile attitude, resolved to bide his time, and make Crispin suffer for such insolence at the first opportunity. It seemed as though poor Maurice would not have a very pleasant time of it, cooped up in a vessel with these two enemies; but, doubtless, when Crispin played host in his own yacht, he would treat the Count in a more courteous fashion. This was exactly the view Crispin took of the matter; and as he knew, according to the laws of hospitality, he would have to be scrupulously polite to Caliphronas on board The Eunice, he was taking advantage of the present time, and giving his humor full rein in the direction of his real feelings. If he could only have prevented Caliphronas coming by such a display of hostility, he would have been very glad, as he mistrusted the Greek very much; but Caliphronas was impervious to the shafts of irony, and, as long as he gained his ends, did not care what was said to him or of him. This brilliant stranger was a man entirely without pride, and would put up with any insults rather than jeopardize his plans by resenting such discourtesy. It was the last opportunity Crispin would have of showing his real feelings, so he took advantage of it; and though it was scarcely gentlemanly of him to do so, the Count was such an unmitigated scoundrel that honorable and courteous treatment was entirely lost on him.

However, Eunice overheard his ironical remarks, and looked reproachfully at him, whereon Crispin restrained his temper, and strove to be delightfully amiable, no very easy task in his present frame of mind. With this good resolve he talked as pleasantly as he was able, and heard Caliphronas romance about his fictitious life without contradicting him, which he felt sorely inclined to do. It must not be forgotten that Crispin had hitherto led a semi-civilized life, and had not acquired that knack of concealing his likes or dislikes so necessary in our artificial society; besides which he was a very honest-minded man, and, knowing the true story of Caliphronas, the deliberate lies, flashy manner, and snake-like subtlety of the Greek annoyed him.

Maurice also distrusted the Count, especially after his conversation with Crispin regarding the real name, career, and character of the man; but, being more versed in the science of deception, behaved admirably towards his guest in every way, thereby deceiving Caliphronas to take all this enforced suavity for actual good-fellowship. As to the Rector, he was extremely punctilious in his behavior, and neither by word nor deed showed his dislike of this sleek-footed panther, who was about to bear away his favorite Maurice into unknown dangers.

"You must bring us all kinds of things from Greece, Maurice," said Mrs. Dengelton in her usual gushing manner. "I adore foreign ornaments—those silver pins, you know, like Italian women wear, and Moorish veils, and Algerian lamps—so delightful—they fill up a room wonderfully."

"Yes, and make it look like a curiosity-shop," replied Maurice, laughing. "Oh, my dear aunt, you may depend I will bring you all kinds of outlandish things; but as to Italian pins, Moorish veils, Algerian lamps, I don't suppose I will find any of those sort of things in Greece."

"What will I bring you?" asked Crispin, as he held open the door for Eunice to pass through.

They were beyond the hearing of the table, Mrs. Dengelton had sailed on ahead to the drawing-room, so they were virtually alone.

"What will I bring you?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yourself," she replied in the same tone. And Crispin returned to his seat with the delightful conviction that Eunice was the most charming girl in the world, and he was certainly the most fortunate of poets.

The Rector poured himself out a glass of his favorite port, and began to converse with Caliphronas; while Maurice and Crispin, lighting their cigarettes, chatted about the yacht, her sea-going powers, the question of stores, the anticipated time she would take to run down to the Ægean, and such-like marine matters.

"Will you pay us another visit, Count?" asked the Rector, more for the sake of starting a conversation than because he really cared about such a possibility.

"No, I do not think so. I am going to be married and settle down in my own island."

"Ithaca?"

Caliphronas laughed a little on hearing the name.

"Yes; on Ithaca."

"Are you a politician?"

"I? No. I care not two straws for the reconstruction of the Greek Empire, the recovery of Byzantium from the Turks, or any of those things which agitate my

countrymen. No. I am a terribly selfish man, sir, as you will doubtless think. I only want to live in happiness, and for the good of my fellow-creatures I care nothing."

"Is that not rather an egotistical way of looking at life?"

"Doubtless, sir, from your point of view, but not from mine. You are a priest of your Church, what we call a Papa in my country, and live the life of the soul, while I live the life of the body. You believe in self-abnegation—I in self-satisfaction. With this beautiful world I am content, but you rack your soul with longings for the life beyond the grave. In a word, I am real, you are ideal; but I am the happiest."

"The happiness of the beasts which perish!" said the Rector emphatically.

"Well, the beasts, as a rule, have a very good time of it during their lives; as to the rest, we all perish at last."

"The body, but not the soul."

"Ah, that I do not know. I may have a soul, but I am not certain; but I have a body, and as long as that is at ease, why should I trouble about things in the next life?"

"Do you ever think of the hereafter?"

"Never! If I die, I die! While I live, I live! I prefer present certainty to future doubt."

Mr. Carriston was silent, as he did not care about arguing theology with this subtle Greek, whose religion, whose philosophy, assumed Protean forms to meet every objection. He was full of sophistry and double dealing, an unfair adversary in every sense of the word, and was so encased in his armor of self-complacency and egotism, that he could never be brought to look at things either spiritual or material in any light than that which satisfied the selfishness of his own soul. The Rector, therefore, avoided the threatened argument, and applied himself to his wine, which was a much more agreeable task than attempting to convince this egoist that the supreme aim of life was not the pampering of the passions of the individual man.

"Apart from the theological aspect of the case," said Carriston good-humoredly, "it is rather a mistaken thing to live only for one's self. Where ignorance is bliss, I grant; but, because you know no higher life than that of the body, you at once assume that there can be no happier existence."

"Oh, I do not say that," answered Caliphronas lightly. "No doubt you people who mortify the flesh, who listen to the voice of conscience, who consider the soul more than the body, and who look upon this life as a preparation for a future existence, are happy in your self-torturings. All that sort of thing came in with Anno Domini, and made the mediæval ages a hell of anguish; but I—I am a Greek—a pagan, if it pleases you—who looks on this world not as a prison, but as a garden wherein to live happily. Your mourning Man of Sorrows is entirely opposed to our joyous Apollo, your gloomy views of life to our serenity of temperament. The difference is plain: for you, a Christian, cannot understand the joyous songs of Paganism; I, a pagan, shudder at your penitential psalms of Christianity. We would neither of us ever convince the other, therefore an argument which has not a common basis from which to start is unprofitable."

"I am not going to argue," replied Carriston, smiling, "and I agree with you that arguments are unprofitable. Unless the change takes place in your own breast, it would be worse than useless for me to attempt to reason with you. But you are

evidently not of the opinion of an Elizabethan ancestor of mine, among whose papers I discovered the following lyric:—

"Oh, shall we pass contented days,
Unheeding Fortune's crown of bays,
Which decks the brows
Of those whose vows
Compel them to incessant strife
And restless life?
Ah no; tho' pleasing to the sense,
This cloying life of indolence
But fills the soul
With weary dole,
And turns the sweet, which doth us bless,
To bitterness."

"Your Elizabethan ancestor was not healthy-minded," said Caliphronas coolly; "if he had been he would never have written such silly verses. It is your unhealthy life, your unhealthy bodies, which breed such restlessness in you."

"At all events, that restlessness has made England what she is," replied the Rector, rather nettled at the rudeness of the Greek.

"A land of money-worship, a land of noisy steam-engines, a land of poverty and wealth—extremes in both cases. Yes, I quite believe your restless spirit has brought you to this satisfactory state of things. Come, sir," added the Count, with a charming smile, seeing the Rector was rather annoyed, "let us agree to differ. For me, Greece—for you, England; for me, Nature—for you, Art. Two parallel straight lines cannot meet."

Carriston laughed at this way of settling the question, but made no further remarks, and after a desultory conversation between all four gentlemen had ensued, they went into the drawing-room to join the ladies.

Mrs. Dengelton was engaged on her everlasting fancywork; and Eunice, with a rather disconsolate look on her face, was idly turning over the pages of a book. Crispin stole quietly behind her and glanced over her shoulder. It was a volume of his poems, and he felt flattered.

"And to think," said Mrs. Dengelton, without further prelude, "that you will be so far away from home to-morrow."

"The world is my home," cried Caliphronas gayly.

"We Englishmen are narrower in our ideas," observed Maurice dryly; "we look on England as our home."

"Ah, there's no place like home," sighed the Honorable Mrs. Dengelton sentimentally.

"If by home you mean England, I am very glad of it," retorted the Count audaciously; "I would rather live in exile in Greece. But come, I will say no more evil things about your beloved island of fogs."

"If you do, I will sing 'Rule Britannia,'" said Maurice, laughing.

"What is that?"

"Our national song. Do you know any national songs of your country."

Caliphronas smiled with an expression of supreme indifference.

"No; I know nothing of patriotism. I have never given it a thought. All my songs are of love and wine."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Dengelton in a shocked tone; "really, Count, you say the most dreadful things!"

"Other times other manners," observed the Rector humorously. "Horace, for instance, said things which would shock you, my dear Mrs. Dengelton."

"I've no doubt about it," retorted the lady viciously; "but, thank heaven, I do not know Latin."

"But you know French, aunt," said Maurice wickedly; "and I am afraid Gyp, George Sand, and Belot, are quite as bad, if not worse, than the Latin poet."

"Maurice," replied Mrs. Dengelton severely, unable to parry this attack, "remember your cousin is in the room."

"I beg your pardon, aunt."

"And now, Count Caliphronas," said the good lady, thus appeased, "suppose you sing us one of your songs."

"I am afraid it will shock you," replied the Count slyly.

"Oh dear no! none of us know Greek."

"That is hardly complimentary to me, who have given up all my life to the study of the Greek poets."

"I don't mean you, Rector, but the young people."

"Oh, I do not mind singing," said Caliphronas, going to the piano; "if the words of my songs were translated, you would find them very harmless. They only contain the language of love known to all the world."

"Will I play for you?" asked Crispin, looking up from the poem he was reading to Eunice.

"If you would be so kind."

"What will you sing?" said the poet, sitting down at the piano. "No love, no wine to-night. It is our last meeting in England, so sing some song of farewell."

"Will I sing 'The Call to Arms'?"

"Yes, that will be stirring enough."

Whereupon Caliphronas sang that patriotic song, which was written by some modern Hellenic Tyrtæus during the War of Independence. Crispin afterwards translated it into the metre of Byron's famous "Isles of Greece" for the benefit of Eunice, who was anxious to know the words which, clothed in their Greek garb, rang through the room like the inspiriting blare of a trumpet.

"Thermopylæ! Thermopylæ!
Give back your Spartan sons of yore,
To raise the flag of liberty,
And dye its folds in Turkish gore;
Then will the crimson banner wave
Above the freeman, not the slave.
Arise, ye Greeks, and break your chains!
By daring hearts is freedom won.
Behold, the Moslem crescent wanes
Before the rising Attic sun;
Oh, let its golden beams be shed
On chainless Greeks, and tyrants dead!
Your fathers' swords were laurel-wreathed,
And wielded well by freemen brave;
Why are your swords so idly sheathed,
While Greece is still a Turkish slave?
Shall Hellas, Mother of the West,
In servitude ignoble rest?
Oh, shame! that it should come to this,
When by your side hang idle swords;
Arise, ye sons of Salamis,
Whose fathers quelled the Persian hordes,
And drive the Moslem to the sea,
Till Hellas and her sons be free."

When the song was finished, Caliphronas turned away silently, and Carriston, who was seated near, saw to his astonishment that the eyes of the emotional Greek were suffused with tears.

"That man has some noble traits," he said to himself as he noticed this; "he is moved by the wrongs of his country."

"What a fine ringing melody!" cried Eunice, whose eyes were flashing with excitement.

"It is like 'Chevy Chase,'" said Maurice quickly, "and stirs the heart like the sound of a trumpet."

"The poet was evidently inspired by Byron," remarked Crispin, idly fingering the piano keys; "I expect he wrote it after the 'Isles of Greece,' song. Ah, a Greek should have written that."

"I am afraid the days of Alcæus are past," replied the Rector, who had understood a considerable portion of the song, owing to his acquaintance with the ancient Attic tongue; "Greece prefers Anacreon. Still she won her freedom bravely."

"And to what gain?" said Caliphronas bitterly; "to be ruled by a Danish prince. Better the republics of Athens, Sparta, and Thebes, than such playing at monarchy."

"To revive the ancient government you must have the ancient patriots, poets, and scholars."

"That I am afraid is impossible. No, the glory has departed from Greece. Centuries of oppression have crushed the creative faculty out of her."

"Oh, let us hope, when the Greek Empire is reconstructed, we will have a new Pindar, a new Sophocles, a new Plato."

"That is a dream of the lyre, not of the sword," replied Caliphronas, carelessly glancing at his watch. "By the way, it is very late, and, as we have to be up early, I suppose we ought to retire early."

"I am quite with you, Count," said Mrs. Dengelton, rolling up her work. "Come, Eunice, we must get our beauty sleep."

"Humph! the mother needs it more than the daughter," thought Crispin, but did not give vent to this very uncomplimentary remark, and hastened to give the ladies their candles.

"Are you going to bed, Caliphronas?" asked Maurice, when the ladies had gone. "We intend to smoke."

"Going to shorten your lives," replied the Count, smiling. "No; I am like Mrs. Dengelton, I require my beauty sleep;" and at that he also departed.

The Rector, in company with his two young friends, went to the smoking-room, and had a pleasant conversation, but it was noticeable that all three gentlemen carefully avoided mentioning the name of Caliphronas. Decidedly the Greek was not in favor, and, in spite of the good impression he had created in the Rector's mind by his patriotic emotion, that gentleman showed how deeply rooted was his distrust by his parting words to Crispin.

"Remember, I leave Maurice in your hands, Mr. Crispin," he said in a faltering voice; "he is very dear to me, and you must protect him from all danger."

"My dear Rector, I am not a child," interposed Maurice, rather nettled; "nor are we going to the wilds of Africa."

"You may meet with worse enemies than the savage beasts of Africa," replied the Rector obstinately. "I do not trust your friend Caliphronas."

"Be content," said Crispin, shaking the Rector warmly by the hand, "I will watch over Maurice; and as to Caliphronas you need not be afraid of him. I know the man."

"And know any good of him?"

"Ah, that is a secret at present; but you may be sure he will not harm Maurice while I am near."

"One would think we were going into danger, the way you talk," said Roylands impatiently, "instead of a pleasant cruise in Greek waters."

"The New Argonauts," observed the Rector, laughing. "Good-night, Mr. Crispin. Good-night, my dear lad; come over and say good-by to-morrow."

The Argonauts promised, and the Rector, quite at peace concerning his dear pupil, departed.

"You doubt Caliphronas; the Rector doubts Caliphronas," said Maurice, when the old man had gone. "I am getting rather wearied of such doubts."

"Well, I will set your doubts at rest in—say a week's time."

"And are your revelations startling?"

Crispin shrugged his shoulders.

"Not very; it all depends upon what you call startling. Really I have made by my talk this molehill of a Caliphronas into a mountain of dissimulation and deceit. He is not a good man, but I have no doubt he is as good as his neighbors."

"The mystery which environs him fascinates me."

“No doubt; the unknown is always attractive,” replied Crispin sententiously. “But after all, when I tell you everything, you may be disappointed. The mountain may only bring forth a mouse, you know. But, at all events, I look forward to some pretty lively times.”

“Where?”

“In the Island of Melnos. My dear innocent Englishman, you are being drawn into a network of intrigue and duplicity, but, as I hold all the threads in my hand, you will come out all right in the end.”

“You puzzle me! I hope I *will* come all right out of this mystery.”

“I heard a vulgar saying at a music hall which applies to this case and to you,” said Crispin gayly; “it was, ‘Keep your eye on your father, and your father will pull you through.’”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PAST OF A POET.

We all have histories. The meanest hind
Who turns the steaming furrow can unfold
Some story in his uneventful life,
Which stirs the wonderment of him who hears,
To thoughts bewildered, how so small a stage
Can thus contain so great a tragedy.

The Eunice left Southampton on an unpleasantly wet day, and standing on the deck, under a dull gray sky, the three adventurers felt quite dispirited as they watched the receding shores of England veil themselves in chilly mists. Going down the Channel they had moderately fair weather, but no sunlight, and Caliphronas, who was a wretchedly bad sailor, in spite of his Levantine cruisings, retreated to his cabin in a very miserable frame of mind. Both Crispin and Maurice, however, were in good health and spirits, mostly remaining on deck to watch the gray sea heaving dully under the gray sky. In the Bay of Biscay bad weather prevailed as a matter of course, and the yacht tossed about a good deal in the choppy waters. Not until they passed the Straits did they have fine weather, for the first burst of sunlight showed them the giant rock of Gibraltar frowning on the left as they steamed rapidly into the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

Had Maurice so desired, Crispin was quite willing to put in for a day, but the young man was anxious to proceed to Melnos, and the yacht soon left the picturesque sentinel of the Mediterranean behind. The weather now became warm and bright, bringing Caliphronas out of his cabin again, like a brilliant butterfly, to bask in the sunshine. The arid island of Malta came in sight, and they saw its precipitous shores rising sternly from the tideless waters. For a few hours they cast anchor in the Grand Harbor, and went on shore to explore Valetta, with its steep streets, quaint houses, and mongrel population. An afternoon spent in leisurely strolling along the Strada Reale, and looking at the bizarre mixture of Turks, Jews, Arabs, Italians, and red-coated English soldiers, proved an agreeable change after their nine days' run from Southampton, and they re-embarked in much better spirits than when they left England. Now they were in tropical heat, with a cloudless sky above, and the brave little yacht steamed merrily across the glittering waters, leaving a trail of white foam behind her. Nearer and nearer they drew to the enchanted shores of Greece, and to glowing days succeeded warm nights lighted by mellow constellations and delicately silver moons.

It was when they were in Adria, the ancient name of the sea between Sicily and Greece, that Crispin told Maurice the story of his life. Dinner was long since over, and the three gentlemen lounged on deck smoking the pipes of peace—that is, Crispin and Maurice smoked and lounged, for Caliphronas did neither the one thing nor the other, but paced restlessly about the deck, looking up into the darkly blue sky, and singing snatches of Greek songs.

"Do you see Taygetus, Mr. Maurice?" he said, pointing to the lofty snow-crowned range of mountains in the distance. "This is your first glimpse of Greece, is it not? Yes, of course it is. I am sorry you do not find our shores bathed in sunlight to greet you; still yonder snowy mountain, this calm sea, that serene sky, is beautiful, is it not?"

"Very beautiful."

Whereat Caliphronas, leaning over the taffrail and looking dreamily at the shores of his native land, broke out into song.

> "I would I were hunting on rocky Taygetus,
> Which kisses the starry sky with snows of chastity,
> Then might I meet the lost nymph
> Who beloved by a god was set as a star on high,
> But fell from thence, and was lost in the snowy wilderness."

"Taygeta!" said Crispin, who knew the song well. "Yes; she was one of the Pleiades, certainly; but I don't think she was the lost Pleiad, nor do I think she had anything to do with yonder mountain. If you hunted there, Caliphronas, you would meet Bacchus and his crew, but no nymph."

"I sing the song as 'twas sung to me," said the Count blithely, balancing himself on one foot. "This is a land of fancy, not of fact; so why bring in your hard truths to destroy the glory of tradition? No; Taygeta haunts those hills, and if I wandered upward to the snows I would meet her."

"If you saw a nymph you would go mad," remarked Maurice, alluding to the old Greek superstition.

"I am mad now, Mr. Maurice,—mad with the scent of wind and wave and shore. Can you not smell the perfumes blowing from the land?"

"No; I'm sure I cannot, nor you either."

"You are no believer. See, from the moonlit waters arise the Nereides to welcome us to the seas of Poseidon. Arethusa, Asia, and Leucothoe are all waving their white arms, and singing songs of the wondrous caves beneath the waves."

"Ridiculous!" retorted Maurice stolidly.

"You are no idealist," said Caliphronas petulantly. "Dull Englishman as you are, the land of romance spreads her wonders in vain for you. Creespeen, you are a poet; behold the daughters of the sea!"

Crispin smiled absently, and tossed his cigarette into the waters which rushed past, glittering in the moonlight with the grayish glint of steel.

"You forget that this is no galley of Ulysses, my friend. A modern steamer, with a noisy screw beating the waters, is enough to scare away all the nymphs in the vicinity."

"And this is a poet!" cried the Greek indignantly, addressing the stars; "this dull-eyed being who can see no wonders in the seas! Oh, shade of Homer, conjure up for him the island nymph, Calypso, and her lovely train; conjure"—

"I think Homer will have to conjure up himself first," said Crispin flippantly.

"Which he certainly will not do on the ocean," added Maurice lazily; "your mighty poet was a land-lubber."

Caliphronas looked indignantly at them both, then went off in a rage.

"I will go and have a talk to the sailors."

"Don't addle their English brains with your classical rubbish," shouted Crispin satirically; "if you do, they may wreck us."

"Wreck you!" said the Greek to himself, with a start. "There is many a true word spoken in jest, my friend; perhaps you will be wrecked before we reach Melnos."

When Caliphronas had gone. Maurice relighted his pipe, which had gone out; and, freed from the chattering of the Count, enjoyed the quiet beauty of the night, while Crispin hummed softly a ballad which Eunice used to sing,—

"Oh, winds and waves, oh, stars and sea,
I would I were as blithe and free."

Above, the sky was almost of a purple color in the sultry night, and the stars, brilliant and large, burned like lamps in the still air. A serene moon, half veiled in fleecy clouds, arose above the chill snows of Taygetus, and a long glittering bridge of light extended from the land to the yacht. The steady beat of the screw, which impelled the vessel through the silent waters, sounded in their ears, blending with the rich voice of Caliphronas, who had climbed up the mast, and was clinging to the weather rigging like a spectral figure in the shadowy glimmer of moon and star.

"The earth breathes fragrant breaths to-night,
And the perfume blows from the land.
Oh, I can see the waters kissing her shores,
Even as I would kiss thee, my belovèd,
With thy breath more fragrant than these languid scents,
Floating from the distant isles of rose-filled gardens."

"I wish I knew Greek," said Maurice, as the Count paused for a moment; "those snatches of song sound so beautiful."

"They are beautiful," replied Crispin idly; "I have often thought of translating some of them into English. Listen!"

"I see Dione rising from the waters,
A Venus of the moonlight night.
Why wavest thou thy arms as ivory gleaming?
Why do I see thine eyes flash as the evening star?
Thy voice is as the murmur of breathing waves
In twilight on a sandy beach.
Callest thou me to thy home below?
Ah, I will come, and beneath the placid waters
Coldly white will I lie on thy cold white breast.
But thro' the door of death must I pass to gain such blisses."

"'Tis like the lyrics of Callicles in Arnold's poem," said Crispin, taking off his cap; "stray fragments of song scattered by the winds."

"Or like the songs in 'Pippa Passes,'" suggested Maurice speculatively; "but I am afraid the singing of Caliphronas will not do so much good as Pippa's."

A long sigh floated past them on the still waters, like the melancholy cry of a bird, and died away sadly in the distance.

"Calypso sighing for Ulysses," observed Crispin, without altering his position; "though I dare say it is only the wind moaning through the ropes."

"Let us think it is the voice calling, Pan is dead!"

"We are classical to-night. Caliphronas has inoculated us with his antique dreams. Well, when one is in fairyland, one must dream romances."

"Suppose you tell me your romance," said Maurice abruptly.

"Of my past life? Yes; I will do so; but you must promise to keep it secret."

"I promise."

"I am afraid you will think but little of it when you know all; but I promised to tell you, so I will now fulfil my promise. In the first place, you know my name is Crispin."

"Yes; and have often wondered at its terseness. Have you no surname?"

"No legal surname."

"Why not?"

"Because I am a natural son."

"Illegitimate!" said Maurice, startled.

"Yes. Now you see the reason for my returning to Melnos."

"You wish to find out who you really are."

"I do; from Justinian."

"But who is this mysterious Justinian?"

"And this equally mysterious Caliphronas, and Alcibiades, and Crispin. You are in a world of mystery here, and will see many things on Melnos which will excite your wonderment. But come, I will lift a portion of the veil, and place you in possession of facts which may be of use to you in the future."

"I am all attention."

Crispin settled himself more comfortably, and, fixing his earnest eyes upon Maurice, began his story without further remark.

"My first memories are of the Island of Melnos, where I was *not* born. No; I was taken there with my mother when I was an infant; but the land of my birth I do not

know. English I am, certainly; but for all I know, ocean may have witnessed my coming into the world. As I grew up, I thought Justinian was my father, for my mother always led me to believe such was the case, and certainly he was very kind to me. This Justinian, of whom you have often heard me speak, is not a Greek, but an Englishman; but of his real name I am ignorant, nor do I know the reason that he lives in this island exile. Now you can see the reason I speak English so well, for from my earliest years I was brought up with the sound of it in my ears; so also was Caliphronas."

"Is he related to Justinian?"

"No; nor was he born in Ithaca; nor is he a count; nor is his name Caliphronas. Count Constantine Caliphronas, better known in these waters as Andros, comes from the island of the name; and Justinian, struck by his beauty as a child, adopted him as a son, and brought him up with me. The English tongue we were both taught from our cradles; so you now know the reason we both speak it so well. In those early days I always thought Justinian was my father, and Caliphronas was my brother; but as I grew up I was undeceived on these points. My mother died when I was still a child, and I was therefore left to the sole guardianship of this pseudo-Englishman. As I told you, he rules over a kind of patriarchal community in this little-known island; and the life seems to suit him, for he is a kind of freebooter in his way, fierce and lawless, though years have now tamed his spirit to a considerable extent. Caliphronas, or rather Andros, and myself were brought up in a wild sort of fashion,—always in the open air, on the waters, fishing, riding, sailing, fighting"—

"Fighting!" cried Maurice in surprise.

"Yes. Oh, there are strange things in these Greek waters, I assure you! On an adjacent island lived a kind of semi-pirate called Alcibiades, who was, and is, a thorough blackguard. He used to cruise about in a small craft in order to levy blackmail on the inhabitants of the other islands, and in these cruises Andros and myself very often joined. There was no killing, you understand; but sometimes the peasants objected to be robbed, so there was often a fight, ending in broken heads."

"But the law?"

"Oh, there is precious little law in these parts. Brigandism is not yet extinct, whatever you English may think. Besides, Alcibiades was a moderate sort of pirate, and was cunning enough not to go too far. He would rob a poor man of his last drachma, but he would not cut his throat. I don't think Justinian blamed him for this piratical existence; indeed, I think he rather envied his wild life, and, had he been young enough, would certainly have joined him in partnership. As it was, he allowed Andros and myself to form part of the band of Alcibiades, which we, wild, uncultured scamps as we were, regarded as a great privilege."

"And how long did this buccaneering go on?"

"As far as I am concerned, for some years; but as regards Caliphronas, I dare say he is at it yet."

"What! is he a thief?"

"Oh, no; a thief is a vulgar thing. Caliphronas is a picturesque freebooter, and simply plunders on a large scale. I've no doubt his visit to England was paid for out of his ill-gotten gains."

"And is this Alcibiades still living?"

"Oh yes; you will see him, I have no doubt, for he is a great friend of Justinian's."

"But who is this Justinian?"

Crispin paused for a moment and seemed to consider, then replied with great deliberation,—

"I can hardly tell you. He is an Englishman, so you must be content with knowing only that. Later on I may tell you something about him, but not now."

"Well, and how did you escape from this piratical existence?"

"Oh, Caliphronas was the main cause of my leaving Melnos. After my mother died, I made several discoveries—one, that Andros was not my brother, as I had hitherto supposed; and another, that Justinian was not my father. Being a comparative child, I did not pay much attention to these facts; but when I was about eighteen years of age, I began to ask Justinian questions as to who I really was, but he refused to tell me."

"Were you always called Crispin?"

"Yes, always. Justinian, in spite of his fierce, wild nature, has a vein of romance in him, and, as he arrived at Melnos with myself and my mother on St. Crispin's day, called me after that saint. My mother fell in with his humor, and from the time I landed at Melnos I was called nothing else but Crispin."

"Or Creespeen, as the Count calls you."

"Yes; Caliphronas is a good English speaker, but he makes mistakes in proper names. You observe he never risks saying Roylands, but always addresses you as Mr. Maurice—Maurice is of course a Greek name."

"And how was Caliphronas responsible for your leaving Melnos?"

"Oh, it was a kind of Esau and Jacob business. I was Esau, and Andros Jacob, the favored one. Justinian thought me rather a milksop, because I did not care about our piratical excursions with Alcibiades, in which Caliphronas, born scamp as he was, delighted. At all events, Caliphronas, in order to curry favor with Justinian, and secure his own well-being, did his best to estrange us still further, and very soon my adopted father broke out into open hatred of me. One day, when I refused to join in one of Alcibiades' little trips in search of plunder, he taunted me with being a man of peace, like my father; and, when I demanded who my father was, refused to tell me anything more than that I was illegitimate. From words we came to blows, for both of us were very hot-tempered, and the end of it was that Justinian ordered me to leave the island, much to the delight of Caliphronas, who wanted to secure it to himself."

"And you left Melnos?"

"Yes; I could not help myself, as Justinian had plenty of scoundrels to do his bidding; and, had he given the word, I have no doubt Alcibiades would have put a stone round my neck, and dropped me into the sea."

"But, my dear Crispin, all this lawlessness nowadays!"

Crispin shrugged his shoulders with a smile.

"My dear fellow, you gentlemen of England, who live at home in ease, do not know what lawlessness still exists in the East. To be sure, I speak of over ten years ago, and things are better now; still, I think a good many things go on in the vicinity of Melnos which Justice would scarcely approve of; but, as long as nothing very bad happens, why, she winks at small crimes. If I had been dropped into the sea, who would have been a bit the wiser? no one except the islanders, and they would not have troubled themselves over such a trifle, especially as I was not popular among them.

Caliphronas, Justinian, and Alcibiades are all their divinities, not a poor poet like me, who shrinks from their scampish ways."

"So you left Melnos in the end?"

"Yes; like the boy in the fairy tale, I went out into the wide, wide world to seek my fortune. I managed to work my passage to Athens, and arrived there without even the traditional penny. Fortunately, I knew modern Greek and English thoroughly well, so was fortunate enough to obtain a situation as a corresponding clerk in a firm of merchants who traded with England, but I did not remain there long."

"Where did you make all your money?"

"Ah, that is what I am now going to tell you. Fortune evidently wished to make reparation for having brought me into the world with a stigma on my name, so threw me into the way of a rich Englishman, whom I met at the house of my employer. He heard my story, and was much impressed with it; and then discovered that I had the talent to string verses together, and also a faculty for music. Being passionately fond of such things he made up his mind that he had discovered a genius; and, being without a relative in the world, he adopted me as his son and made me his heir."

"You seem to have passed your life in being adopted," said Maurice, who was deeply interested in this romantic history.

"Only twice. First Justinian, then my English father. I need not tell you his name, as I did not take it, preferring to be called Crispin until such time as I discovered my real parent. Well, my benefactor, who was very learned, began to educate me, and also placed me at school. I suppose I made good use of my time, as I soon became sufficiently accomplished to win his approval. We travelled all over the Continent—a great deal in the East—until I was about twenty-seven years of age, when he died at Damascus, and left me heir to all his property, amounting to about twelve thousand a year."

"Fortunate man!"

"Yes; I thought I was too fortunate, and had some compunction in taking so large an income, fearing lest I might be robbing some relative of my benefactor more entitled to it. When I buried my adopted father at Damascus, I came to England and saw his lawyers, who were quite satisfied with my identity, owing to the papers which I produced. The will, of course, was in their possession, as my benefactor had returned to England when I was at school, and made his will in my favor. The lawyers told me that there were no relatives alive, and that I was justly entitled to spend the money, so that is how I became rich. The rest of my life you know."

"You published a volume of poems, became the mystery of London, saw Eunice, fell in love with her, and came down to the Grange—yes, I know all that; but have you made no effort to discover who you are?"

"Yes. I went to Melnos three years ago and saw Justinian, but he refused to help me in any way; so I returned to England in despair. Now, however, I am going back with certain knowledge of Justinian's past life, which I will make use of to force him to tell me what I wish to know."

"You don't believe his story about your illegitimacy?"

"No. If I can get the truth out of him I believe I will find I have a right to a legal surname, and I am anxious to establish this fact in order to marry Eunice. As it is, I

cannot marry her without inflicting on her the disgrace I feel myself; besides, her mother would not consent to the marriage, nor would you."

"My dear fellow, I am not so narrow-minded as all that."

"Still, I know your English prejudices. You say that out of kindness, but if your cousin marries, you would prefer her husband to have a spotless name."

"Certainly."

"Then I am going to make Justinian give me one. I know, if he tells the truth, I will discover I have been born in wedlock. Of his own free will he refuses to tell me; now, however, owing to my knowledge of his past, I can force his confidence."

"And what about Helena?"

"She is Justinian's daughter. There is no stain on her birth; so if you love her, as I am sure you will, you can marry her without fear."

"Her father seems rather a terrible old person."

"He is a scamp, I am afraid. Still, he is a man of good family."

"How do you know?"

"I have made certain discoveries while in England, and now know more about Justinian than he thinks."

"Is Helena as charming as she looks?" asked Maurice anxiously.

"Yes," replied Crispin emphatically. "She is a pure, good woman, and will make you an excellent wife; but you have a rival."

"Alcibiades?"

"No; Caliphronas."

"I thought as much," said Maurice, with a start, remembering the Greek's jealousy concerning the portrait. "But if he loves Helena, why did he show me her picture, which has been my sole reason for this journey?"

"Wheels within wheels!" replied Crispin significantly.

"More mystery?"

"Yes; there are still some things for you to learn, but I cannot tell you of them now, as I have made a promise."

"To whom?"

"Caliphronas."

"Caliphronas!" cried that gentleman, who had approached them quietly; "and what are you saying about Caliphronas?"

"A good many things," said Crispin rapidly, in Greek. "I have been telling him who I am."

The Greek flushed with rage, and then he laughed.

"That is your business, but I trust you did not break faith?"

"About Justinian, no; about Helena, no; but I have told him all your early life."

Caliphronas made a dart at Crispin with uplifted hand, but Maurice sprang up and caught him in his arms, where he writhed like an eel.

"Traitor!" he hissed in Greek; "traitor!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEVIL'S PHILOSOPHY.

Why should I call mankind my brothers,
Or live but for the good of others?
'Twould bring me neither pain nor pleasure,
Nor give me comfort, joy, or treasure.
Myself by Nature's law I cherish;
If I am saved, let others perish;
For if ill luck Dame Fortune gave me,
None would stretch out a hand to save me.
While life to me means wealth or laughter,
Themselves all paupers can look after;
Than me for hardships they are fitter,
I taste the sweet and they the bitter.
But if such selfish maxims hurt you,
Then live your life of silly virtue.
Let men defraud you in life's barter,
And you will be—a social martyr.

The two men stood looking at one another in silence for quite a minute, Crispin cool and composed, the Greek fuming with anger. At length Caliphronas burst out laughing, and Maurice, seeing he was now master of his actions, let him go, whereon he flung himself into a chair, with a cynical smile on his handsome face.

"So this dear Creespeen has told you who I am, and what I am," he said, looking insolently at Maurice. "Well, and what do you think of me?"

"You would hardly feel flattered if I told you," retorted Roylands, lighting his cigarette once more.

"Ah, bah! Praise or blame is all the same to me. Oh, I know your dull English respectability which shudders at the truth. Yet I dare say, with my little excursions with Alcibiades, my assuming of a false name, my philosophy of enjoying myself at the expense of others, I am no worse than many of your holy people, who go to church, and, under the guise of self-denial, enjoy all that life can give. I may be what you call bad, but I am at least not a hypocrite."

"By which remark I presume you infer I am one."

"No, I do not. You have not enough character to make you either bad or good. You lead a dull, respectable life, because you like dull respectability. If you had leanings in the other direction, I will do you the justice to say that I have no doubt you would not have concealed them from the world."

"Thank you," replied Maurice dryly; "your opinion of my character is most gratifying."

"As to you, Creespeen," said Caliphronas, turning to the poet with an evil smile, "I knew you were prudish in many ways, a milksop as Justinian called you, and a man afraid of going against the opinion of the world, but I did not know you were an oath-breaker nor a tale-bearer."

"Nor am I," answered Crispin, keeping his temper wonderfully under the insults of the Greek, for, after all, it would have been worse than useless to quarrel with him.

"I did not tell about Justinian, or of anything connected with your visit to England. All I revealed was my own life and your real character, which it is only right my friend should know."

"As for that," retorted Caliphronas carelessly, "I do not mind. Mask on, mask off, it is all the same to me; but, as regards what I told you in confidence, I am glad you were wise enough not to reveal it, as you would have to settle accounts with Justinian, not with me."

"I am not afraid of Justinian," said Crispin, with supreme contempt.

"What is this secret?" asked Maurice quickly; "if it refers to me, I have a right to know it."

"It does not refer to you," replied Caliphronas mendaciously; "it concerns Justinian, and what it is you will learn before you are many days on Melnos."

"I do not generally boast about myself," said Maurice quickly, "but if you and your precious Justinian are up to any tricks, you will find me an awkward customer to deal with."

"No harm is intended, Mr. Maurice."

"Upon my word, sir, your insolence is unbounded," said Roylands, sitting upright in his indignation. "I am going to make a tour of the Greek islands, yet you talk as if I were coming on a visit to you—being decoyed, as it were, into a robber's cave. I don't care two straws about your 'no harm is intended,' and you may be certain if there is any trouble it will be for you, not for me. Really," continued Maurice, laughing at the comicality of the situation, "one would think we lived in the days of filibusters and buccaneers the way you talk."

Caliphronas was not put out in the least by this speech, and, leaning back in his chair, looked at Maurice with a lazy smile.

"There is no pleasure without an element of danger," he said coolly, placing his hands behind his head, "and you may have adventures before you leave Melnos."

Struck by the significance of his tone, Maurice looked keenly at him, and then turned to Crispin with a puzzled air.

"My dear fellow, will you explain this riddle?"

"There is nothing to explain," said Crispin, with a yawn; "you know the way Caliphronas exaggerates. I suppose he wants to make out that Melnos is a barbaric place, and that this cruise partakes of the nature of a journey into Darkest Africa."

"I have heard more nonsense to-night than I ever heard before in my life," said Maurice, still ruffled. "Pseudo-counts, patriarchal knights, islands of fantasy, hintings of dangers. It is like a novel of adventure."

Caliphronas laughed, but said nothing, while Crispin knocked the ashes out of his pipe and refilled it finally for a last smoke before turning in.

"I suppose you are very shocked at Creespeen's flattering description of me," remarked the Count calmly.

"Hm! I hardly know. You are a picturesque scamp, but only a scamp for all that."

"This candor is delightful."

"Caliphronas," observed Crispin, settling himself into a more comfortable attitude, "is a gentleman who believes that Number One is the greatest number."

"Every one in the world does that, my dear Creespeen."

"Probably, but they don't show it so openly as you do."

"Hypocrites!"

"I dare say, but a certain amount of hypocrisy is necessary in this world of shams."

Maurice looked at Count Constantine with an amused smile.

"Caliphronas, you are a most unique person, and I would like to know your views of life."

"Make money honestly if you can—but make money."

"I thought you were a child of Nature, who cared nothing for money."

"You are right in one way, Mr. Maurice. For money as money I care nothing, but I like luxuries which only money can buy, and therefore desire money."

"Epigrammatic, decidedly! but your free, open-air life—your love of mountains, waves, winds, skies?"

"Certainly I love all those things very much. Still, I go to Athens sometimes for amusement, and amusement requires money."

"You are certainly candid."

"I am; when I have nothing to gain, I am always candid."

"And you have nothing to gain now?"

"No. I paid a visit to England—out of curiosity," said Caliphronas, hesitating over the last words. "I met there my dear old friend Creespeen, and also yourself. Both of you are returning with me to the land I love—so, what with your company and my home-coming, I have absolutely nothing to wish for."

"So you are that *rara avis*, a thoroughly satisfied man?"

"I suppose so," replied Caliphronas coolly. "No—stay—I do desire one thing which I hope to obtain."

"I can guess what that one thing is."

"Indeed! pray tell me."

"Well, it is not your mythical Fanariot at Constantinople."

"Mythical?"

"Yes. Oh, don't be angry, Count Caliphronas! I now know the reason you were so angry over that photograph."

"If you do," said the Greek, restraining himself with difficulty, "you will know how to act wisely."

"Possibly; I have already arranged my plan of action."

"Really?"

Caliphronas had a fleeting smile on his lips as he said this, but looked so dangerous that Crispin touched Maurice on the arm.

"Do not irritate him any more; remember he is my guest, and I cannot be impolite."

Maurice took the hint, and addressed himself to the Count with an air of elaborate politeness.

"Don't let us talk any more about possibilities, Count," he said, laughing. "After all, I have some right to be angry, considering how you masqueraded as a count in England."

"And now I am a wolf, eh?" said Caliphronas, showing his white teeth; "bah! a wolf may be a very pleasant animal."

"Maybe, but from all accounts he is not."

"That is as you take him; but then I know Creespeen has prejudiced you against me."

"I have done nothing of the sort," protested the poet quietly; "I only told him how you were accustomed to associate with Alcibiades."

"Eh, and why not? My friend Alcibiades is not a bad man,—a good honest trader who sails about among the islands of the Ægean. I will introduce you to him, Mr. Maurice, and I am sure you will like him. After all, our little piratical excursions are very innocent—no bloodshed—no violence—no burning of houses; we—we only levy toll, so to speak."

"What a pleasant way of putting it!"

"What does it matter if you take openly or take secretly? the thing is the same, but only the mode of doing it is different. What we do in Greece, you do in England, but, simply because the latter is done under the rose and the former is not, your robbers of London are good, honest men, whereas we poor Greeks of the islands are scamps. Never mind, when we become as civilized as you, we also will mask our wickedness under the cloak of sanctity."

"Oh," cried Crispin, suddenly rising to his feet, "I am tired of this discussion! it is all aimless—about no one and no thing. I am going to turn in."

"And I—am not," added Caliphronas, springing to his feet; "fancy going down to a close cabin with such glories as this outside!"

He waved his arms aloft, where the brilliant sky smiled down on the still waters. Indeed, so placid was the sea that the stars, moon, and clouds were all reflected therein as in a mirror, and the yacht seemed to hang passive in the centre of a scintillating, hollow ball.

"When do we reach Melnos?" asked Maurice abruptly, as Caliphronas strolled away to the other end of the ship.

"To-morrow evening," replied Crispin, pausing at the door of the cabin. "We will sleep on board, and visit Justinian in the morning."

"Crispin, is there anything in those veiled threats of Caliphronas?"

"Perhaps," replied the poet vaguely. "Caliphronas is a dangerous man, and is, as I have told you, a favorite of Justinian's. However, I would not be surprised if Justinian dismissed Andros and put you in his place."

"Thank you," said Maurice in haughty surprise, "but I have no ambition to occupy such a position."

"Maurice," said Crispin suddenly, "I wish I could tell you all I know, but, unfortunately, I gave my word to Caliphronas not to do so as long as you were not harmed in any way."

"What do you mean?"

"I cannot tell you, but only this, which may perhaps serve as a warning,—Caliphronas came to Roylands on purpose to get you to journey to Melnos."

"And his reason?"

"I know it, but I cannot tell you. However, if you should be in any danger,—and I will not conceal from you that there may be danger,—I will consider my promise void and tell you all."

"All what?"

"All about Caliphronas, Justinian, and Helena."

"Is she in this plot also?"

"Plot! yes, it is a plot, the reason of which I know not. Helena is to a certain extent mixed up in it, but innocently, you may be sure."

"I cannot understand all this."

"Never mind, as long as I understand it you will not suffer. Caliphronas, as I have told you, is a scamp, and will pause at nothing to gratify his own desire. He lured you to Melnos for a purpose, but he did not count on my presence. Listen! he thinks we have gone below, and is telling his secrets to the stars."

And at this moment, as if Caliphronas knew the subject-matter of their conversation, in the far distance he broke out into a rich burst of song, the gist of which Crispin rapidly translated to Maurice.

> "The net is spread and the prey is near,
> Drive him into the entanglement.
> Ho! my noble stag of Olympus, you are helpless,
> And the spear of the hunter will drink your blood
> Before the dawn sets rosy foot on blushing mountain-top."

"You see," said Crispin significantly, after translating this, "he talks in parables, but you can guess his meaning; but do not be afraid. You trust me, do you not?"

"Yes, I trust you," replied Maurice, grasping the hand held out to him.

"That is right, my friend—good-night."

When Crispin disappeared, Maurice went to the stern of the ship, and, leaning over the taffrail, fell into deep meditation over the strange circumstances in which he was environed. Caliphronas, sitting by the bowsprit, was swaying up and down with the pitching of the yacht, singing songs, now soft, now loud, but this was the only sound of humanity heard. The sough of the wind through the rigging, the dreary wash of the sea, as the ship cut her way through the glittering plain; the rustle of the cordage, the beating of the screw,—he could hear all these blending with the fitful voice of the Greek. The moon had retired behind a thick bank of black clouds, which foreboded storm, and the moonlit world was now shadowy, vast, vague, and strange,—a world of shadows and ghosts, with the swift steamer gliding onward into the unknown seas —into the unknown future.

Maurice Roylands was not what one might call a strong-minded man, for, as a matter of fact, he had that subtle touch of indecision which is often found in artistic natures. He was very impressionable, and surrounding circumstances had a great effect on his temperament—still, when he saw his way clearly before him, he was quite capable of making up his mind, and carrying out his determination to the end. But he could never make up his mind promptly, as he wavered this way, that way, according as he was biassed by circumstances. Had he been of a firm, decisive nature,

he would never have yielded to that pitiable melancholia which seized him in London, and would thus have been spared much suffering. Still, in spite of this latent weakness of character, which always developed itself in time of trouble, he was a brave man, with plenty of pluck. In England, notwithstanding his Bohemian existence, his life had gone on too smoothly to call his moral characteristics into any special prominence, but now, surrounded as he was by vague mysteries, he felt doubtful.

Hitherto his existence had been but prosaic, but now the element of romance had entered into it, and he felt that he was being passively drawn into a series of strange adventures, the subsequent termination of which, either for good or evil, lay not in his own hands. Caliphronas had come to England with the deliberate intention of luring him to Melnos; but what was his reason for this strange conduct? Certainly Crispin knew, but Crispin, fettered by his promise of secrecy, was unable to solve the problem. The strangest thing of all was that Caliphronas had made use of the picture of a girl he loved, to decoy Maurice to the East, which line of conduct struck the young man as most unaccountable.

If Caliphronas was in love with Helena, it was foolish of him to encourage, as he had undoubtedly done, the love of a rival; and the result of two men loving one woman must be unsatisfactory to one of them. Of course, Maurice saw that Caliphronas, confident in his beauty of person and powers of fascination, never for a moment doubted the final result; still, what was the reason of his taking a trip to England especially to bring a rival into the presence of the woman? The more Maurice thought about this, the more extraordinary did it seem, and, as the whole was a decided enigma, his doubts arose as to what was the best course to pursue under these very extraordinary circumstances.

True, Crispin, being in possession of the true facts of the case, would help him, for the poet was an honest man, and would not stand idly by in time of trouble; still, there was something in the affair of which even Crispin was ignorant, as he had confessed, and this mysterious something was connected in some way with Justinian. Maurice, after long pondering, came to the conclusion that with Justinian lay the whole solution of the matter, and, as he could decide on no course of action until he had seen Justinian himself, all he could do was to remain passive and trust to Providence.

"One thing is certain," he said to himself, as he watched the gray waters swirling past, "I can depend on Crispin, and as he knows Caliphronas thoroughly, that consummate scamp will hesitate before he takes any action adverse to my interests. But Justinian seems so mixed up in the affair, and apparently without any reason whatsoever. He has lived in this Greek island all his life, Englishman though he is, so why he should desire to see a complete stranger like myself I do not know. Well, the only thing I can do is to trust blindly in Crispin, for I am sure he will not fail me. Apart from his friendship for me, it would be against his own interests to play false, as he would then never be able to marry Eunice. Time alone will unravel all this perplexity, so to time will I trust. After all, I am young and strong, so can defend myself if necessary. And then there is Helena; whatever happens I shall see her—I will see Helena, and"—

"Eh, Mr. Maurice," said the voice of Caliphronas behind him, "you have not gone to bed."

"No, I am thinking."

“I can guess your thoughts.”

Maurice made no reply to this invitation to argue, but, with a curt “Good-night,” went below, while in his ears rang the cruel, mocking laugh of the Greek, as he repeated rapidly in a singing tone the name of his mistress,—

“Helena, Helena, Helena!”

CHAPTER XV.

THE STORM.

Dark storm-clouds spread from pole to pole,
The lightnings flash, the thunders roll,
And lo, the sea, in mountains high,
With giant billows storms the sky,
While all the vast disturbèd main
Is veiled in whirling mist and rain.
Betwixt the flying scud and spume,
A ship drifts onward to her doom;
She flies before the raging gale,
With broken mast and tattered sail;
While up through pitchy darkness rolls
Despairing cries of drowning souls.

Having passed the Island of Cythera during the night, by next morning the yacht was ploughing the placid waters of the Cretan Sea. Placid waters these generally are, especially during the months of the halcyon, but now a stiff breeze was blowing steadily from the north, which by noon increased to a fierce gale. As far as the eye could see, there appeared nothing but a vast expanse of tumbling waves, their whiteness above accentuated by the green blackness below, as they flung their shattered spray as in derision against the grim sky. Threatening masses of gloomy clouds lay along the northern horizon, fronted by the bleak island of Santorin, which scowled in savage grandeur in the cloudy distance. Gray sky, gray sea, driving rain, and sudden gusts of wind, making the streaming sails crack like pistol-shots with the violent lurching of the vessel;—it was like a North Sea picture; nor would any one surveying the dreary scene have believed the boat was sailing over the enchanting waters of the Mediterranean.

The three gentlemen, after an uncomfortable breakfast, owing to the rolling of the yacht, which upset everything on the table in spite of the fiddles, were now on deck, holding on to whatever they could support themselves by, for The Eunice tossing about like a cork in the yeasty surge, made it no small difficulty for those on board to retain their equilibrium. Wrapped up in oilskins, they were sufficiently dry and warm, for, in spite of the mist and drenching rain, the weather was not in the least chilly—a thing to be thankful for in such a predicament. The yacht schooner, rigged fore and aft, was a capital sea boat; so, apprehending no danger, they joked and laughed during the lulls of the gale at their hardships, and gazed with interest on the wild spectacle afforded by the seething waters. Maurice and the poet were comforting themselves

with tobacco, while Caliphronas, excited by the wildness of the scene, was clinging to the weather rigging, and facing the keen whips of wind, rain, and spray like some antique sea-god. Occasionally he would shout out a few sentences to his companions, but, owing to the tumult around, they could only catch his meaning every now and then.

"Often like this—Ægean!—sudden gales—have no fear."

"Confound that man!" growled Maurice, who was standing shoulder to shoulder with Crispin; "he thinks no one has any pluck but himself."

"On the contrary, he is trying to keep up his spirits," replied Crispin, steadying himself with difficulty as the yacht took a big dip into the trough of the sea; "there is a good deal of brag about Caliphronas, but if we were in any real danger he would not crow so loudly. These Greeks are all afraid of the sea; and if the colonization of the world had been left to them, I am afraid America would never have been discovered."

"Why not?"

"Because they are always afraid of venturing out of sight of the land. They slip about boldly enough among these isles of Elishah, as Ezekiel calls them, but if they lose sight of Mother Earth, all their courage leaves them. Their Hellenic ancestors were just the same, for all their poets call Ocean names, such as 'a hungry beast,' 'a ravenous monster,' and similar pleasant titles. I think Homer, with his 'multitudinous laughter of the sea,' is the only poet who pays Ocean a compliment."

"Yet the Greek genius has produced a great sea drama in the 'Odyssey.'"

"A voyage of necessity, not pleasure—Man the sport of the unjust gods; but I fancy Ulysses had a touch of the adventurous Phœnician in his blood. Besides, Greek bravery produced a great sea drama at Salamis; yet, withal, I decline to believe the Hellenes, ancient or modern, were sailors."

"Yet Arnold calls them 'The young, light-hearted masters of the wave.'"

"A charming line, which applies but to Ægean waters. Masters of the wave, forsooth! Why, they were never masters of anything liquid larger than a puddle. The Greeks never loved Nature in her grandest moods, and—saving Æschylus—both shaggy mountain and roaring waters were alien to their genius."

"Yet they loved Nature."

"Nature the Mother, not Nature the Enemy. Hill, meadow, wood, fountain, river, they loved; but mountain and ocean they feared."

"Would a Greek Wordsworth have been possible?"

"Ah, now you open up a large field of inquiry! No; I do not think the actual spirituality of Wordsworth would have appealed to a Greek. The Hellenic poet of that class would have been like Keats—he would have sung exquisitely of vitalized Nature, of her incarnate forces, Pan and Demeter, nymphs and satyrs; but none but a modern poet, conversant with the haggardness of modern life, with his soul steeped in the religion of the unseen, could have produced those 'thoughts too deep for tears' such as we find in Wordsworth. Theocritus and Bion are your Nature poets of external loveliness, but Arnold and Wordsworth sang deeper strains, and sought the naked soul of Nature, which was but a veiled Isis to the Greek."

"Hallo! what island is that?" cried Maurice, who had been idly listening to such fragments of this discourse as he had caught. "Look to your left."

In the misty distance a great black mass loomed vague and indistinct on the lee side of the vessel, apparently about seven miles off, though the magnifying vapor seemed to bring it nearer.

"I am not sure," replied Crispin, straining his eyes; "we are in the middle of a number of islets."

"The deuce! isn't that rather dangerous?"

"It would be to any one who did not know these waters; but Martin has been here with me often before, and knows every rock in the vicinity. Besides, we are comparatively safe, as the engines are of large horse-power compared with the size of the boat."

Martin was the captain of the yacht, and at present was personally attending to the wheel, with an anxious expression on his weather-beaten face, for it was no light task to steer the boat safely through these clusters of islands, especially when the magnifying properties of the mist cause them to appear in dangerous proximity to the ship, thus deceiving the eye into thinking she was entangled among hidden reefs. Luckily Captain Martin had a clear head, and, being a splendid seaman, knew the capabilities of The Eunice thoroughly; so Crispin felt quite content to leave affairs in his hands, so long as he was at the helm.

"Kamila!" shouted Caliphronas, alluding to the misty island.

"No," shouted back Crispin; "Kamila too far off."

"Kamila!" cried the Greek for the second time, whereupon Crispin was much impressed with his insistence.

"Caliphronas knows these seas thoroughly," he said to Maurice quietly; "he has sailed all over them with his rascal friend; so if this is Kamila, we must be nearer Melnos than I thought."

"Had you not better see Martin?" suggested Maurice, shaking himself like a huge water-dog, as a shower of spray flew over him.

Crispin nodded an assent, and began to struggle towards the wheel, where Martin was standing. It was rather difficult, owing to the slipperiness of the wet deck and the tossing of the yacht, which one moment would be poised on the crest of a wave, and the next ingulfed in a foam-streaked valley of green water, which threatened to swamp her. However, by holding on to anything he could seize, Crispin managed to get close to the captain, who, in his efforts to keep the ship's head right, was straining every muscle to hold the wheel, which was almost torn out of his grasp in a retrograde direction, every time a wave smashed against her helm.

"Kamila!" screamed Crispin in Martin's ear, as he pointed to the dim mass.

Martin shook his head doubtfully.

"Too far south'ard. We're nigher Anapli, I reckon."

"And Melnos?"

"Straight ahead. Who says 'tis Kamila?"

"Count Caliphronas!"

"Hum! he knows these parts too. I'll go and have another look at the chart."

"If it's Kamila, Melnos is just round the shoulder."

"Can't believe we've got so far out of the course. Why, if"—

At this moment a tremendous wave struck the yacht midships, making her reel and strain under the irresistible blows of the sea, and the jolly-boat on the port side was

smashed up like matchwood, the iron davits being twisted out of all shape in the giant grip of the water. The Eunice shuddered under the stroke, paused almost imperceptibly, then sprung forward like a spur-touched horse, and in another second was out of danger, riding lightly on the frothing crest of a huge wave, from whence she slid down smoothly into the smaragdine hollow beyond.

"Boat gone!" quoth the captain, regaining his breath; "bad loss."

Crispin thought so too, but had no time to reply, for at this moment the raucous voice of the captain was heard shouting to the second officer as he passed by,—

"Send Gurt here! look sharp!"

Gurt was a grizzled old salt with one eye, and an unlimited capacity for rum, who, having knocked about in these latitudes all his sinful life, knew the Archipelago like a book. When he arrived, the captain put him in charge of the wheel, and went off, not to his cabin to look at the chart, but down to the engine-room, as he feared for the safety of the propeller. Crispin followed him, and they staggered like drunken men along the streaming decks towards the hatch. Down the iron ladder leading to the engine-room they scrambled, holding on like grim death, for the yacht was now rolling at an angle of twenty-five degrees, an uncomfortable motion which she occasionally varied by dipping her bows so deeply into the water that her stern was sticking nearly straight up in the air; in fact, to use a nautical expression, she stood on her head.

The screw beat the waves regularly enough when in its normal position, but the moment the yacht lifted, it was out of the water, whirling round and round with tremendous velocity, coming down again with a resonant smash, which threatened to snap off short the huge fans of the propeller. To obviate this danger, Martin spoke to the chief engineer, who, at once recognizing the perilous position, took his station beside the throttle-valve, and immediately the yacht dipped her nose, shut off steam, so that, when she plunged her stern again into the waters, the down-stroke was not so dangerous to the motionless blades.

The enormous steel bars of the cranks, shining with oil in the dim lamplight, arose and fell irregularly, owing to the pitching of the vessel, one moment slowing down to half speed, the next beating the air as rapidly as the wings of a swallow. Round and round swept the giant wheels with noiseless speed, and nothing could be heard but the lash of the waves thrashing the sides of the yacht, the intermittent throbbing of the machinery, and the sharp hiss of escaping steam, but the moment the engineer put his hand to the throttle-valve, in an instant the screw, already spinning like a top, hung motionless, until, with the recurring lurch, the great pistons again began to slide smoothly in and out of the cylinders. It was wonderful to see the absolute command this one man had over the colossal mass of machinery, which worked or rested as he let on or shut off steam at every plunge of the ship.

As Martin and the poet returned to the deck, they heard the smashing of dishes in the pantry, the subsequent bad language of the stewards, and The Eunice groaned, creaked, strained, and shrieked like a living being as she strove to make headway against the furious blast.

"All right!" yelled Crispin when they were once more on the streaming decks.

"Right enough, as long as we're in the open sea," retorted Martin gloomily, "but Lord help us if we touch any of them darned reefs."

The islands of the Ægean are very dangerous to ships, as their ragged reefs, running out to sea like roots, can scarcely be noticed save in calm weather, when the thin line of white breaking on the smooth surface of the water betrays the hidden teeth below. It was of these treacherous reefs the captain was afraid, as in such a furious gale there was every chance of the ship striking, in spite of the utmost care being taken to navigate her properly. Fortunately, with her helm and screw, which were to her as a bridle is to a horse. The Eunice could skirt these perils with the greatest dexterity, and the real danger lay in the chance of her running on some sunken rock not set down in the chart. Martin, doubtful as to the island on the lee side, went off to his cabin for the chart, knowing he could safely leave the steering to Gurt, who indeed was better than any chart, and knew more of these seas than all the Admiralty put together.

Crispin returned to Maurice, and reported all that had been done, much to Roylands' satisfaction, for, however brave a man may be, it is not pleasant to think that every moment he may be hurled into eternity. Caliphronas was still clinging to the weather rigging, but his face was graver than of yore, for he too knew the dangers of these waters, and good ship though The Eunice was, an unknown rock piercing her bottom would sink her rapidly, while the furious waves dashing against her, thus firmly held, would not leave enough of her stout timbers to make a cigar-box.

All that afternoon they continued beating about in that weary sea near the Island of Kamila, for Kamila it proved to be on examination of the chart, much to the vexation of Captain Martin, who was considerably startled to find he was out of his course. However, such ignorance was not unpardonable, as the divergence from the course arose from the fact that, owing to the captain being constantly at the wheel, and only hastily glancing at the chart when he was able, he did not notice sufficiently the constant sagging of the vessel, and she had therefore, unknown to him, drifted more to the south than he fancied.

Contrary to his expectation, the gale, instead of abating, increased in fury, and great masses of blinding rain came sweeping down in torrents on the ship, while the gusty wind, straining the wet sails to their utmost tension, tautened the weather rigging like bars of steel. The crew were all picked men, forty in number, the captain was a first-class sailor, the engines powerful, the boat stanch, yet all these could avail but little against the colossal force of wind and wave, which seemed resolved to conquer this brave little craft struggling so gallantly against their Titanic forces.

Meals that day they had none, for it was impossible to sit at the table, but the steward cut some sandwiches, with which, in conjunction with brandy and water, they were able to sustain themselves. Even Caliphronas, quite contrary to his usual custom, was so overwhelmed by the peril of their position, that he took some spirits, which brought the color back to his pale cheeks. Maurice was not at all afraid, having plenty of British pluck, and, but for Helena, would have cared but little if his unhappy life was ended by the seething mass of waters raging on all sides.

Owing to the cloudy sky, the incessant rain, and the absence of sunlight, the darkness fell sooner than usual, with sudden transition from day to night. No more the enchanted twilight of the previous evening, the calm sea, silver moon, and glittering stars; nothing but pitchy gloom, with roaring waves rising in liquid masses to the black sky, and black sky raining down torrents on roaring waves, while between the welkin and the spume flew The Eunice like a stormy petrel, keeping afloat only

through the dexterity with which she was managed. At times a jagged flash of lightning gleaming blue as steel divided the solid blackness with sabre-like stroke, but the succeeding thunder, loud as it was, hardly added to the deafening clamor of the storm, which stunned the ears of those human beings, fighting so determinedly for their lives against the appalling forces of Nature.

"'Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground,'" quoted Crispin grimly, as he clung to a stout rope. "My faith, I don't think we are born to be hanged, Maurice!"

"Do you think there is danger, Creespeen?" cried Caliphronas, whose teeth were chattering in his head.

"Rather; we might go to the bottom any moment," replied Maurice, who, despite the peril of the position, could not help smiling at the cowardice of the Greek. "Be a man, Caliphronas!—you aren't afraid of death, I suppose?"

"Oh, but I am!—I am!" shivered the Count in abject fear. "To leave this world I love for I know not what. Oh, what comes after?"

"God!" said Crispin solemnly.

"God!" echoed the Greek in a tone of despairing conviction. "What is God? I know nothing beyond this world—what I see!—what I feel!—nothing else. But you say there is a God!—there is a God! Oh, what will He say to me?"

"Ask your own conscience."

"Conscience!" cried Caliphronas, with a sneer, which but ill became his ghastly face; "what do I know of conscience? I have been wicked, but no worse than my neighbors. After all, it is death and then—annihilation. It is that I fear—to no longer see the sun, nor feel the wind, nor life in the veins. Life is so glad, death so terrible! But I will undo some of my work that you saints call wicked. Yes, I will tell you, Mr. Maurice, the reason I brought you to Melnos."

"Oh, tell me, tell me!" cried Maurice eagerly; "you brought me here to"—

He did not finish the sentence, for at this moment a gust of unexampled strength tore past them with a shriek, and snapped the mainmast by the board, crashing it downward with tremendous force. Falling over the side, it impeded the yacht's course, and brought her gunwale dangerously near the water. The black smoke poured in volumes from her funnel, the screw beat the water with enormous power, but the heavy mass, the huge canvas, the entanglement of ropes, all held her back, and down on one side, to the great imperilling of her safety.

"Axes!" roared Martin, in a voice of thunder; "cut away the ropes! Look smart, my lads, for your lives! If she pitches to wind'ard, and brings the mast against the bilge, it's all Davy Jones for sure!"

The sailors flew to do his bidding, and though, owing to the perpetual pitching of the vessel, they could not work continuously, yet in the space of half an hour they managed to clear away the wreckage, which fell over into the boiling waters, while the yacht righted herself like a trembling deer. The man at the wheel of course kept the set course indicated by the captain, but, the engines being slowed down during the clearance episode, the ship sagged gradually to leeward, until she drifted dangerously near to the rocks of Kamila.

All were so busily engaged clearing away the wreckage, that this new peril was unnoticed, until the moon, half-obscured by the flying scud, shone out palely on the

wild scene. Attracted by the glimmer of the planet, Martin looked up suddenly from his work, only to see the towering cliffs of the island near at hand, and the caps of the sea rising like fountains of spouting foam over the cruel-looking rocks.

Roaring to pass the word to the engineer to give her every inch of steam she was worth, in order to shoot her far enough ahead to clear the rocks, Martin sprang with one bound to the wheel, wrenched it out of the sailor's hands, and put the helm hard down, so that the yacht's head flew up in the wind just in time to avert a frightful catastrophe. Immediately on the increased speed of the vessel, she plunged forward into every wave, and all on board feared that each new dive into the rough sea would be the last, for she shipped seas freely, and tons of water swept her deck fore and aft. At the last fearful dive, there was the sound of a sudden snap, as if the boat had touched a rock; she shuddered through her whole length, and after the engines had whirled for a minute with inconceivable velocity, they suddenly stopped.

"My God!" cried Martin, guessing the reason of the stoppage; "the propeller has gone! God help us now!"

Fortunately, the way the ship ran through the water shot her to the windward sufficiently to clear the Kamila reef, but, as she could not be kept ahead to sea, owing to the fury of the gale, she had again to be kept off, so that the remaining sails would tend to steady her from the violent lurching. All this time the steam was blowing off; and then, the fires being drawn, all the sooty inhabitants of the engine-room, like so many Cyclops, poured on deck, to do what they could in saving the vessel.

During the time she was clearing the reef, the moon had withdrawn her light, but now she shone forth in her full splendor through a rent in a cloud, whereupon a sight was revealed which struck terror into the hearts of all on board.

"Melnos!" cried Crispin and the Greek in one breath.

"It's all over!" said Martin gloomily. "No screw—only one mast—we'll never clear that island."

Maurice, straining his eyes through the glimmer of moon and star half-obscured by flying clouds, saw a high, conical-shaped mountain, rising sheer out of the sea, at a distance of about three miles. The snows of the summit gleamed pale in the moonlight, below was darkness, but at the base of the peak spouted fountains of white surf on the jagged rocks running seaward.

"It's kingdom come, gentlemen," said the captain, with a grim smile, as he looked at that sky-piercing peak looming hugely in the vague light.

"The boats"—began Caliphronas, who was quite pale; whereupon Martin turned on him sharply.

"The boats, sir! what boats could live in that sea? The jolly-boat is gone—the steam pinnace is pretty well smashed up, so there are only the gig and the lifeboat to save forty-five lives."

"You'll try to launch the boats, at all events," said Crispin quickly.

"Oh yes! all that can be done will be done, you can depend, sir; but it's a poor look-out."

With these dispiriting words, the captain went away to see after the life-belts, and served out one to each man, which gave them at least some chance of floating to land. Martin neglected no chance of saving the ship, and put the helm up, whereon the fierce wind filled the remaining canvas, and drove The Eunice slowly ahead. For fully

an hour she drifted to leeward, now being quite unmanageable, owing to the loss of screw and mast. Straight ahead lay Melnos, with the fierce surf thundering at its base, and the ship, unable to be guided, was drifting slowly but surely on to the rocks. Maurice, with considerable forethought, took Crispin with him below, and they filled their travelling-flasks with brandy. Meanwhile, the crew, utterly demoralized by the hopelessness of the situation, made for the spirit-room; but the captain placed himself in front of it with a revolver, and swore to shoot the first man who came forward. Still, as the men were weary from work, and wet and cold with long exposure, he ordered rum to be served out, which reconciled them somewhat to his prohibition of too much drinking.

"Die like men, not beasts," said Martin, thrusting the revolver back again when the crew were more manageable; "there is still a chance of saving our lives by the boats, and that will be gone if drink is in you."

By this time the yacht was so near the island that they could hear the roar of the surf, and see the white tongues of the waves running up the black rocks. Overhead heavy masses of clouds were moving like battalions across the sky, but the rain had ceased, and at intervals the moon shone out, which gave them but small comfort, as it enabled them to see only too clearly the perils which awaited them. The wind was still furious, and the sea rolling mountains high; its huge billows, topped with ragged fringes of foam glimmering in the fitful light, kept sweeping over the deck. Several men were swept overboard into the trough of the sea, but no assistance could be rendered by those on board, and with despairing cries they sank in the furious waters.

Crispin, pitying the terror of Caliphronas, in spite of his dislike for the wily Greek, took him below and gave him some brandy. The Count was just raising the glass to his lips, when they were both levelled by a tremendous shock, which made the ship tremble from stem to stern.

"God! she has struck!" cried Crispin, and tore up the stairs as hard as he was able, followed by Caliphronas, who was now nerved by despair.

The Eunice had struck about a quarter of a mile from the shore, but so fierce were the waves between her and the land, that it seemed as though no boat could live in that hell of waters. However, as a last hope, the captain ordered the lifeboat to be lowered, which was accordingly done; but the moment it touched the water all discipline was at an end, for the men, seeing the means of safety, rushed in a tumultuous crowd to take advantage of it. In a few minutes the lifeboat was filled with a black mass of human beings, in spite of the captain's efforts to maintain order, and cutting the ropes they made for the shore. Hardly had the boat left the ship, when, caught by a huge wave, she capsized, and the waves were black with shrieking masses of humanity.

"O God! O God!" groaned Crispin, hiding his face; "they will all be drowned."

And so they were, for, in spite of their life-belts, the waves griped the drowning men with irresistible force, and dashed them mangled corpses against the rocks. Of the crowd of living, breathing creatures that had gone off a few minutes before, not one remained alive, and the survivors felt that their fate would be the same.

"Lower away the gig!" shouted Martin, going up to where the boat was hanging; "and if you cowards rush her, I'll shoot freely."

Cowed by his revolver, which was covering them with its six deadly cartridges, the men did as they were ordered, and, placing the boat in charge of the mate, the captain made them all get in in orderly fashion.

"Now, gentlemen," said Martin to the three who stood near him, "get in quick—the yacht will soon be under water."

"But yourself?"

"It's my duty to stick to the ship," said the brave old man; "if she goes down, I go down—if she doesn't, there will be hope of safety; but I will be the last to leave her."

"There's room in the boat," called the mate; "quick, for your lives."

Caliphronas needed no urging, but sprang into the boat, then, either from treachery or terror, cut the rope which held her to the yacht with a knife he had in his hand. There was a shout of execration from the crew, but the act was irremediable, and the gig plunged away into the darkness; the last seen by the four survivors on deck being Caliphronas, furiously fighting with two of the men, who were trying to hurl him overboard.

The yacht was now nearly under water, and on her deck stood Martin, Maurice, Crispin, and Gurt.

"Only one hope," cried Martin, furiously shaking his fist at the retreating boat; "climb up the mast!"

They flew to the weather rigging, and Maurice, Crispin, and Gurt managed to climb up, but just as Martin was springing for the rope, a heavy sea swept the yacht fore and aft, and he was carried overboard. They heard his despairing cry as he went down into the trough of the sea, but there was no time to say anything, for with one final plunge the yacht went down, and the three human beings scrambled up the rigging as fast as they could, followed by the water, which seemed loath to surrender its prey. Fortunately The Eunice had sunk near the shore, so, when she finally settled down, about thirty feet of the remaining mast was sticking up out of the water, and to this clung the three survivors in desperate anxiety, expecting every moment to be shaken off into the depths below. At any moment the mast might break off, or a roll of the submerged yacht send it into the water; so, with this terrible dread in their hearts, these three human beings clung madly to their only refuge.

Below raged the fierce waters, around was the darkness, above the clouded sky and the veiled moon, while amid all this horror hung those three unfortunates to their slender spar, waiting with dread and hope for the morning's light.

CHAPTER XVI.

MELNOS.

Magic isles of beauty glowing
Far in tideless sapphire seas;
Wanton winds, low breathing, blowing
Perfumes from balsamic trees.
Here no wintry waters freeze;
But the streamlets ever flowing,
Murmur drowsy lullabies,
Which the eyelids close unknowing,
Till the soul in slumber lies,
Peaceful under peaceful skies.

Nature is fond of contrasts, and delights in the unexpected; therefore, after the gloom and tumult of the previous night, the morning showed the three castaways a scene of peaceful beauty so enchanting, that they thought they were in fairyland. The sea had gone down after midnight, and only a heavy ground-swell remained to tell of the fury of the storm which had wrecked The Eunice. All around lay an expanse of sapphire sea, touched here and there with white foam, which turned to crimson as the morn dawned redly in the gray eastern skies. Far into the cloudless blue arose the giant peak of Melnos, its lofty summit swathed in snows already bathed in the heavy yellow beams of the rising sun. Below its white cap appeared a green mantle of foliage, which quite hid the bare rock with a profusion of myrtles, plane-trees, arbutus, ilex, and branching heather; and lower still the red tint of rugged cliffs, the black chaotic bowlders of the beach scattered in huge masses, and in and out of these the white threads of the surf like fairy lacework. Far away to the north arose the Island of Kamila, faint and cloud-like in the midst of the blue seas, and on the murmuring waters played gentle breezes, breathing fragrant balms robbed from aromatic trees. It was a scene of unexampled beauty, and even the three unfortunates clinging to the mast could not withhold their admiration, in spite of the discomforts from which they were suffering.

"Once we are on shore," said Crispin, with confidence, "I will take you into the interior of the island, where we will be well looked after by Justinian."

"Has the island an interior?" asked Maurice sceptically, for he saw nothing but a huge mountain resting on the azure sea.

"Of course! Did I not tell you it was the Island of Fantasy, and therefore full of wonders? But the first thing is to get to land. What do you say, Gurt?"

"Swim, sir."

"I feel too stiff," said Crispin, shaking his head. "I could not swim a yard—and you, Maurice?"

"I am in the same plight," replied Roylands, whose joints were aching with the exposure to the night. "If it's a question of swimming, I will have to remain here till doomsday."

"I kin swim, gentlemen," said Gurt stoutly. "Bless ye, this ain't nothin', this ain't. Why, I've bin wrecked in the nor'ard, and precious cold it were. I kin get ashore all safe, but I dunno 'bout you, sirs."

Gurt's face assumed the rapt expression of one who was thinking out a deep problem, and Maurice, knowing the inventiveness of sailors, did not interrupt him, having every confidence that this mariner would hit upon some plan of extricating them from this dilemma.

"There are plenty of ropes," suggested Crispin hopefully, "and if"—

"Right y'are, sir," said Gurt energetically, his one eye flashing with satisfaction. "I'll tie 'em together and swim ashore. Fust I'll tie the rope t' th' mast an' then t' th' beach, an' you two kin skip along like monkeys. D'ye see, sirs?"

No sooner was the plan thought of than the energetic Gurt proceeded to put it into practice, and spliced all the ropes he could get hold of, being armed with that useful implement, a jack-knife, which no sailor is ever without.

"It's 'bout quart'r mile fro' shore," said Gurt, fastening one end of the rope to the mast and the other round his waist; "but if rope ain't long 'nough, you gents tie on more, an' pay out. Here's knife."

Crispin took the knife, so as to be ready for such emergency, and then gave Gurt his spirit-flask, from which the mariner drew new life, although he was pleased to regret that the contents were not rum, instead of brandy. Having thus revivified himself, Gurt, with the rope round his waist, scrambled down into the calm water, and was soon striking out boldly for the shore. Maurice and the poet watched his black head bobbing up and down in the blue, and kept paying out the rope carefully, lest any entanglement should hamper the swimmer.

"Thank Heaven, he's all right!" cried Crispin in a tone of relief, as they saw the white figure of the sailor clambering over the black rocks. "Now it's our turn."

In order to swim freely, Gurt had stripped naked, so the two left on the mast had to carry his clothes to shore, a thing easy enough, as all Gurt wore was a shirt and a pair of blue serge trousers. Crispin took one article, Maurice the other, and waited for Gurt to signal from the shore that the rope was made fast. Soon they saw him waving his hand and shouting to intimate all was right; whereupon they examined the knot of the rope to see that it was fast to the mast, and then slid down into the sea.

The rope was pretty well taut, as it ran from the mast to the shore, so Crispin and Maurice, holding on to it, struggled along towards the land. Their limbs ached with pain, owing to their long exposure to the night-air, but a drink of spirits each put new vigor into their wearied frames, and, after a toilsome journey, aided by the rope, they managed to reach the beach, up which they scrambled with thankful hearts.

"All right, sirs?" asked Gurt, dressing himself rapidly.

"Stiff," replied Crispin ruefully. "I feel as creaky as an old door!"

"Ain't used t' it," grinned Gurt, shifting his quid; for, during all the trouble and danger, he had retained that as his only solace. "Well, I guess, sirs, we'd best take

more rum, an' then explore this here island."

"Oh, I know all about it," said Crispin cheerfully. "But see, the sun is up, so, as it is no use trudging about in wet clothes, we had better dry them."

The two gentlemen stripped at once, and spread their clothing out to dry on the black rocks; but Gurt, disdaining such luxury, perched himself in a sunny place, and watched them swimming in the shallow waters near shore to refresh their weary limbs. The sun was now considerably above the horizon, burning hotly in a cloudless blue sky, and the sultry rays soon dried the clothes spread out on the rocks, so in a short time they were soon dressed again, and ready to start out in search of Justinian.

True, they were very hungry, but Crispin had some biscuits in his pocket, which appeased their appetites in some measure, and, after a good drink of brandy each, they began to trudge along the stony beach, guided by the poet, to whom every inch of the island was as familiar as his own face. The reddish cliffs and white sand of the beach, catching the hot sunlight, threw out intense heat, and, from being cold, the three adventurers soon became uncomfortably warm.

"Do you think Caliphronas is safe?" asked Maurice hesitatingly, as they walked along.

"Caliphronas has nine lives, like a cat," retorted Crispin savagely; "but, after his treachery of last night, I hope he will meet the doom he deserves. If it had not been for his cutting that rope, Martin would have been alive now."

"That is, if the gig reached shore safely."

"Of course! The sea was wild, and she might have been swamped, like the lifeboat; still, we must hope for the best."

"I seed Bulk a-chuckin' of that 'ere gent inter the water," said Gurt, addressing the air with elaborate indifference.

"I hope Bulk succeeded," replied Crispin grimly; "but what's that?"

A dark object was lying on the white beach, and, as they raced up to it, Crispin gave a cry of anguish.

"Why, it's poor Stokins!" he said, recognizing the features of the mate. "He was in charge of the boat. I'm afraid she was smashed up like the other."

"And 'ere's Jimson and Bildge," cried Gurt, from a distance, where he had discovered two corpses. "They've all gone t' kingdom come, gents!"

"Caliphronas also, I suppose!" said Maurice sadly; for, in spite of his dislike to the wily Greek, it seemed terrible that his joyous youth should be ended so suddenly by the cruel sea.

"It looks as if we were the only survivors," remarked Crispin moodily, as they resumed their journey. "We must have those poor fellows buried. I will speak to Justinian."

"Where is Justinian?" asked Maurice a little irritably. "Does he live on this arid peak?"

"Yes; but do not judge by external appearances. This rocky mountain, so sparsely clothed with trees, is only the uninviting shell of a very fine kernel."

"You speak in riddles."

"I seem to have been doing that ever since I knew you, judging from your frequent mention of the fact. However, we will soon come to the tunnel, and then you will see."

"What tunnel?"

"Oh, a wonderful piece of engineering skill carried out by Justinian thirty years ago,—a tunnel which pierces the side of this mountain, and will admit us into its interior."

"Where we will find—what?"

"The patriarchal community of which Justinian is king!"

"What! does he rule over Troglodytes, like a Norwegian gnome?"

"Gnomes have nothing to do with the south," said Crispin provokingly. "I tell you this is the Island of Fantasy—the only fairyland yet remaining on earth. You anticipate the realms of Pluto, but you will find Arcadia."

"I'm hanged if I understand you!"

"Well, your curiosity will soon be satisfied. *En avant, messieurs*, for I am hungry, and wish to be seated at the hospitable board of Justinian."

High above, over the terra-cotta-colored cliffs, hung the fresh green foliage which clothed the slopes of the mountain high up to the verge of the eternal snows;—tall, dark cypresses, funereal-looking even in the bright sunshine, the silver-gray glimmer of olive trees, chestnuts, beeches, plane-trees, and, nearest to the summit, gloomy pines accentuating the whiteness of the snows, which, clinging to the rocky peak, stood out in cold relief against the warm blue sky. Ahead of them was a reddish promontory running out into the calm waters, the trees fringing its crest like the mane of some wild animal. Turning round the shoulder of this, they saw in the distance a similar promontory, and between these two headlands a range of reddish cliffs topped by vegetation, a white sandy beach scattered over with bowlders, and a huge arch in the middle of the cliff, which apparently led into the bowels of the mountain.

"Here we are at the palace gate," said Crispin gayly, as he led the way towards the subterranean entrance. "We will soon be in safety."

Standing in front of this mighty arch, they saw a broad flight of steps leading up into the darkness, so that it looked like the entrance into the hall of Eblis. Outside, the brilliant sunshine, the many-colored land, the sparkling sea; but within, darkness, dank and unwholesome, which inspired the two strangers with anything but hope. Crispin, however, knowing the place well, sprang lightly up the steps, followed hesitatingly by his companions, but suddenly he stopped and held up his finger, the action being visible in the bright light pouring in through the arch into this artificial cave.

"Listen! Maurice, do you recognize that voice?"

It was a man singing, and his clear high tones echoed in the dark vault overhead, coming nearer and nearer as the vocalist slowly descended the steps.

"Blow, wind, and swell the sail,
So that my boat may fly—may fly
As a swallow to its nest across the foam.
I am a swallow, and so am flying
To that dear nest of love, which is her heart.
Blow, wind! for I am filled with longing.
Her heart is empty till me she kisses."

"Caliphronas!" cried Maurice and Crispin in one breath.

It was indeed Caliphronas who came slowly down the steps and paused in alarm just where the light began to mingle with the darkness;—a new and brilliant Caliphronas, arrayed in all the bravery of the Greek national garb, with gold-broidered leggings, snowy fustanella, gaudy jacket, and red skull-cap. In this picturesque dress he looked handsomer than ever, and had quite recovered his bombastic air, which terror had deprived him of during the storm.

"Creespeen! Mr. Maurice!" he cried in a startled voice, placing his hand on one of the pistols stuck in his belt, for he was quite aware that his treachery deserved a warm reception from those whom he had doomed to death.

"You needn't do that," said Crispin, curling his lip as he observed the action; "we are not going to punish you."

"Punish me!" jeered the Greek, recovering his insolent manner. "Oh, never fear, I can defend myself. Punish me! and for why? Because I chose to save my own life!"

"Yes, and nearly caused us to lose ours!" said Maurice grimly.

"You know my philosophy, Mr. Maurice; so why expect me to be false to it?"

"You are an infernal scoundrel, Caliphronas!"

The Greek smilingly showed his white teeth, as if a compliment had been paid to him.

"We are all scoundrels more or less, only some are cleverer at concealing it than other people," he said carelessly. "So you are all safe? I made sure you were drowned."

"And wished too, I dare say," replied Crispin dryly. "Well, you see we have survived your amiable intention of leaving us to die. What about the boat?"

"The boat! oh, that was swamped," said Caliphronas in a satisfied tone. "Two of your infernal sailors threw me overboard."

"I seed 'em a-chuckin' of yer," remarked Gurt in a pleasant tone.

"Did you, indeed? Well, they were very soon chucked themselves, and of the whole twenty in the boat, only half a dozen are alive now."

"Where are they?"

"With Justinian. He sent me to look for your corpses, but I suppose he will be rather astonished when he finds you can still use your own legs."

"How did you escape?"

"I was tossed into the sea near the shore, and, buoyed up by my life-belt, I managed to keep myself afloat till the waves landed me on the beach."

"Naught was never in danger," quoth Crispin coolly. "I suppose all your repentance of yesterday has passed."

"Gone to the winds, my friend," replied Caliphronas airily. "Poof! what would you? There is a time for all things. Yesterday I was nearly dead, and talked nonsense; to-day I am dry and well, so it is evident I am not born to be drowned."

"Born to be hanged, more like," said Maurice viciously, hardly able to conceal his dislike of this heartless, cowardly, beautiful animal before him. "Well, it is cold here, and we are hungry, so I think you had better conduct us to Justinian."

"Come, then," answered Caliphronas, leading the way. "But tell me, how did you escape?"

"With the help of God!" said Crispin, resolved not to gratify the Greek's curiosity.

"Ah, He helps the sinner as well as the saint; for you see I also am alive and well."

"You deserved death for your treachery!"

The mocking laughter of the Count rang through the darkness.

"Neither virtue nor vice is rewarded in every case! I see you are safe, and the poor good captain is dead."

"He is; and you are to blame."

"No doubt I will survive that accusation. Well, you have lost your beautiful ship, Crispin."

"It's my loss, not yours."

"Hark to this philosopher! Ha! how can you leave this island again?"

"What! does Justinian intend to keep us prisoners?"

"Justinian will do what he thinks fit," replied Caliphronas significantly. "You are both rich, and can pay large ransoms."

"You scoundrel, you have been putting these brigand ideas into the old man's head."

Caliphronas laughed disagreeably.

"Perhaps I have. At all events, if you escape Justinian, you won't get away so easily from Alcibiades."

"You forget six sailors still survive," said Maurice sternly, "and we are three, so I think nine Englishmen can hold their own against a hundred cowards like yourself."

The Count made a clutch at his pistol, and muttered an execration, but, thinking better of it, recovered his temper, and burst out laughing.

"Well, well, we will see! I regret, Mr. Maurice, I did not bring a torch for this darkness, but you see I know this passage well, and do not require it. Had I known you three were coming, I would have brought men, torches, food, wine, and all the rest of it, to make you comfortable."

"Thank you for your hospitality," retorted Maurice angrily, for the mocking tone of this scamp was intolerable; "but '*Timeo Danaos*.'"

"I don't understand Latin," said Caliphronas coldly; "but I've no doubt you've said something uncomplimentary. However, we need not wrangle any more, for here we are at the gate of Melnos."

The gate was a huge structure of wood, formed by interlacing beams into a kind of barred defence, which completely closed up the tunnel, and in the centre of this was a small heavy iron door. Through the interstices they could see the faint glimmer of daylight, a still ascending staircase, the red flare of burning torches, and in the doubtful lights three or four men moving about.

"This is to guard against people like my friend Alcibiades," said Caliphronas, seeing the amazement of Maurice and Gurt at this mediæval entrance. "Like the Pass of Thermopylæ, this tunnel could be defended by four against many, so Melnos is thus a city of refuge."

"Ay, if treachery does not gain an entrance," retorted Crispin significantly; "and that is always possible when there is a traitor within the walls."

"Meaning myself?" rejoined Caliphronas tranquilly. "There you are wrong, and I think, my dear Crispin, you must have forgotten that, in or out, I can do nothing, as Justinian alone possesses the key of this door. We must send Alexandros for it. Oh la there, Alexandros!"

One of the men, bearing a burning torch, came to the bars of the framework, and Caliphronas spoke to him in Greek, while Crispin, understanding the language thoroughly, listened attentively, as, after the Count's conduct of last night, he was quite prepared for further treachery, and desired to guard against it. As soon as Caliphronas finished, the man went off up the staircase, and the Count turned round to his companions with a reassuring smile.

"He has gone to get the key from Justinian," he explained courteously. "This key, you must know, Mr. Maurice, is the emblem of sovereignty in Melnos—the sceptre of the island!"

"But it must be rather a trouble going to Justinian for the key every time you want to go in or out!"

"There is not much of that," said Crispin quickly; "the people of Melnos stay at home in the heart of the mountain. 'Tis only wanderers like myself and the Count who are restless."

"The heart of the mountain!" echoed Maurice, in a puzzled tone; "is it a cavern?"

"No; fresh air and blue skies."

"I cannot understand your Island of Fantasy. It is most perplexing, and well deserves its name."

"So Justinian thought, and that is why he called it so."

"Who made this 'ere, gents all?" asked Gurt, who had been surveying his nether world surroundings with much awe.

"Justinian."

"Well, sir, arskin' yer pardin, but I niver thought a lazy Greek 'ud have had it in him to do sich a thing."

Caliphronas laughed at the indolent character ascribed to his countrymen, which, however, he could not deny with any great show of reason.

"Justinian is not a Greek, but an Englishman."

"I thought so, sir," said Gurt triumphantly; "but 'eavins, sir! wot's he a-doin' of in this 'ere lay?"

"Ah, that is a mystery!" replied the Count, smiling.

"Blest if 'tain't all queer," muttered Gurt in bewilderment, and thereupon relapsed into silence.

The house of Justinian was evidently some distance away, as they had to wait a considerable time before Alexandros returned, much to the discomfort of the three shipwrecked men, who were beginning to feel their privations keenly. Maurice would have liked to ask after Helena, but the knowledge that Caliphronas was his rival forbade him to risk an inquiry. He now began to see that the anticipations of Crispin regarding possible dangers were not without some foundation, for, trapped in this mountain heart, which appeared to his fancy to be a most extraordinary place, he saw that Justinian could hold them prisoners as long as he pleased. Besides, this scamp of a Caliphronas, who hated both himself and Crispin thoroughly, was evidently the right hand of Justinian, and thoughts of the cruelties of Greek brigands began to pass unpleasantly through his mind. Here, towards the end of the civilized nineteenth century, was a genuine robber's cave, into which he was blindly walking, and, despite the presence of Crispin, who stood beside him, Maurice did not feel quite at his ease regarding their reception by this renegade Englishman who was called Justinian.

At length rapid steps were heard descending the staircase, and Alexandros came in sight, holding his torch in one hand and the wished-for key in the other. Having unlocked the door, he held it open for them to enter, and, when the four men were inside, locked it carefully again, and thrust the key into his belt in order to take it back to his master. As he did so, he spoke to Caliphronas in Greek, upon which the Count translated the speech for the benefit of Maurice and the seaman.

"Justinian will see you at the Acropolis."

"The Acropolis?"

"Yes! it is a fancy he has for calling his house so. 'Tis too small for a palace, and too large for an ordinary house, so the intermediate term Acropolis fits it exactly. Come, Mr. Maurice. Crispin, you know the way, don't you?"

"Considering I have lived all my life in Melnos, I should think it highly probable," retorted the poet in an annoyed tone, for the patronage of Caliphronas was insufferable.

Conducted by Caliphronas and Alexandros, they walked slowly up the giant staircase, and in a short time arrived at a huge archway similar to the one into which they had entered. Through this Maurice, to his astonishment, saw a smiling landscape, and paused thunderstruck under the great arch.

"Why, Melnos is in the cup of the mountain."

"Exactly," replied Crispin, who was enjoying his astonishment. "Melnos is an extinct volcano, and this is the crater. You see we have plenty of room for buildings, fields, cultivation, and all such desirable things. We are two hundred feet above the sea-level here."

Maurice did not reply, being too much amazed for speech, and standing there feasted his eyes on the beautiful picture framed by the archway, of which he was only able to gain a general idea. It was a vision of snowy hills, miniature forests, yellow fields of corn, terraced vineyards, and a mass of white houses in the hollow, while clinging to the mountain side were other buildings showing white against the pale green of the foliage. High above, encircled by the top rim of the crater, which was broken into a dazzling circle of snow-white peaks, was the blue sky, with the burning sun blazing down into the hollow, wherein, like a mirror, flashed a small lake, encircled by trees. Below, palms waved their feathery fans, above, the light green of the pine trees burned like emeralds in the hot sunshine, and over all this enchanted scene brooded an intense rest, an air of serene calm, which made it seem to Maurice like that sleepy land of the lotus-eaters.

And this was Melnos.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ISLAND KING.

Oh, I know naught of the work-a-day world!
This is the land of eternal quiet,
Where I can nestle in indolence curled,
Far from the clamor of modern riot.
Here are my wings of ambition close furled,
For I know naught of the work-a-day world.
I am the king of an indolent race,
Working with pleasure, and not with regret;
Never the phantom of Money they chase,
Never they feel in their bosoms a fret;
Nothing to alter, for all is in place.
I am the king of an indolent race.

From the archway of the tunnel stretched two roads, one to the left, leading down to the valley below by easy gradations, the other to the right, running round the cup of the mountain on a level with the place where they were now standing. Along this latter road they walked, the three gentlemen abreast, and Gurt, considerably bewildered, rolling behind in his nautical way. Maurice's admiration was strongly excited by the perfection of this road, which was level and broad, being apparently hewn out of the living rock, while the side nearest the valley was bordered by cyclopean masses of dressed stone, and a long line of mulberry trees, now heavily foliaged. On the other side also, where the rocks arose steep and smooth, was a corresponding line of trees, so that they walked through a leafy arcade, formed by the meeting of the branches overhead, and their path was checkered with sunlight shadows moving restlessly under their feet, as the wind rustled the leaves above. Through the slim trunks of the trees, set some little distance apart, they caught glimpses of the town below on the verge of the blue lake, its white houses embosomed in trees, and straight streets intersecting each other at right angles, so that it looked like a miniature chess-board. Maurice was in ecstasies over this Eden of the South, and could not express his delight in high enough terms to his companions.

"It is a place to dream in!" he said enthusiastically; "a land of the lotos! I don't wonder Justinian desires to keep all outside influences away from this paradise. Upon my word, Caliphronas, with such a beautiful spot as this to dwell in, I do not wonder you were discontented with our gray island of the West. My only astonishment is that you should ever wish to go beyond this enchanted circle of mountains."

"Oh, it's pretty enough," said Caliphronas carelessly, casting a glance at the lovely valley below: "but one grows tired of lovely places, the same as one wearies of the most beautiful woman."

"Every one is not so fickle as you are," cried Crispin sharply.

"Well, you did not stay in this paradise yourself, Creespeen."

"I was banished from it, and you were the serpent who caused my banishment."

"Bah! do not lay the blame on me. You ate of the Tree of Knowledge, and wanted to know too much; so Justinian got rid of you."

"I only wanted to know about myself."

"Then you never will."

"Won't I? You forget that I am equal with Justinian now."

"Are you really?" said Caliphronas mockingly. "I think not. Justinian has the wisdom of sixty years against your thirty. The half is not equal to the whole."

"Well, you have something to gain as well as I," flashed out Crispin fiercely; "so if I am beaten, you will not be in a much better condition."

"Eh! you think so? I have Justinian's promise, remember."

"You have; and if I know anything of Justinian he'll break it."

"He dare not! Melnos is not impregnable."

"Probably not; but you cannot storm it single-handed."

"What about my dear Alcibiades?" sneered the Greek significantly.

Crispin stopped, and looked Caliphronas up and down with scorn.

"You had better not say any more, Andros, or I may be tempted to tell Justinian of your intention."

"All I say is not meant," cried Caliphronas in evident alarm; "but Justinian cannot go back from his word about Helena."

"Helena!" said Maurice, who had hitherto kept silence. "What about Helena?"

"Nothing to do with you, sir," retorted Caliphronas rudely, and walked on quickly.

"What does he mean?" asked Maurice, turning to Crispin with a frown.

"Nothing more than what I told you on The Eunice, when we were off Taygetus."

"You told me Caliphronas loved Helena; but this promise"—

"That has to do with Justinian," said Crispin hastily; "you must ask him for information. After all, Maurice, you had better wait and see how things turn out before you cross swords with Caliphronas."

"Ah! you think, then, we will cross swords?"

"I fancy it is extremely probable. This Helena will be an apple of discord, as was her predecessor of Troy. But, however much you two men fight for her, remember it is the lady herself who decides whom she will take."

"If she is the woman I judge her to be from her pure face, she will never take that scamp of a Greek."

"Oh ho! that is as much as to say she will take you, my Lord Conceit; but never mind Helena just now. We have to get into the good graces of Justinian, or else"—

"Well?" asked Maurice, seeing Crispin paused significantly; "what will happen?"

"I can't tell yet; but, after all, why anticipate evil?"

"Crispin, you are as ambiguous as a Delphic oracle."

"And about as doubtful," retorted the poet, laughing. "But here we are at the Acropolis."

"Well, I'm darned!" observed Gurt in astonishment; and his exclamation of surprise was certainly pardonable, for no one would have expected to find so splendid a building in this lonely island of the Ægean Sea.

A broad flight of fine-grained red limestone stairs led up to a lofty platform of the same material, this splendid ascent being bordered on both sides by masses of dark green laurel trees, which accentuated the roseate tint of the staircase. On the platform, some distance back, arose a large edifice, somewhat after the model of the Parthenon at Athens, with graceful slender pillars of white marble supporting the weighty entablature, the frieze of which was delicately carved with god-like forms of nude youths, white-draped maidens, severe-faced old men, rearing horses, and seated deities. Above this the pediment, in the centre of which was sculptured a life-sized figure of Hephaistos, with his anvil and raised hammer, while the bas-reliefs on either side represented long trains of unclothed men, with their faces turned to the god, coming towards him with supplicating hands, as if for the gift of fire. The Pentelican marble of this temple was now toned down by the weather to a delicate gray hue, which contrasted charmingly with the red staircase, the dark laurels, and the faint green of the foliage which clothed the mountain at the back of the building.

"Justinian never built this!" cried Maurice, transfixed in amazement at the suave beauty of the whole building; "no architects of to-day could have designed such perfection."

"No," replied Crispin, as they ascended the steps; "only this staircase and the platform are modern, for the temple is an old Greek one, built in Heaven knows what year of Hellenic art, and Justinian, finding it in a ruinous condition, restored it as you see. The front was fortunately intact, but he has arranged the interior as a dwelling-house. It is a shrine to Vulcan, and, I presume, was built here because this island is volcanic in character, though indeed it is far away from the Hephæstiades."

"I do not wonder Justinian calls it the Acropolis, for it is a magnificent building, and worthy of the name. Oh, Crispin, look at that nude youth struggling with the rearing horse!"

"You can look at all that another time," replied the poet, laughing at the sculptor's enthusiasm; "meanwhile, Justinian is waiting us."

They entered the great door of the building, followed by the awestruck Gurt, who was too much astonished to speak, and advanced along a lofty hall towards an archway draped with heavy blue curtains. Drawing these aside, they entered into an open court, bordered by ranges of white marble columns, for the temple was hypæthral in character, and the sun shone brightly through the opening of the roof. Between these snow-white pillars hung heavy curtains of azure tint, embroidered with bizarre figures in yellow silk. The pavement was of smooth white marble, and there was a small fountain in the middle, splashing musically into a broad pool which brimmed nearly to the verge of its marble marge. A number of Turkish mats, comfortable-looking cane chairs, silk-covered cushions, and dainty bamboo tables were scattered about, and finally, the whole court was one mass of flowers.

Slender palms, bowing their feathery fronds, stood in huge red jars, which added a bright touch of color to the general whiteness; while there were oblong boxes filled with heterogeneous masses of violets, pansies, golden crocus, anemones, gladioli, and cyclamen, all glowing in one dazzling blaze of color. There were also cytisus trees

with their bright yellow blossoms, great bushes of roses red with flowers, delicate white lilies springing virgin-like from amid their green leaves, and the pink buds of the gum cistus with its aromatic odors, while between stood the myrtles, sacred to love. All this gorgeous mass of colors was blended skilfully with a prevailing tint of green foliage, and what with the blue curtains, the dazzling white of the pillars and pavement, even under the hot southern sun it did not pain the artistic eye with a sense of incongruous hues, but rather pleased and satisfied it by its bright beauty and variety of hue.

"What flowers! what flowers!" cried Maurice, with genuine admiration. "Why, this is finer even than the Rector's rose-garden."

"These are Helena's flowers," said Crispin, smiling; "she is so fond of them that she ought to be called Chloris. Hush! here is Justinian."

There was a grating sound of rings being drawn along a rod, and Maurice turned to the left, to see the blue draperies held to one side by an exceptionally tall man, with a long gray beard and keen black eyes, who was dressed in a graceful robe of soft white wool, falling in classic folds to his feet. Maurice himself was over the ordinary height, but this ancient, holding himself erect as a dart, seemed to tower above him, and, as he moved towards Maurice with outstretched hand, the Englishman involuntarily thought of the Homeric description of Nestor.

"Mr. Roylands," said Justinian, taking the young man's hand, and looking keenly at him, "you are welcome to my island. I am the Demarch of Melnos."

Behind Justinian came Caliphronas, who looked rather dismayed when he saw the courtesy with which the island king received his guest; and even Crispin made a gesture of surprise, which movement at once drew the old man's eyes towards him.

"You also, truant!" he said, taking the poet's hand, but without releasing his hold of Maurice; "you have come back to Melnos?"

"Yes, for a purpose," said Crispin boldly, evidently not to be duped by the suave greeting of Justinian.

As a flash of lightning leaps from the heart of a dark cloud, so gleamed a glance from Justinian's dark eyes, and he was evidently about to make some fierce retort to the bold poet, when he restrained himself with wonderful self-command, and released the hands of both the young men.

"Before I ask you any questions, gentlemen," he said, striking a silver bell that stood on one of the small tables near, "I must attend to the rites of hospitality."

A man made his appearance, and bowed submissively to Justinian.

"The bath! the meal! for these guests," said the old man in tones of command, speaking in Greek. "You can attend to Mr. Crispin—tell Georgios to see to the other gentleman. When you are quite refreshed," he added in English, turning to his guests, "I will speak to you here."

"But Gurt?" said Maurice, pausing a moment.

"Oh, the sailor!" observed Justinian, carelessly looking at him; "let him follow you, and Anasthasius can look after him. Go now! I will await your return here."

The young men, astonished at the courtesy of their reception, Crispin being not less so than Maurice, went out with Gurt after the man; and Justinian, flinging himself into a chair, with a deep sigh, covered his face with his hands. Caliphronas, leaning gracefully against one of the pillars, looked at this exhibition of what he considered

weakness with disdain, but did not dare to break upon the revery of Justinian, of whom he had a wholesome dread. He picked a pink oleander blossom and placed it in his belt, then, after walking about for a few minutes with a frown on his face, sat down on a stone margin of the fountain and began to dabble in the water with his hands. After a time, Justinian looked up with a second sigh.

"Well, what do you think of him?" asked the Count in Greek, at the sound of which the old man made a gesture of annoyance.

"Speak English, you fool! I love to hear my own language."

"You will get plenty of it shortly, then," said Caliphronas coolly. "Nine Englishmen already on the island,—bah! it is a British possession."

"You are right, Andros. I am British, and as this island is mine, it is a British possession."

Caliphronas frowned, as if this way of looking at things was distasteful to him, but, not caring to argue about such a delicate matter, repeated his first remark.

"Well, what do you think of him?"

"Maurice Roylands?"

"Yes."

Justinian pondered a moment, and was about to reply, when, catching sight of the eager gleam in the Greek's eyes, he altered his mind at once.

"I will tell you when I know him better; I never make up my mind in a hurry. You ought to be aware of that by this time."

The other, ill-contented with this reticence, would have persisted in his questioning, but the old man, seeing this, shut him up sharply.

"Be silent, Andros! I will give you my opinion in my own good time. Meanwhile, mind you treat my guests with all courtesy."

"Even Creespeen?" said Caliphronas, with a sneer.

"Yes, even Crispin," reiterated Justinian in a fiery tone. "I have my reasons for acting as I do now. If you dare to disobey my orders, I have a way to silence you."

Caliphronas turned pale, for he knew that Justinian was absolute ruler of Melnos, while he was thoroughly well hated by the inhabitants, one and all.

"I have no intention of acting contrary to your desires," he replied sulkily, rising to his feet; "but I cannot understand the meaning of your actions. However, I have done what you desired, and Mr. Maurice is in Melnos. Now, I presume, you will fulfil your part of the bargain."

"Certainly; you have my permission to pay your addresses to my daughter."

"And you will make her marry me?" asked Caliphronas eagerly.

The King sprang from his seat with a gesture of anger.

"I will force my daughter in no way!" he roared fiercely. "I forbade you to think of Helena as a bride, but, provided you brought Roylands here, I gave you permission to woo her. As to forcing her into a marriage with you, there was no question of such a thing."

"I thought there was," retorted the Greek, who was white with rage.

"You put your own base construction on my motives. How dare you question me, Andros! Am I master here, or are you? Helena is free to marry you if she wishes; but, as far as I am concerned, I would rather you were drowned in the sea than become my son-in-law."

The Count went alternately red and white as Justinian spoke, and when the speech was ended tried to answer, but his rage was such that he could say nothing, so, with a choking cry of anger, he turned on his heel and darted out of the court; while the King, much agitated, walked up and down hurriedly, his white robe sweeping the pavement.

"What does the boy mean?" he muttered angrily. "I do not like these veiled threats. Melnos is well defended, but I mistrust Andros—he is too much a friend of that rascal Alcibiades. Bah! I have no fear—treachery for treachery!—and if Andros dares"—

He paused abruptly, and, raising his hands, shook them impotently at the sky, then resumed his seat with a frown, which boded ill for Caliphronas in the event of any double dealing on his part being discovered. A peacock came walking proudly along the court, with his splendid tail erect, shining like some rich product of the Eastern loom, with its manifold colors, fantastic moons, and iridescent sheen, which flashed gloriously in the sunshine. Evidently irritated at not being noticed, the vain bird uttered a discordant shriek, which had the effect of making his master look up suddenly.

"Ha, Argos!" he said, with a sardonic smile; "you are like Andros, my friend, fine to look at and nothing else. But it would be as easy to wring your neck, with all your bravery, as it would that of my handsome scamp yonder."

The bird strutted proudly along, the feathers of its neck glistening with every movement of its head.

"You have many eyes, my Argos," resumed Justinian, after a pause, "but your human prototype has none at all. He sees no farther than his own straight nose, else he would be more cautious in his deeds, and less daring in his words. It looks as if he were going to dispute my will; well, he can do so, and we will see who will come off best—Andros or Justinian."

At this moment Maurice and the poet entered the court, whereupon Argos fled in dismay.

"An omen!" thought Justinian, as he arose to receive them; "with these I need not fear the machinations of Peacock Andros."

The two gentlemen, refreshed by their bath and a hearty meal, were now arrayed in loose, flowing robes of white wool, similar to that of Justinian. Crispin wore this antique garb gracefully enough, very evidently used to managing such draperies; but Maurice found them awkward, and as he sat down seemed rather ashamed of the effeminacy of the dress. The King noticed this, and smiled broadly at the Englishman's want of dexterity.

"You do not like these?" he said, touching his own robe lightly; "but, believe me, they are very comfortable within doors in this climate. When you go out to look at my island, I will supply you with a less embarrassing dress—more adapted for walking and climbing."

"I like my legs to be free, sir," observed Maurice, striving to look at his ease in these long white draperies, whereon Justinian laughed again at this naïve confession.

"Yes; we English are an active race," he said, leaning back in his chair, "and like all clothing to be tight and trig; but indoors you will find these flowing robes more adaptable than a shooting suit would be. When one is in the East, one should adopt

Eastern customs. For myself, I have become a Sybarite in luxury since dwelling in Melnos."

"Where is Caliphronas?" asked Crispin, looking about him for the Greek.

"Caliphronas? Oh yes; I forgot his travelling-name. A count, is he not, of the Greek Empire? He took a fine name to match his fine feathers. Well, Andros has just left me in a fit of bad temper."

"You do not appear to like Andros so much as you did, Justinian."

The Greco-Englishman smiled significantly.

"Andros is—Andros," he replied dryly, "and is anything but reliable. What do you think of my handsome Greek, Mr. Roylands?"

"I think he is a scamp," retorted Maurice briefly.

"How long did it take you to find that out?" asked Justinian, without showing any sign of surprise.

"I did not find it out at all. He confessed his scampishness himself with the most appalling cynicism."

"Oh, as far as cynicism goes, Andros might be a boulevardier soaked in absinthe. It is the soul makes the man, not the surroundings. But never mind this scamp; I wish to hear all about your cruise."

"Hasn't Caliphronas told you?"

"Caliphronas has told me his version of the story, which is all to his own credit; but those six sailors who are at present in Melnos seemed to disagree with his praises of himself, so I would like to hear what you two gentlemen have to say."

Whereupon Crispin, being the more fluent of speech, told the whole story, from the time of the Greek's arrival at Roylands,—narrated the beginning of the voyage, the arrival in Greek waters, the storm, the loss of the yacht, and the subsequent treachery of Caliphronas. Daring the recital, Justinian, with compressed lips, listened to it in silence, only uttering a smothered exclamation of rage when he heard how Caliphronas had cut the rope, and left those on board the yacht to perish.

"Thank you, Crispin," he said, when the poet brought his narrative to a close; "your story is worthy of being told by Ulysses at the court of Alcinous. I am glad you escaped the fate intended you by Andros; but if he had succeeded, I don't think he would have dared to show his face here."

Crispin glanced at Maurice significantly, and Justinian caught the look with his accustomed keen-sightedness.

"I speak for you as well as Mr. Roylands," he said quickly. "We did not get on well in the past, Crispin, but let us hope we will be more friendly in the future."

The poet, considerably astonished at this unwonted emotion of Justinian, accepted the proffered hand of the old man,—although he did so with a somewhat doubtful air.

"I cannot forget you were kind to me in my youth, Justinian, and brought me up; but I cannot understand these sentiments, now so different from those you expressed when we last met."

"You were yourself to blame in the matter, Crispin. Force is of no avail with me, and you came in a rage to demand what I refused to tell you. I have been a wild man in my day, but I am not so absolutely bad as you think me, and it depends upon yourself as to whether I tell you what you wish to learn."

"I have a right to know!" cried the poet impetuously.

"That I question," retorted Justinian, with a flash of his keen eyes. "I will tell you or not entirely at my own pleasure; but the tone you adopt will not make me answer your questions. The storm cannot bend the oak, but the gentlest breeze will make its branches quiver. Lay that parable to heart in your demeanor towards me, Crispin, and all will yet be well; otherwise—well, you know how you left last time."

The young man made no reply, but relapsed into moody silence, whereupon Justinian turned to Maurice with a winning smile.

"You must bring this obstinate boy to reason, Mr. Roylands. Believe me, it is as well we should be all firm friends and allies, as I have reason to believe there will be trouble."

"From Caliphronas?"

"Exactly. He has made a demand of me which I refuse to grant."

"About Helena?" said Crispin, suddenly looking up.

"Yes; did he tell you?"

"He said you had made him a promise to give him Helena for his wife, if he carried out your plans."

"That's a lie!" cried Justinian impetuously. "I said he could pay his addresses to Helena, but the question of marriage I left entirely in her own hands."

"Oh," said Crispin quickly, "that puts quite a different face on the affair."

"At all events, Helena will never marry him," said Maurice abruptly, whereon the King turned on him in surprise.

"What do you know of Helena?"

"Only this," replied Maurice, handing the portrait of the girl to her father. "Caliphronas showed me that face, and I fell in love with it."

"Oh, you fell in love with it!" remarked Justinian in a tone of satisfaction.

"Yes; in fact, it was that which brought me to Melnos."

Justinian smiled in a satisfied way, but suddenly frowned.

"So Andros dared to use this as a lure!" he muttered in Greek; "well, he has succeeded to his own undoing."

"I thought you would think so," said Crispin, who overheard the speech; "as soon as I heard the reason of Andros' coming to Roylands, I guessed your intention."

"How could you do that?" asked the old man quickly; "you knew nothing."

"I know all—Andros told me."

"Traitor!" said Justinian fiercely. "Well, Crispin, if you do know, keep your own counsel until such time as I choose to tell my own story."

"I promise you."

"And in return I will, at my own convenience, tell you what you desire to know about your parentage."

"Do this," cried Crispin, springing up and clasping Justinian by the hand, "and I will be your friend for life!"

"You had better be my friend for your own sake," retorted the King angrily; "united we stand, divided we fall. Remember, Andros is your and my enemy."

"And Alcibiades?"

"Alcibiades would like nothing better than an excuse to plunder Melnos. However, we are nine Englishmen, not counting my Greeks, and I think with all we will be a match for Andros, Alcibiades, and their brother blackguards."

This conversation took place in Greek, so was therefore quite unintelligible to Maurice, who looked from the one to the other in astonishment. On seeing this, Justinian turned towards him with a courteous apology, and restored the portrait.

"As Andros gave you this, I will not deprive you of it, Mr. Roylands," he said politely; "but shortly I hope to present you to the original."

"Now?" asked Maurice eagerly.

"No; you must go and sleep this afternoon," replied Justinian authoritatively; "and you also, Crispin. After your dangers of last night, you must be quite worn out."

"Well, the bath and a meal have done wonders," said Crispin, yawning; "but I must say a few hours' sleep would complete the cure."

"And when will we see Helena?" demanded Roylands persistently.

"This evening," answered Justinian, taking him by the hand. "We must be good friends, Mr. Roylands, for I like your face. Tell me, do you resemble your father or your mother most?"

"My mother," said Maurice, rather astonished at this strange question.

Justinian looked at him steadily, then, dropping his hand with a sigh, turned away, as if to conceal some sudden emotion. After a time he recovered himself, and spoke sharply, as if to atone for his faint-heartedness.

"Come, come, gentlemen, be off to your rooms!" he said testily; "sleep is what you need."

"And Helena!" said Crispin, as he and Maurice left the court.

"And Helena!" repeated Justinian in a satisfied tone; "yes, this is her husband, not Andros."

CHAPTER XVIII.

VENUS URANIA.

To rose-red sky, from rose-red sea,
  At rose-red dawn she came,
A fiery rose of earth to be,
  And light the dark with flame;
Then earth and sky triumphantly
  Rang loud with men's acclaim.
A rose art thou, O goddess fair,
  And bloom as men aspire,—
Red rose to those whom passions snare,
  White rose to chaste desire;
Yet red rose wanes with pale despair,
  And white rose burns as fire.

After all that he had come through, Maurice found no difficulty in inducing sleep to come to his pillow. The room he occupied was one of those built by Justinian when he renovated this antique fane, and the walls, floor, and ceiling were of that fine-grained red sandstone of which the staircase was built. The pavement was bare, save for Turkish rugs scattered here and there, which lack of carpeting made the apartment wonderfully cool and pleasant, but the walls were draped with a heavy kind of woollen tapestry similar to those in the court, saving that the color was a pale gray, and the embroideries terra-cotta color to match the floor. A wide window, shaded by Indian beadworked blinds, looked out on to a pleasant prospect of forest which clothed the side of the mountain, and the cool wind, heavy with aromatic scents, stole into the room. It was also furnished in a somewhat antique fashion, though here and there an anachronism betrayed the nineteenth century, but the couch whereon Maurice rested was purely Greek in design, and lying on this in his white robe, with a purple coverlet flung carelessly over his feet, he might have been taken for some dweller in ancient Athens. True, the mustache on his lip savored somewhat of the barbarian, but in all other respects the comparison was close enough, for if his features were not quite so classic in outline as those of Caliphronas, they were sufficiently so to pass muster in the carrying out of such fancy.

Lying there with his eyes half closed, the young Englishman in a drowsy fashion felt the balmy odors permeating the warm air, and saw as in a dream the antique room, the pleasant prospect beyond, which was but mistily seen through the veiling beadwork blind. He was puzzled over the kind reception accorded to him by this strange Justinian, who he had been led to believe was a kind of modern freebooter. No

swarthy, fantastically-dressed, savage marauder was this island king, but a gracious, courteous gentleman, arrayed in the white robe of Socrates, with a winning smile on his face, and polite words on his lips. Crispin seemed to mistrust him indeed, but even Crispin seemed somewhat astonished at the suavity of his greeting, and now appeared inclined to recant his former dislike of the old man. Maurice longed to have a confidential chat with Crispin, and find out his feelings on the subject, as it was evident that, far from inclining to Caliphronas, their host seemed more disposed to side with them.

Again, Maurice found it difficult to account for the old man's sudden liking for himself, for the satisfaction with which he had received the information that his daughter's face had lured the young Englishman to his island retreat, and for many other things.

"Mystery, mystery, nothing but mystery!" said Maurice to himself, as he closed his aching eyes. "I cannot make these folks out; but, at all events, King Justinian does not seem to disapprove of my passion, and is inclined to give Crispin the information he desires, so I trust all will go well. Sooner or later I will solve all these problems which are now so tantalizing; but, come what may, one good thing is in store for me. I shall see Helena to-night!"

A wave of sleep seemed to roll over his weary brain, now relaxed from the terrible tension of the previous night, and he gradually sank into a deep slumber, with the name of his unseen goddess still on his lips.

Then he dreamed strange dreams of romance, filled with the serenity of Hellenic calm, which floated magically through his brain, and made his slumber delightful with forms of exquisite beauty. He was standing with Helena in the temple of Athena, and together they touched the knees of the undying goddess; but the face of Helena was veiled, and he could see but vaguely the perfect features which had hitherto been so clear in his dreams. Again, they were wandering like lovers beneath the serene Attic sky, beside the bright, gushing Ilissus, and he strove to kiss her, the kiss of betrothal, but she faded away as did the cloud-Juno in the arms of Ixion, and a voice blown by some faint winds cried, "Love, but win." Then he was on board a galley, putting off from the green shore towards the purple mists of sea, and Helena was lying in his arms, while the Greek Caliphronas strove fiercely to snatch her from him. Arrows rattled on the shields of his men, the watch-fires blazed on the high mountain tops, and the air was hot with the flame of battle. In his dream he saw the phantom of himself lay down the cloudy Helena, and dash on the phantom Greek with a mighty sword. A strident cry, a flash as of flame dividing the night, then the phantom Caliphronas vanished, and the galley was sailing, sailing far into the purple night, while, clasped in each other's arms, Helena and himself murmured the songs of love, until they melted ghost-like into the misty splendor of the sinking sun.

When he awoke, it was quite dark, and, springing from his couch, he hastily took his watch to the window, and found it was nearly eight o'clock, so his sleep had lasted over six hours. Feeling greatly refreshed by this rest, he bathed his face and hands in cold water, with the intention of going outside into the delicious night air. That the moon was up he could see by the doubtful glimmer of her pale light, but, the shadow of the house being in front of her, she could not be seen in her full splendor.

Wondering where he would find Crispin, and whether that gentleman was yet awake, Maurice stole quietly from his room, and, drawing aside the curtains, looked out into the middle court, where he saw a sight which chained him to the earth. Not Paris sitting in judgment on Mount Ida saw such a vision of loveliness as now appeared to the enraptured eyes of Roylands. The picture—ah, that was but a pale reflection of this rich, ripe, glowing beauty! Venus, the goddess of love herself, yet with a touch of the chaste purity of Artemis—not Venus Pandemos, with flushed face and wanton glance, but Venus Urania, chaste, cold, pure, and serene as the moon-huntress herself.

The moon, hanging like a great silver sphere in the darkly blue sky, shone serenely through the hypæthral opening of the court, and in her pale light the ranges of white columns glimmered like faint ghosts in the doubtful gloom.

Like a silver rod the fountain's jet shot up to meet her kiss, and the splashed waters of the pool trembled restlessly with faint flashes within the marble marge. The cold, sweet odors of the flowers made the night air drowsy with their perfumes, and a distant nightingale began to trill deliciously in the still beauty of the evening. But the onlooker saw not the moon, the fountain, or the solemn range of pillars; he had no ears for the liquid notes of the unseen bird; for his eyes were fixed in an enamoured gaze on a tall, beautiful woman, who stood with upturned face gazing at the sky.

In that tremulous light she looked more than mortal in her spiritual loveliness—some goddess of ancient Hellas once more visiting the dear-loved islands of the Ægean—perchance Aphrodite herself, haunting the fane of her husband Hephaistos. To add to the plausibility of this fantastic idea, this girl was draped in the long white chiton of antique times, and her golden hair, dressed after the fashion of the Venus of Cnidos, was bound with triple bands of silver, while her slender arms, bare to the shoulder, were devoid of any ornament. So fair, so pure, so ethereal she appeared, that Maurice might well be pardoned for deeming her some pale sweet spirit of classic times, haunting the scenes of her former life, and listening, as she had done in the past, to the golden notes of the divine nightingale, thrilling to ecstasy the heart of the dusk.

For a few minutes Maurice stood spellbound in the contemplation of this lovely incarnation of Venus Urania, then inadvertently made a movement which made the girl start from her rapt attitude, and look in his direction. Being thus discovered, he came forward to meet the awakened divinity, looking himself, in his sweeping robe, like some young disciple of Plato or Parmenides. To his surprise and delight, this beautiful woman, with a smile on her exquisite face, came forward to meet him half-way with outstretched hands.

"You are Mr. Roylands," she said in English, with a delicate sweetness in her voice that seemed to shame the notes of the nightingale, at least, Maurice thought so; but then, in his amazement, he was scarcely capable of cool reflection.

"Yes, I am Maurice Roylands," he replied, taking both her outstretched hands within his own; "and you are Helena."

"I am Helena," she repeated gravely, drawing him a little to the left, so that the moonlight fell on his face. "You can have no idea how anxious I was to see you, Mr. Roylands. I do so love to see one of my countrymen."

"Are you English?"

"Yes," said Helena proudly, dropping his hands, much to his regret; "my father is English, so I am also, although my mother was a Greek. Still, I have spoken your language all my life, and have been brought up like an English girl, so I must be English."

She spoke in a tone of such conviction that Maurice began to laugh, in which merriment she joined freely.

"My father would not tell me anything about you," she resumed gayly; "and as you are the first Englishman that has come to Melnos, I was anxious to see what you were like."

"I hope your anxiety has been repaid," observed Maurice, with a smile.

"Oh, indeed it has. You are very good-looking, especially when you smile."

Roylands was rather taken aback by this naïveté, and, being unaccustomed to such direct compliments, blushed like a girl, much to the amusement of Helena, who stood looking at him with clear, truthful eyes.

"Do you not like me saying that?" she observed innocently. "Andros always likes to be told he's good-looking."

"Well, I am not so conceited as Andros—at least, I trust I am not," answered Maurice, quite touched by her rustic innocence; "but, you know, ladies in England do not speak so—so—very plainly."

"Do they not? Why, do they tell their friends they are ugly?"

Maurice roared in spite of her presence, upon which she looked at him rather reproachfully.

"It is too bad of you to laugh at me, Mr. Roylands," she said pettishly; "you can't expect me to be like an English lady after living all my life at Melnos."

"You are much more charming than any English lady I know."

A charming smile dimpled the corners of her mouth.

"Really! Ah, I see it is the custom for the gentlemen to pay compliments to the ladies, not the other way about. I must not tell you you are good-looking, but it is quite proper for you to say I am charming."

"Well—that is—really, you know, I hardly know what to say," said Maurice, finding himself somewhat in a dilemma. "The fact is, neither English men nor women pay each other compliments at all—at least, it's not supposed to be good form."

"What is good form?" asked Helena innocently.

"I must undertake your education, Miss Justinian."

"I am not Miss Justinian. You must call me Helena."

"Oh, is that so? then you must know, Helena, I am not Mr. Roylands—you must call me Maurice."

"Maurice! Maurice! Ah, that is much nicer to say than Mr. Roylands. Yes, I will call you Maurice. I like Maurice," she continued reflectively; "yes, I like Maurice."

"I am very glad you like me," he said artfully.

"Oh, I mean the name," replied Helena, laughing at what she thought was his mistake. "But tell me, Maurice, do you now feel quite well?"

"Yes, thank you. The sleep of this afternoon has quite cured my fatigues of last night."

"Oh, it must have been terrible!" said Helena, with a shudder; "papa told me all about it. I was so glad when Andros told us of your safety."

"My safety, or that of Crispin?"

"I was glad for both your sakes, and indeed I am very fond of Crispin. You know, we are just like brother and sister."

"Are you? Well, will we be brother and sister?"

"Oh yes," she answered, frankly putting her hand into his; "I will be very glad to have another brother."

Maurice felt a trifle disappointed at this calm acquiescence in his audacious proposal, but, finding her little hand within his own, clasped it warmly; whereupon she suddenly seemed to feel a touch of maiden modesty, and withdrew her hand, blushing shyly. Certainly she was the most ingenuous, delightful woman in the world, and Maurice was quite fascinated by this timid audacity, which was so different from the artificial modesty of many girls he had met. She was Undine without a soul, she did not know the meaning of life in any way whatsoever, yet, like some gentle wild thing, she started back with an instinct of caution when his touch thrilled her virgin soul with a deeper feeling than friendship. Both of them felt tongue-tied and awkward, Helena at the strange, unexpected feeling which made her heart beat and her cheek burn, Maurice with regret for having even unconsciously permitted his touch to convey anything further than the brotherly friendship of a man for a pure young woman.

Fortunately for them both, Crispin, alert and cheery, entered the court with Justinian, and they came towards the couple with careless unconsciousness. Justinian, indeed, did cast a rapid glance at the flushed faces of the pair, which betrayed their late emotion, but, far from being angry, an imperceptible smile passed over his lips, as if he were quite satisfied that this should be so.

"Helena!" said Crispin, coming forward and kissing her hand; "I am so delighted to see you again! You are more lovely than ever."

"Maurice says English gentlemen do not pay ladies compliments."

"Don't they?" answered Crispin humorously. "My dear Maurice, that storm last night must have destroyed your memory. So you two have met?"

"Quite unexpectedly," declared Maurice hastily. "I came to look for you, Crispin, and, glancing into this court, I saw Helena, so we have been talking ever since."

"And Maurice has been telling me about England," said Helena, clapping her hands together with a burst of girlish laughter, delicious as the carol of a thrush.

"Maurice! Helena!" repeated Justinian, smiling. "Really, you young people are getting on very well together."

"Your daughter had some difficulty in saying Roylands," said Maurice apologetically.

"And you do not know Helena's other name, eh?"

"What is her other name, sir? If you don't like me to call her Helena, shall I say Miss"—

"You can say Helena," answered Justinian shortly; "she has no other name."

"No; we are simple people here," observed Crispin mischievously, "and dispense with such cumbersomeness as two names;—Justinian, Helena, Crispin, Andros; so you, Roylands, will drop your harsh English surname, and be henceforth known as Maurice."

"I am quite content to be so as long as Helena speaks the name!"

"Another compliment!" laughed Crispin gayly; "I thought, according to you, gentlemen never paid ladies compliments?"

"This is the exception to prove the rule."

"Helena," said her father suddenly, "where is Andros?"

"I do not know. He was here an hour ago, and said he would be back to supper."

"It is supper-time now," said Justinian, moving towards the side entrance. "You must be hungry, gentlemen. I trust you feel quite recovered?"

"Speaking for myself, I do," answered Maurice brightly; "that sleep has quite set me up. And Crispin"—

"Subscribes to all you have said, and feels as hungry as a hunter."

"Hark! there is Andros," observed Helena, placing one white finger on her lips, in which attitude she looked like some exquisite statue of Silence; "do you hear him singing?"

> "The rose is shedding its crimson leaves,
> Sadly they fall at the caress of Zephyrus;
> And I, O beloved, shed tears in plenty,
> Feeling thy kiss on my mouth;
> For I must lose thee—ah, I must lose thee!
> Another richer than I desires to wed thee,
> Therefore do I shed tears, as the rose sheds her crimson petals."

"An omen!" breathed Justinian under his breath, as the Greek drew aside the curtain of the main entrance; "he will not marry Helena!"

Against the dark draperies veiling the archway the slender figure of the handsome Greek stood out in bold relief. He also had assumed a robe of white, and, with his clear-cut features and graceful pose, looked the incarnation of that delicate Greek adolescence whereof Pindar sings in his Olympian Odes. As he caught sight of Maurice standing near Helena, he frowned perceptibly, and advanced hastily, as if to come between them, but, meeting the keen, significant look of Justinian, he faltered in his hasty step, and broke into a charming smile.

"Are you waiting for me?" he said cheerfully, as they all went to have supper. "I have been down in the valley speaking to your sailors."

"Are they all right?" asked Crispin anxiously, for carelessly gay though he seemed to be, he was terribly disturbed at the loss of so many lives in the storm.

"Oh, they are quite happy. All your subjects, Justinian, are making heroes of them, especially the women, much to the dismay of the men of Melnos."

"I hope they won't be getting into trouble," said Justinian, with a frown. "I want no quarrels here."

"Then you had better go and see about them to-morrow, for if this hero-worship goes on, trouble there certainly will be."

"And doubtless you would be very glad to see such trouble," thought Justinian to himself, as he eyed Caliphronas with a doubtful face. "I must lose no time in putting things to rights. Trouble at this juncture would play into your hands, my friend."

There was a very merry party that night, as even Caliphronas seemed to forget all his jealous feelings with regard to Maurice, and lay himself out to be entertaining. The

stern face of Justinian relaxed, and Helena, full of girlish glee, was evidently quite charmed with this handsome Englishman who had arrived so unexpectedly in Melnos. As for Crispin, he was very happy, for he now began to hope that Justinian would tell him all he wanted to know, and thus sweep away all obstacles to his union with Eunice. In fact, one and all laid aside their secret cares and plans to indulge in light-hearted merriment at the simple meal. Simple it was in every way, and yet infinitely charming, consisting as it did of goat's flesh, white bread, golden honey, fresh cheese; and for drink, that strong resinous Greek wine, which Maurice found so rich for his palate, that he was fain to follow the temperate example of Caliphronas, and mingle it with water.

After supper they all went out into the court, and with the exception of Caliphronas, began to smoke Turkish tobacco provided by Justinian, who was rather proud of his Latakia, while Helena, seating herself on the marge of the fountain, joined gayly in the trifling conversation in which all indulged out of sheer light-heartedness.

At the end of the court a charcoal fire burned in a kind of tripod, and, perfumes being cast thereon, a thick white smoke ascended like incense to the clear sky. Near this stood Caliphronas, and the red light streaming on his statuesque face, his white garb, made him a very striking figure. The other gentlemen were seated decorously in chairs, and the moon streaming down on their snowy robes, on the exquisite upturned face of Helena, produced an effect quite antipathetical to their excessively modern conversation. Pale moon, glittering stars, solemn court, soaring incense;—they should have been a company of philosophers talking of the destiny of the soul, of the sacred festivals, and unseen deities; but, by the law of contrast, they talked nothing but frivolity, and laughed at their own light badinage; Helena's girlish laugh ringing clear above the deep tones of the men.

"I was wrong," said Maurice to himself, as he watched this perfect girlish picture; "she is not Venus, but Nausicaa, and I am a modern Ulysses at the court of Alcinous."

"Are you worshipping at the altar of Vulcan, Caliphronas?" called out Crispin to the Greek, who stood almost veiled in the clouds of incense.

"No," said Caliphronas, walking forward in his stately fashion; "I have no love for the swarthy god of the Cyclops. For me, Venus!"

"Pandemos!"

"Or Urania, I care not which, provided the goddess is herself," replied the Greek coolly. "Ah, we all worship those old pagan gods, who were but the incarnation of our own desires. You, Crispin, bow to Apollo; Mr. Maurice, you adore the Muse of Sculpture, of whose name I am ignorant; and Justinian loves the supreme Zeus, who gives power and dominion."

"And I?" asked Helena gayly; "whom do I worship, Andros?"

"The inviolate Artemis!"

"There's a good deal of truth in what you say," observed Justinian serenely; "but I should have thought your deity was Hermes."

The remark was so pointed that Caliphronas winced, but at once smiled gayly and replied in the same vein,—

"Venus and Hermes—Love and Trickery! Well, doubtless the one helps the other."

"Such aid is not always effectual," said Justinian significantly, whereat the Greek shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply.

"Well, for my part," observed Helena reflectively, "I do not worship Artemis so much as I do Demeter. There is something grand about the earth goddess who causes the earth to break into the glory of flowers."

"I think she must have been here," said Maurice, looking round at the profusion of flowers.

"Ah, these are all my treasures, Maurice. I adore flowers, and there is not a nook in Melnos where I have not hunted for blossoms. Yes, even up to the verge of the snows, where grow tiny saxifragas. Wait till you see our harvest—our vintage—then you will see Mother Demeter in her glory."

"Do you celebrate those festivals?"

"Yes," said Justinian quickly; "I keep up all the old Greek customs, though, of course, I adapt them to the needs of my people. The Bacchanalia of Melnos do not include the debauchery of Athens, nor are the Anthesphoria anything more than innocent flower festivals."

"In honor of Proserpina," exclaimed Helena gayly. "Crispin, do you remember the Flower Hymn to Demeter you wrote long ago?"

"Yes, very well; but I'm afraid my poems were very bad in those days. Can you remember it?"

"Of course; but not in Greek, in English, I translated it myself."

"Sing it, Helena," said her father, and his request was eagerly seconded by the whole company, especially by Maurice, who was anxious to hear a voice which he was sure would outvie the nightingale.

Helena clasped her hands round her knees, and, lifting up her face to the stars, began to sing in a clear, sweet voice, which, though entirely untrained, had a trill in it like the liquid notes of a bird.

I.

"Wild roses red as dawn
When nymphs awaken,
Frail lilies white and wan
As love forsaken.
With primrose pale and daffodil,
Forget-me-nots from hidden rill,
And blossoms shaken
By wintry breezes thin and chill,
From orchards on the distant hill,
With flowerets richer, rarer still,
From thy breast taken,—

II.

"Brave marigolds who in the fields
Outstay the swallow,
Sunflowers whose burning shields
Do eye Apollo,
With pansies dark as honeyed wine,
And reeds beloved by Pan divine
For pipings hollow;
Wild olive, laurel, scented pine,
All these I offer at thy shrine,
If thou wilt smile on me and mine,
And blessings follow."

When her sweet voice died away, an emulous nightingale began to sing as if in rivalry, and Helena burst out into girlish laughter.

"Do you like my translation, Crispin?"

"It is charming—much better than the words."

"No, indeed!" said Maurice, who was enchanted with the song and the singer; "as Wordsworth would say, it is a very pretty piece of paganism."

"Oh, that faint praise is worse than blame."

"Well, gentlemen," said Justinian, rising from his seat, "I am going to retire to rest, as I cannot do without my sleep. Old age is not like youth, you know. Helena!"

"I am going, father," she cried, springing to her feet. "Good-night, Andros—Crispin! good-night, Maurice!"

"'Good-night, and sweet dreams be thine,'" murmured Maurice from some poet.

Their departure was a sign of breaking up, for Caliphronas, not feeling inclined for a conversation with two men he disliked so much, went off immediately; and after they had finished a last pipe, Maurice and Crispin sought their repose.

"Well," said Crispin, as they parted, "what do you think of Helena?"

"Think of her!" echoed Maurice in an indescribable tone. "That she is simply perfection, far above what you told me. If your poetry is not better than your description, Crispin, it must be poor stuff."

"You are bewitched, Maurice. Beware the spells of Circe."

"Circe! No! she is no malignant enchantress, but a beautiful girlish angel."

“Nausicaa!” said Crispin gayly, and went off to bed.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MODERN ARCADIA.

Courage, my poet!
The age of iron is not yet supreme,
For youth still throbs in the old veins of Mother Earth, wan and weary with sorrowful centuries.
Tho' girdled our world by wires multitudinous transmitting the swift message of electricity;
Tho' the straight and curved lines of the railway run parallel along the immensity of continents for the advancement of culture;
Tho' ships, steam-driven, even against storms, plough the waters of perilous oceans;—
Yet somewhere beyond the confines of our selfish civilization
There lies an Arcadia among the lone mountains, or perchance encircled by tideless seas,
Wherein dwell delicate beings who know not ambition or avarice,
And work but for bread—for bread alone, tempering such toil with singing melodious, and merry pipings at sundown.
Therefore, courage, my poet!

They were early risers in Melnos, for in that invigorating climate it was impossible, even for the most indolent, to lie sluggishly in bed, and the sun was hardly above the eastern horizon before Justinian, his household and guests, were seated at breakfast. Helena was not present, having already gone out in the deliciously fresh morning air on some expedition connected with flowers; so the meal was a strictly masculine one, and the four men made their plans for the day. Crispin and Caliphronas decided to remain at the Acropolis, as they were already well acquainted with the lions of the island, the one to write letters, the other to await the return of Helena, over whose movements he kept watch with all the jealous solicitude of a doubtful lover; and Maurice, in company of Justinian, went down to the valley, in order that the Englishman might be shown all the wonders of this unique place.

The white indoor robes of the previous evening were now discarded in favor of a serviceable costume similar to that worn by the rough Cretan mountaineers,—long boots of brown leather, loose blue trousers thrust therein at the knees, a red sash, white shirt of wool, and blue jackets, together with a flowing capote and hood to cover the head when the sun grew unpleasantly strong. Justinian wore a red fisherman's cap with a gold tassel on his white locks, but Maurice was supplied with a large gray felt sombrero, the shade of which was very grateful. The island king looked

truly regal in this picturesque dress, with his long gray beard, his sun-tanned skin, fierce black eyes, and reverend locks; lithe and active as a young man, he carried his burden of sixty-five years with the greatest of ease, and as he walked beside Maurice, with a light springy step, the sculptor began to think that his companion must have discovered the secret of perpetual youth.

They walked leisurely along the mulberry avenue, in the direction of the entrance to the tunnel, and enjoyed the exquisite coolness of the morning, for the sun was not yet over the shoulder of the mountain, and the cup was still in comparative shadow. Notwithstanding this, however, the air was warm, and balmy with the scent of aromatic herbs, which delightful temperature rather puzzled Maurice, as it did not agree with the marked absence of sunlight for a greater part of the morning, and he mentioned this to Justinian.

"Certainly we do not get much of the sun in the morning owing to the mountain," answered the old man, stroking his silver beard; "but in the middle of the day, and most of the afternoon, his beams are very powerful, for at noon he is right above our heads, and the western side of the Melnos Peak is so low, that until near sunset his rays stream on the valley."

He pointed to the west, and Maurice saw that the high peaks fell away into a kind of low semicircle, which enabled them, from their position, to catch a glimpse of blue sea and distant island. On each side of this gap, however, the jagged summits stood up stern, rigid, and snow-clad against the delicately blue sky, girding the valley at the same height all round, save at the western side before mentioned.

"Still," said Maurice pertinently, "the sun is still below the eastern side of the mountain, yet the air is quite warm."

"Cannot the temple to Hephaistos solve the riddle?"

"Oh, you mean that the island is volcanic!"

"Yes; this is the crater of an extinct volcano, extinct for thousands of years, for even when the temple was built, the fires must have died out, or its builders could hardly have placed it on the inner side of the crater. It is the volcanic character of Melnos that makes it so warm and fertile. You see the slopes are covered with corn, vine, olive, in profusion, while dates, lemons, orange-trees, citrons, and all such delicate plants grow wild without cultivation. This valley is the veritable Horn of Plenty so lauded by the Hellenes."

"If we are to believe the ancient historians," said Maurice gravely, as he looked at the fertile sides of the mountain so admirably cultivated, "this was also the case with the crater of Vesuvius, yet it proved to be still active."

"What! do you think Melnos will break out again?" observed Justinian, with a shade of thought on his fine face. "Indeed we have earthquakes occasionally, but not much to speak of. I fancy the islands of the north are more of a volcanic centre than these; still the volcano may break out again—in that case I am afraid all my work will go for nothing."

"Is this island entirely your work?"

"Every bit of it," answered the old man emphatically. "Forty years ago, I came into these waters to look for this extinct volcanic island, of which I had received full information from a wandering Greek, who knew Melnos well. I duly sighted it, and, having landed, I climbed up to the summit, when I discovered this enchanting valley,

also the Temple of Hephaistos still in a tolerably good state of preservation. I had left England smarting under a sense of injury, from—from—well, it was about a woman; and I swore never to return to it. Always of an uncivilized disposition, I determined to fix my home here, and, being possessed of plenty of money, I bought this island of the Turkish Government at a pretty heavy price. They were anxious for money, especially as it was after the Greek War of Independence, which had emptied the coffers of the Sublime Porte; besides which, the Ottomans did not care about this barren rock, which was of no use to them in any way; so I bought it, and settled in the old temple, where I have now dwelt for forty long years."

"But this community—the tunnel?"

"All my works! I have, so to speak, carried out the projects of Goethe's Faust. Ah, you are astonished at my referring to that, but I am a University man, Mr. Roylands, and have not yet forgotten my learning. *Et ego in Arcadia fui*, and know the ancient colleges of Cambridge, the oozy Cam, and the delights of a town and gown row."

"You have had a strange career."

"A very happy one at all events. It was fortunate my superabundant energy found vent in the direction of making this island blossom like a rose, otherwise I would have remained a restless adventurer to the end of my days. I could not settle down to the placid life of an English gentleman; I wanted room to breathe, opportunities for daring, work—gigantic work—to do; and I found them all in Melnos."

"You have carried out your self-imposed task nobly."

"I am glad you think so. Yes; I trust I have been of some use in my generation. And, at all events, I have erected one thoroughly happy, peaceful spot,—a modern Eden,—and that is no easy thing to do in this riotous century."

"It is a modern miracle!"

And it was little else, seeing that all these gigantic works had been planned and carried out by a solitary human being; for by this time they were at the entrance to the tunnel, and as Maurice looked down the enormous flights of red limestone steps, which led to the valley below, he was truly amazed at the engineering science displayed by the man beside him. Flight after flight, now to right, now to left, stretched down the gentle slope of the mountain, and these mighty stairs were all carefully finished with heavy balustrades of the same material, neatly joined together. At certain platforms, statues of white marble, pedestalled on red blocks, stood up in proud beauty, and, seeing his guest's eyes fixed on these heroic forms, Justinian laughed.

"I am a bit of an antiquarian, Mr. Roylands," he explained as they descended, "and all over these islands I pay men to dig among ancient ruins for statues, which I do my best to restore, and then place here. This Apollo, for instance," he said, as they paused before a life-sized nude figure holding a lyre, "was found at Delos and brought to me. True, the Greek Government claim all these things, but I do not see why I should not secure them if possible, and I am sure they look better in this enchanted valley than in some stuffy museum."

Maurice, with sculptor-like enthusiasm, would fain have lingered before this masterpiece of Greek art, but Justinian hurried him impatiently away.

"You will have plenty of time to look at them again," he said as they resumed their descent, "but at present I have plenty to show you. I am glad you like my staircase."

"It is wonderful, but I think the tunnel is still more so."

"Yes; it is a fine piece of engineering," said Justinian complacently. "You see it was impossible to constantly climb up over the peaks, which involved waste of time, and a weary ascent, so I got an engineer from England, supplied him with plenty of Greeks, and they finished that tunnel in five years. I am very proud of it, I assure you."

"What about the gate in the middle of it?"

"That is absolutely necessary, not so much now as formerly, but forty years ago the Ægean was very lawless, and the government could not put down the pirates. Of course, hearing a rich Englishman had bought Melnos, those rascals thought it contained all kinds of treasures, and have made frequent assaults on it. Fortunately I have always managed to beat them off. I think the rascals have a wholesome dread of me now," finished the old man grimly.

"Now I suppose there is no danger of any attack being made."

"I am not so sure about that. King George's Government is more feared by these scamps than was King Otho's; but, though the majority of them have disappeared, there are still some left who would like to storm Melnos."

"Alcibiades?"

"What do you know of Alcibiades?" asked Justinian sharply.

"Nothing more than that he is an equivocal character. Caliphronas told me so much."

"Andros! Yes, he is far too friendly with that scamp of an Alcibiades, who is an excessively dangerous man. I do not trust Andros, and he knows it; so, out of sheer anger, he may urge Alcibiades to assault the island. An enemy without, a traitor within —it is very dangerous."

"If you distrust Caliphronas, why don't you turn him out?"

"I have no proof against him yet, but I fancy he has some scheme in his mind. Believe me, Mr. Roylands, if you have a stomach for fighting, I fancy there will be plenty of opportunity for you to indulge in it shortly."

"Oh, as for that, I should like nothing better."

"I like that," said Justinian decisively; "you are a true Roylands!"

"I trust so. But how do you know the Roylands are a fighting family?"

"All Englishmen fight, more or less," answered Justinian carelessly; "besides your name is a Norman one, and descendants of William the Conqueror's vassals are always soldiers. Hitherto you have led a quiet and peaceful life, but if we do have an island war, I don't think you will be the last to help me defend my kingdom."

"You can rely on that—nor Crispin either!"

"Oh, Crispin!" replied Justinian, a trifle disdainfully; "he is too much a man of peace to suit my fancy. But here we are at the village."

"By the way, how did you populate this new Rome of yours?"

"Oh, in the old days I was rather a celebrity in the islands,—a kind of insular Lord Byron,—and of course had my followers. When I settled here, I made all my followers come also, and admitted none but young men. They brought their sweethearts and wives, so gradually the community grew up here. Recruits come from time to time, but I admit none but those who are physically perfect and passably moral. We now number, with women and children, two hundred souls, and you will not find a deformed or lame person among the lot."

"Then you have no old people?"

"Oh yes. I am old myself, and many of my followers are of the same age. We were all young men in those days of colonization, but now age has come upon us, as you see. Some of my old comrades have died, but many are well and hearty, thanks to the salubrity of this climate. They are the sages of the village."

"Local rulers, I suppose?"

"No," retorted Justinian, with fiery earnestness; "there is only one ruler in Melnos—myself."

They were now walking down the principal street of the village, a broad thoroughfare, running between two rows of red limestone houses, from the foot of the grand staircase to the blue lake, the distance in all being about a quarter of a mile. On each side, between the pathways and the road itself, ran two lines of elm trees, the foliage of which formed a pleasant shade, while the houses, built in a tropical fashion, with wide verandas, were gay with flowers. Helena had evidently inoculated her father's subjects with a love for flowers, as on every side the eye was dazzled with a profusion of bright tints. At the lower end of the street was a wide semicircle, facing the lake, and planted with lines of beech, elm, and plane trees, while in the middle of this pleasantness stood a tall pedestal of white marble, bearing a huge bronze Zeus, seated half-draped, with thunderbolt and eagle beside him. Indeed, the statues of gods and goddesses were so frequent, that Maurice began to think his eccentric host, in order to complete his revival of ancient Athens, had re-established the hierarchy of Olympus, with himself as Pontifex Maximus. Evidently his face betrayed his thoughts, for, seeing his eyes fixed on the garlands decorating the base of the statue, the King laughed in an amused manner.

"No, no, Mr. Roylands, we are not pagans, in spite of the presence of the gods," he said, with a smile. "All my people belong to the Orthodox Church, and we have a priest, a sacred building, and everything necessary for such religion."

"Are you also of the Greek Church?"

"No, I am no renegade," replied Justinian haughtily; "but, at the same time, I am not what you would call a Christian."

"But I trust your religious principles are not those of Caliphronas?"

"No; I believe in working for the good of others, as you can see. Morally speaking, I am what you call an agnostic, though truly I believe in a supreme power. I erect my altar to τὸν ἄγναστον Θεόν, Mr. Roylands, and strive to propitiate him by helping my fellow-creatures."

The conversation now becoming rather delicate in its trenching on religious beliefs, Maurice turned it dexterously by remarking on the number of mulberry trees.

"Those are for the silkworms," explained Justinian, striking the trunk of one of these trees with his staff; "we export a great number of cocoons, and do a large trade with the mainland. We also weave silks for ourselves; the factory is to the right."

There were a great number of people in the streets, all in a similar dress to their own—that is, the men, for the women were mostly arrayed in the graceful Greek dress of the Cretans, which consisted of full white trousers reaching to the ankle, brightly colored tunics, embroidered jackets, gaudy handkerchiefs twisted round the head, and long white veils, though the latter were but assumed for festive occasions. Both men and women were very fine-looking, with oval faces, olive skins, somewhat

pointed chins, and aquiline noses, and their gait was remarkably graceful, with the stately bearing of a free race. The adults all saluted Justinian respectfully, and he acknowledged their greetings with haughty condescension, although he unbent somewhat towards the children, who crowded round him with cries of "Kalli imera Kyrion!"

"You are as populous as a hive of bees," said Maurice, as they walked down to the lake; "soon the island will be too small."

"Not for many years I hope and trust," answered Justinian, casting a look round at the now sunny sides of the mountain, which encircled them like a cup. "There is plenty of room yet; for my colony, in spite of its forty years, is only yet in its infancy. Lots of room yonder for dwellings; the soil is fertile, and affords plenty of food, and as to necessaries from the outside world, we export olives, cocoons, silks, wine, and dittany, receiving in return what we require from more advanced civilization."

"Dittany! what is that?"

"I am afraid you don't know your Virgil, Mr. Roylands. Dittany is an herb of rare medicinal power, which is found in Crete, and also in Melnos. It is excellent for illness of all kinds, especially fevers, and is as valued now as it was in the days of Pliny. Plenty of it up in the mountain yonder, as the goats are very fond of it."

"Have you goats?"

"Of course! and also sheep, though I am afraid the goats are the more numerous. Indeed, I have imported here some of the rare Cretan breed—a kind of ibex, which grows to a great size. These, of course, I will not allow to be killed; but for food we have plenty of the smaller wild goats, such as exist in many places in Greece, particularly on the summits of Olympus. You probably forget we had goat's flesh for supper last night."

"And the lake, sir?"

"Artificial purely."

"Sea-water?"

"Oh dear no. The level of this valley is considerably above that of the sea. I should be sorry were it otherwise, as, were it lower, we might run a chance of being swamped by the influx of waters. I am sure Alcibiades and his friends would be delighted to drown us like rats if they could. This lake comes from the snows yonder."

"The snows?"

"Precisely. I have had a reservoir constructed far below the snow-line, and a shoot into it from the summit of the mountain. At certain intervals I send men up, who detach great masses of snow and send them down the shoot into the reservoir. There the heat of the sun soon melts them to water, and from thence the water is taken down to the lake."

"But water always rises to its own level."

"Hence you think my valley should be an entire lake; but there is no danger of such a catastrophe happening, as my reservoir is filled in a purely artificial manner, and I take care to keep it within bounds. The pipes also down to this lake are contrived so as to regulate the influx of water, therefore there is no fear of a flood. Now you must come and see the theatre."

"The theatre! Have you playwrights and actors here?"

"Our playwrights date from old Hellenic days, and are called Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; the actors are my Greeks. Sometimes Crispin writes us a play bearing on local events, which he satirizes after the style of Aristophanic comedy—at least he did so when he lived here, but since his departure we have fallen back on Hellas for our plays."

"How often do you give performances?"

"Only once a year, at the vintage feast. Oh, we follow old customs closely here, and I hope to show you a veritable Dionysiade before you leave us. We have a three days' festival of simple mirth, without any of the coarse elements which were introduced by the later Hellenes. The first day we have the vintage festival, the second our plays, and on the third there are Olympian games."

"With what prizes?"

"As of yore, the laurel wreath. I am particularly anxious to keep up these games, as it makes my Greeks athletes, and hardens them by muscular exercises, else in this lotus-eating valley they would be apt to become indolent, and then where would Melnos be without brave men to defend her?"

"You are a perfect Spartan!"

"I believe in the Spartan training to a great extent, but I do not think the body should be trained exclusively and the mind neglected; therefore I have the tragedies performed which were unknown to Sparta. The Spartans were a fine nation of materialists."

"You are right!" said Maurice earnestly; "one should never let the material nature overpower the spiritual."

"You speak warmly."

"As I was taught. My mother was a religious woman, and trained me carefully. One cannot rid one's self of youthful teachings; we may forget them for a time, but they always force themselves before the mind sooner or later."

"Not always. I also was taught as you, but forty years of solitude—comparative solitude—and pondering have turned me into what I am—an agnostic. So your mother was a good woman? is she alive?"

"No; she died many years ago."

"And your father?"

"Is also dead. I am an orphan. No relations in the world—at least, none I care about."

Justinian gazed at the young man as if he would read his very soul, then, turning away with a half-suppressed sigh, entered the theatre.

It was modelled on that of Athens,—a large semicircle hewn out of the volcanic rock, with seats of the red limestone so frequent in Melnos. The stage faced the mountain, and had an altar beautifully sculptured in front of it, and life-sized statues of Dionysius and Phœbus on either side.

"This is our Temple of Thespis," said Justinian, as they stood in the centre of the semicircle, which was at a moderate distance from the stage. "You see it is not very large, and suitable to the size of the island and the number of population; so, as the actors can easily be seen, we need neither cothurnus nor mask. Our plays, I am afraid, are not so gigantic as those of ancient Hellas; but there is one advantage, the face is

seen, and the Greeks are wonderfully expressive in revealing their feelings by the countenance."

"All Melnos seems to be built of this red stone."

"Yes; I get it from the cliffs of the island. The tint is pleasing, and warms up the landscape. I am sorry we cannot see the ocean from the theatre, as I am very fond of the sea; but, shut in by this circle of mountains, of course that is impossible. Now we must go and see the silk factory."

After they had gone through this thoroughly,—for Justinian insisted upon Maurice taking notice of every detail,—the King showed him some hot springs just outside the village, which bubbled up from the earth, amid rugged blocks of black lava, streaked fantastically with sulphur.

"These springs are full of medicinal properties, which are useful for the cure of many diseases," he said, as they watched the light clouds of steam rising; "but we of Melnos are so healthy, that we rarely use them. Plenty of work, plenty of physical exercise, careful attention to births, and fresh air and water in abundance, keep the whole population in splendid health. It is a case of quality, not quantity."

"Have you any poets, painters, sculptors?"

"Not yet. True, sometimes rude songs are made, and rude pictures painted, but I am afraid centuries of slavery have crushed all the creative power out of the Hellenic race. However, they are free here, and have a city of refuge in this island; so, in the future, who knows but what Melnos may become a second Attica, and have her Plato, her Sophocles, her Phidias!"

"It will take years to develop all that genius," said Maurice, as they once more began to climb up the staircase.

"I am afraid so. And I dread who may come after me. I am old, and cannot live long; so when I die, unless my successor is actuated by the same desire to found a miniature Attica, as I have been, he may turn this place into a nest of robbers, in which case, I am afraid, King George's Government would interfere, and the aspirations of Melnos to revive Hellenic culture would be at an end."

"Who is to be your successor?"

"That I do not know. True, I have a daughter, but it needs a man to manage my Greeks. I took Crispin and Andros, in order to train them up as my heirs, but Crispin has become wealthy, and prefers to live in England; while Andros, or, as he now calls himself, Caliphronas, is nothing but a scamp. If he succeeded me, all my work would go for nothing. He would be a tyrant, a robber, a selfish seeker after pleasure, who would destroy the simplicity of Melnos, break all my laws, and transform it into a nest of criminals."

"Surely you have some clever men among your people?"

"Clever to serve, but bad to rule. None of them have the administrative power required for even so small a community as this. No; to succeed me, I must have an Englishman. We are a dominating race, fit to rule; and a glance round the world will show you our colonizing capabilities. By a cool head and a firm hand, I have transformed a barren island into a centre of prosperity; and if my successors only follow my policy, in a few hundred years, this little unknown island may become the centre of a great intellectual power. The Athenians, you know, were small in number, yet see the intellectual effect they produced in the world's history. These Greeks of

mine are descendants of the ancient Hellenes, and the spark of genius, nearly trampled out by centuries of Turkish misrule, is still within them. Place a plant in the dark, and it grows not; give it plenty of air and sunlight, and first the green leaves appear, then the bud, lastly the flower. These are my green leaves, which I have placed in the light; and let them be tended and looked after, who knows but what a glorious flower may be produced."

"It is a splendid—dream!"

"A dream which may yet turn out truth," answered Justinian, with energy. "See how well I have prepared the ground. My people here are physically perfect; their morality is much above what is to be found in the islands of the Ægean. I have taught them to love work and loathe idleness. The island they dwell in contains all the beauties of nature in a small space. 'Infinite riches in a little room,' to quote Marlowe. They are starting fairly under my guidance, and they will develop, as their prototypes of Athens, into a keen, cultured, intellectual race, who may give this modern world as splendid gifts of genius as did their fathers of old. But the plant needs fostering, and I, the gardener, alas! am growing old; so when I die, who will attend to this delicate flower of artificiality. What I want is to find a successor who will do as I have done."

"He will be difficult to find."

"I fear so; unless"—

Here Justinian paused abruptly, and walked rapidly along the mulberry avenue, in which they were now. Maurice waited to hear him speak, but he said nothing until he stood under the graceful Corinthian capitals of the temple pillars, when he suddenly came to a full stop, and looked at Maurice keenly.

"Mr. Roylands, do you know what I think?"

"No, sir."

"That it would be an excellent thing for you to give up your country-gentleman life in England, and come here."

"But for what reason?"

"To be my successor."

Maurice stared at him in open-mouthed astonishment, but in another moment Justinian vanished.

CHAPTER XX.

A DIFFICULT QUESTION.

If you this question strange decide,
This way, that way, at your pleasure,
It surely cannot be denied,
If you this question strange decide,
That Fate's prerogative's defied,
And thus may grudge your self-won treasure,
If you this question strange decide,
This way, that way, at your pleasure.

Certainly Maurice felt in a somewhat embarrassing position, on hearing of Justinian's offer to instal him as future King of Melnos, and he hardly knew what decision to make in the matter. At present the affair was so unexpected and bewildering that he hardly grasped the fact of its reality, and remained where he was, leaning against a pillar, wondering if he was asleep or awake. He had come to an unknown island of the Ægean Sea, and therein had beheld a miniature civilization of a most unique character, which in itself by its very fancifulness was enough to unsettle his calm reasoning powers, when lo! the man who had created this vision of dead classicism proposed to bestow it on him as a gift. There was something singularly tempting in this offer, especially to a man of Roylands' artistic temperament; for here, in this sea-girt island, he could lead a life of dreamy seclusion, and work at his art amid these rejuvenated Hellenic times, which breathed all the serenity and calm necessary to foster the craving soul of genius. In the riotous modern world of England he had often felt like an alien, and his work, imbued with modernisms, seemed feeble and meretricious after those masterpieces of Greek art which still remain to remind us of the supremacy of Attic sculptors in delineating the human figure. Devoted to his art, had Maurice been asked by some fairy to name his desire, he would certainly have demanded to be placed in kindred circumstances, calm, untroubled, serene, to those masterly Athenian creators who adorned the Parthenon with god-like forms. Lo! without the intervention of an unseen power, his wish had been unexpectedly gratified, yet, now that the boon long dreamed of was gratified, he hesitated as to the advisability of accepting it.

It was difficult for him to make up his mind, from the very contrast of the two existences which lay before him, either of which he could begin from that moment, by a mere acceptance of the one or the other. On the one hand was the turbulent nineteenth century, full of invention, discovery, feverishness, anguish, ambition, like a terrible yet fascinating dream, which involved the straining of every nerve to attain a

thankless end; and on the other hand were years of quietness, of dwelling in a modern paradise under a serene sky, with all the incentives to awaken and foster his artistic soul, a reconstruction of that calm Attic existence which seemed so far off and mist-like beyond the stormy waters of mediævalism and modern restlessness. Maurice, always impressionable to his surroundings, felt as did the Ulyssean sailors in the lotus-land, when they were loath to leave the drowsy island for fruitless toilings on the main; he thought this serene existence of Melnos, unvexed by the tumults of nations, was perfect: yet the ambitious spirit of the nineteenth-century interest in his being called out to him to come forward and take his place in the fierce fight for fame, for gold, for bread, which vexed the world of to-day. Peace or war—for social war it was in this modern struggle for existence—he did not know which to choose, and, leaning against that relic of the old classic times, when earth was young, fresh, and joyous, he dreamily pondered over the choice offered to him.

Had Keats, that born Greek, been offered the chance of dwelling in this Hellenic Elysium, how eagerly would he have accepted, and revelled in the serenity of the life, like one of his own young deities, who live so joyously in his delicate verse. Perhaps Heine, longing for the infinite charm of the antique on his mattress-grave in the Rue d'Amsterdam, might have accepted with joy this opportunity to dwell in the placid Greek world he loved so well, and of which he sang so mournfully, so exquisitely. But no!—Heine, bitter, dual soul as he was, had too much of Judaism in his soul to accept gladly a serene existence, unflavored by that bitter irony, those pen and ink wars, those modern sophistries in which his spirit delighted. Keats—yes! for he was a born Hellene. Heine—no! for the genius of the Jew fought ever with the genius of the Greek to master his soul, and his irony, his orientalism, his Shiraz roses, and blue Ganges, would have rendered him restless even under the changeless blue of the Attic skies, amid the divine beauty of serene Hellenic art.

Maurice was neither Keats nor Heine, yet partook of the nature of both. He was not a genius, having just escaped the fatal gift of artistic supremacy, still, he had a strong craving for the beautiful, a wish to create, a desire to know; but in his soul the blind craving of Keats for Beauty and Truth was marred by that fatal scepticism which blighted the genius of Heine. He had the faith of the one, the doubt of the other, and, drawn strongly either way by these opposing forces, paused irresolutely between the two. First he would accept and live the old Hellenic life, then he would refuse, lest such life should lack the sharp, salt flavor of modern existence. An ass between two bundles of hay was Maurice, but, unlike that animal, he knew that each bundle contained what the other lacked, and, greedy of both, doubtful of both, afraid of both, he was quite unable to make up his extremely unstable mind.

A man in such an embarrassing position always makes up his otherwise wavering mind to one thing, and that is, to ask advice, though in nine cases out of ten he never means to take it when given. Maurice was not sure if he would accept advice, yet nevertheless went to seek Crispin, in order to lay the matter before him, and ask what he thought was the best course for him to pursue. Crispin was wise, Crispin was friendly, and, moreover, had tried both the ancient and the modern modes of existence, as his youth had been spent in Melnos, his early manhood in civilized Europe; so surely Crispin, with a knowledge of both sides of the question, was the best to decide for the one or the other.

All the morning Crispin had been hard at work on a formidable-looking epistle to Eunice, in which he told all his perils and adventures, the departure from Southampton, the voyage down the Mediterranean, the wreck of The Eunice, and their safe arrival at Melnos. In addition to this narrative, worthy of Marco Polo at his best, he related the comforts in which he and Maurice were now dwelling, in order to set the mind of that gentleman's friends at rest; but, with considerable craft, the wily poet did not put in any words of loverly affection, as he knew well the Hon. Mrs. Dengelton would read the letter before giving it to her submissive daughter.

In order to circumvent his future mother-in-law, Crispin intended to write a separate letter to Eunice, full of his passion, and then slip it into an epistle by Maurice, whom he intended to get to write to the Rector. Mr. Carriston was a friend to the lovers, and would doubtless be able to deliver the letter unseen by the dragon; thus Mrs. Dengelton would be thwarted should she try to destroy Eunice's affection for the poet by keeping back his letters.

Near Crispin sat Gurt, at the open window, chewing the quid of reflection, and looking excessively dismal, as he found this semi-classical existence somewhat dull, and moreover, true seaman as he was, viewed a prolonged sojourn on land with much disgust. He brightened up, however, when Maurice came in, and twisted his forelock in approved forecastle fashion with a scrape of his foot.

"Which I ses t' this 'ere gent," growled Gurt in his raucous voice, "'w'ere is he?' meanin' you, sir, and Mr. Crispin ses he, 'Oh, he's gone down t' valley,' so ses I, 'He'll see the crew,' and ses he, 'It's werry likely.'"

"I'm very sorry, Gurt," said Maurice in some dismay, "but the fact is, I've been exploring the village with Justinian, and quite forgot to see after our mariners."

"I wish you had done so, Maurice," said Crispin in a vexed tone, looking up from his writing; "the poor fellows will think we have forgotten all about them."

"Oh, we will go down this afternoon," replied Maurice hastily. "I've no doubt they are all right down there. Lots of food and liquor and pretty girls! eh, Gurt?"

Crispin laughed and stroked his chin thoughtfully, while a gleam of humor shone in the solitary eye of the mariner.

"I seed," said Gurt, addressing no one in particular, "as light a little craft as I ever clapped eyes on, gents. Her deck lights raked me fore and aft, they did."

"Justinian will rake you fore and aft," observed Crispin dryly, "especially if you make eyes at his womankind. This is a virtuous island, Gurt."

"Well, sir, I ain't a-goin' agin' it, sir," growled Gurt reproachfully. "I care nothin' for the petticoats. I don't. Now if it was Dick, now"—here the old sinner cast up his eyes, as if unable to guess at Dick's enormities.

"Oh, that is the smart young boatswain," said Maurice quickly. "I'm glad he is all right. Why don't you go down and see him, Gurt?"

"Beggin' your pardon, gents both, but I dunno the bearin's of this 'ere island."

"Go along the mulberry avenue," said Crispin, as Gurt waited for an explanation, "and when you come to a flight of steps near the tunnel, go down them. When you're in the village, you'll soon find out your comrades, and tell them Mr. Roylands and myself will come down to see them this afternoon."

"Right y' are, sir," answered the seaman, going to the door with another nautical salutation. "I don't want Dick a-comin' up here to cast anchor aside my little craft."

"You've begun early, Gurt," observed Maurice, taking a seat. "What is the name of your little craft?"

"Zoe, sir; she's maid to Miss Helena."

"Well, you can go away with a contented heart, Gurt," said Crispin, laughing. "Dick won't see her if he comes here in your absence. She's gone up the mountain with her mistress."

"Right y' are, sir," said Gurt again, all of him except his head behind the curtains of the doorway. "I don't trust Dick. He's a fly-away chap, gents both, and a deal sight too handsome for my idea, sirs."

The head vanished, and Crispin laughed uproariously.

"That mahogany image is jealous, Maurice," he said, throwing himself back in his chair. "Behold the power of love! Why, Zoe wouldn't look at him; and if that good-looking young bo'swain comes on the scene, I'm afraid old Cyclops' chance will be but a poor one."

"Zoe's gone up the mountain with Helena?"

"Yes; on some flower-gathering expedition. They have been absent some hours, so Caliphronas has gone to look for them."

"Confound his impudence!"

"Why, you are as jealous of the mistress as Cyclops is of the maid! However, you need not be afraid, for Helena hates our Greek friend, and I shrewdly suspect she has taken an uncommon liking to you."

"Nonsense!"

"It's a fact, I assure you. Love in her eyes sits playing, so if you love her, and she loves you, no power can cut your love in two."

"Except Caliphronas."

"Yes, he is rather in the way; but I've no doubt Justinian will settle him. By the way, where is Justinian?"

"He left me at the steps, after making me a most extraordinary proposal."

"Indeed! and this proposal?"

"I'll tell you all about it shortly. What are you doing?"

"Writing to Eunice. This," laying his hand on the letter, "is a proper epistle which might be published to all the world, and is prepared especially for the pacification of my dear mother-in-law that is to be. I, however, want you to write to our mutual friend, Mr. Carriston, and enclose a note of mine meant for the eyes of Eunice alone. The Rector is our friend, and will manage to give it to her unknown to Mrs. Dengelton."

"Oh, I will write with the greatest of pleasure, and enclose your letter. Besides, I wish to ask the Rector's advice on a very important matter."

"I can guess what that important matter is," said Crispin gayly; "but why not ask my advice?"

"I am going to, in a few minutes. By the way, to revert to the letters, how are you going to get them posted?"

"Oh, Justinian has a felucca laden with currants, silks, and what not, going to Syra to-morrow,—Syra, you know, is the great mercantile station of the Cyclades,—and these letters will go in charge of the skipper. From Syra they will easily go to England by the French packet, via Marseilles."

"Have you any other letters to write—I mean about the shipwreck?"

"Of course; I have written to my solicitors, telling them all about the wreck, and instructing them to see the insurance people; but I suppose nothing can be done till I go back to town myself, and take all the survivors with me. They, I suppose, will have to give all kinds of evidence about the smash-up of The Eunice before the insurance money will be paid."

"What about Martin's relations and the dead sailors'?"

"I am writing about that also. By the way, Maurice, we must get Justinian this afternoon to take his men and go down to the sea-shore to look after the bodies of those poor fellows. It seems horribly heartless of us talking and laughing like we did last night, when so many human beings have lost their lives."

"It does rather, Crispin; but if we had mourned it would not have made much difference. Hang it! that sounds rather cruel. Crispin, I am afraid a semi-barbaric life is making me heartless."

The poet said nothing, but, with a sad expression on his face, stared at the table. It did seem heartless for them both to be light-hearted and merry when Martin and the majority of his brave crew had gone to the bottom; but there was some excuse, for they themselves had narrowly escaped a similar fate, and that in itself was enough to make them buoyant. After all, the dead are dead, and crying will not bring them back; but both the Englishmen determined to search for the bodies that very afternoon, and give them Christian burial, which was the only thing they could really do for their lost comrades.

"What about those sailors?" asked Maurice, suddenly looking up.

"Oh, they must remain here until we can find some chance of sending them to Syra. In fact, I'm not sure if I won't tell my agents to send me out another yacht to replace The Eunice, and then they can all ship on board of her."

"You extravagant fellow; another yacht! Even twelve thousand a year will not stand such reckless use of money."

"Oh, I won't lose anything," replied Crispin cheerfully. "I am not too much of a poet to neglect business, and The Eunice was heavily insured. When the money is paid by the underwriters, as it must be on my return to England, it will go a long way towards the purchase of another boat."

"So much for the buying; but can you trust your agents to get you a yacht as good as the one you have lost?"

"Perhaps not in an ordinary case, but fortunately the twin ship to The Eunice is in the market, and resembles her in all respects. That was a few months ago, so if she is still to be had, I will instruct Danton & Slabe to purchase her on my behalf, and send her to the Piræus. Then, when we are tired of Melnos, we can cross over to the mainland, and have a cruise up the Black Sea before returning to England."

"That does not sound as if you were anxious to see Eunice," said Maurice dryly.

"I will be very glad to see Eunice again," answered Crispin, reddening slightly; "but the fact is, I have a small scheme in my head to get Eunice and her mother, in company with Mr. Carriston, to come out to Athens in my new yacht."

"But with what idea?"

"Well," said Crispin, looking down, "the fact is, Maurice, I do not trust your aunt."

"As to that, I don't blame you," answered that lady's affectionate nephew quietly.

"If she sees a better match for Eunice than I am," resumed Crispin calmly, "she will force the poor child into a marriage, and give me the go-by. Mind you, Maurice, I love Eunice dearly, and in my eyes she is nearly perfect, but I cannot conceal from myself that she has a somewhat weak nature, and is dominated by her terrible mother. Once she is my wife, and away from that influence, she will learn to be more self-reliant, and less biassed by other people. Now, I see perfectly well that there is going to be trouble here about Caliphronas."

"I agree with you there. Caliphronas evidently wants to marry Helena, who does not like him; and, moreover, Justinian refuses to favor the marriage in any marked degree, so Caliphronas is just the kind of sneaking scamp to go over to Alcibiades, and, if possible, make trouble."

"If that is the case, we are here for some time, and as I see you take the same view of it as I do, you must perceive that we are here for some months. If, then, I am away from England all that time, Mrs. Dengelton will certainly try to persuade Eunice that I will not come back, and marry her to some one else. However, if I can get Eunice out here, I think I can trump Mrs. Dengelton's best trick. Do you think, if I instruct my agents about the yacht, and write to Mrs. Dengelton and the Rector, that they will come out to Athens?"

"As to that, I am not sure," replied Maurice slowly, "but I trust so, with all my heart, as I wish to ask the Rector's advice."

"So you mentioned before, and promised to ask mine. I will be delighted to give it to you, so tell me what is the matter. Helena?"

"Partly."

"Hum! Caliphronas?"

"Partly."

"Ho, ho! and Justinian?"

"Yes."

"A very pretty trinity," said Crispin, lighting a cigarette. "Well, what's to do?"

Maurice tilted his chair back against the wall, and followed Crispin's example with regard to tobacco, and prepared for a long talk on—to him—a serious subject, viz. the settlement of his future life in one way or the other.

"First of all," said Maurice slowly, "I have been all over the village with Justinian, and I cannot tell you how amazed I am. That such a community, that such great works, should owe their origin to one man, is, I think, a miracle. This dream of Justinian's regarding a new Hellas may or may not come to pass, but he has certainly laid the foundations of a small independent state in a wonderfully judicious manner. What his real name is, I, of course, do not know, but the one he has taken certainly suits him admirably; he is a Justinian—a born law-giver, and his system meets all the requirements of this simple community. As he says himself, so long as he is at the helm, things will go on all right, but should he die—which at his age is not unlikely—the success or failure of this infant intellectual state depends on his successor. A wise, clear-headed man will carry out the scheme to a successful issue; but a hot-tempered, selfish ruler would doom the whole thing to destruction. Justinian told me that he had brought up both you and Caliphronas as his successors; but as to yourself, you went in search of fame and love in England, and severed yourself entirely from his island community."

"I did not know Justinian desired me to succeed him," said Crispin in a tone of wonderment; "but even had I known, I hardly think things would have gone differently. I am a poet, not a ruler; and Napoleons are made of stronger stuff than mere bards piping their idle song, and letting the world go by. No; Justinian never hinted at such a thing; and I always thought that he favored Caliphronas as the heir to his island throne."

"Caliphronas!" echoed Maurice in a tone of deep disdain. "No; Justinian is too keen a judge of character to mistake our Greek goose for a swan. He told me himself that he does not trust Caliphronas, and more than suspects him of having an understanding with that rascal Alcibiades regarding the capture of Melnos."

"The deuce!"

"Yes; you may well be astonished; but, from what I have seen of Caliphronas, I believe it is quite likely to happen, the more so as this handsome Greek's vanity will receive a severe blow when he is refused—as he certainly will be—by Helena. Well, you can see that Justinian will not have Caliphronas to succeed him on his island throne, so, you two candidates for the purple being thus disposed of"—

"Yes?" asked Crispin curiously, as Roylands hesitated.

"He wants me to ascend the throne when vacant."

"You?"

"Myself! Are you not astonished?"

Crispin twirled his cigarette in his fingers, looked thoughtfully at the red tip as if consulting it as an oracle, and then made slow reply.

"Yes, and no. Justinian evidently sees in you a clear-headed man, who would carry out his scheme if you honorably promised to do so. He is English, you are English, and he trusts none but his own countrymen, so I cannot say that his offer to make you his successor startles me very much."

"But, my dear Crispin, granted I have these capabilities you so kindly gift me with, of which I am doubtful, Justinian has only known me two days, and a clever man as he is could scarcely come to a conclusion so quickly."

"Justinian is a good judge of character, and can tell the nature of a man in five minutes, where you or I would take five years in the search. Besides," added the poet, with an imperceptible smile, "he may have another and stronger reason."

"You mean Helena, I suppose?"

Now Crispin did not mean Helena at all; but as what he did allude to was not his own secret, he let Maurice believe that his supposition regarding Helena was the right one.

"Well, yes; I suppose Helena is a reason."

"Do you think he would let me marry her?" asked Maurice breathlessly.

"I am certain he would," answered Crispin, looking straight at his companion; "quite positive. But you—what about yourself?"

"I love her dearly."

"Two days' acquaintance—you love her dearly! Is that not rather sharp work?"

"Two days!" echoed Maurice contemptuously. "I have known her longer than that. I fell in love with her portrait, as you know, and resolved, if she had the qualities I thought she had from her face, I would marry her. From what I have seen of her, I am certain she has those qualities, and would make me a good wife, provided always she

consents to marry me. Beautiful, pure, charming, simplicity itself; oh, my friend, she is indeed a prize I may think myself lucky in winning!"

"When a man is in love," said Crispin intensively, "it is no use reasoning with him; and, as regards Helena, I quite approve of all you say. She will make you an admirable wife; but, think to yourself, how will this uncultured, simple girl look beside the cultured ladies of England?"

"That is the very point about which I desire to ask your and the Rector's advice," said Maurice eagerly. "Will I marry Helena, and accept the post of governing this island? or will I marry Helena, and go back to Roylands?"

"In any case, I see it is 'marry Helena,'" rejoined his companion dryly; "but really I hardly know what to say. Life here is charming and indolent. You like charm and indolence, so why not stay here? On the other hand, you have your ancestral acres, your position in the world, to think of, and if you value these more than a life in this delightful Castle of Indolence—well, go back."

"I don't know what to do."

"Well, I have given you my advice, and, as is usual in such cases, you will not take it."

"It is such a difficult question."

"Granted! but you will have to decide one way or the other shortly. One thing is certain, that it would be beneficial to your art."

"That is true enough."

"After all," said Crispin seductively, "what better life can you desire? A ready-made kingdom, small and compact—a delightful climate—obedient subjects—a lotus-eating existence—and Helena!"

"It is delightful—but duty?"

"Oh!" cried Crispin, shrugging his shoulders, "of course, if you are going to invoke that bogie, I have nothing further to say. Ask the Rector."

"What do you think he will say?"

Crispin burst out laughing, and, sauntering to the window, threw his burnt-out cigarette into the green grass beyond.

"Did ever any one hear such a man? My dear fellow, I cannot tell you what the Rector will say. He is an ardent Hellenist, with his Aristophanic studies, and may say, 'Stay, by all means!' On the other hand, he is an English Church clergyman, with strong opinions as to the absenteeism of landlords, and the duties they owe their tenants, in which case he will certainly make you come back. But in either event you will have your dear Helena."

"I'm not so sure of that, Crispin. If I refuse Justinian's request, he may refuse me Helena."

"Certainly; that is not impossible," replied Crispin, returning to his writing. "However, I will write to my agents about the yacht, to Mrs. Dengelton and the Rector about their joining us at Athens. At my invitation the Rector may not come, at yours he will."

"Why?"

"Because you, my dear, simple old Maurice, are the apple of his eye; and if you write him on the question of your staying here, he will certainly hurry out at once, so as to see for himself how matters stand, and advise you for the best."

"Will you write as you intend? and I will also send a letter to Carriston."

"Don't forget to enclose mine," said Crispin warningly. "Remember you are to that extent responsible for my wooing with Eunice. Will you write your letter now?"

A delicious burst of girlish laughter sounded from the court.

"Helena!" cried Maurice, rising up so quickly as to upset his chair.

"Go away! go away!" said Crispin resignedly; "no chance of your writing now with that sound in your ears. But, as the boat does not go till to-morrow, you can have a holiday with Helena this afternoon; therefore, go away."

"Caliphronas is with her," said Maurice, hesitating.

"And has been all the morning. Faint heart never won fair lady, so if you don't oust your rival, I am afraid she will be married by him under your nose."

"I'm hanged if she will!" cried Maurice angrily.

There was a second burst of laughter, upon which Crispin, with raised eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, pointed to the door, and resumed his writing.

Maurice paused irresolutely, looked at the poet, and then darted out of the door like a swallow, to find Helena standing alone in the court, with her arms full of flowers.

"I have been flower-hunting on the mountains," said Helena graciously; "and this wild rose is for you."

CHAPTER XXI.

CAPTAIN ALCIBIADES.

Sir! there are three degrees of robbery,
With different names, but meanings similar:
For he who does his thievish work himself
Is but a common foot-pad! quite unfit
To mix in gentlemen's society.
A bandit, brigand, robber chief, is he
Who has a dozen men or so to rule,
And steals your daughter, burns your tenement,
Or holds you prisoner till a ransom's paid.
But he who, having armies at command,
Robs brother monarchs of their territories,
Is called a conqueror, because he thieves
Upon a large and comprehensive scale.
Thief, brigand, conqueror! believe me, sir,
The size o' the theft is all the difference;
For, call them what you please, they're criminals.

Justinian, having ascertained all particulars about the wreck of The Eunice the previous day, had sent a number of men to look after the bodies of those unfortunates who had been cast up on the beach of Melnos, and now, in company with the three young men, and the surviving sailors, went to the sea-shore in order to give the corpses decent burial. Conducted by a body of his Greeks, bearing torches, he went down through the tunnel, and speedily arrived at the outer entrance, from which a sandy beach sloped down to the harbor. Not that it was exactly a harbor, but Justinian had aided Nature to form one, by erecting a breakwater from the end of a jutting promontory, which breakwater, built of huge undressed stones, ran out in a curve into the tideless sea, and thus embraced a calm pool of water, which sufficiently protected ships at anchorage. Beyond, the ocean at times was rough enough, and at stormy seasons dashed its white waves over the rocky mole, but within that charmed circle there was no danger, and the smallest boat was as safe there as it would have been on the serene waters of a mountain lake. This was the work of the English engineer who had planned and carried out the piercing of the tunnel, and Maurice could not withhold his admiration at the perfection of the whole scheme, for without this breakwater it would have been impossible for any sized craft to cast anchor off the craggy coast of the island.

"I have two harbors of this kind," said Justinian, as they looked at the small boats, feluccas, and caïques which filled the pool; "one you see, the other is on the opposite side of the island. As it faces to the west, of course it suffers more from storms than this one, but I built it in order to facilitate escape in time of trouble should the tunnel be taken by assault."

"I hardly understand."

"There are only two ways of getting into the interior of Melnos. The one is by this tunnel, the other is a pass which cuts through the western side of the mountain where it falls away in a semicircle, as I showed you. Owing to the height of the peaks around, their ruggedness, their being covered all the year round with snow, it is impossible for any outside enemy to climb over them. This tunnel and the western pass are the only modes of ingress and egress, as I have explained. Should this tunnel therefore be forced, and we find ourselves unable to defend the island, all we have to do is to retreat through the pass I told you of, down to the harbor on the other side, where there are plenty of boats ready to take us to a place of safety. Of course I trust in the courage of my Greeks, and the difficulties an enemy would encounter in capturing the tunnel, so I hardly expect such a contingency as flight by the western pass would occur; still, it is always as well to be prepared for emergencies."

"You have thought of everything," said Maurice admiringly.

"Danger sharpens a man's wits," replied Justinian coolly; "and when I first came to Melnos, I was surrounded on all sides by rascals of the Alcibiades type."

"Alcibiades is only a smuggler," observed Caliphronas, who was listening to this discourse.

"Alcibiades is whatever pays him best," retorted the king in great ire; "it is only fear of King George's Government that keeps him from hoisting the black flag, and making these islands of the Ægean a nest of iniquity. I believe you are a filibuster at heart yourself, Andros."

The Greek laughed consciously, but did not contradict the old man.

"I am like Alcibiades, sir," he said at length, "and go in for what pays me best—Mr. Maurice there knows my sentiments regarding life."

"I do; and very bad sentiments they are!"

"I wonder what you would say to the views of Alcibiades!"

"He may carry his views more into practice than you do," retorted Maurice warmly, "but I defy them to be worse."

Justinian laughed at the blunt way in which Maurice spoke, so Caliphronas, having his own reasons for keeping a fair face to the old man, discreetly held his peace, and they all trudged along the beach, towards the place where the bodies of the ill-fated sailors lay.

The mast of The Eunice was still above water, but the yacht herself lay far below the blue sea, where she would probably remain until there remained nothing of her save the engines, which would of course defy time and the ocean, until between them these mighty destroyers rusted them to nothing. From the position in which she lay, and the general calmness of the water, it is probable the yacht could have been set afloat again; but the Greeks of the Cyclades have not sufficient energy for such a task, and the underwriters would no doubt rather pay the insurance money than waste more in an attempt to raise the wreck from the depths below.

Twelve bodies had been thrown up by the sea, but the rest of the crew—with the exception of the ten sailors, including Gurt—were buried deep in the ocean. Far up in a sheltered nook, under the red cliffs, twelve graves had been dug in the soft sand, and in these were the ill-fated seamen laid. Martin's body was not among them, and it doubtless lay in a sailor's grave nigh the island, encircled by sand, seaweed, and many-colored shells. The funeral ceremony did not take long, but, as Justinian refused the office, Maurice undertook the task of chaplain, and, with a voice full of emotion, read the beautiful burial service of the Church of England over the remains of the dead sailors, which were then covered up, and roughly-made wooden crosses placed at the head of each humble grave, with the name of each and date of death carved thereon. All those present stood bareheaded during the ceremony, even the Melnosians, who were gentlemen enough not to offend the prejudices of the strangers wrecked on their rugged shores.

Everything having thus been done, in order to show respect to the dead, Justinian and his party returned to the entrance of the tunnel, and Dick, the smart young boatswain before mentioned, attached himself to Maurice, for whom he had a great admiration. Dick had received an education much above that of the average British tar, and Maurice found him a very companionable fellow, but one who bore a great hatred for Caliphronas, as he seemed to think the lively Greek was the cause of all the misfortunes which had overtaken The Eunice.

"A kind of Jonah, sir!" said Dick in a whisper, for Caliphronas was walking just ahead of them with Justinian; "if we'd a-chucked him overboard, I don't believe the boat would have gone ashore."

"Come, Dick, you cannot say the Count had anything to do with the storm."

"Well, I don't know, sir," replied Dick doubtfully, "but I don't believe in him one bit. Why, sir, he cut that rope on purpose!"

"I know he did!"

"D—n him!" muttered the boatswain in a tone of suppressed rage; "why don't you have it out with him, sir?"

"I can't very well, Dick. Doubtless he cut that rope, as you say, on purpose; but he was so overcome by terror that he might not have known what he was doing."

"He's a coward, sir—a miserable coward! and he wasn't overcome so much by terror, as not to save his own life. How long do we stop here, sir?"

"I can hardly tell you. Mr. Crispin has sent to England for a new yacht, which will proceed to Athens. I expect we will be here at least a month."

"Lord bless you, sir, I don't mind! It's a jolly sort of place, though I can't say I like their sour wine, but the girls are pretty."

"Dick, Dick, you are too inflammable! Take care you don't get into trouble over these women. Greeks are jealous, you know!"

Dick grinned, as much as to say he considered jealousy of little moment where a pretty woman was concerned, and then asked Maurice a question which made that gentleman laugh heartily.

"You don't happen to know a girl here called Zoe, sir?"

"Oh, Gurt has been speaking about her," said Roylands with a smile; "she is Miss Helena's maid, and Gurt has laid his heart at her feet."

"She won't have anything to say to a battered old hulk like that, sir."

"Perhaps you think a tight young craft like you would succeed better. Now, Dick, you behave yourself. I've no doubt all the girls in the island are in love with you, so leave Gurt's ewe lamb alone."

"Oh, I'm not going to poach on Gurt's preserves, sir," said Dick apologetically; "but the way he brags about Zoe is sickening, and I want to have a look at her. She must be the beauty of the island."

Maurice had his own opinion as to who was the beauty of the island, but, of course, did not impart such information to Dick, who, after respectfully saluting, fell back among his brother sailors, and began to tease the one-eyed Gurt about Zoe, a proceeding which had but little effect on that hardened mariner.

The boat which was going to Syra that day was now lying in the harbor ready to start, and Justinian went on board to give some final orders to her captain, while Crispin also accompanied him, in order to place his bundle of letters in charge of the skipper. He had told Justinian about his proposed purchase of another yacht, a proceeding of which the astute ancient much approved, as, if any of the anticipated troubles came to pass, the yacht would be useful to bring soldiers from Syra to aid him in defending the island.

"Your sailors can stay here until the new boat comes out," said Justinian thoughtfully; "for if Caliphronas, as you call him, plays the traitor, we will require as many men as we can to defend ourselves."

"But Alcibiades has not an army."

"Alcibiades knows all the scum of the Levant, and I have no doubt can get a few hundred scamps together. They have no fear of the Government, for if they stormed and took Melnos, after plundering the island, they would only have to dissolve again among the population in order to escape. No one could accuse them of their teacup war."

"But have we weapons for our men?" asked Crispin, with considerable trepidation.

Justinian smiled grimly.

"When we go back to the Acropolis, I will show you my armory. I have plenty of guns and pistols of the most modern construction, and many of my Greeks are good shots too. Oh, I haven't neglected the useful for the ornamental, I assure you. What are you looking at?"

"Alcibiades."

"Alcibiades!" cried Justinian, with a roar like a lion, looking towards the shore, where a number of men were standing, among them a heavy-looking fellow talking eagerly to Caliphronas. "So it is. I wonder what brings the rascal here! I must get him away from Melnos at once. Crispin, Roylands, get into the boat—there is no time to lose!"

The active old man rapidly delivered his final orders to Captain Georgios, and then hastily scrambled down to the boat, followed by the two young men. They were speedily pulled ashore, and Justinian, springing on to the rocks, strode up with a frowning face to the group surrounding Alcibiades and Caliphronas, pushing the men on either side with haughty roughness.

"Now, then, Captain Alcibiades, what do you want at Melnos?"

Maurice looked curiously at this celebrated individual, of whom he had heard so much, and beheld a squat, heavily-built man, with fiery eyes, an evil countenance, and

a long black beard. He was clad in the usual dress of Greek sailors, consisting of rough blue trousers and jacket, boots of untanned leather, a red shirt, and a tasselled cap of the same color. To mark his rank, however, he wore a handsome gold-embroidered belt round his waist, in which were placed a rusty-looking knife and a brace of pistols. This, then, was the renowned Captain Kidd of these waters, who, had he lived fifty years earlier, would have been a declared pirate, but who now, owing to the establishment of New Hellas, had to carry on his rascally calling under the pious guise of smuggling and peaceful trading. With his rough dress, his squat figure, his tangled black beard, he formed a great contrast to the slender form of Caliphronas, with his clean-shaven face and dandy costume of an Albanian Palikar. Yet, in spite of the difference in good looks, the two men had the same cunning expression in their shifty eyes, and there was but little doubt that the rough blackguardism of the one was only refined into the astute scoundrelism of the other.

"Well, Alcibiades!" demanded Justinian, imperiously stamping his foot; "what do you want with me?"

"Kyrion Justinian," said the smuggler in a cringing manner, "I but landed here to see you and the Kyrion Andros about a cargo of wine I wish to obtain for Crete. I will pay you a good price for it, as the grapes of Melnos are much thought of at Khanea."

Justinian, on receiving this diplomatic answer, ran his fingers thoughtfully through his silver beard, and pondered as to what answer to give. He was never averse to turning an honest penny by trading, and he knew Alcibiades would pay a good price, as the wine of Melnos was much liked by the Cretans on account of its resinous taste, for the insular Greeks do not as a rule preserve their vintage in this way, which is peculiar to the mainland.

"How much do you want?" he said abruptly.

"Two hundred skins," replied Alcibiades glibly; and named what he considered a fair price.

"Do you think I desire to make you a present of the wine?" retorted Justinian scornfully. "Double your offer."

"Kyrion! impossible!" cried Alcibiades, throwing up his hands with a look of dismay on his crafty-looking face.

"You won't get it for less."

Alcibiades cast a stealthy look at Caliphronas, and considered a few moments.

"Effendi, I will do it," he replied, with the air of one who has made a great sacrifice; "but I will be ruined—yes, ruined!"

Justinian nodded curtly, and, turning on his heel, went towards the tunnel, followed by all. Maurice, of course, had not understood a word of the preceding conversation, conducted as it was in Greek; and even Crispin found the speech of Alcibiades a little difficult at times, as that piratical individual was in the habit of mixing up his own tongue with Turkish, French, Italian, and sometimes a scrap of English.

"Crispin, walk with me—I wish to speak to you," said Justinian; and, the poet having obeyed this command, Maurice was left in the congenial company of Alcibiades and the Count.

Captain Alcibiades kept casting curious glances at Maurice, for Caliphronas had told him about this rich Englishman, and the agreeable old pirate was wondering, in his guileless way, if it would not be possible to kidnap this wealthy foreigner, and

hold him in his own little rocky island until such time as his relatives paid a good ransom. Alcibiades was a genuine brigand of the type described by M. About, and, but that he had fallen on evil times of peace and quietness, would doubtless have risen to high rank in his adored profession. With a view to satisfying himself personally as to the wealth of this traveller, Alcibiades, guessing Maurice did not know Greek, spoke to him in French, with which Maurice was sufficiently well acquainted to enable him to hold an interesting conversation with this accomplished cut-throat.

"Monsieur is staying here?" asked Alcibiades, blinking his little eyes.

"For a time—yes!"

"Aha! Monsieur is the friend of my dear Andros, so to myself he is also a dear friend. I lay myself at your feet, monsieur."

"Very kind of you," retorted Maurice, who was not at all pleased by the implied friendship.

"Monsieur is rich?"

"What's that to do with you?"

"Eh, my faith! do not be angry, monsieur. All Englishmen are rich."

"That is a common delusion with you foreigners. All Englishmen are not rich."

Alcibiades shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands in the French fashion.

"Monsieur is disposed to be witty."

By this time they had arrived at the entrance to the tunnel, and Justinian who had been in earnest conversation with Crispin, turned round sharply to Alcibiades.

"You will wait here," he said imperiously.

"Will not my men come up in order to carry down the wine?" said Alcibiades, looking as black as thunder at this peremptory order.

"No. I will send my men down with it, and you can pay the money to Andros here."

"But, Effendi"—

"Enough! I have spoken!"

"Holy St. Elmo! you will not let me visit your island?"

"No farther than this," retorted Justinian significantly. "You know the proverb, Captain Alcibiades,—'Ill to him who shows his treasure freely.'"

He turned his back on the baffled cut-throat, and ascended the stairs, followed by his own men, while Alcibiades and his ruffians remained below, evidently mad with anger at having admittance refused them. Rumor said Melnos was full of treasure, and the crafty smuggler wanted to convince himself of the truth of this with his own eyes, so the prohibition against passing the palisade made him very wrathful. The king, however, paid no attention to his black looks, but resumed his journey, with Crispin and Maurice on either side of him. Caliphronas, on the weak pretext of asking Alcibiades some question about the wine, remained behind, a fact which was at once noted by the lynx-eyed Justinian.

"Traitor!" he growled in his deep voice, stroking his beard, as was his habit when angered; "the fox to the fox. Ah, well I know those two rascals are hatching plots against me."

"If you think so, why do you want Caliphronas to go with Alcibiades?"

"Cannot you see, Crispin. You will never make a diplomatist. I will tell Roylands here, and I am sure he will discover my reason. Roylands, I am going to deliver this wine to Alcibiades, although I know he does not want it."

"Why does he buy it then?"

"Because he thought it would be a good pretext to get into Melnos and spy out the weak points of our defence. Oh, I know this is so, else he would not have given me my price so freely. I knew his plan the moment he agreed to give me what I asked, which was a very large price, and one which no honest trader could afford to give. Andros also knows of this scheme. Can you guess how I found that out?"

"Yes; because Alcibiades, looked at Caliphronas before agreeing to your price."

"Exactly!" said Justinian, with great satisfaction. "Roylands is quicker than you, my dear Crispin. When I refused to sell him the wine unless at my own price, that look to Andros was one of inquiry, and the answer was, 'Give him what he asks, or you will not see the interior of Melnos.' The rascals! I know their scheme, and will baffle them."

"Yet, with all this, you propose to send Caliphronas on a trip with Alcibiades, when they will be able to bring their plot to a head," said Crispin impatiently.

"Blind, blind, my poet! You forget Andros has not yet made up his mind on which side to be. If I give him Helena, and make him my successor, he will betray Alcibiades as readily as he would betray me if I refused. Well, the only way to meet treachery is by treachery, so I intend to lead Andros to believe that I will do what he wishes, and will then send him to cruise about with Alcibiades, quite devoted to my interest. Alcibiades, thinking Andros is on his side, will tell him all about his plans, the number of his army, and when he proposes to assault the island, all of which my good Andros will repeat to me. Once I have that information, Andros will find out that I neither trust nor like him, and that he will have neither my child nor my island."

On hearing this treacherous scheme, Justinian fell in the estimation of Maurice, who, true Englishman as he was, liked everything to be done openly; whereas this Greco-Briton partook more of Ulyssean craft than honest, fair fighting.

"Punic faith," he said at length, not knowing quite what remark to make.

"Punic faith with Punic neighbors," retorted Justinian as they paused at the gate. "If I don't baffle Andros by turning his own weapons against him, the chances are that he will side with Alcibiades, and one fine day Melnos will be attacked unawares, and we will all have our throats cut."

"Still, your mode of defeating Caliphronas is hardly English."

"My good sir," said the old man, with quiet irony, "Englishmen in their time have had to do just such underhand work. You forget Lord Clive and his false treaty with the Hindoo Omichund, which bound that slippery rascal to the British interest at the time of the battle of Plassy. It promised him everything before the battle, and gave him nothing after it. That is Punic faith, and is necessary in such cases. Straightforward honesty doesn't pay in these waters."

"Well, do what you think best, sir," replied Maurice, who saw Justinian was right. "It's a case of 'When Greek meets Greek,' I suppose."

"'Then comes the tug of war,'" finished Crispin gayly. "My dear Maurice, you will be happier in the actual battle than in all the statecraft which leads to it."

"I hope my statecraft will avert the struggle," said Justinian sombrely; "but with an enemy like Andros to deal with, I fear for the worst."

"What are you waiting for here?" asked Maurice, seeing they still lingered at the gate.

"For Andros," replied Justinian quietly. "I alone possess the key, and the gate is never left unlocked. Ah, here is my Carthaginian. Now, you two gentlemen, go on, and leave me to Andros and my Punic faith."

Maurice and the poet, followed by all the English sailors, entered the gate and resumed their ascent, while the wily Justinian waited with an inscrutable face to entrap the equally wily Caliphronas, who this time, however, had found his master in treachery.

"What do you think of Justinian, Maurice?" asked Crispin, when they were once more in the open air, standing at the head of the staircase, and watching the sailors descending to the village below.

"To speak frankly, I like Justinian."

"In spite of his Punic faith?"

"As for that," replied Maurice, coloring a little, "necessity knows no law; and Caliphronas is such a consummate scoundrel, that I can hardly blame Justinian for trying to beat him with his own weapons."

"Justinian is a serpent of wisdom," said the poet reflectively, taking off his sombrero. "You can have no idea how dexterously he manages these slippery Greeks. They have a wholesome respect for him, as they well may have, seeing that not one of them has ever yet had the better of the King of Melnos."

"You used to speak bitterly of Justinian yourself, Crispin. Are your opinions changed?"

"Yes; I must admit they have changed, and for the better. What you told me the other day about Justinian desiring me for his successor has opened my eyes. It was a fear of losing me that made him refuse to tell me my real name, for he thought I would forsake him and go back to my kinsfolk."

"Well, you have certainly forsaken him."

"Yes; but I don't think he regrets it, as he sees I am not made of the stuff necessary to rule this colony of serpents; so now he has no further reason to keep me in the dark, and will, I feel sure, tell me what I wish to know before we leave Melnos."

"But you said Justinian thought you were not brave enough."

"So he did! so he does! But I fancy I am indebted to my dear friend the Count for that. In all our expeditions with Alcibiades, Justinian was absent, so he could not have personally seen me fighting, and I can only think that Caliphronas, to oust me out of the possible throne, told this about me."

"I am sure you are not a coward," said Maurice warmly.

"No, I don't think I am," replied Crispin equably. "I fancy if Justinian had seen the storm he would have changed his opinion about Caliphronas; but, as to myself, I hope yet to right myself in the eyes of the old man. I am glad you have such a good opinion of me, Maurice."

"My dear fellow," cried Roylands, grasping him by the hand, "I have the best possible opinion of you in every way, and always had!"

"Even when I was a mystery?"

"Yes; though I own you were puzzling at times. But you are a coward in one way, Crispin."

The poet flushed redly, and Maurice hastened to finish his sentence.

"In the presence of Mrs. Dengelton."

“He would be a bold man who felt no fear in the presence of that lady,” answered Crispin, his face clearing again. “But here comes Caliphronas with a smiling face.”

“A sign that Justinian has succeeded.”

The Greek advanced towards them with a merry laugh, and looked triumphantly at Maurice, who bore his insolent self-complacency with wonderful composure.

“I will not see you two gentlemen for a few days,” he said gayly. “I am going on a cruise with Alcibiades.”

“More piracy?”

“Perhaps,” answered Caliphronas mysteriously. “Good-by for the present. I must go down to look after the wine, and if you go back to the Acropolis, tell Helena I will see her before I go.”

With a jeering look at Maurice the duped scoundrel sprang down the steps, his snowy fustanella fluttering in the breeze, and he glittered down the descent like a brilliant falling star.

“You fool!” said a voice behind them, and they turned to behold Justinian with a complacent smile on his face.

“Well, you have succeeded, sir,” observed Maurice doubtfully.

“I have. Caliphronas thinks he has it all his own way. I see you don’t yet like my tactics.”

“Well, sir”—

“Tush!” replied Justinian coolly. “Punic foes—Punic faith!”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE APPLE OF DISCORD.

A woman caused the fall of man,
A woman caused the fall of Troy;
An apple both these woes began,
Which brought beneath pale Sorrow's ban
All earthly joy.
For Eve was fair, and Helen fair,
Each wrought destruction by her face;
They captured hearts in beauty's snare,
And made mankind the burden bear
Of their disgrace.
To-day the story we repeat:
A woman wins or loses all;
She plucks the fruit for us to eat,
We taste and find the apples sweet,
And then we fall.

The ill-fated Eunice had been wrecked about the middle of August, and it was now nearly the end of September, close on the celebration of the vintage feast, which Justinian determined to celebrate with great splendor, so as to gratify Maurice with an accurate representation of the ancient Dionysia of Athens.

Crispin for the moment had resumed his old occupation of playwright, and had furbished up one of his old dramas, not having the time to write an absolutely new one. In this play both Caliphronas and Helena were to take part, and the author himself, like a modern Æschylus, acted as stage manager, drilling the chorus, arranging the scenery, attending to the music, and coaching the principal actors in their parts. The people of Melnos were also busily preparing for the vintage feast of the first day, and for the Olympian games of the third; but amid all these peaceful occupations Justinian kept a watchful eye on Caliphronas, and neglected nothing that might guard the island against a sudden assault by Captain Alcibiades and his gang.

Completely deceived by the manner of the Demarch, which was Justinian's local title among his people, Caliphronas, now assured both of Helena and Melnos, eagerly entered into the plans of the cunning old man, and, on returning from a week's cruise with Alcibiades, revealed a wide-stretching conspiracy among the Levantine Greeks for the capture of Melnos. Far and wide Alcibiades with great art had instilled a belief into the minds of all the idlers, vagabonds, and scamps of the Ægean, that Melnos contained immense treasures, and weekly, leaders of bands of men repaired to

Alcibiades' rocky little island to receive instructions as to how their plans were to be carried out. Of course, the wily old pirate was the leader, and arranged all his schemes in the most dexterous manner, for he gave his commands to those chief men who came to see him, and they, returning to their own islands, communicated such orders to their own followers. By this means Alcibiades had collected quite an army, all eager for plunder, and they had arranged among themselves to attack Melnos, either by the tunnel or the western pass, at the first convenient opportunity.

It may seem strange in the eyes of civilized people that such a conspiracy should be planned and carried out under the very nose of the Greek Government, but all the operations were conducted with great caution; the different portions of the proposed army were scattered piecemeal over the islands of the Ægean, so there was really nothing to arouse the suspicion of the authorities that any revolutionary movement was in course of formation. Besides, Melnos being in the extreme south of the Archipelago and close to Crete, that home of Turkish misrule, any local disturbance would be taken comparatively little notice of, as such disturbances were quite common; so it seemed as though Alcibiades and his brother scamps were going to have things all their own way. Once they captured and plundered Melnos, they had no fear of the future, as, once they dissolved into small companies and returned to their own islands, it would be quite impossible for the Greek Government, even if they did interfere, to punish a body of men which to all appearances had no existence.

The plans of Alcibiades were very simple, for, having arranged with the leaders of the several bodies of men that they would join in his schemes, he commanded that they should all meet on his own island on a certain day,—as yet unfixed,—when in the aggregate they would number quite three hundred men, and could thus storm Melnos, which could only be defended, as they knew, by two hundred, inclusive of women. In fact, the population of Justinian's island capable of bearing arms, even including the English sailors and his guests, scarcely numbered more than one hundred and twenty men; so when the fiery old Englishman heard from Caliphronas of the strength of the enemy, he saw that the danger was indeed serious.

Melnos, however, was strongly fortified against the inroads of these ill-armed pirates, for the tunnel, defended by its palisade, could hardly be forced if held by a small body of resolute men, and the western pass was commanded by two pieces of ordnance, one on either side, which would sweep down the stormers by the score should they attempt to carry this natural entrance by assault. As to the rest of the island, it was quite impossible for the marauders to climb over the rugged, snow-clad peaks; so what with his cannon, defences, arms of the most modern construction, and his resolute men, Justinian felt that he could defy Captain Alcibiades and his ill-armed crew.

The old Demarch still permitted Caliphronas to remain in his fool's paradise, as matters were in a delicate position, and he resolved to wait until after the three days' festival before coming to a perfect understanding with the treacherous Greek. Caliphronas, therefore, regarding himself as entirely favored by fortune, became almost unbearable in his insolence, and had not Maurice known the real facts of the case, a serious quarrel would certainly have taken place between them. As it was, however, the young Englishman saw that the Greek was completely duped by his false prosperity, and would almost have pitied his blind confidence in his good

fortunes, had not the arrogance, insolence, and spite of the Count inspired him with the utmost contempt.

Caliphronas, indeed, was hated by every one in the island: by the common people, owing to the haughtiness and scorn he invariably displayed towards them; by the English sailors, who thought him a coward, and had never forgiven his treachery on the night of the wreck, which had cost their captain his life; and by all the inmates of the Acropolis, who despised this brilliant butterfly heartily. Quite unaware of the delicate ground on which he was treading, Caliphronas, in his gorgeous Albanian costume, swaggered about the place in a most offensive manner, and quite assumed the demeanor of a despot, much to the amusement of Justinian, who chuckled grimly as he saw the blind confidence of the Greek. However, it was the calm before the storm, and everything went along smoothly enough, save for an occasional outbreak between Maurice and the Count about Helena, who was a veritable apple of discord between these fiery young men.

Helena herself disliked Caliphronas intensely, as she was only too well aware of the mean, petty soul contained in that splendid body, and his outward beauty had no effect upon her, knowing as she did what a truly despicable wretch the man was. His admiration for her was purely a sensual one, for he knew nothing about true, pure love, and all he wanted was to have this lovely woman to himself, to be his mistress and slave. Doubtless this was the same animal passion as was cherished by Paris, son of Priam, for that other Helen, whose beauty could scarcely have been greater than that of her namesake of Melnos; and Caliphronas as his Trojan prototype was inspired by no purer deity than Venus Pandemos. When the Count paid her compliments, Helena shuddered, so instinctively did her virginal soul feel the impurity of this persistent suitor, and treated him with marked coldness, much to the anger of Caliphronas, who complained bitterly to Justinian of the scorn with which his advances were met.

"My good Andros," said Justinian one day, when he had been inveighing against the caprices of women, "why do you come to me for assistance? If that handsome face, that fine figure, that smooth tongue, cannot win the affections of a woman, nothing else will."

"I believe she likes that Englishman," muttered the Greek, in no wise pleased at the ironical tone of the Demarch.

"I am not responsible for her likes and dislikes," retorted Justinian coldly, although he heard this remark with much inward satisfaction. "However, you have my promise."

"And you will keep it?"

"Only on condition that you keep me informed of the schemes of Alcibiades."

"Oh, I will do that. I will do anything to win Helena, but if you deceive me, it will be the worst day's work you ever did."

"There is no necessity to threaten without cause," replied Justinian, bridling his anger at the insolence of the Count; "you will have both Helena and Melnos, but before announcing this publicly, I wish to wait until after the Dionysia."

"Very well," answered Caliphronas, turning on his heel; "a week or so will make no difference to me. But when I am publicly acknowledged as your son-in-law and

successor, the first thing I will do will be to turn Crispin and this insolent Englishman out of the island."

"Well, well, we'll see about that," said Justinian, with great indifference; "wait till after the Dionysia."

After this conversation. Caliphronas went away perfectly satisfied that everything was going in his favor, which was extremely foolish, as he might have guessed something was wrong from the unnatural calmness of Justinian. Formerly the old Demarch had been given to outbursts of fiery wrath when his will was crossed, however slightly; but now he bore the insolence of the Greek so quietly, that a less astute man than Caliphronas would have been placed on his guard by this unusual suavity. The Count, however, blinded by his good fortune, rushed madly forward, unseeing the abyss yawning before him, and deemed that the self-restraint of his proposed father-in-law arose from the feebleness of age. If he could have seen the passion of Justinian when he was once more alone, he would have changed his mind; but this he was unaware of, and his self-conceit and egotistical blindness kept him in perfect ignorance of the approaching storm.

It was with great satisfaction that Justinian saw the great admiration Maurice Roylands had for Helena, and with still greater, when he noticed that his daughter was disposed to look favorably on the suit of the handsome young Englishman. Helena, indeed, in spite of her real simplicity, was a born reader of character, which happy trait she inherited from her father, as she inherited the fair beauty of her Greek mother; and the more she saw of Maurice, the more she loved him for his kindly heart, his honorable nature, and the delicacy with which he treated her. Caliphronas, confident in his manly beauty, paid his addresses with the air of a conqueror,—a mode of wooing which no woman likes, and Helena least of all, as it fired her proud soul with indignation; and when she saw how deferential was Maurice in his courting, she naturally enough preferred the diffident Englishman to the over-confident Greek. True daughter of Eve, however, she was, for, in spite of her dislike to Caliphronas, she could not resist at times the temptation of speaking kindly to him, in order to arouse the jealousy of Maurice. In this she was quite successful; and though Roylands could not but deem her wise to lull Caliphronas into a false security at the present crisis, still he was madly jealous of every look she bestowed on the Greek, and the two suitors were always on terms of ill-concealed enmity with one another.

Of course Helena was quite ignorant of all her father's plans, and merely treated Caliphronas with unexpected kindness out of pure coquetry, being quite delighted when she saw how such caprice annoyed the man she truly loved. A woman may worship a man, and look upon him as the sole object of her adoration, yet even the wisest, the purest, the kindest woman cannot help teasing her god a little, out of sheer capriciousness. It is playing with fire, certainly, and many women burn their fingers at this perilous game of "I-love-you-to-day-and-you-to-morrow," yet they will indulge in such coquettish triflings, either to make the man they love value them the more, or out of pure malicious desire to see his anger. Women instinctively know that what is won with difficulty is more valued than that which is gained with ease; and besides, it flatters a man into thinking he is superior to his fellow-creatures in fascinations, when he secures an affection which has fluttered doubtfully here and there before centring finally in his precious self. Think you Cleopatra would have kept Antony so long her

slave, had she not stimulated his love occasionally by giving him cause for jealousy? By no means. Octavia was humble, faithful, true, and loving, so Marcus Antonius grew weary of such domestic virtues, and turned to Cleopatra, who kept him in a constant state of alarm lest her fickle nature should choose another lover. Helena knew nothing of Cleopatra's wiles, but she instinctively knew that the way to win a man is to place a prize almost, but not quite within his reach; so she flirted with Caliphronas, and would have flirted with Crispin, had he given her a chance, yet cared more for Maurice, whom she thus tortured, than for all the rest put together.

To-day she was on her best behavior, however, and was seated with Maurice in the court, weaving a coronal of flowers for her adornment at dinner. Helena was fond of wreaths, and rarely made her appearance at any meal without a chaplet of roses, or ivy and violets, or delicate white lilies adorning her golden tresses. Crispin was in his room, engaged in writing his drama. Caliphronas was holding the above-mentioned conversation with Justinian; and the two young people sat lazily in the sunshine, Maurice smoking cigarettes, and Helena weaving her wreath with myrtle and roses and sweet-smelling violets.

The sun shone brightly on the white marble court, with its treasures of many-colored blossoms, the fountain flashed like fire in the lustrous light, and the white pigeons whirling aloft in the cloudless brilliance of the sky, at times settled down on the roof in milky lines with gentle cooings. Helena, with her hands buried in flowers and many-colored ribbons, was humming a quaint little song of the madrigal type, set to a simple, sweet melody, which rendered it very charming.

"Chloe, take you rose and myrtle,
Weave them in a dainty fashion,
Deck with such your rustic kirtle,
They are type of Colin's passion.
For with roses do I woo thee,
Sue thee! woo thee! woo thee! sue thee!
Hey, pretty maiden, I come a-courting,
Join me, I pray, in such merry, merry sporting,
With a fa-la-la-la, pretty maiden.
Colin, take you pansies only,
From your dream of love awaken,
Deck with such your cottage lonely,
They are type of love forsaken.
For with pansies do I flout thee,
Doubt thee! flout thee! flout thee! doubt thee!
Hey, jolly shepherd, come not a-courting,
Join will I not in such silly, silly sporting,
With a fa-la-la-la, jolly shepherd."

"Where did you learn that pretty song?" asked Maurice, whom the air struck as familiar.

"My father taught it to me," replied Helena, putting her head on one side to observe the effect of a newly added rose. "Is it not dainty? Ribbons, and silks, and flowers,

and pipings; quite unlike the real shepherds and shepherdesses of Melnos, but deliciously delicate for all that."

"I wonder where your father picked it up?"

"Oh, father knows plenty of old tunes, and I am so fond of them. Why do you ask?"

"Because, curiously enough, that song was written by a Carolean ancestor of mine, and I cannot think how Justinian came to know it."

"It is strange, certainly," said Helena thoughtfully.

"Helena, who is your father?" asked Maurice impulsively.

"Demarch of Melnos."

"Yes, I know that; but what is his English name?"

"That I cannot tell you," replied Helena, shaking her pretty head. "I know nothing beyond that he is Justinian, that I am his daughter, and that this is our island."

"It's like 'The Tempest,' is it not? You are Miranda, Justinian Prospero, and I"—

"And you?" queried Helena, with a slight blush.

"Cannot you guess?" asked Maurice significantly.

The girl laughed, and looked down at her flowers.

"I suppose Ferdinand."

"Oh, you know 'The Tempest!'" said the young man, with some surprise.

"I know all Shakespeare's plays. Do you think I am so very ignorant?"

"I think you are very delightful."

"Maurice! I thought English gentlemen did not pay compliments."

"I am the exception that proves the rule," he replied audaciously. "However, I might have guessed Justinian would have an odd volume of Shakespeare about with him. The Englishman believes in the Bible and Shakespeare, the Englishwoman in the Bible and Burke."

"Who is Burke?"

"The man that wrote the 'English Peerage.'"

"What is a peerage?"

"You have read Shakespeare, and do not know what a peerage is! Helena, I'm ashamed of you!"

"If you talk like that, Maurice, I will certainly not give you this rose."

"Then I won't talk like that; so give me the rose."

"Not yet; you must win it first."

"Helena! you are as hard-hearted as the Chloe of your song."

"Am I? but if I don't give pansies"—

"Helena!"

He made a sudden movement towards her of ill-suppressed eagerness, whereupon she, having betrayed herself more than she wished to do, feigned anger to escape from the declaration which she saw was trembling on his lips. Why she did this, it was hard to say, as she loved Maurice very much, and longed to hear him tell of his passion, yet she nipped his declaration in the bud. Why? Ask a woman to solve the mystery; for it is beyond the power of any man to unravel.

"See!" she said playfully; "you have upset all my flowers. Pick them up at once."

The obedient Maurice went down on his knees before this pretty tyrant and began to collect the flowers. The position was worse than the words, so Helena, seeing the danger, hastily began to talk of the first thing that came into her head.

"Talking about 'The Tempest'—who is Andros?"

"Ariel for looks, Caliban for wickedness."

"And Crispin?"

"Crispin is Gonzalo, the honest old counsellor."

Helena made a pretty grimace, and ordered Maurice back to his chair, which was at a safe distance, and did not admit of any embarrassing endearments.

"Miranda was very fond of Ariel, wasn't she?"

"Yes, I suppose so, but she hated Caliban. Do you like Caliban?"

"Well, I like Ariel."

"Then what about Ariel-Caliban—Caliphronas?" asked Maurice, vexed at her fencing.

"I can't bear him—and yet," continued Helena reflectively, with a certain spice of malice, "there is something nice about him."

"You can't bear him, and yet there is something nice about him!" echoed Maurice bitterly. "I don't understand you."

"I don't understand myself."

"Can I explain you?" asked Roylands eagerly, drawing his chair a little nearer.

Helena hesitated, blushed, then made a very irrelevant remark.

"Tell me about Roylands."

Maurice very nearly uttered a bad word, he was so angered at her coquetry, but, thinking the best way to pique her was to meet her with the same weapons as she used, at once acceded to her request, much to her secret dismay.

"Stupid!" thought the lady.

"Flirt!" thought the gentleman.

Decidedly these two young people were at cross-purposes.

"Roylands," said Maurice, pushing back his chair into its former place, "is a large park formerly owned by one of the Plantagenet kings."

"What is a Plantagenet king?"

"I shall have to give you a book of Mangnall's Questions to learn," said Roylands in despair. "*Planta genista* is the Latin name for broom. Do you know what broom is?"

"Yes; the mountains are sometimes quite yellow with it. Father told me it was called broom."

"Well, some of the English kings used to wear it in their helmets as a badge, so that is how they got the name of Plantagenet."

"You are quite a dictionary."

"I am glad to be so when my pages are turned by so fair a hand."

This answer nonplussed Helena, and for once she was fain to hold her peace.

"The park," resumed Maurice, observing this with inward satisfaction, "was given to one of my ancestors by the then sovereign of England, and has been in our family ever since."

"Is it a pretty place?"

"Well, it has not the exquisite beauty of Melnos, but it is very lovely in my eyes."

"Is the house like this?"

"No; quite different. Such magnificence would not do for a poor country gentleman like myself. It is an old Tudor house, built in the reign of Henry VIII."

"I know Henry VIII.," said Helena vivaciously.

"Shakespeare, I suppose? What a charming way of learning history! Yes, Roylands Grange is a Henry VIII. house of red brick, and is covered with ivy. Green lawns with flower-beds are before the terrace, and the whole is encircled by the park."

"How lovely it must be, Maurice! And is it all your own?"

"Yes; at least, it is unless my uncle Rudolph turns up."

"Your Uncle Rudolph!"

"Oh, that is our one family romance. Rudolph Roylands was my father's elder brother, and they were both in love with my mother. She favored my father, Austin, and the brothers had a quarrel which ended in blows. Austin got the worst of it, and Rudolph, thinking he had killed him, fled. Since then, nothing has been heard of him, and that is quite forty years ago."

"But how does this affect your owning the Grange?"

"Because I am only the second branch. Uncle Rudolph was the heir to the Grange, not my father; so if he turns up alive, or if he has left heirs, I will have to give up all my property to them."

"Would you mind very much?" asked Helena in a pitying manner.

"Not at all. I would have once, but now I have a chance of staying in this delightful island, I don't think it would be such a great loss after all."

Maurice had hardly said these words when he heard a grunt of satisfaction behind him, and on turning his head saw Justinian standing beside him, in company with Caliphronas.

"So you don't mind if you lose your English property," said the Demarch in a peculiar tone.

"No; not when I can stay here. Did you hear the story I was telling to Helena?"

"Some of it. Do you think your Uncle Rudolph is alive?"

"Hardly, after forty years."

"What is forty years to a long-living race like the Roylands?"

"How do you know we are long living?"

"Why, you told me so yourself," said Justinian hastily; "but, after all, your uncle may be alive, and claim the property, in which case you will be penniless."

"Oh, then, I shall stay here as sculptor to your public works."

The old man laughed approvingly, and nodded his head.

"I will be glad of that. None of my Greeks can sculpture. It is a lost art with the Hellenes since the days of Praxiteles."

"I will make a statue of Helena here as Venus Urania."

"Better as Chloris," remarked Caliphronas, with a forced smile, coming forward; "Chloris, the goddess of flowers."

"For that charming suggestion," cried Helena, rising to her feet, "I will give you a rose, Andros!"

"I will treasure it as my life," he replied in a low, passionate voice, as she fastened the flower in his embroidered jacket.

"What about my rose, Helena?" asked Maurice, who viewed this proceeding with silent rage.

"Here is one for you," answered Helena quickly; "both roses are red, so you can't complain I don't treat you fairly."

“Perhaps you had better make the roses white, in order to mean silence,” said Caliphronas, pale with anger as he saw Maurice receive a flower; “the red rose means love, you know.”

“Sisterly love,” retorted Helena, looking at him with an undeniable frown.

Caliphronas, with a sudden outburst of rage, tore the flower from his breast, flung it on the pavement, and walked out of the court without a word. Helena in astonishment turned to Maurice, only to find that he also had vanished, but, with more self-restraint than the Greek, had taken his rose with him. Only Justinian was left, and he, looking sadly at his daughter, placed his hand reproachfully on her shoulder.

“My child,” he said reprovingly, “do not make ill blood between these two men by your woman’s wiles. Ate flung the apple of discord on the table of the gods, but it would have done no harm but for woman’s jealousy. Your name is Helena: you are, I doubt not, as fair as she of Troy, so beware lest your beauty be as fatal to Melnos as it was to Ilium.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

BACCHANALIA.

Clash of cymbals, beat of drum,
O'er the mountain peaks we come,
Far from parchèd Hindostan
To these laughing realms of Pan.
Nymphs and satyrs reel about,
Frenzied in the frenzied rout,
Crowned with ivy, fir, and vine,
Leading on the god of wine.
Far and near, and near and far,
Flock ye to his conquering car;
Lo! he comes in merry mood,
O'er the hills and thro' the wood,
While the startled Dryads see
From their trees our revelry;
As we shout so loud and free,
Io Bacche! Evohë!

"We celebrate the *fête* of St. Dionysius to-day," said Justinian, as they stood, in the early morning, on the platform of the Acropolis, awaiting the arrival of the Bacchanalian band from below.

"St. Dionysius!" repeated Maurice, with emphasis. "I thought the gentleman of that name was an Olympian!"

"He was," interposed Crispin before Justinian could speak; "but have you forgotten Heine's account of how the heathen divinities were transformed into mediæval saints. St. Dionysius is our old friend Bacchus in a new guise; Athena has given place to the Virgin Mary—the Panagia, as they call her in Attica;—Zeus is still the Supreme Being, with awful locks and thunderbolt, while Apollo the Far-Darter masquerades in classical adolescence as St. Sebastian."

"And Venus, Mr. Professor?" asked Helena, with a gay smile.

"Venus," answered Crispin, with a profound bow, "still lives in the Ægean Seas as Helena of Melnos."

"What a charming compliment!" cried the girl, who, in her plain white chiton, purple-edged peplum, and silver-banded hair, looked indeed like Aphrodite incarnate. "What about Andros here?"

"Hermes!"

Caliphronas, poising himself lightly on the verge of the staircase, certainly was the herald of Olympus, the divinized athlete, the more so, as, instead of his voluminous fustanella, he wore a simple tunic of fine white wool, which displayed his fine figure to the greatest advantage. His curls, yellow as those of Achilles, a true Achaian color, were bare, as he never wore a head covering unless forced to do so, and thus, stripped of all artificial aids to beauty, he looked the incarnation of Hellenism, the genius of Greece, ever fair and blooming in eternal adolescence. Even Justinian was struck with the manly grace and perfect vitality of the young man, yet, after an admiring glance at this physical perfection, turned to Maurice, and quoted a line of Homer,—

"'Faultlessly fair bodies are not always the temples of a godlike soul.'"

"It is curious you should say that, sir," observed Maurice; "for my old tutor, Mr. Carriston, said the same thing about the same man."

"Carriston!" echoed Justinian hoarsely.

"The Rev. Stephen Carriston, Rector of Roylands," replied Maurice, amazed at this emotion; "did you know him?"

"Know him?" said the Demarch, with a forced smile; "no. I have been absent from England these many years. Rector of Roylands!" he muttered in an undertone; "strange, strange!"

"What is strange?" asked Roylands curiously.

"Nothing, nothing!" answered Justinian, turning away with a frown. "I was thinking of something which you would not understand. But here come our Bacchanalians, Maurice. Now you will see a glimpse of ancient Hellas."

Maurice pondered over the strange emotion of Justinian, which he found himself quite unable to explain, and, coming to the conclusion that the Demarch must have met some one of the same name under unpleasant circumstances, he dismissed the subject from his mind as trivial, and concentrated his attention on the rapidly approaching procession.

Justinian had closely followed the old lines of the Dionysian ceremonies, saving that he expurgated all the coarser elements of drinking and debauchery, and during the whole three days' festival, modelled on the ancient feasts of Hellas, Maurice did not espy one offensive thing, which could bring a blush to the cheek of modesty. Indeed, Helena and all the women of the island were present, so their mingling in the ceremonies would alone have prevented any coarseness, even without the stern interdiction of the Demarch; for the Greeks have a great sense of delicacy, being especially careful not to offend the delicacy of women in any way whatsoever. This modern Bacchanalia, then, represented the antique solemnity, as it was in the earlier Attic days, before later worshippers defiled the rites of the god with their vile orgies.

It was a perfect day, but, as there had been a slight rainfall in the morning, in the east loomed a sombre cloud, which, however, foreboded nothing, as across its darkness, like a many-hued scarf, was flung a splendid rainbow. Helena caught sight of this first, and clapped her hands merrily.

"Oh, father, see how red is the rainbow!—that is a good sign for the vintage."

"How so?" asked Roylands, somewhat puzzled at this Iris prophecy.

"It is an old Greek superstition," answered Justinian, smiling at his daughter's glee; "if red prevails in the rainbow, there will be plenty of grapes; if yellow, a fine harvest;

and when green it will be a year for olives. This one is reddish, as you see, so our Bacchanalia will turn out successfully."

In front of the procession marched the musicians, men playing on pipes, flutes, drums, and goat-skin sabounas, a kind of bagpipe, while beside them danced young ivy-crowned girls, clashing cymbals together. All the men were dressed in their dancing costumes, similar to that of Caliphronas, save that all the colors of the rainbow were represented, though the women, still in their loose white chitons, neutralized to some extent the vivid tints of the male dresses. Behind the musicians came lads garlanded with wreaths of intermingled violets and ivy, bearing thyrsi. Afterwards a number of maidens, with vine-leaf-decorated amphoras of wine, baskets of figs, and bunches of grapes. A goat, with a child on its back, was led by two elderly women waving pine branches. Then came the elders of the village, in white robes, with tall linen mitres, followed by a joyous band of young men, profusely bedecked with flowers, who capered round a sedate ass, on which rode the wit of the village, representing Silenus. An empty chariot, drawn by goats as a substitute for panthers, then appeared, and in this was to be installed the Count, who undertook the *rôle* of Bacchus. The procession finally closed with the ten sailors walking two abreast, their stiff march contrasting strangely with the acrobatic dancing and careless grace of their fellow revellers.

Arriving at the foot of the steps, the chief elder made a speech in sonorous Greek, in which he invited Justinian and his friends to come down to the village festival, and bring good fortune to the vintage. Justinian graciously accepted the invitation, and, in company with his guests, placed himself in the rear of the procession; while Caliphronas, who had been crowned with vine leaves, arrayed in a leopard skin, and bearing a pine-cone tipped sceptre, sprang into his chariot with a laughing glance, as the revellers saluted him—"Evohë Bacche!"

Back to the head of the grand staircase returned the procession, with its wild music and merry dancers, while the god, lightly brandishing his sceptre, looked benignly on his motley crew. Some had fawn skins, all were crowned, and before the procession ran children strewing the road with flowers, while the company sang songs in praise of St. Dionysius, whom Caliphronas was supposed to represent, rather than the genuine son of Semele. Silenus, by his drunken gestures, and difficulty in keeping his seat, evoked roars of laughter, and was quite the hero of the hour.

"I never did see sich tomfoolery," growled Gurt, who was enjoying himself hugely; "this Baccus is all tommy rot. Like a Lor' Mayor's show it is."

"Oh, it's a great spree," said Dick cheerfully, who was Gurt's companion in the march. "Ain't these girls like the ballet at the Alhambra?"

"Never was there," growled Gurt, who, when not absent from England, generally remained in the neighborhood of the docks; "but I'm blessed if I ever did hear sich music, with their Hi ho Baccus! Who's Baccus?"

"The god of wine."

"I wish he was the god of rum," said the old toper; "for this 'ere sour stuff as th' give us is 'nough to give us all cold in our insides. Lor', wot music! Let's give 'em a shanty."

"The skippers might not like it," objected Dick anxiously.

"Oh, they don't mind. I ain't going to let these coves have it all their own way." Whereupon Gurt, in a raucous voice, struck up, "Rule, Britannia," much to the amusement of Justinian. His messmates joined in the chorus, and though the wild orgiastic music still continued, it was almost drowned in the lusty chorus of "Britons never shall be slaves," roared out by ten pairs of lusty lungs.

The chariot of the god had perforce to be left at the head of the staircase, and Caliphronas, descending, led the way down to the valley, followed by all his barbaric crew. Shrill sounded the pipes, loud clashed the cymbals, and the bright sunshine shone on as merry a company of wine-worshippers as ever it did in the Athens of Æschylus.

The vineyards of Melnos were planted on the sides of the mountain, where they rose terrace by terrace nearly up to the dark pine woods, which divided the vegetation from the snow with a broad green band. A wine-press was placed in nearly every one of these vineyards, but the place where the ceremonies were to take place lay near to the theatre, and was a particularly large enclosure, filled with long straggling vines, in the centre of which a huge whitewashed tank, piled with purple grapes, stood ready to be tramped out to the lower tank into which the juice flowed.

Justinian and his guests were conducted to a kind of raised daïs, on which were placed seats tastefully wreathed with flowers, the most elaborate of all being reserved for Caliphronas, who, as the presiding deity of the feast, ranked for the day higher than the lord of the island. The scene was singularly picturesque: far above, piercing the blue sky, arose the snowy peaks, lower down the pine forests, then fields of yellow corn, divided by belts of gray olive trees and grape-laden vineyards, while the near slopes near the scene of the festival were covered with red-berried mastic bushes, delicate white cyclamens, rose-blossomed oleanders, pomegranate trees, and beds of strongly-scented thyme, filling the still warm air with aromatic odors. Amid all this beauty were the Bacchanalians with their many-colored garbs, the whiteness of the women's dresses predominating, and the whole laughing throng swaying, leaping, whirling, bounding, gyrating to the wild music, shrill and plaintive as the wind, of their rude instruments. In such a vineyard might Dionysius appear to some modern Æschylus, and command him to kindle anew, with the breath of genius, the fire of the ancient goat-song, with its solemn splendors, gigantic scenes, and majestic figures of god, goddess, and hero.

As a rule, the vintage of the insular Greeks begins early in August, but this year, for some unexplained reason, the grapes had ripened slowly, hence the Melnosians feared a bad year of the vine, and were much delighted to find that it was one of the most prolific ever known, a fact which was further confirmed in their eyes by the prophetic red of the rainbow.

Papa Athanasius, the priest of the island, arrayed in the gorgeous sacerdotal vestments of his Church, now came forward, surrounded by a number of acolytes, bearing censers and sacred ichons, in order to pronounce a blessing on the first-fruits of the vine year. The ceremony did not last long, and at its conclusion the Papa retired, while, amid cries of rejoicing and noisy music, a dozen men with bare feet sprang into the vat and began to tread the grapes. Their white tunics and naked feet were soon stained red with the juice of the vine, which shortly afterwards began to gush freely into the lower vat, amid the songs of the onlookers. Soon afterwards cups

of last year's wine were passed round to all present, and, though the Greeks as a rule are a very temperate people, yet the thin, sour liquor speedily rendered them slightly intoxicated, and the singing became more vociferous than ever.

"I hope they will give us some national dances," said Maurice to Helena, who sat beside him—who looked lovely as the Queen of Love herself.

"Indeed they will!" she answered vivaciously: "you will see the syrtos, which has a good deal of the Pyrrhic dance in its steps; the moloritis, in which Zoe, Andros, Crispin, and myself will take part. Then there is the dancing on the slippery wine-skin, which is very amusing. See, this is the syrtos!"

A party of young men in their tight-fitting white dancing-costumes now came forward, saluted Caliphronas as the master of the revels, and, placing their arms round one another's necks, began to sway slowly backward and forward, with a kind of mazourka step, to the inspiriting music of tabor and pipe. These evolutions increased in rapidity, and were interspersed with wild acrobatic boundings by single dancers, until Maurice became quite giddy watching their whirlings.

Afterwards the women, linked together with handkerchiefs, in order to make the line more flexible, danced gracefully to a slow melody, with frequent genuflexions of the body and bendings of the head.

"Greek dances are rather monotonous, I am afraid," said Roylands, who found this incessant swaying a trifle wearisome. "Why don't the men and women dance with one another?"

"They do sometimes, as in the moloritis," replied Helena, rising from her seat. "We will dance it now, and I think you will like it better than the syrtos."

It was a graceful dance, and the music was more melodious. First, the four people danced together, then separately, and finally Crispin and Caliphronas indulged in wild saltatory leapings, while Helena and Zoe stood still, swaying from side to side, like nautch dancers.

"I think a waltz would be jollier than that," said Maurice, when she returned to her seat.

"A waltz! what is that?" asked Helena innocently.

"I will show you some time during the day—that is, if we can get any one to play us the music."

"Oh, Andronico, that old man with the violin, can pick up anything by ear. But see, we are now going to have some singing!"

A handsome young fellow stepped forward, escorted by a number of women, who joined in the chorus of the song, which was in praise of Dionysius and the vineyards. Maurice, owing to the skilful tuition of Helena, now knew enough Greek to understand the words, which, irregularly translated, were as follows:—

SOLO.

Oh, my love, we went to the vineyards,
And there beheld bunches of purple wine fruit,
Full of the milk of earth our mother.

WOMEN.

Wine, like thee, is my heart-gladdener.

SOLO.

Thro' the vine leaves peeped St. Dionysius,
Who laughed when he heard the sound of our kisses:
"These are not mad with wine,"
So cried St. Dionysius;
"Not with wine are they mad, but with love and kisses."

WOMEN.

Wine, like thee, is my heart-gladdener.

There were about twenty verses of this delectable song, interlarded at times with the rude music of the sabouna. Maurice grew tired of this dreariness, and went off, in company with Helena, to where the feasting was going on. Tables were spread out in the open air with cheeses, bread, honey, goats' flesh, piles of grapes, and other rustic dainties, to which the hungry revellers were doing full justice. Some of them were dancing the Smyriote, others singing interminable songs; but Roylands by this time had quite enough of Greek dance and song, so asked Helena to show him the hot springs, which were near at hand.

They were at the base of a little cliff, volcanic in character, with curiously-twisted streaks of red, green, and black lava, which presented a bizarre appearance. The water, owing to the presence of oxide of iron, was of a yellow tint and boiling hot, while occasional puffs of steam rising skyward veiled the variegated tints of the rock behind, so that it looked strangely weird and horrible.

"I wonder you are not afraid to live here, Helena!" said the Englishman, going down on his knees to examine these Ægean geysers. "I don't believe this crater is an extinct one."

"It has been quiet enough for over a thousand years," replied the girl carelessly, "so I don't see why it should break out now."

"If it did, the loss of life would be terrible."

"Oh, don't, Maurice! The idea is too frightful. Why, not one of us would escape alive, and then good-by to father's idea of a new Athens."

"Your new Athens has other things to fear besides volcanoes."

"What do you mean?"

"That if Caliphronas is appointed your father's heir, it were better for this crater to become full of seething lava once more, than the hot-bed of scoundrels such as that scamp will surely make it."

"I don't think you need be afraid of that," replied Helena, with great scorn; "Andros is not likely to rule Melnos."

"You don't like him?"

"I hate him!"

"And why? He is very handsome."

"Do you think I am a woman likely to be taken with mere good looks in a man?" she answered, with an angry light in her eyes. "I thought you knew me better than that, Maurice."

"Forgive me, Helena; but indeed I am glad you do not like Caliphronas."

Helena knew the reason of this pointed remark, and, looking down with a blush, was about to reply, when the man they were talking about came quickly along the narrow path, with a savage scowl on his handsome face.

"Helena, your father is asking for you," he said abruptly.

"Oh, I will go at once," replied the girl lightly, in order to conceal her confusion; and rapidly left the spot, where Caliphronas still remained looking angrily at Maurice.

The Englishman saw that the Count was in a terrible rage, and ready to overwhelm him with invective, but, nevertheless, was not sorry to come to a complete understanding with this treacherous scamp, who had no regard for truth, honor, or daring. Caliphronas was a thorough bully by nature; and, having succeeded in browbeating his own countrymen by arrogance, thought he would try the same plan with Maurice, quite unaware that the seemingly easy-going young man was made of sterner stuff than yielding Hellenes, and would hold his own against all odds with true British doggedness.

"Well, Bacchus," said Maurice, trying to pass the matter off lightly at first, "why have you deserted your revellers?"

"To punish a scoundrel," burst out the furious Greek, stamping his foot.

Maurice looked around serenely; and then, sitting down on a block of black lava, streaked with sulphur, began to roll a cigarette, which innocent proceeding irritated Caliphronas beyond all powers of self-control.

"Do you hear me?" he cried, mad with rage. "I came here to punish a scoundrel!"

In a quarrel the victory is generally to him who keeps his temper, as Maurice knew very well; so, in this case, the more enraged grew the Greek, the calmer became the Englishman.

"So I see," he replied phlegmatically; "but, as I see no scoundrel here but yourself, I hardly understand you."

"Understand this, Mr. Maurice—you are the scoundrel!"

"Really!" said Roylands, lighting his cigarette with provoking coolness; "and your reason for applying such a name to me?"

"You make love to the lady who is to be my wife."

"I was not aware your offer of marriage had been accepted."

"I have her father's consent."

"True; but you have not the lady's consent."

"Bah! what of that? Women and dogs are born to obey."

"My dear Count Constantine Caliphronas," said Maurice deliberately, "you have called me a scoundrel, for which epithet, coming from a despicable wretch like yourself, I care nothing. But if you dare to speak disrespectfully of Miss Helena, I will certainly throw you into that boiling spring over there."

The Greek was young, strong, and athletic, and could doubtless have held his own against the Englishman to a considerable extent,—although he would have been beaten in the end, owing to his ignorance of boxing, an art in which Maurice excelled,

—but so craven was his soul that he did not dare to resent this calmly insulting speech, but merely stood his ground, quivering with fury.

"*Và!*" he hissed through his clinched teeth, and shaking five fingers at Maurice, which is about the strongest imprecation a Greek can use. "I will be even with you, pig, English as you are!"

"I see you want pitching into that stream," replied Maurice, rising. "You dare to apply such another epithet to me, and, as sure as I stand here, in you go."

Caliphronas trembled with mingled fear and rage, for he had seen the man before him box with Boatswain Dick, and knew he had but small chance against such pugilistic science. He was as careful of his beauty as a lady, and dreaded lest some sledge-hammer blow should mar his perfect features, therefore he deemed it wise to restrain his temper, and laughed derisively.

"Bah! to-day for you, to-morrow for me," he said jeeringly. "You cannot hold yourself against the future ruler of Melnos. I will have the island and Helena! You will have nothing."

"Don't be too sure of that, Caliphronas! I don't want Melnos, but I certainly do want Helena, and shall certainly refuse to give her up without a struggle."

"Try!" sneered the Greek, snapping his fingers under Royland's nose; "try!"

Hitherto Maurice had kept his temper well under control; but this last insult was too much, so, lifting up the light frame of the Greek in his athletic grasp, in spite of his struggles, he calmly sent him splash into the nearest pool, which was fortunately but tepid in character, otherwise the Count might have run a chance of being parboiled.

"Next time you dare to use your vile tongue on me, I will sling you down the grand staircase," said Maurice quietly; then, without waiting to hear the bad language of his enemy, calmly strolled away towards the scene of the festival, smoking with great enjoyment.

Caliphronas, considerably cowed, crawled out of the pool, looking like a drowned rat; and few would have recognized in this despicable object the daring, handsome Hermes of the morning. Had he possessed a knife, he would certainly have pursued Maurice, and done his best to kill him; but, being without a weapon, he had a wholesome dread of the Englishman's fists, so, swallowing his rage for the time being, went off in search of dry garments.

As Maurice approached the vineyard, he heard shouts of laughter, and found it was owing to the latest amusement, that of dancing on the slippery surface of a skin of wine,—a pastime as old as the days of the Dionysia itself. Many skilful dancers fell off; and it was long before any one succeeded in carrying off the prize, which was the skin of wine itself; but ultimately it fell to the lot of the handsome young Palikar who had sung the song about St. Dionysius.

Helena looked apprehensively at him when he appeared, as she was afraid there had been a quarrel between her two suitors; but Maurice calmed her fears by a smile, and together they watched a sailor's hornpipe danced by Dick to the music supplied by old Andronico, who had picked up the air from Gurt's whistling.

Justinian was in ecstasies over the dance, and made Dick sing some sea-songs, which, with the rude but tuneful chorus of his messmates, made the old man's eyes flash with patriotic fire.

"I'm only Greek on the surface, you see," he said to Crispin, with a somewhat sad smile; "but my heart is English still."

"Hearts of oak!" replied Crispin gayly. "After all, there is no place like England; for you see Melnos, with all its tropical loveliness, is still unsatisfying when memories of white-cliffed Albion awaken in your heart."

"Bravo, Crispin!" cried Maurice, who had heard this speech; "you are a true patriot, and must confirm your views by singing 'Home, sweet Home.'"

Crispin, nothing loath, did so; and the Greeks, attracted by the beautiful air, crowded round to listen. The darkness was falling fast, for the long day was nearly at an end, and through the still night sounded the liquid notes of a cock nightingale calling to his mate; but higher than the voice of the bird arose that tender old melody, which brings tears to the eyes of those absent from their own fireside. Justinian, leaning his white head on his hand, listened intently; and when the song was ended, Maurice could have sworn in the dim light that a sudden tear flashed like a jewel down his withered cheek. It was extraordinary to see this man of iron, astute, keen ruler as he was, so touched by the simple little song, which he had heard perchance at his mother's knee; and from that moment Maurice always believed in Justinian, whom he was certain must have a good heart, when so affected by that pleading air.

Torches were now brought, the wild music burst out anew, and the revellers prepared to escort their Demarch back to the Acropolis. Caliphronas, apparently as merry as ever, made his appearance in new clothes, and resumed his sceptre and vineleaf crown. Along the street danced the procession, with clash of cymbal and throb of drum; torches flaring in the windless air on the excited faces of their bearers; and it was like a confused dream, with the flash of white robes, the tossing red lights, the barbaric pomp, and the swaying, restless, dancing crowd.

At the foot of the grand staircase Maurice burst out laughing.

"What is the matter?" asked Crispin, who walked near him.

"I am thinking of Caliphronas, whom I flung into one of the hot springs."

"The deuce you did! It's a pity he was not drowned."

"He is not born to be drowned," retorted Roylands sardonically; "he is born to be hanged."

At the Acropolis the Bacchanalians left them; and they saw the long procession stream like a serpent of light along the road, down the staircase, with glimmer of white robes and distant sounds of mirth. A last flash of innumerable torches, a last burst of frenzied mirth, then darkness and quiet—the Dionysia was ended.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THESPIAN.

The silvery smoothness of sweet Sophocles,
The rolling thunder of Æschylean verse,
The subtle twistings of Euripides
To prove the better reason by the worse;—
Such poets gained the light Athenian's praise
By daring dealings with the universe,
And yearly won the envied crown of bays;
But not on Attic shores alone,—for we
Yet know their greatness in these modern days,
In alien lands across the stormy sea,
Where with much painful learning do we dare
In pristine splendor to revive the three,
Till, foiled by antique genius high and rare,
We quit the task with unalloyed despair.

The theatre of Melnos was crowded the next day to witness the one performance of the year, and the whole semicircle of seats was occupied by a chattering throng, resembling, doubtless, the gossip-loving Athenians of old. All were in gala dresses, the men brilliant in Albanian costumes of fustanelli, embroidered jackets, gaudy gaiters, and vivid red silk sashes; while the women, in accordance with the edict of the Demarch, still wore their graceful, antique robes of white; indeed, the male bird here had the more splendid plumage of the two, but what the female lacked in color, she made up for in grace. The population of Melnos were, indeed, fine specimens of humanity, as, owing to the selective genius of Justinian, none but the physically perfect were admitted to the privileges of the island, and in the case of births he exercised an almost Spartan rigor. Certainly he departed so far from the laws of Lycurgus as to permit any child born with a blemish to live, but it was sent away from Melnos at the moment of its birth, and provided for elsewhere. In consequence, therefore, of this untiring care in such matters, the Melnosians were all strong, healthy, and beautiful; while their constant out-door life and congenial occupations kept them in a wonderfully vitalized condition, which was eminently calculated to form a race as physically perfect in form and health as is possible on this earth.

"I am a great believer in the *mens sana in corpore sano* theory," said the Demarch to Maurice, who sat beside him. "The first law of this new Athens is, that all the citizens shall be healthy in every way; and the body being thus perfected by degrees,

who knows but what the intellect may not ripen the sooner to the first-fruits of genius?"

"Is that not rather against the Homeric line you quoted the other day, sir?" observed Maurice thoughtfully. "I mean as regarding Caliphronas; he is physically perfect, thoroughly healthful, and yet you can hardly call him intellectual."

"Andros," said Justinian emphatically, "is not a true Greek, but a mongrel from the island of that name, where I found him a shepherd lad. I have no faith in mixed races, as their genius, if they have any, is apt to be confusing. We English are essentially a mixed race, therefore our literature, although marked by great versatility, lacks that dominant note which denotes the special characteristic of a pure-blooded race. Look at the Jew and the Hellene, which are, perhaps, the sole examples of unmixed blood we have,—at least in the West,—and you will see that their works of genius, however different in outward form, are still instinct with the individuality of their particular race-nature. The Psalms of David, the tragedies of the Greek dramatists, could only have been written by men of unmixed blood, steeped in the color of their peculiar branch of the human family."

"What about Shakespeare?"

"None but a mixed race could have produced an all-comprehensive mind like his; and though you may perhaps think me narrow in desiring the formation of pure-blooded nations, which may be barren of such versatile genius, yet, believe me, Maurice, every plant should bear its own natural flowers. Now, my Melnosians have been carefully selected from the most untainted blood of the insular Greeks, who are the real survivors of the old Attic stock. I allow no mixed marriages—I protect them from all outward influence—I encourage them to develop their inherent characteristics of race, so, in all human probability, they, in years to come, will produce a blossom of genius entirely their own."

"Is that not rather a hot-house forcing style?"

"Well, yes; but such artificiality is needed in these days of easy communication and cosmopolitan races. The tribes of mankind are not now isolated each from each as in former times, when that very isolation forced them, uninfluenced by contact with alien tribes, to develop their own special race-nature in literature, music, and art. Mixed races produce mixed results, splendid, I own, in many cases, but not so severely unique and classic as would be the case with untamed tribes."

"Did not Disraeli discuss this question in 'Coningsby'?"

"Touching the Semitic race,—yes, I think so; but it is so long since I have read the book that I almost forget his line of argument. But we have strayed from our subject, which was physical and not intellectual perfection; and I verily believe that if as much attention were given to the breeding of humanity as is given to the rearing of race-horses, the race of mankind would be much benefited thereby."

Justinian had quite a mania regarding this question of race, and Maurice would gladly have continued the interesting argument, but the play was shortly about to begin, so he deferred the discussion until a more fitting occasion, and meanwhile examined the theatre with careful attention.

The stage facing the semicircle was long and narrow, with slender columns on either side supporting the pediment, which, unfortunately, was quite plain, as Justinian's theories had not yet developed a Pheidias to sculpture the red limestone

into god-like forms of hero and deity. A broad flight of steps led downward to the orchestra, which had entrances to the right and left for the convenience of the chorus; while a veritable altar of Dionysius, wreathed with sculptured grapes and nude figures of dancing faun and nymph, taken, doubtless, from some ruined temple, stood on a raised platform fronting the stage, and on it burned a small fire, whereon incense was occasionally flung.

"Is that not rather pagan?" asked Maurice, referring to the altar.

"Everything herein is ideal, not real," replied the Demarch wisely. "When you see the chorus throw incense on the altar, think not that they are sacrificing to the wine-god of their ancestors. No, they are all of the Orthodox Church, and obey devoutly the precepts of Papa Athanasius; but I like to carry out the old ceremonies, even to this altar, which means nothing, and is highly characteristic of the antique festival."

As Crispin, Helena, and Caliphronas were all actors for the day, the Demarch and Maurice sat alone in the centre of the semicircle, surrounded by the sailors, who were much puzzled at the strangeness of this stately, open-air theatre, so different from the air-tight boxes to which they had been accustomed in London.

"If it was only an Adelphi melodrama!" said Dick, whose inclinations leaned to the bloodthirsty play; "but I suppose it will be something like that squalling they called singing yesterday."

"Or a moosic 'all," observed Gurt, chewing his quid reflectively. "I seed a gal in one of 'em down Wappin' way as guv a song called, 'Tap me on the shoulder, Bill.' My eyes, but it were a good un, that 'ere."

Decidedly this unique dramatic representation, which many English scholars would have beheld with delight, was quite thrown away on these conservative tars, who preferred melodrama and comic songs to the solemn splendors of ancient tragedy, which was, naturally enough, Greek to them in more senses than one.

In accordance with the instructions of Justinian, the poet had composed a play embodying an allegory of the aims of this island colony of Melnos, and, forsaking to a great extent the severe classicism of Æschylean tragedy, had modelled his drama on the loose-flying splendors of Shelley's Hellas. This piece, entitled 'The Phœnix,' was intended to represent the degradation of Greece under the Turkish yoke, her escape from such bondage, her material civilization, and her subsequent rise to intellectual supremacy, which end the formation of the colony of Melnos was supposed to foster. Crispin had no fear of his allegorical drama not being understood by his audience, for the Greeks are a singularly keen-witted people, and, besides, Justinian had so imbued the whole population with his hopes of reviving the ancient glories of the Athenian genius, that all present were quite able to comprehend the hidden meaning of the play. The Phœnix was to occupy the whole morning, and, after an interval of two hours for rest and refreshment, the satiric pendant to the more solemn piece was to be represented in the afternoon, consisting, in this instance, of a local incident, developed and expanded by Crispin into a wild Aristophanic farce, blending wit with irony, laughter with tears, and stately chorus with clownish play of rustic actors.

Crispin, moreover, was not only author, actor, and stage manager, but also an accomplished musician, therefore had made use of his Western training in this respect, to get together an orchestra, and, with the aid of Andronico, had adapted the plaintive music of the Hellenic folk-songs to his choruses. The quick-eared Greeks speedily

picked up the airs, many of which they already knew, and thus the drama followed closely in the footsteps of its Athenian prototype; and the wild, rude music, sounding at intervals between the long speeches of the principal characters, prevented the monotony which otherwise would have certainly prevailed. With violin, flute, pipe, drum, symbols, and sabouna, the musicians therefore took their places unseen by the audience; for Crispin, adopting Wagner's theory, did not want the attention of his audience distracted in any way by the presence of the orchestra between stage and auditorium.

The back of the stage represented a smooth, white marble wall, fronted by a range of Corinthian pillars wreathed with milky blossoms, and in the centre, great folding doors ready to be flung open when required by the exigencies of the play. Against this absolutely colorless background moved the brilliant figures of the performers in measured fashion, with stately gestures, as moved those serene, side-faced figures on the marble urn dreamed of by Keats. The clear light of the sun burned on the great half-circle of eager faces with steady effulgence, and left in delicate shadow that wide white stage, whereon was to be enacted a drama such as we in England, lacking all things necessary to such colossal majesty, can never hope to see.

All being read, the curtain arose, or rather fell, for Crispin, with strict fidelity to Athenian usages, had adopted this curious mode of withdrawing the veil between audience and performers.

The stage is empty, but a wild chant sounds in the distance, and a long train of Moslems, headed by their Sultan, sweeps in, bearing with them Hellas, a captive in her own land to the barbaric power. Helena, draped in black and manacled with chains, represented Hellas, who stands with melancholy mien amid the gaudily dressed chorus of Moslems, listening to their songs of triumph over her downfall. "We have chained you to our chariot," they sing tauntingly, "yet thou need'st not look so downcast, for a slave hast thou been before, and a slave thou wilt be hereafter. Thy shrines, thy palaces, thy city walls have fallen, and fallen too art thou."

The chorus having ended their exalting strains, the Sultan addresses Hellas, and offers to make her his wife, thus incorporating the ancient land of loveliness with the newly constructed power of the Turk; but Hellas, who is Athena incarnate, scorns his offer to make her an odalisque of the harem. "Virgin I was, virgin I am, virgin I remain," says the fallen queen, with haughty grace; "my body you may chain with iron, but the soul is under the protection of Zeus, the Supreme; therefore will I sit here in desolation rather than partake of the splendors you offer me." Furious with rage, the barbarian smites her, but she, still smiling, repeats constantly, "The body is thine, but the soul is mine;" so in wrath he leaves her, with a promise that her woes shall never end, and the Moslem chorus follow him from the stage, with triumphant shouts of joy at the success of their arms.

Left alone, chained and desolate, amid the ruins of her temples, Hellas bewails her downfall, which contrasts so darkly with her former brilliance in classic times. Crispin afterwards translated the play into blank verse for the benefit of Maurice, but the English verse gives but a poor idea of the fire and majesty of the sonorous Greek original. "Woe is me!" cries the fallen queen—

For I am but the sport of jealous gods,
Who, envious of Athenian gloriousness,
Have crushed the city of the Violet Crown
Beneath the force of overwhelming hordes;
Thus blotting out my heaven-aspiring sons,
Who, burning with a new Promethean fire,
Would fain have scaled god-crowned Olympus high
To match themselves 'gainst gods in equal strife.

Then, with the sudden energy of despair, she calls upon the heroes of Salamis, of Thermopylæ, of Marathon, to aid their mother in the time of need. Alas! no voice answers to her cry of anguish, and, overcome with a sense of hopelessness, Hellas, discrowned and chained, sinks weeping on the broken column of her fallen shrine.

Now enters the chorus proper of young Greek maidens, dressed in black stoles, to denote the sorrowful condition of their country. They sweep into the orchestra, and, having sprinkled the altar with incense, begin to question their fallen queen, as though they were ignorant of the cause of her grief.

CHORUS.
What madness drives thee, queen, to rend thine hair?
HELLAS.
Curst Ate bides upon the threshold stone.
CHORUS.
Now see I plainly thou art bound with chains.
HELLAS.
In this no fatal blindness dims thine eyes.
CHORUS.
Say whence these chains which check free-moving limbs?
HELLAS.
The Eastern hordes have bound me helpless thus.

Question and answer thus goes on for some time, and then the chorus break out into a wailing song, in which they remind Hellas that, having forsaken the old gods who helped her in her need, she is now reaping the reward of such folly. "The curse of Ate is on thee," they cry pitifully, "nor will the goddess be satisfied until she has exacted her due penalty for neglect of the Olympians." They relate the former woes of Hellas, how she first was slave to the Macedonians, then to the Roman power; how the Latins set their mailed feet on her neck; and now the Moslems have again reduced her to the position of bondswoman. Ever a slave, ever desired, she is thrown from the one to the other, as it pleases them, unable to free herself from such degradation. When this chorus of reproach is ended, Hellas calls upon the tutelar genius of Greece to help her ere she perish.

In answer to her cry, Apollo (represented by Caliphronas) appears, and blames her for foolishly forsaking the old gods for the new, and thus falling into the hands of Nemesis. His power, which was engendered and kept alive solely by belief, has departed, and he cannot help her, much as he desires to do so. "I myself," he says—

E'en I whose fanes were ever reverenced,
Am now bereft of shrine and oracle;
No longer do I hear the Delian hymn,
Nor taste the savors of the sacrifice,
But, lyre in hand, go wandering through the night,
Lamenting for my skyey chariot,
Wherein I bore the fierceness of the sun
Up eastern hills and down to western seas.

Finally, Apollo tells his renegade worshipper that she must sing the battle-songs of Tyrtæus, which may perhaps awaken thoughts of freedom in the breasts of her degenerated sons, and then departs, promising to return again when she is once more the stainless Hellas of old. Fired by the speech of the god, Hellas rises, and, assisted by the chorus, begins to sing fierce battle-songs, and call upon her sons to remember the heroes of the past. A clamor is heard without as of men fighting, then the chains of Hellas fall off, and with them her dark robe. Now she is free once more, and clad in purest white, so, while rejoicing in her liberty, a herald (Crispin) appears, and tells how well the Greeks have fought for their independence. This gave the poet an opportunity for a stirring speech, descriptive of the modern Greek heroes, Canaris, Botzaris, and Conduriottis, which names were received with shouts by the audience, fired with patriotic fervor.

Once more Apollo, the genius of Greece, appears, and declares that no longer can Hellas dwell in desecrated Athens, but that, even as his mother Latona, she must seek shelter in an Ægean isle, and there, after long years, give birth to a supreme race, who will revive the ancient glories of violet-crowned Athens. Leading her by the hand, the god then conducts the newly liberated Hellas up the steps of the temple. The great doors are flung open to the sound of trumpets! and lo! appears the Acropolis of Melnos in all its beauty. Here is Hellas to dwell in seclusion, until her antique glory is revived by a new race of her sons, instinct with genius; and down the steps come strings of white-robed youths and girls, bearing fruits, to welcome this Phœnix of Greece, new risen from the ashes of the past. Then the chorus, wreathing in a mystic dance round the altar of Bacchus, sing the coming glories of New Hellas, which are soon to be realized in the Island of Melnos.

Long, long hast thou lain as in prison, our mother, our goddess, our queen,
But lo! to the eastward hath risen a splendor serene,
And glorious day follows darkness, the darkness of hundreds of years,
Reviving thy corpse from its starkness, with laughter and tears,
Ay, tears for the past and its anguish, and laughter for glories to come,
For never again wilt thou languish, a bondswoman dumb.
The trumpets of triumph are blowing, their clangor swells north from thy south,
And jubilant music is flowing anew from thy mouth.
Man, dazzled, obedient shall render his homage to thee as of yore,
And thou wilt stand forth in thy splendor, a goddess once more.

After this introductory chant in unison, the chorus divided in twain, and semi-chorus replied to semi-chorus, in fiery speech and jubilant music, that rang like a pæan through the wide theatre. Ever moving figures, kneeling youths and maidens, soft radiance of sunlight, and triumphant bursts of choral song, while Hellas, serene in her freedom, stands beside tutelary genius, with the light of the glorious future on her face, listening to the eagle flight of liquid words, greeting her as queen of the world.

The play being ended, all the lively Greeks streamed out of the theatre, loudly praising the entertainment, and, having had an intellectual feast, now proceeded to the tables set in the open air, which were covered with all kinds of food to satisfy their physical wants. Maurice and the Demarch waited in the theatre alone for the actors, and very shortly Crispin came to see how they liked his play. He received warm congratulations of his success from the two men, while Helena and Caliphronas also received their due meed of praise. The Greek was radiant with self-complacent delight, for his vanity had been much gratified by the approval of the audience, and for the rest of the day he regarded himself as the hero of the hour, quite forgetting both Crispin and Helena in his serene egotism.

"I hope I have succeeded in showing your aims clearly, Justinian?" said the poet, as they sat down to a comfortable meal.

"You have succeeded admirably, especially in that last chorus. I only hope that all will see the piece is meant for more than the amusement of an hour."

"If you heard how the villagers are talking," remarked Caliphronas, with a laugh, "I do not think you would have any doubt on that score, for they already regard themselves as the saviours of Hellas, intellectually, physically, and politically."

"Did you intend your genius of Greece for Lord Byron, Crispin?" asked Maurice, who had understood and admired the allegory.

"Well, the character was supposed to blend both the god and the poet," replied Crispin, after a pause; "let us say it was the Olympian incarnate in the body of the Englishman."

"And both the Olympian and Englishman incarnate in a Greek," said the Demarch graciously.

Caliphronas smiled at receiving this compliment, which was intended to further blind him to the reality of Justinian's feelings towards him.

"There is nothing I should like better than to become a leader in reality," he said gayly; "to inspire my countrymen with the desire of once more making Hellas supreme queen of the world."

"Of the intellectual world?"

"Or the material—it matters not which."

"Pardon me, but it matters a great deal," replied Justinian quickly. "Politically, Greece has a place among the Powers—she has a constitution and a king. So, as far as material prosperity goes, I wish not to meddle with her, but my aim is to revive her intellectuality, and Crispin's play was entirely written to illustrate that point. Hellas will never be a modern Roman empire—she never was an all-conquering power, and her strength lay in the brains, not in the hands of her sons. After all, is it not greater to control the minds than the bodies of men?"

"You want to turn Hellas into a school."

"The pen is mightier than the sword," rejoined Justinian sententiously. "Let other nations be merchants and warriors, while Greece reasserts her ancient vocation of teacher. An aptitude for a special line is as true of the many as of the one. You would not give the lyre to the soldier nor the sword to the poet, so every race should exercise the talents with which it is especially gifted; not, of course, to the exclusion of others, but make its peculiar gift its greatest aim. At present, the great human family of Europe is in a state of transition, and, unaware of each other's aims, are watchfully in arms the one against the other. Let us hope that before the end of the twentieth century they will recognize that one special faculty predominates in every nation, and permit each other to cultivate that special faculty."

"What!" exclaimed Maurice, somewhat astonished, "would you have the English nothing but shopkeepers and colonizers—the French, a nation of warriors—the Germans, philosophers only, and the Italians, musicians? That, indeed, would narrow down the talents of the world to one special field each."

"You do not understand me, Maurice," said Justinian impatiently. "I quite agree that every nation should have its own literature, art, music, philosophy, and drama, but the one special gift of the race should be cultivated more than the others; it should be made a state law—a political necessity. However, this question admits of much argument, and we have no time to argue now, but, in illustration that I am not so narrow-minded as you think, I will merely point out, that I educate my Greeks in military and civil occupations quite as much as I attend to their intellectuality."

"After all," said Caliphronas pointedly, "only civil occupations, such as touch agriculture, are necessary, for intellectuality is yet in the future with us, and it is not likely Melnos will ever require to resort to arms."

"I trust not," replied Justinian, looking steadily at the Count. "But if she does, I am quite sure you will find her sons able to defend their island, even against enmity and treachery."

Caliphronas smiled uneasily, and held his peace, upon which there ensued a rather embarrassing pause, which was only ended by the departure of Crispin to look after the afternoon's entertainment. Maurice strolled off in the pleasant company of Helen, much to the disgust of Caliphronas, who now pointedly avoided the company of the Englishman, owing to the fracas which had occurred during the previous day. Truth to tell, Roylands was pleased with such avoidance, as, now that open war was declared between himself and the Greek, he had no need to cloak his distaste for the society of this precious scamp.

The satiric comedy of "The Honey Bees," was a fantastic piece based upon an incident which had lately occurred in Melnos. Justinian had lately imported a potter to teach his people the ceramic art, but this new acquisition turned out to be but an idle scoundrel, who spent his time in drinking and making love to his neighbors' wives. On this basis the poet had worked out an amusing plot, not devoid of point, in which Aristides, an idle scamp, forces himself into an industrious hive of honey bees, whose queen he desires to marry, in order to be independent for the rest of his life. Unfortunately, he falls a victim to a counter-plot of the bees themselves, who, in order to disillusionize the queen, get a pretty young girl called Myrtis to pay court to the adventurer. He makes love to Myrtis, and is discovered by the enraged queen, who orders her bees to drive him forth from the hive.

This slight framework was filled with pointed allusions to passing events, and the weaknesses of many of the Melnosians were slyly pointed out, so that the gossip-loving audience enjoyed every stinging remark to the full, nor, indeed, failed to laugh when the irony was directed at themselves. The scene was the public square of the village, with the lake and the bronze statue of Jupiter, so that, with such a well-known setting, every local point was understood and applauded. The chorus consisted of the "Honey Bees," dressed somewhat after the fashion of Aristophanic Wasps, with pinched waists, yellow black-banded bodies, and spears for stings. Alternating with the rude buffoonery of the play, were bursts of choric song lauding the community of Melnos and the industry of its inhabitants, with many sly hits at the idle lives of the adjacent islanders. In fact, with great judgment the poet had constructed the whole comedy to glorify the Melnosians at the expense of their labors, and thus render them the more resolved to work hard at their appointed tasks, and thus fulfil the aims of their Demarch.

The following scene of the arrival of Aristides and the entrance of the chorus will give, some idea of the play, though, of course, what with local allusions and the flexibility of the Greek language, the comedy is more amusing in the original.

Aristides. O Pan, to what land of honey have I come! Truly, I see naught but wild thyme and yellow comb. Poseidon, has thou then girdled Hymettus with the azure scarf of ocean?

Queen. No hill of Attic fame do you here behold, but the sky-piercing Melnos, beloved of the gods.

Aristides. Jupiter! I behold a graceful creature. Have I then been thrown on the alluring coast of fatal Circe?

Queen. Sun-god's daughter I am not, but one who rules over honey-seeking bees in this hollow island. Cleverly do they extract the sweet juices of flowers to fill the emptiness of many-celled combs.

Aristides (*running away*). Ah me, I fear the sharpness of their stings.

Queen. In no wise will they hurt thee save at my behest. Be still, O handsome stranger, and I will invoke for thee the industrious tribe, whose ambrosia is sweeter than the food of undying gods.

Aristides. Already I shake in my cowardly knees.

Queen. O Pan, inspirer of vague fears, do I call on thee to send hither the swift-flying bees. Whether ye lurk in honey-throated flowers industrious, or speed lightly through the measureless sky, do I summon ye hither, O sting-bearers.

ENTER CHORUS OF BEES.

Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!
Indeed I heard thy cry, O queen,
When seeking on a mount serene
Sweet-tasting honey for our store,
Drawn from the core
Of rose and daisy, violet,
In sparkling dews of meadows set,
With patient labor do I strive
To fill the hive,
Alas! too often plundered, when
Espied by all-devouring men.
Buzz! Buzz! Buzz!
But lo! whom see I lurking here?
The form of man, whom much I fear.
Buz—z—z—z—z!
Let me prepare my angry sting
To slay this greedy-passioned thing,
Who would devour
Our honey in a single hour.
Buz—z—z—z—z.

The audience, lovers of laughter as they were, much preferred this amusing play to the solemn teachings of the morning, and yet from both they learned something necessary to their well-being. From the one, how Justinian wished to make them the centre of a new intellectual force; and from the other, how his aim could be achieved by industry and perseverance: so, grave or gay, the performance instilled the policy of the Demarch into their minds.

On the conclusion of the comedy, the rest of the evening was devoted to feasting, while Justinian and his guests returned to the Acropolis, well pleased with the success of the performances.

"Well, what do you think of my sermons from the stage?" asked Crispin, as he strolled along beside Maurice.

"I think very highly of them," answered the Englishman. "It is a pity we dare not be so out-spoken in our own land. But if you set forth the foibles of Londoners as plainly as you did in 'The Honey Bees,' I am afraid you would have half a dozen libel cases."

"It would be impossible to transplant the Aristophanic comedy to England, for modern civilization is too complicated to admit of such free speaking. Besides, the average Briton is too serious and too practical to relish the truth, even when uttered by the comic muse, and only the light-hearted Athenians could have appreciated and enjoyed such plain speaking. The French are more given to open criticism, and I daresay a political comedy constructed on these lines would appeal greatly to their sense of humor."

"When one is in Rome one must not speak evil of the Pope!"

"And every nation has its pope of conventionality. I agree with you there. After all, it is impossible to revive the past, and even a new Shakespeare would be as out of place in these post-revolutionary days as a new Aristophanes. The modern world deals with the drama of little things, and the individual idiosyncrasy is caricatured instead of the national policy. We have only one plain-speaking Aristophanes nowadays, and his name is *Punch*."

CHAPTER XXV.

OLYMPIAN.

Like statues fair the naked runners stand,
Poised for the start on Elis' sacred plain,
Their limbs resplendent shine with fragrant oil,
And every eager athlete is fain
To win the wreath of olives for his toil,
In honor of his laud.
Like flying arrows from a stretchèd bow,
They onward speed with every muscle strained.
A breathless pause—then shouts to heaven go
In token of the victory hardly won.
A triple cry of "Hail, Victorious!" sounds;
With dance and choral song the victor goes
To bend before the statue of the god.
Then one with glad rejoicing proudly throws
A robe of triumph o'er his shoulders broad,
And with wild olives crowned,
The athlete unconquered, in his state
Waits silent in the awful god's abode
To hear, with pride of victory elate,
The rushing splendor of Pindaric ode.

Owing to the comparatively small size of the valley, which was much taken up with the dwelling-houses, manufactories, and public buildings, the place wherein the yearly games took place was not very large. Still, with a sparse population, the arena was large enough, and when all were assembled it was comfortably filled, leaving a large open space in the centre for the runners, leapers, boxers, and other athletes who took part in the sports. Despite his dislike to anachronisms, Justinian was obliged to deviate from the special sports of Elis, and introduce a number of modern pastimes, in order to keep his men in an efficient state of training for the defence of the island. To this end, shooting matches were arranged, and the Demarch supplied the Melnosians with guns for the day, which were afterwards returned to the armory of the Acropolis, and many of the villagers were excellent marksmen. Justinian also, who appeared to know something of military tactics, drilled and manœuvred his men in fine style; and last, but not least, Gurt, who was an old man-of-war's man, had taught a special number the cutlass drill of the British navy.

The arena was a large open space near the grand staircase, surrounded with many trees of the beech, elm, pine, and plane sort; and thus, to some extent, shaded the ground agreeably from the sun, which beat fiercely down at noonday. There was no amphitheatre, but rows of stone benches on which the women could seat themselves, while their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers stood around, or lay luxuriously on the grass. Justinian himself, however, had a kind of stone throne, rudely carved, and all his guests were supplied with seats adjacent, so that they could view the games quite comfortably. The athletes were clothed in their tight-fitting dancing costumes, which gave free play to their bodies, and were comfortably cool, while their feet only were bare, so as not to impede their speed in the racing. On this final day of the festival, the colors changed sexes, for most of the men were garbed in white for the sports, while the women had decked their snowy chitons with brilliant ribbons and gold coins, while they wreathed their dark locks with fragrant chaplets of flowers. Only Helena was in pure white—Helena, who sat near her father like a queen, and wore a robe the hue of milk, a snowy wreath of delicate cyclamen, yet who looked the fairest of all the fair women assembled. In spite of the attractions, vine-feast and goat-song, which had occupied the two previous days, these Olympian games were the favorites with the lively Melnosians, as all could take part in them, and win the praises of the Demarch, and the smiles of the women, which was greatly flattering to the harmless vanity of the Greek nature.

Maurice, in common with Crispin, was arrayed in the white wool athletic dress, as Caliphronas had challenged him to compete in jumping, and for the honor of his country he accepted the glove so insultingly thrown down. Insultingly, because Caliphronas, confident of his superb physical perfection, had taunted the Englishman with not being able to hold his own in athletic sports, save in boxing, which taunt had stung Maurice so much, that he had wagered himself against Caliphronas in the running jump. At college, Maurice had been a famous athlete, and though six years of idleness in London had impaired his powers, yet the pure atmosphere of Melnos, the constant open-air life of mountain-climbing and swimming had completely reinvigorated him; and what he lacked of his former skill was counterbalanced by the endurance of his spare frame, the hardness of his muscles, and his general feeling of exuberant vitality. He was all in white, save for the colors of his college, and a wreath of red roses, which Helena had woven round his gray sombrero, in which headgear he looked like the Sicilian shepherd, Acis, when he went a-courting Galatea by the sea.

Seated by Justinian, they all watched the progress of the games with great interest, which was fully shared by their surrounding guard of sailors, who thought this festival the most sensible of the three. All the ambitious mariners had entered themselves for every game, running, wrestling, leaping, boxing, and shooting; nor did they fail to uphold the honor of England, for if the Greeks had the speed, the Britons had the strength, and, in their dogged determination that an Englishman could not be beaten, managed to secure a respectable number of victories over the nimble-stepping islanders.

"I think I like the games best myself," said Justinian, as he surveyed the races from his throne, like one of the old Olympian Hellanodikai; "for I know that strength is what Melnos now requires from her sons. Amusement and intellectuality are in the

future, but, with the chances of a probable war, we need as many skilled athletes and trained soldiers as possible."

"I notice you make everything subservient to your schemes," observed Maurice, who every day was more and more impressed with the administrative capabilities of the Demarch.

"Of course. I think the entire life of a people should be the means to an end, and thus they will be able to live healthfully, mirthfully, and intellectually, yet be able to guard themselves in time of dangers."

"Quite like Sparta!"

"No; I have told you I never did approve of Sparta, which destroyed the individuality of every man, and turned her nation into nothing but a warlike machine. A plant will not grow in a pot too small for it, nor will a child constantly confined in swaddling clothes develop its physical nature freely. Mankind requires four things,—amusement, education, work, and physical exercise; and on these requirements I base my system of rule. All the year round, my people work for the well-being of the community, and these festivals, although they please them, are not without their objects. The first day is the pure amusement only of the vintage feast; during the second day, I educate their minds to understand the reason of their existence; and now, on this third day, they indulge in physical exercises, which keep them healthy, and also train them to defend their land from outside dangers."

"You are a modern Solon!"

"The Solon of an unnoticed island," replied Justinian, with a smile. "Well, you see, owing to the exigencies of modern life, I am forced to go in for quality rather than quantity—to rule a tribe instead of a nation—to govern an island rather than a continent. Nevertheless, you know the saying, 'From small events, what mighty causes spring;' so, perchance, my miniature government, when it develops into a larger one, may not be without some influence in this often misgoverned world."

"Justinian," said Maurice, with irrepressible curiosity, "who are you?"

"Demarch of Melnos."

"Forgive me!" replied Maurice, flushing, as he noticed the pointed rebuke. "I know the question I have asked is a breach of good-breeding; but you are such a wonderful man, that I must be excused for wondering where you came from."

"I am not angry at your question," returned Justinian, touched by the frankness of the young man; "the spectacle of an old Englishman with such projects is, perhaps, calculated to arouse curiosity. However, I will promise to tell you all about myself when a certain event, which I dearly desire, comes to pass."

"And that event?"

Justinian smiled meaningly, and let his eyes fall upon Helena, upon which Maurice flushed red with delight, and would have spoken, but that the wary old man shook his head, as a sign that he was to keep silence.

"Andros!" he whispered significantly; "another time."

Maurice saw that Caliphronas was walking towards them, and wisely held his peace, although it was difficult for him to repress the delight which the hint of Justinian had awakened in his breast. To have this queen among women as his own, to pass his life by her side, to always have her beautiful face before his eyes,—it was too good to be true. Yet true it was, for Justinian had unmistakably shown his approbation

of the match. As to Caliphronas, the young Englishman had no fear; he had given his rival plainly to understand that he would strive his hardest to win Helena, and the Greek could not say that he was involved in any way in Justinian's crafty diplomacy. Maurice Roylands was essentially an honorable man, and, despite the necessity for such treachery, the underhanded dealings of the Demarch were revolting to his sense of honesty, and he was glad he had come to a complete understanding with the Count, so that, when Justinian showed his hand in the deep game he was playing, Caliphronas could not accuse his rival of underhand dealings in any way. As to Helena, this straightforward lover was not so ignorant of the ways of women as not to know she liked him best, in spite of her coquettings with Caliphronas; therefore he felt quite confident that Helena would not be cruel enough to refuse him.

His meditations were put an end to by Crispin, who approached with Dick, on whose behalf he proffered a challenge to Mr. Roylands.

"Here you are, Maurice," said the poet cheerily. "Dick wishes to know if you will be his antagonist in a boxing contest."

"Certainly, I will be delighted; but I am afraid, Dick, you will have the best of it, as I haven't touched the gloves for the last six months."

"I'm not in good training myself, sir," replied Dick modestly; "but I'd dearly love to have a turn with you, sir, if I may make so bold, just to show these darned Greeks how to use their fists."

"Don't you speak contemptuously of these darned Greeks, my friend," said Crispin dryly; "some of Justinian's men have no small skill in boxing, I can tell you."

"Not Caliphronas," remarked Maurice, recalling his contest with the Count on the first day of the feast.

"Caliphronas!" echoed Crispin scornfully. "No; he is too much afraid of his beauty being spoiled to go in for hard knocks; but he is a good leaper, Maurice, so you will have to look to your University laurels."

"'And can I fail before my lady's eyes?'" quoted Maurice jestingly.

"Perhaps not; but remember Caliphronas is also exhibiting his prowess in his lady's eyes: so you are like two knights of the Middle Ages tilting before the Queen of Beauty. If you fail, my poor Maurice"—

"*Væ victis*", retorted Roylands, with a laugh; "keep your lamentations till after the contest, Mr. Aristophanes. Jove! how that fellow scuds!"

A one-mile race was going on, four times round the arena, which was a quarter of a mile in circumference, and about half a dozen men had started, among whom was Temistocles, the young Greek who had won the wine-skin dance on the first day of the festival. He had shot slightly ahead of his competitors, who were making great efforts to catch him up, but Maurice, an adept in such things, saw that he was exhausting himself in the effort to keep the lead, and, as it was only the first lap, would not be able to hold out to the end going at such a pace.

"Crispin, tell that fellow leading to reserve himself for the last round."

"What for?"

"Because he's taking too much out of himself, stupid. Quick, shout as he passes."

The runners were now flying past the winning-post, which was directly in front of Justinian's throne, so Crispin sang out loudly in Greek to Temistocles as Maurice had instructed him. The young Palikar was no fool, and saw that the advice was good, so

he let the two behind him gain his side, and took a second place between them and the ruck. Only these three men were in the race, for the remaining three were already well blown, and Temistocles, acting on the wary advice given, wanted his two most dangerous opponents to exhaust themselves. During the second lap, one of the last three men threw up the sponge, as also did another at the third round, and as the hinder man was completely out of it, the interest in the race centred in the two leading runners and Temistocles, who followed closely behind. Neck and neck ran the first two, making violent efforts to pass one another, quite unaware of the danger behind them, so that at the final lap they were getting somewhat stale. Half-way round the arena, one gained slightly on the other, and, thinking he was now pretty certain of the victory, ran home at full speed, but Temistocles, who had been mustering his strength, saw that the decisive moment had come, and, shooting past him like an arrow, gained the goal four lengths ahead. The applause during this exciting race was tremendous, and the onlookers cheered themselves hoarse when Temistocles won; while that grateful young man came to thank Crispin for the hint which had gained him the victory.

"Do not thank me," said Crispin, smiling, as he drew Roylands forward; "Kyrios Maurice told me what to say."

Temistocles expressed himself much beholden to the lord, and went off to receive the congratulations of his friends, while the next item on the programme, which was a boxing contest, began. Both Maurice and Dick watched this exhibition of pugilistic science critically, and came to the conclusion that while the islanders were active enough in dodging and hitting, they had not sufficient strength to make their blows effective enough when they hit home. It was all dexterity and avoidance with them, which made the fight pretty enough to look on, but scarcely exciting from an English point of view. Still, one of these light-weight Greeks was enough to tire out any ordinary boxer, and, once having exhausted his antagonist, could hope to tap him pretty freely, and thus come off victor.

At last, after several contests, Maurice and Dick put on the gloves and stepped into the arena, and, after shaking hands in time-honored fashion, began to spar warily at one another. Both were heavier-built men than the spare-framed Greeks, but were pretty equally matched in point of weight and science. If anything, Dick had the quicker eye of the two, while Roylands possessed the longer reach. Justinian, an old boxing man himself, was as keen as a needle over this glove match, and came down from his seat, in order to get a closer view of the battle, while the Melnosians, equally interested, crowded round eagerly to watch the contest.

After sparring lightly for a time, Maurice made a feint, and led out straight home, but Dick was on his guard, and parried the blow with his right, catching his antagonist a lifter on the jaw with his left. Secretly annoyed at this, Roylands made rapid play, and succeeded in landing a stunner on Dick's eye before the active sailor could dodge. Maurice got the worst of the first round, Dick of the second, so it seemed difficult to foresee who would finally triumph. In the third Maurice got a nasty one in the ribs, but, feinting with his left, extended his right rapidly in that dexterous blow known as "the policeman's knock," which, catching Dick full on the face, had the effect of tumbling him over on the grass. In the fourth round, however, Dick recovered his lost ground by blowing his antagonist first, then coming home with a tremendous rap on

the left ear which made Maurice see stars. The Greeks were frenzied with excitement, and even Justinian, Caliphronas, and Crispin caught the contagion, and yelled as loudly as the rest at every successful blow. Not so active as the cat-like sailor, Maurice was getting a trifle blown, and thought he was going to disgrace himself in Helena's eyes, and, what was worse, in Caliphronas', by being beaten, so, when the fifth round began, made up his mind to come off best. By this time he was pretty well versed in Dick's tactics, and when the sailor closed in with a right-hand feint, in order to come home with his left, Maurice dodged like lightning, and, breaking down Dick's guard, punished him severely on the nose. Both men's blood was up now, and indeed Dick's was showing, as it streamed from what is called, in the graceful language of the prize ring, "his smeller," and at the sixth round the onlookers saw that the final bout would be severe.

All the women were rather nervous at this savage contest, and Helena, pale as a lily at the sight of blood, was clinging to her father's arm, inwardly breathing prayers for the success of her hero, for so she now regarded Maurice. Dick had now quite lost his head, and was quite reckless, while Maurice was as cool and calm as ever, his self-control standing him in good stead in parrying Dick's furious onslaughts. Still the sailor managed to draw blood freely, much to the secret joy of Caliphronas, who would have liked nothing better than to see Maurice's handsome face spoiled, when Roylands, setting his teeth like a vise, tried to close in with his opponent for the final tussle. For a minute the two men dodged rapidly, feinted, parried, sparred, and did their best to break down one another's guard, when Dick, losing his self-control, hit out recklessly in a wild fashion, upon which Maurice sent one blow after another home like a sledge-hammer, and ended the fight with a tremendous left-hander, which levelled Dick almost insensible on the ground.

Every man on the ground, aroused by the sight of blood, fairly went mad, and when Dick went off, supported by two of his messmates, wanted to carry the victor in schoolboy fashion round the ground on their shoulders, a triumph which Maurice declined, and retired to cleanse himself of blood. Long after was that fight remembered, and the local poet made a kind of Iliad out of the struggle, which was one compared to the triumph of Achilles over Hector, Maurice of course being the son of silver-footed Thetis.

The sports went on during the whole of the long day, as if the competitors would never tire, and there were flat-racing, hurdle-racing, jumping, wrestling, and further boxing, until late in the afternoon. Then Gurt put his men through their cutlass drill, and Justinian manœuvred the whole male population of the island, much to his own satisfaction and that of Maurice, who saw that the Melnosians were capitally drilled.

"Where did you learn all your military science?" he asked Justinian when the drill was over.

"I was in the army once," replied the old Demarch, with great pride.

"What regiment, may I ask?"

"I cannot tell you that yet."

"You are as mysterious as Crispin."

"There are a good many mysteries in this Island of Fantasy, Mr. Roylands," retorted Justinian good-humoredly, "and when they are all solved, you will be surprised in more ways than one. Have you been a soldier yourself?"

"No! I am a man of peace, but my Uncle Rudolph was a lieutenant in a line regiment, the —th."

"Ah, your lost uncle!" said the Demarch, with an ambiguous smile. "You must tell me your family history some day."

"I am afraid it will be necessary soon," replied Maurice, glancing at Helena.

"Ah, you think so? Well, remember my desire about you being my successor, Maurice. I wish your answer shortly."

"You will have it as soon as I hear from England."

"Well, that will be soon. I have a boat waiting at Syra for your letters, so I trust you will your reply, and Crispin his yacht, shortly."

"Then you still anticipate trouble?"

"I do! Remember we have one possessing the fatal name of Helena here. She is the firebrand, as you well know; but we will talk of these things another time, my son. Meanwhile, let us come and look at the shooting."

As Maurice turned to accompany the old man, he felt a soft touch on his arm, and, on looking down, saw that Helena, with an expression of pity on her beautiful face, was looking at him.

"Are you hurt, Maurice?" she said anxiously.

"No, not at all!" he replied, laughing. "Dick gave me a nasty one on the nose, which is rather painful, but nothing to speak of. But to-morrow, I will be such a sight, as you will shudder to look on me."

"I would rather see a brave man disfigured, than a handsome coward," retorted Helena, with disdain, casting a side look at the distant form of Caliphronas.

"Oh, and you think Caliphronas is"—

"Very nice," interrupted Helena cruelly. "Yes, he is delightful!"

"I believe you are very fond of Caliphronas," said Maurice, displeased at this speech.

"I don't think you are, Maurice," pouted the girl, looking down.

"Assuredly I'm not, and to prove this, I will do my best to beat him at the high jump!"

"If you do," said Helena gayly, "I will give you a rose."

"Of what color, you coquette,—red for love, or white for silence?"

"Neither! Yellow for jealousy!"

She ran away after her father with a silvery laugh, in which Maurice, in spite of his vexation, could not help joining, as the charming coquetry of this young girl was delightful enough to fascinate him, and annoying enough to pique his pride, of which Mr. Roylands had no small share.

"She is the loveliest woman in the world," he said to himself, sauntering towards the shooting party, "and if I win her I will be the most fortunate of beings. But I am afraid she is a coquette, or else it is a woman's way of provoking love. Hullo, Dick! is this you?" he added aloud, as the boatswain, considerably battered, approached him. "I'm afraid I've knocked you up a bit."

"Not a bit of it, sir," replied Dick, heartily grasping the young Englishman's extended hand. "I'll be as right as a trivet to-morrow; but, my word, sir, I shouldn't like to meet you without the gloves!"

"I don't know so much about that, Dick. You were a pretty tough antagonist, I can tell you!"

"So Zoe thought, sir, when she saw me," grinned Dick, displaying his white teeth; "she thought it was Gurt, sir!"

"And was sorry it wasn't, perhaps?"

"I'm blest if she was, Mr. Roylands! I'm the white-haired boy in that quarter, sir."

"And Gurt?"

"Oh, he don't mind, sir. He's not a marrying man—I am."

"And you intend to marry Zoe?"

"If she'll have me, sir."

"I don't think there's much fear of that, Dick," replied Maurice genially.

"I hope not, sir, but women are queer creatures."

"They are, indeed, Dick," answered Maurice, with a sigh, thinking of Helena and her dexterity in avoiding his wooing, yet keeping him a fast captive in her chains.

"What I'd like you to do, sir," said Dick reflectively, "is to have the gloves on with Mr. Caliphronas."

"Why so?"

For answer Dick pointed to his own swollen face, and grinned meaningly, whereupon Maurice walked away, laughing to think of the Count's handsome countenance in such a scarred condition.

The shooting was going on splendidly, and all the Melnosians proved themselves good marksmen, more or less, while Justinian himself was a crack shot, and made one centre after the other in a most surprising manner.

"Will you have a try, Maurice?" he said, when the young man reached him.

"Not to-day, sir. I'm too shaky after that fight, and wish to keep up all my strength for the high jump."

"You have a tough antagonist in Caliphronas."

"I know that," rejoined Maurice uneasily, "but I'm hanged if I'll let him beat me. His bragging would never cease. Bravo, Crispin!"

Crispin had just made a bull's eye, and was rejoicing in a modest way over his success, so Maurice, to encourage him, patted his shoulder.

"What a pity Eunice is not here to see!" said Roylands, laughing.

"I'm afraid Eunice would not appreciate my skill!"

"My dear lad, she would appreciate anything you did."

"I don't think her mother would!"

"As long as you have twelve thousand a year, Mrs. Dengelton will think you an Admirable Crichton."

"Not without a name!"

"You have a name as good as any in England," said Justinian, touching the poet on the shoulder, "and what it is I will tell you, when all these troubles are over."

This was the first time the Demarch had spoken so plainly, and Crispin was much rejoiced thereat.

"I am quite content, for I know you will keep your promise."

"You are right!" rejoined Justinian proudly. "I never break a promise, unless with regard to Punic faith."

Caliphronas heard this saying, but of course did not understand the significance of the remark, and strolled away in order to look at the high jump, which was being put up near the throne of Justinian. The shooting being at an end, the rest of the party followed, and took their seats for the final contest of the day, which was to be the competition of the Greek and the Englishman in the high jump.

The two competitors came forward, as lightly clad as possible, in order to give themselves every advantage in the contest, and two finer specimens of manly grace it would have been hard to find. Caliphronas was as lithe and sinewy as a panther, with a sinuous grace in every movement; while Maurice, who was the heavier-built of the two, had not a spare ounce of flesh on his body, thanks to his active athletic training during his residence in Melnos. Both were fair-haired and handsome, but the delicately moulded face of the graceful Greek had a cunning expression which was quite absent from the more manly looks of the Englishman. With supreme conceit Caliphronas quite expected to gain the victory, while Maurice in spite of his University record, could not help feeling a trifle uneasy as he looked at the springy grace of his antagonist, besides which he still felt a trifle shaken by the glove-fight, even though it had taken place during the earlier part of the day.

Caliphronas jumped first, and, poising himself on the ball of his foot about ten yards off, made for the tape, which was extended between two upright poles, with the speed of a deer. It was four feet ten high, and, presenting no obstacle to an accomplished leaper like himself, he cleared it easily with the lightness of a flying bird. Maurice followed, and also went over without the least difficulty, amid the applause of the spectators, much to the Greek's secret vexation, as he saw his antagonist was fresher than he thought, and no mean athlete to be scorned. Four eleven was also cleared cleanly by both, though in the air Maurice's feet were perilously near the tape, a fact which Caliphronas, who was eagerly watching, noted with delight. The height was now five feet, at which Caliphronas, unfortunately for himself, went with over-confidence, so that he touched the tape lightly. Intensely vexed at his failure, he could only hope that Maurice also would touch, but the Englishman set his teeth determinedly, and cleared the five feet with the bound of a deer. The Greek, mad with anger at thus being beaten, and furious at the applause of the spectators, loudly swore that the jump was a chance one, whereupon Maurice walked straight up to him, with an angry face.

"Count Caliphronas, you forget yourself, and you forget me, to make such a statement. There was no fluke about the matter, and, to prove it to you, we will both jump the five over again."

Justinian disapproved of this, but Maurice was firm, and Caliphronas was only too delighted to have another chance of beating his hated enemy; so, once more going to the start, he made a rapid run, and cleared the jump, by a hair's breadth, it is true—still he cleared it.

"Now, Mr. Maurice," he said ungenerously, forgetting the noble way in which the Englishman had acted. "Let us see if you can do that twice."

"I will not do it twice, sir."

"I thought not!" retorted the Greek exultantly; "so I have won."

"Not yet! you forget I also have cleared the five; but, to prove to you that my jump was no fluke, I challenge you to five one."

"You'll never do it, Maurice," whispered Crispin in alarm. "Jump the five again, and let the match be a tie."

"I'm hanged if I will!" retorted the Englishman fiercely; "I have done better than five one at Oxford, and if it had not been for the gloves, I'd do it again. At all events, I'll try this jump, Count Caliphronas."

In fair play the Count could not refuse the challenge, although he was pale with anger, so, knowing he would never clear that extra inch, went half-heartedly towards the start. Such a faint spirit is not conducive to victory, and Caliphronas not only touched, but fell heavily on the ground, much to his chagrin. Then it was Maurice's turn, and, measuring the distance with his eye, he placed himself a little more than ten yards from the tape. Helena clasped her hands with nervous fear, the spectators held their breath, as Maurice, pale in face, but stout in heart, came flying forward, and, soaring upward like a bird, cleared the five one with consummate ease. There was a wild cheer from the crowd, especially from the British tars, who rejoiced greatly at the way in which Maurice was upholding the honor of England, and the victor found his two hands nearly shaken off by Crispin and Justinian. As soon as he could get free, he looked for Caliphronas, but the Greek, too petty-souled to bear his defeat, had vanished, nor was he seen in the arena for the rest of the afternoon.

The games being concluded, Helena distributed the prizes, which were useful articles, especially selected by Justinian for these occasions. Caliphronas had won several races, and also the wrestling contest, but could not receive his prize, owing to his non-appearance, concerning which no one seemed sorry, so universally was he hated for his arrogance. Temistocles, Dick, Gurt, and others were duly rewarded for their prowess in the athletic field, and then Maurice knelt before Helena to receive his prize. Justinian had been somewhat puzzled what to give his guest, as the simple articles loved by the villagers were hardly acceptable to the travelled Englishman. Helena, however, solved the problem, and hastily twisted together a wreath of wild olives, which she placed lightly on his bent head.

"For you," said Justinian, as he arose a crowned victor, and kissed the hand of Helena, "we can have no fairer prize than the Olympian wreath of old."

"You should now have a Pindaric ode," exclaimed Crispin gayly; "but alas! I am not Pindar, and you must be content with the old Archilochian shout, 'Hail, Victorious!'"

The valley rang with the cries of the delighted Greeks; and Caliphronas, seated on a summit of the grand staircase, heard the triumphal shouts with wrath in his heart.

"He has beaten me in the games," he hissed between his clinched teeth, "but he shall not beat me in love. I will ask Helena to be my wife, and then, my Englishman!"

A third shout came from the valley below, but Caliphronas only laughed scornfully.

"And then, my Englishman!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

BEAUTIFUL PARIS, EVIL-HEARTED PARIS.

What! wouldst thou force me to thine evil will,
And bear me far away in benchèd ships,
A second Helen to a second Troy,
Whose flight would raise a second ten years' war?
Nay, sir! the gods are dead! and not in me
Beholdest thou proud Aphrodite's slave.
My judgment's as I will, and uncontrolled
By Venus, who would fain bestow on thee
The fairest woman, so that thou proclaim
Her fairest of Olympian goddesses.
Go hence alone! I'll none of thee or thine.
Troy's fallen, and Helen dead,—so Paris loses
The game which Ate's cursed fruit began.

"You beat me fairly," said Caliphronas frankly to Maurice that night. "It was foolish of me to be angry, but you must admit defeat is hard to bear."

The Greek did not mean a word of this very pretty speech, as Maurice was well aware; still he could not but accept it as meant in good faith, and thus a hollow truce was made between the two young men which either was ready to break on the slightest provocation. However, it was a pity to mar the pleasantness of the evening by continuous bickering; so, with smiles on their faces and distrust in their hearts, Caliphronas and his declared enemy sat down to table on apparently the best of terms with one another.

On their return from the games, all had enjoyed the delights of the bath, no small pleasure after a fatiguing day, and now, in their loose indoor robes, were partaking of refreshment. All was going merrily, and, from an outside point of view, a more united party could scarcely be found; yet one and all felt that this was but the ominous calm before the breaking of the storm. The Demarch, astute in the interpreting of signs, saw that matters were approaching a crisis which could not be averted, and that the disaffection of Caliphronas, consequent on his refusal by Helena, would take place sooner than had been anticipated. That the Count would propose to his daughter that evening he had but little doubt, as he saw that, smarting under his defeat in the games, Caliphronas was determined to equalize himself in the eyes of all by gaining Helena's consent to the marriage, as a set-off against the Englishman's triumph. This being the case, Justinian was equally sure that Helena would promptly refuse the Greek, whom she so much disliked; in which case Caliphronas would call upon him to enforce the

marriage, and then the whole truth would have to be revealed, after which the Demarch had little doubt but that the Count's next step would be to leave the island and range himself openly on the side of Alcibiades.

Truth to tell, the old man was rather anxious for the storm to burst, as the suspense was rapidly becoming unbearable; and as, judging from the review that day, all the Melnosians were well prepared for war, he did not mind if Caliphronas, out of wounded vanity, precipitated the affair quicker than was expected. Again, as the Greek had told him all the plans of Alcibiades, he had no further use for him; so, being prepared in every way for trouble, Justinian was in no wise sorry that affairs should come to a head, and that Alcibiades and his threatened invasion should be crushed at once. The insolence of Caliphronas also was becoming unbearable to the proud old Demarch, therefore he desired to hasten rather than retard the explosion; and, had he not seen that Caliphronas was bent upon bringing matters to a crisis himself, would have doubtless hinted the necessity of a marriage proposal being made at once.

With Maurice and Caliphronas veiling their hatred of each other under artificial smiles, with Justinian watchful for the expected catastrophe, with Helena anxious, she knew not why, at the Greek's burning glances, it will be easily seen that the merriment over the supper-table was rather forced. The only truly happy member of the party was Crispin, who, unsuspicious of ill, and rejoicing in having the promise of the Demarch to reveal all about his parentage, was laughing and jesting gayly in the highest of spirits.

"I think you can congratulate yourself on the three days of the festival being a perfect success," he said to Justinian, who sat veiling his real feelings under a quiet smile.

"Yes; everything went off very well. Andros, you, as the god of wine, were the hero of the first day."

"And Crispin, as Æschylus-Aristophanes, of the second," cried Maurice brightly.

"Not forgetting Maurice, as the athlete Milo of the third," replied the poet, raising his glass.

"Oh dear, dear!" said Helena, with a merry smile; "I am afraid this is a mutual admiration society. God, poet, athlete; you are all flattering yourselves, but no one says a good word for me."

"It is impossible to flatter perfection," remarked Caliphronas with one of his burning glances; "besides, you have been the queen of the three days, and we are all secondary characters. The stars are not the rivals of the sun."

"Why did you not say the moon?" said Helena, fastening a red rose in the breast of her robe. "I love the moon better than the sun."

"You are the inviolate Artemis!"

"Without an Endymion."

It was an unlucky remark, and Helena regretted having made it when she saw how fiercely her two lovers glanced at one another.

"Artemis waited a long time for her shepherd, but he came at last," said the Greek significantly.

"And did nothing but sleep when he did come," cried Maurice angrily; "a pretty lover truly! Helena, you are no moon-goddess, but your namesake of Troy—the

world's desire."

"Yet even Helen had her Paris," interposed Caliphronas quickly.

"Every woman has her Paris nowadays," said Crispin quickly, to forestall the angry reply of the rival lover; "only it is a city instead of a man, which is just as charming and more manageable. If Menelaus had been ruler of Lutetia, Helen would never have been persuaded to leave it for a dull provincial town like Troy."

"'Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris!'" observed Justinian quietly. "Tennyson's line would apply equally to the son of Priam or the city of pleasure. There, Crispin, is the subject for a song, which idea I will make you a present of for nothing."

"Sing of Paris the city," cried Helena vivaciously.

"No, Paris the man," said Maurice, with a glance at Caliphronas.

"Sing of both," rejoined that gentleman quickly, out of sheer contradiction.

"It is a hard task to improvise on so difficult a subject as 'the Paris of Paris,'" remarked Crispin jestingly; "however, I will try, although I have no lyre."

"Take this myrtle," said Helena, tossing him a twig across the table, "and sing to it in the Greek fashion."

"Maurice, you ought to give me your crown, so that myrtle and olive inspire me with the breath of the god."

"'King Pandion he is dead,'" rejoined Maurice lightly. "The gods inspire no songs to-day, nor would they be answerable for a mixture of the classic and romantic, such as your 'Paris of Paris' is bound to be."

"Judge for yourself, Thersites," retorted the poet; and, holding the sprig of myrtle in his hand, after a few moments' thought, he began to sing in his pleasant voice the following words to a lively French air.

"Paris came to Helen when
Earth was younger;
He was handsomest of men,
She was fairest woman then;
And love's hunger
Made them long to run away,
Which they did one pleasant day—
So, at least, does Homer say—
Scandal-monger!
Helen comes to Paris now
Earth is older.
But no love shines on her brow,
Nor breaks she a marriage-vow,
Love is colder.
She but comes for triumphs here,
Dressed by Worth in costumes dear,
Lets existence gay *pour rire*
Lightly mould her.
Yet if Paris, town of joy,
Holds a Paris,
Charming as the Trojan boy,
Life is bliss without alloy;
There no bar is
To indulge in love once more;
So with Paris, as of yore,
Flies she as she fled before,
But she marries."

"Oh, 'Roses of Shiraz!'" sighed Maurice comically, "what would your admirers say if they heard such *vers de société*?"

"Improvisation is hardly serious work!" retorted Crispin coolly, drinking his wine.

"And your sentiments!" cried Caliphronas in mock horror. "You have made Helen prim."

"'Tis in keeping with this virtuous century."

"For my part," said Helena of Melnos playfully, "I think your modern reading of the story is charming. Crispin, I appoint you my poet laureate."

"And my wages?"

"A wreath of artificial laurels, for, indeed, your song is but worthy of such."

"Cruel! And I always thought you so soft-hearted."

"Never judge by outward appearances," said Helena, rising from her seat. "I am as hard-hearted as papa—on occasions."

"I hope not on all occasions?" observed Caliphronas, with emphasis.

"Entirely depends upon the situation. To you, now, I could refuse nothing—if I were inclined to grant your request."

She vanished, laughing, through the curtains, and Maurice looked at Justinian, to see if he had espied any hidden meaning in his daughter's words; but the face of the

old Demarch was as expressionless as a mask, while the Count's, bright with joy, betrayed the certainty he felt of receiving an answer in the affirmative to his proposal of marriage. Truly, women are queer creatures, as Dick had observed the previous day. And if Helena did not intend to marry Caliphronas, it was curious that she should thus raise up his hopes, only to dash them down again. Juliet, with her simile of a silk-gyved bird, trying to fly away, yet ever drawn back again by the detaining thread, is a typical woman, who scorns her lover, so that he departs angrily, yet, when she sees him leaving her, woos him back with tender words, only to repeat her former cruelty. Helena, in spite of her girlish simplicity, yet knew these two men were in love with her, and tortured the one and was kind to the other, turn and turn about, just as it suited her humor—why, it is impossible to say, unless the legend that every woman was once a cat be true, and they yet retain a sufficiency of the feline nature to make them love such cruel mouse play. Yesterday Helena said she disliked the Greek, now she roundly asserted she could refuse him nothing; and, whether she was in earnest or fun, there was no doubt that the Count was about to take her at her word, and ask her to become his wife.

In spite of Crispin's valiant efforts, the conversation languished after the departure of Helena, the Demarch being somewhat preoccupied, and Maurice too cross to talk; while Caliphronas, after replying mechanically for a time, finally went off in search of the lady he had made up his mind to marry. All the three men left at the table looked meaningly at one another, for they guessed the reason of his sudden exit, yet none of them made any reference to the affair, as it would be quite time enough to discuss it when Caliphronas was refused.

Meanwhile, Caliphronas rushed onward to his fate, in utter ignorance of the real feelings which Helena entertained towards him, and found her leaning against one of the pillars in the court, listening to the singing of a nightingale, much in the same position she had occupied when first seen by Maurice, two months previous. She turned with a smile when the Greek entered the court, but he held up his hand for her to keep silence, and both of them for some time continued to listen to the delicious music. The passionate song of the distant bird flooding the warm night with melody, the thin, pale light of the moon pouring in white radiance on the white marble court, the intoxicating perfume of the flowers around, and the delicate noise of the falling fountain, all thrilled the heart of the impressionable Greek with a sensuous feeling of delight, and stretching out his hand gently, he laid it lightly on the bare arm of the girl he loved.

Startled by the touch, Helena rather indignantly turned round to reprove him for taking such a liberty, but the words died on her lips, as she saw the handsome face of this man, irradiated with passionate love, bending towards her. Tall and straight as a cypress, his lithe figure gracefully draped in a white robe, he looked like some gracious deity of the past, wooing a mortal maiden, while the burning gaze of his eyes seemed to scorch her with its ardor. It was the animal look in them that thus made her flush hotly, and, with a sudden movement of outraged virginal dignity, she retreated slowly towards the silver pool of the fountain.

"Do not shrink from me like that, Helena!" murmured Caliphronas in Greek, as he came towards her lightly as a fawn. "I wish to tell you the meaning of the bird's song."

"What do you mean, Andros?" she asked uneasily.

"Do you think Aristophanes understood it?" pursued the Greek, taking no notice of her question; "he put it into words, you know. Tio! tio! tio-tiolix—No, that is not the song, but a mere assemblage of words. What is the divine nightingale now singing? Can you not guess? It is of love—of love—of love! My love for you—your love for me, my queen. Hark! out the strains gush rapturously through the night—it is speaking of love eternal—my love for thee, joy of my heart!"

"You jest, Andros!" said Helena faintly, not at all liking the tone of this poetical rhapsody.

"Jest!" cried Caliphronas, ardently seizing her hand; "no, I speak true to you, rose of this isle! I love you! I worship you! I desire you for my wife!"

"Your wife!" she echoed, snatching her hand away. "Are you mad?"

"With love of thee—yes!"

"Do not touch me, sir. How dare you insult me!"

"Insult!" said Caliphronas, starting as if he were stung. "What do you mean, girl? Is the offer of a man's heart an insult?"

"You are surely not in earnest," said the girl, much perplexed what to say. "I had no idea you loved me!"

"I am in earnest, and I do love you," declared Caliphronas with fiery energy, coming so close to her that she could feel his hot breath on her cheek. "You must have seen my passion long since. I want you to be my wife—your father and I have settled it between us."

It was the worst speech that he could have made, for Helena, with a cry of rage, pushed him fiercely back, and stood before him with clinched hands, her eyes bright with indignation.

"How dare you! how dare you! Am I not to be consulted in the matter—do you think I will allow myself to be handed over to you like a slave? Never! I would rather die! I will not be your wife! I refuse to listen to you!"

"But you do not understand," said Caliphronas, rather crestfallen at this sudden outburst of anger.

"I do understand. You have spoken to my father, and he has permitted you to ask me to be your wife, but, as to its being settled—how dare you! I will not be your wife! Don't you dare to suggest such a thing to me!"

"I mean to be heard," began the Greek, but she cut him short with a sudden stamp of her foot.

"You can mean what you like," she said imperiously, "but heard you will not be!"

"You beautiful fury!"

"Go away and leave me!"

"Helena," cried the Count, falling on his knees, "I love you! I adore you! Do not refuse to be my wife."

"I do refuse!"

"But your father?"

"Leave my father out of the question, Andros. You have asked me to be your wife, and I tell you plainly, No. Perhaps I have been rather angry, but when you ask a woman to honor you by becoming your wife, you should not treat her as if she were a bundle of goods to be handed from one man to another."

"You refuse me?" asked Caliphronas, hardly able to believe his own ears.

"I do, once and for all! Come, Andros, stop talking such nonsense, and forget all this scene."

"Why will you not be my wife?" asked the Count doggedly, rising from his knees.

"Because I do not love you."

"Not love me!"

"No, my sultan. Do you think I am a woman to fall at your feet when you thus throw the handkerchief?"

Caliphronas, who had suppressed his rage with difficulty, now burst out in a passion of furious anger, hardly knowing what he was saying.

"I know the reason you refuse me. Yes, you do well to turn away your head. You love this cursed Englishman. Ah, you cannot deny it! you are afraid to look me in the face."

"I am not afraid—there!"

She faced him boldly, and the Greek, maddened beyond control, seized her by the wrist with a grasp like iron, yet she neither winced nor cried.

"Is it thus a woman should proffer her love?" hissed Caliphronas, white with passion; "this Englishman loves you not, and yet you throw yourself at his feet."

"I do not. Let go my hand!" she cried, wincing with pain, yet keeping a bold front, upon which he flung her from him with a furious oath.

"I will marry you, in spite of your refusal."

"Never! I will die rather than be your wife."

The young man tried to speak, but, choking with passion, could say nothing, so, stamping with impotent fury, he rushed to the principal entrance of the court and tore aside the curtains.

"You have refused to marry me," he cried in a strangled voice. "I accept your refusal, but you will be mine soon. I will storm the island, I will drag you in chains away, and when I tire of you then will I sell you as a slave to the Turk!"

He dashed out of the court with a scream of rage, leaving Helena standing white as a marble statue, with her hands across her breast, which was heaving tempestuously with rage at the Greek's insolence. If she had, girl as she was, refused the offer of Caliphronas in a somewhat undignified manner, she was now every inch a woman, who, not knowing the meaning of the word "fear," was fiercely angered at the insult to her womanly pride. The soft, graceful girl had disappeared, and in her place stood Clytemnestra, fearlessly daring the dagger of Orestes. Suddenly she felt a touch on her arm.

"Father!"

"I know what has occurred. You are worn out with excitement, so go at once to bed."

"But Andros"—

"I will deal with him."

"You know I refused him."

"Yes, I heard you say so."

"Was it your wish I should marry him, as he said?"

"Girl, I would rather see you dead than the wife of that despicable coward," retorted the Demarch fiercely. "Now retire at once, and leave me to settle the matter.

Good-night."

"Good-night, father."

She turned to go with an air of utter lassitude, but the strain of the last half hour had completely broken her down, and suddenly, with a low cry, she burst into tears. Justinian caught her in his arms, and began to soothe her tenderly with endearing words, which moved the girl strangely, for she was quite unused to such caresses from her iron-natured father.

"My girl, my little child, you must not weep!" whispered the old man, kissing her white face. "All will yet be well, and never shall you see this vile Andros again. He shall leave the island at once. You did well to refuse him, and I am proud of the spirit you displayed. Come, come! you must weep no more. I know all."

"You know?" she faltered, looking at him in astonishment.

"Yes, I know, and I approve. Now, good-night, my darling, and sleep well."

He led her slowly to the door, and, having summoned Zoe, sent the girl to bed at once in charge of her maid, then returned to the centre of the court and looked frowningly at the entrance through which Caliphronas had disappeared.

"You dared to speak like that to my child!" he murmured fiercely. "It is well you fled, or, old as I am, you would not have left this court alive. It is war between us now, Andros, and if I gain the victory, you had better have died than spoken as you have done to-night."

Maurice, whistling gayly, came into the court, having left Crispin behind at the table, but, when he caught sight of Justinian's face, stopped short in dismay.

"What is the matter, Justinian?"

"Nothing more than what I expected."

"About Caliphronas?"

"Yes; he has proposed to Helena, and she has refused him."

Maurice drew a long breath of relief.

"I am glad of that; now there will be a chance for me."

"You love my daughter?" asked the Demarch suddenly.

"Yes, I love her," replied Roylands simply; "I have always loved her."

"I am glad of that, Maurice."

"You will permit me to ask Helena to be my wife?"

"Willingly. It is my dearest wish; in fact, it was for that reason I brought you here."

"Brought me here, sir!" said Roylands in amazement. "Why, did you know I was coming?"

"Yes; I sent Caliphronas to England to persuade you if possible to pay me a visit."

"But how did you know such a person as I was in existence?"

The old Demarch took Maurice by the hand and spoke solemnly.

"When you propose to and are accepted by my daughter, I will tell you all, and the mysteries which have so perplexed you shall do so no longer."

"I will speak to Helena to-morrow."

"Good. Then to-morrow I will tell you who I am, and how I was able to know all about you."

"But suppose Helena refuses me?"

Justinian smiled slightly.

"She has refused Andros, but you—ah, that is quite a different thing."

"Still"—

"Tush, my son, you are too modest! In my days young men were not so faint-hearted. Helena's a woman, therefore may be wooed."

"True, but the question is, may she be won?"

"My good Mr. Roylands, did I not promise to tell you all about myself when you presented yourself as my future son-in-law?"

"Yes."

"Well, by this time to-morrow you will know all, so as to what will occur in the mean time, I will leave to your imagination."

"And Caliphronas?"

"Caliphronas," repeated the Demarch slowly, "means mischief, so, like the knights of old, you will win your bride at the point of the sword."

"Oh, Justinian, if you only knew how I love her!"

The nightingale, hitherto silent, now began its song, upon which the old man good-humoredly pushed Maurice to the door.

"Go to bed, my son; that bird will tell me the tale of love much better than you will."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE ALTAR INSCRIBED ΘΕΌΝ.

By this altar stone I swear
  Never more to part from thee;
  Thine in life and death to be,
And thy future fortunes share
Be the weather wild or fair,
  Dry on land or wet at sea,
  This vow shall be kept by me,
By this altar stone I swear.

The next morning neither Helena nor Caliphronas was present at breakfast, as the girl, in company with Zoe, had gone up the mountain shortly after sunrise in quest of flowers, and the Greek had not been near the Acropolis since he had left it the previous night.

"Can he have left the island?" said Maurice anxiously to the Demarch.

"Hardly," replied the old man grimly; "unless he has borrowed the wings of Icarus, for I alone have the key of the tunnel."

"There is the western pass," suggested Crispin thoughtfully.

"True; but even supposing he did get to the sea-beach, he will find it difficult to obtain a boat," said Justinian calmly. "All the boats are fast chained and padlocked to the rocks; so, unless his friend Alcibiades finds him waiting, like a second Ulysses, on the beach, I hardly see how he can take French leave."

"What are you going to do about him, Justinian?" asked Maurice curiously.

"I am waiting until you and Helena come to an understanding, and then I will tell Caliphronas that he has been beaten with his own weapons of treachery."

"Helena has gone up the mountain. Will I await her return?"

"By no means. Follow her at once to her favorite haunt. There is a narrow path leading to it—a glade near the western pass, in the center of which is an altar inscribed Θεόν."

"Oh, I know it! Helena showed it to me some time ago. Crispin, I am going a-wooing!"

"I wish you every success."

"Do you think my fortunate star is in the ascendant?"

"You are as faint-hearted as you were last night," said the Demarch, laughing. "Do you think, if I were not sure of Helena's answer, I would send you on a fruitless errand? Go, my son; and when you and Helena come to ask my blessing, I will deal with Andros."

"Punic faith!" remarked Crispin a trifle sadly.

"Well! what would you?" demanded the Demarch with energy. "Had I not made use of Andros, he would have made use of me. It is a mistake in being too honest when dealing with a scoundrel. One cannot go straight on a crooked road. If I were dealing with you, or with Maurice, I might not stoop to diplomatic lies; but as to that serpent of an Andros—pah!—the end justifies the means."

"Do you think he will come and see you again?"

"Of course! He will come to demand the fulfilment of my promise, and ask me to force Helena into this distasteful marriage. Then I will reveal all, and drive him from the island."

"But is it wise to let him go free, seeing he is our declared enemy?"

"What! you wish me to keep him as a hostage?" said Justinian good-humoredly. "Nothing would be gained by such an act. Alcibiades intends to attack the island, with or without Andros; and the only thing this scamp can do is to urge his friend to assault Melnos at once. Everything is ready: the men are in splendid training; I have arms in plenty; and we are thirteen Englishmen, so the sooner the strife is decided the more satisfied I will be."

"Well, I will leave you to talk over your military schemes with Crispin," said Maurice, as he arose to go, "and meanwhile will go in search of Helena."

"Good luck go with you!" cried Crispin, as he left the room; and Maurice heartily seconded the kindly wish.

It was an exquisite morning, and the sun was just below the eastern peaks of the island; but as Maurice lightly climbed up the slopes behind the Acropolis, the luminary came into view, and flooded the high elevation of snowy pine forest, and olive trees, with yellow radiance. The cup of the valley lay in shadow; but amid these lofty solitudes all was luminous light and brilliant sunshine. The little path which led to the glade had been worn into a narrow earthen track by the light feet of Helena; but on either side grew the long lush grass, starred with primrose, violet, anemone, and cyclamen—all delicately blooming in the warm atmosphere. From this floral carpet arose stately plane-trees, arbutus, and here and there lance-shaped cypresses; while, between the luxuriant foliage, Maurice could catch glimpses at intervals of the terraced vineyards, yellowish-green with the autumnal tints of the vine-leaves, and purple with bunches of grapes; sometimes the white gleam of a winepress, from whence arose the merry song of peasants treading the ripe clusters; and far overhead, seen like a vision through the ragged framework of leaves, the serrated peaks of milky hue cutting the intense azure of the sky. All this loveliness was irradiated with the strong sunlight, and steeped in the luminosity of the atmosphere, so that the variety of tints, the infinite delicacy of the colors, the almost imperceptible blendings of the one into the other, made a picture enchanting to the most careless observer. Added to this, the air, rising warm from the valley below, yet coolly tempered by the higher snows, produced an atmosphere exhilarating in the extreme; and a pleasant murmur of song of bird and peasant sounded on all sides, blending with the rustle of the boughs, and the gentle sigh of the wind moving innumerable leaves to airy whisperings.

It was truly wonderful how rapidly Maurice had adapted himself to the mountaineering life of Melnos; and he breasted the steep path with a vigor which had been quite foreign to him, when listless, enervated, and melancholic, in England. The

artificial life of six years in London, amid a deleterious atmosphere, surrounded by ugly houses and stony streets, had saddened and depressed his spirits; but now that he had returned to Nature for cure, her calm and soothing medicines had stilled his fretful spirit, had smoothed the wrinkles from his brow, removed the haggard anguish of his heart; and now, reinvigorated and vitalized, he felt that it was good to live. Doctors can do much, but Nature can do more; for, while physical ills are to a certain extent under the control of the former, only the latter can minister to the mind; and the intangible influence of landscape, mountain air, rustic quiet, and woodland music, on the diseased mental faculties, cannot be over-estimated in their curative powers. Wise, indeed, were the Greeks to fable how the giant Antæus drew fresh vigor for his frame from his mother Tellus; and if we in modern days did but apply this parable of nature-cure to our crowded city populations, how infinitely less would be the physical and mental ills to be endured by our worn-out, exhausted toilers of this over-anxious age!

What wonder if the Hellenes were a joyous race, dwelling as they did in a radiant climate, amid scenes of undying beauty, in healthful communion with the Earth-spirit! They exercised the body in the palæstra, the mind in the portico, and, ever drinking in health, beauty, and the music of leaves, winds, and waves, were therefore easily able to attain and preserve that serene calm of existence, which we see stamped in vivid beauty on the faces of their marble masterpieces. The countenances of Egyptian sphinx and granite king express the awful solemnity of communion with the unseen; the rapt faces of mediæval saints a spiritual unrest to escape from the world they despised; but in the frieze of the Parthenon, in the statues of god, goddess, hero, and nymph, we but see the calm of contentment, of serene satisfaction, arising from the healthful minds and bodies of the race, whose joyous tranquillity was the gift of Nature to her believing children. Yet we, while envying their beatitude, and desirous of emulating their intense calm, make no effort to do so; for we leave the country, and rush to the already overcrowded cities, wrangling, toiling, worrying, striving to attain an unsatisfying end. Wiseacres talk of the complexity of modern civilization, of the over-population of the world, of the survival of the fittest; but this is, so to speak, merely laying the blame of our own mistakes on the stars, for we ourselves have produced this age of unrest, which we profess to loathe. When the humors of the body run to one spot, a tumor ensues, which throws the whole system out of order; and it is the same with the misdirected way in which we govern our modern nations. If, instead of rushing to cities, and thus begetting what may be called geographical tumors, our rustics and wearied toilers stayed in the open country, then would our civilization become less restless, and more akin to the envied calm of Hellenic life. Food would be more plentiful, minds would be more at peace, bodies would be more healthy, and the world happier. But we will not do this;—fired by ambition, by desire for gold, by longings for luxury, we crowd together in noisy multitudes, and turn away from the calm serenity of Nature, who would take us to her breast and make us happy, even as she did those wiser children of old. Nature sent her herald, Wordsworth, to proclaim this truth, but alas! he piped in vain; and his songs of purity were drowned in the jingle of gold and the shouts of ambition.

These were Maurice's thoughts as he clambered up the mountain-path; and so rapt was he in his dreamings of Nature-worship, that, all unconsciously, he emerged into the glade near the western pass.

It was encircled by ilex, tamarisk, beech, and elm, woven together as in brotherhood by straggling creepers, festooned gracefully from bough to bough, from branch to branch; and in the centre, amid the flowing grass, was placed a small marble altar, on a low flight of steps. In front the trees had been cut down, and there was a glimpse of the white houses in the valley, the waving red line of the grand staircase; and, high above, the bizzarre colors of the volcanic rocks, fringed by a dark green belt of forest, from which luxuriance the arid peaks shot up into the blue sky like white marble cones. But not at valley, nor forest, nor aerial peaks looked Maurice, for his eyes were fixed on Helena, who, robed in her favorite white, crowned with a wreath of roses, stood by the altar with a mass of brilliant flowers thereon, looking like the nymph of the place.

She flushed red with delight as Maurice drew near, and paused in her dainty task of arranging the blossoms with the air of some startled shy thing of the woodlands. Like stars her eyes, like sunshine her glinting hair, and as for her face, the roses in her wreath were scarce so delicate in hue. The lovely glade, the solemn, flower-piled altar, the beautiful priestess—it was not Melnos, it was not the nineteenth century, for this was Arcadia; and in this bird-haunted dell was Flora discovered, weaving flowers for future summer's adornment.

"Are you Nymph, Dryad, or Oread?" he asked, pausing with one foot on the lowest step.

"No; I am Chloris, the goddess of flowers," she answered, entering into the spirit of his jesting speech.

"Give me, then, O goddess, of your treasures!"

"Violet, rose, and cyclamen! take them all," she cried merrily, and threw a rain of many-colored flowers on the laughing, upturned face of the young man. Then, while he bent to pick up one crimson bud which had fallen at his feet, she burst out into one of those old English songs her father had taught her:—

"Rose and myrtle all are twining,
In their beauty thus combining,
To become a chaplet fair
For my shepherd's golden hair.
Fa la! la! la!
My Colin dear."

"Clearly," quoth Maurice, with a smile, "this wreath is meant for me, for I have golden hair."

Helena smiled, and continued both her garland-weaving and her song.

"If you ask who is my dearest,
It is he who loiters nearest;
And for him this chaplet fair
Do I weave with flowerets rare.
Fa la! la! la!
My Colin dear."

"Better and better!" said the lover, mounting the steps. "I am nearest! I have yellow locks, so I decidedly am Colin dear!"

They were now standing on either side of the altar, with the rainbow heap of flowers between them; and, despite Maurice's boldness in thus coming so close to his goddess, he was now seized with a fit of shyness, which communicated itself to the sympathetic Helena, so they gazed with embarrassment at one another, tongue-tied, with burning cheeks.

"Where is Zoe?" asked Maurice, breaking the awkward silence.

"Zoe," replied Helena demurely, "is assisting Dick to find more flowers."

"And, pray, what is Dick doing here?"

"Aha! you must ask Zoe."

"I would rather ask you."

Helena glanced at him with a laugh, then suddenly flushed crimson, and sat down on the steps, with the white lap of her gown full of flowers.

"I am no oracle to give answers," she replied, carefully selecting some buds.

"That means you are no goddess," said Maurice, sitting down a step lower, and looking up into her charming face. "Well, I prefer you as a mortal maiden. But what about Colin's wreath?"

"I am weaving it now."

"Roses for love, myrtle for joy, violets for modesty. What a charming wreath!"

"Ah, you know the language of flowers!"

"I know what this wreath means—'Modest love is a joy.' Am I right?"

"Yes—no—yes—that is—Oh dear me! Is it not a lovely day?"

"Is it not a lovely face? Very lovely."

"I speak of the day."

"And I of you."

Decidedly Maurice was getting on capitally in the art of saying nothings which mean somethings, and Helena was woman enough to know what he was hinting at, yet also woman enough to indulge in a little coquetry. She had burnt her fingers with Caliphronas; yet, quite forgetful of the warning, began to tease Maurice with charming persistence.

"Am I very lovely?"

"You are as beautiful as Helen," replied Maurice, rather taken aback at the directness of this question.

"I am as beautiful as Helen! Well, I am Helen; so you mean I am as beautiful as myself. That is not a compliment."

"What a vain child you are! I am speaking of the Trojan Helen."

"I am not a child. I am nineteen years of age—and a woman."

"I believe that, for you possess all the art of a woman in tormenting a man. Where did you learn it?"

"Learn what?"

"The art of being cruel, kind, merry, sad, delightful, yet tormenting."

"Do you mean to say I possess all these contradictory qualities at one and the same time?"

"Well, you are capricious at times."

"Oh, indeed!" said Helena pettishly, resuming her task. "Then I must be full of faults."

"They are very charming faults, at all events."

"I am not listening, Maurice. I am too busy with this wreath."

"My wreath."

"I did not say it was yours."

"Not in words, perhaps; but then, you see, I can read the language of the eyes."

Helena blushed at this, but, purposely misunderstanding the hint, made demure reply.

"Ah, you see my education has been neglected in that particular branch."

"Shall I teach you?"

"I am afraid you will find me a bad pupil."

"I don't mind taking that risk, Helena."

He laid his hand on one of hers with a caressing gesture, upon which she let it remain, but snatched up a cornflower with the other.

"Look what a beautiful blossom!"

"It is the color of your eyes."

"No, no; I mean this red rose."

"The tint of your cheeks."

"I hate compliments," said Helena in a dignified way, trying to release her hand from his warm grasp.

"Always?"

"Yes, always; unless I like the person who pays them."

"And in this case?"

"I—I—don't know."

"Let me read the truth in your eyes."

She looked up with a pretty gesture of mock despair, but, meeting the tenderness of his look, dropped her eyes in confusion, while Maurice, shifting his seat, slipped his left arm round her slender waist, still holding her hand gently.

"Helena!"

No answer.

"Helena, do you know what your eyes tell me?"

No answer.

"They say that you will not be cruel enough to refuse me your love."

"My love!" she murmured confusedly.

"Yes," he whispered passionately. "I said you were capricious. You are not capricious, but true, loving, and charming beyond expression—a very woman, whom I love, and who loves me in return. Helena!"

All the virginal passion of this island maiden burned like red roses in her cheeks, as Maurice drew her slender form closer to his breast, and murmured broken sentences of love in her ear.

"I love, you! I love you, Helena! I saw your face in a picture, and I loved the face; now I see the woman, and I love the woman. My dearest! my darling! say you love me just a little!"

"I cannot say that," she whispered, hiding her face on his shoulder.

"Oh, Helena!"

"Because I love you a great deal."

"My darling!"

She lay in his strong arms, with her head on his shoulder, blushing with maidenly fear at the ardor of his passion; then Maurice, bending down his comely head, pressed a kiss on her lips.

"My dearest! my own!" he murmured rapturously; "how I love you! love you! love you!"

Lost in the overwhelming deeps of each other's affection, they remained silent, filled with feelings too deep for words, too inexplicable to be translated otherwise than by sighs and glances. The delicate voices of the woodlands sounded in their ears, the brilliant colors blazed in the luminous light, the sun shone, the birds sang, but they heard nothing, saw nothing; for, with their hearts beating, their souls blending, their lips meeting, they were far away from this earth in the heaven of love.

There was something sacred about this outburst of passion, which sent a thrill of fear through their breasts; for this was no vulgar affection, no sensual desire, no mere adoration of outward beauty, but a chaste union of two souls, in which the woman's melted into the man's as a dream into a dream. The virginal purity of the young girl experienced no repulsion in this case, as it had felt when near to the frank animal passion of the handsome Greek; and Helena, exquisite blossom of maidenhood, lay in her lover's arms without shame or dread, for she knew that this clinging clasp, these broken sighs, this vivid ardor, were the outcome of a love as pure and chaste as was her own; so there she lay, cradled on his beating heart, and the birds around sang their betrothal song, as doubtless they carolled to our first parents in the garden of Eden. Time was not, earth had vanished, humanity was but an empty name, for, clinging together with passionate ardor, they were all in all to one another, and the divinity which clothed them with his splendors was no rosy, mischievous urchin, with his bundle of arrows, but a terrible, unseen, unknown, unfelt deity, who now, for the first time, had permitted them to enter into his Holy of holies, and touched with their lips the burning coals of his sacred altar.

Alas! mighty as are the pinions of Love, they weary in that divine atmosphere of transcendentalism; so, folding his wings, he ceased his song of bliss, and dropped like a tired lark to the earth. The lovers awoke from their mystic trance, and looked at one another with wide-eyed rapture; then Helena, with a happy sigh, once more laid her head on her lover's shoulder, and began to talk of earthly matters.

"My father!"

"Your father will be delighted, my dearest. He told me that this was the dearest wish of his heart."

"Ah! is he so anxious, then, to lose me?"

"No, he will not lose you, my sweet queen. For when we are married we will still dwell in Melnos, and reign over it through years of happiness."

"My father wants you to be his successor?"

"Yes; and to marry you. So if you fulfil the first, I will accept the second."

"I will marry you whenever you like," said beautiful Helena, smiling through her tears. "But will you not weary of staying here?"

"With you? never!"

"Ah, it is I who am the attraction—not Melnos!"

"It is both; but in my eyes you are before everything else in the world."

"And if you grow tired of me?"

"I will never grow tired of you!"

Helena picked up a rose from her lap and held it up to him.

"This rose is very beautiful, but it fades. Is your love like the rose?"

"Yes; but not because the rose fades. My love is like the rose-plant itself, which renews itself afresh with every coming of summer. In this island it blooms all the year round; and my love will be the same."

"Will you not regret your home, your money, your position?"

"My dearest, none of those things brought me happiness. I was a weary, mournful man, tired of life, tired of myself, tired of all around me; then by chance I saw your face, and it was as a star in the darkness of my night. I followed that star, and it led me to happiness, and to you!"

"So we will live here?"

"Till our days be ended. You will be queen, and I your very humble slave and lover. No; I do not desire to return to the world, with all its tumult, ambitions, and fret. I am weary of the crowded cities, the haggard faces, the gray skies of England. I only care to live in this lotus-land with you, my angel, to wander with you amid the fair flowers, yourself the fairest of all; to sleep at dusk with your loving arms around me, to awake at dawn under your caress; and thus to live in paradise until we meet in a still brighter paradise beyond the grave."

"Will we meet beyond the grave?"

"Helena!"

"I know nothing of religion, my dearest. Indeed, it is not my fault, for my father has always refused to answer my questions. He would not allow old Athanasius to speak to me of sacred things, and I know nothing, save that there is an Almighty Being called God."

"And your father?"

"Believes the same. Look!"

She pointed to the majestic block of white marble behind her, and there was deeply sculptured the one word "Θεόν."

"So of old the Athenians erected an altar to πρὸς τὸν ἀγναστον Θεόν," said Maurice sadly, rather puzzled to know what to do. "My dearest, I am no saint, to be able to instruct you in such things; and I am afraid my views are not what the Church would approve of. However, my dear old friend and tutor, Mr. Carriston, is, I trust, coming out here to see me; and he will marry us, and tell you all you wish to know of sacred things."

They had risen to their feet, and were standing looking at that solemn altar, so noble in its hugeness amid the encircling green. No relic of paganism sculptured with nude figures, with wreathes and nymphs and long-drawn pomp of Panhellenic festival, but a severely plain mass of stainless stone, with no other indication of its meaning than the mystic word "Θεόν" cut thereon. After looking at it in silence for a few minutes, Helena gathered up her flowers in order to return home, for the sun was now at his zenith, and the heat intolerable.

"Oh, not yet!" entreated Maurice, anxious to prolong the sweet communion; "you must make me my wreath."

"Are you Colin?"

"I think so," he said, kissing her fondly.

"So do I," she replied demurely; "therefore, Colin, I will finish your garland."

Once more she sat down on the steps and began busily wreathing the flowers together in long fragrant strings, while Maurice, lying lover-like at her feet on the flowery turf, looked ever up into the delicate beauty of her face, and wondered at his good fortune in being loved by such an enchanting divinity.

Zoe and Dick came back armed with flowers, and Dick grinned somewhat sheepishly as he saw Maurice smile. A fellow-feeling, however, makes us wondrous kind, so Maurice made no remark, but sent Zoe and her swain with their newly gathered flowers down to the Acropolis.

"Do you think Dick is in love with Zoe?" asked Helena, when the laughter of the sailor and his companion had died away.

"Do I think you are in love with me?" retorted Maurice lazily. "My dearest, Dick is as much in love with that wicked little brunette, as I am with a certain charming blonde."

"I'm glad of that," said Helena complacently. "I do not wish to lose Zoe."

"You must when she marries."

"Oh no! If Dick becomes her husband, he will stay here. I'm sure he would not mind, as he is very fond of you."

"That's very kind of him, considering the battering I gave him yesterday."

"Oh, Maurice, it was terrible!"

"For Dick?"

"No; for you."

"Poor Dick! he got the worst of it, yet you pity me."

"Ah, but you see I'm not engaged to Dick," said Helena gravely, holding out a wreath to him.

"No; but Zoe is. At least, if she is not now, she soon will be. But come, Helena, fasten this wreath round my hat."

Helena obediently did so, and then placed it on her lover's head, upon which he gave her a kiss, and insisted that she should deck herself with the remaining flowers. Nothing loath, Helena did so, and was shortly one mass of delicious bloom, from which her face peered out like some laughing Dryad. Rose-wreath on her golden head, green myrtle girding her slender waist, and flowers of myriad hues bedecking her dress, she looked indeed like Chloris, the goddess of flowers, to whom Maurice had so often compared her.

"Come, my dearest," he said, taking her hand, "and I will lead the Spring down to the valley. We are not Maurice and Helena, but Florizel and Perdita, shepherd and shepherdess; so come, my dearest, adown the mountain."

They walked slowly along, talking all kinds of charming nonsense, and laughing merrily, he rose-wreathed like an ancient Hellene, she decked, like a goddess of the spring, with delicate blossoms, and both full of mirth and joy and happiness, which bubbled from their lips in gushes of liquid song.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PUNIC FAITH.

'Tis difficult, when dealing with a knave,
To know what course of conduct to pursue,
Yet if to win the victory you crave,
Strict honesty you must perforce eschew;
Like him, all craftily you must behave,
Or else he certainly will conquer you.
This golden rule remember when you meet him,
A scoundrel's weapons must be used to beat him.

It took Caliphronas some considerable time to recover his usual serenity of temper, as never during his whole life had his vanity received such a blow as this refusal of Helena's to marry him. Hitherto the Greek had been so much petted by all on account of his beauty, especially by women, that he had become quite a spoiled child, and looked upon it as his right that every whim he took into his handsome head should be gratified. To express a wish, and have it at once fulfilled, appeared to him to be the proper mode of behaving towards him, and it was a severe wound to his arrogant self-complacency to find that the only woman he cared about should refuse to yield to the dearest wish of his heart.

His love for Helena was purely a sensual feeling, based on the feminine beauty of the girl, so, when he found himself scorned in such a way, this animal affection speedily merged in the stronger feeling of intense hatred. Formerly he had regarded Helena as a charming toy, who would do him credit as his wife, and satisfy his artistic requirements by her womanly grace; but now he regarded her in the light of a bitter enemy, one who deserved to be punished for the infamous way in which she had slighted his addresses. Nothing would have given Caliphronas greater gratification than to mar that lovely face he had so much admired, and he would have liked to drag Helena through the gutter, and render her an object of pity and derision to all the world, in order to satiate his vengeance against her.

Had he been a Turkish Bashaw, he would doubtless have tied the offending beauty up in a sack and dropped her into the Bosphorus; had he been a Russian boyar, he would have done his best to get her exiled to Siberia; but, as he was neither the one nor the other, and was in his present position quite unable to treat her as cruelly as he wished, with devilish ingenuity he hit upon the only mode in which he could hope to gratify his petty spite against a woman, whose only crime was that she did not admire him as much as he admired himself.

The Count's little scheme of revenge was not complex, as he merely intended to call upon Justinian to keep his word, and force his daughter into the marriage, and, once she was his wife, punish her in a way of which he felt himself thoroughly capable, that is, by worrying her to death. A petty, spiteful, narrow-minded man like the Greek had quite a gift in annoying those people whom he disliked, and by assiduously exercising this ignoble talent, could hope to render unbearable the life of even the happiest and most long-suffering person. Besides, if he grew tired of Helena, he could easily force her to leave Melnos, for her father was so old that he would soon be in his dotage, and thus could not protect the girl, in which case Caliphronas would be free to act as his spiteful nature dictated.

As to Justinian's breaking faith with him, such a thing never entered into the Count's mind for a moment, and, scoundrel as he was himself, he hardly dreamed that any one would be astute enough to beat him with his own weapons, least of all the Demarch, who had hitherto acted towards him in a strictly honorable way. Strong diseases, however, require strong remedies, and, had the deceiving of Caliphronas not been imperative for the salvation of the island, Justinian would certainly not have stooped to such duplicity. Caliphronas, therefore, ready to betray the Demarch if the fancy took him, never thought the Demarch would betray him, and thus relied blindly on the promise of the forced marriage being fulfilled, in which case this consummate scamp decided to sacrifice Helena in the most painful manner which he could devise, for the gratification of his wounded pride.

That Maurice loved Helena he knew well enough, for had not the mere sight of that lovely face brought the young man from England to this semi-civilized island of the Ægean; but as to whether the passion was reciprocal, Caliphronas felt doubtful, as he had never espied anything in the girl's demeanor towards his rival to inspire him with such a belief. But whether she loved this young Englishman or not, the Count was quite indifferent, as he had Justinian's promise that, with her consent or without it, Helena should be his. As it turned out, the marriage, if it took place, would be without her consent, but this the Greek deemed a small matter, and therefore repaired to the Acropolis with the full determination to force the Demarch to keep his word. It was in this rosy light that Caliphronas looked at the circumstances of the case, and he never thought of what he should do in the event of things turning out otherwise, for the simple reason that, in his blind arrogance, he deemed himself too powerful to be thwarted in any way; so, disguising his chagrin under an air of triumph, he went in the afternoon to meet Justinian, and his fate.

Strolling along the mulberry-tree avenue, Caliphronas, anticipating quite a brilliant career of scoundrelism, began to build castles in the air, which were all inhabited by one person—himself. Justinian was old, and would soon die, or, at all events, putting his much-desired death out of the question, would shortly become incapable of managing the affairs of the island, therefore this goodly heritage would soon revert to Count Constantine Caliphronas, better known as Andros, the shepherd boy. This humble birth, however, he would sink in oblivion, and become widely known as Prince Caliphronas, the sole survivor of a famous Fanariot family. Helena, of course, he would marry, in order to revenge himself, and when he grew weary of her beauty and his revenge, there were plenty of ways of getting her shipped off to Stamboul, where she could be finally disposed of in some jealously guarded harem. Then he

would be sole ruler of the Isle of Melnos, and make it a dwelling after his own heart, for, after turning both Crispin and the Englishman off the island, he would set up a princely establishment in this Ægean paradise.

What with the exports of wines, silks, pottery, olives, and grapes, he would be able to realize a magnificent income, which he would apply, not to the aid and assistance of the Melnosians, but to his own enjoyment. He would build a palace, have troops of servants, a pleasure yacht, and could also give rein to his sensuality in the matter of the most beautiful women. As to carrying out Justinian's foolish dream of a new Hellas, of course that was ridiculous, and his first act on becoming Demarch of Melnos would be to abolish the three days' festival, so that the Melnosians could live like other insular Greeks, on such amusements as they could provide for themselves. Besides, the title Demarch only meant Mayor, and was hardly lordly enough for such a magnificent person as he intended to be. He would call himself Prince of Melnos, and who knows but what, with the assistance of Alcibiades and a few other scoundrels of the same kidney with whom he was acquainted, he would not be able to extend his principality so as to include all the surrounding islands. Then Crete, under Turkish misrule, would be glad to come under his protection, and Rhodes also—in fact, a few years might see the whole Cyclades acknowledging him as their sovereign. In that case, he would be powerful enough to measure himself against the Greek Government, who, perhaps, weary of a foreign king, might be persuaded or forced to drive away King George, and place the Prince of Melnos on the vacant throne.

In fact, while indulging in these Alnaschar-like visions, Caliphronas was rapidly foreseeing the conquest of Constantinople, and himself seated on the golden throne of the Palæologi, as Emperor of the East, when the sight of the Acropolis, directly in front of him, dispelled these glowing dreams, and he ascended the steps rather dolefully, with the conviction that, as yet, all his fine schemes were in the clouds.

Pausing a moment on the threshold, in order to quite recover his usual jaunty manner, the future Emperor, but present adventurer, drew aside the curtain and entered the court, to find himself confronted by Justinian, his daughter, and their two guests. The old Demarch reclined in a capacious chair beside the fountain, smoothing the golden hair of Helena, who was seated at his feet. On the back of the chair leaned Maurice, laughing at some trivial remark, and Crispin, balanced perilously on the marble rim of the pool, was irritating Argos, who strutted near with his gorgeous tail spread out to its fullest extent. All of them looked remarkably happy, especially Justinian, whose stern face was glowing with pleasure, and in Helena's eyes shone the light of undying love as she glanced shyly, from time to time, at her joyous lover, so strong, so handsome, and so noble.

When Caliphronas appeared at the entrance, however, all this merriment vanished; for Helena, mindful of the previous night, sprang to her feet, with an indignant look at the advancing Greek, and the faces of Maurice and the poet assumed a cold expression of keen disapproval. Not so Justinian, who, quite enjoying the situation, received his enemy with a bland smile, which, had Caliphronas but known it, boded ill for the success of his mission.

"Helena, my child," said the Demarch quietly, "will you leave us for a little while. I have some business with Count Caliphronas."

Helena needed no second bidding, but, with an angry glance at her rejected lover, walked quickly to the curtains, through which she vanished, but not before sending a sweet smile in the direction of Maurice. Caliphronas saw that smile, and felt uneasy as to the meaning of it, but he became still more uneasy, when the Demarch, without asking him to be seated, addressed him formally as Count Caliphronas.

"Why do you not call me Andros?" asked the Greek apprehensively.

"I understood you called yourself Count Caliphronas," replied Justinian smoothly, "and, naturally, I give you that title. Of course, I thought you were but a shepherd boy, who, in default of god-parents, had to be called by the name of your birthplace. However, I am wrong, as it seems you are the offspring of a noble family, and have a title."

"I don't know what you mean by talking to me like this!" said the Count in rather a cowed manner, feeling that the speech of the Demarch was decidedly hostile in tone. "I wish to speak to you alone."

"You can speak to me in the presence of these gentlemen," retorted the old man coolly; "they know all my secrets."

"All?" said Caliphronas in a meaning tone.

"As far as you are concerned—yes!"

"Beware, Justinian!" cried the Count in Greek, whereupon the Demarch ruthlessly interrupted him.

"You had better speak English. I prefer it."

This was quite the dictatorial Demarch of old, strangely unlike the yielding Justinian of the last few weeks, so Caliphronas, feeling more and more uneasy, burst out into a torrent of rapid English.

"What do you mean? Why do you talk like this? Have you forgotten your promise to me?"

"What promise?"

"Your promise that I should marry Helena!"

"Oh yes, yes! I remember something about that. Well, have you asked her to marry you?"

"I have, and she has refused me," said Caliphronas sullenly.

"In that case, I am afraid you cannot marry her."

"Cannot marry her!" stammered Caliphronas, the rich color of his face fading to a dull gray; "but you promised to make her marry me."

"Did I? then I break that promise!"

"You break it! And what about my succeeding you as Demarch of Melnos."

"I break that also!"

Caliphronas, too startled to speak, stood looking blankly at the Demarch, pale as the marble pillar against which he leaned. Much as he disliked him, Maurice could not but feel sorry for the shame and agony felt by the baffled schemer. Twice, thrice, he tried to answer Justinian, but the words died away feebly on his parched lips, while the Demarch, relentless in his anger, spoke cruelly and deliberately, as if to torture still further the wretched man before him.

"You are astonished at my thus acting so dishonorably. I am astonished myself, as never before have I broken a promise once made, even to the meanest person. However, in this case, necessity demanded that I should make use of you as a tool, in

order to gain my own ends, and I have done so, with the fullest intention of defeating your schemes. Ah yes, my dear friend, I know perfectly well that you would have betrayed me to Alcibiades, had I not, by a stroke of diplomacy, secured you to my interests, by promising to give you my daughter and make you my successor. Had I not done so, you would have joined the ranks of my enemies, and I, being ignorant of their schemes, would have been at a disadvantage in defending my property. Therefore, knowing you were ready to play the traitor, unless bribed to remain true to your benefactor, you can hardly wonder that I made use of you, to learn the plans of those who were dangerous to me in every way. A man cannot serve two masters, and as the question of whose side you would embrace was simply one of bribery, I took advantage of your baseness. I bribed you! I promised you all you wished, without the slightest intention of fulfilling such promise. From you I have learned all I wish to know, and am now in a position to baffle both your ambition and that of Alcibiades. Between two stools you have fallen ignominiously to the ground; and now, having no further use for you, traitor and ingrate as you are, I command you to leave my island this very day."

During this long speech the Greek made neither sound nor movement, but, like a beaten hound, cowered before the lash of Justinian's scornful words. When the Demarch ended, he raised his head with a bitter smile on his pallid face, and flung out his hand threateningly towards the speaker.

"You do well, Justinian, to say you are prepared," he said in a hoarse voice; "you do well to be on your guard; for I swear by the Panagia herself to ruin you and your schemes before the end of another month. Had you been true to me, I would have remained true to you; but now"—

"Most virtuous scoundrel!" cried Justinian scornfully; "you were anxious to guard what you thought was already your own, and now make a boast of doing that which you were bribed to do. As to your threat to ruin me, go and do your worst! I defy both you and your precious friend Alcibiades!"

"You have every reason to be grateful to me. I have told you all the schemes of your enemies."

"Yes; you betrayed them as you would have betrayed me, had their bribe been the larger. Gratitude! gratitude! you dare to speak of that to me, to whom you owe everything! Who were you? Nobody! What were you? Nothing! I found you a poor rustic in the Island of Andros, and trained you up to be my successor—which you would have been, had I not discovered in time your heartless, fickle, scoundrelly nature. Gratitude, forsooth! and you, ingrate, turning to bite the hand that has fed you all these years. You owe me everything, I owe you nothing, save the contempt that an ungrateful hound like you deserves for such treachery as you meditated. You would have sold me, you Judas! you would have betrayed a man who has been a father to you! But I have baffled you! I have tricked you! and you are now reaping the reward of your own vile actions. Go! quit my sight, ungrateful wretch! lest I pass from words to actions, and spurn you from the threshold which your very presence pollutes."

"I will go," cried the Greek, with venomous spitefulness; "but I will return, with an army at my back, to ruin you and yours. I will wreck your island, I will make of you a slave; and as for your daughter"—

"Not a word about that lady," said Maurice firmly, stepping forward and taking part in the conversation for the first time; "she is to be my wife!"

"Your wife!" hissed the Greek furiously. "Never! never! I will drag that fine piece of purity from your arms to the gutter. I will"—

"You d—d reptile!" cried the Englishman, white with passion; "say another word, and I'll break your neck!"

Caliphronas, having had some experience of Royland's strength, judged it wise not to say another word; but, turning on his benefactor, poured out the vials of his wrath on the old man's head.

"So this is why you brought him from England!" he said fiercely; "to marry Helena! You promised that if I fulfilled your desire, and lured him to Melnos, I would be your daughter's husband"—

"If she accepted you, yes—if she refused you, no!"

"So you say now. Oh, I have been your tool and slave all along!"

"You have. I have met treachery with treachery, and baffled you."

"I have obeyed your wishes," hissed the Greek venomously; "I have kept your secrets, but I will do so no longer. Whom you are, and what you are, I will tell this man."

"Be silent, wretch!"

"I will not be silent; I have been silent too long. You have betrayed me, so now I will betray you. Maurice Roylands, look at this so-called Justinian. Do you know whom he is? An outcast Englishman, a renegade adventurer—your uncle Rudolph!"

"My uncle Rudolph!" replied Maurice, aghast.

"Yes. It was he who sent me to England for you; it is he who is heir to your fine estate; and you—you are nothing but a pauper!"

"Crispin, turn that man out!" commanded the Demarch, rising. "Go to the western pass, Count Caliphronas, and there you will find a boat in charge of Alexandros. Leave this island before nightfall, or, by heaven, I will have you drowned like the rat you are!"

"I go," retorted the Greek fiercely, retreating before Crispin, and clutching the curtains. "I go; but when I return, I swear by all the saints that you shall suffer agonies for every word you have uttered to-day. Scoundrel! wretch! renegade! outcast! *Và và!*"

And, uttering the bitterest malediction he could think of, the beaten schemer vanished from the Acropolis, and later on from the island itself; from whence he doubtless went to Kamila, in search of Alcibiades, to assist him in his plans of revenge.

"Thank heaven, that is all over!" said Justinian, when they were once more alone. "Now, at least, it will be open war, and not hidden treachery, Maurice!"

"And you are really my uncle Rudolph?" said Roylands, grasping the outstretched hand of the Demarch.

"Really and truly! Now you know the meaning of so many things which have so often puzzled you. Did you never suspect the truth?"

"Never!" answered his nephew emphatically; "but Crispin"—

"Crispin knew it all along," said the poet quickly; "but, as I had given my sacred word to keep silence, of course I could say nothing."

"I am glad you are my uncle, Justinian."

"Oh, I am still Justinian, then!" said Rudolph, with a smile, as he shook his nephew heartily by the hand. "Well, it is better so; I am too old to learn new tricks, and, after forty years of Greek life, I cannot turn Englishman in one moment."

"Of course Roylands Grange is now yours."

"Boy, boy," observed the old Demarch, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "do you think so meanly of me as that? Were I a pauper, I would not deprive you of a single acre; but, being as I am, rich and happy, I would indeed be base to take your estate when I have all this."

"Still, you are the head of our house."

"A head that will soon be in the grave. No, no, my son, the property is yours; and if you have any scruples, why, then, are you not going to marry your cousin? so the Grange will still belong to you, and yet remain with the elder branch of the family."

"Why, Helena is my first cousin!"

"Of course she is!"

"A second Eunice," said Crispin, smiling, "only not so charming."

"Crispin! Helena is the most beautiful woman in the world."

"So is Eunice."

"Come, that's nonsense, you know!" objected Maurice warmly; "there can't be two most beautiful women in the world."

Justinian settled the matter by bursting out laughing.

"Every one thinks his own crow the whitest," he said gayly; "but come, leave off arguing about the merits of your respective lady-loves. We have other things to think of."

"The coming war, eh?"

"Yes. Andros will do as he says, and bring Alcibiades here with his band of scoundrels. Well," added the Demarch, with a grim smile, "they will get a rather warm reception when they do come. The Roylands are a fighting family."

"Ah, now I understand how you made that allusion before," said Maurice quickly; "and now I come to think of it, what with the many hints you dropped, I must have been blind not to guess the truth."

"When a man has been numbered with the dead forty years, it is hard to believe that he is alive," said the Demarch philosophically.

"You must have had a strange life, uncle."

"Very," replied Justinian, gratified by the title. "To-night, when Helena has retired to bed, I will tell you all my adventures since leaving the Grange."

"Does Helena know I am her cousin?"

"She knows nothing beyond the fact that I am Demarch of Melnos. No, my son, you have wooed and won your bride entirely on your merits, so now you can understand how delighted I am at the prospect of this marriage, which will blend both the elder and younger branch of the family in one common line."

"Can I tell Helena?"

"Certainly, whenever you please."

"Here is Helena now," said Crispin, as the girl, looking rather pale, entered the court. "Come here, sister Helena; Maurice has something to tell you."

"About Caliphronas?" asked Helena, coming up close to her father.

"No, my dear," said her father, kissing her fondly. "Caliphronas has received the reward of his treachery, and has left Melnos forever."

"I am glad of that, father," said the girl, with a sigh of relief. "You can have no idea how I disliked him. But has he been treacherous?"

"Very; he wanted to give up Melnos to Alcibiades."

"Did he dare?"

"Yes; and was only deterred from doing so by being promised both yourself and the island."

"But, father," cried Helena in great distress, "you did not want me to marry Caliphronas?"

"Never! I wished you to marry Maurice."

"Well, your wishes are going to be fulfilled," said Helena, with a lovely smile, turning to her lover.

"Helena," remarked Maurice, with mock solemnity, taking her hands, "look at me carefully."

"I am doing so with both eyes."

"Do you know who I am?"

"Of course—Maurice Roylands."

"And what else?"

"My—my future husband," said the girl, with an amused smile.

"Still, I am something even more."

"I don't understand," began Helena in bewilderment, when Justinian interposed.

"Do not tease the child so, Maurice. Helena, this is your future husband and your first cousin."

"My cousin!"

"By all the laws of the Medes and Persians," said Maurice, kissing her. "Your father is my long-lost uncle Rudolph, of whom I have spoken, and you, my sweet bride to be, are my dear coz Helena."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A ROLLING STONE.

In olden days folks mostly stayed at home,
Nor e'er in quest of unknown lands departed,
And tho' some ne'er-do-weels at times would roam,
They came back poorer than the day they started:
From which disastrous lives there comes alone
That foolish proverb of a rolling stone.
If such advice in earnest we obeyed,
Its narrow views would certainly benumb us;
The progress of the world would be delayed,
For lack of Marco Polo and Columbus!
They tore aside the veil which hid our eyes,
And showed us unknown worlds and unknown skies.
So now that proverb trite is obsolete;
Our enterprise has made far lands alluring,
And north and south our fellow-men we meet,
With Cook and Gaze in restless parties touring,
A rolling stone gains something for its loss,
And polish is more valuable than moss.

In due time Alexandros came back to the Acropolis, and reported that Caliphronas had left the island in a small boat, and when last seen his craft was running before the wind in the direction of Kamila. On hearing this, Justinian had no doubt but that the Greek was on his way to stir up Alcibiades to immediate action; therefore resolved to lose no time in putting Melnos in a thorough state of defence. In the meantime, he placed a strong guard at the gate of the tunnel and in the western pass, so as to prevent the island being taken by surprise. At all events, there was no special necessity for prompt action, as Caliphronas had only departed that day, and in all probability Alcibiades would not attack Melnos for at least one week.

Privately, Maurice wondered if the Greek, adrift in a small boat, would succeed in reaching land safely, as, judging from his terror on the night of the shipwreck, he had not much pluck in foul weather. The sky, however, was perfectly clear, and there was no chance of the castaway being caught in a storm, so Justinian laughed at the fears of his nephew, and bade him set his mind at peace. Caliphronas, he said, knew the waters of the Ægean Sea well, he had but a few miles to sail before reaching Kamila, and once there he would doubtless meet with some of Alcibiades' followers to guide him to their chief. In his innermost heart, the old Demarch rather regretted that

Caliphronas should thus escape safely, and would not have grieved much had the treacherous scamp been drowned in the sea, instead of reaching Alcibiades without harm, and stirring up that accomplished cut-throat to immediate war. There was no chance, however, of such an event happening, and Justinian quite expected within the week to see the Melnosian waters covered with the boats of his bitter enemies.

Helena was much astonished and delighted to find that Maurice was her cousin, and though she could scarcely be more in love with him than she already was, yet felt that this bond of blood-relationship bound him to her by a nearer and dearer tie than even that of her future husband. They talked of a thousand things in connection with their future life, but neither of them dreamed of returning to the family seat in England, but hoped, when this war-cloud had blown over, to pass the rest of their lives untouched by sorrow in this lotus-land of the East. Maurice, in common with Crispin, was anxiously expecting letters from home, but as yet none had reached them; so to all appearances it looked as though they would be blockaded in the island by the pirates before any communication arrived at Syra.

On the day of Caliphronas' departure, however, they were thinking but little of these things, as Maurice was anxious to learn the history of his uncle; while Rudolph Roylands on his part—now being able to talk freely of himself, owing to the revelation of his identity—was desirous of hearing all about his late brother, the ancestral estate, and the present position of the Roylands family. He did not want to speak of these things before Helena, as he judged the girl had undergone quite enough excitement for the present, and, besides, there were many things in his own career which he did not care about speaking of before this innocent child.

Justinian was not a bad man; but, having one of those restless, adventurous spirits, whose impulsiveness leads them into strange scrapes, had during his sojourn in the Levant indulged in many escapades, which, if not exactly criminal, were yet daring and lawless enough to startle a sober-minded person. The serious Justinian of the present was very different from the dashing Rudolph of the past; and as his daughter knew him only in his reverend old age, and respected him as the wisest, kindest, and best of men, he naturally did not want to disturb that feeling by a narration of the wild adventures of his somewhat scampish youth.

Therefore it was not until Helena had retired to rest that he told Maurice his story; and the three men sat up till nearly morning; the eldest talking in the Arabian Nights vein, and the two younger listening with rapt attention to the fascinating career of this free-lance of the Middle Ages, born by some strange chance among the respectabilities of the nineteenth century. Passionate as Benvenuto Cellini, ambitious as the first Napoleon, reckless as Cæsar Borgia, and fascinating as Lord Byron, this extraordinary being possessed all those vices, virtues, charm, and astuteness, we find, not in our military machines of to-day, but in those brilliant adventurers of the Renaissance, who burned fiercely over the troubled world of those days like wandering stars; terribly grand to look upon, but carrying destruction and dread everywhere as they swept onward in their fatal path.

After supper Helena retired, and Justinian went with his guests into the cool court, where they comfortably seated themselves under the star-strewn sky with coffee and tobacco. But the coffee grew cold and the tobacco burned untasted to ashes, as Maurice and Crispin, with their elbows on their knees, leaned forward to listen to the

wondrous story of this modern Ulysses, who had seen many lands, knew many people, and had done many reckless, wild deeds during his stormy career.

Justinian himself grew excited like an old war-horse, as he told of his early life; and it was easily seen that his spirit was as dauntless as ever, that a thirst for adventure still possessed his soul, and that he chafed bitterly at the inglorious ease to which his frail body condemned him. His bright eyes flashed at the memories of his hot youth, and his grand voice pealed trumpet-like through the still air, as he strode up and down before his enthralled listeners, reciting deeds of derring-do done in the times that had been.

"Yes, those were grand days in Bolivia," he said, resuming his seat, after an outburst of stormy passion, as old memories awoke in his brain. "I feel carried away to the past when I talk of them. If Jumez had only brought his troops up in time, I might have been President of a South American Republic instead of Demarch of Melnos. Well, at all events, my late years have been peaceful enough; and as President I would have had but a stormy time, ending, very likely, in a violent death."

"And after you left South America, uncle?"

"I came back to England in a sailing vessel. There was a mutiny on board of her, which I and three other fellows managed to quell; but we held our lives in our hands all the way until we got to England. When I left the ship, I went down to Roylands in disguise, to look after my people, and found them all happy. I had not killed your father, as I had feared; and he was now married to Rose. They seemed happy enough, so I had not the heart to disturb them. It would have been no pleasure to me to take the estate from Austin, as I had plenty of that treasure I found in Bolivia, and the life of a country gentleman was irksome to me. Besides, the woman I had loved so fondly was now my brother's wife; so I had nothing to gain by revealing myself. I strayed about the old place for a time, and then returned to London, in order to think of my future. I was very wealthy, in the prime of life, and anxious for adventure, so at first I thought of returning to the army, but on reflection I decided that my first experience of soldiering had been quite enough, so turned my attention to travelling, and went all over Europe, which tour I found but tame work. Asia was more exciting, however; and I had some good tiger-hunting in India. When I left that place, I went down Cape Town way, and explored the southern wilds of Africa, which were even more savage than they are now. I got this wound there in a row with the niggers."

He drew up his sleeve, and showed a white cicatrice on his arm, which must have been a dangerous wound; and then began to tell of his African adventures, of battles with savage tribes, of explorings in unknown wilds, fights with wild beasts, elephant hunts, witchcraft ceremonies of the Obi kind, until the listeners did not know at which to marvel most, his memory or the bizarre existence he had led.

"I had five years of that sort of thing," he went on, after a pause, "and it became rather tiresome. Besides, I was now thirty-five years of age, and thought it was best to settle down, but where I could not make up my mind. He who has prairie fever once always gets it again, and it sends him off on his travels into the wilds as if he were stung by the gadfly of Io. What I wanted was some big work to keep my mind and body busy; but, with all my wealth, I really did not see where I could find such occupation. True, I might have remained in Africa, and become a kind of savage king; but, with all my buccaneering leanings, I had intellect enough to despise such rusting

away in tropical forests beyond the reach of civilization. I wished to exercise my brain as well as my body; yet, in spite of all my hard thinking, no scheme appeared feasible enough to give me work, interest, and pleasure when I had passed the meridian of life. England I disliked returning to, as a cramped existence in that gray little island would have sent me mad; and unless I had asserted my right to Roylands, and entered Parliament, I did not see how I could employ my time. Besides, I was averse to disturbing Austin; and the prejudices I would meet with on all sides from narrow-minded stay-at-homes would have sent me back again to a savage life. Unlike the Genii in the "Arabian Nights," I could not go back to my jar after once being released therefrom.

"England, therefore, being out of the question, I had serious thoughts of returning to South America, and exploring up the Orinoco river, where they say all sorts of buried cities, civilized Indians, and golden temples are to be found. Then, changing my mind, I almost decided to go to San Francisco, and have a try at gold-digging. Feeling doubtful of this being worth undertaking, I fancied Australia, where fortunes were being made up Ballarat way, would suit me; but this idea I also abandoned. I did not wish to make my fortune, as I already had more money than I knew what to do with; and it was all safely invested in England. You see, Maurice, I had the price of my army commission, which was no great sum, my mother's fortune, which was considerable, and also that enormous Incas treasure I dug up near Lake Titicaco, which nearly cost me my life, as I told you; so you can fancy I was quite a millionnaire long before the days of Chicago pig-sticking and Pennsylvanian oil wells."

"How did you decide to come to the Ægean?"

"Well, that came about in a queer sort of way," said the Demarch, lighting his pipe. "When I was up at Zanzibar, which was about as far north as I had then got, I met a poor devil of a Greek who was starving, so took him about with me as a kind of companion. He had been mixed up in the War of Independence, and got on the bad side of King Otho, who was, at that time, ruling Greece about as badly as it could be ruled. My Greek had a dream of reviving the old Hellenic learning; but with the country under a Bavarian king, and overrun with brigands, he did not see how this could be done. I told him of my desire to find something to occupy my mind and body; so he suggested, as I had such a lot of money, I ought to try to start a little kingdom of my own on an intellectual basis. The idea took my fancy greatly, as I was always of an administrative turn of mind; and then he told me about this island of Melnos, and how it could be cultivated, fortified, and made into a kind of Elysium by a man with capital. After some deliberation I decided to do this, and pose as a second Lord Byron; therefore, with my Greek, I went up the coast in a trading vessel, and into the Red Sea. It was very uncivilized in those days, and we had all kinds of adventures, in one of which my poor Hellene was knocked on the head; so I was left to battle my way on alone over the isthmus to the Mediterranean."

"I wonder you were not killed."

"I was pretty nearly," rejoined Justinian grimly; "especially up Suez way. Of course, at that time, there was no canal, and no Suez; but I managed somehow to get across the isthmus to Alexandria. I need not tell you all my adventures from the time I

left Zanzibar, as it would take too long; but they were just as exciting as the Bolivian escapades, if not quite as bloodthirsty."

"You ought to publish a book of your career."

"My dear Crispin, they would call me a second Baron Munchausen, for many of my adventures would seem impossible in these tame days of Cook's tourist parties. The thirties were a great falling off from the buccaneering times, but in these days the thirties seem quite bloodthirsty; and where the next generation of born adventurers, such as I was, will find scope for the exercise of their talents, I am sure I do not know."

"Well, uncle, and what did you do after Alexandria?"

"I came on to Athens to see about my new Hellas. There I hired a kind of small schooner, and, with picked men, went down among the islands, until I came across Melnos. I recognized it from the description of the Greek at Zanzibar; and, having landed, climbed up over the peaks. When I saw this valley, I was enchanted, for it was indeed a fortress, formed by the hand of Nature herself. True, at first, I hesitated about establishing a colony in the crater of an extinct volcano, for one would never know when it would break out again. However, when I saw this Temple of Hephaistos, I felt pretty safe, as the crater must have been extinct when it was built by the old Hellenes, thousands of years before. So I thought, if the volcano had kept quiet since the days of Pericles, it would surely keep quiet for the next thousand years."

"And probably will!"

"I hope so; at least I have seen no signs of eruption; besides, there is a vent for the volcanic forces at Santorin, so that ought to preserve Melnos intact forever. Well, as I said, I saw this island, found it suitable for my proposed scheme, and went back to Athens, to buy it of the Greek Government. There I was told the island belonged to Turkey, as the Greek tributary islands only extend as far down as Santorin. Nothing daunted, I went to Stamboul, and, after about a year's hard work, managed to buy Melnos for a good round sum—it was a pretty stiff price, I can tell you, but my Incas treasure proved equal to it, and even when I had paid down the money, I still found myself with plenty in hand with which to start my colony."

"So Melnos is absolutely your own?"

"Absolutely! I can leave it to whom I please. It is my private estate, and, as I have always kept friends with the Sublime Porte, there is no chance of it being taken from me. When you succeed me here, Maurice, you will find everything drawn out, fair and square, with my lawyers in London."

"What! have you not the Sultan's firman here?"

"No. London is safer; for even if Alcibiades were to take the island, I can still prove my right to it by my papers in London. I paid too sweetly for it to those greedy Turks, not to take all precautions to keep my title safely stowed away, where it would meet with no accidents. London is the safest city in the world for the preservation of such things; so in London I placed all papers recognizing my right to the ownership of this island."

"Well, uncle, now you had your new Rome, but what about the citizens?"

"Oh, as to that, I did not find any difficulty in obtaining plenty of men eager to settle down under my protection. In those days, what with Turkish misrule, pirates at sea, and brigands on land, the islanders fared badly enough, and when I promised

such as became my subjects absolute immunity from such ills, the difficulty I found was as to quality, not quantity. It was the pure Hellenic stock I wanted, from which to develop my new learning, and there is a good deal of mixed blood, even among these insular Greeks. However, by careful selection, I managed to get together a goodly number of pure-blooded males, and these brought their wives and sweethearts to my island colony. Children and old men I would not have, as the latter were useless for my purpose; and with regard to children, I wanted to regulate the births myself, so as to keep the new race up to my standard. In time, I populated Melnos accorded to my mind, and then set my new subjects to work on dwellings and industries. First, I repaired this temple for my own accommodation, and arranged my system of government; planted mulberry trees, obtained silkworms, built factories, and so on. Olives, vineyards, and currant vines, I also planted, and after a few years they began to flourish greatly, so gradually I established a commerce with the surrounding islands, and thus Melnos, by its exports, was able to earn an income for itself. What with keeping the island going in its infancy, buying what was required for my people, and carrying out engineering occupations, my capital, large as it was, had dwindled considerably, and I was delighted when I found that from all my outlay I was now realizing an income sufficient not only to carry out further works, but also to leave a surplus, which I saved up against bad seasons. Every year I devote part of the income derived from my industries to public works in connection with the place and the people, and the balance I place out at interest in London."

"Still London!"

"Well, you would not have me risk all my hard earnings in Athens, would you? A commercial crisis, a revolution, a war, and where would my money be; while London, though liable to social depression, is at least safe as regards the other two contingencies. No! year after year, I have sent my money to England, and now Melnos has an assured income which would keep her going, even though she earned nothing for many years."

"And have you been to England since you settled here?"

"Yes," replied the Demarch, with a half sigh. "I went once, in order to arrange about the safe investment of my Melnosian moneys, and remained in London some months. When I returned, I brought back your mother, Crispin, and you."

"My mother!" echoed Crispin, with a deep flush; "and her name?"

"I cannot tell you that now," answered Justinian, a trifle sadly; "but when all these troubles are over, I will do so."

"Why not now?"

"I have a reason for not doing so."

Crispin did not like this further putting off, but he knew Justinian was iron when once he had made up his mind, so submitted to the further procrastination of the important secret with a sufficiently good grace, although he made one objection.

"You might be killed in the mean time."

"If that happens, you will find all papers necessary to establish your legitimacy with my London solicitors. You think I am harsh and unkind, Crispin, in not telling you what you wish to know now, but, when I reveal all, you will see I have a good reason for my not doing so. One thing I can comfort you with, however,—your father is alive, and I will restore you to his arms."

"And my mother?"

"She is dead. You know she died here, my boy. It is a sad story I will have to tell you, but, at all events, you will have a father, and a name as good as any in England."

"With that promise I am content," said Crispin gladly; "as you have brought me up from infancy, I would be indeed ungrateful if I did not trust you to the end."

"Yet you left me in anger!"

"I think you must blame Caliphronas for that. It was his machinations that caused you to misjudge me, as I misjudged you."

"Caliphronas has been the bad genius of us all," said Justinian decisively; "but now, thank heaven, he is gone, and will trouble us no more."

"My faith!" cried Maurice lightly, "he will trouble us a good deal, if he brings Alcibiades here."

"Ah, that is open war! I do not mind that. It was his hidden treachery to which I referred."

"By the way," said Roylands meditatively, "I suppose that Caliphronas thinks you have untold treasures in this Acropolis?"

"He does; and that is one of the reasons he desires to plunder Melnos. Fortunately, all my money derived from the island is in London."

"What a disappointment for Alcibiades & Company when they find no treasure here!" cried Crispin, laughing.

"They must never get here!" said the Demarch resolutely; "I will defend the island to the bitter end, and, in spite of their strength, I fancy they will find it difficult to force either the western pass or the tunnel."

"If you had the western pass as an entrance to Melnos, why did you pierce the tunnel?" asked Maurice curiously; "would it not have been better to have only one entrance?"

"Decidedly. But you see the western side of Melnos is exposed to the gales; and, in spite of the harbor, its anchorage is hardly safe; so I was forced to build a breakwater on the eastern side of the island. Of course, this being the case, when ships were loaded or unloaded there, the goods could not be taken round to the western pass,—hence the tunnel."

"I think your scheme is a wonderful one," said Maurice, with great admiration; "and wonderfully carried out."

"It is yet only in its infancy, and needs a wise ruler to carry it on to ripe fruition. That ruler, Maurice, I expect to find in you."

"I trust you will not be disappointed in my administrative ability."

"Well, I am satisfied so far. You have courage, judgment, and self-control, which are the main things needed to control these excitable Greeks. But let us not go too fast, for I know not yet if you intend to stay in Melnos."

"Assuredly I do; especially now I have discovered you are my uncle. Why did you not tell me of our relationship before?"

"Because I wished you to fall in love with your cousin on your own account. Had I revealed myself, and suggested the marriage, with the natural dislike of a young man to be forced into matrimony, you might have objected. Oh, my dear nephew, I have had these plans in my head for a long time. Long ago I saw that neither Crispin nor Andros, whom I had trained as my successors, would suit the post. You, Crispin, are a

poet, and not a ruler, while as for Andros, whom you know better as Caliphronas, he is but an idle scamp, who would undo all my forty years' work. When I saw my failure in this respect, I married a Greek girl, more from policy than love, in order to beget an heir, but she died when Helena was born, and thus I was disappointed of a son."

"But you surely do not regret it, uncle, when you have Helena."

"No; I do not now, as I love my child dearly, but I did then, as I was at my wits' end whom to select as a successor. Then I heard all about you, Maurice, from my agents in England, and resolved to send for you here, and, before revealing myself, ascertain for myself whether you were fit for such a responsible post as ruler of Melnos. The task of bringing you in ignorance here was a delicate one, and I entrusted it to Andros, who promised to fulfil it on the ground that I would permit him to pay his addresses to Helena. I agreed to this, and the result you see; but there was no question of a forced marriage until lately, when it was rendered necessary to mislead Caliphronas, out of policy. He brought you here, Maurice, and the rest you know, as everything has turned out better than I expected. You are going to marry Helena, and succeed me here,—that is, if you have quite decided to stay."

"I have decided," replied Maurice, grasping his uncle's hand warmly. "I hesitated at first, but now do so no longer. There is nothing to keep me in England, and when Crispin marries Eunice, they can stay at the Grange and look after the estate, while Helena and myself stay here."

"But your old tutor?"

"If my old tutor comes out, I am sure he will be delighted for me to stay here and forward your plans of a new Hellas. He is an ardent Greek scholar, and will approve thoroughly of my undertaking a good work like the revival of learning, rather than idling away a discontented existence in England."

"Good!" said Justinian, with great satisfaction; "all this sets my mind at rest. Never fear about this Alcibiades trouble, Maurice, for Melnos is strong, and I think we can defend her stanchly. When all these storms are at an end, I will devote the remainder of my days to teaching you all the necessary rules of my policy, so that you can carry it out completely when I die. You, as my heir, Maurice, will inherit this island, and all the invested moneys in London; so you will find everything smooth before you to carry on the work which I have begun."

"Well, after all this conversation, I think we had better go to bed," said Crispin, rising with a yawn.

"I am afraid it will be morning soon," replied Justinian, with a smile, as he followed his example, "so you will not get much sleep; but I am glad I have told you all my history."

"It is wonderful!" cried Maurice enthusiastically; "and quite gives the lie to the proverb, that 'A rolling stone gathers no moss.'"

"Stones that rest in inglorious ease gain moss," said Justinian wisely; "but rolling stones which circle the world gather polish. Marco Polo, Columbus, Drake, Napoleon, Cæsar, were all rolling stones, and I think have been of more benefit to the world than those wiseacres who remain gathering moss in the dulness of their homes, in the belief that such vegetating is the true aim of existence."

CHAPTER XXX.

KEEPING VIGIL.

All day, all night, with anxious eyes,
I vigil keep,
To watch the ever-changing skies,
The changeless deep;
Yet though for rest the spirit sighs,
I dare not sleep.
For in the skies will comets pale
Burn warningly,
When filled with foes black vessels sail
Across the sea.
To wake upon our shores the wail
Of misery.
Yet though such ships and stars appear
As portents vile,
Our faces will devoid of fear
With courage smile,
For Greek and Englishman will here
Defend the isle.

Two weeks passed since the departure of Caliphronas to stir up war against Melnos. Yet Alcibiades made no sign of attacking the island, so doubtless his plans had not yet matured sufficiently to permit of the assault, or else he was trying to lull the Melnosians into a false security, so as to storm them unawares. Justinian himself thought this latter supposition the more likely, but was too old a campaigner to be thus caught napping, and day and night had sentinels posted on the highest peaks of the island to give notice of the approach of the enemy by lighting watch-fires which were all ready prepared.

As before stated, the defenders of Melnos, inclusive of the Englishmen, numbered about a hundred and twenty; certainly a small force to hold the island against three hundred enemies, which, as Caliphronas had told Justinian, was the strength of Alcibiades' army. Melnos, however, strongly fortified by nature, was quite the Gibraltar of the Ægean, and, owing to the ruggedness and height of the surrounding peaks, no enemy could gain the crater of the volcano save by the western pass or the tunnel, both of which were skilfully defended by wooden palisades. Maurice himself thought it a mistake that these barriers were not constructed of stone, but Justinian explained that they were thus built so as to admit of the approach of the enemy being

seen, when a few determined men intrenched behind could keep at bay a large force in the narrowness of the tunnel or of the pass, whereas, if a stone wall intervened, an outside foe could perhaps batter it down without hurt from the defenders.

Another advantage which Justinian had over a hostile force was the fact of the tunnel being a staircase, as his men posted on the heights could sweep down the enemy climbing slowly upward. In order to do away with the necessity of fighting in the dark, or by the feeble glare of torches, Justinian had a powerful electric search light placed at the inner entrance of the tunnel, so as to command the palisade. Indeed, the Demarch, having unlimited money at his disposal, had the latest European inventions obtainable for the defence of his island, and much regretted that he had been unable to obtain the new magazine rifle which had lately been served out to the English army. This rifle holds six cartridges, which can be fired one after the other, and, unlike the revolver, has no barrel, as the cartridges lie in a line one at the back of the other; but as Justinian was not able to obtain this efficient weapon, he was obliged to put up with the Martini-Henry rifle, which was a deadly enough weapon in the hands of his excellent marksmen.

The western pass was a narrow, winding gorge, created by some primeval convulsion of the volcano, which severed the low semicircle of mountains in a deep cleft; and at the inner entrance was commanded by two old brass cannon which the Demarch had found in some dismantled tower of the Venetians. These cannon, however, in spite of their age, were in an excellent state of preservation, and could do a deal of damage when sweeping down the narrow pass. The middle of the cleft was fortified by a strong wooden palisade, and at the outer entrance was another of similar construction; thus the defenders, intrenched behind these barriers, held the invading enemy at considerable disadvantage. Justinian had also another search light sweeping the pass in the event of a night surprise, and thus, the two entrances being so well defended by nature and art, it was feasible enough that the little band could keep at bay even a larger host than that which Alcibiades was bringing against them.

Even if the beleaguerment of the island lasted for months, there was no danger as long as the pass and tunnel were defended, for there was plenty of provision, and all food eaten by the inhabitants was grown on the fertile sides of the crater; so it was likely Alcibiades, despairing of taking the place by storm, would retire his men after a few weeks. The Demarch was perfectly satisfied that he occupied too strong a position to be dislodged, and the only chance of capture lay in inside treachery, or the enemy scaling the peaks and coming down unawares in the rear. Neither of these things was likely to happen, as there was no chance of treachery from the Melnosians, who were all devoted to Justinian; and the enemy, consisting of all the scum of the Levant, had neither the engineering skill nor the courage to climb over the forbidding-looking mountains which enclosed the central crater of the volcano.

During the two weeks the watchmen on the heights kept a constant watch for the foe, and Justinian, assisted by Maurice and Dick, looked after the military preparations with right good will. The rifles were duly served out to the men, who practised shooting daily, also swords and cutlasses, in the use of which Dick instructed them; yet all this time they went on with their work, and only after it was over did they attend to their military duties. There was no fear of the ammunition

giving out, as the Demarch had constructed a magazine in a lonely part of the valley, which was filled with cartridges, cannon balls, and plenty of powder.

All this elaborate military preparation to defend a rocky little island may sound childish enough in Western ears accustomed to the gigantic military powers of Europe; but the coming assault on Melnos was no holiday battle, but would probably involve a good deal of hard fighting, as the desperadoes of Alcibiades were by no means to be despised. They thought that Melnos was full of treasure, quite unaware of Justinian's wise precaution of sending the public revenue of Melnos to London to be in safety; and, lusting for gold, they were ready to fight like demons in order to plunder the island. The defenders, on their side, valued their homes, wives, and children too much to permit a loose band of absolute wretches to gain entrance into their stronghold; so it seemed as though the fight on both sides would be fought with dogged determination to the bitter end.

Maurice and Dick were the principal assistants of Justinian at this juncture, as Crispin knew nothing about military matters, and the testy old Demarch said he was more trouble than use; so he wandered about a good deal with Helena, quite the idler of the community. In spite of this, however, all knew that Crispin was as keen as any one on fighting, and would defend the island with the best of them; besides which, being the minstrel of the party, he wrote war-songs after the mode of Tyrtæus, to fire the Melnosians with martial enthusiasm.

The old fighting blood of the Roylands showed itself plainly in the Demarch and his nephew, for they both looked anxiously forward to the anticipated invasion, and would have been seriously annoyed had it not come off. Justinian himself quite renewed his youth at the idea of once more smelling powder, and his fiery energy, overriding all obstacles, occupying itself ceaselessly with all military matters, at times even tired out his muscular nephew. Yet Maurice worked bravely, and showed himself to be made of the stuff required for leaders of men, and, despite his ignorance of matters military, made several valuable suggestions from a common-sense point of view, which were greatly approved of by the Demarch.

"Egad, Maurice!" he said, grimly surveying his nephew, "if I had only had you instead of Caliphronas, I would have made a man of you."

"Meaning I'm not a man now," said Maurice, rather nettled.

"By no means. You've got the Roylands spirit, my boy, and will fight like the devil himself when needs be; but when I think of all those years of idleness in England, it makes me angry. Such a loss of good material which could be made use of, and I dare say there are hundreds of fellows of your physique and stamina, who write their lives away in offices instead of going in for an adventurous career and dying rich. What I mean is that you are made of the same stuff as I, and had I possessed you as my right hand when I started this scheme, egad, I'd have had a kingdom instead of an island!"

"You forget, I was not born forty years ago."

"No more you were—more's the pity! Those were glorious times, and, in spite of my years, I do not regret having been born early in the century. Life is too tame now, all bread and butter and explosive machines. Give me the good old days of hand-to-hand combat, lots of adventure, rows galore, and the devil take the hindmost."

"I never met such a man as you, uncle."

"Then you never met yourself. I don't mean your *doppelganger*, but your inner self, for you are exactly what I was, though how the deuce your father ever came to have such a son, I do not know. He was as mild as milk, my brother Austin."

"Was he?" said Maurice grimly, thinking of the many family rows that had taken place.

"Oh, I don't deny he had a spice of the Roylands temper, but as to ambition and enterprise, he might as well have been born a carrot. Why, he nearly ruined you, my boy, with neglecting to put you on the right track—no wonder you got melancholia and all that rubbish. You are a worker, not a dreamer."

"I have brains, I suppose?"

"Yes, and so has Crispin; but he uses his brains in the right way, you don't. Crispin is born to sit down and tinkle a lute, you are born to handle a sword and lead an exciting career. Why didn't you go into the army?"

"My father wouldn't let me."

"Of course!" said Justinian, with a snort of disdain; "he wanted to make you a mollycoddle like himself. I wonder you did not go out of your mind in that smoky London, chipping away at marble and cutting it out. Why, you have been here only a couple of months, and already you are in your right mind. Go back to England indeed!—you are a fool if you do. Like myself, you are born to be a ruler, not a unit in English civilization. I'm glad I got you to myself before it was too late."

"Well, if my career has begun late, I am at least young, and have a long life before me."

"Yes; I envy you that, Maurice. Look at me! youthful in spirit, old in years. I shall die in the prime of my spiritual strength, just because my wretched body is of an inferior quality to my soul."

"Still you are good for a few years yet. And, uncle, don't you think it would be wise of you not to expose yourself in battle?"

"What!" roared the old Demarch in a voice of thunder; "stay in the background! Never while I can handle a sword. I'm not going to let every one else have the fun, and leave myself out of it. Why, this coming war in a teacup is the first bit of amusement I have had for years, and yet you grudge it to me."

"I don't want you to be killed, uncle."

"Oh, I'll look after myself, never you be afraid! I won't live any the longer for wrapping myself up in cotton wool, and if I die, why, like Tennyson's farmer, I die, but I'll have one stirring fight before I give up the ghost."

"You have the Baresark fury in you, uncle."

"An inheritance from our Norman ancestors, my boy. You are more of courtly old Sir Guyon, who went to the Crusades, but I resemble Jarl Hagon, who came sailing to Normandy with Rollo. Indeed, if the theory of transmigration be true, I believe the spirit of that old Norse savage is incarnate in my body. I am born too late! I am an anachronism in this dull, peaceful century, all gas and steam engines. I ought to have fought with Drake and Frobisher. However, I have done my best to make my surroundings agree with my nature, and the result is—Melnos."

"Which is the result, not of war, but of peace!"

"Eh!—oh, I daresay—it is a toy with which I can amuse myself; but you forget that before I colonized Melnos, I had battled all over the world, and thus expended a good

deal of my Baresark fit."

"And now it comes again!"

"The last upleaping of the flame, my boy," said Justinian sadly; "and then death. But there, I talk so much about myself, that you must think me egotistical. What about that electric light I wish to try?"

"Alexandros and Gurt are fitting it up on the platform."

"Good! but say Gurt and Alexandros in future. An Englishman goes before every one else."

"How patriotic you are, uncle! Yet you have forsaken England."

"England was an unjust stepmother to me, but absence makes the heart grow fonder, and, in spite of my residence here, I have as patriotic a spirit as any of your jingoists, who shout War! war! war! on the least provocation. Come, let us go and look at this search light on the terrace."

Justinian, during the last few years, had dabbled considerably in electric matters, and had sent Alexandros to England in order to learn all about the science. Alexandros, keen-witted in all things, had soon picked up all that was necessary, and was quite an accomplished electrician; so when he returned to Melnos, he brought with him, by Justinian's instructions, all machines necessary for the production of the light. The powerful engine for working the dynamo was placed at the back of the Acropolis, under the eye of the Demarch himself, and from this centre the wires were laid to the tunnel and the western pass. Thus the machine, being, so to speak, in the heart of the island, was safe from being captured by enemies, and the lighting of both places was quite under the control of Alexandros. The Demarch had also a third apparatus rigged up on the terrace, in order to make a trial of the power of the light, which was to be tried that night; for Justinian wished everything to be in thorough working order against the arrival of Alcibiades and his army.

While they were examining the electric apparatus on the terrace in front of the Acropolis, Helena, in company with Dick and Zoe, came to them in a great state of excitement.

"Papa, give me the key of the tunnel, for Crispin says the boat has arrived from Syra with letters!"

"By Jove, that's good news!" cried Maurice, as the Demarch handed the key to his daughter. "Now we will know all about the new yacht, uncle, and if Melnos is taken, we can go to Syra, and escape on board of her."

"Melnos won't be taken," said Justinian with a frown. "I am quite astonished at your suggesting such a thing, Maurice. Besides, the yacht is going to Athens."

"Yes, but Crispin sent a letter to the telegraph office there, telling them to wire to the agents that the yacht was to stop at Syra."

"Humph! well, that is not bad news. As you say, it is as well to be prepared for emergencies. Here is the key, Helena. Where is Crispin?"

"Waiting at the tunnel entrance!" replied Helena brightly, and went away with the key of the island, guarded by Dick and Zoe.

There was every sign that these two were following in the footsteps of their master and mistress, for as Zoe, tutored by Helena, could speak English very well, there was no obstacle to Dick's wooing. The bos'n was a handsome young fellow, with a masterful manner about him, which the Greek maiden found very pleasant, so she was

not at all indisposed to yield to his solicitations, and become Mrs. Dick, the more so, as she thought this marriage would not part her from Helena, whom she loved dearly. Her early flame, Gurt, had quite vacated the field in favor of his handsome young rival, and now took a paternal interest in the match. As yet, Zoe, with innate coquetry, had not given Dick a direct answer, but there was little doubt, in the end, she would accept this assiduous lover who worshipped her very shadow.

While the three had departed to take Crispin the key of the gate, Justinian continued examining the electric apparatus, and questioning Alexandros concerning the mode of working.

"The moon is not up till late to-night," said the Demarch, looking at the sky, "so in the darkness we will be able to test it splendidly. Are the lights at the tunnel and the western pass in order, Alexandros?" he added in Greek.

"Yes, Kyrion. I attended to them to-day, myself."

"And the engine?"

"Works perfectly, Kyrion."

"Capital!" said Justinian in English, turning to Maurice. "I think our electric powers will rather startle Alcibiades!"

"No doubt; but do you know, uncle, I think it is a pity you did not place a search light on one of those peaks, so as to sweep the ocean, and thus reveal their approach if they try to steal in to the beach under the cover of darkness."

"True, true!" said the Demarch thoughtfully, nursing his chin, "we will think of that, but meanwhile try this light to-night. As to the watchmen on the peaks, Maurice, you know there are also two on the beach, one on each side of the island, so if they see Alcibiades' approach first, they will light their fires to signal to the peaks, and those above will fire theirs to warn us. It is easier to see from the beach than from above, where everything looks flat. Besides, the nights are so still, that the sound of oars can easily be heard a long way off, especially by men trained to hear like my Greeks."

"But suppose Alcibiades uses no oars?"

"Oh, well, in any case we will be warned in time. But in case of a night attack, the men can muster rapidly, I suppose?"

"In a few minutes."

"And the guard?"

"There is a strong one in the tunnel, under the command of Gurt, and another in the pass, commanded by Temistocles."

"Good! With such precautions we cannot very well be surprised. But here is Crispin."

"In a state of great excitement, too," said Maurice, laughing. "He has got a satisfactory answer to his letter."

"It's all right!" called out Crispin, mounting the steps, waving an open letter in his hand; "the yacht has left England for Syra, with Mrs. Dengelton, the Rector, and Eunice!"

"Is there a letter for me?" asked Maurice, nodding his satisfaction at this intelligence.

"Yes, one from the Rector. See if it encloses one from Eunice to me."

Maurice tore open the letter of his old tutor, and out dropped an envelope, directed to "Crispin," in dainty feminine handwriting, of which the poet at once took greedy possession. On the balustrade of the terrace, Maurice sat down to read his letter, and Crispin, after glancing at Eunice's private note, rattled on to Justinian about the contents of his own correspondence, which he had read on the way hither from the tunnel.

"The agents got my letter all right, sir," he said gayly, "and had no difficulty in securing the yacht I wanted, which was still in the market. She left England a week ago."

"For Athens?"

"Why, no. As there was danger of a row, I thought it best she should be near at hand, so wired to the agents that she was to stop at Syra, where she ought to arrive shortly."

"She left Southampton after your letters, I presume?"

"Yes, a day or so after. Of course they came overland to Brindisi, which gained them five days, or thereabouts, and then caught the boat to Syra, and came straight on here with Georgios. The Eunice!"

"Oh, is that the name of the yacht?" cried Helena roguishly.

"Yes; the old Eunice is under water, but I call the new boat by the old name."

"So The Eunice is carrying her namesake?"

"Exactly. Well, The Eunice will run down to Syra in about twelve days; a week has already gone by, so we may expect her there in a few days."

"When she arrives, what do you propose to do?"

"With your permission, go over to Syra and bring her here."

"By all means, if we are not blockaded in the mean time; but if we are, you will have to stay here."

"And The Eunice at Syra!" rejoined Crispin in a vexed tone. "Well, perhaps it will be for the best, as your sister, niece, and Mr. Carriston are on board, and won't care about being mixed up in a battle."

"My sister!" repeated Justinian thoughtfully; "she was born after I left England, and I only caught a glimpse of her when I went back, so she is quite a stranger to me. Is she a—a pleasant sort of person?"

"Well, she talks a good deal," said Crispin, with some hesitation.

"Then I am afraid she will tire me dreadfully," said the Demarch dryly, "for I do not like chatterboxes. However, Helena will be glad to see her aunt. Will you not, child?"

"Of course, papa. I will be glad to see all my relations if they are as charming as Cousin Maurice."

"Eunice is an angel."

"Of course," said Helena mockingly; "that is because you love her. Why, Maurice says the same thing about me."

"What does Maurice say?" asked that gentleman, looking up from his letter.

"That I am the dearest girl in the world," laughed Helena, going up to him.

"I will find that out when your milliner's bills come in."

"Milliner!" said the child of Nature; "what is a milliner?"

They all laughed at this, particularly Justinian, who pinched his daughter's ear gently.

"Ah, a milliner is a very important person, my child. She makes gowns."

"Like this white one of mine?"

"No, more's the pity," said Crispin, with a laughing glance at the simple white garment; "if all gowns were of that style, the bills would not be so large, and husbands would frown less. Well, Maurice, and what says the Rector?"

"He declines to commit himself to an opinion until he sees Melnos with his own eyes," said Maurice, putting the letter in his pocket, "and is coming out especially to see the new Hellas. There, uncle, is that not a compliment?"

"I will be glad to see Mr. Carriston," observed Justinian a little stiffly, as Maurice thought. "Crispin, did Georgios see anything of Alcibiades?"

"No, nothing."

"Or hear anything?"

"Not a word."

"They must be keeping all their preparations very quiet," muttered the Demarch to himself as he went inside; "but, for all that, I believe an attack will take place within the week."

The party on the terrace broke up after his withdrawal, leaving Alexandros still busy at his electric apparatus, which was in complete order by night-time. After a merry supper, every one came out again on to the terrace to make experiments with the light, and Alexandros went away to look after his dynamo.

Such a still night as it was, with not a breath of air to cool the hot atmosphere, and the sky in the shimmering heat seemed closer to the earth than usual. No moon was yet in the heavens, but the dark blue vault was bright with innumerable stars, large and mellow, like tropical constellations. The valley below was in complete shadow, not the glimmer of a white-walled house being visible, and the sides of the gigantic cup which formed the crater of the volcano were veiled in diaphanous darkness. So intensely quiet was everything, that even the nightingales were silent, and there seemed something awesome in this breathless stillness of Nature, as though the whole earth were dead, and only the handful of people assembled there alive.

"I don't like this sultry night," whispered Helena to Maurice uneasily, as he stood by one of the pillars with his arm round her waist. "I hope nothing is wrong with the volcano!"

"What! after thousands of years' quiet?" laughed Maurice gently. "My dear child, the volcano is as extinct as the dodo."

"I don't know what a dodo is," replied Helena, panting; "but the whole place seems so unnaturally still that it gives me the idea of some coming trouble."

"Perhaps Alcibiades!"

"Oh, we can fight against him, but we can't fight against an eruption."

"Who is talking about an eruption?" said Justinian, turning round from the electric apparatus he was examining.

"Helena. She is afraid there will be one soon."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" said the old man testily, yet with an anxious frown on his face. "If there was danger of an upheaval, we would be warned by the hot springs, but they are just bubbling as usual. Besides, Georgois tells me there is an eruption at Santorin, so with that vent for the volcanic forces we are quite safe. Why, I have lived

here for forty years in safety, and the crater has been extinct for thousands of years, so we need not be afraid of anything going wrong now."

Thus pacified, Helena, in common with the rest, turned her attention to the electric light, which at this moment flashed out from the carbon points in terrible splendor. Alexandros began to move it about, and like the flaming sword of St. Michael, or the tail of a comet, it swept in a tremendous arc across the dark sky. Turned down on the valley, it revealed everything as if it were day, the lake, the houses, the trees, the streets—all sprang out of the darkness with the minuteness of a photograph. Then the intolerable brilliance began to move slowly round the sides of the crater, the black pine forests, the arid rocks, and then the rugged peaks, white with chill snows. But, lo! as it travelled eastward along the jagged heights, on one burned a huge red star.

"The watchfire!" cried Maurice, springing to his feet.

"Turn off the light!" commanded Justinian hastily.

Alexandros did so, and there on the cold peak, amid the luminous twilight, flamed the bonfire of the watch like a baneful star, telling of destruction, war, and death.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BATTLE OF TROGLODYTES.

I hear the noise of battle tumultuous!
It is not on the earth, nor do spectral hosts contend in the cloudy sky;
Under my feet it is raging, in the heart of the globe skirmish the struggling armies.
The cries of horror, the clash of weapons, the sharp crack of the deadly rifle,
Strike dully on my ear, as though the crust of the earth intervened between them
fighting, and I listening.
Yes, the battle is subterranean! Do the gnomes assault one another
Over some new vein of gold but lately discovered?
Or do the dead, not rising from stone-sealed sepulchres,
Renew those quarrels below, which on earth ended their existence?
I know not indeed whether it be the dead or the gnomes,
But I hear the noise of battle tumultuous!

There was no doubt that a night attack was intended, and that Alcibiades, hoping to take Justinian by surprise, trusted he would be able to break in through the tunnel before his secret arrival was discovered. Unfortunately for himself, he did not know the military alertness of the Demarch, who, warned by the watchfires, marshalled his men with the greatest rapidity, and in the space of half an hour every man on the island was drawn up, under arms, in the space before the Acropolis. The powerful electric light flooded the whole crater, so that the little army manœuvred as though it were day, and in profound silence every man took his place in the ranks, ready to march to the front.

Justinian held a hurried council of war with Maurice, Crispin, and Dick, as to the disposal of the troops, for the question was whether Alcibiades would concentrate his forces in the tunnel, and make one bold dash for the island, or, dividing his men into two bodies, attack both entrances simultaneously. Messengers had now arrived from the watchmen on the heights and on the beach, from whose report it appeared that the advancing enemy were all making in a body for the eastern side of the island, therefore the Demarch came to the conclusion that for the present only the tunnel was threatened by the invader. However, to obviate any chance of the western pass being taken by surprise, about thirty men, under the command of Crispin and Dick, marched in that direction, and the remaining eighty-six, with Justinian and his nephew as leaders, took up their station inside the tunnel palisade. Alexandros, of course, remained behind at the Acropolis to attend to the working of the electric lights, which were burning with full power at the western pass and in the tunnel, the middle apparatus being turned off after the departure of the men, so as to increase the

brilliance of the other two. Temistocles was employed as a messenger between the two forces, so as to keep the four leaders thoroughly cognizant of what occurred either on the western or eastern side of the island.

The watchmen on the beach had waited until the boats of Alcibiades were near shore, then rapidly fled up the tunnel to the palisade, through the door of which they were admitted by Justinian, who listened to their excited report concerning the number of the enemy with the greatest calmness. Indeed, the Roylands capability for command showed itself in both the Demarch and his nephew, for the more perilous did the situation become, the cooler they were, and never for a moment lost their heads in giving orders to their men. This self-control had a wonderful effect on the nerve of the Melnosians, who, thoroughly efficient as regards drill, and absolutely blind in their implicit obedience to their leaders, carried out all commands with the utmost skill and promptitude.

At the entrance of the tunnel burned the great round of the electric light, like a full moon, illuminating the neighborhood of the palisade with steady splendor, so that the defensive operations could be carried out to the minutest detail without the slightest difficulty. Earthen works had been built half-way up the wooden structure to the height of a man's shoulders, and now on top of this the Melnosians laid bags of sand diagonally, the one overlapping the other, to either side of the tunnel, with interstices between them at intervals for the barrels of the rifles. All this was arranged so as to afford those inside a good view of the attack, while protecting them in a great measure from the fire of the stormers. The electric light also gained them a considerable advantage, as, being at their backs, they could carry on their operations with ease, while it dazzled the eyes of the enemy, who in front of them would see but the black mass of the palisade, and at intervals catch a glimpse of the defenders like silhouettes against the bright glare, which would have a considerable influence on the fire of the attacking party.

Both Maurice and the Demarch were armed with revolvers and sabres, while the sailors had their cutlasses, and the Melnosians their Martini-Henry rifles; thus, what with these and the protecting palisade, everything was in their favor, especially as the steepness of the ascent hampered the enemy considerably in their dash to carry the barrier by storm. Thus intrenched, they waited in absolute silence, with calm courage, for the onslaught, and shortly heard the tramp of approaching feet, the ring of guns and swords, and the exclamations of astonishment uttered by the invaders, when the powerful rays of the electric light flashed on their advancing mass.

Alcibiades might be a good commander, but he was a confoundedly bad drill-sergeant, for his men came up the staircase in a singularly disorderly fashion, rushing forward pell-mell, as though they anticipated an easy victory. However, at the sight of the electric light, and the barricade, from which protruded the deadly barrels of the rifles, their impetus received a decided check, and the foremost, recoiling on those in the rear, threw the whole body into confusion. Hesitating thus for a second in bewilderment, they offered a fair mark to the defenders, who, at a given signal by Justinian, poured a heavy fire into the huddled mass of human beings. Some fell dead, many wounded, and the yells of the discomfited assailants vibrated under the vaulted roof of the tunnel, as they retired in disorder.

Then the stentorian voice of Alcibiades was heard urging them forward, and with sudden resolution they dashed forward like a wave on a rock, only to retire again before the deadly volley of the Melnosians. The ground was cumbered with the dead and dying, while the air was so thick with gunpowder smoke that it hung like a veil between the contending parties, and not even the powerful rays of the electric light could break through the opaque cloud. As yet, protected by their earthworks, the Melnosians had not lost one man, for the bullets of the enemy passed harmlessly over their heads or buried themselves in the sand and turf. Justinian ordered his men to reserve their fire, as the attacking party were now retreating for the third time in confusion, and therefore, being considerably scattered, did not offer so good a mark as when they rushed forward in a dense mass.

Evidently they were holding a consultation, for when they again assaulted the barricade, one party dashed forward under a heavy fire, with hatchets to cut away the timbers, while the others remained behind and kept up a fusillade at a safe distance. In order to avert this danger, and save the palisade from being cut down, the marksmen returned the fire of the rear rank, while, using the bayonets at close quarters, their comrades stabbed the stormers whenever they could get a chance. Notwithstanding this warm reception, the assaulting party still stuck to their work, and amid the infernal din of yells from wounded and fighters, could be heard the steady blows of the hatchets, the sharp crack of the guns, and the ping, ping, ping of the bullets whizzing through the smoky air. At last, in spite of their valor, the stormers were forced to retire, but not without doing considerable damage, for they had cut through a considerable number of the barrier posts, so that the palisade was now in a somewhat shaky condition.

"Egad! they'll have this down in no time, Maurice," said Justinian to his nephew, with a grim smile, "and then it will be hand-to-hand fighting."

"All the better!" replied Maurice, coolly examining the edge of his sword. "I fancy they will find it hard to drive us back from this position. Here they come again. The devil!"

"What's the matter?"

"They are going to fire the barricade! that is Caliphronas' idea, I'll bet!"

A party of men now surged forward, bearing huge bundles of brushwood, smeared with tar and inflammable oils, which they threw at the foot of the barrier, and ignited without a moment's delay. The Melnosians, adopting their former tactics, shot and stabbed with right good will, but the advantage was with the enemy, for, in the space of a few minutes, the wooden poles and crossbars of the barricade were in flames. Against this new peril nothing could be done, as, not anticipating this stratagem, Justinian had not provided himself with water; so the flames, leaping redly out of the thick smoke, roared upward to the roof of the tunnel, while the little band, some with bayonets fixed, others with guns loaded, awaited the assault which would follow the downfall of the protective palisade.

As if to hasten this catastrophe, the enemy, with infinite labor, dragged a small cannon up the steep stairs, and, having placed it in position, fired recklessly into the centre of the blazing mass, with the hope of the ball cutting a lane through the Melnosians. Luckily, owing to the irregularity of the ground, they were unable to depress the muzzle of the gun sufficiently, and the shot passed innocuously overhead,

having no other effect than to bring down a small shower of stones from the roof of the tunnel. Justinian was rather dismayed when he found they had succeeded in bringing up a gun, but when he saw the effect of the shot, he smiled contemptuously.

"That's no good," he said confidently; "they can't get the muzzle low enough to be effective."

"Nevertheless, if the roof"—

The end of his sentence was lost in a tremendous explosion, which nearly stunned them all, for, in their eagerness to fire, Alcibiades' men had overloaded their cannon, with the result that it burst at the application of the light, and killed five men.

"Glory! glory!" yelled Gurt, when he heard the row; "they can't do much now, d—n them!"

"No!" cried Maurice rapidly; "the barricade will soon be down, and it will be a hand-to-hand fight. If they bring up another gun, we'll take it by storm."

The heat by this time was something intense, owing to the near neighborhood of the fierce flames, while the thick white smoke, rolling upward in clouds, nearly choked them with its pungent odor. The Melnosians were getting the worst of it in this case, as the draught blowing upward from the sea drove the eddying wreaths of acrid vapor full against their faces, while the enemy was quite free from such annoyance. Headed by Alcibiades and Caliphronas, who, for a wonder, had pluck enough to place himself in front of his men, they awaited with impatience the fall of the barricade, and, quite anticipating that the Melnosians would be choked by the pungent smoke, were prepared to dash forward and carry the earthworks by storm while the defenders were yet stupefied. Justinian saw this danger, made up his mind, and acted thereon with promptitude and decision.

"Maurice, we must make a sally, and get into the clear air beyond, else this smoke will suffocate us, and thus give them the advantage."

"Right!" replied his nephew, recognizing the necessity for immediate action. "The flames are now pretty low, so let us dash through at once and take them by surprise. I will lead. You stay here, sir."

"I'm hanged if I will!"

"You must, uncle, so as to help me if I need it. Tell the men to follow me, as I am not well enough up in Greek."

At this moment, the barricade fell down with a crash, amid a sudden shower of sparks and rolling vapors. They could hear the triumphant shouts of Alcibiades at the achievement of this result, and Maurice ground his teeth with anger, as he caught the taunting tones of Caliphronas' voice, rejoicing over this catastrophe.

"You wait here with some men, uncle, and build up the earthwork higher, while I make a dash with a handful, and see if I cannot drive them down the staircase."

This suggestion was more palatable to Justinian than the former one, as it gave him something to do, so he hastily told the men of Maurice's suggestion. A number of the Melnosians, who were lying on the ground with their heads wrapped in their cloaks to escape the stifling smoke, sprang up, on hearing this, with a joyous shout; so, hastily selecting his men, Maurice unsheathed his sword, grasped his revolver, and made ready for a dash. Owing to the fall of the palisade, the flames were now very low, but the smoke still rolled upward in blinding clouds, thus effectively concealing their movements from the enemy.

"Good-by, my lad! God bless you!" said the old lion, grasping his nephew's hand. "Drive them down as far as you can, and, while you keep them at bay, I will have the barricade built up again, with sand-bags and turf."

Followed by Gurt and about twenty men, Maurice leaped up on the earthwork, and dashed downward through the smouldering ruins of the beams with a fierce cry. In a moment they were out of the smoke and into the clear atmosphere, while the enemy, thrown into confusion by their unexpected sally, recoiled in confusion. Alcibiades, however, seeing the smallness of the party, soon rallied them with curses and prayers, so the next instant Maurice and his men were in the thick of the fight.

It was now a hand-to-hand struggle, maintained with equal fierceness on either side, but, fortunately, the narrowness of the tunnel prevented the small band of the Melnosians being overwhelmed by their enemies, while the fact that they were on the higher ground gave them a decided advantage, which made up somewhat for lack of numbers. The electric light again pierced the now thin veil of smoke, so that they could see what they were doing, and the Melnosians used their cutlasses with deadly effect, while those who had bayonets fixed to their guns stabbed the enemy relentlessly, as they dashed forward again and again. Gurt kept close beside Maurice, fighting like the old sea-dog he was, and got a nasty stab in the thigh, which brought him to the ground. Alcibiades saw this, and sprang forward to finish the unfortunate sailor, when Maurice, having cut down a wiry Greek, who was pressing him closely, turned just in time to see Alcibiades lift his sword for the blow. As quickly as possible, he raised his revolver to firing level, and broke the captain's arm near the elbow, causing him to drop his weapon with a yell of pain.

Hitherto the fighting had all been in one place, as neither party would give way an inch; but now, disturbed by the reverse of their leader, the enemy began to fall slowly back. Caliphronas indeed tried to rally them, but, on seeing this, Maurice sprang forward to encounter him, clearing a space for the fight by whirling his sabre round and round his head; but the Greek, seized with sudden panic, flung himself into the centre of his men, so that Roylands' efforts to reach him were futile.

Maurice's band was now much diminished, and he had serious thoughts of retreating back to the barricade, which Justinian by this time must have almost rebuilt, but seeing that the advantage was now on his side, he was unwilling to lose it; so, with his men stretched out into a single line from side to side, he continued advancing, driving the enemy step by step down the staircase. Alcibiades, who was a brave man in spite of his villany, had now shifted his sword to his left hand, as his right arm hung useless at his side, and with many prayers, curses, entreaties, and taunts, strove to rally his forces, but all to no purpose, for slowly but surely they retreated before that devoted little band, who, with flashing eyes and clinched teeth, pressed them steadily downward. Gurt, having bound up his thigh with a piece torn from his shirt, was again by Maurice's side, fighting with a dogged determination, in spite of all entreaties to retreat back to the barricade.

"Go back, Gurt! go back and tell Justinian to send more men."

"What! and leave you with these devils? Not if I know it, sir. Hurrah! England for ever!"

"But you are wounded."

"Only a prod in the thigh. Look out, sir, for that black wretch!"

Maurice sprang aside, just in time to avoid a slashing-down blow, and, turning on his foe, made a dash at him with his sabre. He managed to run him through the left shoulder, but the Greek like lightning cut at his defenceless head, and, but for Gurt, who intervened with his cutlass, Maurice's career would have been ended. As it was, the Greek's weapon smashed against the sailor's sword, and before he could recover himself for another blow, Maurice had slashed him through the neck, so that he fell dead at once.

The enemy were fighting like demons, and, the electric light having been shut off by the angle of the tunnel, the battle was raging in complete darkness, save for the fitful glare of the torches held by Alcibiades' men, and the pale glimmer of daylight forcing itself in at the cliff entrance of the tunnel. As long as Maurice could keep his enemies in front, and his line steadily advancing, he had no fear, while, owing to the confusion of the retreat, the foe kept fighting the one with the other in the semi-darkness. Step by step they fell backward, until nearly the lowest platform of the staircase, when Maurice, having thus accomplished his object, began to think of turning back, especially as he had now but ten men left.

At the entrance of the tunnel, however, he saw the cowardly Caliphronas in the rear, keeping out of harm's way, and, forgetting his caution of keeping the enemy in front, sprang forward to battle with the Greek. Alcibiades saw the false move, and, when Maurice's men followed him rashly forward, dashed back with a handful of his troops, and in a moment the little band was surrounded by a horde of howling savages. This was immediately under the entrance of the tunnel, on level ground, so, the advantage being with the enemy in every way, it seemed as though the Englishman and his handful would be cut to pieces. Seeing his mistake, Maurice, with his devoted followers, strove to fight his way back up the stair, but, environed on all sides by a tumultuous crowd, gave himself up for lost.

"My God! if Justinian would only come!" he prayed, as he fought back to back with Gurt and surrounded by his band. "Will nothing save us?"

At that moment, as if in answer to his prayer, a low moaning sound came sweeping over the ocean, making every heart sink with fear. The island began to tremble, and for the moment so terrible was the suspense, that the fighting ceased. Friend and foe stood alike pallid with fear, as the ground began to shake convulsively, and the whole host looked as though turned into stone. The ground, heaving convulsively, hurled every one to the ground, including Maurice and his band, who were just beyond the entrance of the tunnel. Suddenly there was a sound like thunder, and on the prostrate mass of humanity lying on the quivering earth, a great mass of rock fell from above. What with the dust, the noise, the yells of fear, and the imprecations, Maurice was almost stunned, and when he arose to his feet, he saw that the enormous slip caused by the earthquake had not only killed a number of the enemy, but had also blocked up the entrance to the tunnel.

Seeing that there was no hope to return that way, and well aware that Alcibiades and those of his men who still survived would kill him as soon as they recovered from their fright, Maurice sprang to his feet and seized Gurt by the arm.

"To the boats! the boats!" he gasped, hurrying the astonished sailor down to the water's edge. "Tunnel closed. We must try the western pass."

About four Melnosians had followed him, and these, with superhuman strength, pushed off a boat from shore. When all six were afloat, the islanders took the oars and commenced to pull outward, so as to skirt the breakwater. By this time the enemy had recovered from their first terror, and, seeing the escape of the fugitives, came rushing down to the sea. There seemed to be about two hundred of them left, and being pretty well used to such trifles as earthquakes, especially those who came from Santorin, now that the danger was past, they were determined to follow and kill the little band.

Luckily, Maurice, by his prompt action, had gained a good start, and was already outside the breakwater, making for the western side of the island, where he hoped to re-enter through the western pass. He could see Alcibiades and Caliphronas gesticulating fiercely on the beach and urging their companions to follow, so, just as the fugitives came in sight of the wreck of The Eunice, their enemies started in pursuit.

"Thank God for that earthquake!" said Maurice thankfully, taking off his cap. "It saved our lives."

"Don't holler till you're out of the wood, sir," said Gurt dryly, pointing to the sea. "I've seed that sort o' thing at Thera, and it ain't no child's play."

The waters around them were boiling like a furnace, and had changed from their normal blue tint to the color of milk. Maurice, in astonishment, dipped his hand over the side of the boat into this opalescent sea, but withdrew it immediately with a cry of pain.

The water was boiling hot!

"Bless you, sir, there's lots of that sort of thing about here." said Gurt in a philosophical tone. "I've seed it a-bilin' round Santorin like a kittle. These Greeks don't mind it much."

"Don't they?" replied Maurice in a disbelieving tone. "Well, Alcibiades and his lot seemed pretty sick."

"While it lasts they're frightened enough, but they soon get over it, sir. Look at 'em follering."

By this time they were rounding the angle of Melnos, and the breakwater of the western harbor was in sight; but the boat containing Alcibiades, manned by able rowers, was gradually gaining on them. Two of the Melnosians, though they tugged away pluckily, were yet in great pain from wounds, while Gurt, feeble from loss of blood, could hardly rise to his feet.

"Give way, men!" cried Maurice in Greek, as he examined his revolver. "I've got two shots left, Gurt, so, if that boat comes too near, I'll try to pick off one of the rowers."

"We're not far from home now, sir," said Gurt hopefully; "and Mr. Crispin will be at the gate."

"I hope he will, Gurt; but this earthquake must have demoralized everything, and perhaps Mr. Crispin went back to see Justinian."

"Not he, sir; he'd send Temistocles. But Mr. Justinian must think us dead."

"It's not improbable. However, we will soon show him we're alive, though the tunnel is closed up forever."

"Good job too, sir," replied Gurt cheerfully; "there's no getting in that way now; so if these villains want to take Melnos, they'll only have the western pass to enter by. I

guess that there rock, sir, killed a few."

"What with the battle and the earthquake, they must have lost at least a hundred men, while our deaths are comparatively small."

"We've got nigh on a hundred left, I think, sir; but if it weren't fur you, sir, gittin' that idear of the boat, we'd be all dead men, for sure."

"Egad, we'll be dead men now, if we don't look out!" said Maurice, as the foremost boat of their pursuers came within pistol shot. "Look out, Gurt; I'm going to pick off that fellow standing up in the prow."

The Melnosians, in their sudden rush for the boat, had naturally enough dropped their guns; but Maurice, with an Englishman's determination to stick to anything he has once got a grip of, had carried off his sword, and still possessed his revolver. Gurt also had his cutlass, so, in the event of their foes catching them on land before they could gain the shelter of the stockade, Maurice and one of the Melnosians would have to defend the three wounded men and the remaining one, who had no weapon. Meanwhile, their boat, impelled by the rowers with the energy of despair, had rounded the breakwater, and was rapidly sweeping inward to the land. Some little distance above they could see the narrow entrance of the pass, but, as Crispin and his men were intrenched behind the palisade, farther up the gorge, of course the fugitives could not hope for their help. Maurice, however, thought that the pistol-shots might attract attention, as the sound carries far in that rarefied atmosphere, and he also told his Melnosians to shout loudly, so as to let their friends know they were in peril.

Just as the boat was nearly touching the land, a bullet from the rifle of the man standing up in the prow whizzed past Maurice's ear; but, fortunately, being widely aimed, did not touch him. The Englishman, resting his revolver muzzle on his left arm, fired carefully, and, luckily, hit his enemy full in the chest; whereupon the man flung up his hands and fell splash into the water. The rowers, startled at this, paused for a moment; and in that time Maurice ran his boat ashore, and giving Gurt, who could not walk, into the care of the two Melnosians, one of whom was unhurt, and the other only wounded in the arm, thrust Gurt's cutlass into the hand of the remaining one, and began to retreat slowly up the hill.

Alcibiades' boat was yet far distant, but the one near shore, its rowers having recovered from their surprise at the loss of their leader, landed as quickly as possible, and began to run as fast as possible after the fugitives. The Melnosians shouted with right good will for help, and, while retreating slowly, Maurice managed to drop one of his pursuers with his remaining cartridge. They had now nothing left to fight with but a sword and cutlass, both of which were useless against the rifles carried by their pursuers, and the look-out was all the worse, as Captain Alcibiades, with a new crew of cut-throats, had now landed on the beach.

The two Melnosians hurried Gurt along as quickly as possible, the other wounded man ran ahead, shouting for help, and Maurice, with the remaining islander, covered the retreat with stern determination. Several shots sung past them, but their pursuers were evidently bad marksmen, and they gained the entrance of the gorge without being hurt.

The palisade now could be seen some little distance away, and the foremost fugitive had nearly reached it, so Maurice took heart, in spite of the near proximity of Alcibiades and his men. In his heart, however, he was praying that Crispin might be

still at his post, as, if he were not, the whole four of them would certainly be murdered on the spot.

One of his pursuers was now close at hand, and raised his rifle to the shoulder; but Maurice, with sudden inspiration, threw himself flat on his face, and the ball passed over his head. Then, springing to his feet, he commenced to run rapidly after his companions, followed by the baffled marksman, who did not wait to reload.

Maurice heard a shout of joy from the palisade, so knew that Crispin was at his post, and would bring him help; but at this moment the foremost man caught up with him. The Englishman slashed at his neck with his sabre, but the wily Greek dodged lightly, and, clubbing his musket, brought it down on Roylands' head with tremendous force. Instinctively Maurice put up his sword to guard himself, but the weapon shivered to pieces under the blow, and, stunned by the stroke, he fell insensible to the ground.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE WARNING OF HEPHAISTOS.

Hence, ye mortals! hence away!
Dare not on this isle to stay;
For in grim seclusion here
I a mighty forge would rear,
So that in this sea-girt grove
I can work for mighty Jove.
Thunder-bolts doth he require,
Swift to follow lightning's fire,
When his wrath he would assuage,
And on mortals wreak his rage.
Never more will Melnos isle
With the corn of Ceres smile;
From its crater flames will rise,
Roaring to the frighted skies;
Bubbling from the depths below,
In its cup will lava glow;
And the sea around will boil
At my never-ceasing toil:
Therefore, mortals, haste away!
Dare not on this isle to stay.

When Maurice came to himself, he was lying on the grass inside the palisade, and Crispin was bending over him with the greatest solicitude. His head ached dully with the effects of the blow, and the blood was clotted in a nasty scalp-wound on the right side of his skull, where the butt of the musket had struck him. Dizzy as he was, yet by a violent effort he managed to sit up and inquire in a feeble voice what had become of the companions of his flight.

"Oh, they are all right, Maurice!" said Crispin, holding out his brandy-flask. "Take a drink of this, and lie down again for a time."

Maurice did as he was told, and resumed his recumbent attitude on the grass; but, anxious to know everything, looked inquiringly at Crispin, who at once replied to his mute questioning.

"I have been here ever since you left for the tunnel this morning," explained the poet quickly, "as Justinian sent word by Temistocles that I was on no account to forsake my post. We heard your pistol-shots and cries for help, but thought it was some stratagem on the part of the enemy. Then Theodore, whom you sent on for aid,

made his appearance at the barricade, and gasped out some incoherent story. As soon as I ascertained it was you, I sallied out with some men, and saw Gurt being helped up the hill, and yourself, with Basil, protecting the rear. Alcibiades and some others were scrambling up after you; and then we saw you engage with that foremost blackguard. He knocked you over, and would have finished you, but for Dick, who took a pot shot, and bowled him over like a ninepin. Then we rushed up, and brought you here, with Alcibiades and his friends yelling like fiends at the escape of their prey."

"And Alcibiades?"

"Oh, he and the other fellows have gone back in the boats to the eastern harbor, I suppose. Jove! I was never so surprised in my life as when I saw you scudding up that hill, for both Justinian and myself thought you were dead!"

"Does Justinian know I am alive?"

"Yes. I sent Temistocles off to tell him as soon as you were in safety; I expect he'll be here every minute."

"What about the earthquake?"

"Oh, we felt it, I can tell you. It was a tremendous shock, and has filled up the tunnel completely."

"At which, I suppose, my uncle is heart-broken?"

"No fear. He never thought about the tunnel while you were in danger. But how did you manage to escape?"

"That is a long story," said Maurice faintly, for he felt sick with fatigue. "Give me some more brandy."

"Here you are. Don't talk any more till Justinian comes."

"But tell me, where is Gurt?"

"Oh, he and the rest have gone off to the Acropolis to be looked after. Now, do be quiet, Maurice, or you'll be fainting again."

Roylands closed his eyes, and obeyed; while Crispin, with a sponge and water, brought by the swift-footed Temistocles, carefully bathed the wound, and dexterously bound it up with lint and linen, so that Maurice felt more comfortable.

"It's only a flesh wound," he said in a satisfied tone; "but it is a mercy you did not get your head smashed."

"What is the time?"

"Nearly ten o'clock in the morning. You've been fighting all night, so I don't wonder you are dead beat. The sun will be up over the eastern peaks soon."

It was indeed long after dawn, for in the darkness of the tunnel no one had taken any count of the hours; and when the earthquake had occurred it was just that time between the fading night and the coming day. So upset and excited had Maurice been with the fight, the earthquake, and the escape, that neither he nor any one else remembered that the fighting had begun at midnight, and lasted till sunrise. And now he remembered that the sun had risen while they were rounding the angle of the island; but, having forgotten the flight of time, he had not thought this strange. It was a great blessing that they had escaped in the boat at daylight; else even in the luminous night it would have been difficult, with the sea in such a perturbed condition, to have made the voyage safely.

Very shortly Justinian arrived, full of thankfulness for Maurice's escape, and fear concerning his wound; but by this time the young man, though much shaken, was

quite himself again; and, leaning on the Demarch's arm, with occasional assistance from Crispin, managed to crawl along as far as the Acropolis, where they were joyously received by Helena.

As the tunnel was now completely closed up, there was no chance of the pirates getting in that way; so Justinian sent all his men over to the western pass, where, under the command of Dick, they remained on guard. The women from the village came up the first thing in the morning with provisions and wine to minister to their wants; so, thus, everything being in order for the present, the Demarch was anxious to hear all the details of his nephew's miraculous escape.

He told them the whole story over the breakfast table, with occasional help from Gurt, who was admitted to the symposium on account of his bravery during the battle. The old Demarch, self-contained both by nature and training, did not say much during the recital, beyond expressing his heartfelt joy at the escape of his nephew, but it could easily be seen that he was inordinately proud of Maurice's prowess and promptitude of action; for, though the hero himself modestly suppressed such details as tended to self-glorification, Gurt, in his blunt sailor way, came out with the true unvarnished facts of the case, which caused Maurice to blush, and his audience to exclaim admiringly.

"By Jove, Maurice, you ought to be a V.C.!" cried Crispin, when the story came to an end. "If you hadn't had your wits about you, and seized that boat, you would have been a dead man to a certainty!"

"It is the Roylands' blood!" said Justinian proudly. "I knew I was not mistaken in my estimate of your character, Maurice. You will make an admirable ruler of Melnos!"

"That is, if there is any Melnos to rule over," replied Maurice, with an uneasy laugh; "for, by Jove, uncle, when that earthquake came, I thought everything had gone to kingdom come."

"Ah, you see, father, I was right about the earthquake last night!" said Helena in triumph; "I felt that something was going to happen!"

"Yes, but you thought it would be an eruption," answered Justinian, with apparent indifference, though there was an anxious look on his face; "as to an earthquake, why, these Greek islands are all volcanic, so that means nothing."

"How did you get on after I left you, uncle?"

"Why, I set my men to work, to build up the barricade again, with turf and bags of sand. You were a long time gone, my son, and I became afraid that you had been cut to pieces, so, when the work was done, I intended taking some men and going after you. Then the earthquake occurred, and we heard the fall of the roof at the cliff entrance. I thought you were dead for sure, and cannot tell you of the anguish I felt at your loss. However, Temistocles brought me the news of your safe arrival at the western pass, and I breathed freely again. Oh, my dear Maurice," continued the Demarch, taking his nephew's hand, "how fervently do I thank God that you are alive! for if those scoundrels had killed you, indeed I do not think I would have had the heart to continue living in Melnos."

Maurice was greatly touched with his uncle's emotion, which was a rare thing for the iron old Demarch to display, for as a rule he took both good and bad fortune with the utmost equanimity, and seldom gave any outward signs of his feelings on such

occasions. His nephew, however, was very dear to his heart, and he looked upon him with great pride, both as his future son-in-law and successor, so it had been a terrible blow to him, to think he had lost a young man on whom all his future hopes depended.

As for Helena, she said nothing, but, genuine offspring of her father as she was, bore up pluckily, though it could be plainly seen that she had suffered much during the absence of her lover. Fortunately, the time which had elapsed between Maurice's supposed death and subsequent reappearance had been too short to permit of her knowing of the calamity, else, brave as she was, she would certainly have given way under such a cruel misfortune. As it was, however, he now sat beside her safe and sound, so all the terrible events which he detailed with such coolness only seemed to be some hideous nightmare which had vanished at the coming of morning.

She insisted upon Maurice's going to bed for a good sleep after breakfast, in which insistence she was supported by her father, who saw that Maurice was more shaken by his late fatigue than he chose to acknowledge.

"You can sleep for a few hours at all events, my son," he said affectionately, "for Alcibiades has lost too many men to think about making another attack, at least for some time."

"Are you not going to sleep yourself?"

"No, I am going down to the valley to look at those hot springs. This earthquake has rather unnerved me, and I wish to see for myself if there is any probability of an eruption. Crispin, will you come with me?"

"If you desire it; but, to tell you the truth, I also am rather tired."

"Pshaw!" said the man of iron, with good-humored scorn; "you have no stamina, Crispin. If you had been through all that Maurice has undergone, you might talk. However, take your sleep for an hour or so."

Crispin really was very delicately constituted, and could not do without that sleep which Justinian despised, but, in order to be ready for any emergency, he curled himself up on a divan in the court, and rested there without removing his clothes. Maurice, on the contrary, completely worn out with fatigue and anxiety, to say nothing of his scalp wound, went straight to bed, and slept soundly most of the day, while Helena, tenderly solicitous of his comfort, watched beside him the whole time, with her little hand lying in his warm grasp.

Meanwhile, Justinian, who, in spite of his age, scarcely seemed to feel the effect of the previous night's vigil, took a cold bath to freshen himself up, and then started on a journey of inspection round the island. Like a careful general, his first visit was to the outposts at the western pass, where he found everything in an extremely satisfactory condition. Part of the men were sleeping, while the others kept guard, waiting to take their turn of rest when their comrades awoke. Notwithstanding the hard fighting, all those who had been engaged in the defence of the tunnel seemed in a wonderfully good condition, while Dick and his nine sailors, hardened by a seafaring life, seemed to feel no fatigue whatsoever, in spite of constant watchfulness and anxiety.

With a view to seeing the position of the enemy, Justinian climbed up a small path which led to the hills from the inner side of the outward palisade, and, using his field-glass, soon discovered that Alcibiades was concentrating his forces below in order to storm the pass. Boat after boat filled with desperadoes came sweeping round the

breakwater into the smooth sea of the harbor, and tents were being erected on the beach by the besiegers. Evidently they had discovered that there was no chance of entering by the tunnel, which was completely blocked up by the fallen rocks, so were determined to effect an entrance by the western pass, where at least they would have the advantage of fighting in daylight. Carefully surveying the disorderly host, Justinian calculated that there still remained about two hundred men, against which he could only bring ninety-five or thereabouts. Still, intrenched behind his barricades, and having the pass swept by two cannon, he thought the invaders would find it somewhat difficult to dislodge him from such a strong position, the more so as they lacked discipline, and their leaders were quite ignorant of military tactics.

Having ascertained all this, Justinian descended into the gorge again, where he gave Dick his final instructions, which were simply to keep a sharp lookout on the enemy, and, in the event of seeing any movement uphill towards the mouth of the pass, to at once send off Temistocles to the Acropolis with the information.

Dick having promised faithfully to obey these instructions, the Demarch, escorted by a couple of his men, went along the mulberry avenue, in order to survey the tunnel, which he had not entered since driven from thence by the earthquake some hours previous. The electric light was turned off, as the Demarch, now that the danger lay more in the west than the east, judged it advisable to reserve all the power of the dynamo for the one light which swept the western pass, and therefore, bidding his men take torches, went downward into the darkness of the tunnel with such illumination only.

Passing down to the ruins of the palisade, where so fierce a fight had taken place, he crossed that boundary, and, turning the angle of the staircase, came in sight of the landslip caused by the earthquake. The red flare of the torches but feebly showed the amount of damage done, but Justinian saw sufficient to assure him that there was no chance of the tunnel being made use of again for at least some months. Extending from the cliff entrance to some considerable distance back, the whole roof had collapsed, and tons of débris piled upward from floor to vault completely sealed up the mouth of the passage. It would take a goodly amount of dynamite and blasting powder to remove those massive blocks; and, now that he knew Maurice was safe, the Demarch had time to grieve over the damage done to his beloved tunnel. Justinian, however, was too practical a man to waste time in useless lamentation, and promptly decided that, as soon as Alcibiades was beaten back,—an event which he was assured would come off without much difficulty,—he would set gangs of men to clear away the obstruction, and restore, with as little delay as possible, the tunnel to its pristine excellence. The burning of the palisade also had taught him a lesson, and, to obviate the chances of such defence being destroyed by fire, he decided to build a kind of stone bastion in the same place, with loopholes for guns, and also to fortify it with two field-pieces, which would simply mow down an enemy advancing up the staircase like ripe corn.

The inspection of the tunnel being concluded, Justinian returned upward to the light of day, and descended the grand staircase in order to pay a visit to the springs. He looked upon these as a kind of thermometer, useful in warning him of seismic disturbances, for, in spite of the long silence of the volcano, Justinian knew that the subterranean forces were still at work under the crust which covered the crater; and

with the remembrance of the great eruption of Vesuvius, in the year 79, constantly in his mind, was not without certain fears that this long-slumbering monster might reawaken from the sleep of centuries. The volcanic forces, however, having a vent in the adjacent island of Santorin, he had hitherto calculated that Melnos would remain quiescent, but the terrible earthquake which had so unexpectedly occurred inspired him with great uneasiness, and he was in deadly fear lest it should prelude the renewed activity of the mountain.

As before described, the hot springs of Melnos somewhat resembled the geysers of Iceland, save that they were less active, and did not send up jets of water to any great height from their uncanny mouths. On this day, however, when the Demarch approached the desolate gorge where they had hitherto rested as slightly bubbling pools of water, he was astonished and dismayed to find them in full activity. Clouds of thin steam almost obscured the yellow, red, and green lava of the rocks behind, and amid this ominous vapor the springs were spouting furiously at intervals. Thick jets of boiling water would gush up from the ragged clefts in the sulphur-streaked blocks to a considerable height, and, after expending their fury, would sink down again into the bowels of the earth. After a time the muttered bellowing of the monsters would be heard, and amid groanings and gurglings, which told of the colossal forces at work beneath, the great columns of water would again shoot skyward with hideous roars.

The Demarch noticed this unusual disturbance of the springs with great uneasiness, as during his whole forty years' residence on the island never had there been such signs of danger. Even where he stood, the earth was cracked in many places, and little jets of steam escaped with a whistling noise, which could be heard shrilly when the bellowing of the geysers ceased. All the Melnosians were in a terrible state of alarm, and it took all Justinian's eloquence to persuade them that this was simply a local disturbance caused by the earthquake, and that there was no danger of an outbreak on the part of the long-sleeping volcano.

Truth to tell, in spite of his speech, he was not at all easy in his mind as he climbed up the staircase to the Acropolis, for these ominous signs boded but ill for the safety of the island, and he dreaded lest without further warning the crater should burst out into full fury, in which case every being therein would certainly be killed. He was unwilling, however, to communicate his fears to Helena or to Maurice, and thus disturb their minds at this critical period of the siege; but, feeling that he must have some one with whom to talk, awoke Crispin from his siesta, and, taking him into his own room, gave him a description of the geysers' activity.

"The deuce!" said Crispin in dismay, when he heard this unpleasant recital. "I hope we are not going to have the destruction of Pompeii over again; but I must say it looks uncommonly like it!"

"Do you think Melnos will break out again?"

"Those spouting geysers certainly don't bode any good, sir, nor that earthquake either. Perhaps it is a warning from Hephaistos that we had better leave the island."

"I won't leave the island," said Justinian obstinately, drawing his iron-gray brows together: "after forty years of incessant toil, I would indeed be a coward to leave Melnos simply because things look a trifle ominous."

"Yes; but volcanoes are delicate things to deal with. These signs are slight; but who knows but what they may be followed by a blowing up of the crater's crust, in which

case I am afraid everything in connection with Melnos will be at an end."

"But the volcano has been extinct for thousands of years!"

"So was Vesuvius," replied Crispin coolly, "and that mountain in New Zealand—Tarawera, was it not?—that awoke to activity after centuries of quiescence. You can't trust volcanoes, sir. They are most treacherous monsters, and when least expected break out in full fury."

"An eruption is going on at Thera."

"All the more reason that the volcanic action will extend to Melnos."

"There I don't agree with you. If the subterranean forces find vent in one place, there is less chance of them breaking out in another. Besides, Thera has always been active. Herodotus, Appollonius, and Plutarch all speak of previous eruptions. Then there was one in 1457, when the Venetians occupied the island; another in 1707; and I think the last outburst took place in 1866."

"Well, according to Georgios, there is one going on now, which is a bad sign for us."

"On the contrary, a very good sign. Don't you see, Crispin, that, whereas Thera has burst out every hundred years or so for many centuries, there is no record of Melnos being active. This temple of Hephaistos was built long before Christ, during the supremacy of Hellas in these seas, and had the crater not been extinct then, it could not have been built on the inner cup, nor could any eruption have taken place since, as it would have been destroyed; so as the mountain, to all appearances, has been extinct for thousands of years, and the volcanic forces find vent at Thera, I really do not see why, because of an earthquake and a spouting geyser, we should think it likely the crater will break out again."

"Still, you see the Hellenes must have known this was a volcanic island, and, perhaps, put up this temple to the god of fire in memory of an eruption. If I remember rightly, the Rhodians built a temple to Poseidon Asphalios after some early eruption, in order to propitiate the gods; so this shrine may have been erected for a similar reason."

"Scarcely, if the volcano was active then. I don't think even the pious Hellenes would have risked their lives in building a temple under the very nose of Vulcan in full work. But what do you think is best to be done?"

"Well, certainly it would be foolish to leave Melnos, after all the work you have expended upon it, without very good reason, and, until something more serious occurs, I should be inclined to remain. In spite of these signs, the volcano has been as quiet as a lamb for thousands of years; so I do not see why it should break out now, save out of sheer contrariness. We had better go on defending Melnos from Alcibiades, and take no notice of the volcano; but if anything serious occurs, we must get away as quickly as possible."

"But how? Alcibiades has destroyed all our boats."

"Well, we will seize his; or else, as soon as I can guess The Eunice is at Syra, I will go over and bring her to Melnos; so that in case of danger I can save every one."

"Over a hundred and fifty people! Impossible!"

"There won't be a hundred and fifty people by the time Alcibiades is beaten," replied Crispin dryly. "It is not that I am afraid of; but if such a contingency as the

volcano becoming active does arise, my difficulty will be to get through the besieging army out into the open sea."

"I'm afraid there's no chance of that," replied the Demarch gloomily.

"Well, it certainly looks impossible, but there's nothing like trying. However, there may be no necessity for such daring. Don't trouble about the volcano, Justinian; I've no doubt Hephaistos will warn us again before proceeding to extremities."

"I am of the same opinion myself. Still, your words have given no great comfort, Crispin; for, after all the money and labor expended on this island, it would indeed be a terrible thing if it became nothing but a smoking mass of black lava, to say nothing of the destruction of my schemes."

"You won't tell Maurice or Helena of this?"

"No. Maurice has quite enough on his mind already, and it would only frighten Helena to death. She is brave enough at most dangers, but I think a volcanic eruption would frighten the most stout-hearted. I have to a great extent calmed the feelings of those in the village, so it will be best for you and I to keep our own counsel, and not uselessly alarm our friends."

"I hope it is a useless alarm," said Crispin uneasily. "But it is a very unpleasant idea to think that one is living on top of a powder-magazine which may explode at any moment."

"As far at that goes," answered the Demarch dryly, "the whole globe is nothing but an egg full of fire, and we all live on the surface of an explosive bombshell whirling through space, which may burst at any moment. My island is only a sample of the whole earth."

"I wish you wouldn't look at things in such an unpleasant light," cried Crispin, laughing. "My nerves will be destroyed before I leave this island. However, I am going to finish my sleep."

"And Maurice?"

"He also is asleep, and I've no doubt will wake up quite fit for another midnight attack."

"Egad, and he'll get it!" said the Demarch grimly. "That villain Alcibiades is getting ready for another assault."

"Well, in spite of the benefits conferred, it is to be hoped Hephaistos won't interfere this time with his earthquakes."

"He has warned us twice," replied Justinian, as he walked out into the court with the poet; "once by the earthquake, again by the springs. Heaven help us when the third warning comes!"

"Oh, there's luck in odd numbers," said Crispin flippantly. "And, in any case, if we come to grief, our enemies will be in the same plight as ourselves."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE INVOCATION OF ARTEMIS.

O Moon! thou risest from the western seas,
A virgin Aphrodite fair and chaste,
And by thy votaress on bended knees
These stainless flowers are on thine altar placed:
Pale lilies, roses wan, and cyclamen,
Whose petals have ensnared thy pallid rays;
Frail hyacinth as chill as mountain snows
Beneath thy wintry ken;
With many blossoms plucked in dewy ways,
For thee, O goddess! who canst end my woes.
O Moon! I pray thee in thy tenderness,
Watch with thy silver eye my lover gone,
And soothe him with thy virginal caress,
For thou hadst also an Endymion.
Astarte! Dian! Tanith! Artemis!
Whate'er men name thee in thy mystic might,
With sacrifice and songs I worship thee:
So grant, O Moon! the bliss
Of feeling in my heart the pure delight,
Which tells my love is coming back to me.

Evidently Alcibiades had but little stomach for midnight fighting, for he made no attempt to storm the pass under the cover of darkness, and was apparently making preparations to begin the fight at the first flush of the dawn. In thus deciding, he was wiser than he knew, for many of his men had been killed in the tunnel by their own friends, owing to the confusion which prevailed during the retreat down the staircase. Moreover, with the electric light showing the position of the enemy to the defenders, and dazzling their eyesight when they advanced to the attack, there was nothing to be gained by a night sortie, and Alcibiades thought it best to storm the pass by day, so that he, at least in the matter of light, might have the same advantage as Justinian.

All day long, the Demarch and his nephew posted themselves on the heights above the gorge, and from their vantage, with the aid of strong field-glasses, saw the preparations which were being made for the final attack. Alcibiades, with more military precision than of yore, had divided his two hundred men into two bodies, one of which was commanded by himself and the other by Count Caliphronas. Under these two leaders were four other commanders responsible for fifty troops each, but

these deferred to Caliphronas and Alcibiades, while the Count in his turn took his orders from the old pirate as the supreme head of the whole army.

Without doubt, Alcibiades desired to attack the island in two separate places, for he knew, thanks to the treachery of Caliphronas, that Justinian's force was too few in numbers to admit of division, and thus, while the one body was attacking the palisade in the gorge, the other could get at the rear of the Melnosians by another way. Unfortunately for this daring scheme, the cliffs on either side of the pass were perfectly inaccessible, as they arose smooth and arid from the beach to the height of two hundred feet, and as the besiegers had not wings, they could scarcely hope to climb up these sterile steeps, which would not have afforded foothold even for a goat. The only path available for this plan was perfectly well known to Caliphronas, but, unluckily for the besiegers, was inside the outer palisade, from whence it wound up to the heights where the Demarch and his nephew were seated, and from thence went through the altar glade, down to the back of the Acropolis.

Once the outer defence was taken, Caliphronas intended to lead his century of men up this secret way, which he knew thoroughly, and thus gain the heart of the island as exemplified by the Acropolis, while the Demarch was keeping back the feigned attack at the stockade. This stratagem was very clever and very feasible, but the difficulty in carrying it out consisted in the fact that, before the path could be ascended, the outer defence would have to be taken, which was no easy task, when defended by such determined men as the Melnosians. However, it was to all appearances the only chance of gaining speedy possession of the island, without risking prolonged fighting; so Alcibiades adopted the plan without hesitation, and arranged with his subordinates to assault the palisade at early dawn, carry it with a dash, and then, while he made a feigned attack at the inner defence, Caliphronas and his men, gaining the interior of the island by this path, could attack the defending party in the rear.

It never for a moment struck Messrs. Alcibiades & Company that Justinian was far too wide awake not to have thought of this contingency, and had made his preparations in consequence. The entrance of the path from the gorge was up a narrow, winding staircase, cut in the live rock, which could only hold two men abreast, so, in the event of the outer defence being beaten down, this staircase could be easily defended by a dozen or so of men. Added to this, an iron gate closely locked was placed at the entrance; therefore, even if the enemy did gain an entrance into the pass, they had considerable difficulties to overcome before marching in triumph into the Acropolis. Justinian would, indeed, have been a bad general had he not foreseen this danger, but even though he thus guarded against it to the best of his ability, he trusted that his men would be able to hold the outer defence until Alcibiades retired in discomfiture.

As a matter-of-fact, the fiery old adventurer would have liked nothing better than to sally forth at the head of his handful of men and drive his enemy into the sea, but he was no longer the reckless Rudolph Roylands of the past, and judged it best to be cautious, nor risk the chance of a pitched battle in the open with unequal numbers. Intrenched in the strong outworks of the pass, his little band could hope to face their enemies with more than a fair chance of victory, but if he was foolish enough to make a sally, his ninety-five men would, in spite of their bravery, be quickly cut to pieces by more than double the number. Of course their military precision would doubtless tell

against the undisciplined hordes of Alcibiades; still the risk was too great, and Justinian, much as he desired to make a bold dash for victory, deemed it best to take advantage of all the shelter and advantage his fortifications afforded.

The western pass was not unlike the tunnel in conformation, for, extending from inside to outside, a distance of a quarter of a mile, it ran upward from the cliffs of the beach for some little way, then, turning in an abrupt angle, pursued a straight way into the interior of the crater. Evidently created by a volcanic eruption for the outlet of lava, the sides, rent apart by some convulsion, arose precipitous and sterile to the height of over two hundred feet. No vegetation softened the nakedness of these rugged rocks, which, streaked with green, yellow, and red, presented a singularly forbidding appearance. On the top grew ancient pines, whose sombre branches, nearly touching one another as they stretched across the gulf, only permitted a thin streak of sky to be seen; so that the depths below were singularly gloomy, and to the imaginative Hellenes might well have suggested the thought that it was the Gate of Hades, by which name it was traditionally known. Justinian, however, abandoned such cognomen as of evil omen, and called it "The Western Pass," by which title it was generally called by the Melnosians. It was indeed a remarkably eerie place even on the brightest day, and the light which filtered downward from between the branches of the pines but half revealed, in a glimmering gloom, the horrent rocks, the lack of flowers and grasses, and the chill, vault-like seeming of the whole tremendous cleft.

Maurice, having slept all day, felt wonderfully refreshed when he awoke, just as the sun set, and, though his head was still painful with the wound, yet his brain was perfectly bright and clear; so, after making a hearty meal, he started with his uncle and Crispin for the western pass, where he was to remain all night. The enemy might, or might not, make a night attack, and Justinian rather inclined to the belief that they would wait till daylight. Nevertheless, to guard against any chance of such a thing occurring, he resolved that every one, both leaders and men, should remain in the pass during the hours of darkness.

The men thus being at the front, a number of the women were sleeping up at the Acropolis with Helena, so as to be near their relations, and the interior of the island was thus given over entirely to feminine influence; while the extreme end of the pass, near to the outer palisade, was occupied by the male defenders. At times the sunlight came into this cliff entrance, so there was a scanty vegetation for some distance inward, so on this sparse grass Justinian and his men made themselves comfortable. Many of the soldiers, wearied out with watching, were sleeping around, but there was a strong guard at the barricade, under the command of Gurt, who was much better, and had insisted upon coming to the front.

Round a fire sat the Demarch, his nephew, Crispin, and Dick, all talking earnestly about the coming struggle, for the bos'n, having snatched a few hours of sleep during the afternoon, was now quite alert and active. The fire was lighted more for the sake of comfort than because of cold, though, indeed, the bottom of this abyss was chilly enough, and the cheerful flames flickered redly in the intense darkness, while high above glimmered the pale stars, and to the right arose the frowning mass of the palisade black against the faint gleam of the luminous night. To their nostrils came the salt savor of the sea, and at intervals they could hear the songs and revelry of their

foes on the beach below. What with the recumbent forms of the sleeping men, the firelight hollowing out a space for itself in the blackness, and the intense stillness of the night, broken only by the pacing of the sentries, and the fitful snatches of song from the near distance, the whole scene was extraordinarily weird, so much so, that Crispin, with his impressionable poet's nature, soon relapsed into silence.

"Crispin, why don't you think of business?" said Maurice mischievously, as he noticed the poet's abstraction.

"I was thinking of—of—other things."

"My niece for instance," observed the Demarch, with a grave smile.

"It's not improbable," replied Crispin, reddening a trifle; "but, after all, I am in good company, for Maurice is doubtless thinking of Helena."

Maurice, smiling, did not deny this remarkably accurate guess, and his uncle, smoothing his silver beard, laughed silently.

"I'm afraid Dick and myself are the only persons who are thinking of war."

"I'm certain of it as far as you are concerned, but I will not answer for Dick there."

"Dick, Dick!" said Justinian, shaking his head gravely; "what is this I hear?"

"About Zoe, sir," answered the bos'n innocently.

"Oh, it is my daughter's maid!"

"Well, you see, sir," said Dick bashfully, "it was like this, sir. Zoe, you see, gentlemen, likes me, and I like Zoe; so, with your permission, Mr. Justinian, we were thinking of marriage."

"My permission!" echoed the Demarch, with a lurking smile; "as far as that goes, it doesn't seem to be needed. This is surely pairing time, for you three young men seem to be all choosing mates. Eunice, Helena, Zoe! Maurice, when your old tutor arrives, we must have a triple marriage."

"We've got to drive away Alcibiades first, uncle."

"No doubt; but that, though difficult, is not impossible."

"I hope not. Crispin, wake up, sir! You are thinking about Eunice again."

"Indeed I am not," answered Crispin, with some dismay. "I am thinking of my revolver, which I have left behind at the Acropolis."

"There's a warrior for you," said the Demarch, with a hearty laugh; "he forgets the modern substitute for a shield. Well, my lad, as your revolver is an important matter, you had better go back and get it."

Crispin jumped gayly to his feet.

"I'll go at once," he said, putting on his sombrero; "but I hope the battle will not begin without me."

"I think you may make up your mind there will be no row till dawn, sir," said Dick, who was peering between the bars of the palisade; "there would not be all that kick-up going on down there if they meant business."

"In that case," observed Maurice, rising slowly, "I think I'll go back for your revolver, Crispin."

"Or for your heart," replied the poet, laughing.

"Oh, I don't wish to bring that back, especially in wartime. It is safer with Helena. Uncle, can I go?"

"By all means. I agree with Dick, and do not think there is any chance of a night attack. However, you had better make haste to come back to your post."

"So Paris flies harsh war's alarms
For dalliance in fair Helen's arms."

"Crispin, keep your rude couplets to yourself, or I'll forget to bring back your revolver. Adieu, gentlemen. I will return anon."

Maurice stalked away up the gorge, like a tragedy actor, much to the amusement of Justinian. Indeed, this light-hearted, desultory conversation did a good deal to keep up their spirits, and, in spite of the serious danger at their gates, all the Englishmen were wonderfully merry. It is characteristic of the British, that, if they take their pleasures solemnly, they keep the balance even by being gay in the presence of danger, and he who doubts the truth of this statement has only to read Kinglake's account of the battle of the Alma, in order to assure himself of its truth.

As before mentioned, the gorge was very dark, but Maurice knew every inch of the way, and, being sure-footed as a goat, never stumbled in his step, but strode merrily along in the darkness, whistling "Garryowen." It was curious, amid all this Greek life, revival of paganism, and piratical invasion, to hear the quaint Irish air, but Maurice found it an admirable melody to which to march, and moved his legs so rapidly to the tune, that in a very short space of time he emerged from the pass into the moonlit road skirting the crater.

It was only about ten o'clock in the evening, and the moon, full and round, burned like a lamp in the sky near the Milky Way, which she was slowly drawing near. Brightly gleamed Sirius amid the feebler twinkle of minor stars, and eastward like a ruby glittered Mars, the planet of the soldier, foreboding war and blood. The wind gently moved the branches of the mulberry-trees above the head of the pedestrian, and, moderating his pace, he strolled lazily along the shadow-strewn road, while the nightingales sang in every thicket, thrilling his heart with their delicious notes.

Soon, however, another song mingled with theirs, a strange, wild melody, which, chanted in a clear, high voice, arose and fell sadly in the chill moonlight; then an imploring chorus of voices sounded in unison. Again the one singer cried in an appealing manner; then silence and the hurried notes of the hidden birds.

Curious to know the meaning of this strange singing, Maurice walked rapidly onward, bounded up the steps of the Acropolis, and entered into the vestibule. The music, shrill and fitful, sounded close at hand, so, stealthily approaching the curtains hanging before the entrance of the court, Roylands peered in, to discover the reason of such fantastic melodies. He was evidently disturbing the mysteries of the Bona Dea, for the court was thronged with women, and they seemed to be engaged in the performance of some rite—a kind of invocation to the moon, which appeared shining brilliantly in the sky through the hypæthral opening of the building.

A small brazier filled with burning coals, and elevated on a tripod, stood near the fountain, before which stood Helena, in her long white robe, with loosely flowing hair and slender arms outstretched towards the serene planet above. Around the court knelt a number of Melnosian women in their long chitons; but Maurice's eyes were fastened on that beautiful central figure which stood so motionless before the tripod. The moonlight softly fell on her lovely upturned face, on her snowy robe, her milky arms, and touched with chilly beam the disordered gold of her hair. Maurice, who felt that he was looking on at some ceremony not meant for masculine eyes, would have

stepped forward and announced his presence, but at that moment, Helena broke out into a song so wild and thrilling, that he involuntarily paused in amazement. The words were in Greek, but he was now sufficiently master of the language to understand them. They were evidently some antique invocation to the inviolate Artemis, and he wondered where she could have discovered them, as they rippled from her lips, rising and falling with fitful sobbings, like the voice of some complaining wind on a lonely beach.

HELENA.

Oh, waning moon! why hidest thou thy face?
Fair is the night, but less fair than my lover absent;
Unveil thyself from the jealous cloud-woof,
And thou wilt see how fair is he I worship.

CHORUS.

O Dian! sun of the lovers' night, I call thee.

HELENA.

Thou canst control the tides of ocean,
The tides obedient, who are slaves to thee,
Surely then thou canst control the heart of my lover,
And make him long to return to my arms so loving.

CHORUS.

O Baalit! mistress of the tides, I call thee.

HELENA.

Save him from danger, for he is daring, my lover,
He rides the surges of battle as thou ridest the flying clouds.
Save him, Tanith!
And bring him safely to the arms of her who calleth.

CHORUS.

O Ashtoreth! thou also hast loved! I call thee.

At this moment, Helena took something from her bosom, and, throwing a few grains of incense on the coals, held it in the thick white smoke which arose. Afterwards she advanced to the fountain and dipped it thrice, singing all the time that strange melody.

HELENA.

This amber heart I place in the rising odors,
So that thy virtues may pass into it;
Thrice do I dip it in lustrous water in which thou hast beheld thine image;
For thus will it draw the magic from thy breast,
On my lover's neck will I place it—on his beating heart will it rest,
And it will save him when red runs the blood of battle.

CHORUS.

Hecate! controller of spells, I call thee.

When she ended, the chorus of women arose to their feet, and slowly filed out of one of the side doors, leaving the court empty, and Helena still standing by the

brazier, from whence the burning incense still rolled skyward. Maurice, quite astonished at this strange scene of magical incantation, stole quietly forward, and, looking over her shoulder, saw that she was gazing at the amber heart, which she had converted into an amulet by her moon spells.

"Helena!"

She turned with a cry of astonishment, and then fell into his arms with a joyous laugh.

"Oh, Maurice! my dearest! my darling! Are the old stories true, and have my spells drawn you back to my side?"

She was much excited, so Maurice drew her gently to one of the chairs near the fountain, and, placing her therein, knelt at her feet, smoothing her two hands, which he held between his own, to quieten her alarm at his sudden appearance.

"My dearest Helena, I came back to fetch Crispin's revolver, which he has left behind. Hearing you singing, I looked in."

"Oh!" cried Helena, with a blush; "and what did you see?"

"Nothing very dreadful," he replied, laughing, "I only saw a symposium of women, and felt like Clodius surveying the mysteries of the Bona Dea. What on earth were you doing?"

"Oh, it was only a game, Maurice," she replied, burying her head on his shoulder. "I am ashamed you should have seen me acting so childishly, but, the fact is, there is a woman here who told me about it."

"About what?"

"This incantation to the moon. In spite of father's being so particular about purity of blood, some of the women are of Arab descent. This one who told me how to make a talisman, comes from Africa, and, I believe, is a descendant of the old Carthaginians."

"Nonsense! they were all stamped out by the Romans. Well, what about this modern Dido?"

"Well, she saw how anxious I was about you, and told me if I invoked the moon, and bathed some small article in moon-water and incense, it would become endowed with powerful virtues, and protect its wearer from danger."

"You foolish child!" said Maurice, tenderly stroking her loose hair; "and was all this mummery on my account?"

"Yes; but if you laugh at it, the talisman will lose its power."

"Then I'll be as grave as a judge. Where is this wonderful amulet?"

Helena held out the amber heart which lay in the centre of her little white palm, from which Maurice lifted it daintily, and pressed his mustache against her hand.

"And am I to wear this?"

"Round your neck."

"But there is nothing to fasten it there."

"Oh dear me, I must get some string, or silk, or—Oh," she cried, struck with a sudden thought, "have you a knife?"

"No."

"Then lend me your sword."

"What! are you going to cut my head off for overlooking your Bona Dea ceremonies?" he said laughingly, drawing the keen weapon from its sheath.

For answer, she arose to her feet, and shook the loose gold of her hair over her shoulders. Carefully selecting one long tress, she smoothed it down with her hands, and held it out towards her lover.

"Cut it off."

"What! your beautiful hair!" cried Maurice, who stood before her with his sword gleaming in the moonlight. "Oh, Helena, I could not do that."

"Then give me your sword, and I'll do it myself."

"My dearest, you would hurt yourself. Why do you want to cut this lock?"

"To make a chain for the heart."

"There's a chain round my heart already," said her lover, still hesitating. "Won't it spoil your hair?"

"Maurice! how tiresome you are! Cut it off at once."

She stamped her foot with pretty petulance, so, seeing she was obstinate, he carefully sheared off the tress close to her head. This being done, she shook her locks over the shorn place, and, sitting down in her chair once more, began to weave the shining hair into a delicate chain.

"You silly child, making me despoil you of your glory!" said Maurice, touched by her action. "There, let me put my sword up again, and I will help you."

"Hold the end of the chain then, and do not talk, or you will break the charm."

Maurice, sheathing his sword, knelt down before her, and, taking one end of the glittering coil daintily between finger and thumb, watched her weaving the threads rapidly together, crooning the while a strange old song in a low voice.

"Weave the threads of golden hair,
  Golden future also weaving.
Happy be thy fortunes fair,
  Plenteous joy but scanty grieving.
In and out, and out and in,
Thus thy coming life I spin.
Bind the chain to golden heart,
  Golden heart to thee be binding,
Meet together ne'er to part,
  Love will come with little finding.
In and out and out and in,
Thus thy future life I spin."

"There!" said Helena, having finished the chain; "now let me tie up the ends—give me the heart."

"My heart?"

"I have that already," she answered mischievously. "The amber heart, please; I must bind it to the chain."

"Where did you learn that song?"

"I made it up all by myself," said Helena triumphantly, dangling the chain before him. "Do you think that only Crispin is a poet?"

"No, my Sappho."

“There is a chain of my hair and a talisman attached to keep you from harm, so bend your head, my knight, and I will give it to you.”

Maurice, entering into the spirit of her charming humor, bowed his head, over which she flung the slender chain of hair, then, kissing him on the forehead, leaned back and clapped her hands gayly.

“There! now you are safe. Nothing can harm you while you wear that.”

“Nothing can harm me while I think of you,” he whispered tenderly, taking her in his arms; “your love is my safeguard both in peace and war.”

“Oh dear me!” sighed Helena, as she pillowed her head on his shoulder; “what nonsense it is, Maurice! Still, it’s very pleasant nonsense.”

“Very pleasant.”

“And I am very nice?”

“You are very vain,” he said, kissing her and rising to his feet. “There, you charming sorceress!”

“A new Circe.”

“Precisely; but I must not stay with Circe any longer. Let me go to Crispin’s room for his revolver, and then good-by.”

As quickly as possible he ran into the poet’s bedroom, and found the weapon on the bed, where the neglectful poet had left it. Slipping it into his belt, he came back to say good-by to Helena.

“Now mind you go to bed, dear,” he said, kissing her tenderly; “no more magical ceremonies to-night.”

“No, I will go to bed. Oh, do take care of yourself, Maurice!”

“I will, both for your sake and my own. Besides, your talisman.”

Helena threw her arms impulsively round his neck.

“I give you the talisman, and I give you my love.”

He bent down and kissed her, then without a word went away into the moonlit night on his way to battle, and perhaps—death.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A MODERN THERMOPYLÆ.

In the gap say fifty fighters waiting for the coming shock,
Guns and sabres, pikes and bayonets holding tight,
And two hundred stormers dashing up, like surges on a rock,
With a grim determination for their foes' extermination
In the fight.
Clash of weapons, cannon's thunder, and the rifle's deadly crack,
Mingle fiercely with the shrieking of the wounded in their pain,
Till, in spite of all their toiling,
Valor stanch their efforts foiling,
Down the slope again recoiling,
Reels the shattered column back,
All their dauntlessness in vain,
And the battle-ground is cumbered with a multitude unnumbered
Of the slain.

At the first flush of dawn in the gray eastern skies, the Melnosians were on the alert and ready for the fight. Owing to the early hour, and the fact of their having passed the night in the open air, many of the men were shivering with cold, on noticing which, Justinian ordered hot coffee to be served out all round. They also took a light meal, then went through a few evolutions on the narrow space of their bivouac ground, which suppled their limbs, and sent the lethargic blood once more speeding rapidly through their veins. Both Crispin and Maurice felt somewhat stiff, especially the latter, owing to his wound, but the hot coffee, the food, and an indulgence in a few gymnastic exercises soon brought them back to their normal condition of physical fitness. Unlike their less seasoned frames, Justinian's iron constitution never seemed to feel the strain to which it was subjected, and, in spite of his years, he was as brisk and active as the youngest member of his band.

As it was imperative that this outer defence should be held against all odds, owing to the proximity of the side path, the Demarch had the two cannons which were planted inside the second barricade brought down as rapidly as possible, and placed them on either side of the entrance to the gorge, in order to sweep down the enemy as they dashed up the sloping ground from the beach. Their muzzles, protruding from the earthworks, could pour confusion into the ranks of the stormers in a most effective fashion, especially as they were loaded with grape-shot, which would scatter widely in the discharge. As in the tunnel palisade, a thick wall of turf was built half-way up against the beams, while on this sand-bags and gabions, with loopholes for the rifle

barrels, were also laid. The whole front of the battery was therefore bristling with danger to the besiegers, while the garrison, intrenched behind their outworks, were in comparative safety. The inner palisade farther up the pass was defended in a similar manner, saving in the matter of cannon; but Justinian determined to use his best endeavors finally to crush the enemy in his present position, so as to do away with the danger of their gaining possession of the side path which led into the heart of the island.

Directly in front of the battery, the ground sloped away down to the beach in a gentle declivity, and up this a winding road was cut by slight gradations which afforded a sufficiently easy approach. Still, so undisciplined were the troops of Alcibiades, that the Demarch thought, instead of marching along the road in a regular line, they would scramble confusedly upward either by the path or by the slope, so that his guns could play on their scattered ranks with deadly effect.

Maurice and his uncle took their field-glasses up to the point of vantage above the side path, from whence they could survey the preparations of the enemy, who were now deploying in irregular lines under the amateur leadership of Alcibiades and the traitor Greek. Justinian laughed contemptuously as he saw the confusion into which Caliphronas was throwing his men, and, without removing the glass from his eyes, remarked on this bad generalship to Maurice.

"I always thought Andros had a certain amount of brains, but, seeing what a mess he is making of things after all my training, I am wrong in believing him capable of anything except grinning in the mirror."

"Well, he has very bad soldiers, uncle. They seem to be ignorant of the simplest rules of discipline."

"And no wonder! The very scum of the Levant. Peasants, sailors, Turkish scamps, and stupid islanders. Still, even out of the most hopeless materials a good commander can form a disciplined corps, and I am sure they have had plenty of time to drill their men; but Andros has not the slightest capability for military matters. As for Alcibiades"—

The Demarch's opinion of Alcibiades' generalship was so bad that he could not find words sufficiently contemptuous to express his scorn; but as at this moment the enemy began to move irregularly towards the road which led to the mouth of the pass, he shut up his glass and went down to his men, followed by Maurice.

"The dance is about to begin," said Crispin, when the garrison were all in order at their several posts. "I expect it will be a merry one."

"Faith! we will be the pipers," replied Justinian grimly, pointing to his cannon; "they will caper gayly enough when these play the tune."

"We had better lose no time in beginning then," said Maurice, who was looking at the approaching enemy, "for here come the dancers."

As Justinian had foreseen, the stormers, instead of advancing by the road in a compact body, and thus neutralizing the danger of the opening fire, rushed irregularly up the slope in hopeless confusion, yelling wildly in order to keep up their courage.

"Scum!" cried Justinian scornfully, as he saw the motley crowd climbing upward. "Give it 'em, lads!"

Dick presided over one of the guns, Gurt at the other, as both of them, having been in the English navy, knew all the necessary business for loading, adjusting the sight,

and firing the cannon. The Demarch's finances had not run to the expense of importing cannon of the new type, so these brass guns were somewhat old-fashioned; still, loaded with grape-shot, they were very effective when fired, especially when sighted with considerable science by the old men-of-war's-men.

Up came the enemy, shrieking like fiends, and broken into irregular bands, dotting the green slope with patches of blue topped by the red of their Turkish headgear. Dick, who was to fire first, waited till they were within an easy distance, and then put the lighted match to the touch-hole of his cannon. There was a roar as the deadly grape-shot splashed among the advancing crowd, and then a shriek of rage as the column reeled, wavered, and for the moment paused. Encouraged by Alcibiades, they still advanced, only to be mown down by the dozen with the discharge of Gurt's cannon, upon which, dismayed at the carnage, they retreated down the hill in confusion, leaving the ground thick with the slain.

On seeing this, the sailors set up a hearty British cheer, in which all joined but Justinian, who smiled grimly at the effective work done by his guns. Alcibiades was stamping with rage, for his little scheme of firing the barricade, as on the previous occasion, was quite impracticable, owing to those deadly muzzles which gaped through the palisade.

With considerable caution, however, he scattered his men so as to avert the danger of huddled masses being cut down by the grape-shot, and kept up a continuous fire at the frowning front of the battery. The Melnosians returned the fire with their Martini-Henry rifles, and managed to pick off a few of the sharp-shooters, while, protected by their gabions, they managed to escape without the loss of a single man; for the bullets either buried themselves with a dull thud in the sand-bags or else went ripping above their heads to flatten themselves harmlessly against the lava walls of the pass.

"They can't last long against our cannon, uncle," said Maurice, who was watching Dick reloading his gun; "that first dash has lost them nearly twenty men."

"It will take some time to polish off two hundred," replied Justinian, who had his glass to his eyes; "besides, Alcibiades has some scheme in his head. All this sharp-shooting is done to divert our attention. I thought so!"

"What's up now?"

"He's bringing up a field-piece to that hill."

"The deuce!" cried Maurice, hastily focussing his glasses. "We must silence that. Dick, do you think you could bring one of the guns to bear on that hill to the right?"

Dick, after some consideration, thought he could, and did; for, with the assistance of his sailors, he wheeled round the gun-carriage to an angle of thirty-five degrees, so as to bring the muzzle of his piece in a direct line with the conical-shaped mound up which the enemy were dragging their battery. This hill, which was slightly to the right of the pass, would have been utilized long before for his guns by any able commander; but not until the loss of twenty men had taught Alcibiades experience, did he think of making use of the position. The crest of the mound was slightly lower than the palisade; but, by depressing the muzzle of his gun, Dick got a fair opportunity of disabling the battery of the enemy. Owing to their numbers, they soon succeeded in dragging the field-piece up to the top, and, placing it in position, raised the mouth slightly, so as to aim at the upper part of the barricade. Just as they were

preparing to fire, Dick, who had loaded with round shot, discharged his cannon, and the great mass of iron went hurtling viciously through the air.

"Badly aimed, Dick," said Maurice, who had his glasses up. "Your eye is not quite in. Look out, they are returning the compliment."

There was a puff of smoke, a sudden flash, an infinitesimal pause, and a ball came ripping along at tremendous speed, only to strike the ground in front of the battery, and ricochet harmlessly down the hill.

"Their gunner isn't much better than myself, sir," cried Dick, carefully training the sight of his piece; "but I won't miss this time."

His aim was much better, for the second shot, while not touching the cannon, knocked over two men standing near, who dropped down quickly over the brow of the hill.

"Egad! I wish those two had been the leaders," said Justinian cheerfully; "both the scamps are there. Here's the return fire."

This time the ball struck the palisade fair in the top centre, and smashed down several of the cross-beams. The sharp-shooters, seeing this, gave a cry of triumph, which was echoed by those on the hill, and the gunner rapidly loaded again, so as to follow up the advantage gained. Dick, however, was already prepared, and before the cannon of the enemy could be fired again, a shot from his gun struck it on the carriage, causing it to fall out of position. The besiegers set at once to work about restoring it to its former level; but by this time Gurt also had directed his gun towards the battery, and shot after shot from the two cannon followed so rapidly that in a short time the enemy had to vacate their position.

"I wish I could make a dash, and spike that gun," said Maurice, as the Melnosians cheered loudly.

"You'll do nothing of the sort, sir," replied Justinian sharply. "I don't want to run the chance of losing you again. Besides, Alcibiades is going to make a dash for the gate."

"Old fool!" said Crispin scornfully. "He can't bring his men up against our guns."

"He's going to try, at all events, as he evidently thinks his shot has told heavily on our defences."

All this time there was a constant flash, flash, flash along the line of sharp-shooters, as they kept up a continuous fire; and, in spite of all precautions, two Melnosians were killed. Under cover of this musketry it was apparent that Alcibiades was about to make a dash; but, having learned a lesson from the previous advance, he led his men along the right side, close under the cliffs, where the cannon could not reach them. Justinian saw this manœuvre, and, rapidly serving out fresh ammunition, told his men to be in readiness.

Round the right corner of the battery came a furious crowd, headed by a huge negro, for Alcibiades had no liking for heading such a forlorn hope. The attack was received by the garrison with a volley from their muskets; but, in spite of many dropping off dead and wounded, the besiegers still continued to struggle fiercely up the outward beams, in order to reach the upper gap made by the cannon. The sharp-shooters had, of course, to cease fire, lest they should hit their comrades; and, seeing that they had swarmed up nearly to the top of the barrier, ran forward to help them. The Melnosians, in two lines, one kneeling, the other standing at the back, fired

continuously at the writhing mass, while those behind the gabions stabbed with bayonet and cutlass with right good will. Both cannon were discharged, cutting two lanes of blood through the furious throng; yet, notwithstanding their losses, the stormers still stuck to their intention, and it became evident that nothing now remained to the garrison but to beat them back in a hand-to-hand fight.

One pirate leaped from the parapet through the gap, but was speedily despatched by a bayonet-thrust in the chest. Others, however, followed like a flock of sheep, and there was little doubt but that the Melnosians would have been driven back had they not been so expert in the use of the bayonet. Justinian, an old army man, had taught them the exercise splendidly, and, raising the bayonets first high, and then back over the right shoulder, their weapons told in every thrust; so they were thus enabled to keep the foe at bay.

While the top of the barrier was thus being assaulted, a number of men, under Caliphronas, were hacking away at the lower beams; for, unwilling to harm his men, Alcibiades refrained from setting fire to the palisade as he had done before. The weight of the stormers on the top made the now weakened lower portion rock ominously, and it was evident the whole structure would soon be in ruins. When this happened, the danger would be imminent, as Justinian knew that the enemy far exceeded in numbers his own little band, and, even with the advantage of the narrow gorge, it was doubtful if he could hold his ground. Giving way, however, meant that the side path would be left to Alcibiades, and, however bravely defended, would be certain to be captured at once. Besides, he dared not leave the guns in possession of the enemy, as they would at once use them with deadly effect against his own men.

Rendered reckless by despair, the Melnosians fought like demons against the enemy, and, though Alcibiades hurled body after body of men against them, they stood their ground, and did not give way one inch. At any moment, however, the barrier might fall, and Justinian lost no time in rendering the guns innocuous, if he were forced to retreat up the gorge.

"Dick! Gurt! spike the guns! spike the guns!" he roared in English, and the Greeks, not understanding the language, did not guess how important was the order. Caliphronas, however, heard it on the other side of the barrier, and made immediate report to Alcibiades, who grasped the idea at once.

"Make for the guns! capture the guns!" he yelled in Greek; "they will spike them!"

A body of men leaped down from the parapet and made for the gun held by Dick, but Maurice sprang in front of it, and, while the bos'n was busy putting in the spike, kept the enemy at bay. He soon emptied his revolver, and thus had to fight solely with the sword, but the Demarch, seeing his danger, re-enforced him with four Melnosians, who speedily beat back the assailants. However, Dick's task was accomplished, and, Gurt having also obeyed orders, both guns were now spiked and perfectly useless, should the enemy gain possession of them. The only danger remaining was the side path, which, in spite of its iron door, might be forced; so the Demarch and his men stanchly held their ground, in spite of the havoc which was being made in their ranks by the overwhelming force of the enemy.

Fighting fiercely, with obstinate determination not to give way one inch, slowly but surely the Melnosians drove back the stormers to the barrier, clambering up over the heaps of slain in their efforts to force the enemy to vacate their position. The air was

blinding with gunpowder smoke; the clash of the swords, the fierce shouts of the besiegers, and the cheers of the Melnosians created a most infernal din; but high above this was heard the crash of the palisade, as, yielding to the axes of the enemy, it fell outward. Many were unable to retreat in time, owing to the crush behind,—for Alcibiades had long ago given up every attempt to keep order,—and in its fall a great number were crushed to death, while their comrades, not heeding their death agonies, rushed forward across the platform thus formed, in order to follow up their advantage as speedily as possible.

At this critical juncture Justinian bethought himself of the stratagem of scaring the enemy by a fictitious force, and hastily bade Temistocles to run to the Acropolis and tell all the women to come down the gorge with drums beating and colors flying. There were plenty of kettledrums and flags at the Acropolis, which Justinian had not cared to use, so these, used by the women advancing down the pass, might inspire the enemy with fear that re-enforcements had arrived. The only proviso that Justinian made was that the women, on their arrival, should keep out of musket-shot and not risk their lives.

Temistocles sped away like a deer, and Justinian hastily advanced to the front, in order to assist Maurice and Crispin, who were both fighting with the desperation of despair. The Melnosians, two deep, extending right across the gorge, and, being at close quarters, were using their bayonets for stabbing, and their clubbed muskets for dealing blows. The sailors were almost in a ring round Maurice and Crispin, slashing away vigorously with their cutlasses, cutting principally at the faces and necks of their assailants, so as not to transfix their blades in the bodies, and thus render themselves defenceless.

Maurice, whose stature gave him considerable advantage over his opponents, was sweeping his sword as rapidly as possible among the enemy, cutting, thrusting, slashing, and stabbing; but he was much encumbered by one of the wounded enemy, who was clutching his leg, and thus impeding his movements. Justinian saw this, and, firing at the wretch, knocked his brains out; while Maurice, thus freed, sprang resolutely forward, followed by his sailors, in order to get at Alcibiades, who was urging on his men to the attack from the vantage-ground of the fallen palisade. Justinian and Crispin, thus left alone in front of their line, fought vigorously to keep back the enemy, while the old Demarch, seeing his nephew's aim, shouted out words of encouragement.

"Cut off the head and the body will follow!" he cried in English, then rapidly added in Greek, "Close up, men! close up! give them no chance of getting to the rear."

In obedience to this command, as soon as a man in the front rank fell, another stepped in from the rear to fill up a gap, or else the foremost soldiers closed up shoulder to shoulder so as to preserve an unbroken front. By this means they kept the enemy in front, and, notwithstanding the fierceness of the fight, held their ground stanchly, waiting the signal to advance. Between them and the fallen palisade was a furious crowd heaving like a stormy sea, and at the back Alcibiades giving his orders, which, however, were not heeded. Justinian was waiting until Maurice killed Alcibiades, when he determined to advance with all his force, and thus drive the disheartened enemy over the verge of the barrier.

It was with some difficulty that Maurice managed to fight his way through the crowd, but, protected in the rear by Dick and his sailors, he at length managed to get clear, and, leaping on the parapet, confronted Alcibiades, bare-headed, but waving his sword with a stern resolve to kill the pirate. Alcibiades was no coward, but had kept in the background, as he deemed his life too valuable to risk, as indeed it was, for lacking a head the invading army would be worse than useless. Face to face with the Englishman, however, he did not shirk the combat, but, whirling his sword with a fierce cry, dashed boldly at his enemy. He could not call upon his followers to aid him, as the sailors with their cutlasses kept a clear ring for the combat; so he saw plainly it was a duel to the death, and one upon which depended the whole issue of the battle.

Not having the reach of arm or the stature of the Englishman, he found himself at considerable disadvantage, but nevertheless fought on bravely, and, adopting stabbing tactics more than slashing, tried his best to give his opponent a mortal wound. Maurice, however, having a quick eye, was enabled to ward off his blows by a dexterous use of his now emptied revolver, and made rapid play with his sword firmly grasped in his right hand. The pirate captain managed to wound him in the left arm just below the elbow, but at that moment Maurice passed his sword through his chest. Alcibiades, though not fatally wounded, gasped out "Christos!" and fell back over the palisade into the outward mass of his men, who would have carried him off, but Justinian, hearing the distant roll of a drum, and seeing that Maurice was alone on the parapet, gave the order to advance.

On observing his uncle's action, Maurice cried out in Greek, "Alcibiades is dead!" whereupon the intervening enemy were filled with alarm, and began to retreat before the advancing Melnosians. Dick, the sailors, and Maurice leaped down to take Alcibiades prisoner, and, while busily engaged in fighting, the whole inward crowd, driven forward, came rolling pell-mell over the fallen barrier, carrying those who would have fain stayed with them. Maurice had enough to do to keep his feet against the torrent, but managed to divide it into two streams with the use of his sword and the aid of his sailors.

In another moment Justinian and Crispin were by his side, and down the slope fled the foe in headlong confusion, with the Melnosians in full chase.

"Keep together, men! keep together!" yelled the Demarch, as he raced down the slope like a school-boy; but the Melnosians had been too long held back to pay any attention to his orders. Right and left fled the enemy, making for the boats, but Gurt, seeing this, tried to intercept them with a few sailors. Unfortunately he could not run, owing to his wound, so he had to abandon the pursuit, and the foremost fugitives managed to get afloat. Justinian had forbidden all useless killing, but his islanders, frenzied at the loss of their comrades, and elated by their victory, were quite beyond control. Those who could not reach the boats were slaughtered on the spot, and the Demarch, in despair of saving the lives of any, could do nothing but stand on the beach with Maurice and Crispin beside him. A goodly number of the fugitives, however, were now pulling for the open sea, among them Caliphronas, who, standing up in the boat, shook his two hands with despair on beholding the rout. In a short space of time, what with the fierceness of the Melnosians, who gave no quarter, and

the flight of the fugitives, there remained not a single enemy on the island, except the wounded men who had been unable to fly.

There was a roll of many drums, a shrill cry of delight, and, turning their faces landward, the three men saw Helena, with a company of women, standing on the ruins of the palisade. The setting sun illumined the group, and, grasping the staff whence floated the victorious folds of the Union Jack, she seemed to be the Goddess of Victory come down to sanctify with her presence the triumph of the Melnosians. Her women behind her, the blackened ruins of the barrier beneath her feet, and the Englishmen below on the beach, she lifted up the staff proudly, and the great flag flung out its mighty folds to the breeze, as if it too rejoiced in the triumph of success. The three Englishmen's hearts thrilled with patriotic pride as they saw the symbol of victory flaunting in the wind, and the British sailors, uncovering their heads, saluted the invincible flag with three ringing cheers.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A COUNCIL OF WAR.

The snake is scotched, but is not dead,
  Beware! the snare!
Soon will it lift again its head,
  Beware! nor dare!
The fangs contain their poison still,
The wounded creature yet may kill,
  Beware! take care!
With cautious speech, good council take,
  Beware! the snare!
Nor trust the seeming lifeless snake,
  Beware! nor dare!
For unexpected it may spring,
And slay thee with its venomed sting,
  Beware! take care!

The immediate danger was over, but Justinian was by no means inclined to think that, even with the death of Alcibiades, the island would be left in peace, particularly as Caliphronas was still alive. That the foiled Greek would tamely submit to be beaten thus, was out of the question, and the Demarch was quite certain that he would again gather an army to assault Melnos. If such an event took place, matters would become very serious, as, notwithstanding their loss was less than that of the enemy, scarcely fifty Melnosians survived, and many of these were severely hurt. Four sailors had also been killed, so the total of able men left to defend the island, making allowance for those incapable through wounds, amounted to scarcely forty souls, or thereabouts. Even with the carnage which had ensued during the battle, Justinian felt sure that nearly a hundred men had escaped in boats, and, as Caliphronas must know that the garrison was considerably weakened by loss of men, the Demarch feared lest he should return almost immediately with added numbers and risk another battle, in which case it seemed impossible for the Melnosians escaping total extermination.

This belief was confirmed in a strange way on his return to the palisade, for Alcibiades was found under a heap of corpses, apparently lifeless, and though for a short time he was revived with brandy, had died immediately afterwards, assuring Justinian that re-enforcements were on their way to avenge his death. Whether this was mere bravado or not, Justinian was not quite sure, yet, in spite of his intimate knowledge of the dead smuggler's rascality, he hardly thought even such a scamp would die with a deliberate falsehood on his lips, therefore at once hastened to rebuild

the barrier, in case of invasion by possible foes. Some of the women went back to the village for provisions, while others remained behind to look after the wounded. There was no time to bury the dead, present safety being the great question of the hour, so the bodies of friend and foe were laid gently down on the beach under the cliffs, to be buried as soon as possible, when all danger was past. The gorge thus being cleared of the slain, Justinian made his men sit down to refresh themselves with wine and food, after which, wearied as they were, all hands went bravely forward to rebuild the barrier. Even the women helped in this important task, and by the time it was ten o'clock in the evening, a goodly portion of the desired barricade was erected.

As soon as he heard about the approaching re-enforcements from the dying Alcibiades, the Demarch foresaw that, to be prepared for such an emergency as a fresh attack, his men would have to work all night, therefore desired Alexandros to bring down the electric light, so as to permit the toil to be carried on continuously until the battery was finished. This was easily done, by the electrician joining other wires on to those already at the head of the pass, and then fixing the apparatus near the outer entrance. So speedily did he perform this difficult task, that in a few hours all was in order, and the powerful rays flooded not only the immediate neighborhood of the works, but even the beach and a portion of the harbor inside the breakwater.

Helena had obstinately refused to go back to the Acropolis, and, as the other women remained to help, her father did not insist on her return, so she attended to Maurice's wound, which, after all, was a mere scratch. In common with the rest, she also took her turn at nursing, and aided to carry the wounded into the interior of the island, for so busy were the men at the repairing of the barrier, that none could be spared, so the women, proving themselves thorough heroines, took all the hospital work on their shoulders.

"I wonder, in your scheme, you did not include a doctor, uncle," said Maurice, as he stood by the Demarch, superintending the rebuilding of the palisade. "A medical man would have come in handy now."

"That is true! Had Crispin not left me as he did, I would have sent him to study medicine, but, as it is, I put off the affair from time to time, and now, when I most need one, I find myself without a surgeon."

"I could never have been a surgeon, Justinian," said Crispin, with a shudder; "cutting up people makes me feel quite ill."

"You cut up a good many to-day without being much disturbed," said the Demarch, with a laugh; "but, of course, I know that was in hot blood. However, it is no use longing for the impossible, so it is to be hoped my Melnosians will recover without the aid of medical science."

"Is your wound hurting you, Maurice?" asked Helena, who, though tender-hearted as a rule, seemed on this occasion to think solely of her lover, despite the fact that so many men had been killed.

"Pooh! not a bit—a mere scratch!"

"You've got to thank my amber heart for your safety."

"Or your golden hair," he retorted, smiling; "but, in faith, Helena, I fancy my good luck has had most to do with my safety."

"Don't undervalue your fighting powers, Maurice," said the Demarch, who overheard this remark; "your tussle with Alcibiades was no light one."

"Well, I certainly got the better of him, but his wound was only a trifle, and, had he not tumbled over the parapet, the fight would have lasted much longer. As it was, the poor devil was really trampled to death during the retreat of the enemy. Still, if you like, Helena, we will put it all down to your amber heart."

"What amber heart are you talking about?" asked Justinian inquiringly.

"Ah, that is a secret between Helena and myself," said Maurice, with a meaning look at the blushing girl,—"a very charming secret indeed. Well, Gurt, and how do you find yourself?"

The sailor, who had been working outside the palisade, gave his trousers a hitch and pulled his forelock.

"I'm as right as a trivet, sir. I hop a little with that there dig I got yesterday, but Lor' bless you, sir! 'tain't nothin'. But if I may make so bold, Mr. Justinian, I wants to speak, sir."

"What is it, Gurt?"

"Growin' tired of bricklayin', sir, I goes down a bit for a breath of air, and there, sir, as I'm a sinner, I hears the dip of oars."

"Boats coming!" cried the Demarch and Maurice in one breath.

"Yes, sir. I jest came up like a shot. Turn on the light, sir, t' th' north, an' if you don't see them lubbers comin' back, I'm a Dutchman!"

Maurice ran off to tell Alexandros, who at once sent the white glare across the sea, and there, pulling straight for the breakwater, they saw a long string of boats. The men therein guessed by the sudden flash of the light that they were discovered, and gave a yell of anger, for they had hoped to pull in under cover of darkness, and take the Melnosians by surprise. Thanks, however, to Gurt's quick ear, and the serviceable electric light, their little scheme was frustrated at nearly the moment of its fulfilment.

"Ten boats!" cried Justinian, counting them rapidly. "Push on the work, my men. Here, some of you, take up your guns. What about those cannon, Dick?"

"All right now, sir," said the sailor, saluting; "got the spikes out."

"See if you can knock a few of those boats to splinters. Helena, you and the women go back to the Acropolis."

"Oh no, no, father! let me remain here. And see! all the women are helping to build the wall."

"Well, well, we need all hands; but, for God's sake, my child, keep in a place of safety!"

"Do you think they will attack to-night?" asked Crispin, who had raced full speed down the gorge, and was out of breath.

"No. In the first place, they have had a good thrashing to-day, and in the second, Caliphronas is too much of a coward to lead them on until he has recovered his nerve. They've got re-enforcements, however. I expect those flying met the new men coming, and persuaded them to come back. Is that gun ready, Dick?"

"In a minute, sir. Just turn the light on the water so as I can train the gun."

Alexandros did so, and Dick carefully sighted the piece, so as to allow for the way the boats were making through the water. Evidently unaware of their danger, instead of keeping widely apart, and thus neutralizing the chance of the shot hitting them, they all made for the beach in a dense bunch. The electric light showed their position as clearly as if it were day, and the round shot went with a roar right into the

conglomerate mass, doing considerable damage. The advancing Greeks yelled with fear, but, seeing their only chance of safety was to get under the level of the guns, pulled in like madmen to the beach. Then by the white radiance of the light, it was seen that two boats had been sunk, and many of their occupants killed, but the survivors, fish in the water, like all insular Greeks, were swimming rapidly to land.

Caliphronas, foolish though he was in military matters, yet knew sufficient of the formation of the ground and the nature of cannon to be aware that it was impossible the muzzles of the guns could be depressed sufficiently to do damage to his men on the beach, therefore, feeling themselves comparatively safe, the newly-landed pirates hastened to put up tents, evidently intending to rest that night and continue the assault in the morning. Knowing that the little garrison must be worn out with the long fight during the day, they did not trouble themselves in any way to guard against an attack, not even placing sentries at the outposts.

As all their movements were revealed by the glare of the search light, Justinian noted this fact, and regretted bitterly that he had not a sufficient force at his command to sally forth against this ill-guarded camp.

"Egad, Maurice!" he said in vexation; "with fifty men at our backs we could sweep them off the island before dawn. The rascals evidently know how weak we are in numbers, else they would not be so careless of their camp. How is that work going on?"

"Nearly finished, sir," reported Dick, who was overseer. "They won't get over that wall in a hurry, I'll bet."

"Transfer your command to one of your men and come here; I wish to hold a council of war."

Dick saluted, and having instructed one of his messmates to attend to the final details of the parapet, came forward as Justinian desired. Helena, in company with some of the women, had gone up the gorge, in order to attend to the wounded, so the five men, for Gurt was also included in the council, sat down on the grass some little distance away from the workers, and began to discuss the situation in low tones. Sentries had been posted at the barrier, and the electric light was full on the camp of the enemy, so in the event of any movement being made for an assault, which was not likely, Justinian knew he would be informed at once. After all, with the barrier, the heavy guns, and their muskets, they could hope to hold the pass for some time, but in the end it was doubtful if they would not have to give in, which catastrophe would mean death to every soul on the island.

"You can see for yourselves, gentlemen, that the danger is very grave," said the Demarch anxiously; "we are only forty in number, and with these re-enforcements the enemy must be at least one hundred and fifty. It took us all our time to beat them off to-day when we were stronger and not fatigued, but to-morrow, with such a small force, all worn out with fighting and want of sleep, I dread the worst."

"There is one thing in our favor," observed Maurice in a satisfied tone; "bad leader as Alcibiades was, he had more pluck than Caliphronas; and, as he is the general now, he will not inspire his men with confidence. However brave the followers are, unless the leader is equally so, their valor is not of much use, as it lacks discipline and trust in the general."

"There's one thing, sir," remarked Dick, addressing Justinian,—"there is one thing I'd like to say. All these Greeks have bare feet, so I think it 'ud be a good plan to strew the front of the palisade with broken glass, which would cut them up a bit."

"That's a good idea, Dick; and then, when they are in confusion, we can do some damage with our cannon. By the way, what about that gun? we should have brought that in."

"It's a pity we didn't, sir; but it ain't much good to them, for I've spiked it proper."

"You've got dynamite, Justinian, have you not?" said Crispin, who had been thinking.

"Yes; plenty."

"Then why not make a mine on the slope of the hill, and blow it up with electricity when the enemy are coming up?"

"Egad! I'll do that at once. The dynamite can be brought down in about half an hour; it won't take long to dig a trench and lay a wire: so we ought to have the whole thing ready by the time they assault the battery at dawn. Dick, take Temistocles and some other men up to the magazine."

Dick went off to obey this order with alacrity; and Justinian, whose spirits were rising at the feasibility of these schemes to conquer his enemies, went on talking hopefully of the future.

"What with cannon, dynamite, and broken bottles to cut their bare feet, I fancy those scoundrels will get a warm reception. Ah, if I only had the full strength of my Melnosians again, I would soon drive these scoundrels back to the ocean!"

"If we smash them up to-morrow with dynamite, they won't come again, uncle."

"I trust not; but Alcibiades seems to have made extensive preparations in the way of re-enforcements, and for all I know, a fresh batch may arrive to-morrow; while at every assault our numbers diminish. If we only could get more men! but I fear that is impossible."

"Not so impossible as you think," said Crispin deliberately. "Suppose I go to Syra, and get the Eparch there to send you re-enforcements?"

"True; he's a friend of mine; and if he did not send regular soldiers, he could at least let me have some men of the same fighting powers as these scoundrels. But how are you to get to Syra? and how are you going to bring the troops back?"

"As to bringing them back, by this time my yacht must be there, so it would not take long for me to steam here with a good number of men."

"Well, but you can't go. We are beleaguered."

"All the enemy are asleep; so if Gurt here, who knows these waters thoroughly, will come with me, I think we could steal down to the breakwater and obtain one of their boats. A good breeze is blowing; so, if we put up the sail, we could soon cut across the course of one of those Cretan steamers which sail to Syra from Khanea, in which case it would take but a little time to reach the yacht. Once at Syra, I would get as many men as possible, and come back at once."

"It is a wild scheme, but not impossible," said Justinian thoughtfully. "You'd have to sail about thirty miles; and then there is the chance of your getting picked up by a steamer."

"With this 'ere breeze, sir," remarked Gurt, who was not averse to the adventure, "I guess we'd get in the track of one of them Cretans in about twelve hours, more or

less. Once in the line, and there's lots of 'em plying to and fro, so the chances are we'd soon be picked up. I'm game for it, if Mr. Crispin is, sir."

"But are you not too tired?"

"I am not," said the poet, stretching himself; "besides anything is better than this suspense. The only thing I'm afraid of is Gurt's wound."

"Don't you be afeared o' that, sir," replied Gurt bluntly. "I've lost some blood, but 'tain't nothin'. I ain't no babby to squake fur nothin'. If we kin git a boat, I'm ready to start this minit."

"What do you say, Maurice?"

Roylands had been listening to these propositions not without a certain amount of approval, which was, however, mingled with a feeling that such a scheme was somewhat foolhardy.

"I hardly know what to say," he observed at length. "There is one thing certain, if we wish to hold the island, we must have more men; and, as far as I can see, Crispin's scheme is the only way of getting them. The mere sight of the yacht filled with troops would frighten the life out of these scoundrels, and cause them to clear out; but the difficulty is how to get a boat without being seen by the enemy."

"I think we can manage that," said Justinian, indicating points with his finger; for, of course, with the electric light, there was no difficulty in following his actions. "You see, the camp of the enemy is here, to the right of the harbor. I noticed that several of the larger boats were tied to the breakwater; so if Crispin and Gurt get down there, and walk along the breakwater itself, they can loosen one of the boats and tow it outward to the mouth of the harbor. There they can get in, and row off to the west, without any chance of the dip of their oars being heard by the enemy."

"That is all very well, uncle; but how are they to get down to the beach? No doubt the enemy are all asleep, and, as we know, have not posted sentries; still, if Crispin goes out by the palisade, he might be seen, in spite of all precautions. Caliphronas is sure to be on the alert."

"I expect Caliphronas is too weary with his day's work to keep awake," replied the Demarch dryly; "and he is not the man to deny himself rest, let the consequences be what they may. However, if you don't object to a little danger, Crispin, I think we can get you out by another way."

"In any case there is danger, so a little more makes no difference."

"Then we will go up to the point above the side path; and, from there, you know, the cliff slopes down sheer two hundred feet. We can let you and Gurt down there by ropes, and you can steal along in the darkness down to the breakwater. Once there, and the rest will be easy."

"It's a risk."

"Certainly; the whole enterprise is risky; but we will keep the electric light full on the camp, so, while you can see all the movements of the enemy, they can see nothing of you in the darkness. To tell you the truth, however, they have such a belief that we can do nothing, that they are all sound asleep; so I don't think you will run much risk. Well, what do you say?"

"I'll do it."

"So will I, sir."

"Good! We will trust to Providence for the rest. Let me see, Crispin. It is now past midnight; so, if you can catch one of those steamers before to-morrow night, you will be in Syra by the next day. In twenty-four hours, I have no doubt, the Eparch will give you plenty of men; and it will not take a very long time for a steamer to reach here. Altogether, if all goes well, you ought to be back in four or five days. The question is, can we hold the island till then?"

"We must!" said Maurice decisively. "If the worst comes to the worst, we can blast those overhanging rocks yonder with dynamite, and thus close up the pass entirely. True, we will shut ourselves up as in a prison; still, we will be safe until aid arrives; for, once the gorge is closed up, no enemy can possibly get into the interior without almost superhuman exertions."

"We must hope for the best," answered Justinian, rising to his feet. "Well, Crispin, I thank you for your offer, and will accept it. When will you start?"

"At once. There is nothing to be gained by waiting. We will take enough of these provisions to last us for three days, in case we miss the steamer; and, for the rest, trust to Providence."

"There is a good deal of trusting in Providence about the whole scheme," said Justinian, with a sigh. "You may run the gantlet to the breakwater successfully, you may get safely off in a boat without being seen by the enemy, you may be picked up by a Cretan steamer, and you may find your yacht lying at Syra. It's all chance, my boy; and really I think it would be better for us to adopt Maurice's plan in closing up the pass, so as the enemy can't possibly get in."

"And we can't possibly get out," replied Crispin significantly; "it is too dangerous. Remember our conversation the other day about the volcano: if you blow up the pass, all means of exit will be cut off; and, should the crater burst out, no one of us would be left alive."

"Then go, and God speed you!" cried the Demarch, who saw plainly that it was a case of Scylla and Charybdis.

Maurice had not heard this conversation about the volcano, much to his uncle's satisfaction, having gone forward to meet Dick, who had just come back from the magazine with the dynamite. The bos'n expressed great satisfaction when he heard of the proposed scheme, and would dearly have liked to go himself in place of Gurt, only he knew Justinian could not spare him. However, he was well aware that Crispin could not have a better companion than Gurt, for the old sailor was well acquainted with the course they would have to take towards the west; and, moreover, having had something to do with the line of steamers between Khanea and Syra, knew better than any one as to the possibility of being picked up by one of them without loss of time.

The scheme was put into working order at once, and a sufficiency of provisions was made ready for the adventurers. Crispin filled his brandy-flask and took his revolver, in case he might be stopped on the beach by the enemy; and both himself and Gurt took heavy woollen cloaks to protect them from the chill sea-breeze. It was agreed that Justinian and Maurice only should go up with the rope to let down their companions to the beach below, as it was necessary for Dick to remain, in order to attend to the dynamite mine. Nothing was told to the Melnosians about the proposed scheme, lest they, seeing how desperate affairs were, should lose heart; and, beyond

the four leaders, Gurt, and Helena, every one was in ignorance of the daring attempt about to be made.

After Helena, who was deeply affected by Crispin's bravery, had said good-by to him and Gurt, she went back to the Acropolis with a number of women to obtain some rest, having arranged with her father to come down at early morning with plenty of broken glass, in order to protect the front of the palisade. Dick and his men were already hard at work just on the brow of the slope, about one hundred yards away, digging the mine for the dynamite; so, all things going on thus fairly well, and there being no sign of movement in the camp of the enemy, the Demarch, with his nephew and the two adventurers, unlocked the iron gate, in order to ascend to the top of the cliff, from whence Crispin and Gurt were to be lowered to the beach below.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE FORLORN HOPE.

The night is dark,
The cliff is high,
No moon illumes
The cloudy sky;
Below we mark
The fearful glooms
Which in their night
Hide sombrely the way of flight.
To slender rope
We cling with dread,
And hanging there
As by a thread,
With fearful hope
We downward fare,
Till on the strand
In safety for a time we land.

Fortunately for the success of the enterprise, the sky was cloudy, so that the moon, thickly veiled by vapors, was unable to betray the adventurers by her tell-tale light. A strong breeze was blowing seaward from the land and ruffling the surface of the black water to ragged caps of white, which promised anything but a pleasant journey to Crispin and his companion.

They were warmly clothed in thick garments of blue-dyed wool, consisting of tight-fitting jackets and loose trousers, tucked into high boots of untanned leather. In his belt Crispin carried a dagger and his revolver, while Gurt's cutlass dangled by his side, and both men also wore those red fishermen's caps common to the Ægean, with ample woollen capotes to protect them from the keen winds. Standing on the height of the lofty cliff, they could not see the beach for the profound gloom below, but to the left saw the camp of the enemy clearly defined in the fierce rays of the electric light. Everything there seemed to be as still as the grave, and the pirates were evidently sound asleep under canvas, for not a sound broke the stillness, save the whistle of the breeze and the sullen rolling of the waves on the sands below.

Maurice and the poet had brought up two coils of strong rope, each over a hundred feet in length; so, as the cliff measured but two hundred, there would be no difficulty about the ropes being too short. They tied these firmly together, then, making one end fast to a strong pine tree which grew some distance back from the verge, flung the

other into the abyss below. The rope paid itself out rapidly, until, when only a few coils were left, it ceased running, which showed that it had touched bottom. Now the two adventurers prepared to descend, and shook hands with the Demarch and his nephew, both of whom were much affected. None of the four knew if they would meet again, for two were bound on a perilous voyage, and the others were beleaguered in a dangerous volcanic island by bloodthirsty enemies. If they reached the boat safely, and managed to push off into the open sea unseen by their enemies, they were to send up a rocket as a signal of success to the watchers on land. Gurt carried this useful article, and was the first to descend the slender rope, to which he clung like a spider to its thread, and dropped swiftly down until the thickening gloom hid him from their anxious eyes. After a time the rope slacked, and a gentle vibration stealing up it showed that Gurt had landed safely.

"Good-by, my dear lad," said Justinian, as he embraced the brave poet. "You are sure you have everything?"

"My revolver, cartridges, cloak, a satchel filled with food, your letter to the Eparch. Yes, I think that is all. Gurt has the water-bottles and the rocket. Good-by, Maurice."

"Good-by, old fellow," replied Maurice, and then they grasped each other's hand in token of farewell, with that stolid composure with which Englishmen in trying circumstances conceal their emotion. "Take care of yourself for the sake of Eunice."

"Certainly I will, and for yours also. If all goes well, you will see the white wings of The Eunice off this coast in a few days. But don't surrender the island before then."

"Not much," retorted Maurice grimly. "I'll blow up all the rocks in the pass first, and if the enemy want to get in, they will have to fly over such a barrier. Good-by once more, my boy. Over you go!"

Crispin, even at this supreme moment of parting, could not restrain a merry laugh at his friend's coolness, and, laying himself down on the brow of the cliff, grasped the rope, and prepared to descend. As soon as Gurt, below, felt from the quiver that his master was fairly on his way down, he pulled the rope taut with all his strength, so as to render the descent easier.

"Look out for the rocket," cried Crispin, as he dropped slowly downward into the blackness; "and keep the light turned on the camp, so that we can see what those wretches are up to."

"All right," shouted Maurice, who, lying flat on his stomach, was peering over. "Good-by."

A faint farewell floated up through the intense gloom, as Crispin, with his hands tightly grasping the rope, and his legs twisted round it, went sliding down like a spider on his self-spun thread. Thanks to Gurt, who was holding out the cord widely from the rugged face of the cliff, he found no difficulty in descending, and soon landed safely beside the sailor on the damp sand.

Shaking the rope vigorously as a sign to those on top that they were now on *terra firma*, they walked carefully forward in the darkness towards the land end of the breakwater. Gradually their eyes, now relieved from the dazzle of the electric light, became accustomed to the gloom, and they could see to some extent a good distance ahead. Stealing along silently, their boots made no sound in the dead sand, and they arrived without mischance at the rocky wall of the harbor. Against this several boats were floating, tied to iron rings welded into the masonry, but rejecting the first three or

four, which were too cumbersome for two people to manage, they selected a small light caique, with masts, sail, and oars, which lay nearest to the sea.

Gurt pulled this in easily by the painter, and then bade Crispin get into it, so as to keep it off from the wall as it was towed along. As the sailor was the more powerful of the two, Crispin obeyed without hesitation, and, with the aid of an oar, kept the craft out from the masonry, while Gurt, with the rope over his shoulder and bent form, pulled it with some difficulty towards the entrance. All this time things had gone smoothly with them, for the electric light kept up a steady glare on the camp of their sleeping enemies, and they could see no movement to lead them to suspect that the pirates were aware of their daring attempt.

At the end of the breakwater they placed their provisions, water-bottles, and cloaks in the boat, and after making fast the boat to an iron ring, proceeded to let off the rocket in token of their success. Crispin placed it in position, applied the match, then hastily got into the boat with Gurt and pushed off to sea. Just as they were a few yards from the shore, the rocket flashed skyward with a sharp whizz, scattering trains of sparks in its ascent. Alarmed by the unexpected sound, the pirates rushed out of their tents to ascertain the cause, but the rocket, having expended its fire, had fallen back into the water, so they could see nothing to account for the explosion.

After rowing out a little way, Gurt shipped the oars, and with the assistance of Crispin, hoisted the sail, which bellied out with a groan to the wind and made them glide rapidly forward. Then the sailor took the helm. Crispin, wrapped in his cloak, laid himself down to sleep for a few hours, and the little craft sped away lightly over the white-crested waves into the profound darkness. When they were out some considerable distance, the electric light suddenly flashed out a long ray into the sea, in token of farewell, then reverted to its original position, and the boat with its two brave occupants was swallowed up in the night.

On the cliff those left behind waited and watched until the welcome rocket shot its long trail of golden fire through the darkness, then both simultaneously heaved a sigh of relief.

"Well, they are safe so far," said the Demarch thankfully; "but, by Jupiter, Maurice, those rascals have heard the rocket go!"

"Oh, they've seen nothing," replied his nephew indifferently, as the few men who had rushed out retired again to their tents; "the fire died out before they caught even a glimpse of it. I'm glad Crispin is safely away; his boat will be flying like a stormy petrel before this stiff breeze. Let us go down, uncle, and send them a farewell flash of the light."

"But it might reveal the boat to those scamps," said Justinian, as they rapidly descended the narrow staircase.

"Oh, they've all gone inside again; besides, Crispin has got too much of a start by this time. I'll go and see Alexandros."

Which he accordingly did, and the light, after flashing for a second on the flying boat, was again turned on the camp, after which Maurice and his uncle went to see how Dick and his dynamite mine were getting on. Without doubt these amateur sappers had been working hard, for the trench was dug, the dynamite cartridges placed therein, and the hole filled up. Wires attached to each cartridge ran underground through the palisade to the interior of the battery, and none of the enemy

would have suspected that the whole of that broad space in front was one deadly mine, which, when exploded, would blow them to pieces by the dozen.

"There, sir," said Dick, wiping his heated brow; "now when Miss Helena brings those broken bottles, we'll smash 'em up on this ground between the mine and the palisade, so if any of those beggars escape being cut to pieces or blown to atoms it'll be a miracle."

"It's splendid, Dick," answered Justinian, clapping him on the shoulder. "And now, my lad, you had better go and have some sleep."

"D'ye think it 'ull be safe, sir?"

"Quite safe! All those scamps are sound asleep, and will not attack before dawn. The barrier is built up as strongly as we can do it, your cannon are all right, and, what with the mine and the broken glass, I think they'll find it pretty hard to get even as far as they did to-day."

"Is Mr. Crispin all right, sir?"

"Yes; he got safely into the boat, sent up a rocket to tell us of his success, and by this time is on his way to Syra for help."

"I saw the rocket, sir, so I guessed it 'ud be all right. D'ye think, sir, we'll hold out till he brings the yacht here?"

"Of course we will," said Maurice, who had joined the pair; "our defence here, even with our small numbers, is quite strong enough to stand one storming. If some of them get their feet cut to pieces by the glass, and others blown up sky-high by the mine, I wouldn't be surprised if they gave up the attempt and sailed away."

"Suppose they don't, sir?" questioned Dick dubiously.

"Then, my Richard, I have a plan for closing up this pass."

"How, sir?"

"You see those overhanging rocks up there? Well, as they are just over the entrance of the pass, to-morrow, so soon as we have beaten back those wretches, we'll go up and bore holes along the narrowest part for dynamite cartridges. Then we'll attach wires as in the mine, and if we find that we can't stand against a second assault, all we have to do is to inveigle our friends under those rocks, explode the charge, and then, my Richard—oh, what a time they will have!"

"But that 'ull shut us up in the island, sir."

"Well, what of that? It's a pleasant place to dwell in. But you needn't be afraid, Dick; it's easier to get out than get in, and when the yacht arrives we'll not have much difficulty in getting on board."

"Leave Melnos, sir!"

"No!" said Justinian angrily. "I've no doubt, if we are forced to fill up the pass, those scoundrels will leave us. If they don't, the arrival of the yacht with fresh troops will drive them away. Then, we'll go to work to open up both the pass and tunnel."

"Not enough men, Mr. Justinian."

"Ah, my poor Melnosians! Well, we'll have to get more settlers, that's all. The difficulty is not in getting men and women, but in getting pure-blooded Greeks."

Dick did not understand this latter remark, so wisely left it unanswered, and, touching his cap, went off with his messmates to snatch a few hours' sleep before the grand assault which all anticipated would take place at dawn. Justinian and his nephew made an inspection of all the defences, saw that the sentries were posted, and

then went to talk to Alexandros about the small battery he was rigging up for the purpose of exploding the mine when necessary.

"There will be no difficulty about this affair, Alexandros?"

"No, Kyrion. I have attached the wires leading to the cartridges to this battery, and will have it under my charge to-morrow behind this rock, which will protect me from the fire of the enemy. You wave your hand as a signal, and I touch this button, when the mine will explode in a second."

"Excellent!" said Justinian, with great satisfaction. "And if we wanted to close up the pass by bringing down those rocks above you?"

"In the same way, Kyrion. Make holes above for your cartridges and attach wires of any length. With my battery at one end of those wires, and the dynamite at the other, I could blow up the whole of this gorge from the Acropolis."

"You can trust your man in charge of the engine?"

"Yes, Kyrion. That is all he has to do, for the dynamo works by itself without my being present."

"All seems going smoothly," said the Demarch to Maurice, as they turned away. "That mine ought to do considerable damage."

"I'm certain it will. But, uncle, you must be quite worn out for want of rest; so you go to sleep, and I will watch."

"I will sleep later on; but meanwhile I am going up to the Acropolis to tell Helena that Crispin and Gurt have left the island safely. She will be very anxious."

"Give her a kiss for me," cried Maurice, as his uncle walked away up the pass.

"I am afraid it will be horribly damaged on the transit," replied the Demarch, smiling. "Good-by, my lad. Keep a sharp look-out, and if anything goes wrong, send Temistocles to the Acropolis. I will be back in an hour."

He went away slowly; for, in spite of his iron spirit and determination to keep up, the incessant fatigue was beginning to tell on his frame. At seventy-five, one cannot play with a constitution; and hardened as was the body of Justinian by temperate living and constant exercise, he yet felt that he was not the man he was. Another thing which worried him mentally, and thus acted on him physically, was the thought of the volcano; for, in spite of the way in which he reassured Crispin, he felt by no means easy in his mind regarding the safety of the island. Not until he was absolutely forced to, would he close up the pass, and thus shut himself up in a crater apparently on the verge of eruption. True, if the worst came, he could escape with his people over the cliff, but such a method would take some time; and, with the volcano spouting fire, there would be but a small chance of any one escaping alive. Full of these thoughts, he walked leisurely along, pondering over matters volcanic and matters military; for with the treacherous crater on one side, and the cruel enemy on the other, he could not but see that matters were approaching a crisis.

Even if the volcano remained quiescent, and the enemy were beaten back, still things were in anything but a satisfactory position; for he had lost many of his men, and he knew how difficult it would be to supply their places with Greeks of the old Hellenic stock. Those who were dead had been trained up under his eye; they knew his aims and aspirations, and were already developing greatly: but now all that was at an end; they had been cut off by death, and even if he got new blood, it would mean that the whole task of training up a new generation would have to begin all over

again. Justinian was a man of great self-control, but when he thought of all he had lost, in the darkness of night he gave free vent to his emotion, and wept bitterly at the downfall of his hopes. Still all was not yet lost, for the island still remained, and many of the old inhabitants; so he dried his eyes when he left the gorge, and determined, notwithstanding his bad fortune, still to bear up bravely in his efforts to reconstruct the old Hellenic civilization.

As he neared the Acropolis, he was astonished to see Helena, attended by Zoe, come hastily along the road, with a face expressive of great fear.

"What is the matter?" he asked hurriedly, as she fell into his arms. "Are you ill?—is the"—

"The lake! the lake, father!"

A terrible fear seized Justinian's heart, but he nevertheless controlled his feelings and spoke calmly.

"What do you mean, Helena?"

"The lake! it is dried up."

In the dark Justinian could not see the lake at the bottom of the valley, but he guessed what had happened. The lake's bottom, shattered by the subterranean convulsions, had been unable to hold the water in its cup, and the whole body had been drained off into the bowels of the earth. This, then, was the third warning of Hephaistos, and a very terrible one it was, for if the crust of the crater was so convulsed, the next thing that would happen would be an outburst of fire.

Justinian foresaw all this in a moment, but, without saying a word, led his terrified daughter back to the Acropolis, where they sat down on the steps. The moon, lately obscured by cirrus-shaped clouds, now burst out in full splendor through the thin woof, and the Demarch with a pang saw that his beautiful valley was bereft of its gleaming silver eye. Where the calm expanse of water had been was now an ugly black gulf of rugged rock, and Justinian half expected to see fire burst fiercely from those black depths.

"It is nothing, it is nothing, my child," he said, with a confidence he was far from feeling; "the earthquake has shattered the lake, and of course the water has drained off. Silly child, of what are you afraid?"

"I dread lest the crater should burst into fire."

"There is no sign of that; we would have had warnings long ago."

"But, father, the earthquake! the lake!"

"Those mean nothing. Look how frequent are earthquakes at Santorin, yet people continue to live there. As to the lake, as soon as this war is over, I will stop up the cracks at the bottom, and it will soon be filled again. Are the women afraid?"

"Some of them; still they are all sleeping down below with the children, so I don't think they attach much importance to the disappearance of the lake."

"And are you less brave than these poor things? Helena, I thought you were braver."

"I told Miss Helena there was no danger," said Zoe in English, with her pretty foreign accent.

"There, you see, Helena! Zoe is not afraid."

"Oh, I am better now you are with me," said Helena, smiling through her tears; "but it is so lonely here with no one but Zoe and that man who drives the engine."

"Where are the servants?"

"I sent them down to look after the wounded who are in the village. But, papa—Maurice?"

"He is all right, and sends you this kiss—there!"

"Dear Maurice, he never forgets me!—and Crispin?"

"Has safely left the island with Gurt, so, you see, help will soon arrive. You must be brave, Helena; things are not so bad as you think."

"I am glad to hear you say so, father."

"I do say so. You have not spoken of this volcano business to any one—and you, Zoe?"

"No, no!" cried both the girls in chorus; "not a word."

"That is right; I do not wish any one to be frightened unnecessarily, and you will think of neither war nor volcanoes in a few days. But come, Helena, give me something to eat."

"Will you stay here, father?" asked the girl, as she led the way into the Acropolis.

"No, I am a soldier, and must live as the other soldiers. Let me have a meal here, and then you can go to bed, while I return to the front."

"Can I come down to-morrow?"

"No, you have acted the heroine quite enough. There will be some tough work to-morrow, and I don't want to risk losing you, my treasure."

"I may lose Maurice."

"Don't think of such a thing. He is a true Roylands, and bears a charmed life; something to do with that amber heart, I suppose."

"Did Maurice tell you, father?"

"No; some magical nonsense, I suppose. Well, well, come and give your poor father something to eat, for, war or no war, I must have supper."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

UNDER THE UNION JACK.

The cross of St. Andrew, the cross of St. George,
  Are blent in the folds which are flung to the air,
And proud floats the flag at the head of the gorge,
  Proclaiming the presence of Englishmen there.
Red tint for the blood which is shed for the brave,
  White, symbol of honor no cowardice taints,
With blue as a sign of the circling wave,
  And crosses that witness our faith and our saints.
It streams o'er the battle, forbidding retreat,
  Reminding us ever of Albion's name;
Brave banner of England, unsoiled by defeat,
  The token of victory, valor, and fame.
Shot-ragged with bullets on numberless plains,
  It's folds with the hearts' blood of Englishmen red,
Unbeaten, undaunted it ever remains,
  A sign for the living, a shroud for the dead.

"It must remain here," said Justinian proudly; "once the English flag has been brought to the front, it cannot retreat."

"Let us hoist it by all means," replied Maurice cheerfully; "but, remember, only seven Englishmen fight under its folds."

"Well, I guess, Mr. Roylands, half a dozen Englishmen are worth fifty Greeks!" cried Dick, with great confidence. "Once we get that Union Jack up, and I'd like to see who'd pull it down."

It was early morning, and they were talking about the flag which Helena had brought down on the previous day. As the bulk of their army consisted of Melnosians, who did not understand the sacred feeling with which it was regarded by the English, Maurice thought it hardly worth while to plant it on the palisade; but the Demarch, in spite of his independent sovereignty, was patriotic to the core of his brave old heart, and, with a touch of sentiment, insisted that the attack should be repelled under the unconquered banner. Maurice therefore humored his uncle, and agreed to his wish, so the five sailors planted a stout pole just inside the barricade, and in a few minutes the flag of England was floating proudly at the mouth of the gorge.

As yet the enemy had made no move, so Justinian had plenty of time to complete his defensive preparations. In spite of her father's veto, Helena, mindful of Maurice's instructions regarding broken glass, had come down at dawn with her women, all

bearing bottles, crockery, and earthen jars, which were speedily smashed to atoms and strewn plentifully on the ground between the mine and the barrier. Alexandros had his battery in good working order, and had ensconced himself behind a rock some little distance away, from which, on being signalled to by the Demarch, he could explode the mine at the proper time. The Melnosians had managed to snatch a few hours' sleep, and, encouraged by their victory of the previous day, were ready for the fight, so a sense of great hopefulness was diffused among the valiant little garrison. What with the mine to blow up the enemy, the broken glass to cut their bare feet,—no ineffective defence,—the guns ready loaded to sweep them down as they swarmed up, and the stern determination of the defenders to fight to the bitter end, Justinian felt that, in spite of being outnumbered, he would be able to hold the island until the return of Crispin with re-enforcements. The more perilous became the position, the higher arose the spirits of the defenders, especially those of the sailors, on whose patriotic feelings the presence of their country's flag had a wonderfully inspiring effect.

"Now then, Helena," said her father, when all preparations were complete, "you had better return to the Acropolis with the women."

"Very well, father; but I will be very anxious for your safety."

"What about me?" asked Maurice reproachfully.

"Oh, you've got your talisman," she replied, with an attempt at lightness, "so you will be quite safe; but I am not so sure about father."

"Don't trouble your head about me," said the Demarch, kissing her; "if I die I die, and if I live I live—it's the fortune of war. The best thing you can do, Helena, is to go down to the valley and attend to those poor fellows who are wounded. I know you will be very anxious, my dear, so I will send Temistocles to you every now and then with information as to how the fight is getting on. Now, good-by, my dear child, and keep up your spirits."

"I will walk up with you to the head of the pass," said Maurice, turning away from the palisade; "there is no sign of the enemy getting under arms yet, so I can easily spare a few minutes."

Helena of course was delighted at thus having her lover all to herself for even a quarter of an hour, and walked beside him up the gorge, followed by the women, who had taken an affectionate farewell of their sons, husbands, and brothers. Zoe also was weeping bitterly, as she had just parted from Dick, and dreaded lest she should never see him again. Indeed, despite the danger, the men at the front were less to be pitied than those women remaining behind in the interior of the island, for while the former were at least too occupied to fret over their troubles, the latter, with nothing to take their minds off the disasters surrounding them, were in a state of suspense pitiable to behold.

"Do you think Crispin will come back within the week, Maurice?" asked Helena, as she walked arm in arm with her lover.

"I hope so! If he is picked up by the Cretan steamer, and his yacht is now lying at Syra, I have no doubt he will; but it is all the merest chance. However, come what may, I think we can defend the island to the end."

"It is not of the danger without, but of the danger within I am thinking."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"This volcano"—began Helena, upon which Maurice interrupted her with a merry laugh of scorn.

"My dear one, do not fright yourself with false fire. I suppose you are thinking of the earthquake?"

"Yes; and of the lake and the springs."

"What is the matter with them?"

"The springs are spouting furiously, and the lake has disappeared."

"Great heavens! that does sound ominous," said Maurice anxiously. "Does your father know?"

"Of course he does, but he told me not to speak of it, lest the people should become panic-stricken, but of course such prohibition does not extend to you."

"The lake gone! the springs active!" repeated Roylands in a musing tone. "I am afraid there is danger of the volcano breaking out again."

"So I think; but father laughs at all my fears."

"It would be a terrible catastrophe should such a thing happen, for not one of us could hope to escape. Besides, if Melnos became an active volcano, all your father's forty years of hard work would go for nothing."

"Do you think it is likely an eruption will take place, Maurice?" asked Helena in a tremulous voice. "You have no idea how afraid I am."

"Egad! it is enough to make any one afraid; however, I think you can set your mind at rest, Helena. The eruption, if there is to be one, cannot possibly take place for a week, and by that time Crispin's yacht will have arrived; so if there are any signs of an outbreak, we can escape at once."

"Oh, I hope so! I trust so!"

"What does worry me," pursued Maurice meditatively, "is all this war going on for what may turn out to be nothing but a heap of cinders. It would be the very irony of fate, if, after beating back the foe, this volcano should start, and drive us away from the very place we have defended."

"If such a thing happened, I do not think my father would survive."

"It would be a blow, certainly," replied Roylands, affecting a cheerfulness he was far from feeling; "but one can do nothing against the giant forces of nature. However, Helena, remember all the wealth of Melnos is safe in London, thanks to the wisdom of my uncle; so if Hephaistos did start a forge here, which he seems inclined to do, we would simply have to abandon this island, and start our scheme of a new Hellas on another; but this time we would select one less dangerous from a volcanic point of view."

"But think of forty years' work thrown away!"

"And think of leaving this paradise! However, if the archangel waves his flaming sword, we must; still, if I go, my Eve will be with me, and that will comfort me greatly."

"Ah, my dear, dear Maurice!—Oh, what is that?"

"The roll of a drum," cried Roylands, stopping abruptly. "The enemy must have begun the attack, so I will have to return to my post. Good-by, my dearest, and don't trouble yourself. Remember, I have your amber heart."

"And my real heart also."

"Well, I leave mine with you for safety; so I can't be shot through the heart, can I? Jove! there's the drum again. Give me a kiss. There, good-by, my dear one."

Down the gorge he tore at full speed, for he already heard the sharp crack of a musket-shot; and Helena, remaining where she was, sank on her knees, which example was followed by all her women; and the whole company, with uplifted hands, implored the protection of Heaven for their dear ones at the front.

Maurice arrived at the barrier just in time, for the enemy were already scrambling up the slope; and Justinian, catching sight of his nephew, shouted out to him to redouble his speed.

"Quick, quick, Maurice! Confound it, sir! they'll be on us in a few minutes!"

"Well, that will be just time for me to recover my breath," said the young man good-humoredly. "All in order, uncle?"

"Yes. We'll meet them with rifle-shots first, and give them a chance of cutting their feet to pieces."

"But if we let them get so near, they will assault the barrier."

"What! after crossing those broken bottles barefooted? Don't you believe it, my lad. They will be jumping about like cats on hot bricks shortly!"

All the Melnosians were in a high state of glee over this snare for the enemy, which was so simple, yet dangerous, and yelled with laughter as the foremost stormers dashed with their bare feet right into the centre of the sharp points. Of course, the vigor with which they rushed forward rendered the glass all the more effective; and, after receiving them with a volley of musket-shot, the garrison paused to roar with laughter at the sight of the bare-legged islanders hopping in agony over the broken points. Is was not dignified, it was not particularly dangerous, and could hardly be called legitimate war; yet, by this simple means, the first rush was effectually checked; and streaming with blood, the enraged stormers retired, leaving a few of their dead, who had been killed and wounded by the volley, lying on the field.

The information concerning this stratagem soon passed from mouth to mouth, and those of the enemy who were not yet climbing up the hill, dashed back to their tents, from whence, after a time, they emerged, wearing tough leathern sandals, with the hair still on, bound round their feet by strong thongs. Those who had been wounded in this novel manner had, regardless of safety, sat down within rifle range to tie up their bleeding feet; and Justinian, with more generosity than they would have displayed in like circumstances, refrained from firing on them thus defenceless.

Caliphronas, who, since the death of Alcibiades, now held supreme command of this irregular army, saw his forbearance, and, sneering at Justinian for a soft-hearted fool, with, for him, exceptional courage, led those of his men who were booted across the dangerous ground. Apparently he had quite forgotten how Alcibiades had carried forward his stormers the previous day under the shelter of the cliff, for, advancing thus in a compact body full in front of the palisade, they were exposed to a raking fire from the muskets of the garrison.

"Lions led by a deer are not dangerous," quoth Justinian grimly, on seeing this bad generalship. "I don't think we'll have such a bad time of it as we did yesterday."

"Certainly not, while Caliphronas is general of the enemy," replied Maurice, laughing; "but he has some courage, I see, for he leads the stormers."

"I'll soon frighten him back, sir," said Dick, who hated Caliphronas for his treachery on the night of the wreck; "will I fire?"

"Wait a minute, till they are more conglomerate. Now!"

The gun roared, and a shower of grape-shot splashed over the advancing body, which did considerable damage in their ranks, that is, if such disorderly huddling could be dignified by such a name. They still continued to come on, however, on noting which, Justinian, who, in default of Gurt, had charge of the other gun, sent another shower of grape among them.

They wavered for a moment, but, as their leader still urged them to come on, Maurice snatched a rifle from the man nearest him, and aimed deliberately at Caliphronas, not with the intention of killing him, but merely forcing him to retire wounded. The ball struck Caliphronas on the elbow of his sword-arm, and with a yell of pain he dropped his weapon and ran away, followed as a matter of course, by his soldiers.

"At this rate, Maurice, we can hold the island for a year," said the Demarch, with a jeering laugh; "it's child's play compared with yesterday."

"If we can get them on that mine, and explode it in good time, the siege will be over," replied his nephew decisively.

"I am averse to useless massacre."

"So am I, but if we don't put the fear of God into their souls, they will wear us out by these puny attacks. One bold stroke, and they will fly."

"Well, do what you will. I have every confidence in your generalship."

The enemy again charged up the hill, but this time Caliphronas was conspicuous by his absence, as he was evidently in the camp attending to his wound. A huge man in an Albanian dress was leading this time, and had at least the virtue of brute courage, for, in spite of the musket-shots and double discharge of the cannon, which killed many, he still advanced with his men right up to the palisade.

"Hand-to-hand again," said Dick, as the Melnosians began to use their bayonets, "but they won't get over the barricade this time."

As the barrier was now built of nothing but turf overlaid with sank-bags and gabions, the besiegers found their axes of no use, and were reduced to try to swarm up to the top of the parapet in overwhelming numbers. The garrison, however, shot freely into the struggling mass, but in doing this had to expose themselves greatly, and in consequence lost many men. Still, they managed to drive back the besiegers, and the two cannon belched forth grape-shot alternately, so that at length the enemy were forced to retreat over the brow of the hill. Thus relieved from immediate danger, the Melnosians busied themselves with their dead and wounded, carrying both to the rear, so that their fighting might not be hampered by the cumbering of the ground with bodies. In front of the barrier, the ground right over the brow of the hill was thick with the fallen of the enemy, and some of the wounded were trying to crawl to a place of safety, while others, lifting up their hands, cried out on "Christos."

In a remarkably short space of time, the pirates re-formed into something like order, and, still led by the Albanian, came once more to the point of attack. This time, however, instead of assaulting the barricade, they lay down on the crest of the hill, and began to pick off the garrison with their rifles, while every now and then a small body would make a sally forward, only to be beaten back with bayonet and cutlass.

Quite unaware of the danger they were in, the whole of the firing party were camped right on top of the mine, and Justinian, wishing to end this desultory warfare, waited until they were pretty well massed before giving the signal to explode.

Twice he raised his hand to give the sign, and twice he dropped it again, from a sentiment of regret, for, scum though the besiegers were, it yet seemed a terrible thing to hurl into fragments the fifty or sixty men who were so calmly seated over the mine. Still it was a case of necessity, for the garrison, worn out with incessant fighting, were not fit to stand another assault such as had taken place the day before, and, if the pirates captured the island, every living person would be ruthlessly put to death.

Justinian was not a uselessly cruel man, and would fain have been spared the necessity of such a wholesale massacre, but when he thought of his child, and the defenceless women who would be left to the mercy of these savages in case of capture, all feelings of pity died in his breast, so when the enemy were massed in a great number above the mine, he gave the signal.

Alexandros at once sent the electric spark along the buried wires, the ground in front of the barrier heaved like a convulsed serpent, and in the concussion which followed the roar of the explosion, every one of the garrison was thrown to the ground. When they arose to their feet, the sight which met their eyes was frightful, for the ground was strewn with fragments of human bodies, legs, arms, trunks, heads, all lying about in ghastly confusion. The sky seemed to have rained blood, for their garments were splashed with the crimson fluid; and the whole space of ground on the crest of the hill was rent and riven into huge holes. Of all the human beings resting there a few minutes before, hardly one was left alive, and down the hill fled the frightened survivors, yelling out that an earthquake had taken place. Those still in the camp caught the alarm, and ran for the boats, so in a few minutes the harbor was dotted with craft pulling hard for the entrance. Not one pirate, save those who were wounded, remained on the beach, for this frightful catastrophe, which they ascribed to natural causes, had completely routed the whole host which had stormed the palisade so confidently a few hours before.

"The war is over," said Maurice, who was very pale, for the shocking sight of the bodies in fragments was enough to make the bravest shudder; "they have had a lesson, and won't come back again."

"I trust not," said Justinian, who stood sternly under the drooping folds of the Union Jack, "but I doubt it while Caliphronas is alive. Still, we have gained the victory this time, and, though I am ashamed of having perpetrated such a wholesale massacre under this flag, yet necessity knows no law or mercy either."

"If we had not beaten them by that time, they would have beaten us," said Maurice, taking a pull at his brandy-flask, "for all our men are about worn out, and could not have stood another assault. We have lost a good few too, and I doubt, uncle, if, out of your hundred and twenty subjects, you have more than thirty left."

"It has indeed been a severe struggle," replied Justinian sadly, "but now, thank God, it is over—at least, for a time; but, as sure as you stand there, Maurice, Caliphronas will come back with a fresh set of blackguards."

"By that time, Crispin and his re-enforcements will have arrived, so we will soon be able to drive them back. Dick!"

"Yes, sir?"

"We must repair damages, and bury the dead."

"Right, sir!"

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when they began this task, and not until nightfall were the dead buried decently in shallow graves dug in the sea-shore sand. Papa Athanasius came down with all the women from the village, and read the service of the Greek Church over the remains of friend and foe alike, so that when the moon arose above the peaks of Melnos, there was no sign of a struggle having taken place, save in the battered barricade and the rent ground.

When all was completed, Justinian held a consultation with his nephew and Dick as to the probability of the foe returning soon, as, if there was a possibility of such an event happening, it would be unwise to leave the barrier unguarded. Ultimately, it was decided to leave sentries on guard, with cannon and muskets loaded, and Alexandros directed the search light full on the entrance of the harbor, so that in the event of the enemy returning, they could be seen before reaching shore, and the alarm given at once. Temistocles, who was still in good condition, as he had done no fighting, was left behind also, in order that if an attack were made, he might run to the Acropolis to alarm Justinian.

These arrangements having been made, the survivors of the fierce fighting returned to the village, in order to take the rest they so much needed. Loud were the wailings for the dead from the Melnosian women, many of whom were now alone in the world, and all that night, those sleeping in the Acropolis heard the sounds of bitter sorrow rising from the valley below. It had been a tough fight, many had been lost, and much damage had been done; still, the foe had been forced to retreat, and Melnos was still under the rule of the Demarch.

That night the leaders were all gathered round the supper-table, to make the first good meal they had tasted for days, and Helena and Zoe waited on them, for all the rest of the servants were down in the village looking after the wounded men. All of them looked worn out and haggard, for the strain, both physical and mental, had been something terrible; and even now, like Justinian, Maurice and Dick, gifted as they were with iron constitutions, were nearly broken down by the terrible experiences they had undergone.

"My poor Helena, you look fit to drop," said Maurice tenderly, drawing her down beside him. "Rest yourself for a time, and do not be so afraid. All danger is now past."

"But think of the many lives that have been lost."

"I do, and regret them; still, selfish as it may sound, remember we are all safe, and, after all, that is a great thing."

"I am sure I don't know how long we will be safe with this volcano."

"Nonsense, Helena!" said her father in a vexed tone; "I tell you there is no danger there. Nothing new has happened that I know of. The island is quite safe, but if there are any chances of an outburst, we will get away in Crispin's yacht."

"That is what I was saying to Helena this morning. But will you abandon the new Hellas?"

"I must if Hephaistos bids me. The bravest man can do nothing against a burning mountain. No, Maurice, if I am driven from Melnos, I will no longer fight against fate; already, by the death of so many, a great deal of my forty years' labor has proved

futile, so if the crowning touch is put to it by the outbreak of the volcano, I will throw up the game."

"And return to England?"

"Yes. I am old now, and want rest, so I have no doubt you and Helena will give me a corner at the Grange. It will be a great blow to me should things turn out in this way; still, I may be too pessimistic, and all may yet be well."

"If I may make so bold, sir," said Dick, who had been talking in a whisper to Zoe, "what, may I ask, is to become of me? Zoe, here, says, if Miss Helena goes to England, she will go too."

"Well, you will accompany her, Dick," said Maurice genially; "and I have no doubt that, when you are married, I will be able to give you a billet at the Grange."

"Buy a yacht, sir?"

"No, I leave that to Mr. Crispin, so you can still take service under him, and make Zoe stewardess. But we are all looking at the black side of things; the mountain may remain quiet, in which case I will still stay here and carry out Justinian's scheme of the new Hellas."

"Hear! hear!" cried Dick, lifting his glass. "Beggin' pardon, sir, but here's to the health of Mr. Justinian!"

"Coupled with the name of Mr. Roylands, who is a hero," said Justinian, bowing his thanks for the compliment.

"And add Helena's name also, for she is a heroine," cried Maurice gayly. "Now then, uncle, Dick, Helena, Zoe! three cheers for our noble selves!"

These were given, and after that, quite worn out, all retired to rest.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE PREY OF THE GODS.

Far down the valley the altars are reared,
The off'ring no power can delay;
For gods never honored, yet gods ever feared,
Claim their prey.
The fire that springs from the womb of the earth
Will flame on these altars of fear;
The songs of the living, the laughter and mirth,
None will hear.
For weepings and wailings of hundreds afraid
Roll up 'neath the sting of the rods;
The worship is ended, the sacrifice made
To the gods.

Things went along very smoothly for the next two days, as there was no sign of the pirates returning, nor did the volcano hint at any near outbreak of fire. Gradually the diminished population settled down to their old occupations, for Justinian, in spite of the terrible events which had lately taken up the attention of every one, judged it wisest to prevent any disorganization of his social system. The few men surviving returned to their work, and did their best by constant industry to make up for their lack of numbers, though, indeed, a dismal silence had settled down on this rural population, once so gay and mirthful. Later on, when all fear of an invasion had passed away, Justinian intended to make an excursion round the Archipelago in search of new colonists, and had but little fear that he would be able to obtain as many as he wished, for many islanders would be only too glad to place themselves under the protection of the wealthy, eccentric Englishman.

Thanks to the Demarch's wisdom in placing his money with his London solicitors, he had plenty of capital on which to draw, and when things were once more quiet, and Melnos repopulated from the adjacent islands, he made up his mind at once to restore the tunnel to its former perfection. Certainly it would take some time to gather a number of pure-blooded Hellenes for his colony, but with plenty of capital at his back, and the productions of the island in a flourishing condition, he could afford to wait. Besides, he had Maurice now beside him, and the young fellow was a man after his own heart, for, in contrast to his former listlessness when in England, he flung himself into Justinian's schemes with an ardor which delighted the old man. With himself to conceive, and his nephew to carry out, the Demarch was quite jubilant in spite of his

late reverses, for he foresaw that in such capable hands Melnos would soon be restored to its pristine glory.

The only thing, therefore, which agitated his mind, was the dread he felt lest Caliphronas should again assault Melnos with another army of cut-throats. Calmly as Justinian had taken the treachery of the Greek, yet in his own soul he felt deeply hurt that his years of kindness had met with so base a return. He had found Caliphronas a poor shepherd lad on the island of Andros, he had educated, clothed, and fed him for many years, and now, when perilous times came, not only was the ungrateful scamp absent from his side, but actually arrayed against him, being in every way an active agent in bringing ruin on his benefactor. However, if the pirates, headed by this accomplished villain, did appear again, the Demarch knew well that he could not hope to hold out against them for any lengthy period, as, owing to the smallness of his garrison, incessant watching, fighting, and suspense would wear out even the bravest among them.

In this dilemma there was only one thing left to do, should the pirates reappear, and that was to close up the pass by means of the overhanging rocks at the cliff entrance. True, it would shut all within the island up in a crater which threatened to break out; still, from all appearances, such a volcanic outburst did not seem likely to take place, therefore, if the pass were firmly sealed, they would at least be free from their dangerous enemies without, until such time as Melnos could be repeopled, and thus defend itself. Notwithstanding the earthquake, the disappearance of the lake, the activity of the hot springs, the Demarch could not believe that this crater, extinct for so many thousands of years, would break out in eruption without giving, at least, some serious warning; therefore, with this idea, he determined, if the worst came to the worst, to shut himself and his people in, by closing up the gorge, rather than abandon his forty years of work to the mercy of a band of Levantine black-guards.

As to Helena and Maurice, they were perfectly happy in making love to each other; and, in the intervals of such a delightful occupation, the young Englishman looked after the palisade, at which two sentries were constantly posted, wandered about the village with his uncle, attending to local matters, and twice or thrice a day went to the vantage-point above the side staircase, in order to watch for the appearance of Crispin and his yacht. Daily both Maurice and his uncle swept the offing with their glasses, but no thin line of smoke or glancing white sail showed that The Eunice was on her way to aid these unfortunates.

Nor during all this time was Dick idle, for, with a small body of men, he had posted himself above the overhanging rocks at the entrance of the pass, and there they drilled holes in the soft volcanic soil for the reception of dynamite cartridges. When these were placed sufficiently deep, Alexandros attached his wires to them, and then threw these thread-like conductors across the abyss to the opposite side of the pass. At the point where Crispin had gone over the cliff a few nights previously, he established a small battery and fixed the wires thereto, so, in the event of the pirates approaching the island, the man who was on the look-out at the vantage-point had simply to touch the button of the battery, when the enormous rocks on the other side of the gorge would crash down in Titanic fragments, closing up the narrow way irretrievably. Still, as before stated, the Demarch, on account of a lurking suspicion of the extinct volcano, was unwilling to avail himself of this aid until the last moment, but in any

event, if that last moment did come, the rocks could be exploded from the vantage-point with the greatest ease. The ropes which had been used to let down Crispin and Gurt were still attached to the trunk of the pine tree, but had been carefully drawn up, lest by chance, if the pirates arrived, they could enter the island by ascending such a convenient ladder, notwithstanding the closing of the pass.

On the early morning of the fourth day after Crispin had departed, Justinian and his nephew, ascending the path at the back of the Acropolis, went down to the vantage-point through the altar glade, according to custom, in order to look for signs of the poet's return. The east was yet rosy with the dawn, and the great expanse of ocean slept below them in serene calm. The long white waves broke gently on the sandy beach, there was not a breath of wind, and when the sun arose suddenly out of the sea, his long yellow rays shot like bridges of gold across the water, while his orb, invisible to the watchers, projected the shadow of the island on the liquid plain in front.

Temistocles had been on the watch for some considerable time, and as the electric light was kept all night constantly sweeping the surface of the sea in search of strange boats, Justinian asked the runner if there had been any indications of approaching danger. Receiving a reply in the negative, he put up his glass in hopes of discovering some signs of the long-expected and much-desired yacht, but not a speck could he behold, in spite of the power of his glasses and the keenness of his eyesight.

"It's four days since he went away," said the Demarch to Maurice, with a sigh, as he put down his glass; "yet he does not seem to be coming back."

"You must allow him more time, uncle," replied Maurice comfortingly; "you know everything may not have gone exactly as we thought. He may have cruised about some time before being picked up by the Cretan steamer, and even if he were fortunate in meeting a boat at once on his arrival at Syra, the yacht may not have been lying there."

"The yacht has had plenty of time to get to Syra, Maurice; but either he has missed the steamer, or else he finds some difficulty in obtaining men from the Eparch of Syra."

"But surely in an urgent case like this the Eparch will send you help at once. You say he is your friend."

"Certainly he says he is, but my belief is that he is jealous of my independent sovereignty, and would not be sorry to see my little government come to an end."

"What a nice old gentleman he must be! But tell me, uncle, what is the difference between a Demarch and an Eparch?"

"One rules over one island, the other over many. As a matter of fact, a Demarch is a kind of mayor, and really it is too small a title for me, seeing I have a whole island to myself. Still, I am quite satisfied with it, as King of Melnos is out of the question, and Prince of Melnos sounds like the hero of a penny novelette."

"And what islands does the Eparch of Syra rule over?"

"Well, really, I quite forget; but the Eparch of Santorin rules over Amorgos, Anapli, Santorin, and Ios."

"Of course all these Epachs—or what is it?—Eparchs—are subject to the government of King George?"

"Certainly."

"Then I don't wonder they envy you this island. I suppose you are the only independent prince in the Ægean?"

"I am now, but in former times there were many. An Italian family ruled as Dukes of Naxos, another line governed Seriphos, but those potentates were somewhere about the fifteenth century. I think the ruler likest to myself was one Capsi, a kind of ancient pirate, of the Alcibiades type, who became ruler of Melos."

"Melnos?"

"No; the island of Melos, without the 'n.' It is a curious coincidence, is it not, the similarity of name and rule?"

"Very; but what became of King Capsi?"

"Oh, the Turks invited him to Stamboul, and then cut off his head for presuming to set himself up as a rival to the Sultan. But such a fate is not likely to happen to me, as I am very good friends with Abdul Hamid."

"I think we had better establish a line of princes, uncle," said Maurice in a joking tone. "You will take the title of Justinian I.; when I succeed to the throne, I will be Justinian II.; and if Helena and myself are fortunate enough to present you with a grandson, he will be Justinian III. So, you see, we have an excellent beginning for a royal family."

"I do not see why it should not be so," replied the Demarch seriously; "look at the Brookes, who became Rajahs of Sarawak, and the Bernadottes, now Kings of Sweden, and then again the Bonaparte family. My dear Maurice, believe me, there are still kingdoms to be gained, if he who seeks has the nerve, judgment, and fortune of a born adventurer."

"Such as yourself."

"Exactly; and you are of the same type. Oh, that I were younger, Maurice, and with you by my side, we would go to South America and carve out a kingdom. You smile, but I tell you it can be done."

"It has been done in Melnos."

"Oh, that is nothing! an intellectual training school only; but I mean a real large kingdom on a continent."

"I may be like you in some things, uncle, but I do not think I have your ambition, as I will be quite content with my island sovereignty of Melnos."

"I daresay you are wise. But, Maurice, what a story all your and my adventures would make—the way you were brought here by Andros—the description of the crater—the attack on the island—why, it would make a capital romance!"

"Which nobody would believe. They would look upon it as an embroidered lie of the 'Alroy' species."

"Ah, the author of that book—Disraeli—what a man!"

"'The wondrous boy wot wrote "Alroy,"'" said Maurice. "Yes, he certainly was clever; a little too fond in his books of Oriental splendor perhaps, but a genius as a statesman."

"If Disraeli had been an Eastern vizier, he would have become a king."

"What a desultory conversation!" said his nephew, laughing; "we began with Eparchs and end with possible sovereigns. Well, as far as I am concerned, this island is big enough for me and the Princess Helena."

"Who is talking of the Princess Helena?" cried a gay voice behind them, and, on turning, they saw the princess herself, with her arms as usual full of flowers, looking at them both with a smile in her eyes.

"I am the culprit, your highness," said Maurice, bowing. "When did you arrive?"

"This very moment; so if you have been saying nice things about me, you may as well repeat them."

"Vanity! vanity!"

"All is vanity! If that is the only thing you have to say to me, I will go."

"I think we had better all go," said Justinian, turning away from the cliff. "I am anxious for breakfast, but you young people, I suppose, are content to live on love."

"Not in this keen morning air, father. But have you seen any sign of the yacht?"

"Not the slightest!"

"What a bad thing! and the pirates?"

"No appearance of those gentlemen either."

"What a good thing! I wonder who will arrive first, Crispin or Caliphronas!"

"I trust the former," answered her father hopefully; "but I dread the latter."

"Oh dear me!" said Helena, with a sigh; "I do wish he would leave us alone. Why cannot he get an island of his own?"

"Ah, that's just it, my child! He does not desire an island so much as you."

"He will never get me," she answered resolutely. "Sooner than become the wife of that traitor, I would throw myself over the cliff."

"You can rest quite content, Helena," said Maurice, with quiet determination; "if Caliphronas overwhelms Melnos with his forces, he shall not obtain the prize he desires. If he captures you, it will be over my dead body."

"Then he'll never capture me, for you can easily conquer such a coward," retorted the girl, with great spirit; "and, after all, I don't believe he'll have the courage to come back."

"Uncle," exclaimed Roylands suddenly, as he saw Justinian stumble, "what is the matter? Do you feel ill?"

"Not exactly ill," replied the Demarch, taking his nephew's arm; "but, to tell you the truth, I awoke this morning feeling very sick and faint."

"Why, papa, so did I!" exclaimed Helena in surprise; "that is why I came down to the cliffs to obtain a breath of fresh air."

"I also had a headache when I awoke," said Maurice, after a pause; "so, as we have all felt the same thing, there must be some malaria in the air."

Justinian gave a cry of alarm, and his face blanched white under its bronze.

"Oh, Maurice! I dread to think what it may be!"

"Why, uncle, what do you mean?"

"The vapors of the volcano!"

Both Helena and her lover grew pale at these ominous words.

"Still," said the latter anxiously, "if they do nothing but give headaches"—

"You forget," replied Justinian in a sombre tone, as they entered the Acropolis; "we are half-way up the crater, but if the vapors are rising from the volcano, think of all my people in the valley."

Without waiting a moment, the three, in a state of great alarm, hurried to the platform in front of the temple, and looked anxiously down to the village. Although it

was now seven o'clock, and the Melnosians were early risers, there was no appearance of life in the valley below, no sound of labor or voices ascended, no smoke curled upward from the chimneys; but in the still morning the cup of the crater lay spread out before them, a scene of exquisite beauty, yet terribly, ominously calm.

"Great God!" cried Justinian, with a strangled sob; "can it be as I feared?"

A man came staggering along the mulberry avenue, waving his arms wildly, and when he came sufficiently near, they saw it was the bos'n Dick, pale and haggard, reeling in his gait like a drunken man.

Maurice ran forward to help him as he advanced, and ultimately had to carry him to the steps of the Acropolis, while Helena, by her father's direction, ran inside for brandy and smelling-salts. With these they revived the almost insensible sailor, who opened his eyes with a shudder, only to find three faces scarcely less haggard than his own bending over him. None of them asked what had happened, for the intense quiet of that valley told its own terrible story, and Justinian knew that in one night he had lost the whole of his subjects through the deadly vapors breathed by the awakening volcano.

"Oh, Mr. Justinian! Mr. Roylands! it is horrible—horrible!" said Dick, sitting up with difficulty. "They are all dead!—not one left alive; and my poor messmates are gone also. Let us leave this cursed place, sir, or we will die also."

Dick had fought bravely all through the campaign, and was a man but little given to emotion, yet so unnerved was he by the fearful catastrophe that had happened, that he buried his face in his hands and almost wept in the intensity of his agony. Maurice and Helena also were paralyzed with dread, for, however daring human beings may be, the most resolute quail before the gigantic powers of nature, and, high-spirited as they all were, their hearts thrilled with fear as they recognized in what a death-trap they were snared.

Only Justinian preserved a certain amount of calmness,—Justinian, who suffered more than the others, for this was the crowning blow, and his whole untiring labor of forty years had been swept away as naught in a single hour.

"It is not a valley," he cried, looking downward in despair; "it is a tomb enclosing many dead. Oh, my poor Melnosians!"

"How did you discover it, Dick?" asked Maurice in an awed tone.

"After you went away this morning, sir. I walked down to the valley, in order to get my messmates to go on with that mining work in the pass; but I felt a bit headachy and queer. However, I did not think about it, and went down the stair. Just as I got down half-way, I felt a poisonous breath of air wafted up from below, which seized me by the throat, and made me fall down insensible by that statue of Apollo. I don't know how long I lay; but it was lucky I was not farther down, or else I would have been stifled; as it was, little breaths of the gases floated up, but the cool air above revived me somewhat, and I managed to crawl up higher. Then I came along, sir; and you helped me here."

"And are they all dead?"

"They must be," said Justinian in a tone of despair. "I see how it is we escaped. You know the Grotto del Cane at Naples, Maurice, where a man can enter freely, but a dog dies? that is because the vapors only rise a certain height. Down below there, when all were sleeping, the gases must have been breathed slowly from the mouth of the

volcano, and stifled every soul. They could not rise higher on account of their weight, so we managed to escape death. Look at that valley!" cried the Demarch, with a passionate gesture; "it is a smiling death-trap. We can see nothing; but half-way up the cup it is filled with deadly poison, which would kill us were we to descend. Oh, my poor people! dead! dead! all dead!"

He hid his face in his hands, overcome with horror at the sight; and Dick, somewhat cured of the poisonous vapors he had inhaled, arose to his feet with an effort.

"We must get away from here, Mr. Maurice. We dare not stay another night, for even if that volcano does not burst out, the gases will rise and rise until the Acropolis will be below their level. We must fly."

"And how can we fly?" asked Justinian abruptly. "We have no boats—those scoundrels of Caliphronas' have destroyed them all. The only thing we can do is to abandon the Acropolis, and go to the sea-shore, in order to wait the arrival of Crispin to save us."

"But if the volcano breaks out, uncle?"

"In that case we must die. The island is so small, that, with this crater in full fury, we would be crushed under the weight of the stones thrown out, or burned to death by the streams of lava. Our only hope is Crispin; and as to this death-trap we must leave it at once. Helena!"

Helena did not answer. She was crouching down with her head on the lap of Zoe, who had joined the group; and the two girls were too terrified to speak, but lay silent with horror, a mere huddled mass of humanity.

"How many of us are left alive?" asked Maurice, raising the girl to her feet.

"About ten, sir," replied Dick, making a rapid calculation. "Those two who are on the sentry-go at the palisade, Alexandros, who is down there attending to the mine, Temistocles, who is on the look-out, the man here who drives the engine, myself, Zoe, Miss Helena, yourself, and Mr. Justinian."

The Demarch flung up his hands with a cry of horror.

"Ten survivors out of nearly two hundred people! Oh, there is a curse on me and mine! It is useless to fight against fate, Maurice. We must fly this very minute, and trust to Providence to be spared until the arrival of the yacht. Hark! what is that?"

There was a low moan, which seemed to come from the lips of the crater, and a moment afterwards the earth trembled slightly. It was the dreaded voice of the earthquake, as they knew only too well; and, with a sudden impulse, all turned to fly. The valley smiled peaceful and serene in the brilliant sunshine, the white peaks glittered like Pentelican marble against the sky, the delicate green of the foliage, the myriad hues of the flowers met their eyes on all sides; yet under this mask of smiling loveliness raged fierce subterranean fires, which were already pressing furiously upward to shatter the whole beautiful scene into Titantic fragments of stone.

"Let us take provisions, water, wine—what we can," said Justinian rapidly, as he led the way into the Acropolis. "There is not a moment to be lost. We must fly without delay."

The unfortunates made as much speed as they could, and collected all the food they could find, assisted by Argyropoulos, who had been called by the Demarch from his engine. Fortunately there were but few valuables to take away, as Justinian had

always lived with great simplicity, and all his money was safe in London. The Demarch hastily gathered up a few of his papers, some money, and a little jewelry which belonged to Helena; while the others loaded themselves only with necessaries, such as provisions, wine, water, and cloaks to protect them should they have to pass the night on the beach. Helena, weeping bitterly, took leave of all her beloved flowers; and never had the court, with its snowy pillars, sporting fountain, and mass of blossoms, looked so beautiful as it did on this fatal morning. Argos, poor bird, was strutting proudly about, quite unaware of his danger; and Helena, touched by a feeling of compassion, impulsively spoke to Maurice.

"Shall we take Argos with us?"

"I am afraid we cannot, my dear girl. See, we are all heavily laden. Where is my uncle?"

"He has gone to take a last look at the valley," said Helena, bursting into tears.

"Poor uncle!"

At that moment Justinian reappeared in the court, with a haggard face, his shoulders bent with the weight of his grief. In a few hours he had aged years, and now this terrible blow had broken him down completely. He had taken one last farewell of the valley he loved so much, of his dead people who were there sleeping in their terrible tomb, of all his schemes for reviving the old Hellas of the past; and now took up his burden, in common with the rest, to abandon the Acropolis forever.

The little band sadly left the beautiful home in which they could no longer hope to dwell, and took their melancholy way up the winding path which led up to the altar glade. Argyropoulos went first, then Dick came, supporting the weeping Zoe, and finally Justinian, with his nephew on one side and his daughter on the other, came slowly walking along, overcome with grief. All his schemes, all his expenditure, all his works were now at an end; and, as far as results went, the last forty years of his busy life had been absolutely wasted.

Just as they reached the altar inscribed Θεόν, which had witnessed of late the birth of young love, Temistocles, in a state of great excitement, came running up the path which led from the cliffs.

"Kyrion! Kyrion! the pirates! pirates!" he cried in Greek.

"Another blow!" said Justinian, with a harsh cry. "Are we not to escape with our lives? How many boats?"

"Eight, Kyrion, crowded with men."

"What misfortune!" muttered the Demarch, letting his chin sink on his breast. "Pirates without—fire within. We are lost!"

"On the contrary, we are saved," cried Maurice, with a sudden inspiration. "Don't give way, uncle. Caliphronas has arrived at a most opportune moment, for we will use their boats in order to escape."

"Impossible!"

"Not at all. I will explain my scheme when we get down to the verge of the cliff. Come, Temistocles, Dick, Argyropoulos. Forward all. We will hoist those scoundrels on their own petard."

"If I can," cried Justinian in a rage, raising his hands to heaven, "I will make a holocaust of them to the infernal gods!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

JUSTINIAN'S REVENGE.

The past is shattered,
The future lost.
Now tempest-battered,
My soul is tossed
From billow to billow on life's wild sea,
With nothing but sorrow and care for me.
The gods have spoken,
My prayers they spurn,
Yet tho' thus broken,
I make return
Of holocausts high on their altars bare,
An offering bitter of my despair.

The saying, "It never rains but it pours," was fully exemplified by the series of calamities which had befallen the once peaceful Isle of Fantasy and its inhabitants. First the treachery of Caliphronas, then the war which had killed so many people, now a threatened eruption of an apparently extinct volcano, and, to crown all, a band of pirates waiting at the only outlet of escape, to massacre the survivors as they fled from the perils within. Evidently the sins of Rudolph Roylands' youth were now bearing fruit, and his ancestral Ate was now exacting her full penalty for those half-forgotten episodes of his early life, by depriving him of all he valued most in the world. One thing after another had been torn from his reluctant grasp, and now it seemed as if his life itself was to crown the measure of repayment. Standing on the lofty cliff, with his nephew, daughter, and dependants beside him, Justinian watched the pirates landing from their boats with cynical despair, feeling that the end of all things had come as far as he was concerned.

Owing to the mental and physical trials of the last few weeks, the Demarch had lost to a great extent his iron nerve, and could no longer conceive, decide, and execute his projects with his former promptitude. The loss of his island had turned him from a vigorous, determined leader into a feeble old man, and although now and then his spirits did flash up with a gleam of brilliancy, it was apparent to every eye that he was no longer fitted either to lead or control matters at this final crisis of affairs. It was then that Maurice showed himself a capable commander, and, leaving his worn-out uncle to the care of the women, instinctively took affairs into his own hands without further loss of time.

Of course he still deferred to Justinian as ostensible head of all things, but it was he who made all suggestions, and the Demarch did little else than agree to all his propositions. First of all, Maurice, getting from Justinian the key of the iron gate, sent Temistocles down the staircase to call up Alexandros and the two Melnosians, in order to concentrate in one spot all the survivors of the island, and decide upon a course of action. When they came up to the vantage-point, Temistocles locked the iron gate again, and restored the key to his master, after which all the men sat down to consider the position of affairs.

It was now noon, and the sun at his zenith was blazing hotly down on the lava rocks of Melnos, which, flinging back the glare, rendered the heat almost intolerable. The pirates, having drawn up their boats on the beach inside the harbor, had retreated to their old camp, the tents of which, untouched by the Melnosians, were still standing. There they evidently intended to remain until it grew cooler, in order to assault the palisade, quite ignorant that the inhabitants of Melnos were all dead, and that the volcano was on the point of bursting out in eruption. Had they known this latter fact, they would speedily have fled away from the ill-omened spot; but Maurice was glad they were thus ignorant, as he wished to use one of their boats, in order that himself and his party might escape from the coming explosion of the mountain.

"Do you think the pirates will assault the palisade this afternoon, uncle?" asked Maurice, anxious for the old warrior's opinion.

"No, I don't think so," replied Justinian, shaking his head. "They have evidently been rowing here all the morning, and are tired out. It is probable they will sleep all the afternoon, and attack us just when it grows dusk. What do you propose to do, Maurice?"

"First, pull down the palisade."

"What! and thus lose our only defence! You are mad!"

"There is some method in my madness, as you will see, uncle. I wish to pull down the barrier, so that when the pirates come up to assault, they will find no difficulty in passing up the gorge. Of course, suspecting nothing, they will make their way right into the interior of the island, while we, who are in their rear, can go down the side staircase, on to the beach, and then push off in a boat before they return."

"It's a good idea, sir," said Dick, scratching his head; "but suppose, when they get inside the palisade, they should come up the stair and find us here."

"They won't do that, Dick, for we will lock the gate; and you can depend upon it, when they find the pass open, they will not waste their time in trying to force this side path. If they can gain the interior of the island by an open way, they certainly won't try to pass in by a blocked one."

"Don't you think they will suspect treachery, Maurice?"

"No, uncle. In the first place, most of these are new arrivals, and, in spite of what their comrades have told them, won't believe we are—or rather were—so strong. And in the second place, they will think we have retreated up to the second palisade, so even if they stop there, we will have time to get to sea."

"What about this, Kyrion?" said Alexandros, pointing to the battery, which stood near; "will we not wait till the enemy are under the rocks, and then bring them down to crush all?"

"By no means, Alexandros; for by so doing we would close up the only avenue of escape left to us. It will not be much gratification crushing the enemy, if we only attain that by letting ourselves be blown up by the volcano."

Alexandros looked rather unhappy at this, as he was proud of his work, and would have liked to show how skilfully his battery worked; but he recognized the force of Roylands' reasoning, so said no more about it. Justinian was also silent, but simply because he had conceived a plan for punishing his enemies; and looking at the battery, the rocks frowning over the pass, and the coils of rope near the pine tree, he glanced suddenly at Alexandros with a significant smile, whereupon the quick-witted Greek saw that the Demarch had some scheme in his head, and that his battery would yet be utilized. Accordingly, when all the men descended to the gorge for the purpose of levelling the palisade, Alexandros lingered behind with Justinian to receive his orders.

"What is it, Kyrion?" he asked in Greek.

"Alexandros," replied the Demarch fiercely, "I am leaving this island forever, for, as you know, all our friends are dead; but I will leave behind me an offering to their manes of all those scoundrels who have given me such trouble. You must carry out my wish."

"I will, Kyrion."

"By those coils of rope up there you can escape down the face of the cliff?"

"Easily, Kyrion; I am a monkey in climbing."

"Good! Well, when the pirates have gone up the pass, and we have gained the boat on the beach, you remain behind, and, when I give the signal, explode the mine. Thus the pass will be closed up, sealing the pirates up in the crater, so if the volcano does burst out, they will be blown to pieces."

"I will do it, Kyrion," said Alexandros, who liked this scheme immensely; "and then I can escape down the cliff."

"Keep it to yourself," said the Demarch in a whisper, as they went out of the iron gate; "Mr. Maurice is too tender-hearted, and might not like it."

How Justinian could reconcile this proposed massacre with the aversion he had felt the previous day in exploding his mine, it is hard to say, but the fact is, with all his troubles, his brain was becoming slightly affected, and he now deemed it a point of honor to sacrifice his enemies to the manes of his dead subjects. After all, as he considered, and very truly, these pirates were but dangerous desperadoes, which the Ægean could very well spare, so the sooner they were cut short in their nefarious careers the better for the islanders of the Cyclades. Besides, Rudolph Roylands had, even in his old age, a wild and lawless spirit, only curbed by his wonderful powers of self-control, and in thus avenging himself on the enemies who had destroyed his cherished schemes, he was indulging in a burst of that Baresark fury which he inherited from his Norse ancestors.

With hard work the eight men managed to make a breach in the earthworks through which the enemy could pass, and all the carefully-built fortifications were levelled to the ground. It was growing dusk when they finished, and already they could hear a stir in the camp of the enemy, so, rapidly completing their work of devastation, they returned to the vantage-point, where they had left the women. Only the Demarch and his nephew lingered behind, the one to lock the iron gate, and the other to carry away the Union Jack, which still floated proudly over the ruined barricade.

"They won't get this, at all events, uncle," said Maurice gleefully, as he hauled down the flag; "I wouldn't have it fall into their hands for a thousand pounds."

"Sooner burn it," retorted the Demarch fiercely; "but hurry up, Maurice, for, judging from the noise they are making, I suspect their forces are being drawn up."

Roylands, with the folds of the flag wrapped round his body, ran through the iron gate with his uncle, and the latter having locked it carefully, they ascended the staircase in order to wait events.

It was just at that hour after sunset, when the day blending with the night produces that luminous twilight so noticeable in the Mediterranean. The little band, concealed from sight on the high cliff, could easily see in the warm glow how rapidly the enemy were gathering their forces together, but, in spite of all endeavors, none of them could see Caliphronas.

"I don't expect he has come back, uncle."

"Oh yes, he has," replied the Demarch grimly; "but, on the plea of his wound, he will remain behind in the camp, and let his army do the work. Once they conquer, he will come out and crow. That is Andros all over; he likes to be the monkey, and use others as cats to pull the chestnuts out of the fire."

"I am very glad he is not leading them," said Maurice thoughtfully, "for he would be keen enough to mistrust appearances, and refrain from entering the pass in case of treachery, in which case we would be kept prisoners up here."

Helena uttered a low cry of fright, and hid her face on Maurice's shoulder, for at this moment the earth began to tremble slightly. The shock, however, was not a severe one, and did no damage, still it made the whole party feel uneasy, and wish they were relieved from their perilous position. The four Melnosians, who had lost all their friends and relatives, looked like statues of despair; still, so selfish is man for himself, that, though all their pleasure in life was gone, they were as uneasy and anxious to be saved as the rest of the party.

Luckily, owing to the ardor with which the enemy were forming their lines, they had not noticed the ominous warning of the earthquake, and were evidently about to make a grand assault on the barrier. At a given signal, they rushed wildly up the hill, shrieking like fiends, but recoiled in dismay as they saw the ruins of the palisade. Evidently suspecting treachery, they consulted together for a moment, then cautiously went forward into the pass. Finding no foe there to confront them, they became more confident, and as Caliphronas, who could have shown them the way, was not present, they took no notice of the iron gate, but marched boldly up the gorge, firing their rifles at intervals, until there was not a single man left either at the palisade or on the beach.

There was not a moment to be lost, so, Justinian leading, with Maurice and Dick following with the women and the Melnosians, they went down to the foot of the stair, unlocked the door, and as rapidly as possible ran down the hill to the beach. Placing Helena, Zoe, and all their bundles in the best boat they could select in their hurry, Dick and Argyropoulos pushed it off into deep water.

"Where is Alexandros?" asked Maurice, noticing the absence of the electrician for the first time.

Justinian, with a grim smile, turned his face towards the cliffs and raised his hand, both to point out Alexandros to Maurice, and to give the signal for the exploding of the mine. Maurice stared aghast for a moment, and would have spoken, but before he

could open his mouth there was a tremendous roar, and the great rocks at the mouth of the pass crashed down with a noise like thunder, blocking up the entrance for ever.

"You have shut the pirates in, uncle!"

"Yes," said the Demarch fiercely; "I have triumphed over my enemies."

"But Alexandros?"

"Is safe. See! he is sliding down the rope."

"And the volcano!"

Even while the words were on his lips, the ground began to shake convulsively, and with a cry, Helena fell back in the boat in a dead faint. Maurice and Justinian were thrown to the ground, and high above, amid the encircling peaks, shot up a mighty column of smoke, streaked with red fire.

"The volcano!" cried Maurice, dragging his uncle to his feet. "Quick! quick! get into the boat. Dick! Alexandros!"

They were both beside him, and assisted to take the Demarch towards the boat, but, to their dismay, found it had been left high and dry by the receding waters, which were curling backward from the land in streaks of livid white. The volcano now began to cast out great stones, and at intervals showers of boiling water, while lurid flames flashed fiercely through the gigantic column of smoke which loomed terrible and vague above the fatal island.

"God! we will be killed!" cried Maurice, as, with the aid of Dick and Alexandros, he began to push the boat slowly towards the sea. "Helena! Helena! lie down at the bottom of the boat."

In order to push the craft to sea, Maurice had been forced to leave his uncle, but the old man was now on his feet running towards him. Suddenly there was a shriek of agony, and through the falling stones, through the blinding dust, through the rain of fire, rushed Caliphronas, making for the boat.

"Save me, save me, Justinian! Maurice, help!"

"Traitor!" cried Justinian, turning fiercely on the Greek; "now you shall reap the reward of your treachery."

A thick, sulphurous smoke was spread around, and in this the two men were struggling, locked in a deathly grip. Temistocles and his three countrymen were already afloat, pulling away as hard as they could; but Maurice gave himself up for lost, as, in spite of all his efforts and those of Dick, the boat was too firmly imbedded in the sand to be moved. Great bombs came shooting up into the sky from the heart of the volcano, and, bursting in the lurid air, huge rocks and showers of stones came crashing down on all sides; and, to add to the horror of the night, Maurice, with a cry of despair, saw the sea rushing violently up to the land.

"Uncle! uncle! the boat! the boat!"

Dick and Alexandros scrambled in, while Maurice ran to help Justinian; but, before he could reach him, he was ingulfed in the waves of the sea, and half blindly saw a huge stone fall from heaven on his uncle and the struggling Greek. The waves foamed around the pair, but, without a cry, Caliphronas had been struck down, a bleeding, smashed-up mass, under the cruel rock; while Justinian, also struck on the chest, could make no effort to save himself. Borne up by the force of the sea, Maurice felt rather than saw the boat rush past him towards the beach, but with an almost superhuman effort he managed to clutch his insensible uncle and keep afloat. The

waters around were seething furiously, great stones kept splashing down on all sides, and above he could but see a sky of intense black smoke, through which played forked flashes of red fire.

The sea, having dashed right up to the cliffs, began to retire, upon which Dick and Alexandros leaped out of the boat to lighten her, and thus try to float her back into deep water. Maurice staggered to his feet, with his uncle in his arms, and strove to reach the boat. Borne outward by the retreating waters, the light craft swept past him, but he also, abandoning himself to the waves, was carried seaward. In another second the boat was in deep water, and Dick, who had never let go the gunwale, leaped in with Alexandros. They looked anxiously through the gloom for Maurice and the Demarch, and as at this moment a flash of scarlet fire lighted up the furious sea, they caught a glimpse of them, and, in spite of the still outward-rushing water, tried to row obliquely towards the pair. For a moment it looked as if they could not be saved, but fortunately, Maurice, though half stunned, still retained his senses, and was able to clutch the oar which Dick held out towards him. By this he was drawn gradually to the boat, which was rocking violently in the disturbed sea.

"Take—uncle!—uncle first!"

Dick, with the assistance of Alexandros, managed to pull the insensible man on board, after which, Maurice, half dead with exhaustion, also scrambled into the boat, and, the sea now being calmer, they rowed rapidly out to sea.

The volcano was now spouting fire furiously, and by the glare they were able to see the entrance of the breakwater. By a miracle, they escaped the falling stones, but, just as they were gliding past the massive masonry, they saw the boat of Temistocles dashed to pieces, and all on board go down in the crimson flood. Much as they wished to save the unfortunate men, they were unable to do so, for every second they expected to be dashed to pieces, so, with the strength of despair, they shot out of the harbor far into the sea beyond. Justinian, Helena, and Zoe were all lying insensible at the bottom of the boat, Maurice was at the helm, and Alexandros, with Dick, was pulling for dear life, so as to get beyond the range of the projectiles shot from the volcano.

Alas, the beautiful Island of Fantasy! it was now nothing but a pillar of fire, and all the dead Melnosians, the living pirates, had been reduced to ashes in that terrible furnace. Already streaks of glowing lava began to move slowly down the sides of the mountain, colossal tongues of fire shot upward to the silent stars, and explosions, like distant cannonading, shook the mountain to its base. The noise was something deafening, but, luckily for the fugitives, they were now beyond the rain of stones, rocks, and bombs, while the sea, though still disturbed, was comparatively quiet.

They were floating on an ocean of blood, for the crimson glare of the spouting fire smote sky and sea alike with its fiery blaze, and away in the distance arose the deserted Melnos, with its peaks crowned with thick vapors, from whence flashed streaks of fire.

The ever-turning wheel of time had come full circle, and the long extinct volcano was once more a burning mountain, vomiting death and destruction on all sides; while far beyond, on the scarlet waters, floated the little boat containing five human beings, all that remained of the inhabitants who had dwelt in the beautiful valley of Melnos.

CHAPTER XL.

DEATH PAYS ALL DEBTS.

The day is ended, the night is near—
  That's how I look at my end.
The night is over, the day breaks clear—
  Such is your creed, my friend.
But, yours or mine, does it matter much
  Which of our faiths is the true one—
Mine, with its failure a future to touch,
  Or yours, so sure of a new one?
We both know nothing of what comes next,
  For that is my firm belief;
'Tis waste to preach on an unproved text,
  And harrow our souls with grief.
My life has not been what you call pure,
  Yet when drops this vexed life's curtain,
I think my future is quite as sure
  As yours with its heaven certain.

Without doubt Crispin's star was in the ascendant when he left Melnos on that perilous voyage to Syra, for in a very short space of time he was picked up by a Cretan steamer, and, on his arrival at his destination, found the yacht lying in the harbor. Owing to her likeness to the unfortunate Eunice which had been wrecked, he had no difficulty in recognizing her among the gay-colored caiques and steamers from all countries which thronged in the bay below the white town of Syra. Hurrying at once on board, he was met by the Rector, Mrs. Dengelton, and Eunice, who were both surprised and delighted to see him so soon after their arrival in the Ægean. A long conversation at once ensued between the four, and Crispin described the perilous position in which he had left Justinian, much to the astonishment of the Rector, who could not understand that pirates still existed. As for Mrs. Dengelton, she asserted that no power on earth would induce her to go to Melnos, where there were so many dangers; but in this selfish determination she was overruled by her daughter and Mr. Carriston.

It having been settled that all on board would remain, Crispin, in company with Gurt, hurried off to see the Eparch, and, on explaining the state of Melnos to him, managed to obtain about fifty men in order to assist the besieged. They were marched on board at once; and late next day the yacht set sail for the Island of Fantasy, with every one in a fearful state of excitement at the prospect of coming adventures.

During the voyage they met with a head wind, but this made but little difference to The Eunice, which, beating the water with her powerful screw, forged steadily ahead in

spite of wind and wave. The Hon. Mrs. Dengelton had long since recovered from sea-sickness, and was now as lively as ever, chatting gayly with Mr. Carriston, while Crispin, now being for the time at leisure, made love to Eunice. Both the lovers were in the seventh heaven of happiness at thus being reunited, and, had it not been for the state of uncertainty he felt about Melnos, Crispin would have been perfectly happy. For a wonder, Mrs. Dengelton had kept her promise, and not persuaded Eunice to marry any one else; for which honorable conduct she deserved no praise, for as yet Crispin was the wealthiest suitor The Parrot had secured for her daughter. The lady, however, made a virtue of necessity, and frequently pointed out to Crispin how straightforwardly she had behaved, for which meritorious conduct the poet was duly thankful.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dengelton, recovering her breath after a long harangue; "when I make a promise I keep it. I said, Find out whom you are, and you shall have my daughter. Well, here is Eunice, and here am I, both waiting for the promised explanation. Now, then, Mr. Crispin, who are you?"

"I don't know yet."

"Do you mean to say you cannot find out?" screamed the lady.

"No, I don't say so, Mrs. Dengelton. As soon as we arrive at Melnos, Justinian will tell me everything I and you desire to know."

"Justinian!" echoed Mrs. Dengelton crossly, determined not to be satisfied. "Oh, dear Mr. Crispin, do not call my brother by that heathenish name!"

"It is an honorable name!" said the Rector good-naturedly. "You know it was Justinian, the Emperor of the East, who built St. Sophia, and was the author of the Pandects. My old friend Rudolph could scarcely have chosen a more suitable name for a lawgiver."

"It is really wonderful to think of Rudolph still being alive," mused Mrs. Dengelton, taking no notice of the Rector's historical explanation. "It will be like meeting a stranger, for I was a child in long clothes when he left England."

"Yes; fifty years does make a difference."

"Fifty years!" shrieked Mrs. Dengelton, seeing he had made a mistake. "Oh, quite impossible, my dear Rector!—why, I am only forty-five, and as I was born when Rudolph left, it really cannot—it cannot"—

She was unable to utter that nauseous statement of fifty years, so the Rector good-humoredly came to her relief.

"Of course not—of course not, my dear lady. Time flies so quickly that we are apt to make mistakes. Your age, of course, is—is—?"

"Forty-five," murmured the lady bashfully. "Ah, I am indeed growing old. But I will be glad to see Rudolph again, and my niece. You say she is beautiful, Mr. Crispin?"

"Lovely!—as lovely as Eunice here."

"Good looks run in our family," said Mrs. Dengelton complacently. "I myself—well, there, I was just like Eunice at her age. Yes, I will be glad to see Helena!"

"And I will be glad to see Melnos!" interposed the Rector. "You can have no idea, my dear Crispin, how interested I was in Maurice's letter concerning this scheme of reconstituting Hellas. It is a noble dream, which may turn out into a reality."

"Always provided there is no trouble from the pirates or the volcano, Mr. Carriston."

"Oh, I trust that the volcano is quiescent; and as for the pirates, I judge, from your description of the defences, that Maurice will be able to keep them at bay until we arrive."

"Certainly as a last resource they can close up the pass," said Crispin thoughtfully; "but that would leave them at the mercy of the volcano."

"They may be all burnt up," observed Mrs. Dengelton in a sepulchral tone; "and instead of Rudolph I may meet a cinder."

"I don't think so, Mrs. Dengelton. Whatever happens, I have full faith in Justinian's powers of extricating himself from any dilemma; besides, Maurice also is ingenious in ideas."

"My dear lad!" said the Rector, with emotion. "I am so anxious to see him. This siege seems to have made a new man of him."

"I don't think you would recognize him, Rector. He is not listless now, but full of life and spirits. Love, open-air life, and responsibility have wrought wonders."

"And when do you think we will be in sight of Melnos?"

"To-morrow morning, I think, but Gurt will know."

Leaving Mrs. Dengelton and Eunice in the cabin, the two gentlemen went on deck to see Gurt, who gave it as his opinion that they certainly would sight Melnos at dawn.

"I hope we will find them alive, Gurt."

"Don't you fear, Mr. Crispin, sir. Why, I'd back Mr. Roylands against the Dook of Wellingtin himself for fightin'."

The Rector was much delighted with Gurt, especially when he saw how the sailor worshipped Maurice; and the tale of the siege of the island, as told by Gurt, with Maurice as the hero, was as brilliant and unreliable as "The Arabian Nights Entertainments." Never being able to hear enough about his dear lad, Mr. Carriston asked Gurt to once more recite his Iliad, which the sailor was nothing loath to do, and the story lasted until all retired to rest.

The next morning at dawn they were in Cretan waters, and the Rector, Crispin, and Gurt were all on the lookout for the island. Just about sunrise they saw its conical shape dimly on the horizon, and Crispin, who had his glasses up, uttered a cry of dismay.

"Why, there's smoke!" he said anxiously. "Can the volcano have broken out?"

"I hope not! I trust not!" cried Carriston, turning pale. "Let me look, Crispin. You surely must be mistaken."

Alas! there was no mistake, for, as they drew nearer, even without the aid of the lengthy tube of the binocle, the crest of the island appeared to be topped by a dark cloud of smoke, and they could hear at intervals the muffled roar of the volcano breathing fire and fury.

"O God! O God! my poor friends!" groaned Crispin, sinking down in deep despair; while the Rector, stunned with the magnitude of the calamity, could say nothing—not even a word of comfort. Both Mrs. Dengelton and Eunice were weeping bitterly at the thought of their terrible loss; but Gurt, in spite of the smoking volcano before his eyes, sturdily refused to believe that Justinian and his company were dead.

"Don't 'ee believe it, Mr. Crispin! Mr. Maurice knows a thing or two. If any one's frizzled, I guess it'll be them pirates; but Mr. Justinian and Miss Helena!—Lor', sir, Mr. Maurice 'ull see to 'em!"

At this moment the man on the lookout cried out that there was a boat in sight to the eastward, on which cheering intelligence the hearts of all revived, in the hope that it would prove to be their friends escaped from the fatal island. The yacht's head was turned towards the speck in the distance, and she steamed ahead at full speed, so as to

put an end to all suspense, while every one crowded to the taffrail, in order to catch the first glimpse of the occupants.

"Glory! glory!" yelled Gurt, dancing about in a state of great excitement. "There's Mr. Maurice, sir! and Dick! What did I tell 'ee, Mr. Crispin! Glory! glory!"

"I don't see Justinian," said Crispin anxiously; "but see, there are two women. Those will be Helena and Zoe!"

"Sum'at lyin' in the boat," cried Gurt, who had climbed up the weather rigging; "maybe it's Mr. Justinian. Get her ahead, sir, an' we'll soon have 'em on board."

The Eunice slowed down her engines when she approached the caique, and the anxious faces bending over the side saw that it contained Maurice, Dick, Helena, and Zoe, all frightfully haggard-looking objects, and that at the bottom of the boat lay the form of a man covered with the folds of the Union Jack. The two young men, who seemed quite worn out with fatigue, brought the caique alongside the yacht, and, having passed up the women and the insensible Justinian, climbed on board themselves. Then ensued a scene of heartfelt welcome and congratulations, in which Maurice especially was nearly overwhelmed by the embraces of Crispin and the Rector.

"Is Justinian dead?" asked Crispin, when the first excitement had somewhat subsided.

"No; but I am afraid he is dying!"

"My poor lad!" said the Rector pityingly; "you are quite worn out. Crispin, are you still going on to Melnos?"

"What is the use, sir?" said Dick bitterly; "it's nothing but a heap o' cinders."

"Any one still left on the island?"

"Crispin," said Maurice solemnly, "with the exception of those you see, every soul on the island is dead. I will tell you all soon, but meanwhile I must have something to eat, a bath, and a sleep."

The women had already carried off Helena and Zoe, to attend to them in their cabin, Justinian was taken down and put to bed, and the yacht's head was turned back to Syra without delay, in order to obtain a doctor for the dying Demarch.

"Where is Alexandros, Dick?" asked Gurt, as he attended to the wants of the boatswain.

"Fell overboard!" replied Dick sadly; "he got away with us from that cursed island, but, being weak with all his work, tumbled into the water. We tried to save him, but he was so weak that before we could reach him he went down."

"And that 'ere Count?"

"Oh, a stone from the volcano smashed him up."

"Served him jolly well right!" said Gurt cruelly. "My eye, Dick, 'ow glad I am t' see ye, and Zoe too!"

"If it hadn't been for Mr. Roylands, we'd all have been lost, Gurt!"

"Didn't I say so!" cried Gurt, bringing his fist down on the table with a mighty thump. "Wot a man he is! Lord Nelsing and the Dook of Wellingtin were nothin' to him —nothin'!"

In spite of the speed of the yacht, she was unable to reach Syra in time to save the life of the Demarch, for the stone from the volcano had so crushed in his chest, that internal hemorrhage had taken place, and there was no hope of saving his life. He

revived, however, shortly after being taken on board, and was conscious to the last, not without some gleams of his former grim humor at the cause of his death.

"That ungrateful Melnos!" he said feebly, as he lay back in his berth, clasping his daughter's hand; "I gave it bread, and it returns me a stone—a stone to crush me to death. Well, at all events it killed Andros, and of that I am glad."

"Hush, hush, my dear friend!" said the Rector gently; "you must not talk like that. Forgive your enemies."

"What! forgive that monster of ingratitude, who brought so many troubles on me, and ruined my schemes."

"Yes," said Carriston firmly; "the greater the sinner, the more need has he of forgiveness. If you forgive not your enemies their sins, how can you expect God to forgive you?"

"What about yourself, Rector?"

"I have no enemies," replied Carriston, with great dignity; "but even if I had, I would forgive them freely."

"Very well," said the Demarch, with a cynical smile, which but ill became his pallid face; "I will put you to the test. Call in every one."

Considerably puzzled at this remark, the Rector did as he was bidden, and in a short space of time, Maurice, Crispin, Mrs. Dengelton, and Eunice were gathered round the bed of the dying man. Helena still sat near him, holding his hot hand; and the Demarch, thus having got his audience together, began to make his last confession.

"You say, Hector, you have no enemies."

"No, not that I know of!"

"Think a little, Mr. Carriston. What about thirty years back?"

"Thirty years back!" repeated Carriston, growing pale.

"And Captain Malcolm, who ran off with your wife and child!"

"How do you know that?" asked the Rector, with a reproachful glance at Roylands. "Has Maurice"—

"I have said nothing, sir," cried Maurice, flushing deeply; "how can you suspect me of such a thing?"

"I beg your pardon, my dear lad," replied the Rector penitently; "I was wrong to do so. Still, how does Mr. Justinian know"—

"For the very simple reason that he was Captain Malcolm," said the Demarch faintly.

"You!" cried Carriston, recoiling with a shudder,—"you! Are you the man who wrecked my life, and stole my dear ones from me?"

"I am that man!" said Justinian, looking at him with weak defiance. "Come now, where is your forgiveness?"

The Rector was deeply moved, and sat on the edge of the berth, with his hands clasped, and great drops of perspiration rolling down his pale face. A terrible struggle was going on in his mind, for it appeared to him almost impossible to forgive this man, who had wronged him so bitterly. Justinian, observer of human nature to the last, looked at him with a faint sneer on his dying lips.

"I thought you would not practise what you preached."

"You are wrong! you are wrong!" cried the Rector, springing to his feet. "God forgive me! I should not have hesitated a moment. I do forgive you! I forgive you freely."

Justinian was so moved to sudden emotion at this noble behavior on the part of the man he had wronged, that for the moment he was deprived of speech.

"I see there are some good men still on earth," he said at length in a faltering voice. "Mr. Carriston, I thank you for your noble conduct, which has taken me quite by surprise. I acknowledge I have wronged you deeply, and cannot palliate my conduct, but I can and will make reparation."

"My wife?" groaned the Rector bitterly.

"Is dead; but your son is by your side."

The Rector turned suddenly round and found himself face to face with Crispin, whose countenance was as pallid as his own. They gazed for a moment at one another, suffocated with emotion, then, casting all restraint to the winds, fell into one another's arms.

"You will find all the necessary papers to convince you of this truth with my lawyers in London," said the Demarch, with evident pleasure at this meeting of long parted father and son.

"I am convinced now," replied Carriston, as he stood with his hand on Crispin's shoulder. "Yes! this is indeed my son."

"Still, you had better see the papers," said Justinian faintly. "There is a letter for you from your wife, which will tell you all you wish to know. Rector, I have been a great sinner, I know, still I don't think there are many actions I regret so much as robbing you of your wife. However, I have done my best to make amends, and you have forgiven me. But Crispin?"

"I also forgive you freely," said Crispin, clasping the hand of the dying man; "for by this confession you have not only given me a father, but a wife."

"Yes, take her!" sobbed Mrs. Dengelton, pushing her daughter towards the poet. "I always liked you, Crispin,—or shall I say Mr. Carriston?"

"I think it must be Crispin Carriston," said the Rector, drawing Eunice towards him, "for I love the name of Crispin too well to part with it."

"My dear father!"

"Maurice!" said Justinian, who was getting weaker.

"Yes, uncle?"

"You will find my will at my lawyer's; it leaves all the money to you and Helena, who is to be your wife."

"My dear wife!" repeated Maurice, kissing the weeping girl. "As to your money, uncle, I do not require it."

"You must take it, my son. Helena is my heiress, and alas! now Melnos has vanished in smoke and fire, there is no use for it there. You will return to England, Maurice, and, with all this wealth, do what good you can in the world. Crispin is already rich, so it would be useless to leave him anything."

"I have Eunice, and that is enough for me."

"Well, now all is arranged, we must drop the curtain on this comedy of life," said Justinian, with a flash of his old cynicism. "After all, I have played my part to the best of my ability on this life's stage, but Fate has been too strong for me."

"It is the will of God," observed the Rector solemnly.

Justinian said nothing, as he did not wish to offend the firm faith of the old clergyman, but he could not, for the life of him, think that it was the will of God that

forty years of hard work to raise up a new civilization should be blotted out for no reason whatsoever.

"Life's a problem!" he said, with a faint sigh; "we do our best, and remain poor, we do our worst, and become rich. However, it is all over now, and of all my schemes nothing remains. Dust, ashes, smoke, fire, have they all come to, and I, after seventy-five years of life, die foiled and beaten by Fate."

"Oh, father, do not talk so! You will not die! you will live!"

"I am afraid not, my child!" replied the dying man faintly; "the parting gift of Melnos has crushed the life out of me. Oh, my island, my beautiful island! that bloomed like a rose on the waters! how your glory has departed! The forge of Hephaistos hath supplanted the garden of Cytherea."

"Will I not pray for you?" asked the Rector gently.

"To whom? God? Well, a good man's prayers can do no harm, and, if there is truth in your belief, may do some good. But we are all in the dark, you with your Christianity, I with my paganism. The comedy is ended, drop the curtain."

"Oh, father, father! do not talk so!" sobbed Helena, burying her face in her hands.

"Hush, my child! I am not afraid. Rector, you can pray for me, but, now all is told and done, leave me with my child. Good-by, my sister; I never knew you, so we are almost strangers—good-by. Kiss me, Eunice, and be a good wife to Crispin, who loves you so dearly. Crispin, I have wronged you, but made reparation. Dick! Gurt! you have been true men, and Maurice will look after your future. Maurice, my dear son, good-by. Be a kind husband to my child, and comfort her in her sorrow. Bury me at sea, for I will have no meaner grave than the mighty ocean. Good-by, one and all—good-by!"

They took leave of him in silence, one by one, and then left the cabin quietly, leaving him alone with Helena and the Rector, who was already on his knees reciting the service for the dying. On deck, the sun was setting in splendor, leaving trails of glory in the heavens, and sadly they remained there, waiting for the end. In about half an hour, the Rector, pale and sad, appeared on the deck.

"It is all over!"

The next day, the yacht arrived at Syra, with her ensign half-mast, as a token of the dead on board. Here the men whom Crispin had recruited for the defence of Melnos were paid off and dismissed. No one on board cared to remain longer in the Archipelago, now so fraught with sad associations, so, after a few hours' stay, The Eunice steamed out of the harbor on her way to old England once more.

Off the island of Cerigo, to the extreme south of the Peloponnesus, Justinian's body was committed to the deep, wrapped in no meaner shroud than that ragged Union Jack, shot nearly into tatters, which had floated so proudly over the well-defended stockade. The Rector, in a voice broken by emotion, read the burial service over the body of the dead Demarch, who, whatever his faults might have been, was a great man. The engines were slowed down, the body, wrapped in its glorious pall, shot with a sullen splash into the sea, and then the yacht, with set sails and beating screw, plunged on, through the purple seas, towards England.

Helena was almost broken-hearted with her loss, and shut herself up in her cabin to lament in solitude. This, however, Maurice would not allow, as he was afraid of her becoming ill, and one evening, when all were at dinner, he persuaded her to come up on deck, where the glory of the sunset was burning with splendor in the far west.

"My dearest," he said tenderly, taking her in his arms, as they stood facing the keen sea breeze, "you must not break your heart like this. Your father would never have survived the loss of Melnos, so he had his wish, and died when all his hopes of a new Hellas were at an end. I must be your comforter now, Helena, and when you are my dear wife, I trust to make you so happy, that you will be able to look back with calmness on this loss, which you now think—and justly—so bitter. Hush, hush, my dear love! We will face the future together, and live down our past sorrows."

Helena, drying her eyes, put her cold little hand into his, and looked trustfully up into his face, but was too overcome by her feelings to trust herself to speech.

The sun, dying in the west, was flooding the heavens with gold, and just above the intolerable brilliance on the horizon appeared a fantastically shaped cloud, like an isle all broken into bays, capes, peaks, and plains. In the glowing splendor it looked so frail and ethereal, that, even as they gazed, it melted away before their eyes like a fairy vision.

"The Island of Fantasy!" murmured Helena.

"My love! The real Island of Fantasy has vanished; the cloud Island of Fantasy has disappeared; but in our hearts, my Helena, there is a land of fairy loveliness, which will endure forever, and some day, my child, when we leave this world, we will find our beautiful island once again, more glorious than of yore, with your father to welcome us there."

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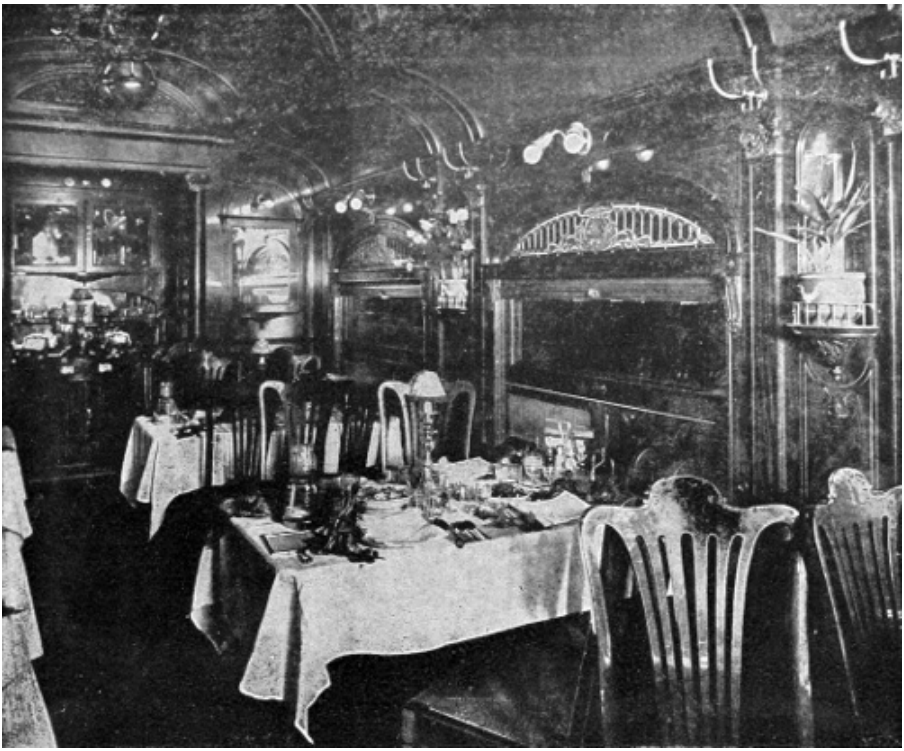

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Transcriber's Note

Compound words which appear on page or line breaks either retain or forgo the hyphen depending on usage elsewhere in the text. Inconsistencies of hyphenation in words appearing midline are retained, unless there is a clear preponderance of one or the other.

Errors deemed most likely to be the printer's have been corrected, and are noted here. The references are to the page and line in the original.

15.23	such arid chips of wi[ds/sd]om	Transposed.
16.4	which renders your life so bitter[./?]	Replaced.
30.26	said Mrs. Den[e]gelton	Removed.
46.35	I learned [Greek/English] from a roving Englishman	Confused.
104.8	—misnamed a palace[./,]—	Replaced.
129.30	[“]I must think it over.	Added.
130.34	[“]I talk very confidently, but I am doubtful.	Removed.
136.46	To bitterness.[’]	Removed.
137.40	any national songs of your country.[”]	Added.
162.2	such as ‘a hungry beast,’ ‘a ravenous monster,[’]	Added.
191.35	with the most appalling cynicism.[”]	Added.
211.34	I should like nothing better[?/.]	Replaced.
237.40	with this accomplished cut-throat.[”]	Removed.
238.37	with Crispin a[u/n]d Maurice on either side of him.	Inverted.
251.25	his chair a little nearer.[”]	Removed.
251.35	Decide[d]ly these two young people	Inserted.
254.2	his offer to make her an[ ]odalisque of the harem.	Inserted.
279.8	in these post-revolu[n]tionary days	Removed.
282.28	[“]who are you?”	Inserted.
286.16	well versed in Dick’s ta[c]tics	Inserted.
287.8	there were flat-racing[,] hurdle-racing	Inserted.
289.1	[“]she thought it was Gurt, sir!”	Added.
304.16	to her favorite haunt[-/.]	Replaced.
317.1	[“]As to Justinian’s breaking faith	Removed.

325.1	now you can understand how [de]delighted I am	Redundant.
327.28	now being able to talk f[r]eely of himself	Inserted.
373.32	However, it was to[to] all appearances	Redundant.
403.6	[“]it is too dangerous.	Added.
417.24	like cats on hot bricks shortly![”]	Added.
420.4	who were so calm[l]y seated over the mine	Inserted.
429.6	“Not the sligh[t]est!”	Inserted.
431.2	their hearts thrilled with[,] fear	Removed.
452.33	he said tenderly, taking[,] her in his arms	Removed.

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