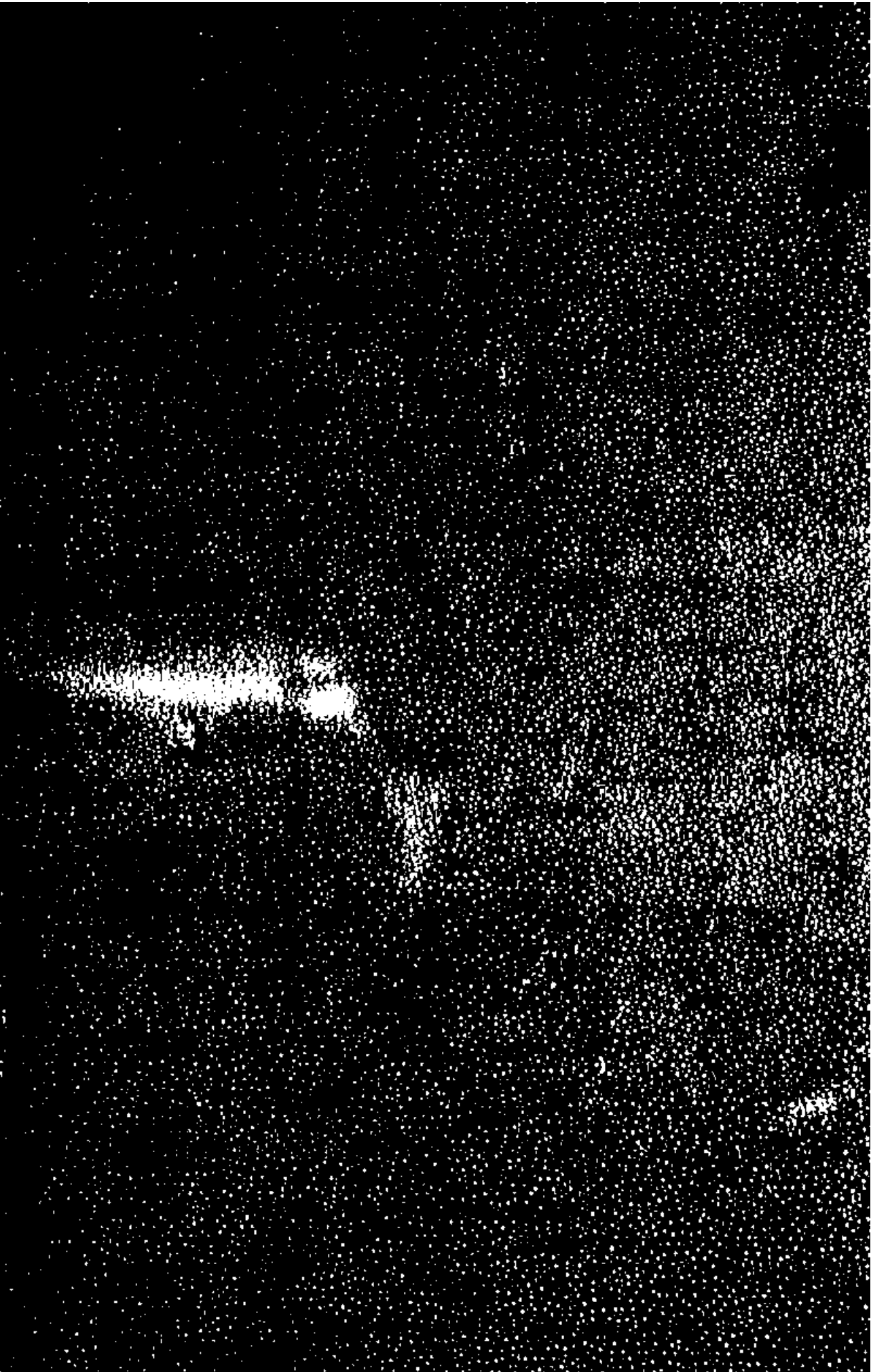

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HEDGED WITH DIVINITIES

By EDWARD TREGEAR

HEDGED WITH DIVINITIES

BY

EDWARD TREGEAR

"A short time ago I received an angry letter from a correspondent in Iowa, full of curious bluster about 'doing without the men altogether.' Apparently this lady really imagined that the human race could be recruited from the gooseberry bushes."

GRANT ALLEN, in the *Fortnightly Review*,
1st Oct., 1889, p. 453 (note.)

Wellington, New Zealand

R. COUPLAND HARDING, BALLANCE STREET

1895

PREFACE.

I feel that some apology is needed for daring to add a single atom to that great sea of fictional literature which is coming in upon us like a flood. Sometimes its waves cast at our feet a string of pearls like *Romola*, sometimes the dissected carcase of a dead dog, like *Nana*. My little book is a mere foam-bubble blown along the beach. Over sand and ripple let it drift.

THE AUTHOR.

Prologue.

Out under the dark shadow of the palm trees rolled from the darker temple the wave of worshipping voices. These sang the praises of the Creator, Tanè, adoring him in his triune aspect as Light, Sound, and Steadfastness. For on the lonely and lovely Polynesian island men and women recognized their one deity under three forms: as Light he had conquered the unbearable darkness of the Void, as Sound he had broken down the awful silence of the Abyss, as Steadfastness he had wrought stability from the loose floating atoms of Chaos. A Chaos which they, the semi-savages, could picture in their intelligence as well as we; for indeed from such as they did our first vision of Chaos come — long before Science was born to repeat and confirm the story.

Within, the eyes of the priests were turned in awe on the face of their chief. Young and beautiful was the countenance of Maru, the high-priest of Tanè; his lips moved in the chanted hymns, his hands wove around the body of the god the sacred garments, but his face was rapt as that of one in an ecstasy of prayer. As he moved he asked of the Lord of Light that he might be given a token of grace — that he might with the eye of mortal man look upon the Ineffable Splendour and yet live. Even while he sought was the prayer granted; the form of the high-priest stiffened and fell into the arms of his watching comrades.

"The god in-dwelleth!" they cried. "Place him before the altar." And they laid the senseless clay awhile to rest.

Up from the altar, borne on the sound-waves of the holy songs, rose the spirit of Maru, until it floated to the ninth heaven, wherein dwelleth the Lord of Light. As the body of the high-priest lay before the altar so lay his soul at the divine footstool. Blinded was he, but strength was given him to bear the intense radiance, and he saw.

Who shall speak in words of earth concerning that vision? Around the throne were grouped the lesser gods, and yet not they but only One, for all seemed but emanations or reflections of the Glory not to be endured. Ever swelling and falling pulsed the song of praise in many tongues, adoring Him as Ra and Baal, Zeus and Phœbus, Odin and Balder, Brahma, Indra, and Ormuzd.

Then arose one of the lesser gods and said: "The wailings of men and the louder wailings of women rise for ever from the earth, and make discords in the celestial song. Wilt Thou longer endure? See how slowly men rise in the path of progress: ever the lower is breeding and growing, ever the coarser nature endures, ever the finer and higher is trampled into dust, ever the viler form of the fittest survives. Wilt Thou not arise and make anew?"

Then the gods bowed and covered their faces, for the voice which was at once Light and Sound vibrated its waves of flame and thunder around them and said,

"YRA, I WILL ARISE, AND * * * * * * * * *"

Then they of the gods who loved mankind moaned in despair for that which was to fall upon the goodly and pleasant children of men.

The priest awoke. There was darkness about and around him. But in the darkness a voice spake:

*"Maru! Set thy face toward the land wherein the crowned and giant images of ancient kings look out across the sea; southward and eastward doth that island lie. There shall a priest of thine own race and faith give into thy hands a tablet graven with many signs. The signs shall be strange to thee, for no man now can read them. But, bearing the tablet, thou shalt returning go towards the west; week after week shall the prow of thy vessel look toward the sleeping-place of the Sun. There, in a land, whose people have named it 'the White World' shalt thou dwell and make thy home, alone, in a place of peace. The signs of the tablet shall become clear to thee as the years go on, and as the white weeds of Tura grow upon thy head. Thither will one day come a youth bearing the sign of * * *, and then shalt thou depart from earth, for the New Day of Tanè is at hand. Fear thou not, the brave abide for ever. Farewell!"*

HEDGED WITH DIVINITIES.

I.

"Isn't this glorious, Jack?" said the pretty lips.

And it was glorious: that there was no denying. What more would you have than a bright blue sky above, a fresh breeze aft, your fingers on the steering-paddle feeling in thrills the life in your little craft as she darts through the brine, and — the daintiest of sweethearts holding the sheet bent round the cleet?

A tiny craft indeed, flat-bottomed as are most of the boats on the tidal rivers of North New Zealand; a boat sharp at each end, and with both bow and stern "tip-tilted" from the water. Now she was well over on her side under the pressure of the big sprit-sail; with little wavelets foaming and rippling from the bow, and the water trying to lap in over the lee gunwale. A full sail, wind, tide, and freshet racing you along — together with Youth and Love! Ah — unhappy indeed are they who have no memories of some such scene wherewith to brighten the after-hours of the darkness and rain.

As over mile after mile of water they floated on, slowly the speed began to slacken as the wind fell light.

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The lady bent over the side of the boat, and allowed her fingers to trail through the water.

"I wonder, Nellie," said Jack, "why girls always do that?"

"Girls?" answered Nellie, "Everybody does it."

"Oh no, not everybody," said her lover. "Women always do it, and men don't. I never was in a boat with a girl but she dragged her hand along and made the water ripple through her fingers. I suppose," added he, laughing, "that if some musty old Don was here he would tell us that it was an instinct in your sex inherited from prehistoric days, when the habit was of use for the preservation of the species. But anyway, don't do it now, Nelly. Look," said he, raising his paddle from the water, and pointing to a triangular fin moving slowly along out in the calm bright water of one of the river-bays. "There might be one of those gentry travelling with us under the boat, and I want those little white fingers to pet me with; don't offer them as bait. The sun is getting hot, Nelly, and the tide not half made yet, so that we can't get to work for some time. Let us go up one of those creeks, and lie in the shade for an hour."

Nelly acquiesced, and the boat's course was altered till they glided into the mouth of one of the winding channels near the shore. Jack struck the sail, and pushed the boat along until they came to the refreshing shade of a large mangrove tree throwing its gnarled boughs above the water which lapped around its trunk. Here Jack drove the curved bow of his craft up among the countless spikes of the young mangrove shoots which peeped above the surface around their elder sister, and then, arranging the sail as a nestling place for his fiancee, he lay down in peaceful enjoyment of the pleasant place and season.

A bonny pair were they upon whose forms the summer leaves threw their dappled shadows. Nelly was a maiden of about eighteen years of age, with a figure in which the willowy slenderness of the girl was blending with the soft entrancing curves of developed womanhood. Masses of waved brown hair were coiled upon her well-poised head and broke into soft fluffy rings over the collar of her dress. Her face was delicately fair with the wholesome fairness of maidens of the Anglo-Celtic race; the clear eyes, calmer than blue and warmer than grey, were candid and honest, while the tender mouth was curved with smiles of pleasure and innocent happiness. Dressed in a light frock suitable for summer hours, she was fit to pose as an ideal specimen of that youthful womanhood whose presence brightens thousands of homes in the colonies of Britain.

Nor was her lover outwardly unworthy of his mate. Tall and athletic, he had the grace which comes of great strength so trained and disciplined that the muscles obey the will without effort or exertion. The fault, if any, was that the figure was too lithe and sinewy to please those accustomed to see beauty in softer and more flowing outlines. The deeply-bronzed face was fairly handsome, but the features were not so attractive as the bright fearless expression which at once caught the attention. Dauntless energy and vitality were the predominant characters of that expression, and, though softened by the circumstances of the situation, it was evident that the young man had unmistakably "a will of his own."

"Jack," said Nelly, "you would not have let me sit on the other side of the boat that day at the picnic."

Ah! that day of the picnic. That was the day, only a week ago, that had sealed Jack's fate. He had

borne much that day, the usual country-picnic baby, the wet feet getting ashore, the mustard-pot in the peach-pie, the spider in the salad; but when he saw the awkward son of a neighboring squatter trying to rompingly kiss the girl whom he (Jack) adored in silence, then Jack broke over the bounds, and, after a few words, grew sulky and only to be appeased by soft feminine devices. Then was he led away by Nelly along winding forest paths, under the tree-ferns, and past waterfalls, then was he coaxed with many subtle wiles into being "a good boy" again, but the good boy melted too far, and, in a tumult of agitation and affection, poured forth the story of his love and hopes — and not into unwilling ears nor to unresponsive lips. Once more the old story; the original-plagiarism; the springing of the eternal rose-buds on the world's battered old bush.

They had been acquainted but a short time before the eventful picnic had brought their love affair to a culmination in the first week in summer. Nelly Farrell was the daughter of a well-to-do farmer dead some years before, who had left behind him some landed property and a respectable income to his wife and only child. Nelly had grown up as her mother's companion, and since her school-days had enjoyed few of the pleasures of society and little intercourse with young people. Among her neighbors some of the sons of the runholders and farmers were fine young fellows, well grown and able to keep the saddle from dawn till sunset; others belonged to the "electro-plated aristocracy" who speak of the working men as if they were dogs, and carefully avoid the mention of having had a grandfather. Good or bad, however, Nelly saw little of them, and, save at an occasional picnic in the summer,

she had few opportunities of comparing their attractions or judging their acquirements. Jack had seemed to drop down upon her from the skies. He had come to that part of the country apparently only for the purpose of spending his time or of obtaining a knowledge of the language and customs of the Maoris, amongst whom most of his days were spent. But at the first glimpse of Nelly his enquiries into the ways and manners of her dusky compatriots ceased, and he spent his hours making occasions for visiting at her mother's house, or meeting her, quite by chance, in her daily walk. Fervid and passionate in his wooing, how could the simple country lassie endure these meetings without learning to await anxiously their next occasion? Meetings with one whose coming wrought shy silence, but whose earnest words were thought of afterwards with flushes of soft sweet tears. Now, all this was over, the confession at the picnic had dissolved the barrier of timid reserve, and these two were learning to know each other, turning gently together, leaf by leaf, the book of personal knowledge which is so fair when on the pages of either side there is no deep and lasting stain.

"No, Nelly, I would not have stopped on this side at the picnic, but then, on the other hand, you would not have asked me why I didn't come. That's the beauty of it; this side or that side I know that you love me and belong to me, and I am not afraid to let go of you for a moment for fear you might slip away to someone else."

Jack bent down over the little hand that she stretched out towards him and softly kissed the fingers one by one. Nelly lifted his cap and patted with her disengaged hand the close-curled head bending towards her, and as she did so, her eyes rested upon a curious scar which Jack bore upon his forehead. This consisted

of two deep lines crossing at right angles, and showed up grimly on the fair white skin.

"Is that your christening mark, Jack? she said laughingly. "I'm afraid you must have been christened in boiling water, or else the priest's finger was red hot."

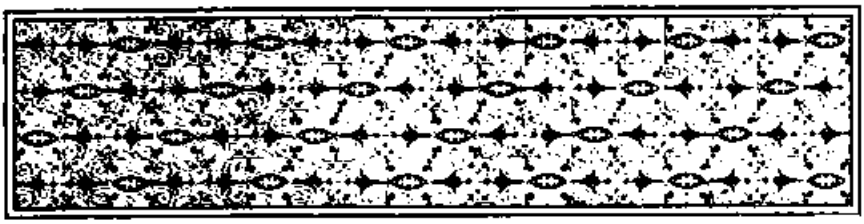
Jack looked abashed and smiled uneasily, saying, "Oh it does not matter, it is nothing." The girl replied "You know, Jack, I asked you once before about that scar, and you promised to tell me some day. Tell me now."

"Oh it's such a long story," said Jack, "You wouldn't understand unless I began at the beginning and explained why I went to the place where I got it, and such a yarn would be as long as an old-fashioned sermon."

"What matter?" answered his sweetheart, "Here we have an hour or two to stay waiting for the tide, and you might just as well spend it in this way as in talking nonsense—not but what I love the nonsense too; but I mean to hear the story from you some day, so why not now? And you know," she added pleadingly, "you have told me so little about yourself and your wanderings in the world; I want to hear all your adventures and tales of foreign countries. Think how quiet a life I have lived here; these fields and the river are the only places I have seen, and the few settlers the only people I have known. Do tell me Jack. Now's the day, and now's the hour."

"Yes," said Jack, "See approach proud Nelly's power, chains and slavery! I will tell you, my pet, if it will please you, but promise me that when I bore you too much you will stop me; remember you bring it upon yourself."

"Very well," said Nelly, "go along."



II.

"It fell on this wise. You have heard me say that by profession I am a civil engineer. When I came out of my articles I thought that I did not know nearly enough about mechanical engineering to be a good all-round man, so for three years I went into a workshop and learnt all I could, which was considerable, because I loved the work. Then I took a billet on a steamer as engineer, so as to see the world a little, and, at this business, I made a couple of trips to Canada, one to the West Indies, and one to Japan. When I was coming home from Japan as third engineer, we had as our second a queer old fellow to whom I took a great fancy, and he also conceived a strong liking for me."

"He *must* have been a queer sort of fellow," murmured Nelly.

"Yes, he was," said Jack, "but you mustn't interrupt.—He had lived in the East almost all his life, and was strongly tinctured with the Oriental mysticism and love of out-of-the-way knowledge. He wasn't exactly a spiritualist, but he believed in all kinds of bogey influences, and there was something in him far above the mere credulous devourer of idle tales.

He knew much of the philosophy current in those ancient lands, and hour after hour he would descant on the mysteries lying behind the phenomena of our common lives, till he infected me and made me almost as wild an enthusiast as himself. I became eaten up with the desire for knowledge hidden from the majority of my countrymen, and I was always at him to allow me to get a peep behind the veils, and become an initiate of some of those strange secret societies which he assured me carried on their remarkable work in places little visited by man. I went so far at last as to tell him that I had determined to renounce my profession (I have a small independent income) and pursue the search alone, if he would only give me the addresses of men in Asia who could help me to the knowledge I was pining for. At last, just before we separated, he yielded, and gave me the name of an old Brahmin whose dwelling was not far from the caves of Elephanta. To this old priest he gave me a letter of introduction written in some character that I could not read. I made a brief stay in England to get together a proper outfit, and then sailed for Bombay, presented my credentials to the priest, and told him that I was ready to become his pupil on any terms and for any length of service, and that I was ready to submit to any training however hard or long that would end in securing my novitiate. Unhappily, however, I had come too late. The old man was too infirm, he was indeed then sick unto death. He heard me patiently and with sympathy, commending my resolve as being the only desire worthy of an immortal being, but he gave me no hope that he would be able to instruct me in the path."

"How did you manage to understand him?" said Nelly.

"Oh," replied Jack, "he talked beautiful English, far more grammatical and elegant than mine; for you may have noticed, dear, that I talk slang sometimes."

"Yes Jack, sometimes," said Nelly, archly.

"Everything he told me made me wish more and more to get at this knowledge which he averred held the mastery over all secrets of nature, and even over those things which we consider supernatural. He spoke of 'the last word of the Master,' which is alluded to in so many ancient legends of people now scattered to the ends of the earth. I said to him 'What is the effect of the Master-word? Does it only give control over the minds and actions of men?'

"'I myself,' he answered, 'who am of the Outer Circle, have never spoken nor heard the Master-word, that is for the few, or perhaps the One, that in all ages kept the sacred secret of its power. They who, like me, share a part of the lesser knowledge have power over the minds and actions of men, but they who stand near the Light exert the real power of which ours is but a ghost, a thin spiritual phantom.'

"I told him that I could not understand, and asked him to put it into words, so that I, a little child in understanding, might get a fuller idea of the position.

"'It is thus,' said the Brahmin, 'we, of the Outer Circle, have a power drawn from the Heaven of Illusion. You know that in the upward lives of the soul it rests each time after its bodily death in the Heaven of Illusion (Devachan). This is the heaven in which each receives what, in this world, has been to him the desire celestial; to the hunter, his hunting grounds crowded with game; to the worshipper of beauty, new and

endless shapes of loveliness; to those who care for domestic pleasures, continuous dwelling in the presence of those loved on earth. But all these things are spirit-reflections; to each soul they seem real, and so to each is the heaven they have desired, but nought has substance. All gradually fades away till, after perhaps centuries, the rested spirit incarnates once more and returns to the earthly pilgrimage. It is from this heaven we draw illusion, and bewitch the eyes of men with powers that seem real but are mere tricks of the senses overshadowed by another's will; influences cast by us upon the perceptions of human beings. Thus grows the mango tree from the flag-stones of the market place; the balls are thrown aloft and do not fall again, the figure climbs the endless rope to disappear into the sky. This is the witchcraft of the East, spoken of as juggling, but to be explained by no juggler, and with its secret virgin to the uninitiate. But the Master-word is not with us. For him possessing that precious secret the veil of illusion is rent away, and he holds power over the actual realities of the world. His touch rends the solid rock at will, not in appearance but in fact; for him the vivid lightning burns and scathes; and, better still, for him the earth breaks into fruit and flower. Before him pestilence melts like a mist, and health blows across the land like a pure wind; before the glance of his calm eyes the sin and sorrow of men take wings and fly away. But for the presence of such in the human world it would have long ago have grown corrupt and decayed; these are the world's heart beating out healthy blood through innumerable arteries and drawing back the changed, affected current through the countless veins.'

"'Why,' I asked him, 'have you never attained to the Inner Circle? Have you not wished to perfect yourself?'

"'My life,' answered the old priest, 'has been one long desire, one burning thirst for attainment, but it comes not with desire, nor is it reached by passionate craving. It comes to whom it comes, to those who are chosen and set apart. Rest assured of this, that while the desire to improve and go upward remains with you, so long you are not alone nor far from help. You are being led, guided by unseen hands charged with your care. Led, though you know it not; nearer every hour though you do not seem to have gained a pace, and sometimes only the thickness of the Veil's substance from the dazzling glory. May you lift that Veil and see! For me the end is near, and I have now but the hope that when I have rested and again put on the robe of life I may be counted worthy. For you, go, strive; it may be that you will prove by your efforts that you are among those from whom the elect are chosen, and that you may learn the great secret.'

"'How can I?' answered I. 'How can I hope to succeed without years of preparation? I must be a pupil before even the possibility of such a power can be conferred upon me. Tell me to whom to apply.'

"'I know of no such teacher in India; none of those who have the necessary training would care to impart it to a foreigner. If you would take a long journey to the Eastern Seas, there in the far-away Islands of the Archipelago, in the sacred land of Bali is a priest of Mahomet in whose breast are locked many secrets. He was wiser than I even when we parted many years ago, and if he is alive and you give him a certain sign which I can teach you, he may listen to your prayer for instruction.'

"'A Mussulman!' I said. 'You, a Brahmin, send me to one you count an infidel!'

"'My son,' said the priest, 'in the path you seek to tread there is neither orthodox nor heretic — he is the only infidel who is *infidelis* — unfaithful — to the truth.

"I sailed from India for Bali, and reached the harbor of Bleling. I went inland to the town of Carang-Assem, to which I had been directed. The religion of the people is so strict and their devotion to the worship of Siva so intense that my enquiries for the Moslem priest were evidently distasteful, but I made a friend of the Rajah of Kalongkong, the chief of the island priests, and he ordered me to receive assistance in my search. At last I got on the tracks of my old Mussulman, whom I found living in a very poverty-stricken manner, clothed only in the *sabok*, the robe of the common people.

"I presented myself before the moolah, and, making the brotherhood sign, informed him of my wish for initiation. To my dismay he answered in Arabic, then changed the dialect to Balinese, evidently unable, like my Brahmin friend, to speak European languages. I had to look about some time to get an interpreter, and after much trouble got hold of one — a regular muff, too.

"On again presenting myself with the interpreter and explaining my wishes, I was met with a flat refusal. He said that he could not impart any teaching through a third person, and that it would be years before I could get such a knowledge of Arabic as would allow me to understand the refinements and subtleties of philosophy. 'Besides,' he added, 'the power still lies eastward. Go to the city of Giant Ruins.'

"I had heard of Easter Island and its huge statues, and I told him that I was afraid there were none of the people, certainly none of the priests, left there.

"He said, 'Not so far, not so far by many thousand miles. Go to Ualan and Ponapè. In Ualan, among the ruins, half hidden in forest undergrowth and buried in the earth, are rooms wherein are held the lodges of initiation. There you may take the step which will put your foot on the upward way.'

"'But,' I remonstrated, 'those people are savages; do you tell me to turn my back on the learning of Europe and the wisdom of Asia to seek among barbarians the way of knowledge?'

"'You are but a child,' said the old man. 'I did not say that with them lay the secret; they have never attained; they are but as the still quiet earth in which the seed is buried deep, too deep for growth, but it lies there preserved in safety for the chosen ones. You are indeed a child to despise the humbler and more primitive races of men. Have you not heard how the wise are sometimes denied the light, and that it is "revealed unto babes." These barbarians are the world-infants. Go and learn of them.'

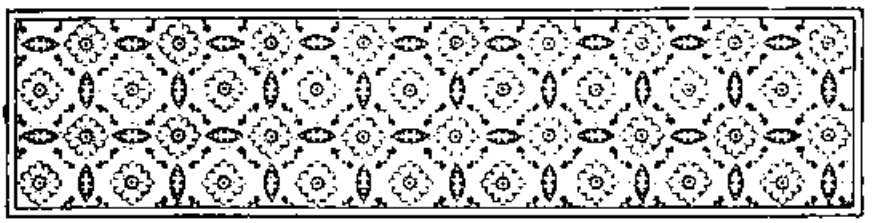
"I saw that it was useless to press the old Moslem further, and leaving Bali dropped down through the countless islands of the Archipelago, till with much trouble and no little expense I managed to get a passage in a trader bound to the Carolines, and was landed at Ponapè."

"Are you never coming to the point, Jack?" said Nelly. "I wanted to know about that scar on your forehead, and you have wandered off into talks with old priests about religion or mythical stuff of all kinds."

"You dear, inconsistent girl," answered Jack; "didn't I tell you again and again that it would be a long story? You couldn't understand why I got hurt unless I told you how I put myself in such a position. But, if you like, the story can be told in half-a-dozen words. A nigger in Ponapè did it with his tomahawk. Finis."

"Now, dear Jack," said Nelly, "you won't be cross with me, will you? You know that I wouldn't hurt or offend you for worlds."

Jack had to be persuaded by many coaxings not confined to words before he would take up the thread of his anecdote, but at last consented.



III.

"Little did I think when we sailed into Metalanien Harbour how near I should be to the great mystery several times in a few weeks. I had spent piles of money in laying in stocks of 'trade' as presents; shawls, looking glasses, cheap jewellery, turkey-red, and perfumes, for I intended making friends with the king and big chiefs if money would do it. And I did so. The king made much of me, the queen and royal ladies vied with each other in petting me and wheedling presents out of my cases. With the King I became so great a favourite that we interchanged the blood-bond. With him I went to see the stupendous ruin of the ancient walls, and many an awe-struck and solemn thought came to me there as I drifted along the old canals or pondered in the shadows of the cyclopean walls, on which the dense tropical verdure rooted in luxuriance. I found that my wish to sail for Ualan was possible to gratify, for Alo, the youngest daughter of the king, was to proceed thither in a few day's time, an envoy from the chief of Lele in Ualan then being in Ponapé to remind the king of a half-forgotten betrothal promise. Lifu, the chief who had borne the message, was a stalwart, sinewy man of fierce

and stern countenance. I could not help thinking, as I watched the burning glances he threw at the young princess, that the old story of Lancelot and Guinevere was to be re-enacted on a humbler stage, except that the passion of the envoy did not seem by any means to be returned by the princess, who shrank visibly when he showed her any personal attention. As the days went on the preparations came to an end, and the party prepared to cross the waters. A large canoe was loaded with the presents for the chief of Ualan, and these presents, together with my remaining boxes of trade, were stowed away in the vessel, with pigs, fowls, yams, and *taro* as provisions."

"Was it a wooden canoe like that of the Maoris?" asked Nelly.

"Not at all," said Jack; "it was larger, and was made of little planks lashed together with sinnet, and neatly fastened. Before we started the king gave precise directions how I should greet the *aritoi*, or priests, whom I wished to conciliate, and he told his daughter that as I was going among a savage people over which she would have authority, he would look to her to cover me, as his dear brother, with her influence, and that I was to be saved and cared for even at the sacrifice of her life. We took our places in the canoe, poor little Alo covered with wreaths of flowers, but with tears on her face coursing through her colour-decoration. She and four of her girls took their station between the stern and 'midships, twenty men, also decorated with wreaths, as paddlers took their places. Lifu and the Ualan men were in the bows. Amid songs of farewell and loud music of the native flutes and drums we left the harbour, and the bow was turned to the south-east. The great crab's-claw sail was hoisted, and with a light

breeze, under a blazing sky, we began our journey. All day we lay in the canoe, I smoking my pipe lazily under a kind of awning rigged up for the protection of the girls; and we talked and sang to try and distract Alo's melancholy. I think that we should have succeeded, but away forward was lying the form of Lifu, his body and face hidden beneath a mat of *fala*, but his moody eyes watching ceaselessly above the embroidered edge.

"'I do not like that man,' Alo said to me; 'I hate him. He has said that though I am married to the king I shall be his sweetheart, and shall have no other lover. I am afraid.'

"I told her that the first thing she must do would be to use her influence with her bridegroom to get Lifu sent away to some other place, and this she assented to as the wisest course. As it grew towards evening the sky began to darken down towards the point to which we were steering. The natives commenced to look at one another uneasily, and to whisper together in an ominous way. They lowered the great sail, and I gathered from their agitation that there was a storm brewing and danger ahead. Just then, with a slight sucking sound, there arose right across the bow an immense triangular fin, big as the dorsal fin of a sunfish, and lying near the surface of the water was the back of an enormous shark. It was a perfect giant of its species, I could not have believed in a creature so huge — it seemed more like a whale than a shark. The utmost fright and dismay seized the natives. They dropped their paddles and howled, 'The shark-god! the shark-god!' The face of the chief who was steering reflected the general consternation, and in response to the common cry to return, he struck the water with a blow of his paddle to turn the head of the canoe aside so as not to

strike the sacred fish. Instantly, on seeing the action, Lifu leapt up in his place at the bows, apparently maddened at the thought of returning.

"'You shall not go back — you shall *not*,' he cried; 'by all the gods of Ualan you shall keep on till we get to Lele. I have sworn it, you shall keep on!'

"A tumult of cries broke out from the Ponapè men, but as the steersman still struck the water sideways to turn the canoe, Lifu drew a short axe from his girdle and rushed aft, followed by his two men. A Ponapè native raised his paddle to bar the way, but was struck down by a blow through the brain, and falling with the back of his knees against the gunwale, went overboard. The Ponapè crew seized their weapons and drove the others back, one of the assailants following the first victim over the side. Suddenly the vessel received a tremendous shock which almost upset the craft, and threw us all down. It was given in the fierce rush of the shark, or of two of them — for another as huge had joined its mate — and in a second we were in the midst of a churning of blood and foam, with the sea-tigers rending the bodies of the slain. Maddened with the blood-taste they lashed up and down, plunging through the water. The sight and the concussion stopped the fight on board, but Lifu, tearing off his garment, was screaming with rage in the bow, and swearing that unless we went on he would drive his feet through the frail timbers and send us all to the sharks. By that time I had got my back up properly, so I covered him with my revolver and told him that if he wagged a toe I would fill him full of holes. Seeing that I meant it, the beast sulkily sat down, and his man lay down by him. We turned the canoe for Ponapè, but by that time the storm was down upon us and the darkness too.

All that night under the storm we drove along, only guided by glimpses that the lightning gave us of the distant land. We laboured and toiled at the paddles hour after hour, the girls and I too, for half the crew were baling and madly striking out the water from the bilge with side-strokes of the paddles. And always as we tore along, beside us or behind us flashed and played the gleaming silver bodies of the two sea-devils, waiting for us in case of accidents. At last it came to the hour of dawn, and through a rift in the clouds and mist we saw the far peak of Tolocolme in Ponapè. That seemed to send Lifu crazy again, and, rising erect with a shriek, he leapt up and came down with both feet through the fragile timbers. The canoe, already half waterlogged, seemed to fill in a moment, and we were instantly all out in the water. It was pretty rough, that plunge into the black water, with the sharply-blown spray of the brine driving along and smothering one's nose and mouth. And the big sharks round, too. Close up I heard the chief of the canoe cry out, 'A ring for Alo! a guard for the king's daughter!' I felt someone clasp my arm as I swam. It was Alo, who ranged close alongside, and sent two of her girls round to the other side of me. I can swim well for an Englishman, but these girls were fish-swimmers from the cradle, like most island women. The splashing of so many in the water at first frightened the sharks, and they kept swimming about outside the company, but growing bolder at last, made a rush which scattered us for a moment.

"'I wish your body was not so white, Tiake,' said Alo, as we swam.

"'I suppose they'll go straight for me, won't they?' I said.

"'Not while we can give ourselves for you,' Alo

answered. 'You are mine; I have sworn to keep you safely.'"

"Oh, Jack!" said Nelly; "you haven't told me true. You vowed you never loved any one until you saw me, and I feel sure that she loved you and you loved her."

"Not I," answered he. "She was a true, brave girl, as good as gold, but I never saw her except she was daubed all over face and body with yellow turmeric. White men do fall in love with the pale brown beauties of the South Seas, but although they have delicate features and slight figures, these yellow girls up in the Carolines paint themselves so extra yellow that one could almost as easily fall in love with a mustard-pot. No, I didn't love her, but she saved me twice. As the sharks grew bolder, and we closed our circle in swimming, the chief cried out, 'Takino! an offering for the god!' and then one of the men, Takino, stopped his stroke and waited — for the shark. Again the chief cried out, naming another, and that other stayed. More sharks had joined in the chase, attracted by the smell of blood in the water, and man by man all went, the old chief himself facing his death with a sad cry of farewell to the daughter of his king. I was by this time exhausted, but we had passed through one of the gaps in the fringing reef, and were close to the shore. Alo swam with one hand and her feet, while with the other hand she helped to buoy me; on the other side was one of her girls also assisting, while the other two girls swam behind us. There was another rush. Alo called out the name of one of the girls, and she folded her arms and stayed. Alas! so did a second, but in a moment more we were in the break of the water, and I felt myself hurled forward on to the rocks with a force which knocked the breath out of me. Then I was hauled along, cut

and wounded by the sharp rocks and sharper shellfish, till I reached a place of safety.

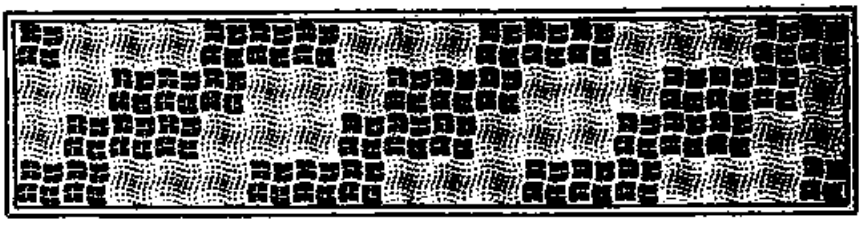
There I lay exhausted, and on opening my eyes found myself being tended by Alo and her maid, who, having been well accustomed to the surf, had escaped better than I had. They busied themselves in binding bruised green leaves upon my smarting cuts until the burning pain was assuaged. Then the princess told me that she and her attendant must leave me and try to pass through the dense forest in the hope of getting help at some village of her people and bringing assistance to me. With many little pats of consolation they left me, and I fell instantly into a heavy sleep of exhaustion, which must have lasted several hours. I awoke from a dream in which I fancied myself as the heretical centre-figure in some old Spanish *auto da fé*, with the flaming faggots round me. Little wonder, for the tropical sun was high in the heavens, and the bush in whose shadow I had been left, no longer acted as a refuge from the sickening rays. The heavier forest was at some little distance, and towards its shade I dragged myself wearily along, my stiffened and smarting body letting me know at every step of the exertion and scarification it had endured. When I neared the larger trees I saw among them a portion of an ancient wall still standing among the undergrowth, and in this was a dark hole which looked entrancing as a retreat from the white glare outside as I dragged my heavy feet past the entrance and a few yards within. I balanced myself with wavering footsteps in the gloom, which to my unaccustomed eyes seemed of night itself, when suddenly a man's form rose erect almost at my feet, and struck a blow at me with some weapon. As the figure rose I involuntarily stepped back, and catching my foot in a

ground vine, I fell face upwards—luckily for me, since the force of my opponent's blow descending vertically on my forehead, was lessened by my yielding descent. The weight of the stroke brought my enemy down on top of me, and in another moment we were grappling fiercely together. With one quick glance I saw that it was Lifu, who had in some manner escaped a sea-death, but the blood running into my eyes blinded me, and his unwounded strength was too great for my weakened muscles to resist. I called out with all my might again and again as I tried to hold the hand grasping the tomahawk, but at last he got his knees on my arm, and though I twisted as much as I could, he struck me once more with the tomahawk. The blade fell horizontally on my forehead, but my writhing and tossing my head about prevented the stroke falling true; the edge turned on the skull, and, though it made an ugly cut, it did not finish me off as my friend hoped. The next instant Alo with half-a-dozen men dashed into the crypt and pinioned my assailant, which they did very roughly, with many kicks and blows. The party which Alo was bringing to my assistance had heard my outcry as I struggled, and were not a moment too soon. They bound up my head and took me to Metalanieu, where I was looked after till I was sound and well again.

"I managed to get a passage to Australia in a German schooner of the Godefroi's, which put into Ponapè. I never tried again to get to Ualan. I was becoming tired of the weary search, and my fad is worked out. I don't want more knowledge now, dear; I know you, that is enough for me. I have bored you awfully with my long yarn, but that is really the end of it."

"You wicked boy," answered Nelly, "you are too humble altogether. Uriah Heep, I will reward you by

saying that I love to hear everything you have done and all that you have seen. I think that the tide is high enough now to have covered the mud-flats, so take your oars and let us move along to the fishing-grounds."



IV.

JACK took up one of the short oars and pushed the boat out from the shade of the mangrove into a more open channel, and then, seating himself on the thwart with his face to the pretty steersman, pulled for a mile or two along the shore till they reached a wide shallow flat, half-covered by the tide and bare of the brine-loving trees. Here Jack took off his shoes and stockings and left the boat. He carried as a spear a long light pole about eight feet long with a slender iron point. With this spear he was about to try to spear the flat-fish which abounded in the locality, and came up with the rising water. Every now and then one could see the flash of the quick spear as it pierced the fish, the lace-like track of whose fringing side-fins in the ooze had guided its pursuer to his prey. Carefully Jack waded along a few yards from the shore; noiselessly behind him glided the skiff, impelled by the silent strokes of the girl seated in the stern. Suddenly Jack uttered a loud cry of pain and fright, echoed by a succession of shrieks from Nelly as the peaceful scene changed to a wild commotion. The water was thrown and tossed about the limbs of the man as he drove his spear again and

again into the muddy eddies whirling around him, striking at some unseen antagonist which splashed the shallow waves into foam. Nelly sat stricken stiff with fear for a moment, as she saw her lover's violent struggle with some unknown danger, but the tumult only lasted a few seconds, and as Jack waded towards the boat, the girl drove her paddle sharply into the water and struck out to meet him. He looked white as he came alongside, but endeavoured to calm his excited and overwrought sweetheart with soothing words. Her tears came fast, as leaning on the gunwale of the boat, he took her in his arms.

"Oh, darling, what is it?" she said.

"It was an immense stingaree," he answered, "it was lying on the sand, and I trod on it without seeing it in the muddy water. It has bored a hole through my leg."

So saying, he got into the boat, and sat down while Nelly fell on her knees and took out her poor little handkerchief to bind the place. In the white flesh just above the ankle appeared a badly lacerated wound, the raw flesh turned outward round the orifice, from which the blood poured fast. Both their handkerchiefs in unskilled hands were not sufficient to stanch the welling stream.

"Oh, Jack," said Nelly, "it is frightfully dangerous. Unless you can get help very soon you may die. What *can* we do?"

Her tears broke forth afresh as her lover tried to stanch the bleeding caused by the spike at the base of the rat-like tail of the sting-ray.

"It is almost as deadly as a cobra-bite if I can't get help soon, but it hurts a great deal more. Let's get ashore, Nelly, and you run for all you know to the

Maoris we saw fishing round the point, and ask them what to do. Bring them to help if you can."

They ran the boat up on the beach, and Nelly, sliding one arm round the sick man's neck, gave him one despairing kiss, and ran.

On past the rocky points and little bays, past the outlying clumps of mangroves, with flying footsteps pattering and crackling upon the broken shells of the beach, ran the frightened girl. She turned the corner of the last point and saw near her a young Maori woman wading and gathering cockles by groping with her hands and arms under water. As the native girl heard the shrill cry of the visitor she stood upright, and, shading her eyes with her wet hands, looked in the direction from which the call proceeded. A fine contrast were the two girls. The English maiden, trembling, with clasped hands, her summer dress floating in misty folds, the red blood coursing through her cheeks with excitement and exertion. The native lassie, with her brown shoulders and arms dripping and flashing in the light, her splendid supple form only half concealed by the white chemise and the petticoat kilted high. In response to the quickly-repeated cry of alarm the Maori girl waded ashore, and heard in a few words the story of the accident. Her face became very grave as she gathered the nature of the trouble, and she also sent her voice out seaward in a prolonged, high-pitched recitative, which went vibrating across the water. However incomprehensible the words of this call would have been to a European it was evidently understood in the far-off fishing canoes, as the men instantly began to return, and paddled hard towards the beach. They landed and began a rapid chatter of questions and answers to Mini (Minnie), the girl who had called them. Their eager questions died

into an anxious silence as they looked at one another and then at poor Nelly, evidently doubtful and divided as to the best course of action. They were all young men, muscular and well-shaped, but their youth was against them in this matter.

"I know nothing of such wounds," said one.

"Nor I," said another.

"Oh, come and see him; pray, come!" said the distracted girl. "Only get him to my mother's house; there is no doctor near."

"Let us go quickly, then," was the verdict of the Maori girl, who had in the meantime let down her petticoat and wrapped a shawl round her shoulders. Off they started, Nelly at a run, and the Maoris in a rapid "loping" walk. Back past the mangroves and the shelly beaches, back to the boat, now high and dry upon the shore, and lying upon its side. Nothing was to be seen of Jack until they came alongside, and then, to Nelly's horror, he was found lying along the side, white and unconscious.

"*E!*" said the men—"*E!*" said the native girl, with faint little clicks of sympathy and grief sounding from her tongue. She assisted Nelly to raise the helpless head and prevent the hair dabbling in the muddy leakage which had run from under the bilge-boards to the side. The men removed the sail and mast from the boat, and rapidly constructed a kind of litter or hammock, kept apart at head and feet by the boat's stretchers lashed firmly to the centre-pole. The Maoris of the present day are poor creatures compared with their very accomplished forefathers, but even now their deft and skilful fingers, quick to adopt any possible vantage, are invaluable in moments such as this. As they worked they argued.

"Let us take him to the village," said one.

"What for?" questioned another; "in the village is no one who is old or skilled in medicine or charms. All have gone to the wailing-feast."

"Is there no one of his own doctors near?"

"Nay; not for two days' journey."

"Then he will die; his face is turned towards the leaping-place of souls."

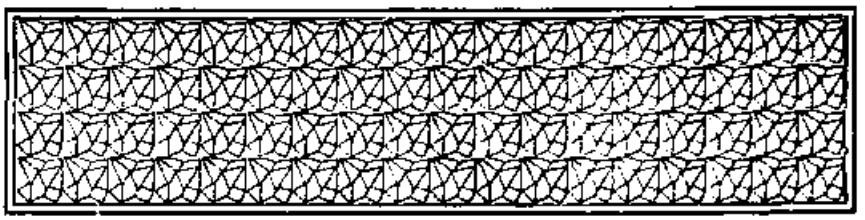
One stooped and felt inside the shirt of the sufferer, then raised his eyebrows in assent to the opinion of the last speaker. The native girl broke in:

"Do you remember who lives up there?" she said, pointing to the forest-covered hill. "Does not the old man abide still in the Humming-house? He is wise, and I have heard my father say that long ago, when they were in great trouble, they consulted him and received help."

"Yes," replied one of the men; "but who has seen him for years? And which of us dares go near the Humming-house? It is *tapu*. I am a Christian, but I fear the spells of the ancient gods. The old man is wise and doubtless knows the cure for the wound of the sting-ray's spear. He may cure the stranger, but who are we that we dare to visit the wizard and ask a favour, with no present in our hands? I have heard say that the friend of our ancestors has never seen a white man. He came in the days when the strangers were few indeed and scattered, and he has lived alone ever since."

All the time this discussion had been going on Nelly had been growing more and more agitated. One moment she would kneel and gaze into the deathly face of her lover as if she would keep the hovering soul by sheer force of passionate affection, then she would rise and

appeal, entreating that the natives would carry her precious one to the old man in whose skill lay a chance of life. The mention by the young Maori of "bearing no present in our hands" inspired her with a new train of thought, and she launched promises of money and gifts upon them if they would make the attempt. Mini also added her persuasions, and at last their laziness in disliking to carry a heavy burden up the steep hill, and their superstitious fear of the dreaded old man, both yielded to the fervid entreaties and rich promises of reward. Lifting the insensible body into the litter they commenced the toilsome ascent.



V.

The sun had begun to descend towards the horizon, as, with each pair of bearers alternately relieving the others, they plodded on. Up and up the narrow overgrown path, along the ridge, past beautiful spots unnoticed by the panting carriers, or by the weeping mourner. They reached at last a small glade, covered with short undergrowth but still having the marks of long-ago habitation. At the end of the glade stood a small native house, with its back against the cliff which towered a hundred feet above in sheer precipice. The front of the house was adorned with curious carvings, but not with the curves and spirals or the grotesque figures of Maori sculpture. The gable and side-posts were painted red, and the little sliding door was closed. In front and round the house was a low fence, formed apparently more for sport than use, for it consisted of light sticks placed crosswise, like a series of the letter x encircling the building. The bearers stopped and laid their burden on the ground.

"Take him to the house!" cried Nelly, "do not put him on the damp ground."

The men pointed to the little fence of sticks, which they evidently considered as prohibitive, and shrank back,

"Listen!" they said. "Listen."

Nelly listened intently, and she heard a strange sound, a sound as if the house was one great hive. Droning, rising, falling, went on the murmur within, as if some monotonous but ponderous machinery was whirring heavily round.

"I will enter," she cried, "you cowards, you foolish things, more timid than children."

She herself at another time would have been timid enough, and would have shrunk from exposing herself to an unknown danger in a place so wild and with her savage companions, but she was nerved by the half-wifely, half-maternal feeling of protection, and desperation for the sake of her unconscious sweetheart lying there.

"Do not go," said Mini, "we will call the old man forth." Then, raising her voice, she cried, "O Ancient One, come forth and speak!"

No answer came. The men raised their voices also with hers, and emboldened with the sound of their own shoutings in the quiet place, called out again and again. "Come forth, O father, come forth!" Then they waited. Nelly could bear the suspense no longer, and was about to step forward over the crossed sticks of the little fence, when suddenly the vines and hanging trailers that clothed the base of the precipice at the side of the house were drawn apart, and the figure of a man stood before them. He was an old, old man, bent and bowed downwards with the weakness of extreme decrepitude. His eyes were unseen, for the white eyebrows, heavy as the moustache of the ideal cavalry-man, had bent themselves over in a great arch until they almost touched the sunken cheeks. A snowy beard flowed upon his breast and over the mat of silky flax which hid the shrunken form. One naked arm, sinewy

still beneath its withered skin, held aside the branches as he stood with bowed body but with head thrown back to peer out beneath his long eyebrows at the visitors. The young men drew back startled and silent; even Nelly was awed by the strange apparition, coming, not from the house as she expected to see a person approach, but almost, it seemed, from out the solid rock.

"Who calls?" the old man said. "Who comes to shout and wanton in a place made sacred?"

The men answered nothing, but Mini replied to the strange creature. "We have come, O Ancient One, bearing a wounded white man for the help of your skill. A sting-ray has pierced him with its spear, and this lady entreats your assistance to save her husband's life."

"I have never looked on the face of one of the white strangers," said the venerable man. "They are a fairy people, I am told, and full of strange witchcraft. If he is a fairy he cannot die. I am nearing the end of my days. Leave me in peace."

Nelly rushed across the small intervening space and threw herself at the old man's feet. "Oh!" she said; "you are old, and wise with the knowledge of many years; doubtless you know the remedy for the poison of the fish's spear. Did not the Celestial Maiden come down to earth for the love of One whose help you may some day need? So I would leave heaven itself for the sake of that dear dying man lying neglected there. Help me! help me!"

The elder peered curiously into her face—the face of one of a race to his dim eyes so strange and unfamiliar. Little wonder was it that he mistook her for one of the fairy people, for her distress and abandonment had added new expression to her beauty. Slowly the old man crept across the tiny clearing till he stood beside the litter, the

natives drawing back as he advanced. He bent down and touched the wound, on which the blood, which had ceased to flow, was blackening as it dried on the white skin. Then his glance travelled upwards to the face, which lay in a pallid calm like the mask of death itself. At that moment a ray of the sun, which was just about to dip into the sea, pierced through the lattice-work of the forest boughs, and fell upon the brow of the sick man, whereon the double scar showed red against the whiteness. Like a flash the body of the old man straightened itself, and his breath came quick and long. He raised his hands and murmured words to himself, but did not recover his bent position. A new life, a sudden blazing up of the spirit within, seemed to animate his shrivelled body with a vitality that quickened his whole frame. Turning to Nelly, he said:

"He is safe with me; he shall live for many years. Leave him in this place."

"Whither shall we take him?" said one of the men. "May we step over the crossed sticks?"

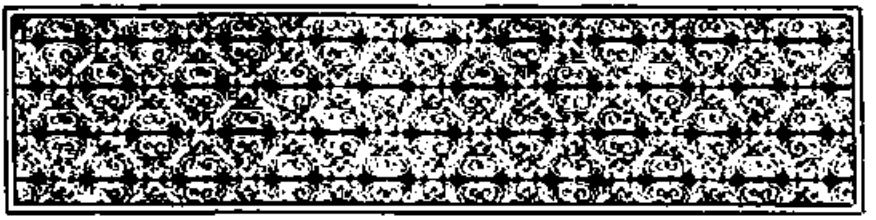
"No," said the elder; "would you dare to violate the holiness of the Humming-House? Listen to me, you children: You shall know whither to go."

Thus saying, he lifted his arm, and began to repeat in monotonous recitative the words of a charm. To Nelly's horror—a horror to which she did not dare to give expression by any sound or comment—she saw the light in the eyes of the natives pass into a dazed and fixed look such as one recognizes in the eyes of a somnambulist. It was the *Rotu* incantation, harmless to Nelly, who, perhaps by birth, and certainly by education, was unprepared by superstition to yield to the mesmeric influence so potent upon her dusky friends. The old man said to the natives:

"Lift the litter and follow me."

To Nelly and Mini he said, "Wait till these return, then go to your homes and wait till you hear the steps of a man made strong again."

Nelly pressed a last farewell kiss on the cold forehead of her lover, but did so with a heart renewed with hope. The little procession passed within the barrier of vine leaves, and was hidden within the unknown recesses of the cliff. Mini sat with her head buried within her shawl. Nelly, almost prostrate with the long-sustained tension of her nerves relaxed at last, stood quietly weeping on the shoulder of her kind-hearted brown-skinned sister, until the little party again appeared. Then they all quickly retraced their steps along the descending ridge, until they gained the boat in the dusk of evening, and Mini attended her girl friend back to her home.



VI.

As Jack awoke a slight shiver rippled over his body, for the air was chilly, and he was clothed only in the light boating dress which he had donned for his disastrous day of sport. He opened his eyes and gave a start of surprise, for the scene was weird as well as novel and unexpected. He found himself lying on a bed of fern at the side of a small cave apparently formed by some tilted stratum of dark rock leaning against a wall of limestone. He was stretched under a shelf of the darker stone, while against the opposite wall of dazzling whiteness stalactites hung pendent, from the points of which drops of water slowly dripped and disappeared in a shallow groove cut in the stone floor. The light which showed the snowy stalactites came from a rude lamp, the oil in which was by no means too pleasant in its odour, but the smoke disappeared in the recesses of shadow which overhead hid the lofty roof from view. In the light sat a bowed figure that, white-bearded and with the face in deep shadow, crouched silent and motionless as though carved from the substance of the rock itself. Only a little flicker of the light by its motion now and then gave the semblance of reality to the scene; but for this Jack must have thought it a mere picture on the brain—a

vivid reflection from his distempered imagination. He tried to rise, but found that he could not do so—his bandaged leg responding with a sharp thrill of pain to his attempt at motion. Resolving to break the intense silence he raised himself on one elbow and said:

"Hello!"

Slowly the stooping figure lifted itself, and Jack saw that it was a Maori to whom he was speaking. Changing his language to the native tongue, he said:

"O friend, will you tell me how I came here?"

"You were carried here after the fish had speared you, that I might heal the wound."

Instantly the whole scene flashed back upon the young man's senses—the white figure in the gliding boat, the sharp combat in the tossing water, the painful wound, and the slow drifting away of consciousness as he lay awaiting the result of Nelly's efforts at rescue. Again he accosted the quiet figure and inquired the name of his aged nurse, but not directly, as that would be rudeness to native ears. To say bluntly, "What is your name?" would imply that the fame of the person addressed was not world-wide, and that his appearance was not celebrated. Therefore, he cautiously said:

"What is the name by which you are called among the men of your race?"

The old man answered:

"I do not know."

"Not know your own name?" exclaimed Jack. "Why, who does know it then?"

"I know my own name, fairy child," said the elder, with dignity. "I know my own name, but other men do not know it. I was called Maru among my mother's people. Many years have gone by since my name was spoken. I was a boy like you when I heard it last.

You asked me by what name am I called among men of my race, and I say that I do not know. I am no one."

Jack stared at him, and then sank back on his couch. "Mad," he said to himself; "this is a lively spot to get into—I like this." Then he gradually sank into a doze, for the stupor of the nervous shock caused by the wound was still strong upon him.

Again he awoke with a start and a shiver, again to view the silent scene, the flickering lamp and glistening walls, the crouching figure. He felt that he must speak, that he must break the horrible silence, even if the antique specimen of crazy humanity was to be the only medium of conversation.

"Friend," he said, "where are we? What do you call the name of this cheerful hole you live in?"

The old man threw back his head and replied:

"It has no name; it is a cave. Why do you keep asking me about names?"

"Well," said Jack, "I will not do so any more. Let's be bright and merry. I want something to eat. Give me some food."

"Not in this place," was the answer. "You must wait till to morrow; to-morrow you will be well, then you can go outside and eat."

"I am afraid that you are not very hospitable," said the young man.

The Maori answered him:

"Want of hospitality is not a sin of my people; what we have we give, and that freely. I am a chief and a priest—I could not carry food for you. And if another brought cooked food into this place I could not enter it again. The sacredness of my head would be defiled. My food is eaten under the open sky, as the food of the chiefs, my fathers, has always been eaten."

"Could you not come in here if food was here?" said Jack. "What do you want to come to such a place at all for?" Then he said to himself, "By Jove, it *is* a place, this; I hope I shall never see it again."

The old man remained awhile without speaking, evidently pondering over his reply. At last he said slowly:

"I came here because I was sent here, and I stay here because close by is the place wherein my duty lies, the Humming-House *(Te Whare Tamumu)*."

"Why 'humming'?" said Jack.

"Because of the buzzing and whirr of the sounds within," answered Maru.

"What makes the sound?"

"All the little voices of the many winged-ones—tiny creatures that dwell in the house. They are like the flies that have come with your people to this land, and which have been shown to me. Those flies that hum among flowers and gather sweetness, which they take to their nests."

"So," said Jack, "you have bees and honey. The *Whare-Tamumu* is a big hive."

The old man crept to his feet and said solemnly:

"The *Whare-Tamumu* is the temple of Tamumu, 'the god that hums,' and it is full of his servants. They do not make honey. The food they prepare is for the lips of those prepared and ready. They are producing the Wine of the New Birth."

Jack sank back upon his couch, half vexed and half amused, but with a feeling of awe, nevertheless, as he looked at the fiery eyes glowing in the shadows under the snowy fringes of the great eyebrows.

"Very mad, indeed; quite hopeless," he said to himself.

The old man resumed his slow speech. "They are creatures of Those that sit in the Heavens; you and I are also their servants. Do you not know by whom and for what purpose you were brought to me?"

"No," said Jack; "you said I was brought to be healed of my wound, but you haven't told me who brought me here. I could not have flown here by myself, and the delicate girl who was with me certainly could not have carried me. Neither would she have brought me to you, for I don't think she had ever heard of you. As to the cause, of course it was the sting of that cursed fish."

"The fish, you child of the sea-god, was but a messenger—as I am. Do you not understand? Have you had no warning? I thought that the Chosen One would have come with eyes which could see through the bodies of men, and would have been able with a glance to divide the shadow from the substance. See, then!" and he raised his hand and made a sudden sign.

Like lightning there ran along the links of the young man's memory thoughts which brought to his consciousness the message given to him by his Brahmin friend. He was to be "led" by unseen hands, and guided without knowing whither. He raised himself on his narrow bed full of the old eagerness, but was waved back by Maru.

"Are you the Master?" whispered Jack. Will you initiate me and show me the path to the higher powers that await the fearless seeker? I entreat you to let me be your pupil — your slave if you will. Only reveal the secret to me at last. Now! Let us begin at once."

The old man smiled sadly, and said, "You have waited long; I have waited more years than you have

days. Your wound is not healed; to-night it is dangerous for you to move. To-morrow you will be well — to-morrow you shall have the secret. Drink this and sleep."

Jack took the carved cup held out to him and drank the contents, making a grimace at the taste of the pungent, oily liquor. "What time is it?" he said. "Is it night or day? Will it soon be to-morrow?"

"It is night," was the answer; "but to-morrow is very near."

The old man went back to his crouched posture under the lamp, and Jack resumed his former supine position. At first his mind was in a tumult, a tossing sea of doubt and hope and expectation, but he could not shut his eyes or turn them away from that stooping figure dull and dark against the whiteness of the limestone walls. Then his fancy began to waver backwards on old lines of memory—back from the scene on the beach to pleasant hours of courtship and dalliance. Back to mysterious Ponapè and the struggle among the cyclopean stones, back to yachting voyages over sunny seas, and many games of football and cricket on school holidays. Then forward again ran his thoughts, to Nelly, and as he lingered lovingly on the pictured beauty of her delicate face, the sweet eyes of spring looking into his grew dim, and faded out like stars in the night of sleep.

Then the old priest arose and came to the side of the couch, watching to see if the strong narcotic had done its work. Satisfied at last, he turned away and tottered to the side of the cave, where in some recess behind the stalactites he groped and drew forth what looked like a small black flask. It was a dried bladder of the sea-kelp, often used by the natives for the purpose of holding liquids. Crooning some incantation, he moved

forward and bent above the sleeping youth. Reverently and with a deep solemnity he touched with his fingers the mark upon Jack's forehead, and then uncovered the wound upon his leg.

"The Wine of the New Birth," he muttered to himself; "the wine of great Tumumu, the humming-god —himself the servant of the Mighty One. Sleep! Child of the fairy people, sleep long and well."

So saying, he poured into the wound a black, slow-dripping liquid, which sank into the flesh and disappeared like water upon arid ground. It was the venom of the mason bee, the deadly poison of paralysis.

"The winged creatures of Tané have done their work," said the priest. "I, too, have finished mine; and as I said to the Chosen One, the day is very near."

So saying he extinguished the lamp, and left the cave in total darkness.

VII.

It was a bright sunny day in the little clearing where stood the Humming-House. The buzzing, however, was heard no longer; all was silent except the healthful noise of living creatures rustling in the thicket and chirping in the boughs, the voices of bird and insect. The door of the building was open, and part of the roof had fallen in. More overgrown than ever was the clearing, for the row of sticks which composed the low fence was hidden by the long coarse grass, which now grew right up to the walls of the house.

The air was full of the warmth of summer, but every now and then clouds drifted in from the sea and obscured the sunlight. When the rays gleamed through the trees and lighted up the edges of the fern, the cicadas raised their shrill notes, the fantails danced up and down among the shrubs, and the soft cooing notes of the wood pigeons echoed among the higher boughs.

There was a movement among the creepers veiling the face of the cliff, and then slowly, walking like a man in a dream, shading his eyes that they might bear the daylight, appeared the form of Jack Wallace. It was evident that the scene was entirely new to him, and that his mental attitude was that of deep wonder as

to his whereabouts. He advanced and looked at the dilapidated building, and said aloud to himself:

"That can't be the 'Humming-House' the old man spoke of; it is as quiet as death."

Then perceiving the overgrown path leading down the ridge he pushed his way through the tangle of shrubs and parasites, little thinking that the feet of Nelly had once preceded him in the way he pursued. Suddenly, as the forest grew thinner, through the leaves he caught a glimpse of the deep blue sea and white strand below. Anxious to escape from the overpowering solitude he quickened his steps and soon reached the margin of the tide and the little sandy flat that had been the scene of his adventure. There was no sail on the water or foot-mark on the shore; so he resolved to go to the little Maori settlement to get a canoe wherein to cross to Mrs. Farrell's farm. Visions of the joy wherewith Nelly would receive him were curiously and unromantically mixed with base cravings for "a good square meal," for the feeling of hunger within was beginning to be ravenous. Passing a clump of large trees standing in marshy ground he saw that their trunks, swathed with green parasitic plants, were dappled with large white flowers of the *Kie-kie*. The blossoms, which look like large water-lilies, have thick, fleshy petals, of a fragrant, sugary taste, and when found are eaten greedily by natives and white people alike.

"I wonder my young Maori friends have left so many of you to ripen there," said Jack. "But perhaps they are on *tapu* ground. Come what may, I must have something to eat."

Climbing by aid of the creepers, he soon had some of the flowers broken off, and flinging them to the ground he stayed his hunger with the odorous food. Refreshed

and strengthened he resumed his journey, but the day was gradually darkening with storm, and before he reached the native village rain had began to fall, wetting his thin garments through and through. As he approached the settlement he missed the usual chorus of barking dogs and the shout of welcome to the stranger. He entered between the carved posts of the gateway, and stood in the small square space around which the houses and raised food-stores were scattered. All was still and quiet. The place seemed utterly deserted, the doors of the houses closed; not a sound or glimpse of humanity were apparent to the senses. Moreover, it was evidently some time since any human foot had disturbed the loneliness of the scene. Weeds were springing up between the houses, and everything wore an air of neglect and abandonment.

Jack called aloud several times, but in a half-hearted and hopeless manner, for it was evident before he did so that there would be no response — and there was none. He then went down to the beach where, within the mouth of a small creek, the canoes of the tribe were generally moored. No canoe or boat of any kind was to be seen. He sat down and rested awhile, considering his best course of action. It was a long road round the head of the bay, but there seemed no help for it but in the strength of his own legs; the water was too wide to swim across, and he had an uneasy feeling at the thought of trusting himself to the salt water and its fierce inhabitants after his late adventure. He made up his mind for the rough walk by which he must head the bay and get round to Glenfern, the home of his Nell. Resolutely he started off, and mile after mile was put behind him till, late in the afternoon, he began to go slowly, for his unshod feet were tender.

As he entered the home-paddock he noticed that the fences were broken here and there, and he made mental resolutions that the next day he would go round with one of the farm-hands and repair the carelessness that was damaging the property. Suddenly on his ear broke an angry roar, and he found facing him a young bull striking the ground with a fore-hoof, and tossing his head from side to side. Behind the bull were half-a-dozen wild-looking heifers, swaying their heads and crowding up close to their lord. Jack stopped a moment in dismay, knowing that it would be death to turn and run, and perhaps death to advance; but the bull solved the difficulty by wheeling, and with another note of defiance from his deep throat, dashed off toward the bush with his companions, the sunshine glittering from their sleek hides, while the rush was hastened by a shout from the man.

Nothing now appeared strange to him. He seemed walking in a dream through some familiar-unfamiliar place, and yet with the constant expectation of seeing a graceful white-robed figure run out from the shadow of the verandah and give him a lover's greeting. But no one appeared — the house was as still as the Maori village. He pushed open the garden wicket, and by a path which skirted the side of the house, approached the door, but with difficulty, for, from the trellised arches overhead hung long-neglected sprays of sharp-thorned roses, matted and clinging in riotous luxuriance.

"My Nelly's roses have run wild while I have been ill," said the bewildered Jack. "The old man called me a child of the fairy-race; I feel like the Fairy Prince in the old Sleeping Beauty story, pushing my way into the enchanted castle. I hope *my* sleeping beauty will awake to my kiss."

He reached the door and knocked loudly, without answer. He knocked again and again, till the echo reverberated as from a great drum. At last he assumed the privilege of a guest, so, forcing open one of the French windows that opened on the verandah, he entered the drawing-room. Everything in the pretty room was exactly as he remembered seeing it last, save that a thick coating of dust obscured the surfaces of the chairs and tables, and lay heavy on the ornaments scattered about the apartment.

Jack sank upon a couch and covered his face with his hands. "Surely," he said, "I am possessed of an evil spirit. Or am I Rip Van Winkle himself come back after a sleep of half a century? That must be it. I must be an old man. Let me see myself in the glass."

Timidly he approached one of the mirrors, and dusting its surface with his handkerchief, looked at the reflection of himself. Certainly not Rip Van Winkle! There stood a young and strikingly handsome man, slightly thinner than the old self, and with a little more hair in the short, curling beard, but the same man undoubtedly.

"That's something," he said; I am not a dotard yet; I haven't lost all the summer of life, nor been turned into one of Circe's swine. But where is my Nelly, and where is her mother?"

He seemed to shrink awhile from going further, and began to run over all possible chances. A thought paled his cheek.

"Can the place have been swept by bushrangers or by some enemy?" he meditated. "Yet there is no disorder—no signs of struggle—no overturned furniture. But the tragedy might not have been in this room. Oh, heaven! support me in my trouble! What is there in this silent house?"

He rose, and went into the dining-room. On the table the cloth was laid; plates, knives and forks about the table as though the last occupants had partaken of a meal. In the kitchen nothing was wanting or out of place. He opened the doors of the bedroom; the beds were undisturbed. His own room was as he had left it. Then he went to Nelly's room, her own sacred little retreat. He paused a moment, and yet another, before he turned the handle of the door. He was frightened. Take care, Jack! lest unwittingly you come upon that which may freeze your heart for ever.

Reverently, with shaking fingers, he opened the door and entered. Empty of life or human relict was the bedroom. Nelly's dresses were hanging up; her dainty slippers standing by the dressing-table. With a sadly-beating heart he stooped and lifted a little shoe to his lips, and then gently touched the pillows on which her bright head had once rested. Then he went out, and unlocking the outer door of the kitchen, walked through the empty stables. As he returned he heard a sharp succession of barks and snarls, and was confronted with a collie slut having six or seven half-grown pups around her. "Rej!" he called joyfully. "Rej! Rej!" It was Regina, Nelly's favorite dog. The pups dashed away barking and wild with fear; but Rej, after staring a moment in astonishment, bounded forward, and with snake-like undulations of her body, evincing at once her fear and affectionate delight, crawled to his feet.

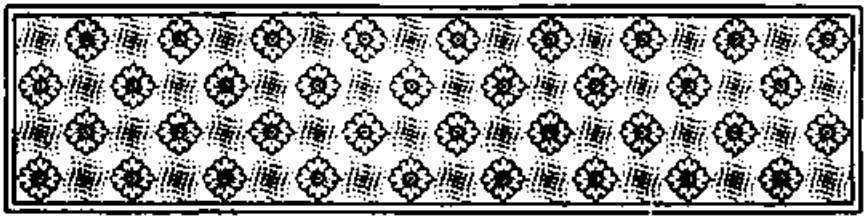
"Oh, you blessed dog!" said Jack; "Oh, you blessed *living* pet. Tell me where is your mistress?"

He threw his arms round the dog's ruff, and hugged it in passionate delight — in a perfect ecstasy to find something at last to speak to. The dog licked the man's

face and hands, glancing wistfully from him to her yelping children, but finally elected to come with him awhile. Jack returned to the kitchen, and seeing the dishes ranged along the shelves suddenly remembered how hungry he was.

"If I am going to solve this mystery," he said, "I must have something to eat."

So saying, he proceed to explore the store-room and pantry. The departure of the inmates had evidently been sudden, for the store-room was well supplied. There was no bread or meat, of course, but there was flour in an earthen jar, sugar in another, biscuits and tea in sealed tins. With these materials Jack went to the kitchen, and used to perform cooking for himself, as most wanderers are, he managed to make a very substantial meal, which he shared with poor lanky Rej, who, lean with motherhood, looked and behaved as if food and she had long been strangers. Then Jack passed along to his own room, and from his portmanteau produced a pipe and a tin of tobacco, which he proceeded to enjoy, despite his anxiety and bewilderment, taking sweet solace and counsel from "Sancta Nicotina Consolatrix."



VIII.

The next morning, after a long and refreshing sleep, assisted by a plunge in the stream below the house, and a breakfast resembling his meal of the night before, Jack set about the preparations for a journey. He had resolved to make for the nearest large town, that of Auckland, and then try to obtain some explanation as to the flight of the Farrell family from Glenfern. Putting on his thickest boots and that suit of his clothes most suitable for journeying in when a change could not be carried, he made up a light package of the most substantial and portable articles of food he could find, and started off. As he left the house he whistled to Rej, who with her pups was basking in the garden. She bounded to his side, and accompanied him across the home-paddock, but then, with mute apologies of her tail, whined, and ran back to her unhappy howling children. Jack looked at her wistfully, but recognized the divine mother-feeling in the poor brute, and desisted from trying to induce her to follow him. He gained the high road, and plodded steadily onwards, trying not to ask himself why the road was untravelled, why no ruts were visible in its floor of clay and stone. The larger bridges were firm and stable, but many of those across

the smaller streams had been washed away, so that it was necessary to ford the waters carefully, and to test the unknown depths with a pole carefully prodded in advance of the wader. Some rivers had to be crossed by swimming, but these were few, and of no great width, so that there was little difficulty, and they held no danger for a young and athletic man. Now and then he passed a clearing and saw the white houses of the settlers among the trees of the homestead, but, after visiting one or two of these, and finding them as deserted as Glenfern, he gave up the idea of leaving the road any more, and passed the smokeless chimneys with a feeling of solemnity and awe. He tried to stifle the mental questioner continually whispering "Why? Why?" to him, but it was almost impossible.

At intervals he would come upon small herds of startled cattle. Sometimes they resented his approach, but more often they would dash away like frightened hares towards the nearest cover. Luckily the weather was mild and the nights warm, so that he had no inclemency of the season to add to his trouble, and he would rest at night on a bed of fern with a fire to cheer him, and his pipe as a companion.

After some days there broke on his sight the lovely vision of Auckland, and a shout of joy went up from his lips as he saw that from its distant chimnies blue smoke was curling upward into the clear air. He almost wept with gladness to recognize the near presence of human beings, and pushed on with springing steps, eager again to become one of those that throng the busy streets. But the noon-day sun and his excitement heated him so much that he was obliged to turn aside under the shade of some large trees that overhung a woodland garden. Entering the shadow, he removed the boots from his

swollen feet, and went to the top of a little knoll to look around. Thence he saw, seated a few paces from him, the figure of a youth clad in grey trousers and jacket, sitting at the foot of a tree, reading.

"My boy—" said Jack.

Before he could add another word, the supposed boy leaped to his feet with a succession of piercing shrieks, such as never came from masculine lips, and, looking at him with a glance of terror, fled down the hill. As Jack looked at the long plaited tail of hair swinging as she ran along, and recognized the feminity of the screams, he said to himself:

"Dash it! What's she running and squealing like that for? Am I a wild beast or an Orson? What has happened to me? I shall go out of my senses soon."

So saying, he returned to his boots, and putting them on, laced them up, with many solemn waggings of the head. He had hardly moved out into the street again before he became aware of a mob of people running towards him, and he was almost instantly surrounded by an eager, excited crowd of dancing, yelling people. Some of them threw themselves on their knees at his feet and kissed his hands, some kissed his clothes, while others (most of them) leaped into the air and screamed. Jack was bewildered and dazed, but perceiving, in spite of their male attire, that those who were clinging to his hands were women, he raised them from the ground. In an instant their arms were round his neck, and the kisses were on his face, a fact no sooner perceived by others than they, too, precipitated themselves upon him, like a swarm of bees when the queen settles. Down went poor Jack in a sea of waving limbs. He struggled madly to his feet, dashing them aside, his coat torn, his whole form covered with dust. Clearing a space around

him with a sweep or two of his strong arms he shouted:

"You pack of d——d fools—you brazen hussies; what do you mean?"

A perfect chorus of joyful exclamations arose around him.

"Isn't it lovely?"

"Just hear him swear!"

"The manly voice of him!"

One middle-aged woman, looking rather absurd in her boy's clothes, hugged herself and jumped straight up and down, crying, "Thanks be to goodness! I've been cussed by a man again!"

Every moment the throng grew denser, when there came a shout, "Here's the carriage! Make way for the carriage!" and an open barouche, drawn by a pair of grey horses and driven by an excited young lady, recklessly dashed through the crowd. In a perfect Babel of noise Jack was tenderly pushed and hustled towards the carriage-door. He stood upon the step, and turning, raised his hand. There was a moment's silence. He evidently had not recovered his temper, for he called out:

"I'll not be tumbled and jostled about like this. Let the nearest women join hands and make a ring to keep the others off."

Instantly the women recognized the voice of authority, and linking their arms in a great oval, two-deep, encircled the carriage and horses. The extraordinary procession began to move. Continually was the dense crowd augmented as it went on; those on the outside breaking down the garden fences and gathering flowers, which they flung singly or in wreaths upon Jack as he sat in new and solitary grandeur, but feeling like a fool nevertheless.

As they entered Queen Street still new accessions to the number of the throng came pouring from every side street, making progress at times almost impossible. The noise was deafening. Jack would have tried to find out the meaning of it all by asking questions of some of the nearest girls, but no voice could be heard in the din. Some were singing hymns, some songs; others were screaming to each other in sheer excitement, or crying with inarticulate, hysterical voices.

Slowly they moved along from Queen Street up the long sloping hill till they reached the Albert Park, where amidst the grass and flowers fresh contingents awaited them. But among all the crowds of women there was never a man.

"What can it mean?" thought Jack. "Ah! I have it. Some awful epidemic of madness has rushed through New Zealand, and driven many of the women crazy. The men have made Auckland a lunacy-quarantine ground, and have all fled to other places. It's just like my luck to have dropped into a Bedlam like this."

They reached the gates of Government House, and Jack's bodyguard fought fiercely to allow the carriage to pass through the gates, but the pressure of the dense excited crowd was too great, and it was only when the frail fences gave way on each side and allowed a wave of humanity to beat across the pleasure grounds under the oak trees, that the carriage was able to proceed to the foot of the entrance steps. Jack got out, and was going to enter the house, when there arose a great cry of entreaty from the masses of the people.

"Oh, *don't* go in yet!" "Don't let him go in!" "Let's look at him a little longer!"

The young man turned round upon the upper step, and waving with his hand, mutely asked for silence.

A solemn hush fell upon the swaying crowd.

"Ladies!" he began; "ladies! fellow-citizens!" They gave him a loud, shrill cheer. "Few men own the power of your sex more fully and earnestly than I do, but at the present moment I am 'embarrassed with my riches.' Will you allow me to ask you to kindly depute one of your number to be a spokesman—that is, a spokeswoman—for the rest. I want to know what is the meaning of this demonstration; I should like to learn what all this fuss is about, and whom you think I am. If you would depute somebody; not a young girl, but a married lady——"

He was interrupted by loud cries of "No! no!" and "Never!" One voice, stronger than the rest, was heard to say, "There are no married ladies here." Jack resumed:

"Then perhaps some elderly widow would——"

The whole assembly was in a moment in intense uproar; cries of rage rang over the sea of tossing arms. The young man stood dumbfounded at the tumult and anger he had evoked. One splendid specimen of a girl, full-grown and well-developed, with dusky hair streaming and bright eyes flashing, sprang up to the steps beside him and raised her arms.

"Hear her!" they cried; "hear her!" and in a few moments became peaceful.

"You heard him ask for a widow!" she shouted. "A widow! If any widow dares to come near him I'll kill her!"

"So will we!" came the infinite chorus. "So will we!"

Jack pushed the girl aside and spoke again:

"Nevertheless, I insist upon it that you select one of your number to confer with me this evening. Unless

this is done I will find some means to disappear again as suddenly as I came. But, rude as my speech may appear, even more than with any member of your sex I should prefer just now to confer with a man."

"With a man!" they cried unanimously, evidently both awe-struck and astonished. "Confer with a man?" Then the girl standing by Jack on the steps turned to him and made the tremendous remark:

"Why, the men are all DEAD; and you are THE ONLY MAN LEFT ALIVE IN THE WORLD!"

IX.

JACK fairly staggered under the blow. He turned, and in a dazed way entered the doorway, and then walked into the first room he could find, which appeared to be a kind of study. He locked the door, and threw himself upon a couch to meditate awhile upon the awful circumstances under which he found himself. The only living man! This explained the frenzied ecstasy of his reception, the deserted country, the unused roads, the wildness of the cattle. How had this dreadful thing come about? What steps would he take in the future? The whole matter was too bewildering for connected thought. All formulas of ordinary life or rules of action were smitten away at a blow. Where was Nelly? Had she survived the perils of the journey, and escaped to a place of refuge with her mother? What would she think of his escape? What could he say to the frantic crowds of women outside? All these questions turned and chased each other over and over through his brain, but nowhere could he find a key to the problem of his future conduct.

His meditation was interrupted by a gentle tapping on the door, and by a voice calling "Sir! Sir!" Without unlocking the door he said, "Who is it?"

"I am Jenny, sir, one of the maids, and I want to know if you will not have some lunch."

Jack went to the door and unlocked it, finding himself confronted by a sprightly maiden dressed in a kind of uniform of blue and scarlet. Her pretty face was a rare compound of pride, shyness, and pleasure. Jack asked her if she could not bring his lunch into the study, and she assented at once. Departing, she returned with another maid, smart as herself, and the two set to work to lay the table, and bring in the food. They set out the table stylishly enough with glass and silver, but the only meat was a roasted fowl. There were no vegetables, and bread was represented by some biscuits. Jack ate his biscuit and fowl, carefully attended by his fluttered companions, who sometimes, as if by accident, touched his fingers in helping him or brushed lightly past him, as if to assure themselves that he was not altogether a child of dreamland. The course of fowl was followed by many different kinds of pastry, but Jack soon satisfied his appetite, and asked the girls to take things away. As they did so, Jenny seemed inclined to linger, and taking advantage of the other girl being absent, slid her arm round his neck, and said:

"Don't forget."

"Forget what?" said Jack.

"Forget that I looked after you first," she said. "You will have to take a wife directly, and remember I am in the running. We are all equals now, though it is my work to look after the house here."

"All right, Jenny," Jack replied. "You are pretty enough for anyone to be proud of, and if you will do something for me, I promise to give you first chance."

Jenny said that she would do whatever he wanted, and Jack continued:

"Do you know where there are any carpenters' tools?"

"Yes; there are some in the back rooms, but they haven't been used for years."

"Never mind that," said the man; "you run and get me a hammer and chisel, and I'll think you the most charming girl in the whole town."

Off ran Jenny, and soon returned bearing a hammer and screw-driver.

"This isn't a chisel, Jenny; a chisel has a sharp edge. But women always drive screws with chisels until the edge breaks. I'll make this do."

"What are you going to do with 'em?" said Jennie.

"I am going to amuse myself for a little while." replied Jack; "but it's a secret, and I'll tell you when you come back directly."

Jenny looked at him half-suspiciously, and said:

"Well, if I go away you'll remember your promise, won't you?" and she moved towards the door, running a caressing hand over his hair as she passed him.

As soon as the maid had left the room Jack again locked the door, and then, with a blow or two, and a wrench of the screw-driver, broke out one of the panels of the door. The noise brought Jenny and her companion back again with alarm on their faces, but Jack looked out laughingly through the empty space of the panel.

"Any food or conversation," he said, "will in future pass through this opening. You don't have me like that again, Miss Jenny."

"You are a mean thing," said Jenny, pouting, and going off with a tossed head. Jack had hardly settled down on a couch and lighted a cigarette before a tapping at the door and faces at the open panel announced visitors.

"You can't come in," said Jack. "This room is *tapu*. Say what you must through the door."

"We are the deputation you asked for this morning," said a voice. "You asked for someone to explain matters to you, and I have been chosen."

"Only one can come in," replied the young man.

"I am not allowed to see you alone," answered the voice. "I am grey-haired and middle-aged, but they will not trust me with you unless two of the younger ladies are with me."

"Will the young ladies promise not to speak?" said Jack. "I will let them in if they only come to play propriety."

"Yes; we promise to be silent," said another feminine voice."

"Then I'll unlock the door," replied the rude fellow.

Thereupon he unlocked the door, and three ladies entered, Jack carefully fastening the lock behind them. He bowed deeply, and then shook hands with his fair visitors, for whom he placed chairs, and they all seated themselves.

"My name is Margaret Henley—*Miss* Henley," said the lady most advanced in years. "This young lady," she continued, pointing to a tall and very handsome dark girl, "is Victoria Stanley. And this is Harriet Longfellow." The last-mentioned was an ordinary lassie, not very fair to look upon, but with a kind and sympathetic expression. They were all evidently highly nervous, and the tremor in Miss Henley's voice was echoed by an answering thrill in Jack's bosom—a feeling that seemed to catch him in the throat when he tried to express pleasure in their visit to him. He asked Miss Henley if she was one of the leaders of the people. She answered:

"I am not in any political position, Mr. ——? I have not the pleasure of knowing your name. When I say pleasure, I assure you that it is not an empty compliment, for we meet under such extraordinary circumstances that the pleasure is almost overwhelming."

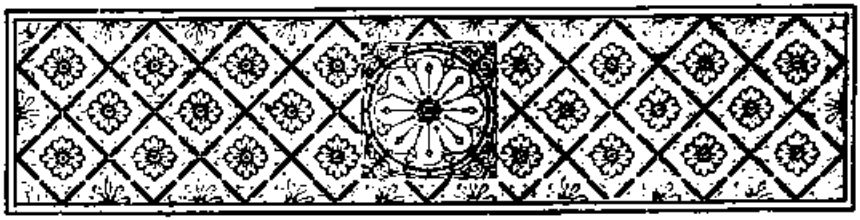
"My name is John Wellesley Wallace," he replied, "commonly known as Jack Wallace. May I ask you to add to your kindness in coming to see me by giving me a brief history of what has taken place?"

"I do not know where to begin," said Miss Henley. "How much do you know? Where have you been? How did you escape?"

"I have been asleep in a cave," Jack answered. "I was sent to sleep by an old native priest (whose name be blessed); he gave me some curious narcotic. But never mind me—I know absolutely nothing. What made the men die?"

"No one knows," said Miss Henley. "Three years ago, on the 4th January, every man and every male child drooped and died in the same hour. They did not suffer, nor was there any external mark or symptom; the life ebbed out of them, and they passed away. No tongue can describe, no mind can picture the fearful vision of the Great Calamity. What it was like in the crowded cities of Europe and Asia I have always shrunk from imagining. Even here, with our small, scattered population, it was awful beyond conception. The women almost universally seemed frenzied with grief and terror; some went raving mad, and many died. When the men went, some of the women tried to bury the bodies, and partly succeeded, but in the towns they could not dig sufficient graves to carry all the corpses. So down on us swept the pestilence to add its horrors and claim new victims. Those who survived fled to the fields and endured the

severity of exposure to the weather. The bulk of the food supply, the meat and vegetables, stopped instantly; only the goods in the shops and stores were available, and these are almost exhausted. Then, from all parts of the country the women and girl-children came trooping in — they could not bear the dreadful solitude of country life in scattered homes. 'Their place was full of ghosts,' they said — for superstition added its evil weight to the burdens already weighing down the poor, hungry, sickening creatures. Efforts were made by many noble-hearted women again and again to organize and equip the better portion of their number to help their weaker sisters, but the difficulties needed not only courage, but herculean strength to overcome. In the constant presence of death, with scenes of maddening misery on every side, there was no one among us strong enough to stem the tide of despair. We have only gone from bad to worse, except in one thing. We managed to cleanse and fumigate the town, and take possession of many of the houses. But our numbers are sadly reduced. With all the crowding into the city of the whole female population of the Province there are now not one-half the people in Auckland that there were four years ago, and, strange to say, we should be thankful if there were fewer still. The vile and criminal section of our women, though few in number, have held high orgie. They gained possession of the chief stores and hotels, and have occupied a whole street, which is now a perfect Alsatia. Luckily they are dying off from the effect of their excesses, but their behaviour and the reckless way they set places on fire if interfered with are causes of anxiety added to our troubles."



X.

"How do you know," said Jack, "that the calamity was as great as you say? It might have been confined to these islands only. There might be plenty of men left in Australia or Europe to fill the vacant places."

"Alas, no," answered Miss Henley. "One of the occupations which women could be found to fill on the sudden demand was that of telegraphist. Some understood the Morse alphabet, and others soon learnt. Messages came in from Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, from all parts of the islands, telling the same story. Then followed the cable flashes from Europe, Asia, and America. For months we had the sad comfort of communicating our woes to each other; but now the wires are down towards the South, and none of us know enough or dare enough to start out into the lonely forest country to put them up. The cable is still working in Wellington between the North and South Islands, but there is no news save of disaster and death. The steamers are rotting at the wharf, or have drifted ashore, for we do not know how to manage them; the railways are idle, for we are afraid to touch them and are doubtful of the bridges. The Maori

women, themselves but few, have been persuaded by bribes, which would once have been of immense value, to carry a letter now and then for us to Taranaki or Wellington. Now to *you* we are all looking. You will be the inspiration that can give the world a chance for life again. See how your coming has put the wine of hope and of life into these poor helpless despairing women, who yesterday were fainting with hopelessness, thinking that each hour the end of the race was drawing near, and that they might as well die now in languorous carelessness as drop off one by one through hunger or natural decay."

"I cannot quite understand," said Jack. "Why should they die of hunger? They could have occupied the near farms in companies; the cattle and sheep were there, and they could have grown enough potatoes and maize and pumpkins to keep themselves alive."

"You would have understood it had you been here," was the rejoinder. "No temperament, however courageous, could have borne up against such a deluge of troubles as overwhelmed us. Herds to be tended and managed by women whose husbands had always done it for them. Fences to be mended, beasts killed, carcases cleaned, roads repaired by those who had known such work only as lookers-on. Fields to be ploughed, crops gathered, flour made in quantities for a large population; all the labour (skilled labour) to be supplied by a sex accustomed to see men, and machines guided by men, conducting such operations. All this was to be begun instantly, and carried on under the wildness of crushing sorrow, of superstitious fear of an angry Heaven, with death and disease everywhere, and the future one great Dread! It could not be done. It was attempted here and there, as I said, by bands of brave women, but they

all broke down, and defeat was universal. Men themselves could not have coped with such a time, until they had somewhat recovered from the immense shock; and *we* have never recovered at all. A noble girl, whose name was Ethel Hammond, made a last and vigorous struggle only six months ago. It seemed as if she was really going to succeed in organising the community to meet the difficulties of the food-supply. She fought through all the petty difficulties, but in consequence of a flood the main sewer of the town accidentally broke in; half Queen Street and the lower town by the wharf became a hideous swamp. She could get no party of followers to face that foul work, and she gave up the struggle."

"I will make a note of *her* name, anyway," said Jack.

Victoria Stanley gave him a sharp suspicious glance, and the other girl flushed.

"Have you no later intelligence from any part of the world?" Jack resumed. "Is Australia not able to get enough clever girls together to work a steamer? Where are the millions of England? What of crowded India?"

"Ah," replied Miss Henley, "there are few left, I fear, in Britain or in India now; England could not feed her own people before the trouble, without food from abroad; plague and famine had swept her numbers down to a few before we ceased to hear. India was one huge grave; there famine and the wild beast were always near, and needed the strong arms of men to keep them back. In the past few years it has become a desolation."

"So will all the rest of the world be," broke in Victoria Stanley, "all places but this favored land,

when one is saved for us, one man's arm holding aloft the hope of life."

Her dark eyes beamed with the light of enthusiasm; she was evidently one of those frank natures in whom freedom of thought was blended with imagination and excitability. But the personality coming from a strange girl towards himself jarred upon Jack, who had old-fashioned notions upon certain subjects, and did not make allowance for the different points of view from which he and she were regarding the matter. She had been through the dismal experiences of despair for many months; she had shared the curious sense of there being but one sex in the world, till that fact alone had become overwhelming and hateful. Now she saw deliverance, and her impulsive nature had loosened her tongue to give utterance to the thought which (shared by all her sisters) was to her not indelicate.

But she flushed crimson as Jack, speaking under the jarring feeling that her speech had aroused in him, said calmly and with a laugh, "Remember the compact; only one speaker."

Victoria looked indignant, and her lip quivered a moment, but she became silent.

"I notice, Miss Henley, that you ladies have adopted the masculine costume."

Miss Henley smiled and said, "Yes, we did that, partly because some of our number had a great fancy for it, partly because we had to work at many rough unpleasant duties that could not be performed in petticoats. It was astonishing how in the matter of dress all the old instincts of vanity started up, even in the midst of distress. I suppose the feeling must be deep in us after so many centuries of considering the subject as important. The pretty girls came out in knicker-

bockers, but others who had not well-shaped legs were dissatisfied. They said that now that distress had made us all equal it was not fair that one should flaunt her personal advantages over the others. So they all came down to a jacket and trousers. Boots were a great trouble; we have exhausted all the women's boots in the shops and factories, and now we are wearing the men's boots. We perhaps could have made some for ourselves, but the supply of hides was short. For clothes we have used up the contents of the stores, and had to fall back upon cutting up our old dresses. I am afraid that you will be very much amused when you see some of us close; we are all right in a crowd, quite picturesque, but you must not examine the details. We could have woven cloth, but the shearing puzzled us, and the sheep are now missing."

"Well," said Jack, "I do not see that things cannot be remedied, if we all work hard and get a little time to turn round in. I must go about the place and inspect the actual condition of the roads, bridges, farms, and other things, so as to see what we can do to get plenty of food for the present and future. I thank you ladies very much for your kindness in coming to see me and telling me what occurred. If I can get Jenny to bring us some wine and refreshments I may perhaps offer you some."

"No," replied Miss Henley, "we do not wish for any. I have done my best to be calm, but I am really too excited to eat or drink. You could not offer us wine; the wine and spirits have all been destroyed. We went round to the hotels and warehouses and emptied the alcoholic drinks into the gutter, because they were a danger to all through the behaviour of the criminal women; and indeed some of the better sort

were beginning to fly to stimulants in their despair. Our mission to you is not yet finished. We, the women, have determined to call a great meeting to-night in the park, and then with all the inhabitants of the city present, you will be elected King."

"What?" said Jack, "King? Nonsense! I am not going to be King or to play the fool in any such way. I can work, and help, and direct affairs just as well with only the position of a citizen."

"You can do nothing of the kind," again broke in Victoria Stanley. "To do any good you will want a supreme authority, and a power which only high position gives."

"Yes," added Miss Henley, "she is quite right. They want to worship you; let them: that is the only way to move them properly. You must not be their equal, there must be no bickerings, no hesitation in carrying out orders, no petty jealousies. You are no common man. No king that has governed among the human race has had so much right as you to be sole and only ruler of his people, for if theirs has been the power of life and death you *are* the life or death of the people in the future. For myself I am old enough to speak very frankly, to say that I like you very much, and feel the utmost confidence and trust in your capacity to organize us again into a civilized community. But in the fact of manhood which is yours, and which makes us look to you with trust, is the weakness that you do not know your future vassals as I know them, so I am bold to offer what I believe is good advice. They will probably have the coronation ceremony the day after to-morrow. The order for the most splendid material for your robes has been given, all are offering their treasures which have been neglected or put away

as too rich for use in the time of calamity, and you will have to look your best."

"I will *not*," said Jack. "This thing finishes it all for me; I won't be a party to such mountebank folly. It is too much altogether."

"Now, Mr. Wallace," resumed Miss Henley, "you have had much patience; have a little more, and I will show you where the good advice I spoke of comes in. After this I shall have to address you with that deep respect and homage which suits with our new conditions. You are going to reign over a peculiar people, a people you can coax into doing anything if you will only study their foibles, and a people with whom you can do nothing if you rouse their obstinacy. They must not be ridden on the curb, but with a very gentle hand; be it as firm as you like. Give way to them in little things which are unessential, then you will get all the great things in their power to give; loyalty, affection, industry, self-abnegation. As to this matter of the coronation, this small matter, which you think ludicrous, but at which none who will be present at it will laugh; let it go on. Humour their love of colour, their pleasure in pretty sights and sounds, and dress, and music; remember that they have been living in the most awful trouble for months and years. Let the pageant be as splendid as their poverty can provide, and that splendour will be like the sun breaking from under the clouds upon their grey monotony of sorrow. Don't let them hear a harsh word, or see a cross look under whatever provocation, and you will have a people of willing devoted slaves, who would give their lives in your service, and serve you as never a king was served before."

"Miss Henley," said Jack, "you are a real immense

Brick; you will pardon the slang, I hope, in consideration of the short time remaining to me in which I may use words under three syllables and not talk of myself as 'we.' I feel that you have spoken the truth, and that if I am to do any good I must have large powers of control. I want you to do one more kindness, however; that is to see that a proper force of your able-bodied women is told off, not only to keep order generally, but to prevent my being mauled about as I was to-day. Some young men may like that sort of thing; I don't; I am one of the hunters, not the hunted. That reminds me, do either of you know a young lady named Nelly Farrell?"

"Farrell? Farrell?" said Miss Henley, "No." The others also shook their heads, but with a suspicious and half-angry look from Victoria toward Jack.

"I do not know the name," continued the elderly lady, "but there are hundreds of women here unknown to me; so many came in from the country districts, and, alas, so many have died. Was she a relative?"

"No," said Jack, proudly, "she was my betrothed, and I shall know no peace till I find her."

"I hope that you will find her," returned Miss Henley.

"*So do I*," said Victoria drily, as she passed the door which Jack had unlocked to allow their egress.

"I wish you and your friend," said Jack to Harriet Longfellow, "would come with me to-morrow, and bring some horses, that we might ride round the place, and that I might see exactly the state of things. I suppose you have horses? there were two with the carriage that met me on my entrance to the town."

"Yes," replied Harriet, her face growing pink on being thus directly addressed for the first time, "Yes,

we will bring a horse for you, and accompany you if the others will let us, but we shall have to slip round to the back entrance I fear. We were in such great straits for meat at one time that it was resolved to kill the horses, but no one would undertake it. We did kill one, but it was a horrid thing to do, and we couldn't get its dreadful skin off, or clean it properly, so we left them alone, and most of them have gone wild, but there are a few left."

"Till to-morrow then," said Jack, bidding farewell to his visitors.

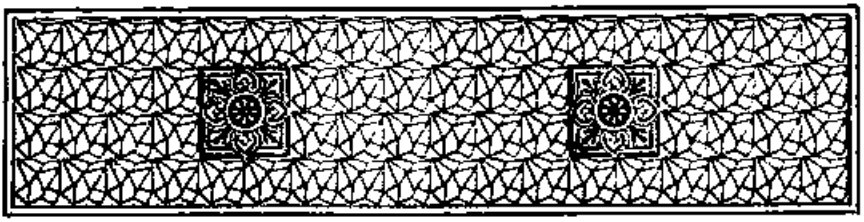
"Won't you come with us *incognito*, and see the great meeting in the Park to-night, when you will be elected King?" Victoria said over her shoulder as she went down the steps.

"No," replied he, "I am tired out, and must have a good sleep; besides I am afraid."

"Afraid, what of?" questioned Victoria, "Of me?"

"Oh no," answered Jack, "of course not of you. Good-bye!" And he went back into the house.

That night he lay upon the sofa wrapped in a rug which had been passed through the vacant panel by Jenny, whose good-natured smiles had re-appeared, and who addressed the future King with some of the reverence which his coming dignity demanded.



XI.

The next morning Harriet and Victoria put in an appearance, mounted, and leading a third horse. They looked rather bashful in appearing before a man, as they were riding cavalier-fashion, but the novelty soon wore off. On Jack asking them if they preferred the side-saddle, they both declared that they did so, but that without a riding habit the side-saddle looked ridiculous, and skirts were not allowed. The girls explained that if they avoided the Park, where most of the women were again assembled, they should not attract remark nor cause a crowd to follow them. They skirted the Supreme Court, and crossing Official Bay, reined up the horses on the long slope which leads from the old site of Fort Britomart to the Wharf. Thence their eyes looked over the desolate morass which extended from Lower Queen Street across Fort Street and the Railway Station. The breaking up of the main sewer along Queen Street had undermined the foundations of numerous houses, which falling in had dammed the flow of storm water from the streets of the upper town. *Debris* had collected everywhere, and immense pools of slime and fetid water had collected on the flat of Fort Street and the reclaimed land

between Shortland Street and the Wharf. Two or three large hotels and Firth's flourmill still stood like islands in the putrid sea, but the Railway Station buildings had fallen in, and rows of trucks and carriages stood like black walls in the mire.

"Little hope of engines and rolling-stock available there," said Jack, all his engineering instincts aroused. "We must search some of the higher workshops and stations."

Seaward all was still. No longer was the beautiful sunny harbour dotted with the white sails of boats, or busy with the continual passing to and fro of the river steamers. A solitary rowing-boat appeared near the North Shore, and this was the only representative of the busy fleet whose vessels once jostled each other at the crowded wharves. A few masts standing above the water, and a small steamer or two ashore and helpless looking, were the only relics of Auckland's merchant shipping. With a sad heart Jack turned his rein, and with his companions rode towards Newmarket. There he was glad to find an engine in fairly decent order and only needing a good overhaul, and several trucks and carriages shunted on to one of the sidings. The riders cantered on to the Onehunga road, as Jack wanted to see the state of the railway-bridges, in the hope of being able to establish communication with the nearer country districts before he undertook the task of replenishing the farms. They rode as far as Otahuhu; Jack dismounting and examining the timber and iron-work of each bridge. In some cases the approaches had been washed away, but most of the trestle-work and solid portions were firm and sound.

As the trio passed on their way they had brief snatches of conversation. "How have you arranged

about money? and how is the social order carried on?" said Jack.

"We don't want money," answered Harriet, "and we have no occasion for it. At first the rich women were able to buy the services of the poorer ones, but that custom soon found a new level. No one felt inclined to save money or to hoard it; for, so far as we could see, there would soon be no one to benefit by it. Those who owned houses insisted on the rent being paid them for a little while, but in most houses the breadwinners were gone; there was no money to pay rents with, and unless the houseowner was very strong and noisy the tenant would not turn out or take any notice. Soon every one, driven by starvation, helped themselves to the things in the shops, to the food and clothes and everything. Of course the greedy ones got most, but it was taken from them if it could not be used at once. Those who hadn't anything got desperate, and forming parties together, helped themselves from the supply of those who had taken too much. I am afraid its a sad and sorry kind of Communism."

"Communism on one leg," suggested Jack. "Have you kept up social ranks at all? How was it I found servants at Government House if you were all in a wild struggle for existence?"

"Oh, we were not very violent, you know. We made lots of tries to get things to rights, and as it was as easy to live in spacious pleasant houses as in bad, we did so, and put caretakers into the large buildings. They would as soon live there as anywhere else, and have kept them clean, because like most decent women they hate to see things dirty. I suppose that under your Majesty's beneficent rule" (here Harriet bowed and laughed) "we shall soon have not only plenty to eat,

but rank and distinction, and perhaps begin the struggle for wealth again."

"I confess I should like to see it begin again here," Jack said; "it would be proof that there was something worth fighting for amongst us, but it will be an immense effort to secure even the necessities of life before we can fight for the luxuries."

The conversation was here interrupted by Jack checking his horse, and disappearing under a bridge. When he emerged he resumed the questioning. "There is one thing I notice; that I haven't seen any dogs. What has become of the dogs?"

"I am ashamed to tell you," answered Miss Stanley; "we've eaten the dogs. It seems horrid, I know, but it was easier to kill them than the big things, and we *were* so hungry—all the cats went too. We have no dogs, but we have lots of fowls. Did'nt you hear the chorus of their voices last night? Everybody has a lot of fowls, and takes the greatest care of them, for they are almost our only animal food; those and eggs and fish. If it hadn't been for the fowls I don't know what we possibly could have lived on. We watch our chickens with intense interest; very selfish interest, I'm afraid. We tried to breed pigs, but had nothing on which to feed them, and when we let them go loose to find their own food they got wild and were too fierce for us to catch. We've made a great many large nets lately, so that we shall not be dependent on the few fish we could get by hook or line. Bread is what we want most, for many of us grow vegetables, and we could get along if we only had bread and more meat."

"We'll have a big try next week," said Jack.

Having reached Onehunga they retraced their steps, and rode past Mount Eden toward the Whau, where,

after examining some distance along the Helensville railway line, Jack expressed himself satisfied with the day's work, and the small cavalcade returned to the city. The few women they had met at a distance did not notice him as a new arrival, and when they were at such close quarters that the fact of his being a male broke upon their astonished senses, they appeared so utterly dumbfounded that Jack rode hastily onward before they recovered from their stupor. Past the once-pleasant homes of the suburbs of Ponsonby and the deserted shops of Newton, past the shady trees of Symonds Street, he rode till he regained his home and Jenny's welcome.

XII.

Next day brought the coronation ceremonies. It was an ordeal so trying for poor Jack that we will omit a detailed description of the proceedings. There were processions and speeches, prayers and blessings, dust, sunshine, flattery, glitter; all things turning about in a great social kaleidoscope of which the after-memory was to him an endless bewilderment. His keen sense of the ludicrous sometimes afflicted him sorely with mockery of his new position; sometimes strengthened him by making him endure with patience what he mentally denounced as "tom-foolery." But he had wit enough to keep his sense of the laughable invisible to the eyes of the adoring throng which was paying him all the honor and devotion in its power. The splendid Weariness came to an end at last, and His Majesty's circlet of diamonds (made of two twisted tiaras) was at least on honest brows. Many a secret vow and fervid resolution did he make in his own heart as to the single purpose and forgetfulness of self which he would show in the cause of these helpless crowds of human beings who looked to him in simplicity as their deliverer and director.

In the afternoon of Coronation Day a proclamation was issued, printed copies of which were posted all over the city, for be it remembered that Auckland had woman-compositors, and though their calling had fallen into disuse, the material was still available. The proclamation set forth that His Majesty directed the attendance of all adults in the Albert Park next day, without exception or excuse; that each should bring a slip of paper on which was the name of the person she desired to represent her in a Convocation or Parliament; that until the Parliament of sixty representatives assembled, the King assumed absolute power, and would maintain it; that it was his intention as soon as possible to divide the population into working parties, and anyone above the age of fifteen years failing to present themselves for registration would be considered as a rebel and treated as a criminal; that His Majesty was convinced that it was only through all working cheerfully and obediently in a common direction that the public safety could be secured, and that there was no reason to believe but that comfort and prosperity would be theirs in the future.

This proclamation brought together the whole of the inhabitants of the city the next morning. They crowded into the Park and its environs, no longer the place of many-hued flowers and plants, which had once made it such a beautiful sauntering-ground beloved of visitors, but now neglected and forlorn-looking. Jack, who had doffed all his finery, stood near one of the gates, and gave orders through some of the most intelligent of the first-comers that the women should form in close ranks. He then went to Government House, and surrounded by a bodyguard which had been selected for him by Miss Henley, returned to the Park. Every one was in

high spirits, and the girls of the bodyguard were inclined to giggle, but Jack soon made them understand that he meant business. They quickly took their tone from him, and became earnest enough, assuming an official air of great importance. Jack asked Miss Henley to introduce some of the women who would be most likely to be of service through their common sense and practical knowledge. With half a dozen of these, accompanied by Victoria Stanley, Jack proceeded up and down the long lines, and selected about two hundred of the most powerful and well-grown women he could discover among the thousands present. These he asked to withdraw apart from the others. He then addressed the remainder, reminding them that obedience was the first and most necessary step toward prosperity. He wished them to separate for a short time into two parties; those who had lived in the town and those used to country life; and requested the country people to move over to the Parnell side of the Park, and there again form in rank, so that they might be counted and organized into companies. Carrying out this request caused a good deal of confusion, but after an hour or two they were again in orderly lines. The country party was evidently the larger of the two. It contained about seven thousand individuals, while the town contingent hardly numbered one thousand. Some of the women, however, were absent in attendance on children and sick people.

Going first to the country party, Jack passed up and down along the ranks, anxiously looking for his lost Nelly; the proclamation having been issued by him partly in hope that if he could gather all the women together he might regain happiness with her

whose memory he held deep within his heart. In vain he gazed, in vain he searched up and down the ranks; one moment with his heart beating fast as he recognized a fancied likeness at a distance, the next with the shadow of disappointment on him as the hope deferred mocked him with the face of a stranger. He had to take up his official duties, so made his hearers a speech in which he desired them to form in companies of a hundred each and elect their officers. He made a similar oration to the town dwellers, asking them in forming their companies to unite if possible according to occupations; those who could manage boats especially to form separate parties. Jack then gathered the two hundred he had first selected from the whole population as choice specimens of womanhood, and taking them to an adjoining paddock told them that he had chosen them to act as constabulary; that hereafter their work would be to see the laws observed that their Parliament would frame; but in the meantime that they must see his orders carried out to the letter, at whatever odds and even at the cost of life itself. He had first in view the reduction of the criminal and disorderly element of which Miss Henley spoke in her historical sketch. There had been really few disorderly women in the town itself, but with the crushing of the population of the small towns into the city many who had hitherto been kept in check by social laws had given way with the withdrawal of all outward discipline, and maddened with despair and hopelessness had joined in frenzied orgies with the women of the worst character. This class of women could only be reduced by force, and it was as a disciplined and organized force that he wished to train his new bevy of constabulary. He commenced

at once to drill them with a few military movements, such as how to step together, form fours, wheel into line, etc. The women picked up the right manner of executing these movements with marvellous quickness, and, delighted to have something definite in the way of duty to do, showed great emulation, appreciating at once the value and beauty of the evolutions. Dismissing them before sunset, Jack hurried back to his house and ate a hasty dinner, then visited the place where the votes for parliamentary representatives were being counted.

The counting, it was evident, would not be finished that evening; it would take two or three days to sort apart the names of the candidates, so the young man put on some old clothes he had procured, and went off to the locomotives at Newmarket. There with the aid of a lantern he went carefully over the stock, making a detailed examination of the parts of the engines most exposed. It was evident that, although there was nothing virtually wrong with the machinery, he would need the aid of more hands than his own to take apart and clean some of the delicate portions. After spending some hours crawling among the wheels and clambering over masses of rubbish, Jack returned dirty, but happy, to his sleeping quarters. On rising, the programme of the preceding day in regard to the duty of his chosen ones was repeated, and a few of the more proficient were selected to drill the others and perfect the movements by instruction in his absence. Turning to Victoria Stanley, to whom he had resolved to give the command, he said, "Where are the rifles?"

"I don't know," she answered, "In the armory, I suppose. The volunteers had rifles, but I think each man had his own, and it would take some time to

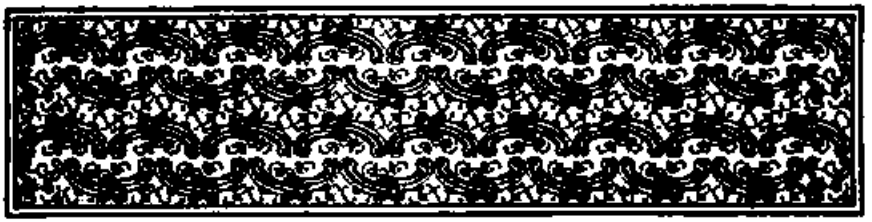
collect them. Women had no use for fire-arms. It's a trial to most of them to 'let off' a gun, much more to hit anything with it."

"Well," said Jack, "you're going to let them off now to some purpose. There must be some guns in the militia store. Pick out fifty of the most resolute of your troops and march them down there."

Victoria stepped forward and picked out her little company, marching them off to the store. They found plenty of rifles, ammunition and accoutrements; then began instructions in their use. The women acquired the art of handling their rifles as quickly as they had the company movements, but the weight of the weapons soon fatigued the unaccustomed muscles of their bearers, although these had been selected for their athletic accomplishments. It would have been foolish to have attempted real precision, as they were unlikely to want to use the rifles in earnest more than once or twice. On the third day Jack led the little company of 'Guards,' as he called them, to the rifle range, and then through a course of blank cartridge he gradually led them up to firing a few rounds of ball without hitting each other or shutting their eyes. The recoil, they complained, hurt them, bruising the tender flesh of the shoulder. Jack saw that they would never become veterans, but sufficient had been learnt for his purpose. Their needles had been diligent also, for they were all clothed by this time in a neat grey uniform with jaunty little forage caps, and formed on parade quite a soldierly company. The fourth day after their formation Jack determined on a *coup-de-main*. After a search he found a quantity of special constables' batons, and with them he armed the hundred-and-fifty of his remaining police, providing them also with a number of pieces of clothes-

line cut into short lengths. Then, placing his company of Guards armed with their rifles at the head of his forces, he marched the whole party to the quarter of the town where one long street with several cross lanes had been wholly given up and relinquished to the criminal or debased women.

Leaving a few constables to guard the ends of the streets, their leader rode through the filthy place, and ordered the denizens to surrender. He was answered with curses, and with numerous bottles and stones flung at him from the windows. To this Jack replied by ordering up the Guards and desiring them to fire at the windows. Half-a-dozen vollies, followed by scattered firing as the troops moved along, finished the battle; through the smashing of broken glass and screams of fright came appeals for mercy. The firing was stopped (nobody being killed on either side) and the inmates of the dwellings were ordered to come forth. The miserable creatures, to the number of one hundred and fifty, appeared and were handed on to the police who securely roped their hands and marched them off to Mount Eden Gaol. They were made to cleanse this building as a first task, and were informed that by the King's orders they were to be utilized the ensuing week as hands on the drainage works, to clear out and rebuild the main sewer, and thus to recover the lower part of the town from its filthy quagmire.



XIII.

The training of the constabulary during the three days had by no means filled in all Jack's hours. In a hundred directions his energies were applied, thinking, acting, teaching both by precept and example. He was about to head an expedition into the neighboring country to endeavor to collect and bring to town some of the scattered flocks and herds. With this end in view, many of the paddocks in the suburbs were full of the country-bred girls practising equitation, furbishing up saddlery, cracking whips, and entering into the spirit of the enterprise with cheery cries and shouts of laughter. Gangs of the town girls were carrying and cutting up firewood, which they stacked in great heaps; firewood procured by pulling down empty and deserted houses and breaking up the timber and planks. Some were cleaning out the hospital, others the Supreme Court, as in the latter the parliamentary sittings were to be held. With the help of Miss Henley and others Jack had drafted the delicate or highly-educated girls to the lighter or more intellectual tasks. The schools were re-opened, the delivery of letters (mainly for official purposes) commenced, chemists' shops and the store of drugs examined.

"We shall want them directly," said Jack, "as soon as we get into swing we shall have a fearful quantity of accidents and casualties."

With this idea in his mind he assembled all those who had been on nursing staffs of hospitals, and the few lady medical students who had been preparing for that profession. These were sent to the hospital and encouraged to resume their studies and their duties with all application in their power. To those young ladies who had taken degrees at the University or shown any aptitude for mathematics, he lectured several times on bridges, earthworks, railway curves, etc., and the stronger members of this class with other women of physical power but less education he took with him to the railway workshops to assist him in taking to pieces and cleaning the locomotive engines. He visited the steamers that had been wrecked or driven ashore. Most of these were useless; only one, a small steamer named the 'Rose Casey,' was safe and sound, stranded in Mechanics' Bay. Her engines were quite in good order, except for the want of cleaning, and he resolved to make a strenuous effort to get her off the shore. He set several gangs at work to clear away the mudbank between the vessel and the water, and as this was heavy and dirty drudgery, the gangs only worked for some two hours at a time, and were relieved in watches. The outside of the vessel was scraped and painted at low water, and the work proceeded by night as well as by day; the darkness lighted by bonfires kept fed with the woodwork brought by the firewood gangs. In the meantime the election-lists had been compared, and Jack was glad to find among the fifty chosen names, those of Miss Henley, Miss Stanley and several others whom he knew. Jack's object in calling this Council was two-

fold; first, because being in favor of free institutions, he thought that his subjects should have a fair opportunity of expressing their sentiments and opinions; secondly and mainly, he wished them to act as a council for himself. He nevertheless did not mean to allow this body for some time to exert any considerable executive powers, believing that for business purposes one head should have control of entire direction. Still he looked forward to the time when he might resign what he considered his 'ridiculous dignity' and become an ordinary citizen, living like the others under a representative government. So he called a meeting of the new Council for three weeks' time, and then turned his thoughts to more pressing concerns.

About a week after the coronation a large cavalcade rode out from the city towards Parnell. It consisted of several hundred horsewomen, while behind them followed a train of carts, and behind these again many hundreds on foot. They passed through Parnell and on towards Drury, their numbers drawing out more and more thinly as the pedestrians flagged. As they passed farm after farm parties of riders turned off to the right and left, and rode away up the country lanes. Soon the cracking of whips might have been heard, and over the fields through broken fences gallopped the country lasses rounding up the timid cattle, some of which were half wild and some wholly so. As the people on foot arrived they were drafted off in tens and dozens to occupy the deserted farm-houses, and the carts plied busily to these re-occupied buildings bearing the edibles that had remained in the country stores. Much of the flour was spoilt and the bags rat-eaten, but there was still some available, while a considerable quantity of wheat and oats would repay the trouble of grinding or bruising for

people whom long abstinence from anything like plenty had robbed of fastidiousness. The main party, with Jack in charge, had pushed on to explore the fertile fields of the Pakapura valley, when an incident occurred which nearly cost their leader his life. He, with Victoria Stanley, Mary Lockwood, and three other girls had been driving a mob of cattle along the Wairoa road when a young bull convoying two heifers, one of them with a calf at her foot, crossed the road. Chase was set up, a headlong delightful gallop across fence and field to the edge of the bush, but the strong bull gained the shelter of the timber and was lost to view. The cow having the calf also eluded them, but the other and the calf were secured and driven back quickly, followed by the enraged mother, whose repeated charges took all the riders knew to elude. So desperate were her attacks that Jack and two others had to devote all their attention and skill to her capture, and at last, close to the trees, they managed to throw her by means of a trailed rope. Jack leapt from his horse and took a turn or two round the animal's legs, crying out to one of the others to send up a cart and that they would carry her. As he stooped down at his work of lashing her legs, his back turned to the bush, he did not perceive the return of the bull, who, with his head low, rushed with great force and incredible swiftness at his human enemy. A cry arose from the throats of the riders, but Jack had not even time to turn his head before the angry beast was upon him. He would certainly have had the short cruel horns crushing through his ribs at the back had not Victoria Stanley, with one convulsive drive of her spurs into her horse's sides, leapt between him and the bull when only a yard of space intervened. Under the belly of Victoria's

horse went the curly frontal of the charging beast; down went Victoria and her steed, down went Jack over the heifer, while the bull turned a complete somersault over the group. In an instant Jack sprang up again, and drawing his revolver fired a shot which struck the bull between the horns as in a slow dazed way the animal staggered to its feet. Down it went again, on its knees this time, and with the blood running from nose and mouth, poor beast, so Jack had to end its misery at once with the knife.

"Thank you very much, Miss Stanley. I won't forget your courage and promptitude to-day," he said to Victoria, who, white and shaken with her heavy fall, was being brushed and petted by the others. "Send the cart," Jack continued, "and two of you come here and help me to skin the bull."

None of them seemed anxious to do this, all wanted to ride off to the cart, so Jack named two of them and made them dismount.

"Bare your arms," he said, "and hold the hide back as I cut." Then followed the revolting work of skinning, and removing the entrails of the bull; the ghastly bleeding carcase looking hideous in the bright sunlight on the pleasant grass. One of the girls fainted, and had to be succeeded by another, then another; they all sickened at the loathsome spectacle.

"I will not! I will not!" said one of them.

"You *shall*, I am determined," replied Jack; "you and others must learn; I cannot be butcher for the whole community. We haven't got vegetarian food for the thousands of people; you are half starved now, and meat must be got. When I return with the herds I will make regular parties take their turns. No humbugging now; lend a hand." The rough side

of his temperament was beginning to show itself, but in reality much of the roughness was assumed, for the work of a butcher was as loathsome to him as to them; but it was so absolutely necessary for the welfare of his project that he was determined to bully if he could succeed no other way. "If any woman or girl won't obey orders," he continued, "I will hand her over to Miss Stanley's charge, and she shall be sent to take her place at the town drainage. She will find that worse than skinning a bullock."

They got through their task at last, the dismembered beast was packed upon a cart, and they all joined the homeward procession. They had spent two nights already on their way, and passed another night at Otahuhu on their return journey, but on the evening of the fourth day those who had remained in Auckland were gladdened by the sight of huge clouds of dust, resonant with the lowing of cattle and bleating of sheep, moving towards the city. Crowds of the town dwellers went out to meet the procession of food-bringers, and, amid songs of rejoicing, the cattle and sheep were secured in safe paddocks.

While they were riding homewards, soon after the time of Jack's narrow escape, he was escorted by several of his guards, Mary Lockwood and Victoria Stanley among them. Victoria said to him, "I could not bear to hear you speak as you did to those girls to-day. I have heard you talk in a stern and peremptory way, and I thought it became you well enough; but this time, if your Majesty will pardon my telling you, I thought you harsh and overbearing. The repugnance of the girls was natural enough; I felt the same disgust to the whole business, and I think you wounded their feelings unnecessarily."

"Not unnecessarily, I hope, Miss Stanley," replied Jack. "It was a cruel necessity; only harsh words and the threat I used would have overcome their dislike of the work. Now, that work has to be done; men have hitherto done it, there is no reason why, when men are absent, women should not do it. The hard rough work of the civilized world was carried on by men; your sex must do it now — or die."

"You speak," said Victoria, resentfully, "as if women had not always done their share of the world's work."

"They may have done their share of the world's work, but they certainly haven't shared the rough unpleasant work. It is not for me to tell *you*, who to-day saved my life, that women are not capable of anything demanding either courage or toil; but, as a general rule, courage has been quite exceptional in their past history, and the toil has been performed by their male relatives."

"Let me tell you, Sir," said Victoria, her eyes now ablaze with anger, "that you are talking like a vain boy. Every woman who has borne a child has faced death as a soldier faces death, and her work in her home has been more long and incessant, if requiring less exertion, than a man's."

"Doubtless you are right, Miss Stanley," Jack replied. "Forgive me for vexing you, to whom I should be saying nothing but words of gratitude."

"Sire, doing my duty requires no thanks; allow me to leave you for a little while." And with cheeks still burning with subdued vexation she dropped behind and rode with one of the other girls.

Jack was left with Mary Lockwood, who took up the conversation. Mary was a very interesting companion, some years older than Victoria Stanley, but still

far from middle age. Her fine face and thoughtful eyes gave promise of a reflective character, which intimate acquaintance with her was sure to confirm. She said, "I am sorry that you vexed Victoria; she is a good warm-hearted girl, but she is a great champion of her sex, and cannot hear their weaknesses exposed. What she says is in one way true enough, men have never given women credit enough for facing the pain and danger which is the lot of married women. I mean that *was* the lot of married women, but neither she nor I nor any other single woman has the right to take much credit for that. Many of us avoided that danger coolly enough when we had the chance of marriage; now, when we would undertake any task, or dare any peril for the sake of a husband or children, those blessings are denied us."

"Why wouldn't you marry?" questioned Jack. "You must have been old enough for marriage before that terrible day three years ago?"

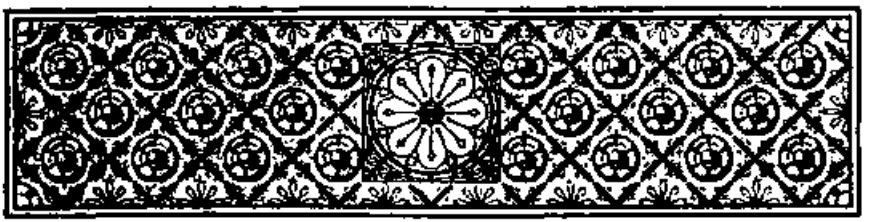
"Well," said Mary Lockwood, "the reason was—because I was a fool. There were many women in those days who would not marry; some from a sense of duties to others, some from delicacy of health, some from a spirit of independence, some because they would only marry for love and the right man didn't come along. None of these women were fools; I *was*. I was a fool because I was led away by the teachings of a clique of hysterical writers who deceived me as well as others; who preached that every bride would take to her bosom a debauched and worthless husband; that all men were selfish, all lustful, most of them brutal; that the pure ethereal wives of these men were fitted to do all things that men could do, and do them better if they had the chance. I believed these

follies; fled to the society of other women and to seclusion, to escape from the loathsome male. Now I see differently. Just as that bleeding carcase had to be skinned by you, so men have been doing our dirty work for ages. The women could eat the beef and mutton at dinner, but must not see the offal removed from the beast; they could wear the silks and laces from overseas, but need not stand lashed to the wheel of the merchantman in the bitter spray. They could sit by the warm fire, without one thought for the man working in the coalpit among the poisonous gas, where human lives are flung aside like withered leaves. Men protected us, worked for us, died for us, and we lied about them. Working women, women who in factories or as servants themselves knew labour, were grateful; but the cultured women *had forgotten how to say 'Thank you!'* That is why I believe that this trouble has come upon us, because we boasted our washing of babies and dusting of bedrooms against the clearers of forests and makers of railways. Now we know better—now that we have got to do it all ourselves."

"You are too hard upon your own sex, Miss Lockwood," said the King. "The women have done the work allotted to them as well as men have done theirs."

"I do not rail at my own sex, but at their latter-day false prophets, their leaders who gave us the phantoms engendered by an idle life upon a morbid brain, as ideals for guidance in a world of whose true aspects they knew nothing, and who taught us ingratitude to our helpers and protectors. For me, my lord, it is only bitterness to look back at myself, and see—a fool."

That night, in the solitude of her bed-chamber, Mary Lockwood paced up and down, her cheeks growing hot as her memory recalled the conversation of the afternoon and the companionship of her manly comrade. "How I hate those leaders of the blind whom once I worshipped," she said, "those sowers of discord between men and women! What if, after love, death had come? I should have had one hour of real breathing life before the darkness fell. Now there can be nothing. How I loathe them, and how I loathe myself! Hateful bosom!" she cried, striking her breast with her open hand, "Bosom sterile to baby fingers and barren of lover's kisses! Would to God that the women had died with the men!"



XIV.

Jack now found that one of the most pressing duties which devolved upon him was to float the 'Rose Casey.' Before the locomotives could be set to work they needed a supply of coal, and the town depôts had been emptied of their last basketful in the scarcity of fuel. He hoped that the line could be opened up to Waikato to tap further supplies, but to reach that point would need some small stock in hand for working necessities. The furnaces of the little steamer could, with some slight alterations, be adapted to the consumption of firewood, but for the locomotives coal was not to be done without. If he could set the steamer afloat he hoped to be able to procure the supplies which had been provided in case of emergency at some of the harbour ports and at small coastal stations. He therefore directed the full force of the labour at his command to the task of floating the vessel.

It was an arduous task. Large bands of women were occupied in driving the teams, or setting up heavy beams of wood and in laying sills and cross-pieces as slides. While they were doing this, Jack was busy cleaning the engines, explaining the use of the various

parts, and the theory of the steam engine to his girl classes. He would work busily at the machinery, then leave the shop and superintend the process of fixing the timbers of derricks and windlasses. He was here, there, and everywhere; now hauling on a rope, now adzing a beam, now aloft fixing a doubtful bearing. With all his care, however, and attempts at ubiquity, the accidents were appalling. The workwomen were never for an hour without an accident, some of them, alas! fatal; several were wounded with adzes and cutting tools, many hurt by the fall of some heavy wooden shears, others by being entangled in the bight of a running rope. Nerve would fail just at the critical moment when some heavy weight was moving into place, and there would be a wild stampede, followed by shrieks, and the carrying of some victim to the ambulance cart. Jack's prognostication about the necessity for a large hospital and nursing staff was sorrowfully fulfilled, and a number of beds were filled with the ship-yard accidents. These were supplemented by victims brought in from the country districts, where they had been hurt by animals, from the yards where cattle and sheep were slaughtered, and from the farriers' shops where the horses were shod. The casualties were enough to make anyone despair, but Jack nerved himself with a resolution, as painful as it was intense, to disregard the present suffering of the few for the ultimate good of the community. He said to himself bitterly that he was a very poor second-hand Providence, but that he must do what he thought right. At the end of several days he found that all was in order, and that the great attempt must be made; so, getting up steam on board and turning it on to the donkey-engine, the signal was given. The seaward cables strained tight, the gangs of women hauled their best and

circled the windlasses, and, with a kind of sighing sound, the gallant little steamer left her bed of repose and with a rush slid onwards to her home in the salt water. Cheers went up; Jack, with the few who had remained on board during the launch, covered the halyards with bunting, and, taking on board a boat-load of admirers, went hither and thither about the harbour. It was a glad moment for all in the town as they stood in groups watching the steamer once more sending its clouds of smoky steam and its shrill whistle abroad in the wind; an omen of brighter days and returning hopefulness. Jack soon found that he could entrust the management of the vessel to others, for many of the girls began to take delight in the machinery, and the navigation (thanks to the yachting habits of Aucklanders) was more familiar to them than to him. Several of them were first-rate local pilots; so, giving them directions as to which places they should search for supplies of coal, he left the care of the vessel in their hands.

About this time Jack was importuned by some of his followers to establish a Court, with titles and order of precedence, etc. They pointed out that a king without a court was an anomaly, that it would add greatly to his prestige to be surrounded by a glittering throng of nobles, and that, as there was no money in circulation, some scheme of reward was necessary for those who distinguished themselves for the public good. Jack answered them by telling them that he wanted no more tinsel about the officials than he could help; that though he was king he had no personal pride at all, and was contented to help them in his dirty dress as an engineer or farmer, as well as in pretty clothes. On being urged still further, he declared that he would leave it to their Parliament to decide if titles were desirable things, but

that all members of the Council should have the prefixed title of Lady. This was to be a temporary honour, suitable for a thorough democracy, as he understood that (in spite of his position) they knew themselves to be. He issued a proclamation to that effect, and hoped that the matter was settled.

Jack was troubled by many such small matters, and his best refuge was in hard material work. One evening, after a long day's toil at the railway workshop, he resolved to take a solitary stroll. Going to his room he attired himself in an ulster-like cloak coming down nearly to his heels, a garb in which, at a little distance, his sex was almost undiscernable; a small cap completed his costume. Rejoicing in his escape to solitude he passed under the deep shadows of the oaks surrounding the Residency, and, dipping the descent to the Strand, ascended Parnell Hill. The moonlight was flooding the air and making the night full of tranquil beauty. Turning to the left, he wandered down to the seashore in St. George's Bay, and there on the grass by the margin of the sea, seated himself in quietude for an hour of dreamy thought. The harbour, empty of passing vessels and boats which had once made it busy, lay stretched before him for miles, only bounded by the triple-peaked volcano which, exhausted of its fires, rose rugged against the horizon. Lonely as the place seemed, he was not its only occupant, for at a few paces from him another figure, its outline black against the high lights from the moon's rays, sat in a brooding attitude by the shore, but so still in its isolation that it was not in any way a disturbing element in the restful scene.

Jack sat awhile watching the long ripples breaking on the sand, twisting their shining silver ribands along the edge of the shore. The last weeks had been so full

of novelty and excitement that every night had found him worn out by excess of feeling and by downright exertion of mind and body, but the peace of the night scene wrought calmness and allowed his contemplation to take the form of connected thought. There was however, no garment of comfort into which he could weave the threads of reflection. The responsibility upon him appeared so vast, the near pressure of immense necessities so imminent, that he hardly dared to venture to face the outlook. Whence was he to procure stores of food for such numbers of people? Many of these works he was himself ignorant how to commence or carry on, although his training and observation had taught him much of others. The burden was enormous, and through the scented air of the summer night a veil of great weakness seemed to fall upon him, half enshrouding his manhood and his faith in the future in its depressing folds. "Where is comfort?" he said, "I feel myself alone in the universe!"

XV.

Half mechanically he felt for the friendly cigarette case, and as he did so the figure near him rose and was about to pass him with a gentle inclination of the head. Jack struck a match and applied it to the end of his cigarette, the light for an instant falling on his face. A piercing shriek made him bound to his feet, and as he stepped towards his unknown companion he saw the slight figure reel as if to fall. Swiftly moving forward he passed his arm round the shoulders of the stranger, and as the hood fell back from her head it revealed the exquisite face of Nelly Farrell. Beside himself with joy and agitation he pressed kisses on the white face and on the lips that quickly grew warm to his. Then ensued such a scene of holy delight and passionate affection as it has seldom been the lot of the sea to witness, although it has seen many visions of parting and despair, of greeting and delight. Almost dumb with the intense satisfaction of love's bodily presence, they murmured and babbled, cooing little foolish words of endearment and inarticulate fondness; they

> "Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
> Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
> Full of music."

It was to them a resurrection of all that life held that was dear and valuable. Time slipped by, and then talk became more coherent, although naturally full of the "I love you, love you," and the "Do you love me?" which is the undying heritage of lovers' conversation through the centuries. At last Jack, spreading his cloak upon the ground, coaxed his new-found sweetheart to seat herself by his side. It needed some little coaxing, for, after all the yielding and abandon of the first delightful moments, there soon sprang up in Nelly's breast the reserve and shyness which a girl feels when she has been for a long time unused to a warm embrace, and perceives the "capture" feeling which haunts the fervid caresses of the masculine lover. Soon, however, she nestled gently to the protecting arm, and began to speak of the strange past.

"Tell me," said Jack, "how you have managed to hide yourself from me? All the time I have been here I have enquired high and low, and no one could tell me of you. I began to think that you must have managed to reach some other place, although they assured me that all the women of the province were gathered here, and I know that you could not have gone through to Taranaki or Wellington. How is it that, when you heard that I had survived, and even had been made king, that you did not fly to my side? You must have known my longing and dreadful anxiety."

"Oh! Jack," said Nelly, "you don't know my trouble; I had forgotten it in the joy of meeting you; but—oh! Jack—my mother—my dear mother—" and she began sobbing bitterly. Jack tried to comfort her and appease her grief, and when she had sufficiently recovered to resume with something like calmness, she continued—"My mother died only last week, and I

knew little of what was going on in the outside world; I could think of nothing but her illness, and then of her death. I was allowed to stay and nurse her in her extremity, so did not go out with the parties of working women."

"Tell me," said Jack, "how was it that you left home? I wandered through the dear old house in absolute despair and fear, not knowing or able to understand what had happened to myself or others."

Nelly then went on to tell him of her having left her betrothed in the care of the old priest, and of her return to her mother's house. "The next morning our two men left with some of the stock which had to be driven to the township, and then they should have returned with some store-cattle. I should have gone to the Maori settlement to learn more about the old man in whose care I had left you, but I could not leave my mother, because she would have been all alone. We waited through the next day and the men did not return; we thought that they must have got drunk, although they were usually very steady men, but when another day passed we began to get anxious. On the third day, just after breakfast, Rhoda Palgrave (do you remember her at the picnic?) came riding up as fast as her horse could gallop. She was very white and looked terrified. She told us that her father and brothers were dead, and all the men on the country side also. She entreated us to leave at once and go with her and the others to Auckland. We could not believe her; mother and I stared at one another in absolute dismay, thinking that Rhoda had been deranged and escaped from a bed of fever or delusion of some kind. But she gave us so many details that conviction came to us, and we decided to go.

My heart was torn in two directions, for my own dear boy was lying ill in the care of an old savage up at the Humming House, and I begged my mother and Rhoda to wait while I got a guide at the Maori village and went to seek you. I called to Netta (you remember my pretty mare, Jack?) and she came running up to me. I saddled her and rode to the *Kainga* to get a guide. To my horror it was deserted! The houses were fastened up and the slip-rails lashed. There were no fires lighted, and the place was empty of living beings. I became half crazed with wondering what to do, for when we had carried you up through the bush, my thoughts had been so full of anxiety for your almost dying state, that I had not taken notice of the way we went. I rode here and there for a time like a mad thing, indeed I began to act like a poor fellow lost in the bush, when he begins to circle, but I suddenly recollected that I was losing my senses, and pursued by this fear I turned and galloped back to the house. Rhoda and I rounded up the buggy horses; we put a little food in the trap and started, thinking that we could get supplies of food from farms on the way. Oh! the horrors of that journey, the dreadful, dreadful, time! We could not go near a house on the road but there we saw some sight that pierced the heart. The sun was bright overhead, but death was everywhere underneath. When we got to Auckland the place was like a pest house and lunatic asylum combined. We had a few noble women amongst us, indeed, noble is a slight and petty word for bravery like theirs. They implored, they threatened, they worked, till they got a number of others to undertake the task of burying the dead bodies. We could not dig graves; the blistered hands and feeble arms soon gave in, but in all the

carts we could muster we carried the bodies to a steep gully and then broke down the sides of the hill on them. When most of this horrible work was done our leaders had utterly collapsed with toil and exhaustion, and things have drifted on from that time till now. Mother and I lived somehow or other until lately, when"——Here she again began to weep. On becoming calm she told Jack that she had lately heard that one man had been discovered, but that, however interested she might have been at another time, she was then so full of her own numbing sorrow that she took no interest in the news, believing that her lover had died years before. "But now," she said, "I have you again darling, and you will take care of me for always and always, won't you? and you will make the sunshine come back, and we will see and love the flowers again. The world can never be so dark and hopeless now, there will be love in it, if it is only for us two and for"—— She stopped suddenly as some thought passed through her mind which made the cheek laid against that of her lover burn hot in the darkness. "Oh," she resumed, "perhaps when you see me by daylight you won't love me Jack; I have got white threads in my hair with all the sorrow and trouble."

"Silver or brouze, it is just as dear to me," Jack replied, pressing his lips gently to his sweetheart's tresses. Then followed words of infinite tenderness and sympathy, soft sentences that soothed her like a charm, and, as the low murmurs fell gently on her ears, she yielded the final proof of love and trust by falling softly asleep in his embrace. The proof of love, because "home," "love," and "peace" are of some unknown but perfect kinship, although their outward attributes may vary and be strange.

"Poor suffering child," mused Jack as he looked down on the sleeping face, it is beauty made infantile by its position and spiritual in the lunar pallor. "What a wonder of wonders is this! Here as we sit, the man guarding the woman in the night, we are an emblem of all that has developed humanity from the germ which also held 'the life of the worm and the fly,' and with us two is not only the emblem of the past, but the actual potency of the race in an endless unimaginable future. Sleep on, light of my soul and hope of the world!"

XVI.

Nelly was established by Jack in a pretty little house, and for a few days he was able to visit her every evening and to enjoy to the utmost the pleasure of renewed intimacy with his betrothed. This was not done, however, without much comment and angry debate among the women, but the rumor of discontent did not reach the ears of the King, whose hours of daylight were filled with a hundred arduous tasks and his evenings with a wealth of delight.

Naturally, he disliked at this time to leave the town for more than a few hours, but another reclaiming expedition was necessary, and was organized with the help of those of the country division who had not taken part in the first exploration. This time they proceeded to occupy the lands about the Whau and Waitakerei, and proceeded to reconnoitre northwards by the Wade towards Mahurangi and Waiwera. Jack was absent for some days, and on his return one evening a great surprise awaited him. He found the Supreme Court brilliantly lighted up, and, on enquiry, learnt that the Council had assembled, and was in full session. So absorbed had he been in the work of re-colonizing the

farm lands that he had forgotten his own proclamation of the day of assembly for the Council. Having had his dinner and changed his dress, Jack resolved to go across and listen to the debate. On enquiry of Jenny what subject was then engaging the attention of the Council, he was told to his horror, that it was "The Royal Marriage Bill," this being deemed the subject of primary importance. He went across to the building wherein his fate was to be decided, and calling one of the officials aside, he instructed her to give him a place where he could hear without attention being attracted to his presence.

He listened for an hour to orations in which the speakers dilated on the course which was evidently marked out for him by Fate, and signified that it was not to be doubted that he would certainly prove worthy of his high calling. They spoke of his courage, his hopefulness, his capacity for work, and his great ability. No one seemed to fear that he would shrink from the honoured responsibility of being the Father of the Nations in the time to come. One speaker feebly essayed to differ on religious grounds concerning polygamy, but was silenced by quotations concerning the family arrangements of Abraham, David and Solomon; and also with arguments that in times of great disaster all rules of artificial morality should give way, and all customary formulæ be suspended for the Perseus who should deliver the Woman-Andromeda from the monster of Extinction.

One of the speeches he particularly noticed was that of a bright sensible-looking girl with a very quiet and assured manner. With little movement or gesture of oratory she addressed herself directly to the President, who proved to be Jack's first friend, Miss Henley, now

Lady Margaret Henley. "On the general principle of the Bill, which only contains one short clause, there can be little discussion or debate. We seem agreed that the King's marriage is absolutely necessary, and there is little dissent on the principal detail, viz.: that the number of those that share his throne shall be twenty in all. Where I see difficulty is in what way can the twenty be chosen without arousing bitter jealousy among the claimants for so great an honor? Shall the decision be left to the King's choice, or shall we choose for him? If we decide on the latter course, what are the rules that should guide the selection? The King may decline to choose, where among so many the choice would be embarrassing and the result appear invidious. It is to this aspect of the question that I invite all the ladies of the Council to direct their attention, and to consider this practical point at issue."

The speaker was succeeded by a dignified woman of middle age but whose attitude expressed much self-consciousness. She spoke with a slight mincing in the pronunciation of her words. "My Lady President," she began, "Lady Hilda Morrison has certainly expressed the sentiments of many of us, and she has made us think of the real subject of discussion, that is, who our future queens shall be. Now, as I have the honor to represent the most exclusive suburb of the city, I may perhaps be allowed to express myself as in favor of the natural leaders of society being appointed to the royal position. Only those familiar with courts and refined circles could possibly satisfy the demands of royal station, and command the respect of the common people, who for years were accustomed to look up to the aristocracy of this colony, and have only forgotten their proper position because of the *bouleversement* of affairs

which followed the great calamity. If the Council will permit me I will act as a committee to nominate the twenty ladies fitted for the high position."

Before the speaker could sit down a girl named Lady Etty Armstrong, a representative of the working women, dashed to her feet and said, "Lady President, have we been called here to be insulted? Shall we have to listen to the old, old sneers in the first hours of the new Council? For years women like her have trampled on us. What are they good for, her and her twenty ladies? They used to think themselves industrious when they ordered a dinner or scolded a servant; now they are no better than we are under our new leader (bless him!) who is determined we shall all work. When the King marries, don't let him marry a doll! Let his brides be chosen from among the healthy well-grown daughters of the people, who have always done their work and kept you from starving. Yes, every one of you! I wouldn't mind if she was a real lady whose people had always been ladies and gentlemen, but her grandfather sold treacle and straw-bonnets ——"

Here the denounced member appealed to the President for protection. "Was she to be defamed and insulted like this? Her grandfather had never sold straw-bonnets; they were straw-hats, and ——"

The President tapped with her hammer and commanded silence. She addressed the Council, and hoped that all personal allusions would cease. At such a time as this, the crisis of the destiny of the future race, they should avoid all littleness, and remember their high mission. She hoped the debate would resume the lofty tone which had distinguished its opening speeches.

Lady Amy Winterfield, B.A., a slight, delicate young lady with a severe face and a thin clear voice, then continued the discussion. "I think," she said, "that in this matter the proposal of neither of the two latter speakers should be entertained. Neither the social position of the once-rich, nor the virtuous perfection of the laboring classes, should be allowed to monopolise the important choice. What is the poor perishing body, the fount of corruption and weakness, compared to the lofty claims of the soul? It is to those who, by the higher culture, have conquered the frailty of the flesh that we should look for the pure spiritual people of the future, ever rising towards a refining away of the grosser particles, and the emancipation of the Ego from the material husk. Let us choose our queens by competitive examination, the twenty with the highest marks to be in the Honours-list of royalty."

"Lady President," said a bright-faced little woman, rising to her feet, "I was about to observe that we haven't decided yet whether the choice should be left to us at all. Now, I think it might be left to *him*, because we all know that he is love with that sweet girl Nelly Farrell."

Here there was a perfect tumult of interruptions and indignant protests. One lady cried, "We will not have other persons' names introduced into the debate." Another said, "She has nothing to do with State affairs at all." "Sit down!" etc., etc.

The President again called the Council to order, and when quiet was restored Lady Ethel Hammond caught the eye of the President.

She had been one of the most notable among those who before Jack's arrival had attempted to reduce matters to order and useful routine. She posed as the

"Princess Ida" of the community, and indeed was fit through her courageous and independent spirit to be a champion and leader of her sex. She said, "It seems to me that we are on ground altogether false and shifting. We have never in any way limited the power of the king; we have no Constitution, and we do not know the boundaries of his jurisdiction or our own. I was always opposed to putting him into an autocratic position; I voted against his election, and I again protest against the supreme position of a man in our woman's world. Why should we willingly put our necks beneath the foot of a single man? (A frivolous member interjected that *he* wouldn't be a single man long.) I, for one, decline to lay down my liberty even before a woman, and we should certainly safeguard ourselves against refusal or disregard of our wishes. Let us pass an Act taking from the king this foolish royalty we have bestowed—(cries of 'Treason!' 'Shame!') and call him the First Consort, or some other title that would imply that the supreme power still rests with the representatives of the people, and that in this plural marriage, as in all else, he is only the servant of the State."

Ethel was followed by an older woman; grave, sententious, and full of dignity. She said, "If, Lady President, I express myself slowly and with difficulty, it is because in the days of my education public speaking was an art unknown to my sex. It has been acquired with great facility and (bowing her head to each side) with much success. I only hope that we may acquire more useful knowledge as quickly and completely. This we can only do by the help of that brave, resolute, and clever man who has been selected by Providence, as well as by the unanimous vote of this people, to be our

guide and ruler. (Cheers.) It is evident to me that the marvellous and terrible series of circumstances which has led us to our present position points out to us that it is we and the King together who must choose. And in this manner should the matter be accomplished: From our thousands we will select one hundred of the most perfect specimens of womanhood in our midst, and these we will present to His Majesty, that from their numbers he may choose the twenty to be honoured with the throne. (Cheers.) Thus shall we all exercise the power of choice. Now, my Lady President, I come to the second part of the subject. Have we any reason to suppose that the King will fall in with our views? I know from the little that I have seen of his temper that he is a downright straightforward man, able to think out his own line of conduct, and to keep to that line unflinchingly if he considers it right. Now, suppose that he insists upon marrying Nelly Farrell, as he openly declares that he will do; suppose that he laughs at our hundred candidates for the royal choice, and declares that he will marry this girl, and this girl only, what then?"

Silence fell upon the assembly for one brief moment, and then a chorus of cries and exclamations filled the Chamber. The excitement grew intense. At last a girl who had not yet spoken stood up and claimed attention. She cried, "I do not talk much generally, but I swear that if the will and purpose of the nation be broken down through the sentimental folly of one woman, I will cut through this difficulty with the dagger of Charlotte Corday!" She was wildly cheered.

The President rose and said, "It is not necessary for us to use strong expressions, or show excitement in a theatrical manner. If such a course becomes necessary,

a State Indictment will be laid against the girl who is the obstacle to our wishes, and it shall be proven that the common good of all is high above private happiness or individual safety. We may consider that question decided; in that direction there is no outlet for the King's wishes to be granted. Let us resume the debate as to the choice of the hundred candidates. For my part ——"

Here Jack, feeling sick at heart as he saw his dreams of domestic happiness melting into air, left the Council Chamber, having had even more than his fill of eloquence.

XVII.

For a long time the King paced up and down his lonely room. He wished to see Nelly and talk with her upon this momentous issue of their lives, but the hour was late, too late for him, with due regard for her delicacy of conduct, to visit her at her home. He therefore despatched one of his officers with a carriage for her, and a request that she would confer a favour upon the King if she would visit him at the Residency in an open and public manner. After some little delay Nelly appeared, looking anxious and distressed at the unusual summons, which, she felt assured, betokened some very grave and unforeseen event at hand. Moreover, rumours (which Jack's absence had prevented him from hearing) had reached her ears, both as to the intentions of the Council and the wishes of the majority of the women, in regard to the royal marriage.

The officers of the household were dismissed, and the betrothed pair held conference in one of the larger drawing-rooms.

"Nelly," said Jack, "I have sent for you in an hour of sore trouble. I have been present at a meeting of the Council, and have listened to

the speeches on the Royal Marriage Bill. I need not tell you in what direction my thoughts have continuously turned; it was always to marriage with you, and to a home wherein nothing could separate us; a home where we might spend the years of our lives in entire sympathy and fellowship. Now I feel that such a home, complete in itself, but shutting out all those not so blest as ourselves, would be but a selfish retreat after all; and I have asked you to come and see me that we might talk the matter over, and choose that which is right."

While he had been speaking, waves of red and white had chased each other over Nelly's face, but her figure seemed to grow proudly rigid as he finished, and she said, with a look of indignation, "I am afraid, Jack, that your being able even to discuss such a matter at all with me shows that you call me to your counsels too late. Are you sure that your effort after 'that which is right' is not to please yourself most after all? Why not say at once that the charms of other women are turning you from me, who have lost many of the graces of girlhood under sorrows too heavy to be borne?"

"The griefs that you wrongly think have marred your beauty have not been of my making, or at all events of my ordering," Jack answered. "I would have given my life to save you from them, as I would give it freely now to save your dear body from one touch of pain."

"My body!" said Nelly, "my body! it is my soul that is wrung by the thought of your desertion, by this trouble worse than has befallen other women. I have lost my home, I have lost my mother, and now I have lost all hope."

"It was the lot of all," replied Jack gloomily. "The calamity was universal."

"Yes," said Nelly, "but their loss was not like mine, for they were numbed as I was by despair. But to me, and to me alone, you came like a god, beckoning me with a finger of light back to life again. Mother and home were replaced by a glorious dream, that I see now was only a deceitful and treacherous dream, for in it I thought that you would fill the place of all those lost dear things, and be to me lover, husband, home, everything and all in one. Oh Jack!" cried the poor tortured girl, "think of what I am suffering now, having believed in you as above all men: nobler, stronger, better, purer than the mass of men—and that this hero of mine was to be full of endless infinite affection for me, and me only. Now I find him to be common clay, tempted by the tinsel of his childish royalty, ready to shut my hope and belief out into blackness for ever, for the sake of the first bold-eyed wanton that throws her arms around him. Help you to do right? You who are ready to thrust aside the holy marriage vows you promised to make to me, and trample on the sacred laws of heaven and earth! Go to your harem, my lord King! I am ashamed for you and for myself; I am utterly, utterly desolate." She broke down into wild sobbing, exhausted with the stormy passion into which she had worked herself while she declaimed her wrongs, and Jack's face darkened as he listened.

"Oh Nelly," he said, "I never saw you give way like this; I never thought your sweet nature had in it such depths of bitter distrust, or that you could scold at me so harshly." He tried to take her hands from her tearful face, but Nelly dashed his touch aside and

refused to be comforted. "Listen, Nelly," he continued, "you spoke of my breaking laws by the marriage the State wishes me to make, but it has always been held that 'the welfare of the people is the supreme law,' and, even in lesser extremities than this, others have had to sacrifice love and life for the sake of their country. I heard speech after speech made to-night in the Council, and against all of them I sullenly rebelled. I heard them prate of duty; a duty that they said I had been selected from among the millions of men to perform, and while my heart and my conscience told me that they were right, I hardened myself and said, 'I will not do this, I will not! let the race end now.' But they used another argument, Nelly, they threatened *you;* they swore that, either by the knife of the avenger or by the State Decree, you should die if you frustrated the will of the people or destroyed the human race by your successful claim upon my selfish affection. If this is so we must bow to the inevitable; what cannot be, cannot be, and it is hopeless to think of the happy home we dreamt of, in the midst of a mutinous and dangerous people. But Nelly, there is another way; be you the first and highest of my queens; you shall reign Lady Paramount, first in the nation as in my heart; first ——"

"If you dare to say another word like that," interrupted Nelly, "I will kill myself before the day breaks. *I* share with others! I— I—" and she broke afresh into a paroxysm of weeping.

There came at this moment a knocking at the outer door, and the chamberlain announced the arrival of a deputation from the Council, if His Majesty would graciously receive it. The King assented, while Nelly with an immense effort composed herself, and withdrew

to one side of the room, turning as well as she could from the glare of the lamps. Three ladies entered; Victoria Stanley, Edith Selwyn, and Kate Mansfield. Victoria addressed the King, and informed him that the President regretted that sudden illness prevented her presence, but that she had requested the present deputation to convey to His Majesty the information that the Council had passed the Royal Marriage Act, and that it now awaited his signature for confirmation. The Council also desired the King to inform them when the necessary ceremonies should take place.

Jack, who still looked stern and moody from the stormy experiences of his scene with Nelly, answered the deputation that he did not intend to affix his signature; that his betrothal to Nelly Farrell had been completed years before, and that if any marriage was in question it would be a marriage with her.

Victoria replied, "I regret very much to appear disrespectful, but the President informs you, Sire, through me, that the matter is no longer debatable. It is the will of the people, and must be obeyed."

At this Jack fairly lost his temper, and uttered a few harsh sounds which appeared to be "swear words." He said, "I will not take a vote of the Council as the voice of the people. I myself will summon a meeting of the citizens, and, telling them the history of my life, ask if it is their desire that this infamous Act be carried into effect. If I won't be married I won't; Council or no Council."

"You talk folly indeed," replied Victoria, hotly. "What right have you, marked out not only as our preserver from hunger and despair, but as the deliverer of your species from death, what right have you to weigh your own private wishes and dislikes against this most magnificent destiny? I and other women are

resigned to stand aside, we will toil and obey and serve our best; content to go down to old age and the grave if we can but know that the great human family will not end at once, and their only evidence in creation be as the fossils in the hills. Is all to be lost for the sake of your fooling with that girl?"

"My dear Lady Victoria," said the King drily, "do I learn from your discourse that you are going to stand aside in the competition for the throne, and that you have no personal interest in this matter?"

Victoria started as if she had been whipped across the face. "Now, for the first time, I have heard you say a cowardly and unmanly thing," she replied; "I could hate you for it," and angry tears of wounded pride started to her eyes. "If you think," she continued, "that I have done this just that I might win *you*, that I have schemed like a petty Miss for your admiration, you are wrong and cruel. I wouldn't have you for my husband if there wasn't another man in the man in the world. There isn't; but I would not marry you if you entreated a million times. May I ask your Majesty's permission to retire?"

"I am sorry I have vexed you with my foolish jest," replied Jack. "Will you be good enough to inform the Council that I will do myself the honour of stating my decision to-morrow."

Victoria bowed deeply and left the room.

When she had disappeared Kate Mansfield addressed Jack, and said, "Sire, you spoke just now of a plebiscite. I can assure you that a plebiscite would result in the prevention of the marriage you wish for, by a thousand votes to one. We all wish for one course of action on your part; every woman amongst us is agreed; and the kindest thing both for yourself and Nelly here (indeed the only thing for her safety)

is to assent to the Marriage Act. Surely it is not so hard! Nelly herself may be one of your queens. Why not? I shall be proud to be the first to pay my homage to her, and she would not in this feel herself, as the other girls will do, sacrificed for State purposes, and risking their lives for the sake of others. I will ask you, Nelly, to join with me, and beseech His Majesty not only to please the people who love and honour him, but to do his duty and forget his own wishes for their sake."

Now, Nelly, after Victoria's tearful defeat and departure, had suffered a revulsion of feeling, and had sat with stony face but melting heart while Kate was speaking. With her fingers twisted together over her heart, and her lips almost as white as her cheek, she rose and went over to the three who stood together in the centre of the lofty room. "If others of my sex," she said, "can forget their own wishes for the sake of all, hardly as you think of me, I can be unselfish too. Here I renounce all claims to my lover; I will not share him with others, nor be one of a herd, coaxing and cajoling for a part of his favors. He shall be free for me, free *from* me, free as if he were dead (her voice failed her for a moment), as I once thought he was, and as *I* wish that I was. But I will stand in his light and in the way of his duty no longer. Good-bye Jack—we two will part now, saying 'farewell for ever,' for even in the world to come you will not be mine. Good-bye!"

And, covering her face, she moved towards the door, while Jack dropped on his knee, and lifting the edge of her cloak, pressed it to his lips, while the tears in his eyes prevented him from seeing her slight form disappear in the doorway. Then he said to Kate Mansfield, "Bring the Act to me; I will sign it."

XVIII.

Nelly had renounced her lover in a moment of high-strung feeling, but in the quiet hours after exaltation was past there came reflections which filled her with sorrow. She did not regret her resolution, nay, she felt assured that if the crisis was again presented her conduct would not be altered. Her tears were not for what she had done, but for what she had lost; for the vision of dear companionship sacrificed, and for her lost illusions concerning husband and children in the future. Now she had to put aside all thought of the strong arm on which to lean; it was hers to face a lonely life, with no outlook save solitary old age, and with death at the end of the vista. She was woman enough, too, to be unable to repress the continually recurring thought, "those other women!" and then to hate herself for smallness and want of sisterly feeling for those who would only do their part for duty's sake. And could she not for duty's sake have been one of them?

"Oh my darling," she cried wildly to herself, "I *could* not, I *could* not; I can give you up, but I cannot share."

Slowly passed the days till the time came when the King had to select his brides from the hundred girls chosen by the Council. Almost the whole population left in the city streamed around the royal residence, for it was a moment of intense interest to all; even those who had no chance of being among the competitors were full of excitement. Nelly did not go out, and she had no friend whose kindly feelings might prompt her to appear and condole with the unhappy girl, so she sat in the shadow of her verandah, praying for deliverance from envy, and calling down blessings on the head of her lost lover, wherever he might be, and whatever he might do. As, late in the afternoon, she sat behind the sun-blinds, she heard in the street the warm greetings of two friends, girls of the operative class, who had approached from opposite directions. They spoke in a curious blending of the cockney dialect with colonial slang, hardening the vowels in the abominable way one now hears amongst uncultured people at every corner.

"Well Jennie," said one voice, "How are you? You were one of the lucky ones, weren't you, and got in to the big show?"

"You bet, Maggie," replied the other voice, "but I wasn't lucky; it was just hard shoving, and I was there from ten in the morning till three in the afternoon sticking to the blooming palings like a hoyster. When the door was opened I fought all I knew to get a place, and a good place I got, but I had to use my elbows and no mistake. I saw all the show anyway, and that's what jolly few did."

"Tell us what 'twas like, Jennie."

"Oh I don't know where to begin. It was all lovely, you know. When we went in there was a lot of empty seats reserved in front for the toffs. After a bit they came in—the Councillors—forty-six of 'em."

"There's fifty Lady Councillors, Jennie."

"Yes, I know, but four of 'em was among the hundred the King had to choose from. Then this hundred come in, and they looked just beautiful; all in white dresses, and with their hair done. Oh Maggie! I haven't had a long gown on for three years, three years—think of that! I *do* think it's hard that we should have to go about in these beastly trousis. Well, they all come in and filled the front seats, looking beautiful, as I said. Oh Maggie, them frocks!"

"Go on, yer fool!" said Maggie.

"Well," Jennie resumed, "then the music struck up, and everybody stood up, and the King come in. My word! he did look splendid; a great big good-looking feller, he is; and he had on a velvet coat and a long cloak, lined with white silk, right down to the ground. He was trying to look chippy, but he seemed to me to be laughing the wrong side of his mouth. The President, she come in with him, and went up with him to the raised place, and the King sat down in a big arm chair which had a curtain, like a bloomin' bedstead, over the top. There was twenty empty chairs up on the raised place, some on one side and some on the other. One girl was a sort of *aid-de-conk*, and she stood up by the King and began to sing out the others' names. When she sung out a name the girl it belonged to come and walked in front of the King and bowed."

"I wouldn't ha' liked that," said Maggie. "How did they take it?"

"Well," answered Jennie, "I couldn't see their faces just when they bowed, cos they had their backs turned, but most of 'em when they went up was as white as death. Some of 'em walked with their eyes down and never raised 'em as I saw, and some'd toss their heads

and walk stiff, and some of 'em wriggled and twisted but most was very white and quiet. I twigged a look between the King and the *aid-de-conk* after about half the girls had gone by, and then I felt sure that they'd got the twenty already. But they all went up and bowed, and then come a sort of pause. Everybody was nervous, and I felt as creepy as anythink. The King was screwing himself up to make a speech—you could see that; but he was awfully twitchy and shaky."

"Why, Jennie, you seem to think he didn't like it. Most of the men I used to know in the old times would have jumped at such a chance. You had to keep 'em off with a broomstick."

"Well, he didn't like it, I know. Margaret Wilson, who's member for our district, says he wanted not to have to choose at all; said it was too much like throwing the handkerchief at kiss-in-the-ring, and that he wanted to take the first twenty on the list whose names went A, B, C, D, and so on, but the Council would not hear of it. They said it wasn't right for him to pass a slight on the girls by not choosing them himself. Well, then he got up and made a little speech, tellin' 'em how highly he thought of 'em for obeying orders and doing what the people considered was their duty; and that he hoped that all who were not chosen would give their support to their queens."

"Was that all, Jennie?"

"No, not quite. He says, 'Let me lead you to your places,' and he steps down from the raised place. The girls whose names had been picked out got out of their chairs, and met him in a little mob. He held out his hand to the nearest one, and that was Victoria Stanley. She was looking splendid, but her face was burning with two red spots. What do you think the

cheeky thing did? She throws back her head and says quite haughty, 'Your Majesty knows that I do not seek this honour.' Lor! you might have heard a pin drop. Some of the girls looked ashamed, and some looked as mad as if they could hit her, but the King looks at her very grave, and, says he, 'Neither your wish nor mine has weight here; it's for the people's good, as you said yourself. Let's try to make the best of it,' or something like that—that's what it meant anyway. So they followed him to the chairs and sat down, and the King said, 'My people, these are your leaders, and their name is Hope.' I don't know what he meant by that, but we all cheered like anythink. And, after he had thanked 'em for accepting the responsibility, we all went away."

"Well, Jennie, I s'pose it's a big responsibility, but I wish I had it."

"Yes, and you would have wished it more, Maggie, if you had seen the King to-day, such a fine chap as he is, in that lovely cloak."

"I don't care about the cloak," said Maggie, "but I do wish I had been one of the girls as was chose; but lor! *we* had no show, we're only ord'nary girls."

"Well," answered Jennie, "if we *are* only ordinary girls, I s'pose we want loving, just as much as other people. It ain't much fun cuddlin' yer piller, is it? Responsibility! why any woman'd take the responsibility of getting married to a real nice chap like 'im; especially if she could wear lace petticoats, and a wedding dress, and a veil, and all that, while the others had to stand round in cloth trowsis. Shall you go and see the weddin', Mag.?

"My word, yes. When is it to be?

"Oh in about ten days; it will be a grand shine I got ter go 'ome, and wash some aprons and things ready for that beastly butchering job I'm sorted out for. So long, Maggie."

XIX.

We must now pass over a short period of time, extending from the summer of the royal marriage, to the spring of the following year. The intervening winter was fortunately very mild, and productive of little hardship to a community which would have felt the vicissitudes of a severe season in a painful way. The return of the sunny time of the year saw a great change in the outward aspect and the inward feeling of the settlement, compared with that which existed at the corresponding date the year before. There were few people remaining in the town itself; the others had made their homes in the suburban and country districts, which were regaining some aspect of their lost prosperity. Vast fields of vegetables were thriving for miles around the city, for on these was reliance mostly placed to furnish the standard food-supply. To these were added the sheep and cattle, drafted into town from the farms and out-settlements; the women having taken to the agricultural and pastoral employments with a vim and success not to be expected from a people that had seemed so dispirited and despairing a few months before. The smoke of the daily train, northward to Helensville, and southward to Waikato,

might be seen upon the air, for after months of hard work the line as far as the Huntly mines had been cleared and re-established, thus producing sufficient fuel for locomotives and for the use of townspeople. Unfortunately the trains had to be mostly used for the conveyance of passengers and stock: the supply of breadstuffs had not been such as to freight the train, though already a thousand fields were springing with the soft green shoots of the growing grain, promising a bounteous harvest in the coming autumn. The ploughing and coal-mining had been two of the occupations which Jack had found it difficult to get women to undertake; only the strongest were fit to fulfil such duties, and they had often to be relieved and their work changed. But perseverance was not lacking, and some even found in the danger and exertion a rude pleasure which they preferred to more tame or frivolous occupations. The harbour was dotted with fishing-boats, in which "the harvest of the sea" was gathered in a systematic and organized fashion, for this was by no means a minor item in the industries which supplied the town. The streets were again lighted with gas, although most of the shops were closed, those which were open being mere depôts for the supply of articles issued by the governing powers to all, according to the stock in hand. Occasionally the little steamer might be seen rounding the North Head as she made her way to Warkworth or Whangarei or the Thames, places in which small colonies had been re-established, and which depended on the steamer for communication. The lower part of the town had resumed its old appearance, the prison labour having succeeded in restoring the drainage; and, except for the generally-deserted air of the streets, there was little alteration from the former appearance of the city.

Carrying out these improvements had caused Jack months of excessive application of head and hand. He had thrown himself heart and soul into the work of creation and reformation, sparing neither himself nor others in the task set before him. He had left the town itself mainly to the guidance of the Council, while he, after the first two or three months, had spent his time wholly in the country, working at the railways, instructing in farm work and mining, and in re-capturing from nature the lands once cultivated. He had allotted to each of the royal ladies a separate establishment in a large hotel, the empty rooms being re-furnished and brightened up. In some one of these each queen had her small court of guards and attendants; the guards merely for the purpose of displaying the exalted position of their mistresses, the attendants carefully selected as the most prudent and watchful custodians of a precious charge. One rule was invariable — the King never appeared in public with any of these ladies; the suggestion of "the harem" was offensive to him, and, although his polygamy was as orthodox here as in Turkey or any Eastern country, he and his consorts agreed by common unuttered consent to ignore the existence of the absent.

One evening in December Jack entered the town after dark. He was very tired, and wished to quietly reach his rooms at the Residency without attracting notice, so pulled his hat well down over his eyes, and took a way which avoided the main street. He noticed as he neared the gate of his house that a steady stream of people was pouring into the Albert Park, and desiring to know what public function was proceeding, he joined their number. On arriving, he found a large crowd gathered in silent groups about the central fountain.

They appeared to be awaiting the arrival of some one or expecting an announcement, and he would have liked to ask some bystander what was the occasion of the assembly, but he feared lest his masculine voice would instantly have betrayed him, and shrank from the demonstration which would follow the discovery of his presence. So he sat down in the moonlight on the stone steps which led to the upper walk, and rested in silence.

Suddenly there was a stir among one of the larger groups, as, with a bright flash cleaving the night, a cannon roared across the park, and a red flag floated up on the flagstaff. The whole assembly burst out into wild cries of delight; the women embraced each other, weeping and singing in a manner which reminded him of his first reception among them, but this latter demonstration was in a quieter fashion.

"What does it mean?" he asked a woman near him.

"Mean?" she cried, "mean? Don't you see the red flag?"

"Yes, of course," he said, "but what does *that* mean?"

"A BOY!" she cried, "a boy, a beautiful boy for us!"

"What is the mother's name?" he questioned.

"Why, Lady Victoria, your Majesty," answered the woman, recognising the King.

Jack hastened away to the residence of his son's mother, wishing to be one of the first to pay her honour and sympathy in that proud moment of her weakness and her strength.

Among no community has a baby ever met with such adoration and worship as fell to the lot of that favoured infant during the next few days. In a nation

of women *the only baby;* the only baby in the world; their future King! What a quintessence of infantile attraction! What processions of tender eyes passed before the morsel of humanity in its veils of lace; what reverent hands were allowed as the highest honour to touch or hold it for a moment!

But its solitary reign was brief, for, two days after its birth, another gun thundered over the town, and another red flag gave its joyful message to a delighted populace. Before another week a blue flag, with the disappointing news of a girl-baby's advent, joined the two red ones on the high flagstaff.

XX.

WHEN the first-born was about three weeks old, Jack was sitting in one of the drawing-rooms of Victoria's residence, watching the beautiful delicate-looking young mother lying upon a sofa with her boy in her arms. One of the attendants brought a message to the King that two Maori women wished to see him; and the King, anxious to receive letters from the south, and hoping that these had been the bearers of such letters through the native country, answered that they could be admitted to the room he was then in. The two women entered, and, after a few words of greeting, informed him that they were a deputation. They represented, they said, the women of the native race. They were the original owners of New Zealand. They heard that the King had taken many wives, as was the olden custom befitting great chiefs. They therefore requested that one or two of their noblest young women might be added to the number of the royal wives, and that thus the blood of an ancient race would not become extinct and sink into the ground.

The King listened with a lowering face, and then said between his teeth "D—n it, Victoria: this is too much. I won't stand it."

"Be gentle, Jack," replied Victoria, "don't be rough with the poor things; put them off somehow, and temporize."

"Well," said Jack, "I hope you will be proud of your colleagues." Then, turning to the Maoris, he said, "Please convey my thanks to your countrywomen for the honour, but pressure of State affairs prevents my acceding to their request at present. I hope, however, to visit your settlements in an expedition which I am about to undertake in the effort to reach Wellington, and we will then confer on the subject. In the meantime I will keep your request steadily in view."

The Maoris retired, but in a dissatisfied way, and not without one or two sulkily-jealous glances at the new baby.

Hardly had they left the chamber when the Lady President of the Council was announced. She greeted the King and Queen respectfully, and looked at the little Prince with melting eyes. Then she addressed Jack, and said, "Sire, I have some important news. The Maori women, before they came to you, brought letters from the south for me. These letters tell me that the women of Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin have heard of your survival and your marriage. They desire that they also should be represented in the royal establishment, and a large deputation of their most eligible young ladies is now on its way through the native country. They were also able to communicate with Australia and to impart the news to that continent. The intelligence has awakened a new spirit in the Australian colonies, and a large vessel is being manned and provisioned by them in hope of reaching New Zealand. It will contain deputations from Queensland, New South Wales, South ——"

"Great Heaven!" said Jack. "Good-bye, Victoria! I'm off!" and like a flash he disappeared through the doorway.

* * * *

That evening, as Nelly sat in her lonely home, she was startled to hear the tread of a quick heavy step on the verandah—a sound produced by no feminine foot. With a swift impulsive movement she opened the door, and admitted the King, unaccompanied by his usual staff of officials.

Jack said, "Nelly, may I come in?"

Nelly, with a trembling and agitated voice, answered "I— I don't know."

"Well, Nelly, I must come in," said Jack. "I have to say something upon which your fate and mine, and indeed the fate of us all, depend." He came into the room, and while Nelly sank upon a chair, exhausted by a flood of emotion, he continued, "I have for a long time borne separation from you and association with others, upheld by an overmastering feeling of my duty towards these thousands of helpless women, and inspired by the idea that it was cowardice on my part to run away from my position, when I alone had been reserved to be the protector and sustainer of a race almost annihilated. A crisis has, however, arrived." He then proceeded to unfold to her the news which had reached him that afternoon. He proceeded, "Under this new calamity, this weight of numbers claiming my rule over other realms, my direction of large populations, my meeting even greater difficulties than I have yet had

to encounter; under all this I break down and despair. I will struggle no more, but yield at once. In some solitude, some isolated nook of forest or shore, I will withdraw from life, and let what *will* come, come. Shall I go unfriended and alone? To you, to you I look, love of my heart, unforgotten, never wavered from in spirit, and ask of you the redemption of the promise made to me in the old happy days."

"Ah," said Nelly, "many things have happened since the old happy days."

"I know, said Jack, possessing himself of one shaking little hand, "I know, and *you* know, also, how mighty have been the forces which have united to drift us two apart, but I feel strong when with you to meet and overcome them. Before I saw this country, I visited a little island near Fiji. It was a lovely place, with groves of coco-palms and a spring of water. It was only visited by the natives now and then for the purpose of procuring coco-nuts for making copra, and now of course is utterly deserted. Let us go there, Nelly, you and I, and create a new Paradise. Under the palm-shadows we will make our simple home, and forget in the peace of mornings that break in endless summer all the trials and disappointment entailed in the struggle of many human beings to keep the life of civilization moving in the old grooves. If you consent, I will have the little steamer ready to-morrow, manned by a few faithful women whom I have ventured to approach on this subject, and who will cast in their lots with us. Nelly, let us fly to happiness together."

"Oh Jack!" said Nelly, "have you in your heart of hearts counted the cost? Can you leave the flattery and worship of all these women, the power you wield over them, the half-finished work of their industrial

redemption — and all for one poor weak girl? You would repent, and then I should be lost indeed. You mean it now, I feel sure, but if you should look from under the empty calm of the palm trees and think of all you have left, and fret for one of those others (ay, those *mothers)* then I too should be the unhappiest of living creatures, knowing that for me was the great scheme abandoned, and all for nought."

"No, Nelly, that is not so," answered Jack. "I have not told you how I have fretted already; how among those sweet women who have given themselves whole-souled for the sake of a great cause, I, half-hearted and pining for one only, for one absent, have felt like a traitor and a coward. Night and day your face shone before my eyes, till life ached with longing. I threw myself into hard work. I have worked savagely, exhaustingly, to get a respite from the hungry insatiable craving after the one woman in the world to whom I had been plighted, and who had plighted her word to me." He had got hold of both hands by this time, and the electric vitality of his passion quivering along every nerve, thrilled through and captured her bodily senses as his words of pleading overcame her mental resistance.

"If for my sake," she said solemnly, with lips that quivered, "if for my sake you will forego all and 'cleave to me only, so long as we both shall live,' I will forget everything but the promise that I made to you long ago, and we will sail away to your lonely Eden." Then lips and hearts ratified the treaty, and when Jack left the cottage he walked with form elate, and a step that told of hope and confidence renewed.

XXI.

That eventful morning broke clear and cloudless; a true New Zealand day, with a "champagne atmosphere" above green land and sapphire sea. Nelly was busy from before the dawn, packing up her small wardrobe and leaving her cottage in a state of spotless cleanliness. The hours passed slowly until nearly noon, when she began to grow excited, and fear that the design of flight had been discovered and intercepted by some unforeseen misfortune. Just before twelve o'clock she heard the jingle of the royal escort, and the King arrived in his carriage. Telling two of the orderlies to place the luggage in the vehicle, Jack jumped out, and, with delight shining in his eyes, assisted Nelly to enter. This was not done without exciting the attention of the escort, the members of which at first looked on with considerable surprise, changing with feminine quickness into distrust and then comprehension. Swift glances passed from one to another when Jack gave the order "To the Wharf," and, as they clattered off, two or three closed in together and began to whisper. Jack stood up in the carriage, and with an angry voice ordered them to attend to their

duty. They separated, and rode on in their proper places for a little distance, till Jack, who seemed to have an eye on every side, saw two of them suddenly wheel as if to gallop down a side street. In an instant he drew a revolver, and cried out, "Back to your places, or I fire!" when they again fell into order, sulkily, and proceeded.

Jack hurriedly explained to Nelly that the night before he had expressed to his household his intention of trying a longer cruise than usual in the steamer; that her destination was Napier, perhaps eventually Wellington. That with this expressed intention he had caused a number of the boat-women to work all night at putting stores of every kind on board, including many things hardly necessary for a coastal voyage, but which, as they were packed in cases, excited no suspicion. He had racked his brain to try to think of everything likely to be of use to them in their future isolation.

Just as he had proceeded thus far in his narrative the horse of one of the advance guards went heavily down, and the rider lay apparently unconscious. Jack jumped out, and felt the pulse of the sufferer, but did not appear to sympathize so much with the victim of the accident as did her comrades, who unanimously urged that she should be left to recover.

"I think not," said Jack, "I was watching her the moment before the horse went down, and I do not think she fell heavily. It will be better to take her with us in the carriage, and one of you can lead her horse. It would be cruel to leave her to ride to the barracks unassisted, as I feel sure she would attempt to do if we left her."

The young soldier was then lifted into the carriage, and soon recovered her senses on finding that her daring little *ruse* had failed. When they reached the wharf they found a police guard (placed by Jack) across the entrance; except for this there was no sign of anything unusual in the quiet place. The little steamer was lying at her berth, sending up a thin column of white steam into the still air. Her young captain met the King at the gangway, and saluted him as he went on board with Nelly. Some of the sailor-lasses carried the luggage and rugs from the carriage, unassisted by the escort, who one by one slipped away up the wharf, and were evidently off to give the alarm. Jack ordered the captain to "Let go!" the warps were drawn on board, and the vessel moved out into the stream.

As the shore receded Nelly touched the arm of her lover, who was looking sadly and solemnly towards the town. "Jack," she said, "do you regret? It is not too late."

"No," he replied, "my darling, my wife, long promised and won at last; regret and I have parted company for ever. I was only thinking how ungrateful I must seem to those who did so much for me; but I should be still more ungrateful if I forgot for an instant your forgiving affection and self-sacrifice."

He passed his arm through Nelly's, and together they watched the shore as it seemed to move along. Nelly took up a binocular for a last look as they passed the railway station, and at that moment the sound of a heavy gun boomed over their heads from Albert Park.

"They have discovered our escape!" said Jack. "That will alarm the town."

"I don't think so," answered Nelly. "It is a — another red flag going up on the flag-staff, Jack."

"Is it?" said Jack. "Poor — little — devil!"

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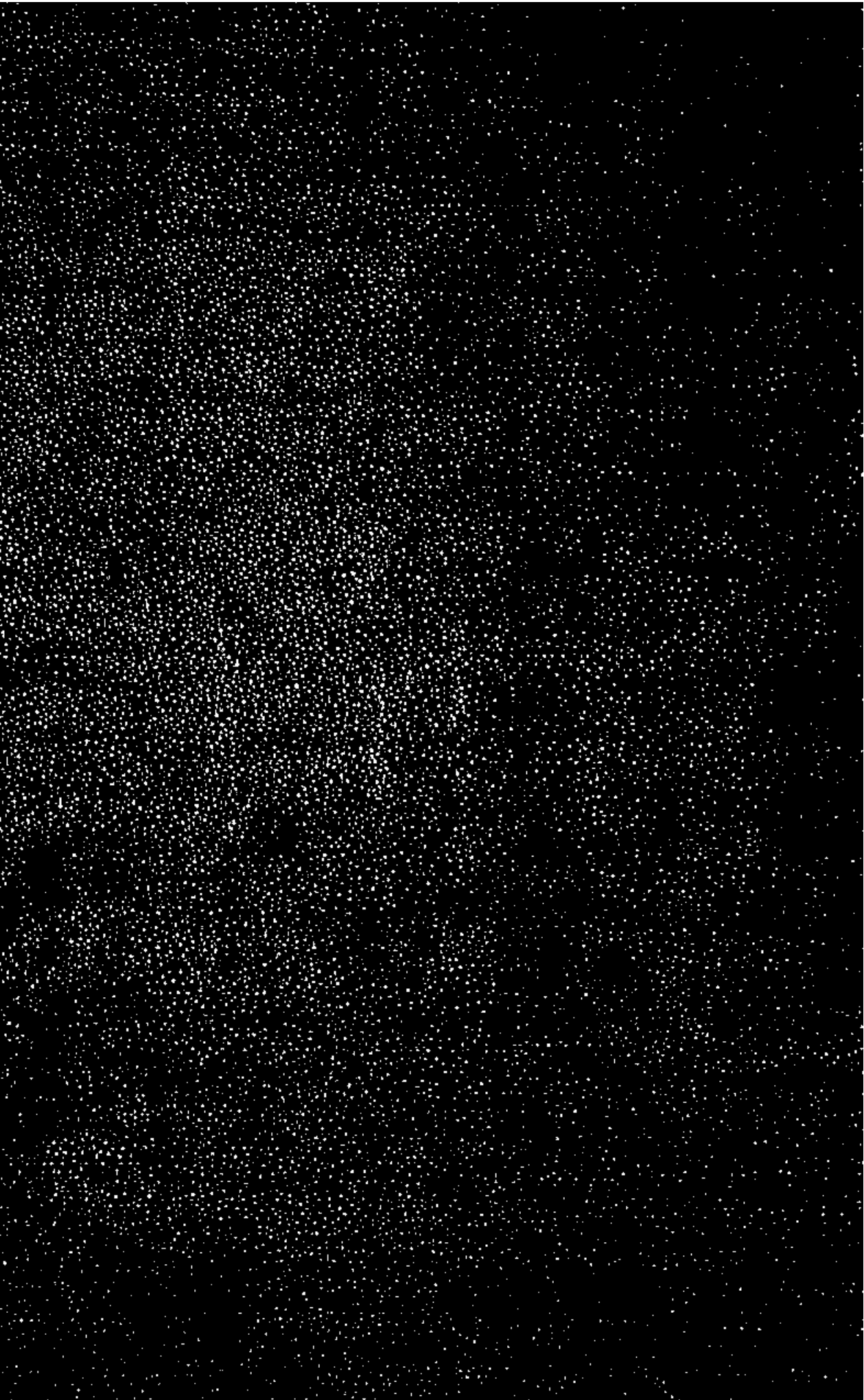
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