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A Bride from the Desert

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Grant Allen

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A BRIDE FROM THE DESERT

BY

GRANT ALLEN

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN WHO DID"

NEW YORK

R. F. FENNO & COMPANY

112 FIFTH AVENUE

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A BRIDE FROM THE DESERT.

CHAPTER I.

OFF CAPE GUARDAFUI.

It was the quarter-deck of the steamer Lord Mayo, from Bombay to Southampton, and they were passing Cape Guardafui, the easternmost point of Africa, near the entrance to the Red Sea, and the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. Mona Wallace, in a light wrap, was sitting there with her friend and chaperon, Mrs. D'Arcy, wife of the Deputy Collector of the Moozuffernugger district. I apologize for the name, I admit—Moozuffernugger is such a terrible mouthful—but the people of India, not I, are responsible for that atrocity. The evening was fine and soft, but still tolerably cool, at least as one counts coolness off the east coast of Africa. The men were strolling up and down the quar-

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ter-deck after dinner, enjoying their cigarettes and the fresh breeze from eastward. The ladies were lounging at ease in long wicker chairs, and watching the stars come out one by one in the pale sky above them.

"Beautiful evening!" said the women, looking up at the countless host of heaven.

"Beautiful evening!" echoed the men, striking a fresh wax vesta, and looking down at their boots, as they puffed away vigorously at the cigarettes they were lighting.

For it's the way of women to look up on their path through life; while it's the way of men to look down, or, at the very best, to look round about them.

"To-morrow morning," Mona Wallace observed at last, wreathing her loose, white woolen shawl lightly about her hatless head, "we shall get to Aden."

"If nothing happens to us meanwhile," the croaky old gentleman in the pith helmet interposed, with a very wise nod. "Most dangerous coast, this—most dangerous—most dangerous. And if once you run ashore—click, click; click, click. Nothing but *this* to expect from those wretched Somanlis." And the croaky old gentleman drew his open hand across his throat with a gently gurgling noise, intended to represent with dramatic force the probable action of

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a knife in the hands of some wild Somanli tribesman..

"Don't take any notice of him, dear!" Mrs. D'Arcy murmured to Mona, half under her breath. "He's a born pessimist in his way, that funny old doctor. He's never so happy as when he's predicting the very worst that can possibly happen to one, which is a very good plan, after all, when one comes to think of it; for it saves one a great many serious disappointments. . . . But why are you always so anxious to know when we get to Aden, I wonder? Is there anybody there, by any chance, you're particularly anxious should come down to meet you?"

Mrs. D'Arcy spoke archly, for, though only thirty-five, she was an old hand at the arts and crafts of India. And there was something in the ingenuous eagerness of Mona Wallace's tone whenever she spoke of their arrival at Aden that made her friend and chaperon suspect at least a flirtation, if not even a more serious and full-fledged love affair.

As for Mona, being just nineteen, she was still too innocent, poor girl, to conceal her feelings. So she blushed crimson to her finger-tips at the point-blank question—so crimson, indeed, that Mrs. D'Arcy could distinguish the change of color clearly even in the pale grey light of evening. "No; nobody in particular," she stam-

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mered out, half betraying herself as she spoke. "At least . . . that is to say. . . . Well, Wilfrid Moyle's there, don't you know. You remember, of course, about Wilfrid Moyle? I'm sure you must have heard Geraldine speak of him often."

Geraldine was Mona's married sister at Moozuffernugger, to whom she had been paying a long visit in what is politely known in India as "the cool season." The younger bachelors on board, indeed, somewhat rudely described their pretty fellow-passenger as a "returned empty," which is the vulgar and reprehensible Anglo-India name for any marriageable girl who runs out to Calcutta or Bombay on a visit, and then goes back unmarried; for so conceited is that noble specimen of our race and culture, the covenanted civil servant in up-country stations, that he fancies every woman who comes within fifty miles of his distinguished presence must be devoured with the insane and incomprehensible ambition of winning him for her husband. It was strange, however, that anybody, even a Deputy Collector—that perfect embodiment of the purest cynicism—could look at Mona Wallace's frank young face, and yet credit her for a moment with such a fatuous endeavor. Just turned nineteen, and as fresh as an English primrose, Mona possessed that crowing charm

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of utter feminine unconsciousness, which puts the last finishing touch of perfection on a pretty girl's prettiness. So Mrs. D'Arcy thought, as she gazed admiringly at her blushing charge, with that tell-tale crimson spot starring the very centre of her soft round cheek. "Oho," she said quietly, in a low, still voice, "so that's how the wind blows, is it, Mona? But, my dear, if I understood Geraldine right, this Mr. Moyle is nothing but a common soldier."

"He's our rector's son at Whittingham," Mona answered, bridling up with very pretty indignation. "And he's a Rugby boy, and an Oxford man, and a perfect gentleman."

"But he ran away from home and enlisted, didn't he?" Mrs. D'Arcy persisted, drawing her on, of malice prepense, and tapping one pretty little foot half impatiently on the quarter-deck. As a conscientious chaperon, the Deputy Collector's wife desired to find out how far things had gone already between Mona Wallace and this very undesirable and ineligible young man, before deciding whether or not she'd allow her to see him at Aden.

Mona spoke up bravely, like a solider's daughter and sister that she was, in defense of her friend. "His father and he had differences," she said, still bridling, "about his expenses at Oxford. I believe Mr. Moyle's a

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very strict man—clergymen sometimes *are* with their sons, you know—and Wilfrid was high-spirited and full of energy, and couldn't bear to be kept down. So at last, when he'd taken his degree, he didn't like to be ordained, as his father wished, because he felt he had no special call for the Church; and there I think he was quite right, you know, though his uncle Fred would have given him a fat family living. But Wilfrid said no man ought to go into the Church just for the sake of the loaves and fishes; he wouldn't take orders as a mere means of livelihood—nor at all—unless he was really convinced he had a vocation that way, instead of which, as it happened, he'd always had a burning desire for entering the army. And as he was too old to get a commission in the regular course, why, he did what he could, and enlisted as a private. And now he means to work his way up till he's promoted from the ranks; and he *will* do it, too, of that I'm certain, for he has plenty of pluck, and perseverance, and energy.

"I see," Mrs. D'Arcy said blandly, smiling the wise little smile of the comely British matron, as Mona ceased abruptly, quite flushed with her enthusiasm. "And now, dear, how long has this been going on between you and Wilfrid?"

Mona looked up at her astonished.

"How long has *what* been going on?" she

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asked, in a little tremor of surprise. For how on earth could Mrs. D'Arcy have discovered her secret?

"Why, this nice little correspondence," Mrs. D'Arcy answered, nodding her sapient, small head with a very conscious smile. "This pleasing interchange of opinions and ideas with Wilfrid on the suject of Wilfrid's career, and Wilfrid's probable prospects."

"There's been *no* correspondence," Mona answered sincerely, like one who means it. "I've never written a line to him, and he's never written a line to me. He told us all this in a letter to Geraldine."

"Oh, indeed," Mrs. D'Arcy echoed, more amused than before, "in a letter to Geraldine, was it? And Geraldine went and showed the letter to you! That was very unwise of her. A romantic girl like you, with her head stuffed as full as it can hold of nonsense. I should have expected a little more common sense from Geraldine." She paused for a moment, and tapped her tiny foot on the quarter-deck once more. Then she added, still more archly, "And was Wilfrid, as you call him, often in the habit of writing to Geraldine?"

"Not very," Mona replied, feeling still on the defensive. "That is to say—not oftener than once every four or five weeks or so."

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"And you speak of him as Wilfrid?" Mrs. D'Arcy mused softly.

"He's a very old friend," Mona answered with an evasive air. "We've all called him Wilfrid ever since we were children at Whittingham together."

"Not so very long since, either!" Mrs. D'Arcy remarked, smiling. "Well, and he went and enlisted in the South Gloucestershire regiment, did he? And he's quartered now at Aden. And you'll be there to-morrow. How oddly things turn out to be sure. What a curious coincidence!"

But before Mrs. D'Arcy had time to moralize any further on this strange disposition of mundane events, one of the bachelor civilians, his cigarette now finished, strolled up casually to their sides, and bending low to the acknowledged belle of the ship, said with a self-satisfied smirk, "Will you take a few turns up and down the deck before you go below for the night, Miss Wallace?"

Mona rose hastily to accept his offered arm, well pleased at the diversion, for she didn't quite like to hear Mrs. D'Arcy talk so lightly as that of her poor friend Wilfrid.

Not that they were *engaged*, of course; oh, dear no, not engaged. But still, Mona admitted, half-shamefacedly to herself, she was really

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very fond indeed of Wilfrid. She would never accept any other man till Wilfrid was at least in a position to ask her. And he would be, some day. She felt sure of that. Wilfrid would rise; he would conquer all difficulties. He was a good fellow at heart, common soldier or not, and she believed he loved her. Though he'd never said so, to be sure; he'd never quite *said* so; but looks mean often far more than words, and Mona believed Wilfrid Moyle's looks. She was certain he would come home some day to claim her.

They lingered long on deck that evening, pacing up and down, the bachelor civilian and Mona Wallace, for it was a tempting night, and nobody was in any hurry to go below from that soft, fresh air to the stuffy confinement of a stateroom in the Indian Ocean. It can be pretty hot, I can tell you, between decks when it tries, off the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. As they walked up and down they caught from time to time vague murmurs of a conversation going briskly on upon the bridge, between the captain of the ship and the second officer. It was a nautical conversation, of no general interest. It seemed to have something to do with the course the Lord Mayo was taking.

"What land's that ahead?" the Captain asked sharply, looking out past the bows into the dim,

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starlit night—for there was no moon as yet. "Oughtn't to be any land so high, surely, anywhere hereabouts, Talbot."

"No, sir," the second officer answered, staring ahead in his turn, and shading his eyes carefully from the glare of the starboard light. "I can't make it out at all. Looks precious unfamiliar. The coast seems to have gone wrong on our port bow somehow. Isn't that an island, too, on our weather side? No island over there. No right to be an island. But perhaps it's only clouds. We shall make it all out better when the moon rises."

The captain tramped up and down the bridge in evident doubt. "Very queer," he said slowly, taking a glance at his compass as he passed, with a puzzled and screwed-up face. "Left the Guardafui light behind more than a knot and a half. We're making about fourteen knots an hour now. Shouldn't be any land in front at all. Never heard of anything so odd in my born days. Nothing wrong with the compass. We're steering the straight course right enough for Aden."

"Must be clouds, sir," the second officer suggested, scrutinizing the binnacle in turn, and scanning the horizon hard. Then he shouted aloud to the look-out man in the forecastle, "Do you make that out dust-storm or only fog-bank to starboard, Jenkins?"

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"Neither, sir," the man answered, suddenly, with a somewhat tremulous voice. "Breakers on the port bow—high land on starboard. . . . Hold hard! . . . What's this? . . . We're out of our course, sir! Look out! Breakers ahead! Breakers ahead on all sides of us!"

The captain gave a start. His face turned white as a sheet. "I tell you what it is, Talbot," he cried, seizing the officer's arm and gripping it hard, "that wasn't the Guardafui light we passed a while ago at all. We've been shamefully taken in. These Somanlis have been tricking us. It must have been a false light on a point a good bit south by west of Guardafui. Those are mountains in front. We're in for a pretty mess." His hand touched the electric bell with a quick signal to the engine-room. He rang twice; then three times. "Easy! Stop her! Back her!"

It wasn't a moment too soon. Even Mona Wallace, pausing all unconcerned on the civilian's arm, saw a white line of breakers just abreast of their bow, lighted up by a dim beam from the green and red lamps of the steamer's signals. In another second, with marvellous speed, the engines had slowed—stopped dead short—reversed. Mrs. D'Arcy ran up with a face like a ghost's. "Where are we?" she cried, terrified. "Oh, Mona—Mr. Walters—what does

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all this mean?—what's happening?—what's happened?"

The civilian tried to assume a very calm air of superior masculine wisdom. "We've got out of our course somehow," he answered, with an easy wave of the hand. "There were breakers ahead. But we're reversing now. In another half-minute we shall be well in the open again."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when —crash—b'r'r—unspeakable—a shock jarred and vibrated with a roll-like thunder through the Lord Mayo's hull. It was resonant, deafening. Mona clung wildly to the civilian's arm. Mrs. D'Arcy clung wildly to Mona's woollen shawl. There was a moment's pause; then a cry of sharp alarm went up as if by concert from a dozen lips at once: "We've struck on a rock! She's parting amidships!"

In a second all was hurry, confusion, turmoil, excitement. Mona felt her heart come up into her mouth as, time after time, the great waves lifted the Lord Mayo aloft on their curling crests, and then pounded her down again remorselessly upon the huge reef that produced them. On the bridge the Captain still stood erect and unmoved, commanding, in the midst of it all, with the calm bravery of tried and trusted seamanship. "Man the boats! Lower them! Three

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more in number two! Stop there! No one else! Now go! Steady, boys, steady!" His voice was as free from any quiver of fear, as if he were engaged in entering a friendly port. But on the shore just beyond, gazing blankly through the gloom, Mona dimly descried a terrible sight that made her full heart first quail and then stand still with terror within her—a sight a thousand times worse than the sea or the breakers.

For on the beach, right in front, she could make out with her sharp eyes row upon row of dusky faces, girt round with white hoods, and draped below in long, Arab robes, just visible in grey line against the darker background. Here and there among the groups flitted still duskier, and almost unclad figures; in the rear, many bare heads of negro warriors made themselves vaguely felt more by motion and turmoil than by any visible color. All alike were gazing eagerly in front of them, at the sinking ship. Not a hand was stretched to save; not a voice was raised to cheer them. Low murmurs and hoarse curses rose faintly, at times above the roar and crash of the curling waves. But that was all. With a shudder of horror Mona recognized what it all meant. They had fallen into the cruel and remorseless hands of Arab and African wreckers.

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CHAPTER II

LANDING AT MATAFU.

On shore meanwhile, that night, there were fierce joy and hushed suspense, in a certain Somanli village among the fanatic band of Mahdist and Wahabee warriors. A strange intoxication of religious frenzy had broken like a flood over the whole east coast of Africa. For those were the days just after the fall of Khartoum; and dervishes from the Mahdi's camp—wild preachers of a Holy War—scattered east and west north and south to spread the tidings of his victory, had stirred up the savage tribesmen with their fiery words to an extraordinary pitch of bigotry and enthusiasm. Incredible rumors spread like wildfire through the bazaars. The day of revenge had come. The infidels were to be extirpated. Allah in his mercy had been pleased to begin the regeneration of Islam. The Mahdi, his prophet, had slain Gordon Pasha, the great leader of the Nazarenes—the viper of mankind—and cut off five hundred thousand of the enemy's army. The Feringhees, the Eng-

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lish, the despised and hated Franks, had been delivered into his hands to slay and spare not. Elsewhere, men said in those days, the Mussulman faith was equally active. Another great mutiny had broken out in the Land of Hind. The Faithful of Agra and Delhi, it was whispered abroad, had risen in their might, like a strong man refreshed, and flung the generals of the unbelievers, as in 1857, into the wells and ditches. No tale was too wild or too fantastic for these naked devotees to swallow whole. They were drunk with Moslem zeal ; they were maddened and stung by unearthly visions.

On this particular evening, then, when the Lord Mayo hove in sight upon the gray horizon, at first a mere long, black line of trailing smoke, then a great hull dimly descried amid the dark waves to eastward—Hadji Daood of Nejd, one of the fiercest and wildest of the Mahdi's emissaries, was haranguing a villageful of Somanli warriors in battle array, under a spreading baobab.

"There is no God but Allah," he cried, with his black locks streaming free in the evening breeze, and his tawny breast bare, like an ascetic that he was.

"No God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet. And as Mohammed was in days gone by, so is now in the ends of the earth his suc-

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cessor, the Mahdi. Who would earn the joys of Paradise, who would enter into his rest, who would sup with the houris in the bowers of bliss —that man must cast in his lot with the Mahdi to-day in the great and terrible fight for Islam. This is a Jehad, a Holy War, a war of extermination. No infidel on earth must be left alive. Slay, slay, and spare not. Slay man, woman and child. Slay every Frank, every Nazarene on whom you can lay your hand. This is Allah's command. It is Allah who has willed it. Now is his chosen time. Now is his day of vengeance. Death, death to the Giaour—man, woman and child—and let the Faithful of Islam inherit the kingdom !"

Even as he shrieked out these fiery words, writhing his body, and foaming fiercely at the mouth, he drew his gleaming knife, and gashed his own bare flesh with the blade till the blood flowed from the wound freely. "So must we shed our blood," he cried, clapping his hand to the gash, and holding it up before their eyes all red and dripping. "So must we pour forth our blood, if we would be true to Islam and inherit Paradise."

At the word one of his followers stretched his hand towards the horizon.

"It is well !" he cried. See, see ! A ship !

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They are coming. Allah sends them to our shore! One of the steamers of the infidel!"

The dervish turned round and stared hard at it with eyes starting wildly from his head.

"Good, good," he murmured, half to himself. "*He* speaks true indeed. This is the finger of Allah. . . . I know that ship well. I know who sail upon her. . . . She comes from the land of India. Those are fugitives from Bombay, from Delhi, from Hyderabad. The Moslems of Sind and the Moslems of Hind have rallied to the Prophet and to the Mahdi his messenger. They have cut every throat of the Nazarenes in Calcutta. A miserable remnant alone has escaped from the massacre. They sail on that ship. And even those our Allah has sent hither for us to plunder."

At the sound of that fierce hint, which promised them not only Paradise, but present and temporal booty, the Somanlis with one accord shouted,

"How, how, O Dervish?"

Hadji Daood of Nejd paused for one oratorical moment to survey, with a quiet smile, the fierce mass of eager eyes and mouths and upturned faces before him. Then he continued, with slow emphasis,

"A light. A false light. A revolving light.

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Let it lead them astray. Let them take it for Cape Guardafui."

At the suggestion, a wild shout of joy went careering through all that tumultuous crowd.

"Hadji Daood speaks well!" they cried. "He speaks well, by Allah. Quick, quick! A false light! Raise it high on the headland. To the glory of Allah! To the safety of Islam!"

In a minute or two the whole surging mob had rushed headlong to the top of the jutting cliff,and reared up on a low whitewashed and flat-roofed house a tall frame of big timbers, tied loosely together. Then, with a few square mirrors, collected hastily from the women's quarters, and a great ball of pitched tow, steeped through and through in petroleum, they manufactured in an incredibly short space of time a very tolerable imitation of the Guardafui lighthouse. Hadji Daood was the proud possessor of a European watch—looted some weeks before from the dead body of an English officer at Khartoum. By its aid the savage wreckers shifted the mirrors at intervals of three minutes, so as to mimic the revolving light on the one recognized headland of the ocean highway. It was an ingenious enough imitation to deceive the captain of the Lord Mayo himself; all the more so as lights are few and far between indeed on that desert stretch of wild African coastland.

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As the vessel, attracted by the false glare, began to alter her course and steam ahead towards the sunken rocks, the savage joy of the Somanlis knew no bounds or limits. Drunk and mad with frenzy, they shouted and danced in their delight; they hugged and embraced one another in perfect transports of exultation.

The doomed steamer moved rapidly along the coast to northward. The Somanlis, following hard on their Arab leaders, bounded barefoot over the dry rocks at the top of their mad speed and pressed after her frantically, round steep capes and short headlands. Just as she struck the reef, in front of their own village, they reached the shore beside her: panting and breathless. But with deep sighs of savage relief those hot and eager barbarians stood still and watched her. Not a word was spoken aloud for awhile, lest the infidels should hear and escape their clutches; but between their clenched teeth the Somanlis muttered to themselves, in the double delight of the wrecker and the religious fanatic, "Allah be praised! The infidels are doomed. This night they shall all stand at the judgment-seat of Allah!"

One by one the boats put off from the ship and approached the shore cautiously. Not a few of the passengers, in the hurry and confusion of the moment, flung themselves in their

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terror from the deck upon the tender mercies of the water. As for these, the great waves caught them up like so many toys, and dashed them resistlessly on the reef with tremendous force, pounding all semblance of life out of them in a very few seconds. But the others in the first-manned boat, mounting the wave as it swept in, reached the beach in safety—before they perceived the dark line of grim and silent Somanlis ranged in a row to receive them. In an instant a dozen black hands clutched at the gunwale at once; with a loud cry of triumph the negroes seized her and hauled her ashore, and raised her far above the reach of the incoming breakers. Then several of them sprang fiercely upon her like a tiger upon its prey, while others, thirsting for still more blood, rushed headlong into the water, at the imminent risk of their lives, to seize the second boat as she came in the self-same way, and drag her helplessly forward to the slaughter-house of the landing-place.

In the second boat were Mrs. D'Arcy and Mona Wallace.

As they rose on the crest of the wave, the sailors with one accord hanging hard upon their oars, a horrible sight met their eyes through the thick gloom of evening. Mona was the first to perceive it, and to interpret its meaning

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aright. With a quick shudder of horror she clutched with her hand the nearest sailor's arm. "Look, look!" she cried, spasmodically, pointing forward with one finger. "We can't land here! Just see what the natives are doing! See their guns and their knives! They're massacring them! They're killing them!"

From the stern, through the grey dusk, the officer in charge, looking ahead as she spoke, caught a glimpse of the savages bearing down with wild cries upon the occupants of the first boat that had reached the shore, and hacking them to pieces in cold blood with clubs and daggers and cutlasses. It was a ghastly scene. Blood flowed like water. As he looked, the officer's heart stood still with horror. He took it all in at a glance—treachery, murder, indiscriminate massacre. Three or four dozen half-naked, black barbarians, with uplifted weapons and white teeth grinning, were beating out the brains or cutting the throats of those defenceless Europeans in a mad orgie of fanaticism, lust of blood and ferocity. As fast as they killed them they flung the dead bodies out, like so many carcasses, on the sand of the beach. Even in that uncertain light, the officer could make out there great pools of clotted gore; above the roar of the breakers, he could hear the loud cries and panic-stricken groans of the unhappy victims.

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"Back water!" he cried to the sailors, waving his hand behind him. "For your lives, men, back water! These brutes here will murder us!"

But it was all too late. They stood poised on the crest of the wave now, and no human force could avail to save them. With all their might and main, straining hard their practised muscles against the fierce flow of the in-rolling water, the sailors tried their best to stem the deadly flood and hold her back from the beach. But the breakers were too much for them. Steadily and resistlessly the great moving mass carried them in on its summit, and with a thundering thud dug their bow into the foreshore. At once a dozen black hands were stretched out, as if by magic, to clutch at the gunwale; a dozen black arms hauled them eagerly up to the same blood-stained berth on the high bank of shingle. Mrs. D'Arcy shrieked aloud. Mona hid her face and trembled. But the officer in charge, like a true-born Englishman, thought first of his duty, even in that supreme hour of death and danger. Rising up in his place as the boat poised herself for one second on the crest of the wave, just before the negroes caught her, he shouted at the very top of his voice, as only a seaman can shout, to the handful of men still left on the deck:

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"For Heaven's sake, land no more, boats! The Somanlis are killing us. Take care of your own lives. Put out to sea for Aden, and send troops to avenge us!"

It was all he had time to say. Scarcely were the words well out of his mouth when those blood-begrimed black hands seized the gunwale by the bows; and the occupants of the boat felt themselves drawn hastily up by twenty strong black arms to the high ridge of shingle. Then in the glare of the torches began once more a ghastly carnival of slaughter. Mona cowered close to Mrs. D'Arcy and shut her eyes tight with terror, bending her head to await the fatal blow she felt sure was coming. Mrs. D'Arcy held her little friend's hand clasped in hers, and with her lips closed hard, sat bolt upright in her place, prepared to die like a true-hearted English woman. For a minute or two they sat still there, and felt as if the bitterness of death were surely past. Then a horrible noise fell on Mona's ear; she knew perfectly what it was; some savage had cleft their officer's skull in two, and that sound was the swish of the short sword crashing through it. Something hot and thick spattered on her cheek at the self same moment; that was the officer's blood spurting fresh from the wound, and sprinkled all around him. Mona cowered and shrank, and drew her breath even

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deeper and slower than before. Would her turn come next? . . . Would her turn never come? . . . How long did the savages mean to continue this unspeakable torture?

One by one, the Somanlis fell fiercely on the men in the boat and killed them. They mangled them in their rage; they hacked the lifeless bodies with strange curses into a thousand pieces. Only the women now remained, and one or two of those too the savages hewed dowu with remorseless weapons. At last there came a lull, they paused for a moment and spoke hastily with one another. Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy could not hear or understand the words they said, but even in the vague terror of that awful hour they were dimly aware from the varying tones of expostulation and rage that the Somanlis were discussing or quarreling among themselves. One loud voice in particular gave command above the rest. It was a guttural Arab voice, very clear and imperative—it belonged, in point of fact, to Hadji Daood of Nejd, the Mahdi's dervish.

"Kill all! Kill all!" it said in strident Arabic. "This is a Holy War! Kill every man, woman, or child of the infidels?"

Mona shuddered as she heard. Though she understood not a single word of that hateful tongue, she felt sure from the very tone and

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manner of his speech that the person in command was exhorting his followers to go on and murder them.

But still, for some unknown reason, the Somanlis hesitated. Their first wild thirst for blood was partially satisfied now; their very arms were tired; and their cupidity and love of plunder were beginning to assert themselves. "The women are good marketable, personable bodies," one naked wretch said, eyeing them askance, as they crouched there in speechless terror. "Very sound young women! They'd fetch a good price. Why waste and destroy such good, useful cattle?"

For to your African a woman is as much a piece of goods as a cow or a camel.

But Hadji Daood of Nejd was not a man to be gainsaid or to stick at trifles.

"Allah has willed it," he cried aloud, stepping forward himself, and lifting his own curved sword to strike the deadly blow. "This is a Holy War. Death, death to the infidels!"

He swung it round with a loud swish, ready to bring it down with terrible effect on Mona's defenceless head. But even before he could do so, half-a-dozen black Somanlis, now eager for gain, interposed their strong arms to prevent such culpable waste of good saleworthy slave stuff. "No, no," one naked warrior cried, push-

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ing back the Hadji by main force from his expected prey. "She's ours. We captured her. You shall not hurt one hair of our women's heads. Allah has drunk enough infidel blood for one day already. These are booty, booty! We want them to sell. We'll take them up country to the Imam of Daro. The Imam buys fair. He'll pay us a good price, we know, for two handsome women from the land of the infidels!"

For a minute or two after that there was tumult on the shore—much noise of dispute—much loud babble of voices. What exactly it all meant Mona had no idea; but she knew, at least, the black men and the brown were disputing hotly over their heads, and that the black, in the end, seemed to get the best of it. Suddenly, as they disputed and waxed hot in their quarrel, something fresh seemed to break in upon the discussion and upset their plans. The two white women, all spattered with blood and trembling with emotion, were left alone for several seconds on the high shingle bank by a general rush backwards. Apparently, the men had bethought themselves of the wreck once more. The voice of the Hadji was again raised in loud tones above the dull roar of the breakers. "Man the boat!" he cried aloud in very sonorous Arabic. "These other infidels are escap-

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ing ; we must cut off their retreat ! If once they get away alive and safe to Aden, they'll rouse all the bad powers of the Franks against us !"

What it meant Mona, of course, didn't at all understand. But she saw that at his word of command the Somanlis, rushing forward, began to haul down the first of the Lord Mayo's boats that had come ashore, and to take their places on the thwarts, and fix the oars in the rowlocks. There was a second's pause : then the Hadji, stepping in, took his place at the tiller, and gave in one loud word, the order, " Forward !" It sounded almost like Italian, she thought, *avanti*, or something of that sort. At the sound a dozen black arms pushed the boat to sea stoutly on the favoring undertow of a refluent wave. Many of the negroes, indeed, ran in far by the side, pushing hard as they ran ; the next wave caught them up, and pitched them landward again, shrieking. Meanwhile the Somanlis in the boat, plying their oars by the shore with the dexterous skill of practised surfmen, ran her out fast over the flats, taking advantage of each back current to carry them on across the shallows. There was a pause of suspense. In a minute they were out of sight, and all around was still again.

Then Mona knew where and why they had

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gone. They had started in hot pursuit of the last boat from the Lord Mayo.

And she and Mrs. D'Arcy sat huddled together in a heap upon the blood-stained beach, alone with a dozen or so of half-naked black Africans, beside the hacked and bleeding and mutilated corpses of their murdered fellow-countrymen. It was a ghastly sight. They hid their faces in their hands, and refused to behold it.

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CHAPTER III.

AWAY TO ADEN!

The third and largest boat that put off from the wreck, was the only one of the lot that carried firearms. It was armed to the teeth, in fact. The captain, last of the officers, as usual, to quit the deck of the sinking steamer, had taken the precaution of slipping his revolver into his pocket before he left the ship; and several of the sailors had provided themselves hastily in the hurry of the moment with knives or short cutlasses. In the first alarm of the grounding, indeed, the one thought of the authorities had been to get the women and children and the elder passengers into the boats with safety; the immediate danger from the sea was too fierce and too pressing to allow time for reflection on the remoter danger of hostilities from those wild and savage African tribesmen. But as soon as the passengers had all been safely housed, and the boats had been lowered in due course from the davits, the captain bethought him on a sudden, of the less obvious risk.

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"Take your arms, men," he cried. "Jones, get out the revolvers. These brutes may attack us and prevent us from landing. We must be prepared for the worst. We may have to fight for the women and children."

Before they left the deck, however, a warning voice from the crest of the wave had reached them where they stood—the voice of the first officer standing up in his place and shouting above the roar of these deafening breakers, as only a sailor can shout:

"Land no more boats. The Somanlis' are killing us. Take care of your own lives. Put out to sea to Aden, and send troops to avenge us!"

Thus warned the captain looked ahead, and peering deep through the gloom, saw aghast with his own eyes, the horrible tragedy that was being enacted then and there on the high beach before him. It was useless to interpose; so much, he saw at a glance. Most, if not all of his passengers were already massacred in cold blood by those infuriated savages; the mere handful of men he had left with him on the ship, if they tried to land at all in the face of such an armed mob could only share the fate of their unhappy countrymen. The disproportion in numbers was simply overwhelming. There remained but one chance now, as the first officer

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said, to make straight for Aden, and rouse to revenge the British garrison. They would be pursued, of course, perhaps overtaken and slaughtered; but their sole hope of safety, all the same, lay there; they must put straight out to sea and grope their way across the water in an open boat to Aden.

In three minutes the sailors were fully armed for a fight; the boat was manned and lowered, and impelled by sturdy British arms over the unruffled sea, was making off at full speed, from the scene of that deadly massacre.

Perhaps if they'd known that Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy sat crouching there still on the blood-stained beach, between little pools of gore in abject misery, they might have landed in spite of everything and sold their lives dear in defence of their countrywomen. But even if they had, it would have availed them little. The savages, fifty to one, could have overpowered them at a blow by mere numerical superiority. In their present drunken rage of fanaticism and bloodthirstiness, no power on earth would have restrained them from attacking the infidel; they would have blotted out the Lord Mayo's crew from the face of the earth as ruthlessly as a farmer destroys a brood of rats in an infested rick-yard.

For three or four minutes the Englishmen

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rowed on across the bay unperceived. The quarrel with the Hadji over Mona's fate and Mrs. D'Arcy's kept the Somanlis for the time being from perceiving their departure. At the end of that short breathing space, however, a loud shout from shoreward rent the sky. They knew well what it meant. It was the Hadji exhorting his pack of wolves to man the boat and follow them. Two minutes later a dark object glided out past the wreck upon the gray waters of the bay. A boat had been launched! It was hand to hand now! The Somanlis were after them!

Then began a fierce and exciting chase over the still evening waters, the Englishmen at first flying hard as if for their lives across the silent sea; the Africans pressing on, mad with loot and religion, in desperate haste to overtake and destroy them. For several minutes at the start the captain's one idea was to get away off and run safe to Aden; all ideas of revenge he put aside for the present till they could land with a regular armed force at the offending village, which he believed to be a place of the name of Matafu. But after a time, as they rowed on, silent and calm, but straining every nerve of their bodies to make the heavy life-boat travel fast through the rippling water, a change began to come over the spirit of their project. It be-

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gan to strike them that the pursuit was inadequate. The captain looked back—rubbed his eyes—leaned forward. "Hullo! what was this? Only *one* boat following?" He peered once more across the abyss of darkness to see if perchance yet others might be coming up slower through the gloom from behind. But no; not an oar. Not a sign or a sound of one. Quick as lightning his tactics changed; his mind was made up for open war. "Easy all!" he cried aloud, in a voice of sudden resolve. "Don't waste your strength rowing, boys! Go gently ahead. Draw them on. Let them follow us. There's only one boat, I see. We're more than a match for it. It may catch us up if it likes. Once we're well away from land and out of reach of their neighbors, we'll fight these fellows to the death. They shall pay with their lives for it."

"All right, sir," the officer in front made answer, with true nautical promptitude, seizing the cue at once. "We're ready when they come. We'll give 'em pepper. Don't fear that. They shall have a warm reception."

In obedience to the order, they slowed off their pace gradually, and let the Somanlis in the other boat approach by gentle degrees almost within hailing distance. The savages, unaccustomed to such wily tactics, leaped at once at the conclusion that the Englishmen were tiring. Hadji

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Daood himself, mad with blood and excitement, stood up eagerly in the stern and exhorted his followers with fierce gestures to still greater exertions.

"Row, row, sons of the faithful!" he cried, in his ringing tones. "The infidels are failing. Their arms are like wax. Allah has delivered them as a prey into our hands. Fall upon them! Cut their throats! Let not a man of the hateful horde escape alive to Aden!"

He pointed forward as he spoke, with a wild wave of triumph. The Somanlis, so adjured, rose on their oars once more, and raising a loud cry of "Allah is great! Bismillah!" pressed eagerly forward across the intervening distance. But the unaccustomed English rowlocks and the weight of the heavy boat distressed and wearied them. Though powerful men of their sort, big built and bony, after the true African pattern, and well used to the surf, they were but clumsy rowers on the open, for lack of skill and science. The English tars, on the other hand, thoroughly trained to their work and keeping perfect time, like a piece of cunning clockwork, could have distanced them easily if they wished, in a long row for life, by many minutes in the hour. But to say the truth they didn't care to. On the contrary, making little spurts every now and again as a feint, and

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then dawdling in turn as if tired, they encouraged the savages to strain every nerve and muscle in the fierce endeavor to overtake and run into them. Hadji Daood fell into the easy trap like a lamb. He followed up their retreat as readily as they could have desired.

"Row, row, for your lives, friends!" he cried, time after time. "We're gaining on them now! We're gaining every stroke on them! Allah fights for Islam! Death, death to the infidel!"

All on fire the negroes rowed on dripping hot with sweat in the warm tropical night, and wore out their coarse muscles in the intensity of their efforts. At last, as they drew near the Englishmen still cool and unfatigued with their row, the savages ready to drop with the unfamiliar exertion—on a sudden the captain gave the calm short word, "Easy all! Ship your oars! Now, steady boys, and fire at 'em!"

In a moment, almost before the Somanlis were aware what was happening, the white men's boat had come quickly to a standstill as if by magic, and a deadly fire of revolver bullets raked them fore and aft with such terrible effect as they had never before dreamed of. The English sailors well drilled to render prompt obedience to a word of command, had shipped their oars silently in a great deal less time than it takes to tell it, and had discharged their fire-

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arms point-blank at the heads of the enemy. Hardly twenty yards now separated the boats. The Somanlis taken by surprise and unexpecting any attack were still leaning on their blades and pressing eagerly forward. At the very first volley Hadji Daood himself, tall and erect in the stern, fell prone on his face with a loud groan in the bottom. Blood gushed from his mouth ; he tried to speak, but his words were lost in inarticulate gurglings. Half a dozen more of the pursuers were disabled or dead.

Overwhelmed at the sudden attack the Somanlis were panic stricken. The captain saw his advantage and seized the decisive moment. "Fire again, boys!" he said quietly. And before ever the astonished savages could recover their presence of mind sufficiently to seize their own rifles—for they had no revolvers—a second deadly shower of bullets rained in upon them full in front, and sent five or six more of them howling to the boat's bottom.

"Waste no more of your ammunition now, boys!" the captain continued coolly. "We may need it at close quarters. . . . But, in with your oars again, and forward all straight at 'em!"

On the word, a dozen blades struck the water together at once, and the lifeboat, deftly answering to the tiller in the captain's own hand, swung

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round like a flash, and charged full pelt at the amazed and demoralized savages.

As for the Somanlis, now deprived of their one cool head, the Hadji, and left to their own unaided African devices they gave way at once to the panic terror of the vanquished barbarian mind before a civilized enemy. With the Arab dervish to lead them, indeed they had been capable of a certain rough sort of irregular discipline; but cast upon their own savage resources, they were like sheep without a shepherd, and their loud cries of fear as they saw the Englishmen sweep down upon them in perfect order were more like the frantic shrieks of little children in distress than any common sound of grown men and warriors. In the awe and horror of the moment not a few of them leaped overboard with wild prayers for mercy to escape the deadly fire of the English revolvers, and swam away for their lives in an impossible attempt to make the dim coast which now lay invisible in the dark, miles and miles behind them. Of the others, the greater part crouched panic-stricken in a huddled mass on the floor of the boat, among the dead and dying, or shammed death in their craven fear, to save their wretched lives for one moment longer. Only one or two of the whole crowd showed fight with true Moslem fanaticism; and these last were Wahabees, who leaped

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so fiercely upon the white sailors, scratching, biting, and screaming like wild beasts at bay, though unarmed and defenceless in their religious zeal, that the Englishmen cut them down with hardly a show of resistance. In less than ten minutes from the firing of the first shot, the whole episode was over. Nothing was left of it all but a boat load of wounded or dying negroes, and a few scattered black heads dimly descried through the gloom, bobbing up and down frantically on the calm water to westward.

"Clear the corpses!" the captain said sternly, turning them over with an oar; and four or five sailors, leaping across into the other boat, began with cautious care to pick out the living and the wounded from the dead, keeping a sharp look-out meanwhile for the chance of unexpected and hostile revivals—for these fanatics will kill you even as you try to save them. One by one, they raised the great bleeding black bodies and felt at the hearts to see if they were still beating. At each shake of the head to indicate no motion there, the captain gave the solemn and quiet word, "Overboard!" There was a splash and a gurgle, a low noise of the swallowing sea—and the body of a dead enemy rolled slowly to the bottom.

In the end, five wounded men alone remained of all that savage crew. The sailors disarmed

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them, and propped them up, wounded as they were, against the thwarts. "We must take them along with us," the captain murmured, in the cold, calm voice of a man who means business, and knows his duty; "if possible, we must keep these prisoners alive till we get into port. This isn't the end of our day's work. They'll be useful to show a gunboat the way back to their village."

"Yes; they'll pay for this," the officer answered, pausing to bind up the few wounds of their own men received in the last hand to hand conflict; "they'll pay for it when we get ashore again. It's all very well for to-day; but they don't know what it means to rouse the anger of Englishmen."

As for the captain, he said nothing. His wrath was too deep and too still for words. He waited a minute or two in solemn silence till all was in good trim again. They tied the other boat to their stern, and put two sailors at the bow to look after the prisoners, each armed with a knife and a loaded revolver. "Shoot them promptly if they try to rise," the captain said at last in a very dogged voice. "Shoot them down like dogs. No attempt at a rescue. Now, boys, forward all, again! We must make for Aden!"

It was a long and desperate row, and they had

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little but water and a few biscuits on board to live upon. But the consciousness of an important duty to perform kept them up to their work through that weary voyage. It wasn't their own lives alone that were at stake that day. It was the dignity of England and the lives of unknown and unnumbered Englishmen. For the honor of the British flag, for the safety of all future British vessels, they felt they must reach a British port, and read these treacherous savages a terrible lesson. No wreckers in future on that African coast could afford to insult and mislead an English steamer.

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CHAPTER IV.

A PRIMITIVE EXPEDITION.

To Mona Wallace and Mrs. D'Arcy, huddled up in a noisome native hut at Matafu, it seemed indeed for the time as though England and Englishmen had ceased to exist—as though Britain were blotted out, and only black savages or Arab dervishes were left anywhere in existence. They had hardly even a hope or expectation of release. All looked black before them. So far as they knew, every living soul save themselves on the ill-fated Lord Mayo had been massacred in cold blood by the ruthless Somanlis; no messenger had escaped to tell the tale of the disaster; and with the ghastly picture of that awful scene still burned as with a brand into their reeling brains—with the shrieks of the murdered still ringing in their outraged ears—even the question what was to become of themselves in their future slavery seemed relatively unimportant. In some vague way they gathered that they were reserved for the harem of some very powerful king or chief up country; more than that they know not; and in that, awful as

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it was, they acquiesced with the calmness of utter despair. They were helpless and hopeless. They had no power to defend themselves. They sat down and let things go as the Somanlis might take them.

There wasn't even a fair chance of release by suicide. Some fates are worse than death, theirs seemed to be one of them. And yet—so irrational are women—Mona Wallace at least had a single wild hope of her own. I wouldn't give you twopence, indeed, for the girl who, in spite of all reason, doesn't believe to the end—madly, wildly, foolishly—that her lover, if she has one, will somehow rush in to rescue and save her. And Mona Wallace *did* believe it. She knew it was impossible, she knew it was silly; but still in some vague way, she felt certain Wilfrid would hear of it, and Wilfrid would turn up before long to deliver them. How, when, or where, she hadn't the faintest idea. It was pure irrational feminine faith. The days of chivalry, we all know on good authority, are past. Knight-errants are no more. Doughty deeds are at a discount. Yet she felt sure for all that in her own heart of hearts, Wilfrid Moyle would come in the end and free them from this slavery. Once even in the still night she ventured to say so to Mrs. D'Arcy. "I'd give up all hope," she cried passionately, "if it weren't for Wilfrid."

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Mrs. D'Arcy hadn't the heart to crush her girlish dream, but she smiled to herself bitterly, for she, too, in her time had been there.

At Aden, meanwhile, strange things were happening. The normal sleepy calm of that hottest and drowsiest of Oriental military stations —a mere British outpost and coaling place on the Arabian coast—had been rudely interrupted by a most unexpected occurrence. As a rule, things go tolerably slow at Aden. But one morning early, while the garrison was on parade, the lookout man on the hill signalled suddenly a startling message from the lightship. "Boat of castaways in the offing shows sign of distress. Send out tender to meet her."

In breathless haste the tender was dispatched from the strange submarine crater which forms that marvelous harbor; and in less than half an hour, all Aden was agog with the surprising news that an English steamer had been wrecked and plundered on the Somanli coast by a body of lawless Mahdist dervishes. The passengers and several officers had been murdered in cold blood; only the captain and a few sailors had got away safe with their lives, and after a fight at sea, and many days tossing on the Arabian Gulf, half starved and tortured with thirst, had at last reached Aden, more dead than alive, with news of the disaster.

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In a moment there was taking down of arms and preparation for active service. All was bustle and hurry in the guard room and the harbor. Not a day must be lost. The British power must be vindicated. A gun boat would be dispatched forthwith to the offending shore, and a primitive force of soldiers landed on the spot to demand the extradition of the guilty and to exact signal vengeance for the wrong that had been perpetrated.

But there was one simple private of a line regiment in the garrison of Aden to whom this strange, bad news came home all at once with crushing and terrible significance. Wilfrid Moyle heard with horror that the wrecked and plundered steamer was none other than the Lord Mayo, on which Mona Wallace was to have sailed from Bombay for Southampton.

In a minute he had made up his mind. He stepped up to the non-commissioned officer in charge of his squad, and in a tremulous voice asked for leave to speak with the commandant.

The commandant, though busy with the expedition, received him kindly. It was well known in the garrison, indeed, that Moyle was a "come down gentleman," as the soldiers phrased it, who had enlisted in the ranks to work his way up to a commission; and the diligent way in which he had studied Arabic ever since his

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arrival at Aden—for he was born a linguist, and he wished to be employed on frontier service—had attracted no little attention among his superior officers.

"Well, Moyle," the commandant said cheerily looking up from the bundle of charts and papers on which he was busily engaged with the Lord Mayo's captain, "and what do you want to-day? Quick, out with it! I'm hurried."

Wilfrid Moyle's lips were ashy white, for the news had come home to him as a terrible shock. But he spoke up with an effort. "If there's an expedition going off to the Somanli coast, sir," he said slowly, "to avenge this massacre, I should very much like leave to volunteer for service with it. I'd take it as a great favor if you allowed me to accompany the forces you send there."

The commandant eyed him keenly. He was a spare, stern man.

"We must have no favoritism here, you know," he answered in a sharp tone of authority. "Why should you have a better chance of distinguishing yourself, my man, than any other soldier? I've no doubt the whole garrison would like to volunteer, if they could, for such a job as this. But if I let one soldier offer himself, what can I say to the others?"

Wilfrid's lip trembled visibly.

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"It isn't only that, sir," he replied, trying hard to be calm. "It isn't merely or even mainly that I want a chance to distinguish myself—though I hope in a soldier such a wish is no blame—but . . . I had a friend on the Lord Mayo, and I want to know the worst. I want to help in rescuing her, if I can ; and if not, to avenge her."

The commandant whistled low, and took a good long hard stare at him.

"I see," he answered curtly ; after a moment's pause. "I think I understand. It makes a difference, certainly. So that's the way the wind blows in your quarter, is it ? . . . Well, Moyle, I'm sorry to say, let that be as it may, I can't make you any definite promise one way or the other. It would be destructive of discipline, you see—destructive of discipline—if men were allowed to choose their own posts as they like themselves. They must go where they're ordered. All I can say for the present is, I'll select for active service some sixty or seventy trustworthy fellows." He paused once more for a moment. Then he added significa ntly, with an after thought, "And, of course, I shall choose for a piece of work like this the men I think most likely to carry out our plans with zeal and valor as well as with discretion—and a distinction may be made in favor of soldiers acquainted with Arabic."

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"Thank you, sir," Wilfrid answered, still quivering in every limb, and he retired, saluting, but he wasn't at all surprised when, half an hour later, the adjutant read out the names of the men selected for active service on the Somanli expedition, and amongst them he found himself among the earliest chosen.

With them on the gunboat went the captain of the Lord Mayo, and three of the least dangerously wounded among the Somanli prisoners. Fanatics as they were, the men had consented to buy their lives dear by promising to guide the gunboat to the offending village, and to show the safest spots for landing to attack it. It was morning of the second day before the expedition reached Matafu. The natives, astonished, clustering thick on the hill, saw them enter the little bay, where the crew had landed. A blank shot from the big gun brought them all down to the shore. They were ready for fight; they knew what this move meant, and were prepared to resist the Europeans to the bitter end, with true Moslem courage. They felt sure if they died they would sup that night with the houris in Paradise.

The commandant, an old stager on the Arabian coast, called aloud in Arabic to the foremost natives, "We give you an hour to remove your women and children to a place of safety. Till

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then we don't shoot. After that, unless you give up the guilty to justice, and make full reparation for your crime, we open fire upon you."

A dervish stood forward from the crowd and waved his fingers aloft with a contemptuous gesture. "Fire away," he answered in the same tongue. "We're not afraid of you. Allah is with us. What care we for the infidel?"

"All right," the Englishman answered. "It's war to the knife, then."

The commandant kept his word and gave them the one full hour for the removal. During all that time, much stir and commotion they could see went on in the village. It was clear the natives were turning out their whole homes, and escorting their women and children inland to some place of safety. The commandant, eyeing it all at leisure from the deck through a field glass, could see for himself there were certain women among them in white Arab robes on whose safety the savages seemed to place a peculiar importance. Wives or daughters, no doubt, he thought to himself, of the Imam of Daro, the great prophet and chief, at once priest and king of that wild Somanli seaboard. And so they were indeed, although not in the sense he supposed. They were brides held in reserve for the cruel sheikh of the desert. At last, minute by minute, the hour wore away, and the boom

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of a big gun, roaring fiercely forth for war, announced to the villagers that the temporary armistice was now fairly over. As its sound died away, the natives, scattered by its grape, rushed headlong from the shore to defend their homesteads; and the English, lowering their boats, made landward to attack them. They preferred this course to a cannonade of the huts, on the bare chance that some of their friends might still perhaps be kept there as prisoners.

As they landed and marched up in good order to the village of mud-built huts clustering round a squalid little whitewashed mosque, a sharp hand-to-hand fight was kept up continuously. The Somanlis were brave with the reckless bravery of the savage fanatic. But the invaders, strong in their civilized discipline, soon carried the low stockade by storm, and were struggling inch by inch for possession of the narrow roadways. In the skirmish that ensued, by some casual mistake Wilfrid Moyle soon found himself separated from the main body, and fighting on his own account for very life down a wretched side alley. There a dervish sprang out at him suddenly from under a dark doorway—a bronzed and bearded man, half-naked to the waist, armed with an English sword and an old rusty pistol. The attack was so unexpected that Wilfrid, though walking along

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warily, was taken wholly by surprise. And as he looked at the dervish in his haste, even in that moment of danger—for the man's sword was raised to strike, and Wilfrid had hard work with his own to parry it—he saw a sight all at once that made his blood run cold, and realized his worst fears for Mona's safety.

The wretch was wearing round his bare neck a little gold locket. He knew it at a glance. It was a locket that he recognized with a shock of horror. He had given it to Mona, himself, three years ago in England.

Goaded and maddened by the sight, he sprang like a wildcat at the fellow's throat. The dervish, taken aback, fell a pace or two into the doorway again, and shouted aloud with all his voice to his comrades for assistance.

Wilfrid dashed on, however, conscious only now of Mona's fate and that tell-tale locket. In a perfect frenzy of just rage, he rushed blindly at the Arab, and struck him twice with his sword, till the blood spurted lustily. But he was too blinded with grief and wrath to perceive at the same time what was happening behind him. One moment later, a dozen stout Somanlis had surrounded him on all sides. Before he knew what was going on, he was overpowered and hurried away. His sword and pistol were taken from him by main force, he was seized by either

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arm, and hustled rapidly through the village. What it all meant he knew not. But at the end of ten minutes, his captors were marching him over loose desert scrub, behind a long ledge of rock, away inland towards the wilderness.

Resistance was hopeless. He had let himself be entrapped. Two stalwart Somanlis, proud of their prize, held him tight on the right, and two on the left; a fifth marched behind, and prodded him from time to time, with a blunt spear, to make him travel faster. All was up with him now. He expected his fate. He was a prisoner in the hands of those ruthless savages, who had wrecked the Lord Mayo and murdered in cold blood his spotless Mona.

They marched on and on, for full two or three miles, by tortuous ways, across that burning valley—a bare, rocky defile, waterless and herbless—till they halted at last by a sort of open cave, which Wilfrid recognized at once as a rock tomb of some early race of settlers. He had seen such tombs before by the dozen in Egypt and at Aden. At the door of the cave, an Arab sheikh sat watchful, a long, white-bearded man, who bowed slightly to his captors.

"Who have you there?" he asked in Arabic, which Wilfrid understood now almost as easily as French or German,

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The Somanlis answered in the same tongue, spoken with a strong negro accent :

"One of the infidels from the ship. Allah gave him into our hands. He is a soldier of the Franks. We have taken him as a hostage."

With a happy burst of intuition, Wilfrid judged it best to conceal his knowledge of their words, so as to learn as much as possible of the enemy's intentions. The sheikh bent his head once more with a dignified bow, in solemn eastern fashion.

"It is well," he made answer, slowly. "Allah is great. His ways are wonderful. He has permitted the Franks to sack Matafu for the moment. Who shall explain his designs? But he will deliver Islam yet from the power of the infidel. We will take this heathen prisoner up country to the Imam of Daro. He will be useful there. We can ask him questions then about the plans of the infidels. For there are people with the Imam, refugees from Khartoum, who speak the tongue of the Franks, and who know their ways, they will question him straitly as to their wicked devices."

The leader of the Somanlis laid his hand on his breast. "It was for that, O servant of Allah!" he said with much dignity, "that we brought him alive here. We can torture him

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till he tells. Otherwise, we might have hacked him at once into little pieces."

"Good," the sheikh answered, never stirring from his place. "You are faithful servants. Take him on, then, and guard him with the other prisoners."

The Somanlis passed on, still holding Wilfrid between them, to another similar cave, some twenty yards further up the rocky valley. At the mouth they halted; then they pushed Wilfrid in, not unaided by the blunt spear, with very little ceremony. The cave was in gloom, like most of these old tombs, hewn deep into the living rock of the desert hills, and it was a moment or so before his eyes could accustom themselves to the darkness. All he could see just at first was a couple of women in native Arab costume, with veiled faces and white robes, cowering timidly in a corner, and watched by a small squad of villainous armed natives. But before he could make out any more, one of the women had risen up with a sudden cry of surprise; and, rushing wildly forward, was clinging to his neck in a perfect transport of joy and affection. "Oh! Wilfrid," she cried in English, "I knew you'd come, I knew you'd come to save us! See, there, Mrs. D'Arcy, I told you so! I knew it! This is Wilfrid Moyle, come alone to deliver us?"

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CHAPTER V.

UP COUNTRY TO DARO.

It's all very well to be welcomed in a rock tomb by a pretty girl in Oriental costume, who assures herself the moment she sees you that you've come to deliver her; but how to make any reasonable use of your opportunites, under such painful circumstances, there's the rub, that's the question; and Wilfrid Moyle was fain to confess after the first wild burst of joy at finding Mona still alive, against all hope and expectation, was fairly over, that his chances of saving her seemed unpleasantly precarious. A prisoner himself in the hands of the Somanlis, he had a very slender idea of getting away alone and still less of carrying Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy along with him. For one thing, however, he was profoundly grateful, and that was the good-luck that had made him think instinctively of concealing from his captors his intimate knowledge of Arabic. He saw at once that the fact of his understanding their conversation, without a suspicion of it on their part, gave him just one feeble hope of escaping from captivity.

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"Mona," he cried, accepting her natural caress as frankly as she gave it, "I've come as you thought I would; but I came to avenge you, not to deliver you. We heard you were all killed. Are there any more left alive of you?"

Mona clung to him still, with a natural impulse of affection, but shook her head mournfully. "No, not one," she answered hanging on his neck like a child on her brother's. "Only Mrs. D'Arcy and me. Oh, Wilfrid, it was horrible! They killed all the rest of them in cold blood before us."

She was very much unnerved, it was clear, by this terrible episode. Wilfrid could see that much at a glance. It had stunned and dazed her. "But how did you come here," he asked, "and in these dresses, too? What have they done with your own things and your friend's, dear Mona?"

The poor child clung to him in a speechless agony of mingled joy and shame and fear. "I don't know," she answered, sobbing. "I don't know, what they mean. I'm half dead with fright. They brought us here like you see. They threatened us they'd kill us if we didn't come along quietly with them."

Mrs. D'Arcy, more calm, was a little more explicit. "They kept us under guard in a hut in the village from the wreck till this morning,"

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she put in hurriedly, for she hardly knew how long their jailors would allow them to converse like this; "and then, about nine o'clock, we heard a great noise and commotion outside. The men who had charge of us rushed in to us then, and brought us these native clothes—for up till that time we'd worn our own—and made signs to us that we must make haste and change them instantly. We were afraid to put them on, though, and shook our heads and refused; so after that, the men went away and sent in three or four great strong built Somanli women, who held us down with their big black hands, and undressed us forcibly. As soon as we were undressed, they put these things on us, and made us look like Arab women. Then they took our own clothes, and sprinkled them with goat's blood, and left them on the floor in the hut, as if we'd been killed and buried there. Mona's locket and my rings, the men divided amongst themselves; and one of the women had my brooch and bracelet. As soon as all was finished, they blindfolded us, partly, and hurried us out by a bare path across the open desert, and then by winding ravines away to this cave here. As we came along, however, we heard the boom of a ship's gun behind us, and we knew then the English were coming to rescue us. But we couldn't turn and join them; they hurried

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us away here so fast, and they've kept us here all day in suspense and terror while we've heard the firing."

Wilfrid drew a deep breath. This was very hard luck. He felt sure the attacking party, after burning the village and finding no sign of white prisoners in the huts, would go back to the gunboat ; and even if it didn't, without good knowledge of the country, it would be impossible for them to discover these remote rock-caves in so intricate a ravine of the desert ranges. No one knows who hasn't seen them, how trackless they can be. He drew a deep breath. It was all up with them clearly. They must all be taken up country to Daro, that was certain now ; and he must trust to the chapter of accidents for saving Mona.

As he stood there, still soothing her, but much troubled in soul, a terrible idea rose up suddenly in his mind. At any moment the Arabs might step forward and separate them. It was now or never. He mightn't see her again. Was it his duty to save her from disgrace and dishonor ? They might hurry him away, to death or torture ; they might carry off his Mona to the Imam of Daro. That thought made his blood boil with rage and horror. Mona, his Mona, that spotless Mona, a slave in the harem of some vile African princeling ! It was more than Euro-

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pean flesh and blood can stand. Dishonor or death? One second he hesitated.

What was that the old sheikh in the other cave had said? "We will take this prisoner up country to the Imam of Daro. We can ask him questions there about his people's plans. For there are prisoners with the Imam, refugees from Khartoum, who speak the tongue of the Franks and who will question him straitly." Then they were going up country to Daro, that much at least was certain; and hadn't the old sheikh added also to his captors: "Take him on and guard him with the other prisoners." Why hadn't they killed Mrs. D'Arcy and Mona when they killed the rest of the Lord Mayo's passengers? Clearly because they were the two youngest and prettiest of the women, reserved as a prize for the hateful chief of Daro. When Wilfrid thought what that prospect meant, his blood ran alternately hot and cold within him. Could he let Mona fall into this vile wretch's hands? Was it not rather his duty then and there to save her—to save her from that fate by falling upon her at once and choking her with his kindly English hands—those strong, brave hands—those tender hands that loved her?

For an instant he trembled in fear and perplexity; his fingers twitched doubtfully. Then the men in the cave, who had fallen back just at

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first in surprise and indecision at this unexpected recognition, stood forward and waved him back, saying in broken Arabic (for they were black Somanlis), "The brides of the Imam! Keep your infidel hands away!"

Wilfrid glared at them, indignant. But it was all in vain. They were stronger than he. Oh, how he longed to jump at the fellows' throats, and free Mona then and there from such a deadly future! But that was clearly impossible. He hesitated still. Then with a sinking heart he stood back sullenly. As he did so, his conscience half smote him for the delay. Had he done right or wrong? Wasn't it his clear duty to save Mona still while he had the bare chance? Was he justified in letting them take her into that terrible slavery?

The Somanlis, pushing him back, made him sit down behind on the bare floor of the cave. Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy, crouching apart in another corner, they guarded equally with their swords and rifles. For half an hour, nothing more was said or done on either side. Then a faint echo rang slowly through the desert hills. They pricked up their ears. It was the boom of a cannon. Another further off . . . yet another, still fainter. Wilfrid guessed what that meant. The primitive expedition had accomplished its work. Matafu was in ashes. Its de-

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fenders lay dead. The troops had returned to the gunboat, after destroying the village. And they were now on their way back again home to Aden.

They would take with them news that Private Moyle was missing; and that in the smoking huts of the native village they had found the blood-stained clothes of two English ladies murdered by the Somanlis.

An hour or two more elapsed, and still the English prisoners sat there in the stifling tropical gloom of that stuffy cavern. Slowly evening came on, and their jailers brought them a little fresh fruit, and some thin cakes of millet. They ate them in silence, though the food seemed to choke them. At last, as all began to grow dark, on a sudden like a ghost the old sheikh loomed large in his white robes at the door of the tomb, and murmured something in Arabic, which Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy didn't of course understand; but to Wilfrid it came as prompt orders for a start. They were to travel all night up country towards Daro.

"The camels are coming," the sheikh continued quietly, in the low, calm tone of Oriental dignity. "Get ready your slaves. Bring out the women and the infidel. Let them prepare for a journey. We start immediately."

"Shall we tie his hands behind him, O de-

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scendant of the Prophet?" the nearest Somanli asked of the white-robed Arab. And Wilfrid awaited the reply with profound interest. It might make all the difference on earth to their chance of escape whether he were bound hand and foot, or had his limbs at liberty.

The sheikh deliberated a moment.

"Let him go free," he answered, slowly. "He'll be less trouble so, for the present, on the camel. And we can guard him well. Don't hurt the women, either; but if the man tries to escape, or if you even suspect it, don't hesitate for a second—shoot him down immediately."

As he spoke, the camels came sauntering round, with their stately tread, to the mouth of the cave, and, obedient to the word of command, after their clumsy fashion, knelt down one leg at a time to receive their riders. The sheikh mounted first and composed himself for his march; then the Somanlis brought out Mrs. D'Arcy and Mona. The two terrified women cast a mute glance at Wilfrid, but didn't dare to speak. The natives helped them on to the camels, bundling them up unceremoniously, with no more sense of chivalry or consideration for their feelings than if those English ladies had been bags of dates or bales of cotton. It made Wilfrid's blood boil to look at such brutality. But for their own sakes, he endured. To

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the Somanlis, indeed, these were only women, and infidel women at that—worth less consideration than slaves or the dumb beasts that perish.

Slowly, in the gray dusk, the caravan got under way. Then began a long and weary all-night march, across the sands and rocks, through the interminable and seemingly trackless desert. The sheikh went first, a dim, white-robed figure on his own swift camel; Mrs. D'Arcy and Mona, close watched on either side by half-naked Somanlis on foot, with old Egyptian government rifles, came next in order; and Wilfrid brought up the rear on a two-humped gray beast followed by a long line of Arab fugitives from Matafu. Some of them marched on foot, some rode their own camels. The procession wound in and out among the bare, gray hills, following a long ravine which in any other country on earth would have been threaded by a water-course. But in that dry and burnt-up East African climate, all was barren and dusty; underfoot the coarse sand or loose pebble disintegrated from the rocks; on either side the gray hills; overhead, a vast expanse of thick, starlit sky; no tree, no plant, no grass, no water.

Hour after hour they plodded on, for the most part in silence. It was a weird and terrible scene. Mona had never before beheld anything like it. On either hand stretched the desert,

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not, as most people falsely picture it, a vast plain of sand, but a district of absolutely bare and rock-built mountains. Behind lay the ravine through which they had already wound their toilsome way; in front, the ravine through which they were still to wind it.

The stillness of the night grew painfully oppressive. Not a sound could be heard for the most part save the padded footfall of the camels on the bare ground beneath their feet. Here and there, where the valleys opened out a little wider, lay great beds of sand, which the wind whirled round at intervals into columns in the shape of waterspouts. As Mona looked at them gliding from place to place like so many dark spectres, her heart misgave her. They looked like angry fiends. She wrapped her Arab dress round her face in her terror, and cried to herself silently.

About midnight they halted for a while in a big hollow basin, ringed round by black hills, and strewn with volcanic boulders. The soil was gravelly, very rough and arid. But the sheikh gave the word: "The wells of Beladyssa!" In a moment the caravan stood still through all its length, and the camels stretching their necks awaited their first drink since the day before yesterday.

The Somanlis began to scrape away the sand

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in some shallow depressions in front of the halt, and soon came to an oozy bed of very dirty and half-brackish water. Of this, the camels drank first, and when their thirst was quenched, the Arabs and natives helped themselves in turn. Last of all, they handed up a cup or two of the noisome liquid to Wilfrid, and then to Mona and her companion. It was bitter and nauseous, but still, one must drink; after five hours of desert dust it refreshed them slightly.

And so ceaselessly till morning they threaded on and on those intricate defiles, without sight of a human home or a green plant on any side.

As they marched along through the desert, the camels lifting leisurely feet all the while over the stones and boulders that strewed the uncertain trail, Wilfrid Moyle had plenty of time to recall to himself in his awe all the facts or rumors he had heard in the guard-room at Aden about the Imam of Daro, that wild Arab marauder, towards whose rude court they were now making their slow way through the mountains. Thirty years before, he remembered to have heard a fierce adventurer from Nejd on the opposite mainland, professing the faith of the fanatical Wahabi sect of Mahommedans, had crossed over to Africa, and by a series of bloody crimes had made himself Sultan of the oasis of Daro and the half-heathen Somanlis. But only

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ten years before the time when Wilfrid and Mona were taken prisoners at Matafu, the nephew of this fillibustering chief, a sort of Arab Richard III., had succeeded to his uncle's throne among the desert hills by the simple process of assassinating his predecessor, and all other possible claimants to the Imamship of Daro. Wilfrid recollected to have heard that the present Imam had murdered in cold blood with his own hand his two brothers and his nephew, besides strangling in prison by the hands of his servants sixteen alternative rivals. And now he ruled undisputed in the inland town of Daro, a half African, half Arab city of mosques and mud walls, girt round by an oasis of waving palms where his word was law, and his cruelties were unbounded.

As the night wore on, and the camels stepped wearier over the burning stones, Wilfrid's heart began to sink ever lower and lower at the fate in store for his spotless Mona. His conscience smote him now that he hadn't had the courage to kill her innocently while he could. Such a chance as that mightn't occur again. And the alternative was really too terrible to face. At each step across the desert, Wilfrid bethought him afresh of some further and more hideous story he had heard at Aden of the Imam's atrocities. The man was a monster of

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crime, kept in his place by fanaticism; a debauched, worn-out, inhuman tyrant, a ruler who outraged every feeling even of his savage subjects, but made up for his excesses by his religious intolerance. And Mona as a Christian would be all the more exposed to the twofold dangers of the man's evil passions. Wilfrid reproached himself bitterly for having let slip last night a chance that perhaps might never come back again.

At last dawn began to crimson the bare hill-tops to eastward. Slowly the sun rose, and as the first rays of his light struck the crest of the mountains, the caravan stopped and all the Moslems of the escort fell prone on their knees and engaged in their devotions. The very beasts stood still, with their heads bent low; and the Somanlis and Arabs, all ranged on the sand in a line, with their faces towards Mecca, lifted up their voices together in one long wailing cry of "Allah Ekber, Allah Ekber!" When they started on their way again, the desert sun shone mercilessly on their heads; but still the camels plodded on—plodded on unwearied. About eight o'clock, the heat became unendurable. By that time, however, they had reached a point which was clearly a familiar stopping place for the worst part of the day. A huge pinnacle of sandstone cast a shade in whose shel-

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ter the Somanlis raised a rough tent of skins. They dismounted and lay down. It was "the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land." In spite of all the dangers and difficulties ahead, Wilfrid and his companions were too weary with their long ride not to fall asleep at once on the open desert. Mona was breathing peacefully almost as soon as she laid her head on the rough pillow of her saddle. Wilfrid Moyle took a little longer to escape his own thoughts. But before half an hour was over, he was sleeping like a child with his head propped on bare stone and his bed the desert. The Somanlis slept, too; but with a rifle by their side. If Wilfrid had attempted for one moment to move, they would have shot him down ruthlessly.

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CHAPTER VI.

AN AFRICAN REVOLUTION.

THEY slept all day. The sun burnt fiercely. It was evening when they awoke; and even then Wilfrid was roused from a very deep slumber by the vague noise of preparation for a fresh march towards Daro. He jumped up with a start. The Somanlis all round were getting the camels ready, and the white-robed sheikh, on his little square of prayer mat, was swearing strange oaths at his slaves and directing operations. Big negroes rubbed down the tired beasts with dirty, dust-laden cloths, and strapped the saddles with tight girths on their galled and jaded backs, while the patient creatures themselves stood still and unmoved, chewing the cud of yesterday's meal in their habitual hunger. Outside, two Arab cooks squatted low on the ground mixing an uninviting *pillau* with meat and millet, or pouring brackish water from the midnight well into rude cups of earthenware.

Wilfrid drew a deep breath. He shrank from the idea that Mona had still three more

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nights like this one to expect before reaching Daro. And yet, when Daro itself was reached, things would be even worse than ever. For what were the mere discomforts of desert travelling compared with the unspeakable, unthinkable future in store for her henceforth in the Imam's harem?

Before the breakfast or supper—which you will—was ready, however, a loud sound in front roused Wilfrid's attention by its unexpected turmoil. It was the noise of a great event—of that he felt sure. He sat in the tent still guarded by an armed Somanli, while Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy were shielded a little on one side behind a rude camel's hair curtain. But even so, he could hear a voice crying aloud in wild tones to the leader of the caravan, "In Allah's name and the Prophet's, halt hard! Whence come you?"

"From Matafu," the sheikh made answer without altering his demeanor one jot or tittle; "from Matafu, which the infidels have fired and destroyed; and we alone have escaped to tell the tale in Daro. But we take up a prisoner of war, a Frank whom we captured, and brides for the Imam, the servant of Allah."

"Then you can go back again to Matafu," the voice retorted grimly. "You are not wanted up here. For the followers of our Mahdi have fallen upon Daro, and slain your Imam, who was no

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servant of Allah, but an ally of the infidel. And Daro town is in the hands of the dervishes; and our Mahdi has sent his own brother with an armed force to bear rule in the oasis."

What happened next, Wilfrid never knew. He was only aware of great noise and turmoil. Hastily the Somanlis and Arabs ate their evening meal and with many loud cries got their camels ready. But Wilfrid himself was thrust all at once into the inner chamber with Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy, where he could see or hear nothing, and could hardly tell what was going on outside the tent he was imprisoned in.

By and bye, the noise without began to subside slowly. The sounds died away. Quiet came over the camp. It was clear the main body had moved on somewhere else. Wilfrid began to suspect they were left alone with their guards, two half-clad Somanlis, armed with Egyptian rifles.

If only he were sure of it, he might make an effort to escape! But he couldn't be sure. Perhaps the other tents might still harbor armed men. "I wish, Mona," he ventured to begin: but before he could utter another word, the Somanlis by his side had raised his rifle and pointed it full at him. "The sheikh told us to fire," he said to his companion in Arabic, "if they ventured to speak. Keep a good look out upon

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them, Mahmond. Not a sound! Not a movement! The sheikh holds us responsible for not letting them go. He will come back to fetch them. It is as Allah wills it."

Wilfrid leant back, and took no further notice of his companions for the moment. Not a muscle of his face betrayed to the men the fact that he heard and understood them. An hour or two passed and the night grew very dark. The weird silence of the desert seemed to brood over the scene. Bit by bit their guardians dozed and nodded, and woke again with a start, and looked hard at the prisoners. It was plain they were bored. One of them gazed across languidly at the other and yawned a weary yawn. "This is slow work," he said again in Arabic. "Allah is great; but it will be a long toil waiting for them here four days and nights all alone in the desert. They should have given us more men. I wish they had left some others beside you and me here to watch these three infidels. If we two have to do it alone, we shall soon be pretty sick of it."

Wilfrid could hardly resist drawing a deep sigh of relief. Then they were alone after all with the two armed Somanlis! It was something at least to know that much. He leant back silently, and let his eye catch Mona's. Neither uttered a word, but a mute look full of

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meaning passed rapidly between them. Mona asked with her eyes :

"Are there more than these two ?"

And Wilfrid answered her promptly in the same dumb language.

"No, none but just these. Keep awake and watch them."

More long hours went by. Presently the Somanlis dozed off again, with their hands still nervously grasping their rifles. Their heads dropped on their breasts, and they breathed deep and slow like a pair of tired children. The moment for action had surely come. . . . Whisht ! Whisht ! Not a sound now ! . . . Cautiously and stealthily, Wilfrid raised himself on his elbows from the ground till he sat, half erect, looking across towards Mona. Without uttering a word, without making an unnecessary movement, he held out one palm very straight in front of him. Then, with the forefinger of the other hand, he began to trace on it slowly in dumb show various letters of the alphabet—W, H, E, N, I, S, E, and so forth. With breathless attention, Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy leant eagerly forward and followed his hand while he proceeded to trace capital after capital. As they read each letter, they nodded a noiseless assent ; at the end of each word, which Wilfrid emphasized by closing his palm in silence for a

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moment and then opening it once more, they signified acquiescence by a lowering of their eyebrows. But the message itself as it grew plain made them quiver with nervousness—it was so much to ask of two poor weak women. For these were the words that in fear and trembling they spelt slowly out :

"When I seize this one's rifle, wrench the other man's from him and point and fire. I'll give the signal with a nod. Don't hesitate instantly to snatch it and shoot him.

Mona drew back all aghast in unspeakable horror. Even for dear life's sake, she felt she couldn't, she daren't take a fellow creature's life. But Mrs. D'Arcy, as became her years, was bolder. After a second's hesitation, she nodded and gave an answering wave of the hand. There was a moment's deep pause. Their hearts stood still within them. Then Wilfrid raised one hand to bespeak attention. With a sudden resolve he gave the fatal nod. It was neck or nothing now ; either death or freedom.

Without one instant's faltering, he leant hastily forward ; wrenched the rifle with a jerk from the dozing Somanli's grasp ; and before the fellow was well aware what was really happening, had raised it and covered him with the mouth of the barrel. Quick as lightning, the Somanli saw what was taking place, and drawing his

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short, native dagger, sprang forward upon the white man. There was a short hand to hand struggle. It was a life and death fight. Releasing himself with an effort, Wilfrid fired full at him. The ball entered the negro's chest and passed through him like wildfire. The Somanli staggered and fell, still lunging out with his knife. A look of unutterable hatred played round the fellow's clenched teeth. It was ghastly to look at in its concentrated malignity. Wilfrid leapt upon his neck. The man shrieked and died heavily.

At the very same moment, as Wilfrid seized the nearer rifle, Mrs. D'Arcy, with feminine quickness, had caught the other man's gun, and, in an access of wild courage, snatched it rapidly from him. The negro awakened at once by the movement, jumped up and confronted her.

"Here, hold it with me, Mona!" the brave woman cried out, jumping back and firing at him like a tigress.

But Mona clapped her hands to her ears and drew aside all thunderstruck. The Somanli seized the rifle and tried to wrench it from her grasp, but Mrs. D'Arcy holding tight, stuck to it gallantly. In the scuffle, one barrel went off and hit the Somanli's foot. The man gave a howl of pain, and drawing his dagger leapt upon her like a wild beast, frenzied and maddened by

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resistance. But even before he could strike home, Wilfrid, now freed from his own personal antagonist, had raised the rifle again, and taking deliberate aim, shot the negro through the temple. Mona shrieked once more at the sight. With a leap and a groan the great, black body rolled senseless upon the ground in a little pool of blood and then lay still and silent. Wilfrid's breath came and went. He could hardly believe it. It was all over now.

"Thank heaven," he cried aloud in good English at last, "we're free! we're free! We can make for the sea immediately."

"How!" Mona asked in a burst of tears, clinging to him in her terror. "Must we go back by night alone through all that terrible desert?"

"Yes, dearest," Wilfrid answered, laying his hand on her shoulder, and turning her gaze away gently from the hideous sight on the ground by her side. "Come out into the open. There may be camels there still. If not, we must turn and tramp on foot across the desert."

They emerged all tremulous on to the silent night. It was terrible to look about. The loneliness was appalling. All round, two or three empty tents flapped free on the desert breeze. But thank heaven for one thing. On the bare sand of the foreground, four or five

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camels were kneeling still and patient, as usual awaiting their riders.

In a minute Wilfrid had lifted Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy into their seats, and mounting his own beast in front, led the way into the desert.

It was a terrible ride that unpremeditated march from nowhere to nowhere. Not a sound broke the stillness of those unpeopled solitudes. From time to time they spoke to one another—a few words of encouragement, but their own voices seemed to affright them in the universal stillness. There was no regular path, no marked track of any sort.

The padded feet of camels leave not a trace on the bare rock ; and even if they did the whirling sandstones of the desert would cover it up and obliterate it from journey to journey. All that Wilfrid knew was the general direction in which they had travelled the night before ; for the rest, he was fain to trust to the instinct of the animals.

Nor was that their only misfortune. They had no food to eat, except a few coarsely dried dates which they found in the saddle bags ; and for water they were confined to the brackish wells they had passed about midnight the previous evening. But if only they could once reach the sea, Wilfrid felt all might yet be well.

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It was this expanse of pathless desert that appalled and terrified him.

After about four hours hard riding through the rocky ravines they had made a considerable way, and began to breathe freely again. The camels relieved from the press of Somanlis and their burden of heavy tents, trotted along at a better pace seaward than before ; they always travel faster, Wilfrid knew, indeed, down country than upward. At last, just as they reached a point where two long ravines ran together under the uncertain starlight, Mona drew up in alarm and gave a little cry of terror.

"Hush ! What's that?" she murmured low, holding her hand to her listening ear. "Noise ahead ! Who can it be? Oh, Wilfrid, Wilfrid, somebody's coming !"

Wilfrid pulled up his beast short with a sudden jerk of the head, and listened long in his turn. His heart misgave him. There was indeed a noise in front. No mistake about that. A caravan from seaward ! They were discovered—overtaken—no doubt betrayed. Perhaps the newcomers would maltreat and kill them !

His first impulse at this alarm was to turn round again where they stood and flee once more at the top of the camels' speed towards Daro. But a second's consideration showed him how mistaken and foolish such a course would

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be. Come what might, they must stand by their guns now and see it out fairly. Perhaps, after all, this upward bound caravan might let them pass as good friends without attempting to interfere with them. There is honor among thieves—above all, in the desert.

He started his beast on its round trot once more, and advanced to meet them. The two other camels stalked after him as before, with their stately tread, making straight for the sea by the accustomed trackway. In a minute or two they came abreast of the coming caravan.

Wilfrid Moyle was a brave man, and not given to vain fears; but there, in the silent night and amid the pathless desert, his heart gave a strange jump at the ghastly sight that met his eyes. Great Heavens, what was this? The foremost beast was bestridden—by a laden coffin! He rubbed his eyes and looked. Yes, yes; not a doubt of it. There was no rider, no leader, no human soul by its side; nothing on earth but a camel bearing on either flank a heavy coffin! He looked once more. Why! what on earth could this mean? There was a whole great string, a long and straggling caravan of them. Camel after camel in long line stalked slowly by, each with no living rider to guide his steps, but bearing on his back two full and noisome coffins. There were corpses in

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them, too. Indeed, the stench was horrible. But the camels passed on, without heeding him in any way; it was with difficulty in the dim starlight that Wilfrid, standing off as far to windward as possible, made out the true nature of their ghastly burden. At the end of the long procession, but after a considerable interval, so as to avoid all near contact with the pestilential air, two Arabs in white robes rode slowly behind, bringing up the rear guard, and watching the beasts move forward.

"Bismillah," they cried as they passed, a little way on one side, to the three strangers. "In Allah's name, a good journey to you, brother!"

"In Allah's name, the same to you," Wilfrid answered in Arabic, as the safest course open to him. Then his natural curiosity compelled him to add in an easier voice. "But what caravan is this, and where do you come last from?"

"Have you no nose on your face that you haven't found that out already?" the man answered laughing. "I should have thought you might have guessed it. This is the Caravan of the Dead, and we take them up in their coffins to Daro for burial. But perhaps you are from the Soudan, new comers to these parts, and know not the ways of the coast-wise people. It is our custom here, then, when sheikhs or holy imams or great robbers die, to send their bodies up for

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burial to the threshold of the seers, that they may sleep in holy ground, beside the tomb of Sidi Okbah, the companion of the Prophet who lies enshrined under the dome of the high mosque at Daro. For that purpose, we carry them up from all the Somanli coast. We have been ten days on the way already as you may perceive for yourselves. And you, strangers, in turn, whither bound? Where go you?"

"To Matafu," Wilfrid answered boldly. "We come from Daro itself, and we take down important letters to the coast from the Imam to the dervishes. But we have missed our path. Which is the road to Matafu?"

"Down the ravine to the left," the man answered pointing vaguely with his hand. "But, friend, you are full late; you may spare yourself the trouble. For two days since, so we hear, the infidels attacked Matafu and burned it to the ground, nor is there any living soul of the Faithful of Islam now left within it."

"Thanks, brother," Wilfrid answered touching his beard in salute, and setting his camel in motion again. "But I will proceed for all that. For my business is pressing, and with Allah's help I fear not the infidels. The commands of the Imam must needs be obeyed, whether the miserable Franks have burned Matafu or left it

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standing. Yet I thank you for your courtesy. Bismillah !"

"Bismillah !"

And the two men moved on slowly in charge of their ghastly load, leaving those three once more by themselves in the wide loneliness of the desert.

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CHAPTER VII.

FROM SAND TO SEA.

From the wells of Belad-yssa to the bowers of the Indian Ocean, the camels made good time for their distracted riders. It's the way of camels indeed to quicken their slow and steady pace in proportion as they approach the neighborhood of the sea; some vague instinct of locality, perhaps even some faint odor of salt brine in the air, seems to act upon their nerves as the road homeward acts upon a tired horse in England. At any rate, they stepped out far more briskly on their seaward journey than on the way up country towards the oasis of Daro. And the fugitives let them pick their own path as they would among the barren ravines. It was wonderful to see how cleverly those born denizens of the desert seemed to follow of themselves that well-known route. Winding tortuously in and out, bending here to the right and there to the left, avoiding now a great rock, and now again a steep descent, the sagacious beasts plodded patiently on, at a long, swinging, jog-

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trot, very wearying to their riders' limbs, of course, but satisfactory from the point of view of rapid transit. One by one the stars set, and Venus began to rise in the pale grey of morning. But still those tireless brutes lifted one leg after another in their unwearying amble; and still the travelers looked out eagerly, but in vain, all in vain, for a glimpse of blue sea on the horizon in front of them.

At last, the sun rose, and the air grew hot at once with the astonishing rapidly of arid tropical regions. "Must we go right on through the heat?" Mona asked in despair, jolted to death with the long ride, and hardly able any longer to keep her seat on her camel.

And Wilfrid answered with a sigh, "I'm afraid we must, Mona. Indeed, I don't suppose we could get the camels themselves to stop for us now. They're obstinate beasts to deal with, and once they've made up their minds to make straight for a given point, straight for it they'll make, whether you wish them or check them. They've settled in their own wise heads that they're going seaward now, and they'll never stop, either for you or for me, till they've pulled us up short at their accustomed station. Besides, even if we were to dismount, what good would that possibly do us? We've no tent or shelter, and it's better to be moving briskly through the

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air like this than to sit in the eye of the sun on the basking hot desert."

"I'm dying with thirst," Mrs. D'Arcy said huskily, clearing her throat. "I can hardly even speak. But if we're to die here, we shall at least die free. I'm glad I could help you, Mr. Moyle, in getting us clear away from those disgusting wretches."

They rode on for an hour more without speaking a word across the dreary upland. At last, about eight o'clock, they reached a black and gloomy pass or neck over a ridge of grey rock, whence they looked down abruptly on a great desert valley. At its end, a narrow gap opened out like a fan, with—oh, joy !—yes, it was—a blue gleam in the centre. Wilfrid, leading the way, reached the summit first. With an effort, he moistened his mouth, and found words to cry aloud. "The sea ! The sea !" he exclaimed in his delight. And the two women burst at once into floods of hot tears at that welcome discovery.

Yet even so, it was a long and weary ride down that dry, desert ravine, and through those endless mazes to the dim shore in front of them. Every now and again the camels craned their heads and sniffed the air suspiciously. Perhaps they scented the salt breeze ; perhaps, on the other hand, they missed the accustomed odor of

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the village of Matafu; perhaps their keen nostrils even detected afar off the signs of recent burning by their wonted station. But at any rate, they grew uneasy and seemed to doubt their right way. Once or twice they stopped short, and sniffed time and again in distinct uncertainty. Then the sight of some familiar rock or some sharp bend in the gorge seemed to reassure their vague minds, and they stepped forward once more with accelerated eagerness.

At last, all of a sudden, a little twist in the path brought them out with a rush upon the open coast. Before them lay the sea, tossing blue and illimitable; in front stood the still smoking and smouldering ruins of what three days before had been the village of Matafu.

And now, a new terror began to seize upon Wilfrid's soul. The camels pulled up short, and gazed with a certain blank surprise at the unexpected scene. After a moment's pause they knelt down on the sands in a kind of mute despair. Wilfrid helped the two women to descend from their seats. They were shaken and sore and almost faint from riding. But their worst enemy now was a parching demon of thirst; they had drunk nothing for two days save the brackish water at the wells of Beladyssa.

"The question is," Wilfrid mused, "can we

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get anything here to eat or to drink. And then next, can we get a boat to put away to sea in?"

Mrs. D'Arcy was nothing if not a practical English matron with an eye to housekeeping.

"Not a scrap to eat," she said with an effort, in a very choked voice. "That's all burnt, of course. We must live on our own fat. But water, yes. How could they do without it? Wherever there's been a village, there must naturally be wells, or springs, or tanks, or something."

That was as clear as wind. The British matron was certainly right. Wilfred seated Mona on a rock, in the scanty shade of a palm tree, for they had now returned to some scrubby vegetation, and went off by himself in search of the water supply. He was gone for several minutes, during which the two women sat alone by themselves in that unspeakable desolation of the ruined village. Corpses rotted in the sun in every direction. At the end of that time he returned with a firmer tread; and their hearts leapt up within them to see to their joy that he was carrying in his hands a bucket half full of water.

Oh, how they fell upon it and drank, scooping it up in both hands! Oh, how delicious it tasted, that pure, fresh, spring water! The camels rose

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slowly, and begged in mute language for their share in the draught. Wilfrid motioned them on, and the weary beasts followed him to the edge of the well. There, he drew for them abundantly, and let them drink their fill, which amounted to a quantity that might well have astonished anyone less used to their ways than the young soldier had been at Aden.

And now to get away, since food was out of the question. It was a hopeless lookout; yet miracles had answered their turn so well hitherto that he was almost disposed once more to trust for a means of escape to some inscrutable interposition of providence.

In an aimless fashion, if only to avoid the foul air, they made their way down to the beach, over the high bank of shingle. There might be mussels there, or periwinkles, or some other shellfish. At any rate, one's chance of food is always best on the sea shore, especially in these out-of-the-way unpeopled countries, where even oysters and fish are often to be found in plenty in the tide-swept rock pools. For there was no concealing the fact that free or enslaved, they were certainly weak and faint with hunger.

At the top of the shingle ledge, a welcome sight burst unexpectedly on their startled eyes. For there, full in front of them, beached high on the shore, lay an English built boat, with her

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oars by her side, and on her stern were painted the familiar words, "Lord Mayo, Southampton."

It was the second of the three boats that had put off from the wreck on the night of the massacre. One had gone away with news of the disaster to Aden. One had been seized by the wreckers under Hadji Daood of Nejd, and finally towed in to port by the victorious captain. But one, the second to land, had been left there, high and dry on the beach by the natives, and was overlooked by the gunboat, which put her men ashore on a less exposed spot at the opposite end of the village. It seemed as though Providence had designed it on purpose for their use. And there, in the stern, best luck of all—as they looked—was a barrel of fresh water, still full and undrawn from.

"We'd better lose no time," Wilfrid cried, in a burst of delight. "We don't know how soon some other Somanlis may come up from neighboring parts to rebuild the village. To be caught here would be death. There's nothing about to eat. It's clear the gunboat destroyed everything—standing crops and fruit trees. We must put to sea just as we are, and trust to the bare chance of making Aden, or attracting the attention of some ship going up the Straits for Suez.

And indeed, in that narrower channel, on the

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highway of commerce between India and England by the great canal, the possibility of such a rescue seemed by no means a remote one. And yet, to those who go down to the sea in ships, and know its dangers well, the bare idea of putting out in an open boat without a morsel of food, on such a frail hope of speaking a passing vessel, might indeed appear a desperate one. But drowning men will cling to a straw ; and at the very worst, Wilfrid thought, if they had to die at all, he would die with Mona by his side, after rescuing her from a life far more terrible than death. Far better starvation on the free blue sea than the tender mercies of an Imam of Daro.

They hauled the boat down to the water's edge with what strength they had left, and took their seats in it. Then Wilfrid shoved it off with a good hearty push. Thank Heaven ! They were afloat again, and free at last from the hateful soil of darkest Africa !

A gentle wind was blowing faintly from the south east. That would take them more or less in the direction of Aden, or at any rate into the centre of the main stream of traffic. Wilfrid was unfortunately no navigator, so he dared not trust himself to set the full sails lest she should become unmanageable or capsize. But he hoisted the mast, with Mrs. D'Arcy's aid, and stretched

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from it the main canvas, fastened square like a sheet to go ahead before the wind, which was as much as his knowledge of seamanship would allow him to venture upon. The rudder must do the rest. And, indeed, they were too tired, too sleepy, and too hungry, to attempt much more than sitting still or lying back wearily.

As for Mona, she fell asleep on her seat in the stern. Mrs. D'Arcy kept awake. And Wilfrid held the tiller, making straight out to sea, with the sun and the hour alone to guide him. Fortunately, he had wound up his watch even in the manifold dangers of those awful days. He was glad of that now, for it was his only compass.

All day long, they sailed slowly, slowly, over that basking hot sea. How easy it is to say; how long, how terribly long it takes to pass through! All day long, too, no food; but they took it out in drinking; and indeed, after the desert, such abundance of pure water seemed in itself a luxury. Hour after hour went by, and still they drifted on, under that copper sky, and with that red-hot sun beating mercilessly down upon them. All day long they drifted on, towards the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. Surely, sooner or later, they must sight a passing brig; surely they must run up against some P. and O. steamer!

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But all day long, not a sail, not a hull hove in sight. All day long, not a line of black smoke flecked the dim blue horizon.

Hour after hour passed wearily away, and still Wilfrid Moyle hoped on against hope. At last, the sun set red in the dark sea westward, and the water grew black, and all was dim around them.

"We ought to have had a light," Wilfrid said, with a sigh, "to attract the attention of any passing vessel."

He began to realize now, after some hours' sail, how slender was that hope; but, such as it was, it was all they had left to depend upon.

"There's a lamp at the bow," Mona put in, looking up at him suddenly. "I noticed it just now, and perhaps there may be oil in it. Most likely there is. For sailors always keep everything ready for use at once, in apple-pie order."

She stepped forward lightly, and seized the lamp, and shook it.

"Yes, two of them," she exclaimed, "and both ready trimmed. They're as full as they can hold. If only we'd a match, now, we might have managed a light. It's so dreadful to be in the dark, all alone upon the water."

"If a match is all you want," Wilfrid said, brightening up, "I think I can help you. Shows the use of smoking after all, you see, Mona.

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You remember you used always to be preaching to me against it."

He drew out his box.

"By Jove," he murmured, opening it, with a very blank face, "this is rather serious. I've only one left. If that misses fire, or goes out, we'll be as ill off as ever."

"Let *me* light it," Mona said, "I've a very sure hand," and with that she opened the lamp, and held the match-box close down under the shelter of the cover.

There was a moment's suspense as *she* struck it. Then the match flared up bright. Mona held it to the wick. Thank heaven, it jumped at it! It was now quite dark, save for the light from the lamp, and they went on for a minute or two in the despondent silence of hunger and fatigue. Suddenly, a curious noise burst upon them like a flash. Something hard struck the sail—like a bullet or an arrow. The whiz and the concussion were stunning in their rapidity. Mona clapped her hands to her ears in alarm once more. "What's that?" she cried, aghast. "Have they followed? Are they firing at us?"

Wilfrid rose in his place, uncertain what to answer, and took up something curiously in his hand from the bottom of the boat. Then a cry of joy and triumph burst spontaneously from his lips.

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"Food! food!" he exclaimed, overjoyed. "Fish! fish! We shall have lots of it!"

"Why, what is it?" Mrs. D'Arcy asked, looking forward all eagerness.

Wilfrid drew a long breath.

"I might have thought of it before," he answered. "I knew this so well. They catch them so at Aden. Why, it's a flying fish, and it's attracted by the light. The fishermen along the coast burn a torch in their bows, of wood steeped in petroleum, and the fish jump up at it, like moths at a candle. We shall have dozens before morning. This sea simply swarms with them."

"But we can't eat it raw," Mona cried, all aghast, drawing back at the bare idea, even in her deadly hunger.

"Well, no!" Wilfrid answered more coolly. "Though we might, too, if we tried. Better that than to starve. But as it happens, we needn't. We can cook it over the lamp in the little tin cup they keep in the locker for bailing out the boat with."

And even as he spoke, another hard object hit the mast full pelt, and another flying fish fell, maimed and bleeding, an easy prey for their use on the boat's bottom.

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CHAPTER VIII.

BOAT AHOY, THERE!

All night long the flying fish, attracted by the lamp like moths by a candle, kept falling thick into the boat; and all night long the weary fugitives baked and ate them, till their hunger was satisfied. More fish flew in, indeed, than they could possibly eat, and they put several away at last in the locker for future use, rather than be troubled any further with them lying about on the bottom. Hour after hour, they dozed and watched by turns; and in that balmy air, sleep came very easy to them. Compared with the desert, indeed, this was luxury itself. They had food, and drink, and cool air all around them.

With the early morning, a fresh breeze sprang up from the north. Little chopping waves began to obstruct their progress. But they were in mid channel now, and might begin to feel some hopes of passing vessels.

"What's that speck over yonder?" Mona

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asked at last, pointing one pale white hand away to the horizon.

Wilfrid strained his eyes to look, but could make out nothing definite. He had steered their course through the night as well as he could guess to the northwest by north, by the pole star and the southern cross, and he fancied now they must have made the best part of thirty miles from Africa. But a terrible idea broke over him all at once. The direction in which Mona pointed was the direction of Matafu. If any sail came thence, it must be either a pursuing boat, or else an Arab dhow, engaged in the contraband slave-trade.

"Are you sure you see anything?" he asked, peering out under his hand. "I've got pretty good eyes, my child, but I can't make it out anywhere."

"Oh! yes," Mrs. D'Arcy interposed, "Mona's right, I'm sure. It's a most undoubted sail. A very tiny speck, but I can see it distinctly."

For a minute or two Wilfrid looked, and still failed to perceive the faintest sign of the supposed vessel. Then all at once his eyes made it out—yes, yes, there it was a small dark mass on the horizon to southeastward.

"Shall we turn round and make for it?" Mona asked with a beating heart. "Or is it coming

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this way, and should we wait where we are, and try to attract its attention ?"

Wilfrid hesitated for a moment. They had come so far safe from the shores of Africa, and so far out into the main stream of Anglo-Indian traffic, that he was loth to turn back again, in case of accident. And if it were really a slave-dhow, why run headlong right into it ?

"I don't feel quite sure," he said, looking anxiously around him on every side and now inured to dangers. "Better stay where we are, perhaps, and make certain first as to her course and her intentions."

Slowly the dark speck grew clearer and clearer till it loomed up, a visible hull, against the southern sky-line. She was a sailing vessel he saw now, and heading straight, as he guessed, from Cape Guardafui to Aden. His heart stood still at the sight. Were they missed then, and pursued ? Had the Arabs discovered the dead bodies of their companions in the deserted camp, and made haste to put forth a clumsy dhow to take vengeance ?

The ship came slowly forward, as if making straight for them. Wilfrid felt sure they were perceived, and that she was bearing down upon them on purpose. He made no signs of distress ; he was too uncertain of her errand to attract her attention. Only one thing he saw clearly as she

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drew nearer and nearer. She was indeed a dhow, Arab built and Arab rigged, with the regular clumsy but quick sailing cut of the trade-built slaver.

Had they only just escaped, then, from the Imam of Daro, to fall straightway into the clutches of the Sultan of Muscat or the petty robber chiefs of Southeastern Arabia?

On and on the dhow sailed, straight down on them she bore. Escape was impossible. As she drew almost within hailing distance, Mona looked suddenly up with a visible start of delight.

"Why, she's flying British colors," the poor child cried aloud. "We're saved! We're saved! Don't you see, Wilfrid—Mrs. D'Arcy—just look up there—look up—the dear old Union Jack flying free at the masthead!"

But even the sight of his country's flag didn't fully reassure Wilfrid Moyle, under these doubtful circumstances. He shook his head incredulously.

"No, no, my child," he said, with a bitter little smile. "That's only a ruse, I'm sure. She wants to take us in. More dangers ahead. She's a piratical slave-dhow. I know the cut and rig of those vile craft so well. I've seen dozens of them towed in as prizes to Aden."

The clumsy looking brig approached well

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within speaking distance. Then suddenly it hove a little to one side, and stood to for hailing. A cheery voice called aloud from the fo'k'sle :

"What, ho!" it cried out in very sailor-like English. "Boat ahoy! Boat ahoy, there!"

Wilfrid Moyle put his hands together and shouted in return, in a somewhat trembling voice :

"What do you want? Who are you?"

The answer rang back sharp and clear, in a true English tone :

"Captured Arab slave-dhow, manned by officers and men of H. M. S. Vigilant. We thought you were in distress—one of the boats from a wreck—and so we came out of our course a bit, and bore down upon you to see if you needed assistance."

In the wild joy of the moment, without thinking what he did, Wilfrid flung himself first upon Mona's neck, and then on Mrs. D'Arcy's.

"Saved! saved!" he cried aloud in his first transport of delight. "They're English! They're English! We shall get back again to Aden."

The men on the dhow put down a boat to tow them. In ten minutes' time they were alongside, and being hauled gently on deck. There, a crowd of kindly faces surrounded the ladies at

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once, in their torn and dust-encumbered Arab dress, with friendly offers of assistance. It was some time before the poor fugitives could realize their troubles were really well over at last, and that twenty-four hours more would see them safe in British territory.

As the dhow entered the great, frowning, volcanic mouth, next day, and news spread through the lazy port that the missing soldier was on board, with two rescued English ladies, a ringing cheer went up on every side with deafening applause, from every sloop and steamer in the crowded harbor. The formalities of entering port delayed them for some short time, and meanwhile, the strange tidings of their miraculous escape ran like wildfire through the station, the town, the garrison. As they landed on the shore, dozens of Wilfrid's comrades pressed eagerly round to grasp his hand once more—good, honest Tommy Atkinses, who liked their brave companion in arms none the less for his being, as they themselves expressed it, "a come-down gentleman."

"Hullo, Moyle," one of them shouted from a high perch in the background, "we knew all the time we'd see you safe back again. But we didn't quite count on you bringing back in your knapsack a bride from the desert. One of 'em's married already, I'm told; so you can't have

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her; but the other one won't be worth her salt, that's what all of us says, if *she* doesn't marry you!"

On the Hard, the commandant himself was waiting to receive them and pour forth congratulations. "What, Mrs. D'Arcy!" he cried, as he took her hand warmly. "Why, we haven't met before since I saw you in India. You're saved after all, thanks to this brave fellow, Moyle! That's well! That's well! And your friend too! Miss Wallace! Well, my wife of course expects to give you both shelter in our quarters for the present. After all you've gone through, you'll need to recover a bit no doubt before you feel yourselves in a fit state for going on home to England."

"Thank you, colonel," Mrs. D'Arcy answered, glancing down with a doubtful look at her strange costume. "We're shaken, of course; though less ill than you'd imagine. But I won't deny we'll be glad to be taken in for awhile and get on civilized clothes again. I hardly feel like myself, to tell you the truth, in all these dirty, close-fitting Arab wrappings."

For so strange a thing is civilization that Mrs. D'Arcy, who'd behaved like a heroine all the time up till then, while the necessity was upon her, now suddenly woke up to an awkward consciousness of the fact—being after all a woman

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—that she looked anything but handsome for European life in such ill-fitting garments. Wilfrid seized Mona's hand. "Well, good-bye, dear," he said, tenderly, in a very low voice, after the first five minutes. "I may see you again soon, perhaps, but I can't stop just now. I must go for the present."

Mona clung to him, all amazed. "*Go*, Wilfrid?" she repeated, in a very puzzled voice. "Go? go where? I thought . . . we should never again be parted from one another."

"Go to report myself at barracks," Wilfrid answered in a low tone, as calmly as he could. "You forget who I am, dear. In the desert and on the boat I was a gentleman and a commander. Here at Aden, you know, I'm only a common soldier."

He drew away his hand, in spite of Mona's resistance. "Let him go," the commandant interposed, with a knowing little smile. "Let him go, Miss Wallace. He's quite right, of course. Discipline's discipline. He must report himself returned. We haven't got a better behaved private in garrison than Wilfrid Moyle, though he was born a gentleman. And I've no doubt you'll have opportunities afforded you in due time of seeing something more of him before you leave Aden."

That afternoon and evening, the commandant

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heard at full Wilfrid's story of the rescue, confirmed in every particular by Mrs. D'Arcy's and Mona's. It was noticed in the garrison, too, that the adjutant was sent to dispatch that day to England an unusual number of very lengthy telegrams. Now, telegraph clerks, we all know, are as silent as the grave; and the sanctity of dispatches is absolutely inviolable. Still it *did* somehow leak out and get noised abroad in Aden that very evening that the commandant had forwarded a specially full report of the occurrence to the War Office, and that he had spoken most highly of Private Moyle's zeal and valor and discretion under extremely difficult and trying circumstances.

About twelve o'clock next day, a telegram arrived at Aden from England which was *not* private, and which soon ran the rounds of the gossipy little station. "Everybody in London," it said—'twas a Reuter's dispatch—"is full of Mrs. D'Arcy's and Miss Wallace's escape; while Private Moyle's gallant conduct in securing their retreat is universally praised in all the morning papers. Since Chard and Bromhead defended Rorke's Drift with a stockade of mealie bags, no military event of a personal sort has roused so much enthusiasm and admiration in England. It is the general opinion that Moyle should receive the Victoria Cross, and that some official

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recognition should at once be made of the two ladies' bravery."

In the course of that afternoon, while the guard-room gossip was at its highest, an orderly brought down a little note for Wilfrid. It was from the commandant's wife, and, to his great surprise, it contained—an invitation to dinner that evening. Towards a private soldier, such a courtesy was unheard of; it even trenched upon the sanctity of that thrice-sacred discipline, which the commandant himself was known to idolize so highly. But circumstances alter cases, says the sapient proverb, and at seven o'clock, Wilfrid, in the full uniform of his humble rank, presented himself duly at the commandant's door very hot and flustered. The commandant himself was there to welcome him like a gentleman. In the drawing-room Mona and Mrs. D'Arcy, in such evening dresses as could be rigged up for their use on the spur of the moment, were waiting to receive him. There was a gleam of triumph in Mona's happy eye which struck Wilfrid at once with a strange presentiment of some coming pleasure. He could see at a glance it was something more than the mere joy of once more being near him.

"And now, Moyle," the commandant said, laying his hand on the young man's shoulders very kindly and gently, "I've a little surprise,

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as I hope, in store for you. I thought you'd like to hear it before the faces of those two ladies, who owe their lives—and more even than their lives—to you and your gallantry. . . . I got a telegram from the Horse Guards this afternoon, which you can read if you like; and you'll see from it that I haven't failed to speak well of your exploit."

Wilfrid took it and read with a swimming brain: "In consideration of the facts detailed in your telegram of yesterday's date, His Royal Highness, the Commander in Chief, has been graciously pleased to recommend to Her Majesty that a commission as sub-lieutenant should today be granted to Private Wilfrid Moyle of the South Gloucestershire Regiment, and his appointment to that rank will accordingly now be immediately gazetted. You are authorized to communicate to Private Moyle at once his Royal Highness's decision and the contents of this telegram."

Wilfrid looked across, somewhat dim-eyed, towards Mona. Mona stepped forward and took his hand tenderly.

"How soon, my child?" he asked, in a very low voice, while tears stood in his eyes.

And Mona made answer:

"As soon as ever you like, Wilfrid. And, oh!

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I'd have married you all the same, you dear boy, if you'd still remained a common soldier."

"I drew particular attention in my dispatch," the colonel interposed, smiling blandly at their joy, "to the fact that you passed all your examinations at Oxford, Moyle, and that but for the pains you'd bestowed on learning Arabic thoroughly here at Aden, you'd never have been able to effect this rescue. And I further suggested to the authorities at the Horse Guards, you might probably be employed with considerable success on frontier duty or diplomatic missions."

"There's another telegram too, just brought in this minute," the commandant's wife put in, taking an envelope from her pocket; "it's addressed to Mr. Moyle. They sent it up here direct from the office, having heard from the sentry you were to dine with us this evening."

Wilfrid opened it and read:

"Just received news, dear son, of your brilliant exploit, and consequent promotion to the rank of officer. The past is forgiven. Think no more of that. You must marry Mona at once. Your uncle Fred and I will make an allowance between us of three hundred a year towards your household expenses."

He handed it across to Mona.

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"From my father," he said, faltering. Tears rushed fast into her eyes as she read its contents.

"It's not so much the money," she said, in a very quiet voice, "as to know they're so proud of you and that all has been made right. And really, Wilfrid, again after all, what with your pay and your allowance and my own two hundred a year we shall be as rich as Crœsus, ourselves, now you're an officer and a gentleman."

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DR GREATREX'S ENGAGEMENT.

EVERYBODY knows by name at least the celebrated Dr. Greatrex, the discoverer of that abstruse molecular theory of the interrelations of forces and energies. He is a comparatively young man still, as times go, for a person of such scientific distinction, for he is now barely forty; but to look at his tall, spare, earnest figure, and his clear-cut, delicate, intellectual face, you would scarcely imagine that he had once been the hero of a singularly strange and romantic story. Yet there have been few lives more romantic than Arthur Greatrex's, and few histories stranger in their way than this of his engagement. After all, why should not a scientific light have a romance of his own as well as other people?

Fifteen years ago Arthur Greatrex, then a young Cambridge fellow, had just come up to begin his medical studies at a London hospital.

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He was tall in those days, of course, but not nearly so slender or so pale as now ; for he had rowed seven in his college boat, and was a fine, athletic yonng man of the true English university pattern. Handsome, too, then and always, but with a more human-looking and ordinary handsomeness when he was young than in those latter times of his scientific eminence. Indeed, any one who met Arthur Greatrex at that time would merely have noticed him as a fine, intelligent young English gentleman, with a marked taste for manly sports, and a decided opinion of his own about most passing matters of public interest.

Already, even in those days, the young medical student was very deeply engaged in recondite speculations on the question of energy. His active mind, always dwelling upon wide points of cosmical significance, had hit upon the germ of that great revolutionary idea which was afterwards to change the whole course of modern physics. But, as often happens with young men of twenty-five, there was another subject which divided his attention with the grand theory of his life ; and that subject was the pretty daughter of his friend and instructor, Dr. Abury, the eminent authority on the treatment of the insane. In all London you couldn't have found a sweeter or prettier girl than Hetty Abury,

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Young Greatrex thought her clever, too; and, though that is perhaps saying rather too much, she was certainly a good deal above the average of ordinary London girls in intellect and accomplishments.

"They say, Arthur," she said to him on the day after their formal engagement, "that the course of true love never did run smooth; and yet it seems somehow as if ours was wonderfully smoothed over for us by everybody and everything. I am the happiest and proudest girl in all the world to have won the love of such a man as you for my future husband."

Arthur Greatrex stroked the back of her white little hand with his, and answered gently,

"I hope nothing ever will arise to make the course of our love run any the rougher; for certainly we do seem to have every happiness laid out most temptingly before us. It almost feels to me as if my paradise had been too easily won and I ought to have something harder to do before I enter it."

"Don't say that, Arthur," Hetty put in hastily; "it sounds too much like an evil omen."

"You superstitious little woman!" the young doctor replied with a smile. "Talking to a scientific man about signs and portents!"

And he kissed her wee hand tenderly, and went home to his bachelor lodging with that

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strange exhilaration in heart and step which only the ecstacy of first love can ever bring one.

"No," he thought to himself, as he sat down in his own easy-chair, and lighted his cigar; "I don't believe any cloud can ever arise between me and Hetty. We have everything in our favor—means to live upon, love for one another, a mutual respect, kind relations, and hearts that were meant by nature each for the other. Hetty is certainly the very sweetest little girl that ever lived; and she's as good as she's sweet, and as loving as she's beautiful. What a dreadful thing it is for a man in love to have to read up medicine for his next examination!" And he took a medical book down from the shelf with a sigh, and pretended to be deeply interested in the diagnosis of scarlet fever till his cigar was finished. But, if the truth must be told, the words really swam before him, and all the letters on the page apparently conspired together to make up but a single name a thousand times over—Hetty, Hetty, Hetty, Hetty. At last he laid the volume down as hopeless, and turned dreamily into his bedroom, only to lie awake half the night and think perpetually on that one theme of Hetty.

Next day was Dr. Abury's weekly lecture on diseases of the brain and nervous system; and Arthur Greatrex, convinced that he really must

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make an effort, went to hear it. The subject was one that always interested him ; and partly by dint of mental attention, partly out of sheer desire to master the matter, he managed to hear it through, and even take in the greater part of its import. As he left the room to go down the hospital stairs, he had his mind fairly distracted between the premonitory symptoms of insanity and Hetty Abury. "Was there ever such an unfortunate profession as medicine for a man in love?" he asked himself, half angrily. "Why didn't I go and be a parson or a barrister, or anything else that would have kept me from mixing up such incongruous associations? And yet, when one comes to think of it, too, there's no particular natural connection after all between 'Chitty on Contract' and dearest Hetty."

Musing thus, he turned to walk down the great central staircase of the hospital. As he did so, his attention was attracted for a moment by a sigular person who was descending the opposite stair towards the same landing. This person was tall and not ill-looking ; but, as he came down the steps, he kept pursing up his mouth and cheeks into the most extraordinary and hideous grimaces ; in fact, he was obviously making insulting faces at Arthur Greatrex. Arthur was so much preoccupied at the moment, however, that he hardly had time to notice the

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eccentric stranger ; and, as he took him for one of the harmless lunatic patients in the mental-diseases ward, he would have passed on without further observing the man but for an odd circumstance which occured as they both reached the great cenral landing together. Arthur happened to drop the book he was carrying from under his arm, and instinctively stooped to pick it up. At the same moment the grimacing stranger dropped his own book also, not in imitation, but by obvious coincidence, and stooped to pick it up with the self-same gesture. Struck by the oddity of the situation, Arthur turned to look at the curious patient. To his utter horror and surprise, he discovered that the man he had been observing was his own reflection.

In one second the real state of the case flashed like lightning across his bewildered brain. There was no opposite staircase, as he knew very well, for he had been down those steps a hundred times before ; nothing but a big mirror, which reflected and doubled the one-sided flight from top to botton. It was only his momentary preoccupation which had made him for a minute fall into the obvious delusion. The man whom he saw descending towards him was really himself, Arthur Greatrex.

Even so, he did not at once grasp the full strangeness of the scene he had just witnessed.

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It was only as he turned to descend again that he caught another glimpse of himself in the big mirror, and saw that he was still making the most horrible and ghastliest grimaces—grimaces such as he had never seen equalled save by the monkeys at the Zoo, and (horridest thought of all !) by the worst patients in the mental-disease ward. He pulled himself up in speechless horror, and looked once more into the big mirror. Yes, there was positively no mistaking the fact : it was he, Arthur Greatrex, fellow of Catherine's, who was making these hideous and meaningless distortions of his own countenance.

With a terrible effort of will he pulled his face quite straight again, and assumed his usual grave and quiet demeanor. For a full minute he stood looking at himself in the glass ; and then, fearful that some one else would come and surprise him, he hurried down the remaining steps, and rushed out into the streets of London. Which way he turned he did not know or care ; all he knew was that he was repressing by sheer force of muscular strain a deadly impulse to pucker up his mouth and draw down the corners of his lips into one-sided grimaces. As he passed down the streets, he watched his own image faintly reflected in the panes of the windows, and saw that he was maintaining outward decorum, but only with a conscious and evident struggle.

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At one doorstep a little child was playing with a kitten ; Arthur Greatrex, who was a naturally kindly man, looked down at her and smiled, in spite of his preoccupation ; instead of smiling back, the child uttered a scream of terror, and rushed back into the house to hide her face in her mother's apron. He felt instinctively that, in place of smiling, he had looked at the child with one of his awful faces. It was horrible, unendurable, and he walked on through the streets and across the bridges, pulling himself together all the time, till at last, half-unconsciously, he found himself near Pimlico, where the Aburys were then living.

Looking around him, he saw that he had come nearly to the corner where Hetty's little drawing-room faced the road. The accustomed place seemed to draw him off for a moment from thinking of himself, and he remembered that he had promised Hetty to come in for luncheon. But dare he go in such a state of mind and body as he then found himself in? Well, Hetty would be expecting him ; Hetty would be disappointed if he didn't come ; he certainly mustn't break his engagement with dear little Hetty. After all, he began to say to himself, what was it but a mere twitching of his face, probably a slight nervous affection? Young doctors are always nervous about themselves, they say ; they find

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all their own symptoms accurately described in all the text-books. His face wasn't twitching now, of that he was certain ; the nearer he got to Hetty's, the calmer he grew, and the more he was conscious he could relax his attention without finding his muscles were playing tricks upon him. He would turn in and have luncheon, and soon forget all about it.

Hetty saw him coming, and ran lightly to open the door for him, and as he took his seat beside her at the table, he forgot straightway his whole trouble, and found himself at once in Paradise once more. All through lunch they talked about other things—happy plans for the future, and the small prettinesses that lovers find so perennially delightful ; and long before Arthur went away the twitching in his face had altogether ceased to trouble him. Once or twice, indeed, in the course of the afternoon he happened to glance casually at the looking-glass above the drawing-room fireplace (those were the pre-Morrisian days when overmantels as yet were not), and he saw to his great comfort that his face was resting in its usual handsome repose and peacefulness. A bright, earnest, strong face it was, with all the promise of greatness already in it ; and so Hetty thought as she looked up at it from the low footstool where she sat by his

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side and half whispered into his ear the little timid coufidences of earthly betrothal.

Five o'clock tea came all too soon, and then Arthur felt he must really be going and must get home to do a little reading. On his way, he fancied once he saw a street boy start in evident surprise as he approached him, but it might be fancy ; and when the street boy stuck his tongue into the corner of his cheek and uttered derisive shouts from a safe distance, Arthur concluded he was only doing after the manner of his kind out of pure gratuitous insolence. He went home to his lodgings and sat down to an hour's work ; but after he had read up several pages more of "Stuckey on Gout," he laid down the book in disgust, and took out Helmholtz and Joule instead, indulging himself with a little desultory reading in his favorite study of the higher physics.

As he read and read the theory of correlation, the great idea as to the real nature of energy, which had escaped all these learned physicists, and which was then slowly forming itself in his own mind, grew gradually clearer and clearer still before his mental vision. Helmholtz was wrong here, because he had not thoroughly appreciated the disjunctive nature of electric energy ; Joule was wrong there, because he had failed to understand the real antithesis between

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potential and kinetic. He laid down the books, paced up and down the room thoughtfully, and beheld the whole concrete theory of interrelation embodying itself visibly before his very eyes. At last he grew fired with the stupendous grandeur of his own conception, seized a quire of foolscap, and sat down eagerly at the table to give written form to the splendid phantom that was floating before him in so distinct a fashion. He would make a great name, for Hetty's sake; and, when he had made it, his dearest reward would be to know that Hetty was proud of him.

Hour after hour he sat and wrote, as if inspired, at his little table. The landlady knocked at the door to tell him dinner was ready, but he would have none of it, he said; let her bring him up a good cup of strong tea and a few plain biscuits. So he wrote and wrote in feverish haste, drinking cup after cup of tea, and turning off page after page of foolscap, till long past midnight. The whole theory had come up so distinctly before his mind's eye, under the exceptional exaltation of first love, and the powerful stimulus of the day's excitement, that he wrote it off as though he had it by heart; omitting only the mathematical calculations, which he left blank, not because he had not got them clearly in his head, but because he would not stop his flying pen to copy them all out then and

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there at full length, for fear of losing the main thread of his argument. When he had finished, about forty sheets of foolscap lay huddled together on the table before him, written in a hasty hand, and scarcely legible; but they contained the first rough draft and central principle of that immortal work, the "Transcendental Dynamics."

Arthur Greatrex rose from the table, where his grand discovery was first formulated, well satisfied with himself and his theory, and fully determined to submit it shortly to the critical judgment of the Royal Society. As he took up his bedroom candle, however, he went over to the mantelpiece to kiss Hetty's photograph, as he always did (for even men of science are human) every evening before retiring. He lifted the portrait reverently to his lips, and was just about to kiss it, when suddenly in the mirror before him he saw the same horrible mocking face which had greeted him so unexpectedly that morning on the hospital staircase. It was a face of inhuman devilry; the face of a mediæval demon, a hideous, grinning, distorted ghoul, a very caricature and insult upon the features of humanity. In his dismay he dropped the frame and the photograph, shivering the glass that covered it into a thousand atoms. Summoning up all his resolution, he looked

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again. Yes, there was no mistaking it; a face was gibing and jeering at him from the mirror with diabolical ingenuity of distorted hideousness; a disgusting face which even the direct evidence of his senses would scarcely permit him to believe was really the reflection of his own features. It was overpowering, it was awful, it was wholly incredible; and, utterly unmanned by the sight, he sank back into his easy-chair and buried his face bitterly between the shelter of his trembling hands.

At that moment Arthur Greatrex felt sure he knew the real meaning of the horror that surrounded him. He was going mad.

For ten minutes or more he sat there motionless, hot tears boiling up from his eyes and falling silently between his fingers. Then at last he rose nervously from his seat, and reached down a volume from the shelf behind him. It was Prang's "Treatise on the Physiology of the Brain." He turned it over hurriedly for a few pages, till he came to the passage he was looking for.

"Ah, I thought so," he said to himself, half aloud; "'Premonitory symptoms: facial distortions; infirmity of the will; inability to distinguish muscular movements.' Let's see what Prang has to say about it. 'A not uncommon concomitant of these early stages'—Great

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heavens, how calmly the man talks about losing your reason !—' is an unconscious or semi-conscious tendency to produce a series of extraordinary facial distortions. At times, the sufferer is not aware of the movements thus initiated ; at other times they are quite voluntary, and are accompanied by bodily gestures of contempt or derision for passing strangers.' Why, that's what must have happened with that boy this morning ! ' Symptoms of this character usually result from excessive activity of the brain, and are most frequent among mathematicians or scholars who have overworked their intellectual faculties. They may be regarded as the immediate precursors of acute dementia.' Acute dementia ! Oh, Hetty ! Oh, heavens ! What have I done to deserve such a blow as this ?"

He laid his face between his hands once more, and sobbed like a broken-hearted child for a few minutes. Then he turned accidentally towards his tumbled manuscript. " No, no," he said to himself, reassuringly ; " I can't be going mad. My brain was never clearer in my life. I couldn't have done a piece of good work like that, bristling with equations and figures and formulæ, if my head was really giving away. I seemed to grasp the subject as I never grasped it in my life before. I never worked so well at Cambridge ; this is a discovery, a genuine dis-

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covery. It's impossible that a man who was going mad could ever see anything so visibly and distinctly as I see that universal principle. Let's look again at what Prang has to say upon that subject."

He turned over the volume a few pages further, and glanced lightly at the contents at the head of each chapter, till at last a few words in the title struck his eye, and he hurried on to the paragraph they indicated, with feverish eagerness. As he did so, these were the words which met his bewildered gaze.

"In certain cases, especially among men of unusual intelligence and high attainments, the exaltation of incipient madness takes rather the guise of a scientific or philosophic enthusiasm. Instead of imagining himself the possessor of untold wealth, or the absolute despot of a servile people, the patient deludes himself with the belief that he has made a great discovery or lighted upon a splendid generalization of the deepest and most universal importance. He sees new truths crowding upon him with the most startling and vivid objectivity. He perceives intimate relations of things which he never before suspected. He destroys at one blow the Newtonian theory of gravitation; he discovers obvious flaws in the nebular hypothesis of Laplace; he gives a scholar's-mate to

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Kant in the very fundamental points of the 'Critique of Pure Reason.' The more serious the attack, the more utterly convinced is the patient of the exceptional clearness of his own intelligence at that particular moment. He writes pamphlets whose scientific value he ridiculously over-estimates; and he is sure to be very angry with any one who tries rationally to combat his newly found authority. Mathematical reasoners are especially liable to this form of incipient mental disease, which, when combined with the facial distortions already alluded to in a previous section, is peculiarly apt to terminate in acute dementia."

"Acute dementia again!" Arthur Greatrex cried with a gesture of horror, flinging the book from him as if it were a poisonous serpent. "Acute dementia, acute dementia, acute dementia; nothing but acute dementia ahead of me, whichever way I happen to turn. Oh, this is too horrible! I shall never be able to marry Hetty. And yet I shall never be able to break it to Hetty! Great heavens, that such a phantom as this should have risen between me and paradise only since this very morning!"

In his agony he caught up the papers on which he had written the rough draft of his grand discovery, and crumpled them up fiercely in his fingers. "The cursed things!" he groaned

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between his teeth, tossing them with a gesture of impatient disgust into the waste-paper basket; "how could I ever have deluded myself into thinking I had hit offhand upon a grand truth which had escaped such men as Helmholtz, and Mayer, and Joule, and Thompson! The thing's preposterous upon the very face of it; I must be going mad, indeed, ever to have dreamt of it!"

He took up his candle once more, kissed the portrait in the broken frame with intense fervor a dozen times over, and then went up gloomily into his own bedroom. There he did not attempt to undress, but merely pulled off his boots, lay down in his clothes upon the bed, and hastily blew out the candle. For a long time he lay tossing and turning in unspeakable terror; but at last, after perhaps two hours or so, he fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamed a hideous nightmare, in which somebody or other in shadowy outlines was trying perpetually to tear him away by main force from poor pale and weeping Hetty.

It was daylight when Arthur woke again, and he lay for some time upon his bed, thinking over his last night's scare, which seemed much less serious, as such things always do, now that the sun had risen upon it. After a while his mind got round to the energy question; and, as he

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thought it over once more, the conviction forced itself afresh upon him that he was right upon the matter after all, and that if he was going mad there was at least method in his madness. So firmly was he convinced upon this point now (though he recognized that that very certainty might be merely a symptom of his coming malady) that he got up hurriedly, before the lodging-house servant came to clean up his little sitting-room, so as to rescue his crumpled foolscap from the waste-paper basket. After that, a bath and breakfast almost made him laugh at his evening terrors.

All the morning Arthur Greatrex sat down at his table again, working in the algebraical calculations which he had omitted from his paper overnight, and finishing it in full form as if for presentation to a learned society. But he did not mean now to offer it to any society; he had a far deeper and more personal interest in the matter at present than that. He wanted to settle first of all the question whether he was going mad or not. Afterwards there would be plenty of time to settle such minor theoretical problems as the general physical constitution of the universe.

As soon as he had finished his calculations he took the paper in his hands, and went out with it to make two calls on scientific acquaintances. The first man he called upon was that distin-

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guished specialist, Professor Linklight, one of the greatest authorities of his own day on all questions of molecular physics. Poor man! he is almost forgotten now, for he died ten years ago; and his scientific reputation was, after all, of that flashy sort which bases itself chiefly upon giving good dinners to leading fellows of the Royal Society. But fifteen years ago Professor Linklight, with his cut-and-dried dogmatic notions, and his narrow technical accuracy, was universally considered the principal physical philosopher in all England. To him, then, Arthur Greatrex—a far deeper and clearer thinker—took in all humility the first manuscript of his marvelous discovery; not to ask him whether it was true or not, but to find out whether it was physical science at all or pure insanity. The professor received him kindly; and when Arthur, who had of course his own reasons for attempting a little modest concealment, asked him to look over a friend's paper for him, with a view to its presentation to the Royal Society, he cheerfully promised to do his best. "Though you will admit, my dear Mr. Greatrex," he said with his blandest smile, "that your friend's manuscript certainly does not err on the side of excessive brevity."

From Linklight's Arthur walked on tremulously to the house of another great scientific

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magnate, Dr. Warminster, who shared with his friendly rival, Abury, the reputation of being the first living authority on the treatment of the insane in the United Kingdom. Before Dr. Warminster, Arthur made no attempt to conceal his apprehensions. He told out all his symptoms and fears without reserve, even exaggerating them a little, as a man is prone to do through over-anxiety not to put too favorable a face upon his own ailments. Dr. Warminster listened attentively and with a gathering interest to all that Arthur told him, and at the end of his account he shook his head gloomily, and answered in a very grave and sympathetic tone.

"My dear Greatrex," he said gently, holding his arm with a kindly pressure, "I should be dealing wrongly with you if I did not candidly tell you that your case gives ground for very serious apprehensions. You are a young man, and with steady attention to curative means and surroundings it is possible that you may ward off this threatened danger. Society, amusement, relaxation, complete cessation of scientific work, absence as far as possible, of mental anxiety in any form, may enable you to tide over the turning point. But that there is danger threatened, it would be unkind and untrue not to warn you. It is very unusual for a patient to consult us in person about these matters. More often it is

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the friends who notice the coming change; but, as you ask me directly for an opinion, I can't help telling you that I regard your case as not without real cause for the strictest care and for a preventive regimen."

Arthur thanked him for the numerous directions he gave as to things which should be done or things which should be avoided, and hurried out into the street with his brain swimming and reeling. "Absence of mental anxiety!" he said to himself bitterly. "How calmly they talk about mental anxiety! How can I possibly be free from anxiety when I know I may go mad at any moment, and that the blow would kill Hetty outright? For myself, I should not care a farthing; but for Hetty! It is too terrible."

He had not the heart to call at the Aburys' that afternoon, though he had promised to do so; and he tortured himself with the thought that Hetty would think him neglectful. He could not call again while the present suspense lasted; and if his worst fears were confirmed he could never call again, except once, to take leave of Hetty forever. For, deeply as Arthur Greatrex loved her, he loved her too well ever to dream of marrying her if the possible shadow of madness was to cloud her future life with its perpetual presence. Better she should bear the shock, even if it killed her at once, than that both

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should live in ceaseless apprehension of that horrible possibility, and should become the parents of children upon whom that hereditary curse might rest for a lifetime, reflecting itself back with the added sting of conscientious remorse on the father who had brought them into the world against his own clear judgment of right and justice.

Next morning Arthur went round once more to Professor Linklight's. The professor had promised to read through the paper immediately, and give his opinion of its chances for presentation to the Royal Society. He was sitting at his breakfast-table, in his flowered dressing-gown and slippers, when Arthur called upon him, and, with a cup of coffee in one hand, was actually skimming the last few pages through his critical eye-glass as his visitor entered.

"Good-morning, Mr. Greatrex!" he said, with one of his most gracious smiles, indicative of the warm welcome extended by acknowledged wisdom towards rising talent. "You see I have been reading your friend's paper, as I promised. Well, my dear sir, not to put too fine a point upon it, it won't hold water. In fact, it's a mere rigmarole. Excuse my asking you, Greatrex, but have you any idea, my dear fellow, whether your friend is inclined to be a little cracky?"

Arthur swallowed a groan with the greatest

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difficulty, and answered in as unconcerned a tone as possible, "Well, to tell you the truth, Mr. Linklight, some doubts *have* been cast upon his perfect sanity."

"Ah, I should have thought so," the professor went on in his airiest manner; "I should have thought so. The fact is, this paper is fitter for the *transactions* of the Colney Hatch Academy than for those of the Royal Society. It has a delusive outer appearance of physical thinking, but there's no real meaning in it of any sort. It's gassy, unsubstantial, purely imaginative." And the professor waved his hand in the air to indicate its utter gaseousness. "If you were to ask my own opinion about it, I should say it's the sort of thing that might be produced by a young man of some mathematical training with a very superficial knowledge of modern physics, just as he was on the point of lapsing into complete insanity. It's the maddest bit of writing that has ever yet fallen under my critical notice."

"Your opinion is of course conclusive," Arthur answered with unfeigned humility, his eyes almost bursting with the tears he would not let come to the surface. "It will be a great disappointment to my friend, but I have no doubt he will accept your verdict."

"Not a bit of it, my dear sir," the professor

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put in quickly. "Not a bit of it. These crazy fellows always stick to their own opinions, and think you a perfect fool for disagreeing with them. Mark my words, Mr. Greatrex, your friend will still go on believing, in spite of everything, that his roundabout reasoning upon that preposterous square-root-of-Pi theorem is sound mathematics."

And Arthur, looking within, felt with a glow of horror that the theorem in question seemed to him at that moment more obviously true and certain in all its deductions than it had ever done before since the first day that he conceived it. How very mad he must be after all.

He thanked Professor Linklight as well as he was able for his kindness in looking over the paper, and groped his way blindly through the passage to the front door and out into the square. Thence he staggered home wearily, convinced that it was all over between him and Hetty, and that he must make up his mind forthwith to his horrible destiny.

If he had only known at that moment that forty years earlier Professor Linklight had used almost the same words about Young's theory of undulations, and had since used them about every new discovery from that day to the one on which he then saw him, he might have at-

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tached less importance than he actually did to this supposed final proof of his own insanity.

As Arthur entered his lodgings he hung his hat up on the stand in the passage. There was a little strip of mirror in the middle of the stand, and glancing at it casually he saw once more that awful face—his own—distorted and almost diabolical, which he had learnt so soon to hate instinctively as if it were a felon's and a murderer's. He rushed away wildly into his little sitting-room, and flung his manuscript on the table, almost without observing that his friend Freeling, the rising physiologist, was quietly seated on the sofa opposite.

"What's this, Arthur?" Freeling asked, taking it up carelessly and glancing at the title. "You don't mean to say that you've finally written out that splendid idea of yours about the interrelations of energy?"

"Yes, I have, Harry; I have, and I wish to heaven I hadn't, for it's all mad and silly and foolish and meaningless!"

"If it is, then I'm mad too, my dear fellow, for I think it is the most convincing thing in physics I ever listened to. Let me have the manuscript to look over, and see how you've worked out those beautiful calculations about the square root of Pi, will you?"

"Take the thing, for heaven's sake, and leave

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me, Harry, for if I'm not left alone I shall break down and cry before you." And as he spoke he buried his head in his arm and sobbed like a woman.

Dr. Freeling knew Arthur was in love, and was aware that people sometimes act very unaccountably under such circumstances ; so he did the wisest thing to be done then and there ; he grasped his friend's arm gently with his hand, spoke never a word, and taking up his hat and the manuscript, walked quietly out into the passage. Then he told the landlady to make Mr. Greatrex a strong cup of tea, with a dash of brandy in it, and turned away, leaving Arthur to solitude and his own reflections.

That evening's post brought Arthur Greatrex two letters, which finally completed his utter prostration. The first he opened was from Dr. Abury. He broke the envelope with a terrible misgiving, and read the letter through with a deepening and sickening feeling of horror. It was not he alone, then, who had distorted the secret of his own incipient insanity. Dr. Abury's practised eye had also detected the rising symptoms. The doctor wrote kindly and with evident grief ; but there was no mistaking the firm purport of his intentions. Conferring this morning with his professional friend Warminster, a case had been mentioned to him, without

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a name, which he at once recognized as Arthur's. He recalled certain symptoms he had himself observed, and his suspicions were thus vividly aroused. Happening accidentally to follow Arthur in the street he was convinced that his surmise was correct, and he thought it his duty both to inform Arthur of the danger that encompassed him, and to assure him that, deeply as it grieved him to withdraw the consent he had so gladly given, he could not allow his only daughter to marry a man bearing on his face the evident marks of an insane tendency. The letter contained much more of regret and condolence; but that was the pith that Arthur Greatrex picked out of it all through the blinding tears that dimmed his vision.

The second letter was from Hetty. Half guessing its contents, he had left it purposely till the last, and he tore it open now with a fearful sinking feeling in his bosom. It was indeed a heart-broken, heart-breaking letter. What could be the secret which papa would not tell her? Why had not Arthur come yesterday? Why could she never marry him? Why was papa so cruel as not to tell her the reason? He couldn't have done anything in the slightest degree dishonorable, far less anything wicked; of that she felt sure; but, if not, what could be this horrible mysterious, unknown barrier that was so sudden-

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ly raised between them? "Do write, dearest Arthur, and relieve me from this terrible, incomprehensible suspense; do let me know what has happened to make papa so determined against you. I could bear to lose you—at least I could bear it as other women have done—but I can't bear this awful uncertainty, this awful doubt as to your love or your constancy. For heaven's sake, darling, send me a note somehow! send me a line to tell me you love me. Your heart-broken,

"HETTY."

Arthur took his hat, and, unable to endure this agony, set out at once for the Aburys'. When he reached the door, the servant who answered his ring at the bell told him he could not see the doctor; he was engaged with two other doctors in a consultation about Miss Hetty. What was the matter with Miss Hetty, then? What, didn't he know that? Oh, Miss Hetty had had a fit, and Dr. Freeling and Dr. MacKinlay had been called in to see her. Arthur did not wait for a moment, but walked upstairs unannounced, and into the consulting-room.

Was it a very serious matter? Yes, Freeling answered, very serious. It seemed Miss Abury had had a great shock—a great shock to her affections—which, he added in a lower voice,

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"you yourself can perhaps best explain to me. She will certainly have a long illness. Perhaps she may never recover."

"Come out into the conservatory, Harry," said Arthur to his friend. "I can tell you there what it is all about."

In a few words Arthur told him the nature of the shock, but without describing the particular symptoms on which the opinion of his supposed approaching insanity was based. Freeling listened with an incredulous smile, and at the end he said to his friend gently, "My dear Arthur, I wish you had told me all this before. If you had done so, we might have saved Miss Abury a shock which may perhaps be fatal. You are no more going mad than I am; on the contrary, you're about the sanest and most clear-headed fellow of my acquaintance. But these mad-doctors are always finding madness everywhere. If you had come to me and told me the symptoms that troubled you, I should soon have set you right again in your own opinion. To have gone to Warminster was most unfortunate, but it can't be helped now. What we have to do at present is to take care of Miss Abury."

Arthur shook his head sadly. "Ah," he said, "you don't know the real gravity of the symptoms I am suffering from. I shall tell you all

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about them some other time. However, as you say, what we have to think about now is Hetty. Can you let me see her? I am sure if I could see her it would reassure her and do her good."

Dr. Abury was at first very unwilling to let Arthur visit Hetty, who was now lying unconscious on the sofa in her own boudoir; but Freeling's opinion that it might possibly do her good at last prevailed with him, and he gave his permission grudgingly.

Arthur went into the room silently and took his seat beside the low couch where the motherless girl was lying. Her face was very white, and her hands pale and bloodless. He took one hand in his; the pulse was hardly perceptible. He laid it down upon her breast, and leaned back to watch for any sign of returning life in her pallid cheek and closed eyelids.

For hours and hours he sat there watching, and no sign came. Dr. Abury sat at the bottom of the couch, watching with him; and as they watched, Arthur felt from time to time that his face was again twitching horribly. However, he had only thoughts for one thing now: would Hetty die or would she recover? The servants brought them a little cake and wine. They sat and drank in silence, looking at one another, but each absorbed in his own thoughts, and speaking never a word for good or evil.

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At last Hetty's eyes opened. Arthur noticed the change first, and took her hand in his gently. Her staring gaze fell upon him for a moment, and she asked feebly, "Arthur, Arthur, do you still love me?"

"Love you, Hetty? With all my heart and soul, as I have always loved you!"

She smiled, and said nothing. Dr. Abury gave her a little wine in a teaspoon, and she drank it quietly. Then she shut her eyes again, but this time she was sleeping.

All night Arthur watched still by the bedside where they put her a little later, and Dr. Abury and a nurse watched with him. In the morning she woke slightly better, and when she saw Arthur still there, she smiled again, and said that if he was with her, she was happy. When Freeling came to inquire after the patient, he found her so much stronger, and Arthur so worn with fear and sleeplessness, that he insisted upon carrying off his friend in his brougham to his own house, and giving him a slight restorative. He might come back at once, he said; but only after he had had a dose of mixture, a glass of brandy and seltzer, and at least a mouthful of something for breakfast.

As Freeling was drawing the cork of the seltzer, Arthur's eye happened to light on a monkey, which was chained to a post in the

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little area plot outside the consulting-room. Arthur was accustomed to see monkeys there, for Freeling often had invalids from the Zoo to observe side by side with human patients; but this particular monkey fascinated him even in his present shattered state of nerves, because there was a something in its face which seemed strangely and horribly familiar to him. As he looked, he recognized with a feeling of unspeakable aversion what it was of which the monkey reminded him. It was making a series of hideous and apparently mocking grimaces—the very self-same grimaces which he had seen on his own features in the mirror during the last day or two! Horrible idea! He was descending to the level of the very monkeys!

The more he watched, the more absolutely identical the two sets of grimaces appeared to him to be. Could it be fancy or was it reality? Or might it be one more delusion, showing that his brain was now giving way entirely? He rubbed his eyes, steadied his attention, and looked again with the deepest interest. No, he could not be mistaken. The monkey was acting in every respect precisely as he himself had acted.

"Harry," he said, in a low and frightened tone, "look at this monkey. Is he mad? Tell me."

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"My dear Arthur," replied his friend, with just a shade of expostulation in his voice, "you have really got madness on the brain at present. No, he isn't mad at all. He's as sane as you are, and that's saying a good deal, I can assure you."

"But, Harry, you can't have seen what he's doing. He's grimacing and contorting himself in the most extraordinary fashion."

"Well, monkeys often do grimace, don't they?" Harry Freeling answered coolly. "Take this brandy and you'll soon feel better."

"But they don't grimace like this one," Arthur persisted.

"No, not like this one, certainly. That's why I've got him here. I'm going to operate upon him for it under chloroform, and cure him immediately."

Arthur leaped from his seat like one demented. "Operate upon him, cure him!" he cried hastily. "What on earth do you mean, Harry?"

"My dear boy, don't be so excited," said Freeling. "This suspense and sleeplessness have been too much for you. This is antivivisection carried *ad absurdum*. You don't mean to say you object to operations upon a monkey for his own benefit, do you? If I don't cut a nerve, tetanus will finally set in, and he'll die of it in great

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agony. Drink off your brandy, and you'll feel better after it."

"But, Harry, what's the matter with the monkey? For heaven's sake, tell me!"

Harry Freeling looked at his friend for the first time a little suspiciously. Could Warminster be right after all, and could Arthur really be going mad? It was so ridiculous of him to get into such a state of flurry about the ailments of a tame monkey, and at such a moment, too! "Well," he answered slowly, "the monkey has got facial distortions due to a slight local paralysis of the inhibitory nerves supplied to the buccal and pharyngeal muscles, with a tendency to end in tetanus. If I cut a small ganglion behind the ear, and exhibit santonin, the muscles will be relaxed; and though they they won't act so freely as before, they won't jerk and grimace any longer."

"Does it ever occur in human beings?" Arthur asked eagerly.

"Occur in human beings? Bless my soul, yes! I've seen dozens of cases. Why, goodness gracious, Arthur, it's positively occurring in your own face at this very moment!"

"I know it is," Arthur answered in an agony of suspense. "Do you think this twitching of mine is due to a local paralysis of the inhibitories, such as you speak of?"

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"Excuse my laughing, my dear fellow; you really do look so absurdly comical. No, I don't think anything about it. I know it is."

"Then you believe Warminster was wrong in taking it for a symptom of incipient insanity?"

It was Freeling's turn now to jump up in surprise. "You don't mean to tell me, Arthur, that that was the sole ground on which that old fool, Warminster, thought you were going crazy?"

"He didn't see it himself," answered Arthur, with a sigh of unspeakable relief. "I only described it to him, and he drew his inference from what I told him. But the real question is this, Harry: Do you feel quite sure that there's nothing more than that the matter with me?"

"Absolutely certain, my dear fellow. I can cure you in half an hour. I've done it dozens of times before, and know the thing as well as you know an ordinary case of scarlet fever."

Arthur sighed again. "And perhaps," he said bitterly, "this terrible mistake may cost dear Hetty her life!"

He drank off the brandy, ate a few mouthfuls of food as best he might, and hastened back to the Aburys'. When he got there he learned from the servant that Hetty was at least no worse; and with that negative comfort he had for the moment to content himself.

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Hetty's illness was long and serious; but before it was over Freeling was able to convince Dr. Abury of his own and his colleague's error and to prove by a simple piece of surgery that Arthur's hideous grimaces were due to nothing worse than a purely physical impediment. The operation was quite a successful one; but though Greatrex's face has never since been liable to these curious contortions, the consequent relaxation of the muscles has given his features that peculiarly calm and almost impassive expression which everybody must have noticed upon them at the present day, even in moments of the greatest animation. The difficulty was how to break the cause of the temporary mistake to Hetty, and this they were unable to do until she was to a great extent convalescent. When once the needful explanation was over, and Arthur was able once more to kiss her with perfect freedom from any tinge of suspicion on her part, he felt that his paradise was at last attained.

A few days before the deferred date fixed for their wedding, Freeling came into the doctor's drawing-room, where Hetty and Arthur were sitting together, and threw a letter with a French official stamp upon its face down upon the table. "There," he said, "I find all the members of the Académie des Sciences at Paris are madmen also!"

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Hetty smiled faintly, and said with a little earnestness in her tone, "Ah, Dr. Freeling, that subject has been far too serious a one for both of us to make it pleasant jesting."

"Oh, but look here, Miss Abury," said Freeling; "I have to apologize to Arthur for a great liberty I have ventured to take, and I think it best to begin by explaining to you wherein it consisted. The fact is, before you were ill, Arthur had just written a paper on the interrelations of energy, which he showed to that pompous old nincompoop, Professor Linklight. Well, Linklight being one of those men who can never see an inch beyond his own nose, had the incomprehensible stupidity to tell him there was nothing in it. Thereupon your future husband, who is a modest and self-depreciating sort of fellow, was minded to throw it incontinently into the waste-paper basket. But a friend of his, Harry Freeling, who flatters himself that he *can* see an inch or two beyond his own nose, read it over, and recognized that it was a brilliant discovery. So what does he go and do—here comes in the apologetic matter—but get this memoir quietly translated into French, affix a motto to it, put it in an envelope, and send it for the gold medal competition of the Académie. Strange to say, the members of the Académie turned out to be every bit as mad as the author and his friend;

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for I have just received this letter, addressed to Arthur at my house (which I have taken the further liberty of opening), and it informs me that the Académie decrees its gold medal for physical discovery to M. Arthur Greatrex, of London, which is a subject of congratulation for us three, and a regular slap in the face for pompous old Linklight."

Hetty seized Freeling's two hands in hers. "You have been our good genius, Dr. Freeling," she said with brimming eyes. "I owe Arthur to you; and Arthur owes me to you; and now we both owe you this. What can we ever do to thank you sufficiently?"

Since those days Hetty and Arthur have long been married, and Dr. Greatrex's famous work (in its enlarged form) has been translated into all the civilized languages of the world, as well as into German; but to this moment, happy as they both are, you can read in their faces the lasting marks of that one terrible anxiety. To many of their friends it seemed afterwards a mere laughing matter; but to those two, who went through it, and especially to Arthur Greatrex, it is a memory too painful to be looked back upon even now without a thrill of terrible recollection.

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THE BACKSLIDER.

THERE was much stir and commotion on the night of Thursday, January 14, 1874, in the Gideonite Apostolic Church, No. 47 Walworth Lane, Peckham, S. E. Anybody could see at a glance that some important business was under consideration; for the Apostle was there himself, in his chair of presidency, and the twelve Episcops were there, and the forty-eight Presbyters, and a large and earnest gathering of the Gideonite laity. It was only a small, bare schoolroom, fitted with wooden benches, was that headquarters station of the young Church; but you could not look around it once without seeing that its occupants were of the sort by whom great religious revolutions may be made or marred. For the Gideonites were one of those strange, enthusiastic, hole-and-corner sects that spring up naturally in the outlying suburbs of great thinking centres. They gather around

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the marked personality of some one ardent, vigorous, half-educated visionary ; and they consist for the most part of intelligent, half-reasoning people, who are bold enough to cast overboard the dogmatic beliefs of their fathers, but not so bold as to exercise their logical faculty upon the fundamental basis on which the dogmas originally rested. The Gideonites had thus collected around the fixed centre of their Apostle, a retired attorney, Murgess by name, whose teaching commended itself to their groping reason as the pure outcome of faithful Biblical research ; and they had chosen their name because, though they were but three hundred in number, they had full confidence that when the time came they would blow their trumpets, and all the host of Midian would be scattered before them. In fact, they divided the world generally into Gideonite and Midianite, for they knew that he that was not with them was against them. And no wonder, for the people of Peckham did not love the struggling Church. Its chief doctrine was one of absolute celibacy, like the Shakers of America ; and to this doctrine the Church had testified in the Old Kent Road and elsewhere after a vigorous practical fashion that roused the spirit of Southeastern London into the fiercest opposition. The young men and maidens, said the Apostle, must no longer marry or be given

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in marriage; the wives and husbands must dwell asunder; and the earth must be made as an image of heaven. These were heterodox opinions, indeed, which Southeastern London could only receive with a strenuous counterblast of orthodox brickbats and sound Anglican road metal.

The fleece of wool was duly laid upon the floor; the trumpet and the lamp were placed upon the bare wooden reading desk; and the Apostle, rising slowly from his seat, began to address the assembled Gideonites.

"Friends," he said, in a low, clear, impressive voice, with a musical ring tempering its slow distinctness, "we have met together to-night to take counsel with one another upon a high matter. It is plain to all of us that the work of the Church in the world does not prosper as it might prosper were the charge of it in worthier hands. We have to contend against great difficulties. We are not among the rich or the mighty of the earth; and the poor whom we have always with us do not listen to us. It is expedient, therefore, that we should set some one among us aside to be instructed thoroughly in those things that are most commonly taught among the Midianites at Oxford or Cambridge. To some of you it may seem, as it seemed at first to me, that such a course would involve going back upon the very

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principles of our constitution. We are not to overcome Midian by our own hand, nor by the strength of two and thirty thousand, but by the trumpet, and the pitcher, and the cake of barley bread. Yet, when I searched and inquired after this matter, it seemed to me that we might also err by overmuch confidence on the other side. For Moses, who led the people out of Egypt, was made ready for the task by being learned in all the learning of the Egyptians. Daniel, who testified in the captivity, was cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and instructed in the wisdom and tongue of the Chaldeans. Paul, who was the Apostle of the Gentiles, had not only sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but was also able from their own poets and philosophers to confute the sophisms and subtleties of the Grecians themselves. These things show us that we should not too lightly despise even worldly learning and worldly science. Perhaps we have gone wrong in thinking too little of such dross, and being puffed up with spiritual pride. The world might listen to us more readily if we had one who could speak the word for us in the tongues understanded of the world."

As he paused, a hum of acquiescence went round the room.

"It has seemed to me, then," the Apostle went on," that we ought to choose some one

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among our younger brethren, upon whose shoulders the cares and duties of the Apostolate might hereafter fall. We are a poor people, but by subscription among ourselves we might raise a sufficient sum to send the chosen person first to a good school here in London, and afterwards to the University of Oxford. It may seem a doubtful and a hazardous thing thus to stake our future upon any one young man ; but then we must remember that the choice will not be wholly or even mainly ours ; we will be guided and directed as we ever are in the laying on of hands. To me, considering this matter thus, it has seemed that there is one youth in our body who is specially pointed out for this work. Only one child has ever been born into the Church ; he, as you know, is the son of brother John Owen and sister Margaret Owen, who were received into the fold just six days before his birth. Paul Owen's very name seems to many of us, who take nothing for chance but all things for divinely ordered, to mark him out at once as a foreordained Apostle. Is it your wish, then, Presbyter John Owen, to dedicate your only son to this ministry ?"

Presbyter John Owen rose from the row of seats assigned to the forty-eight, and moved hesitatingly towards the platform. He was an intelligent-looking, honest-faced, sunburnt work-

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ing man, a mason by trade, who had come into the Church from the Baptist society ; and he was awkwardly dressed in his Sunday clothes, with the scrupulous, clumsy neatness of a respectable artisan who expects to take part in an important ceremony. He spoke nervously and with hesitation, but with all the transparent earnestness of a simple, enthusiastic nature.

"Apostle and friends," he said, "it ain't very easy for me to disentangle my feelin's on this subjec' from one another. I hope I ain't moved by any worldly feelin', an' yet I hardly know how to keep such considerations out, for there's no denyin' that it would be a great pleasure to me and to his mother to see our Paul becomin' a teacher in Israel, and receivin' an education such as you, Apostle, has pinted out. But we hope, too, we ain't insensible to the good of the Church and the advantage that it might derive from our Paul's support and preachin'. We can't help seein' ourselves that the lad has got abilities ; and we've tried to train him up from his youth upward, like Timothy, for the furtherance of the right doctrine. If the Church thinks he's fit for the work laid upon him, his mother and me'll be glad to dedicate him to the service."

He sat down awkwardly, and the Church again hummed its approbation in a suppressed

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murmur. The Apostle rose once more, and briefly called on Paul Owen to stand forward.

In answer to the call, a tall, handsome, earnest-eyed boy advanced timidly to the platform. It was no wonder that those enthusiastic Gideonite visionaries should have seen in his face the visible stamp of the Apostleship. Paul Owen had a rich crop of dark-brown glossy and curly hair, cut something after the Florentine Cinque-cento fashion—not because his parents wished him to look artistic, but because that was the way in which they had seen the hair dressed in all the sacred pictures that they knew; and Margaret Owen, the daughter of some Wesleyan Spitalfields weaver folk, with the imaginative Huguenot blood still strong in her veins, had made up her mind ever since she became Convinced of the Truth (as their phrase ran) that her Paul was called from his cradle to a great work. His features were delicately chiselled, and showed rather natural culture, like his mother's, than rough honesty, like John Owen's, or strong individuality, like the masterful Apostle's. His eyes were peculiarly deep and luminous, with a far-away look which might have reminded an artist of the central boyish figure in Holman Hunt's picture of the Doctors in the Temple. And yet Paul Owen had a healthy color in his cheek and a

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general sturdiness of limb and muscle which showed that he was none of your nervous, bloodless, sickly idealists, but a wholesome, English peasant boy of native refinement and delicate sensibilities. He moved forward with some natural hesitation before the eyes of so many people—ay, and what was more terrible, of the entire Church upon earth; but he was not awkward and constrained in his action like his father. One could see that he was sustained in the prominent part he took that morning by the consciousness of a duty he had to perform and a mission laid upon him which he must not reject.

"Are you willing, my son Paul," asked the Apostle, gravely, "to take upon yourself the task that the Church proposes?"

"I am willing," answered the boy in a low voice, "grace preventing me."

"Does all the Church unanimously approve the election of our brother Paul to this office?" the Apostle asked formally; for it was a rule with the Gideonities that nothing should be done except by the unanimous and spontaneous action of the whole body, acting under direct and immediate inspiration; and all important matters were accordingly arranged beforehand by the Apostle in private interviews with every member of the Church individually, so that

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everything that took place in public assembly had the appearance of being wholly unquestioned. They took counsel first with one another, and consulted the Scripture together ; and when all private doubts were satisfied, they met as a Church to ratify in solemn conclave their separate conclusions. It was not often that the Apostle did not have his own way. Not only had he the most marked personality and the strongest will, but he alone also had Greek and Hebrew enough to appeal always to the original Word ; and that mysterious amount of learning, slight as it really was, sufficed almost invariably to settle the scruples of his wholly ignorant and pliant disciples. Reverence for the literal Scripture in its primitive language was the corner-stone of the Gideonite Church ; and for all practical purposes, its one depository and exponent for them was the Apostle himself. Even the Rev. Albert Barnes's Commentary was held to possess an inferior authority.

"The Church approves," was the unanimous answer.

"Then, Episcops, Presbyters, and brethren," said the Apostle, taking up a roll of names, "I have to ask that you will each mark down on this paper opposite your own names how much a year you can spare of your substance for six years to come as a guarantee fund for this great

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work. You must remember that the ministry of this Church has cost you nothing; freely I have received and freely given; do you now bear your part in equipping a new aspirant for the succession to the Apostolate."

The two senior Episcops took two rolls from his hand, and went round the benches with a stylographic pen (so strangely do the ages mingle—Apostles and stylographs) silently asking each to put down his voluntary subscription. Meanwhile the Apostle read slowly and reverently a few appropriate sentences of Scripture. Some of the richer members—well-to-do small tradesmen of Peckham—put down a pound or even two pounds apiece; the poorer brethren wrote themselves down for ten shillings or even five. In the end the guarantee list amounted to £195 a year. The Apostle reckoned it up rapidly to himself, and then announced the result to the assembly, with a gentle smile relaxing his austere countenance. He was well pleased, for the sum was quite sufficient to keep Paul Owen two years at school in London and then send him comfortably if not splendidly to Oxford. The boy had already had a fair education in Latin and some Greek, at the Birkbeck Schools; and with two years' further study he might even gain a scholarship (for he was a bright lad), which would materially lessen the expense to

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the young Church. Unlike many prophets and enthusiasts, the Apostle was a good man of business; and he had taken pains to learn all about these favorable chances before embarking his people on so very doubtful a speculation.

The Assembly was just about to close, when one of the Presbyters rose unexpectedly to put a question which, contrary to the usual practice, had not already been submitted for approbation to the Apostle. He was a hard-headed, thick-set, vulgar-looking man, a greengrocer at Denmark Hill, and the Apostle always looked upon him as a thorn in his side, promoted by inscrutable wisdom to the Presbytery for the special purpose of keeping down the Apostle's spiritual pride.

"One more pint, Apostle," he said abruptly, "afore we close. It seems to me that even in the Church's work we'd ought to be business-like. Now, it ain't business-like to let this young man, Brother Paul, get his eddication out of us, if I may so speak afore the Church, on spec. It's all very well our sayin' he's to be eddicated and take on the Apostleship, but how do we know but what when he's had his eddication he may fall away and become a backslider, like Demas, and like others among ourselves that we could mention? He may go to Oxford among a lot of Midianites, and them of the great an' mighty of the earth too, and how do we know

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but what he may round upon the Church, and go back upon us after we've paid for his eddication? So what I want to ask is just this, can't we bind him down in a bond that if he don't take the Apostleship with the consent of the Church when it falls vacant he'll pay us back our money, so as we can eddicate up another as'll be more worthy?"

The Apostle moved uneasily in his chair; but before he could speak, Paul Owen's indignation found voice, and he said out his say boldly before the whole assembly, blushing crimson with mingled shame and excitement as he did so. "If Brother Grimshaw and all the brethren think so ill of me that they cannot trust my honesty and honor," he said, "they need not be at the pains of educating me. I will sign no bond and enter into no compact. But if you suppose that I will be a backslider, you do not know me, and I will confer no more with you upon the subject."

"My son Paul is right," the Apostle said flushing up in turn at the boy's audacity; "we will not make the affairs of the Spirit a matter for bonds and earthly arrangements. If the Church thinks as I do, you will all rise up."

All rose except Presbyter Grimshaw. For a moment there was some hesitation, for the rule of the Church in favor of unanimity was abso-

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lute ; but the Apostle fixed his piercing eyes on Job Grimshaw, and after a minute or so Job Grimshaw too rose slowly, like one compelled by an unseen power, and cast in his vote grudgingly with the rest. There was nothing more said about signing an agreement.

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II.

MEENIE BOLTON had counted a great deal upon her visit to Oxford, and she found it quite as delightful as she had anticipated. Her brother knew such a nice set of men, especially Mr. Owen, of Christchurch. Meenie had never been so near falling in love with anybody in her life as she was with Paul Owen. He was so handsome and so clever, and then there was something so romantic about this strange Church they said he belonged to. Meenie's father was a country parson, and the way in which Paul shrank from talking about the Rector, as if his office were something wicked or uncanny, piqued and amused her. There was an heretical tinge about him which made him doubly interesting to the Rector's daughter. The afternoon water party that eventful Thursday, down to Nuneham, she looked forward to with the deepest interest: For her aunt, the Professor's wife, who was to take charge of them, was certainly the most delightful and most sensible of chaperons.

"Is it really true, Mr. Owen," she said, as they sat together for ten minutes alone after their

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picnic luncheon, by the side of the weir under the shadow of the Nuneham beeches—"is it really true that this Church of yours doesn't allow people to marry?"

Paul colored up to his eyes as he answered,

"Well, Miss Bolton, I don't know that you should identify me too absolutely with my Church. I was very young when they selected me to go to Oxford, and my opinions have decidedly wavered a good deal lately. But the Church certainly does forbid marriage. I have always been brought up to look upon it as sinful."

Meenie laughed aloud; and Paul, to whom the question was no laughing matter, but a serious point of conscientious scruple, could hardly help laughing with her, so infectious was that pleasant ripple. He checked himself with an effort, and tried to look serious.

"Do you know," he said, "when I first came to Christchurch, I doubted even whether I ought to make your brother's acquaintance, because he was a clergyman's son. I was taught to describe clergymen always as priests of Midian."

He never talked about his Church to anybody at Oxford, and it was a sort of relief to him to speak on the subject to Meenie, in spite of her laughing eyes and undisguised amusement. The other men would have laughed at him too,

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but their laughter would have been less sympathetic.

"And do you think them priests of Midian still?" asked Meenie.

"Miss Bolton," said Paul suddenly, as one who relieves his overburdened mind by a great effort, "I am almost moved to make a confidante of you."

"There is nothing I love better than confidences," Meenie answered; and she might truthfully have added, "particularly from you."

"Well, I have been passing lately through a great many doubts and difficulties. I was brought up by my Church to become its next Apostle, and I have been educated at their expense both in London and here. You know," Paul added, with his innate love of telling out the whole truth, "I am not a gentleman; I am the son of poor working people in London."

"Tom told me who your parents were," Meenie answered simply; "but he told me, too, you were none the less a true gentleman born for that; and I see myself he told me right."

Paul flushed again—he had a most unmanly trick of flushing up—and bowed a little timid bow.

"Thank you," he said, quietly. "Well, while I was in London I lived entirely among my own people, and never heard anything talked about

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except our own doctrines. I thought our Apostle the most learned, the wisest and the greatest of men. I had not a doubt about the absolute infallibility of our own opinions. But ever since I came to Oxford I have slowly begun to hesitate and to falter. When I came up first, the men laughed at me a good deal in a good-humored way, because I wouldn't do as they did. Then I thought myself persecuted for the truth's sake, and was glad. But the men were really very kind and forbearing to me; they never argued with me or bullied me; they respected my scruples, and said nothing more about it as soon as they found out what they really were. That was my first stumbling-block. If they had fought me and debated with me, I might have stuck to my own opinions by force of opposition. But they turned me in upon myself completely by their silence, and mastered me by their kindly forbearance. Point by point I began to give in, till now I hardly know where I am standing."

"You wouldn't join the cricket club at first, Tom says."

"No, I wouldn't. I thought it wrong to walk in the ways of Midian. But gradually I began to argue myself out of my scruples, and now I positively pull six in the boat, and wear a Christ-church ribbon on my hat. I have given up pro-

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testing against having my letters addressed to me as Esquire (though I have really no right to the title), and I nearly went the other day to have some cards engraved with my name as 'Mr. Paul Owen.' I am afraid I'm backsliding terribly."

Meenie laughed again. "If that is all you have to burden your conscience with," she said, "I don't think you need spend many sleepless nights."

"Quite so," Paul answered, smiling; "I think so myself. But that is not all. I have begun to have serious doubts about the Apostle himself and the whole Church altogether. I have been three years at Oxford now; and while I was reading for Mods, I don't think I was so unsettled in my mind. But since I have begun reading philosophy for my Greats, I have had to go into all sorts of deep books—Mill, and Spencer, and Bain, and all kinds of fellows who really think about things, you know, down to the very bottom—and an awful truth begins to dawn upon me, that our Apostle is after all only a very third-rate type of a thinker. Now that, you know, is really terrible."

"I don't see why," Meenie answered demurely. She was beginning to get genuinely interested.

"That is because you have never had to call

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in question a cherished and almost ingrown faith. You have never realized any similar circumstances. Here am I, brought up by these good, honest, earnest people, with their own hard-earned money, as a pillar of their belief. I have been taught to look upon myself as the chosen advocate of their creed, and on the Apostle as an almost divinely inspired man. My whole life has been bound up in it; I have worked and read night and day in order to pass high and do honor to the Church; and now what do I begin to find the Church really is? A petty group of poor, devoted, enthusiastic, ignorant people, led blindly by a decently instructed but narrow-minded teacher, who has mixed up his own headstrong self-conceit and self-importance with his own peculiar ideas of abstract religion." Paul paused, half surprised at himself, for, though he had doubted before, he had never ventured till that day to formulate his doubts, even to himself, in such plain and straightforward language.

"I see," said Meenie, gravely; "you have come into a wider world; you have mixed with wider ideas; and the wider world has converted you, instead of your converting the world. Well, that is only natural. Others beside you have had to change their opinions."

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"Yes, yes; but for me it is harder—oh! so much harder."

"Because you have looked forward to being an Apostle?"

"Miss Bolton, you do me injustice—not in what you say, but in the tone you say it in. No, it is not the giving up of the Apostleship that troubles me, though I did hope that I might help in my way to make the world a new earth; but it is the shock and downfall of their hopes to all those good, earnest people, and especially —oh! especially, Miss Bolton, to my own dear father and mother." His eyes filled with tears as he spoke.

"I can understand," said Meenie, sympathetically, her eyes dimming a little in response. "They have set their hearts all their lives long on your accomplishing this work, and it will be to them the disappointment of a cherished romance."

They looked at one another a few minutes in silence.

"How long have you begun to have your doubts?" Meenie asked after a pause.

"A long time, but most of all since I saw you. It has made me—it has made me hesitate more about the fundamental article of our faith. Even now, I am not sure whether it is not wrong

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of me to be talking so with you about such matters."

"I see," said Meenie, a little more archly, "it comes perilously near ——" and she broke off, for she felt she had gone a step too far.

"Perilously near falling in love," Paul continued boldly, turning his big eyes full upon her. "Yes, perilously near."

Their eyes met; Meenie's fell, and they said no more. But they both felt they understood one another. Just at that moment the Professor's wife came up to interrupt the *tête-à-tête*; "for that young Owen," she said to herself, "is really getting quite too confidential with dear Meenie."

That same evening Paul paced up and down his rooms in Peckwater with all his soul strangely upheaved within him, and tossed and racked by a dozen conflicting doubts and passions. Had he gone too far? Had he yielded like Adam to the woman who beguiled him? Had he given way like Samson to the snares of Delilah? For the old Scripture phraseology and imagery, so long burned into his very nature, clung to him still in spite of all his faltering changes of opinion. Had he said more than he thought and felt about the Apostle? Even if he was going to revise his views, was it right, was it candid, was it loyal to the truth that he

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should revise them under the biassing influence of Meenie's eyes? If only he could have separated the two questions—the Apostle's mission, and the something which he felt growing up within him! But he could not—and, as he suspected, for a most excellent reason, because the two were intimately bound up in the very warp and woof of his existence. Nature was asserting herself against the religious asceticism of the Apostle; it could not be so wrong for him to feel those feelings that had thrilled every heart in all his ancestors for innumerable generations.

He was in love with Meenie; he knew that clearly now. And this love was after all not such a wicked and terrible feeling; on the contrary, he felt all the better and the purer for it already. But then that might merely be the horrible seductiveness of the thing. Was it not always typified by the cup of Circe, by the song of the Sirens, by all that was alluring and beautiful and hollow? He paced up and down for half an hour, and then (he had sported his oak long ago) he lit his little reading lamp and sat down in the big chair by the bay window. Running his eyes over his bookshelf, he took out, half by chance, Spencer's "Sociology." Then from sheer weariness he read on for awhile, hardly heeding what he read. At last he got

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interested, and finished a chapter. When he had finished it, he put the book down and felt that the struggle was over. Strange that side by side in the same world, in the same London, there should exist two such utterly different types of man as Herbert Spencer and the Gideonite Apostle. The last seemed to belong to the sixteenth century, the first to some new and hitherto uncreated social world. In an age which produced thinkers like that, how could he ever have mistaken the poor, bigoted, narrow, half-instructed Apostle for a divinely inspired teacher? So far as Paul Owen was concerned, the Gideonite Church and all that belonged to it had melted utterly into thin air.

Three days later, after the Eights in the early evening, Paul found an opportunity of speaking again alone with Meenie. He had taken their party on to the Christchurch barge to see the race, and he was strolling with them afterwards round the meadow walk by the bank of the Cherwell. Paul managed to get a little in front with Meenie, and entered at once upon the subject of his late embarrassments.

"I have thought it all over since, Miss Bolton," he said—he half hesitated whether he should say "Meenie" or not, and she was half disappointed that he didn't, for they were both very young, and very young people fall in love

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so unaffectedly—"I have thought it all over, and I have come to the conclusion that there is no help for it; I must break openly with the Church."

"Of course," said Meenie, simply. "That I understood."

He smiled at her ingenuousness. Such a very forward young person? And yet he liked it. "Well, the next thing is, what to do about it. You see, I have really been obtaining my education, so to speak, under false pretences. I can't continue taking these good people's money after I have ceased to believe in their doctrines. I ought to have faced the question sooner. It was wrong of me to wait until—until it was forced upon me by other considerations."

This time it was Meenie who blushed. "But you don't mean to leave Oxford without taking your degree?" she asked quickly.

"No, I think it will be better not. To stop here and try for a fellowship is my best chance of repaying these poor people the money which I have taken from them for no purpose."

"I never thought of that," said Meenie. "You are bound in honor to pay them back, of course."

Paul liked the instantaneous honesty of that "of course." It marked the naturally honorable character; for "of course," too, they must wait

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to marry (young people jump so) till all that money was paid off. "Fortunately," he said, "I have lived economically, and have not spent nearly as much as they guaranteed. I got scholarships up to a hundred a year of my own, and I only took a hundred a year of theirs. They offered me two hundred. But there's five years at a hundred, that makes five hundred pounds—a big debt to begin life with."

"Never mind," said Meenie. "You will get a fellowship, and in a few years you can pay it off."

"Yes," said Paul, "I can pay it off. But I can never pay off the hopes and aspirations I have blighted. I must become a schoolmaster, or a barrister, or something of that sort, and never repay them for their self-sacrifice and devotion in making me whatever I shall become. They may get back their money, but they will have lost their cherished Apostle forever."

"Mr. Owen," Meenie answered solemnly, "the seal of the Apostolate lies far deeper than that. It was born in you, and no act of yours can shake it off."

"Meenie," he said, looking at her gently, with a changed expression—"Meenie, we shall have to wait many years."

"Never mind, Paul," she replied, as naturally as if he had been Paul to her all her life long,

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"I can wait if you can. But what will you do for the immediate present?"

"I have my scholarship," he said; "I can get on partly upon that; and then I can take pupils; and I have only one year more of it."

So before they parted that night it was all well understood between them that Paul was to declare his defection from the Church at the earliest opportunity; that he was to live as best he might till he could take his degree; that he was then to pay off all the back debt; and that after all these things he and Meenie might get comfortably married whenever they were able. As to the Rector and his wife, or any other parental authorities, they both left them out in the cold as wholly as young people always do leave their elders out on all similar occasions.

"Maria's a born fool!" said the Rector to his wife a week after Meenie's return; "I always knew she was a fool, but I never knew she was quite such a fool as to permit a thing like this. So far as I can get it out of Edie, and so far as Edie can get it out of Meenie, I understand that she has allowed Meenie to go and get herself engaged to some Dissenter fellow, a Shaker, or a Mormon, or a Communist, or something of the sort, who is the son of a common laborer, and has been sent up to Oxford, Tom tells me, by his own sect, to be made into a gentleman, so as to

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give some sort or color of respectability to their absurd doctrines. I shall send the girl to town at once to Emily's, and she shall stop there all next season, to see if she can't manage to get engaged to some young man in decent society at any rate."

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III.

When Paul Owen returned to Peckham for the long vacation, it was with a heavy heart that he ventured back slowly to his father's cottage. Margaret Owen had put everything straight and neat in the little living room, as she always did, to welcome home her son who had grown into a gentleman ; and honest John stood at the threshold beaming with pleasure to wring Paul's hand in his firm grip, just back unwashed from his day's labor. After the first kissings and greetings were over, John Owen said rather solemnly, " I have bad news for you, Paul. The Apostle is sick, even unto death."

When Paul heard that, he was sorely tempted to put off the disclosure for the present ; but he felt he must not. So that same night, as they sat together in the dusk near the window where the geraniums stood, he began to unburden his whole mind, gently and tentatively, so as to spare their feelings as much as possible, to his father and mother. He told them how, since he went to Oxford, he had learned to think somewhat differently about many things ; how his

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ideas had gradually deepened and broadened; how he had begun to inquire into fundamentals for himself; how he had feared that the Gideonites took too much for granted, and reposed too implicitly on the supposed critical learning of their Apostle. As he spoke his mother listened in tearful silence; but his father murmured from time to time, "I was afeard of this already, Paul; I seen it coming, now and again, long ago." There was pity and regret in his tone, but not a shade of reproachfulness.

At last, however, Paul came to speak, timidly and reservedly, of Meenie. Then his father's eye began to flash a little, and his breath came deeper and harder. When Paul told him briefly that he was engaged to her, the strong man could stand it no longer. He rose up in righteous wrath, and thrust his son at arm's length from him. "What!" he cried fiercely, "you don't mean to tell me you have fallen into sin and looked upon the daughters of Midian! It was no Scriptural doubts that druv you on, then, but the desire of the flesh and the lust of the eyes that has lost you! You dare to stand up there, Paul, Owen, and tell me that you throw over the Church and the Apostle for the sake of a girl, like a poor, miserable Samson! You are no son of mine, and I have nothin' more to say to you."

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But Margaret Owen put her hand on his shoulder and said softly, "John, let us hear him out." And John, recalled by that gentle touch, listened once more. Then Paul pleaded his case powerfully again. He quoted Scripture to them; he argued with them, after their own fashion, and down to their own comprehension, text by text; he pitted his own critical and exegetical faculty against the Apostle's. Last of all, he turned to his mother, who, tearful still and heartbroken with disappointment, yet looked admiringly upon her learned, eloquent boy, and said to her tenderly, "Remember, mother, you yourself were once in love. You yourself once stood, night after night, leaning on the gate, waiting with your heart beating for a footstep that you knew so well. You yourself once counted the days and the hours and the minutes till the next meeting came." And Margaret Owen, touched to the heart by that simple appeal, kissed him fevently a dozen times over, the hot tears dropping on his cheek meanwhile; and then, contrary to all the rules of their austere Church, she flung her arms round her husband too, and kissed him passionately the first time for twenty years, with all the fervor of a floodgate loosed. Paul Owen's apostolate had surely borne its first fruit.

The father stood for a moment in doubt and

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terror, like one stunned or dazed, and then, in a moment of sudden remembrance, stepped forward and returned the kiss. The spell was broken, and the Apostle's power was no more. What else passed in the cottage that night, when John Owen fell upon his kness and wrestled in spirit, was too wholly internal to the man's own soul for telling here. Next day John and Margaret Owen felt the dream of their lives was gone; but the mother in her heart rejoiced to think her boy might know the depths of love, and might bring home a real lady for his wife.

On Sunday it was rumored that the Apostle's ailment was very serious; but young Brother Paul Owen would address the Church. He did so, though not exactly in the way the Church expected. He told them simply and plainly how he had changed his views about certain matters; how he thanked them from his heart for the loan of their money (he was careful to emphasize the word *loan*), which had helped him to carry on his education at Oxford; and how he would repay them the principal and interest, though he could never repay them the kindness, at the earliest possible opportunity. He was so grave, so earnest, so transparently true, that, in spite of the downfall of their dearest hopes, he carried the whole meeting with him, all save one man. That man was Job

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Grimshaw. Job rose from his place with a look of undisguised triumph, as soon as Paul had finished, and, mounting the platform quietly, said his say.

"I knew, Episcops, Presbyters, and Brethren," he began, "how this 'ere young man would finish. I saw it the day he was appinted. He's flushing up now the same as he flushed up then when I spoke to him; and it ain't sperritual, it's worldly pride and headstrongness, that's what it is. He's had our money and he's had his eddication, and now he's going to round on us, just as I said he would. It's all very well talking about paying us back; how's a young man like him to get five hundred pounds, I should like to know. And if he did even, what sort o' repayment would that be to many of the brethren, who've saved and scraped for five year to let him live like a gentleman among the great and the mighty o' Midian? He's got his eddication out of us, and he can keep that whatever happens, and make a living out of it, too; and now he's going back on us same as I said he would, and, having got all he can out of the Church, he's going to chuck it away like a sucked orange. I detest such backsliding and such ungratefulness."

Paul's cup of humiliation was full, but he bit

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his lip till the blood almost came, and made no answer.

"He boasted in his own strength," Job went on mercilessly, "that he wasn't going to be a backslider, and he wasn't going to sign no bond, and he wasn't going to confer with us, but we must trust his honor and honesty, and such like. I've got his very words written down in my notebook 'ere; for I made a note of 'em foreseeing this. If we'd 'a' bound him down, as I proposed, he wouldn't 'a' dared to go backsliding and rounding on us, and making up to the daughters of Midian, as I don't doubt but what he's been doing." Paul's tell-tale face showed him at once that he had struck by accident on the right chord. But if he ever goes bringing a daughter of Midian here to Peckham," Job continued, "we'll show her these very notes, and ask her what she thinks of such dishonorable conduct. The Apostle's dying, that's clear; and before he dies I warrant he shall know this treachery."

Paul could not stand that last threat. Though he had lost faith in the Apostle as an Apostle, he could never forget the allegiance he had once borne him as a father, or the spell which his powerful individuality had once thrown around him as a teacher. To have embittered that man's dying bed with the shadow of a terrible disappointment would be to Paul a life-

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long subject of deep remorse. "I did not intend to open my mouth in answer to you, Mr. Grimshaw," he said (for the first time breaking through the customary address of Brother), "but I pray you, I entreat you, I beseech you, not to harass the Apostle in his last moments with such a subject."

"Oh, yes, I suppose so," Job Grimshaw answered maliciously, all the ingrained coarseness of the man breaking out in the wrinkles of his face. "No wonder you don't want him enlightened about your goings on with the daughters of Midian, when you must know as well as I do that his life ain't worth a day's purchase, and that he's a man of independent means, and has left you every penny he's got in his will, because he believes you're a fit successor to the Apostolate. I know it, for I signed as a witness, and I read it through, being a short one, while the other witness was signing. And you must know it as well as I do. I suppose you don't think he'll make another will now; but there's time enough to burn that one anyhow."

Paul Owen stood aghast at the vulgar baseness of which this lewd fellow supposed him capable. He had never thought of it before; and yet it flashed across his mind in a moment how obvious it was now. Of course the Apostle would leave him his money. He was being

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educated for the Apostolate, and the Apostolate could not be carried on without the sinews of war. But that Job Grimshaw should think him guilty of angling for the Apostle's money, and then throwing the Church overboard—the bare notion of it was so horrible to him that he could not even hold up his head to answer the taunt. He sat down and buried his crimson face in his hands; and Job Grimshaw, taking up his hat sturdily, with the air of a man who has to perform an unpleasant duty, left the meeting-room abruptly without another word.

There was a gloomy Sunday dinner that morning in the mason's cottage, and nobody seemed much inclined to speak in any way. But as they were in the midst of their solemn meal, a neighbor who was also a Gideonite came in hurriedly. It's all over," he said, breathless —"all over with us and with the Church. The Apostle is dead. He died this morning."

Margaret Owen found voice to ask, "Before Job Grimshaw saw him?"

The neighbor nodded, "Yes."

"Thank heaven for that?" cried Paul. "Then he did not die misunderstanding me!"

"And you'll get his money," added the neighbor, "for I was the other witness."

Paul drew a long breath. "I wish Meenie was here," he said, "I must see her about this,"

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IV.

A FEW days later the Apostle was buried, and his will was read over before the assembled Church. By earnest persuasion of his father, Paul consented to be present, though he feared another humiliation from Job Grimshaw. But two days before he had taken the law into his own hands, by writing to Meenie, at her aunt's in Eaton Place; and that very indiscreet young lady, in response, had actually consented to meet him in Kensington Gardens alone the next afternoon. There he sat with her on one of the benches by the Serpentine, and talked the whole matter over with her to his heart's content.

"If the money is really left to me," he said, "I must in honor refuse it. It was left to me to carry on the Apostolate, and I can't take it on any other ground. But what ought I to do with it? I can't give it over to the Church, for in three days there will be no Church left to give it to. What shall I do with it?"

"Why," said Meenie, thoughtfully, "if I were you I should do this. First, pay back everybody who contributed towards your support in full,

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principal and interest ; then borrow from the remainder as much as you require to complete your Oxford course ; and finally pay back all that and the other money to the fund when you are able, and hand it over for the purpose of doing some good work in Peckham itself, where your Church was originally founded. If the ideal can't be fulfilled, let the money do something good for the actual."

"You are quite right, Meenie," said Paul, "except in one particular. I will not borrow from the fund for my own support. I will not touch a penny of it, temporarily or permanently, for myself in any way. If it comes to me, I shall make it over to trustees at once for some good object, as you suggest, and shall borrow from them five hundred pounds to repay my own poor people, giving the trustees my bond to repay the fund hereafter. I shall fight my own battle henceforth unaided."

"You will do as you ought to do, Paul, and I am proud of it."

So next morning, when the meeting took place, Paul felt somewhat happier in his own mind as to the course he should pursue with reference to Job Grimshaw.

The Senior Episcop opened and read the last will and testament of Arthur Murgess, attorney-at-law. It provided in a few words that all his

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estate, real and personal, should pass unreservedly to his friend, Paul Owen, of Christchurch, Oxford. It was whispered about that, besides the house and grounds, the personality might be sworn at £8,000, a vast sum to those simple people.

When the reading was finished, Paul rose and addressed the assembly. He told them briefly the plan he had formed, and insisted on his determination that not a penny of the money should be put to his own uses. He would face the world for himself, and thanks to their kindness he could face it easily enough. He would still earn and pay back all that he owed them. He would use the fund, first for the good of those who had been members of the Church, and afterwards for the good of the people of Peckham generally. And he thanked them from the bottom of his heart for the kindness they had shown him.

Even Job Grimshaw could only mutter to himself that this was not sperritual grace but mere worldly pride and stubbornness, lest the lad should betray his evil designs, which had thus availed him nothing.

"He has lost his own soul and wrecked the Church for the sake of the money," Job said, "and now he dassn't touch a farden of it."

Next John Owen rose and said slowly,

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"Friends, it seems to me we may as well all confess that this Church has gone to pieces. I can't stop in it myself any longer, for I see it's clear agin nature, and what's agin nature can't be true."

And though the assembly said nothing, it was plain that there were many waverers in the little body whom the affairs of the last week had shaken sadly in their simple faith. Indeed, as a matter of fact, before the end of the month the Gideonite Church had melted away, member by member, till nobody at all was left of the whole assembly but Job Grimshaw.

"My dear," said the rector to his wife a few weeks, later, laying down his *Illustrated*, "this is really a very curious thing. That young fellow, Owen, of Christchurch, that Meenie fancied herself engaged to, has just come into a little landed property and eight or nine thousand pounds on his own account. He must be better connected than Tom imagines. Perhaps we might make inquiries about him after all.

The Rector did make inquiries in the course of the week, and with such results that he turned to the rectory in blank amazement. "That fellow's mad, Amelia," he said, "stark mad, if ever anybody was. The leader of his Little Bethel, or Ebenezer, or whatever it may be, has left him all his property absolutely, without conditions;

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and the idiot of a boy declares he won't touch a penny of it, because he's ceased to believe in their particular shibboleth, and he thinks the leader wanted him to succeed him. Very right and proper of him, of course, to leave the sect if he can't reconcile it with his conscience, but perfectly Quixotic of him to give up the money and beggar himself outright. Even if his connection was otherwise desirable (which it is far from being), it would be absurd to think of letting Meenie marry such a ridiculous hair-brained fellow."

Paul and Meenie, however, went their own way, as young people often will, in spite of the Rector. Paul returned next term to Oxford, penniless, but full of resolution, and by dint of taking pupils managed to eke out his scholorship for the next year. At the end of that time he took his first in Greats, and shortly after gained a fellowship. From the very first day he began saving money to pay off that dead weight of five hundred pounds. The kindly ex-Gideonites had mostly protested against his repaying them at all, but in vain ; Paul would not make his entry into life, he said, under false pretences. It was a hard pull, but he did it. He took pupils, he lectured, he wrote well and vigorously for the press, he worked late and early with volcanic energy ; and by the end of three years he had

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not only saved the whole of the sum advanced by the Gideonites, but had also begun to put away a little nest-egg against his marriage with Meenie. And when the editor of a great morning paper in London offered him a permanent place upon the staff, at a large salary, he actually went down to Worcestershire, saw the formidable Rector himself in his own parish, and demanded Meenie outright in marriage. And the Rector observed to his wife that this young Owen seemed a well-behaved and amiable young man ; that after all one needn't know anything about his relations if one didn't like ; and that as Meenie had quite made up her mind, and was as headstrong as a mule, there was no use trying to oppose her any longer.

Down in Peckham, where Paul Owen lives, and is loved by half the poor of the district, no one has forgotten who was the real founder of the Murgess Institute, which does so much good in encouraging thrift, and is so admirably managed by the founder and his wife. He would take a house nowhere but at Peckham, he said. To the Peckham people he owed his education, and for the Peckham people he would watch the working of his little Institute. There is no better work being done anywhere in that great squalid desert, the east and southeast of London ; there is no influence more magnetic than

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the founder s. John and Margaret Owen have recovered their hopes for their boy, only they run now in another and more feasible direction ; and those who witness the good that is being done by the Institute among the poor of Peckham, or who have read that remarkable and brilliant economical work lately published on "The Future of Co-operation in the East End, by P. O.," venture to believe that Meenie was right after all, and that even the great social world itself has not yet heard the last of young Paul Owen's lay apostolate.

THE END.

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A BRIDE FROM THE DESERT

BY

GRANT ALLEN

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