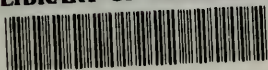


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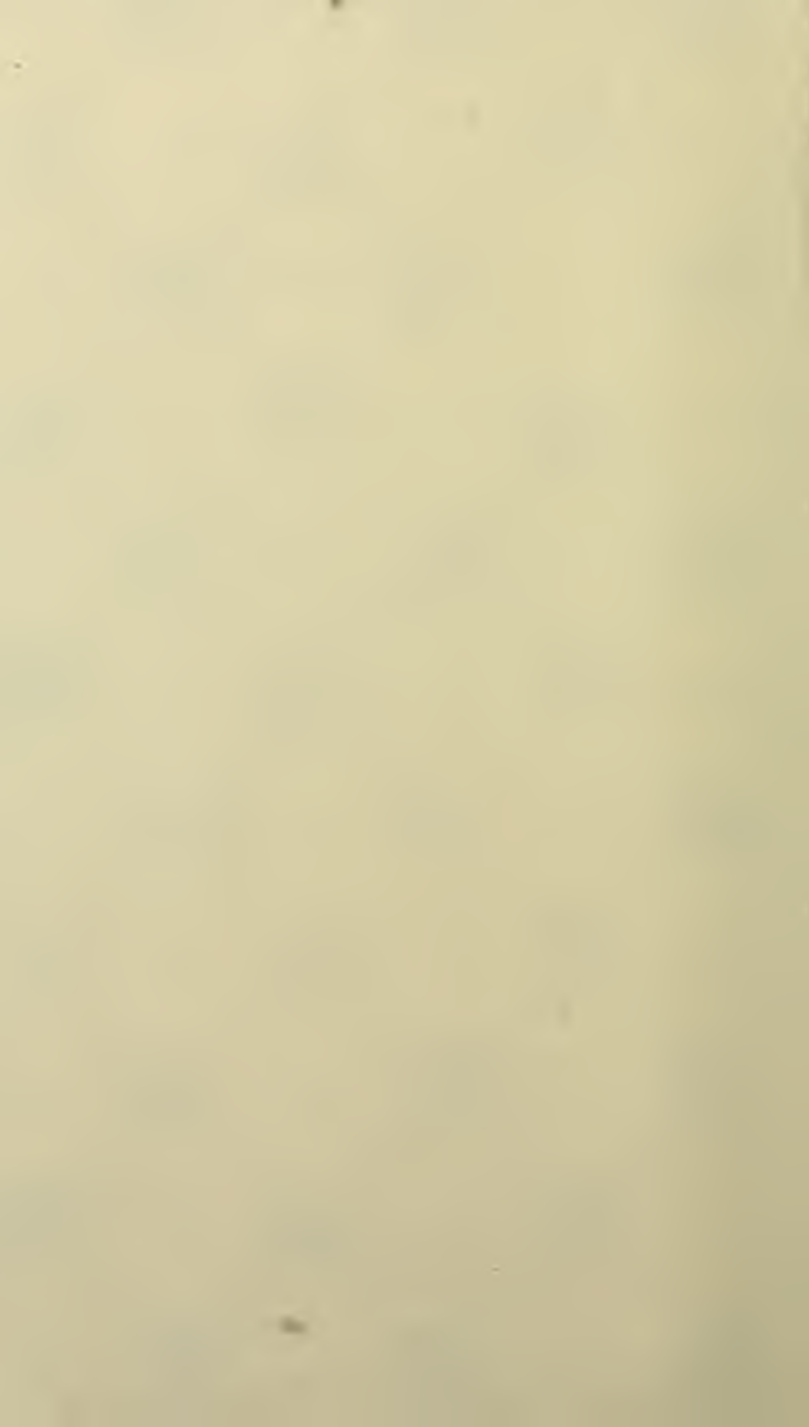


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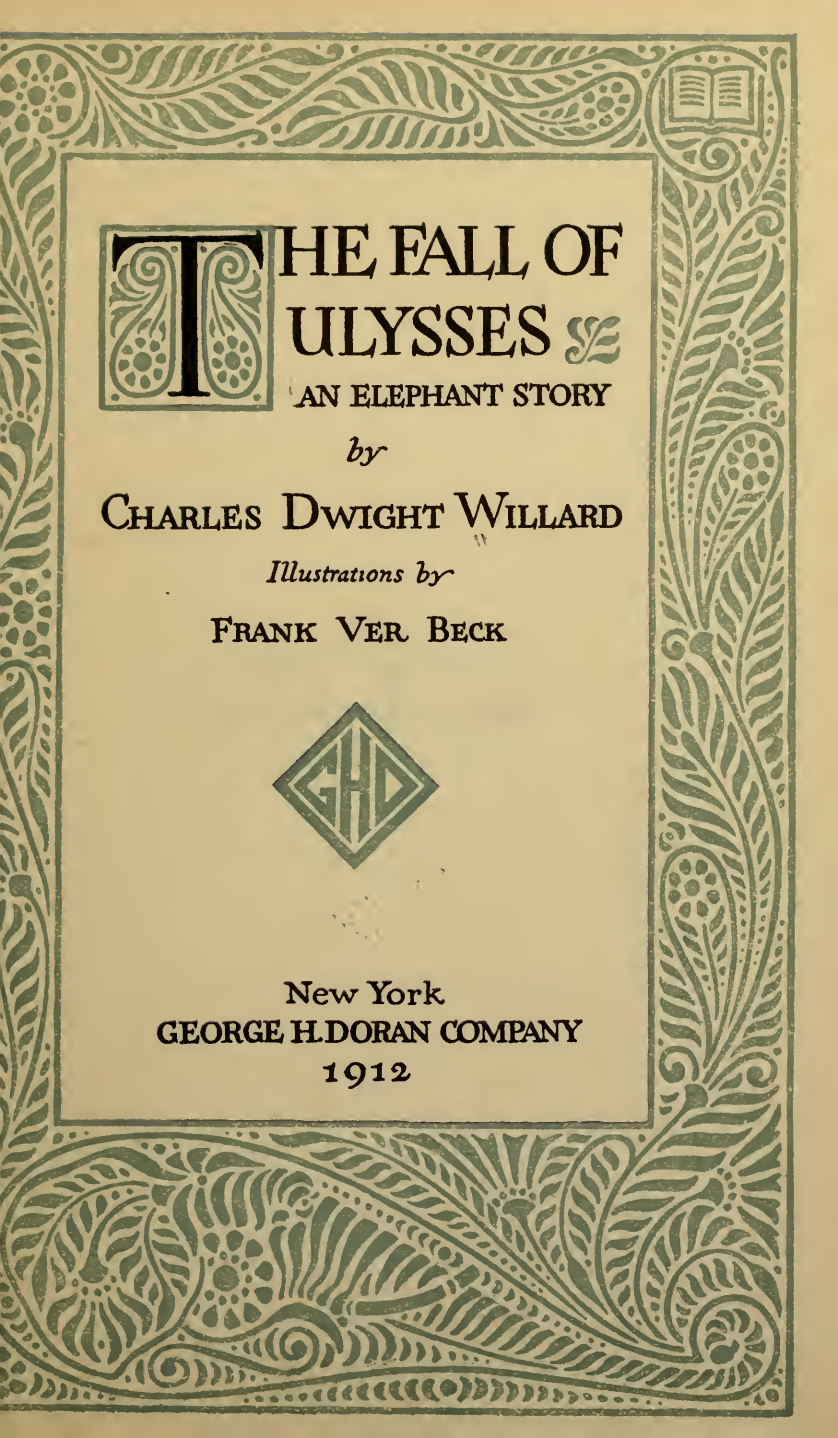









"I began a systematic and determined effort to teach Ulysses to read and write."



THE FALL OF
ULYSSES 
AN ELEPHANT STORY

by

CHARLES DWIGHT WILLARD

Illustrations by

FRANK VER BECK



New York
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY
1912

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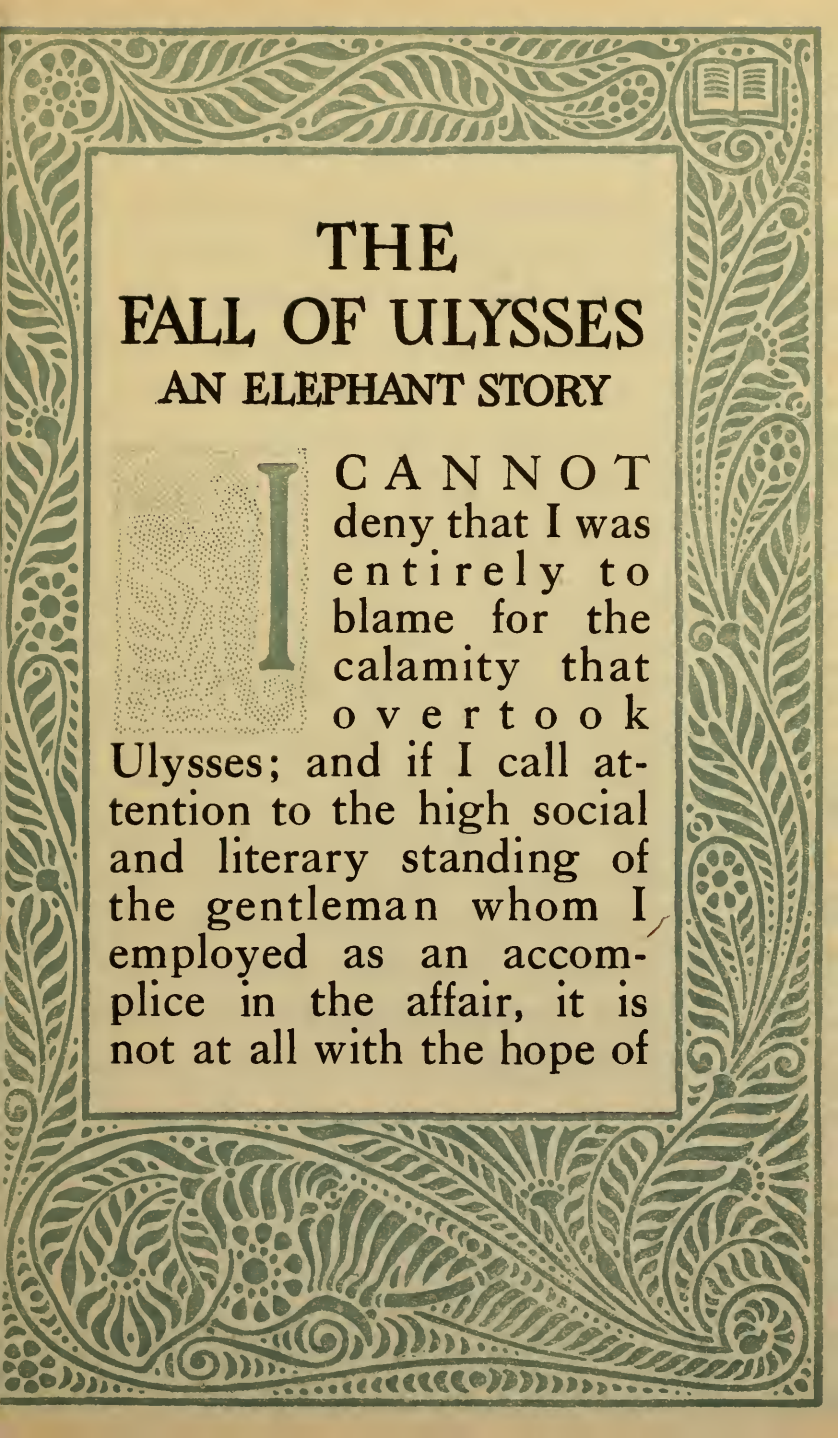
To Ulysses' loyal friend
M. O. H.
this story is dedicated
by the Writer.



THE FALL OF ULYSSES

An Elephant Story

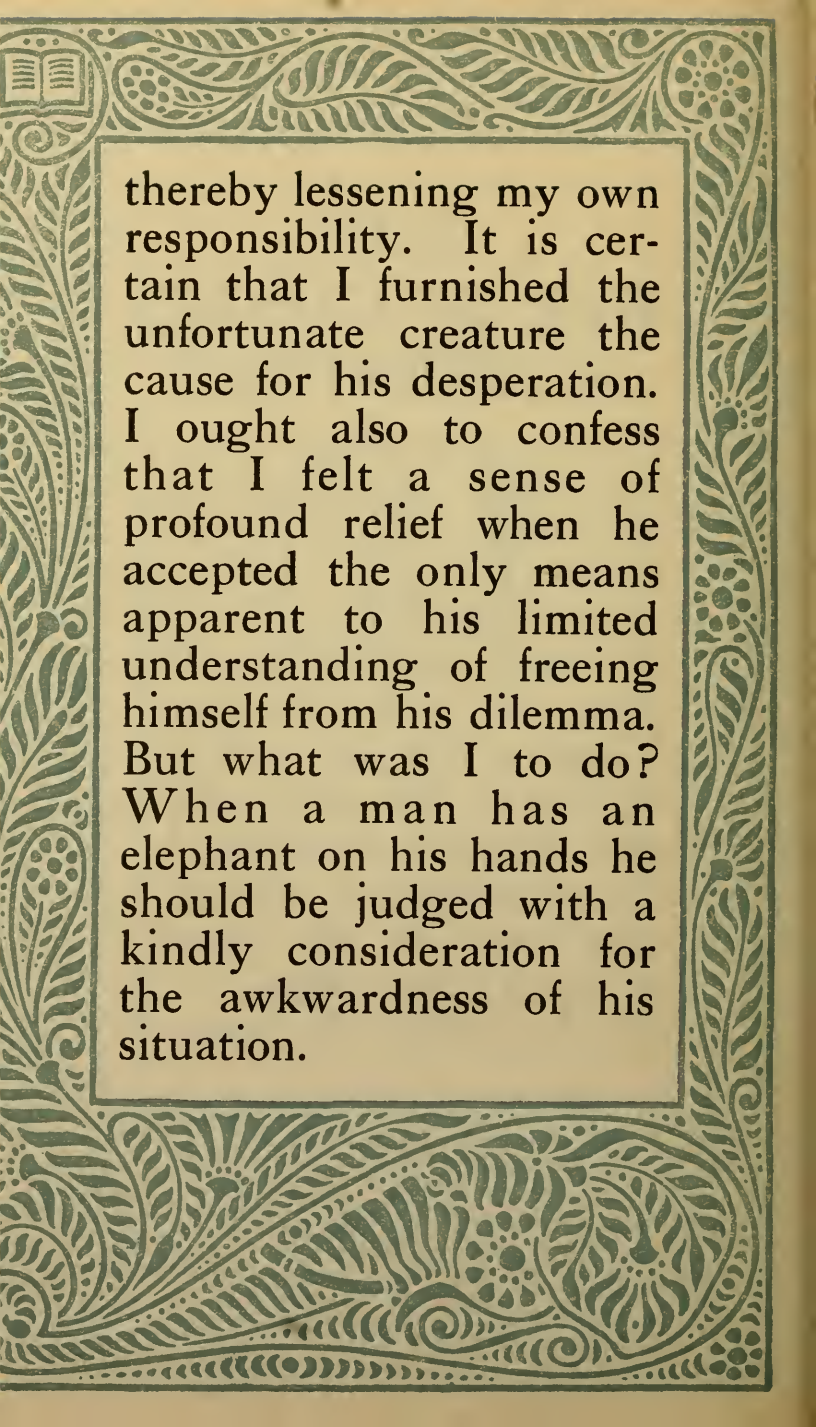




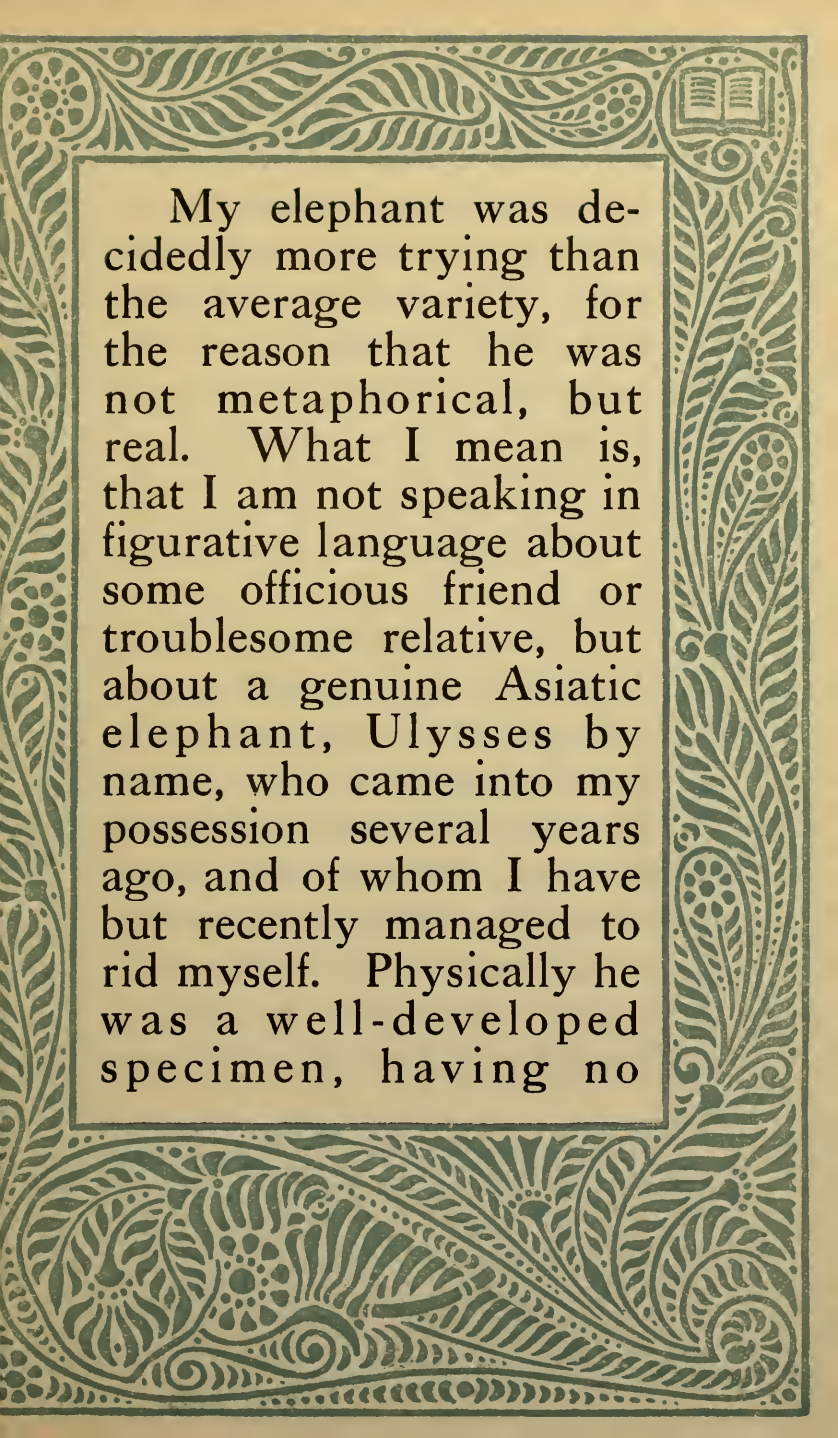
THE FALL OF ULYSSES

AN ELEPHANT STORY

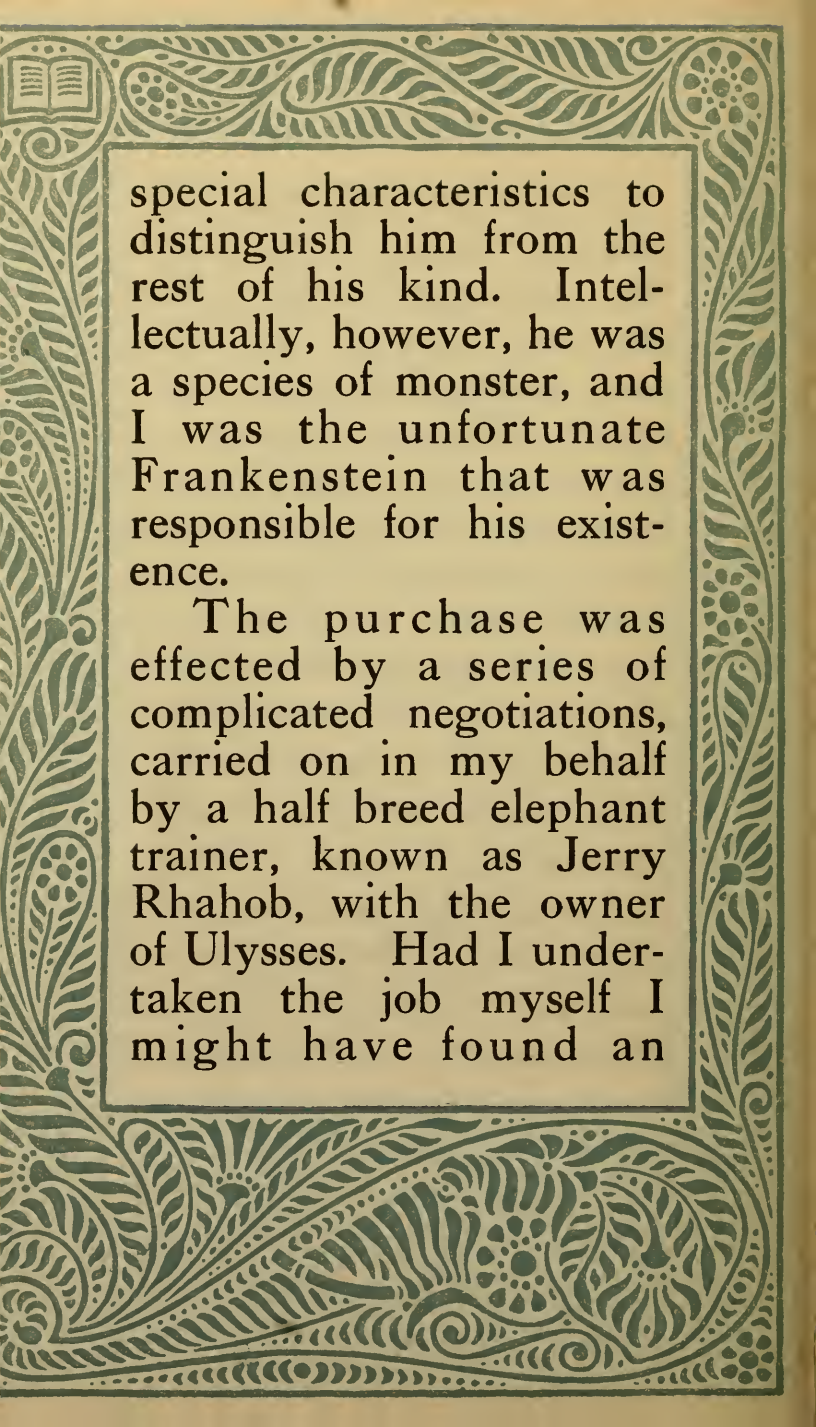
I CANNOT deny that I was entirely to blame for the calamity that overtook Ulysses; and if I call attention to the high social and literary standing of the gentleman whom I employed as an accomplice in the affair, it is not at all with the hope of



thereby lessening my own responsibility. It is certain that I furnished the unfortunate creature the cause for his desperation. I ought also to confess that I felt a sense of profound relief when he accepted the only means apparent to his limited understanding of freeing himself from his dilemma. But what was I to do? When a man has an elephant on his hands he should be judged with a kindly consideration for the awkwardness of his situation.

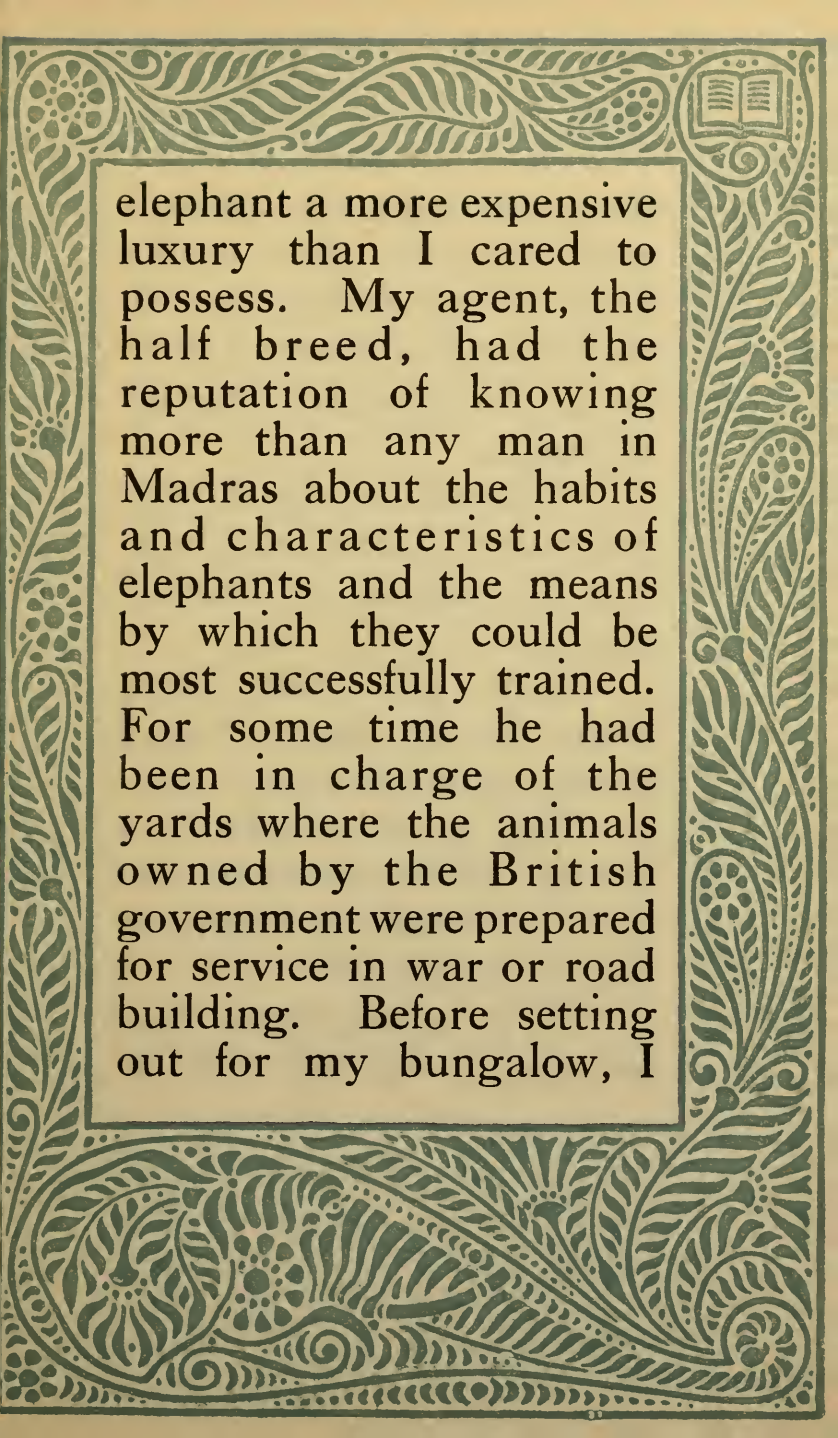


My elephant was decidedly more trying than the average variety, for the reason that he was not metaphorical, but real. What I mean is, that I am not speaking in figurative language about some officious friend or troublesome relative, but about a genuine Asiatic elephant, Ulysses by name, who came into my possession several years ago, and of whom I have but recently managed to rid myself. Physically he was a well-developed specimen, having no

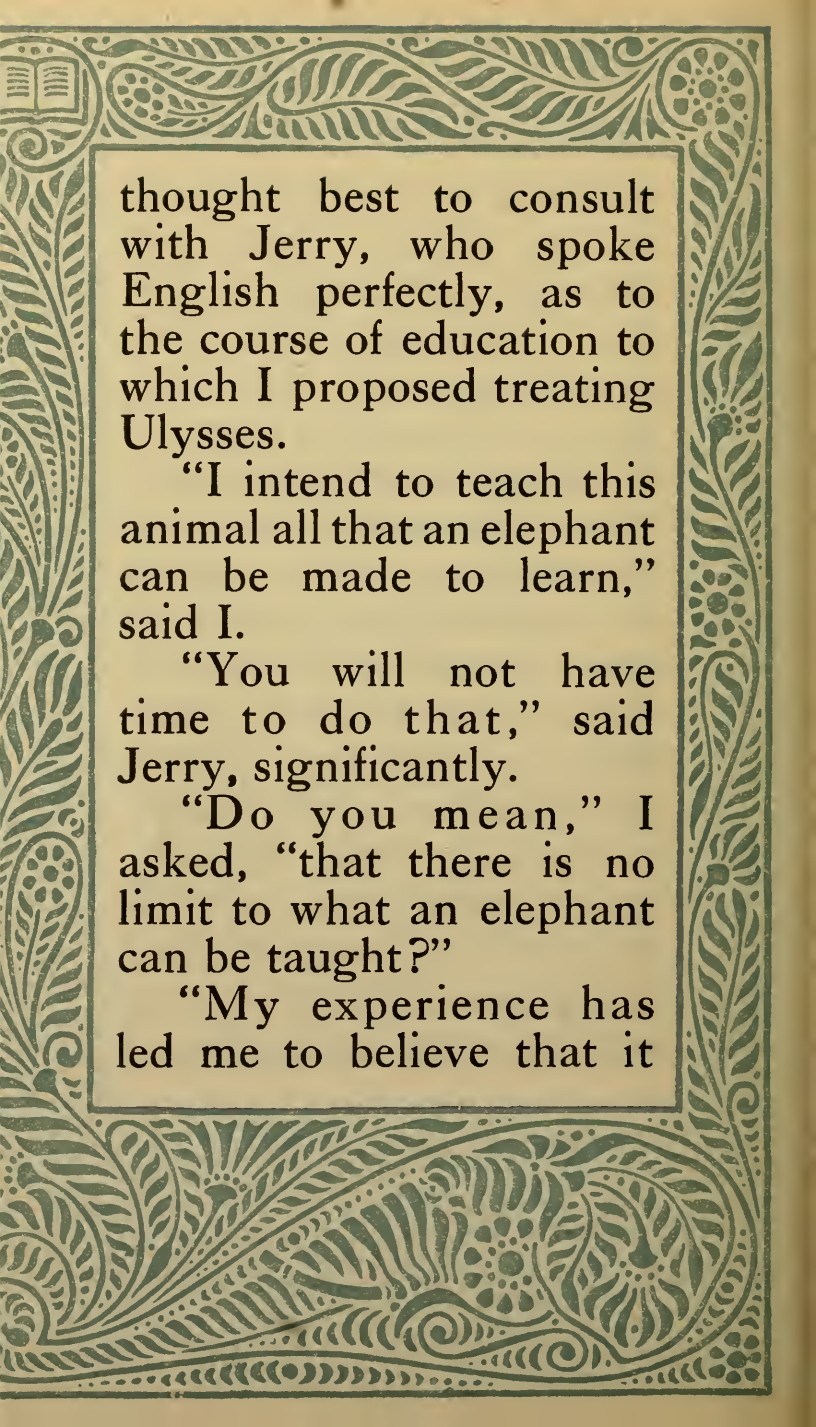


special characteristics to distinguish him from the rest of his kind. Intellectually, however, he was a species of monster, and I was the unfortunate Frankenstein that was responsible for his existence.

The purchase was effected by a series of complicated negotiations, carried on in my behalf by a half breed elephant trainer, known as Jerry Rhahob, with the owner of Ulysses. Had I undertaken the job myself I might have found an



elephant a more expensive luxury than I cared to possess. My agent, the half breed, had the reputation of knowing more than any man in Madras about the habits and characteristics of elephants and the means by which they could be most successfully trained. For some time he had been in charge of the yards where the animals owned by the British government were prepared for service in war or road building. Before setting out for my bungalow, I



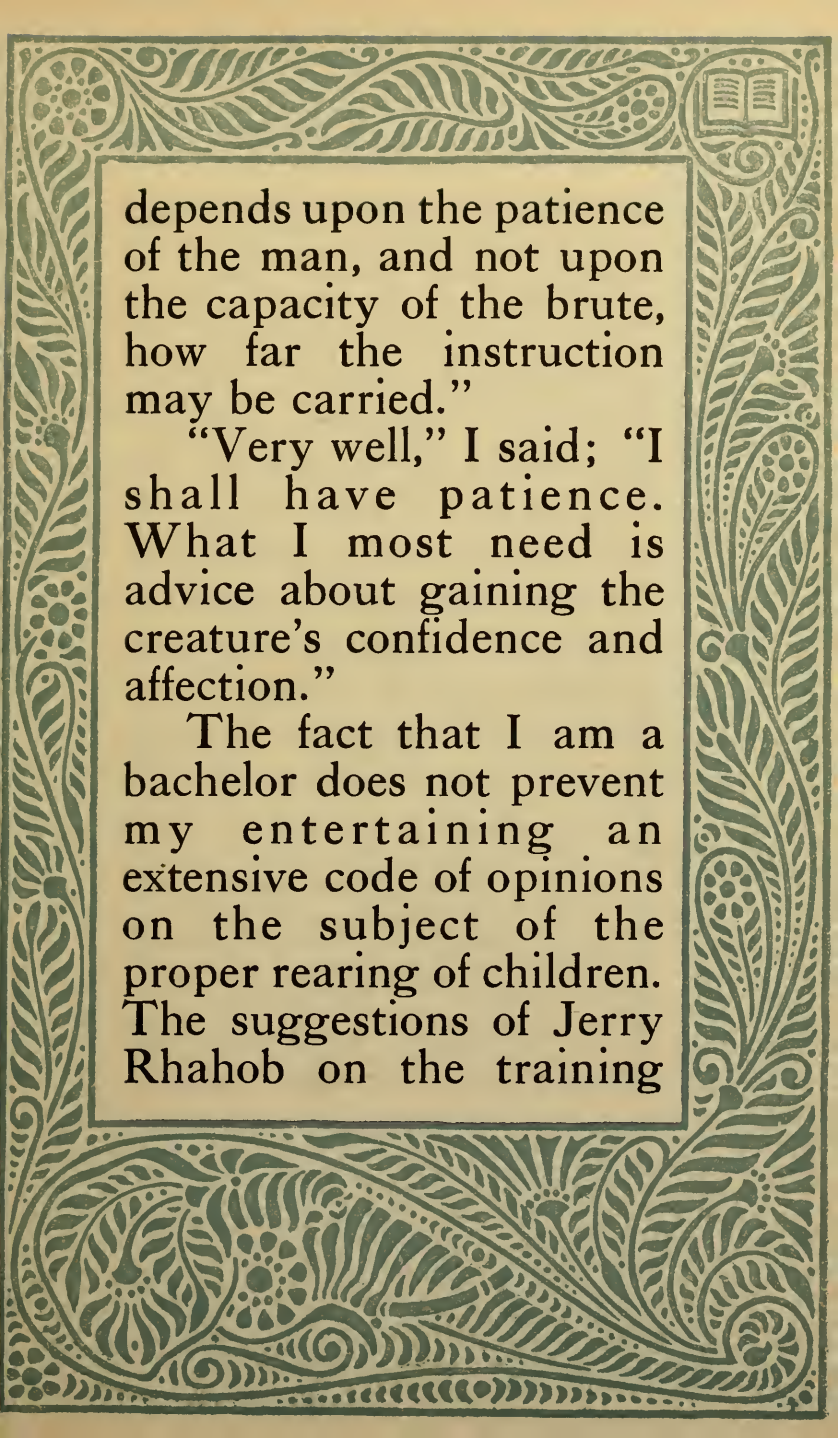
thought best to consult with Jerry, who spoke English perfectly, as to the course of education to which I proposed treating Ulysses.

“I intend to teach this animal all that an elephant can be made to learn,” said I.

“You will not have time to do that,” said Jerry, significantly.

“Do you mean,” I asked, “that there is no limit to what an elephant can be taught?”

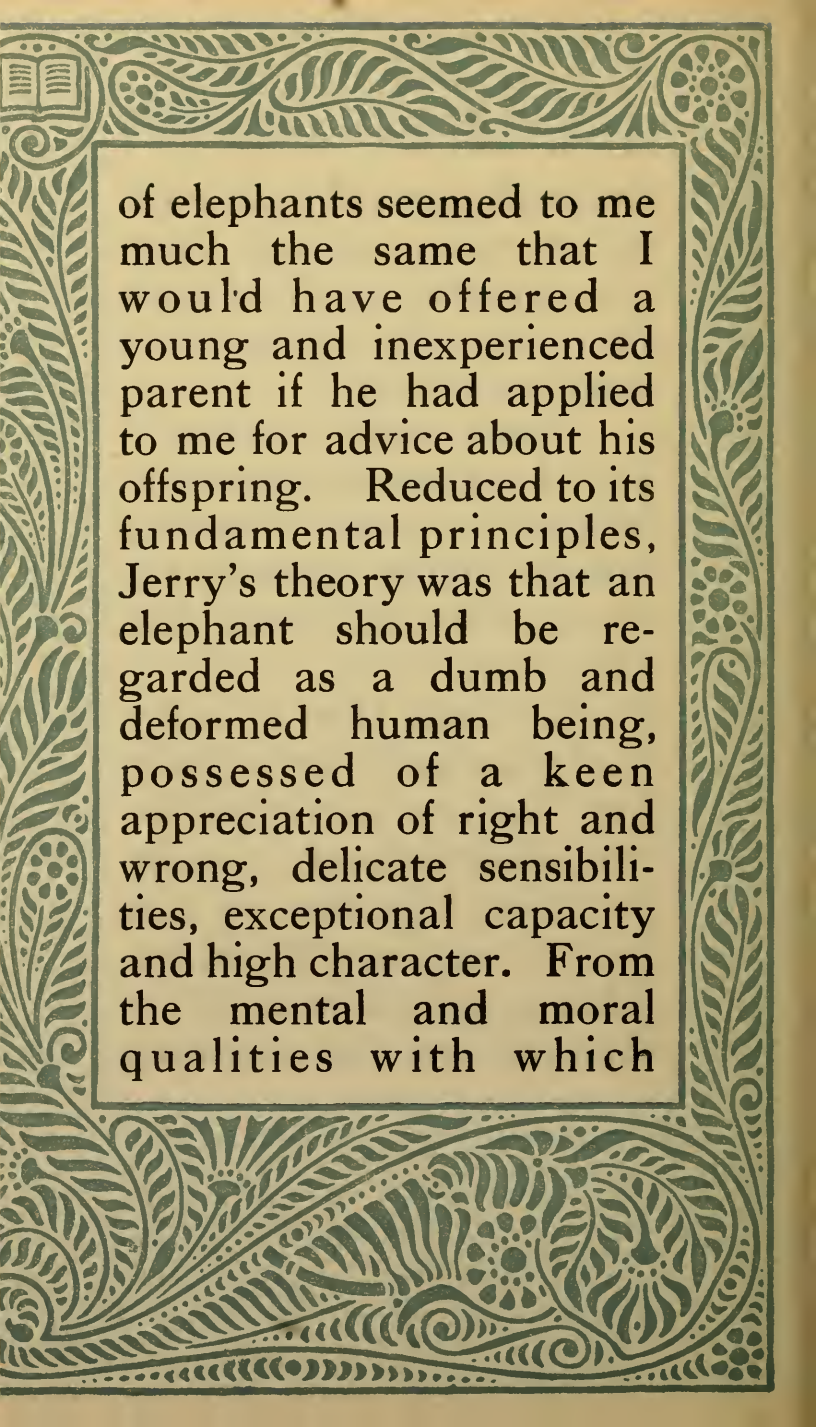
“My experience has led me to believe that it



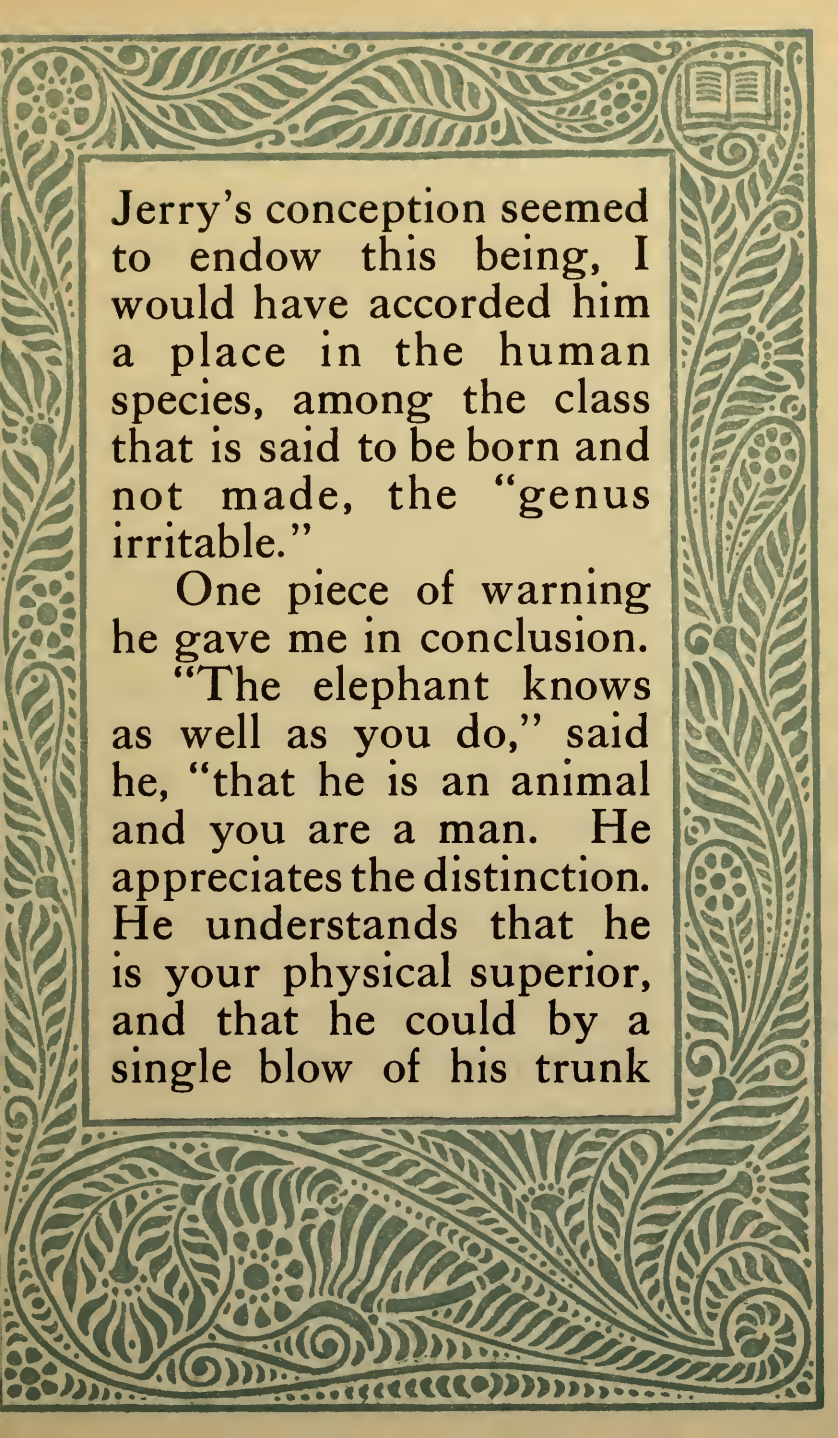
depends upon the patience of the man, and not upon the capacity of the brute, how far the instruction may be carried."

"Very well," I said; "I shall have patience. What I most need is advice about gaining the creature's confidence and affection."

The fact that I am a bachelor does not prevent my entertaining an extensive code of opinions on the subject of the proper rearing of children. The suggestions of Jerry Rhahob on the training

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns surrounds the text. The border is composed of repeating motifs of leaves, flowers, and scrolls, creating a rich, textured frame. In the top-left corner, there is a small circular emblem containing an open book with lines of text on its pages.

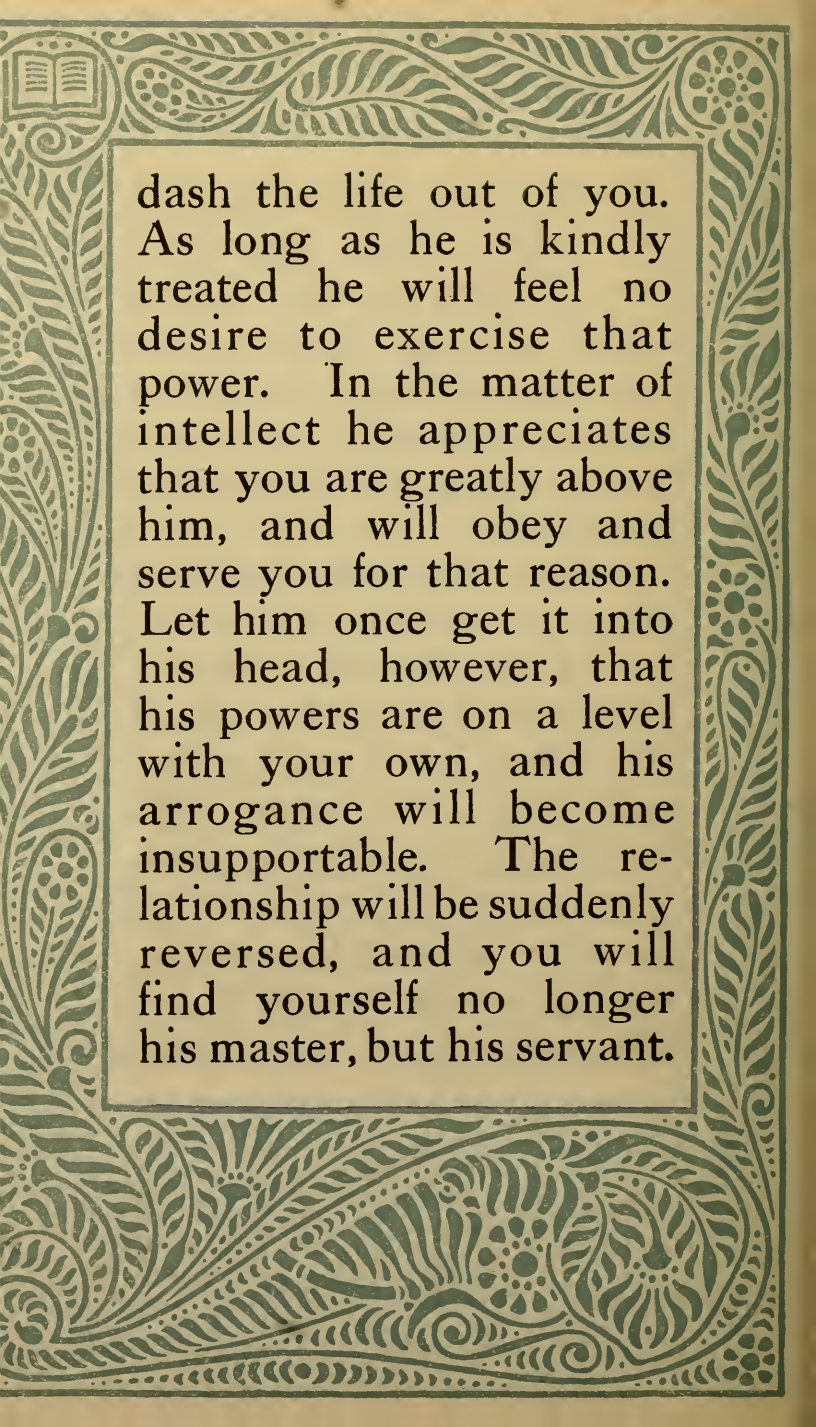
of elephants seemed to me much the same that I would have offered a young and inexperienced parent if he had applied to me for advice about his offspring. Reduced to its fundamental principles, Jerry's theory was that an elephant should be regarded as a dumb and deformed human being, possessed of a keen appreciation of right and wrong, delicate sensibilities, exceptional capacity and high character. From the mental and moral qualities with which



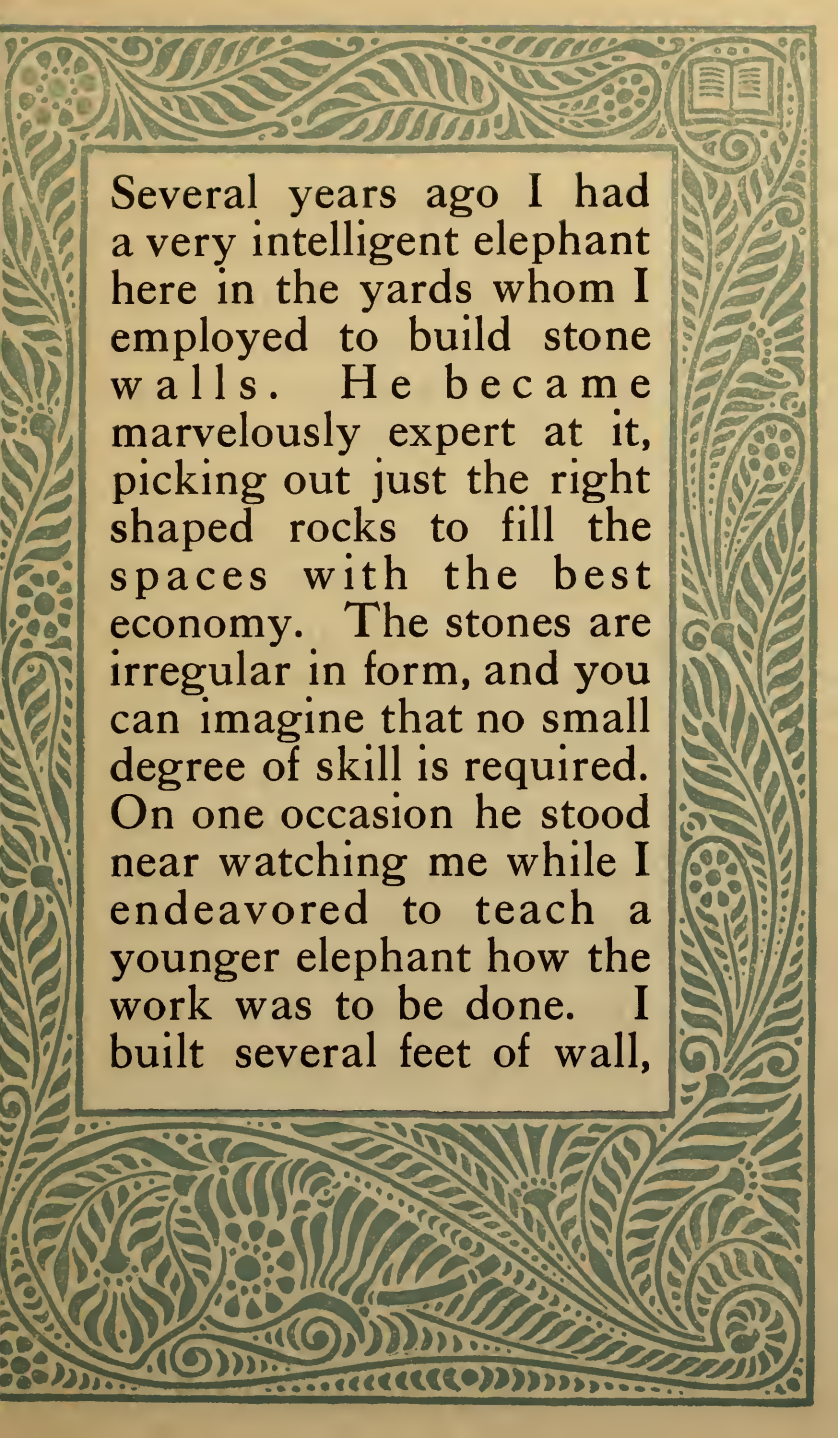
Jerry's conception seemed to endow this being, I would have accorded him a place in the human species, among the class that is said to be born and not made, the "genus irritabile."

One piece of warning he gave me in conclusion.

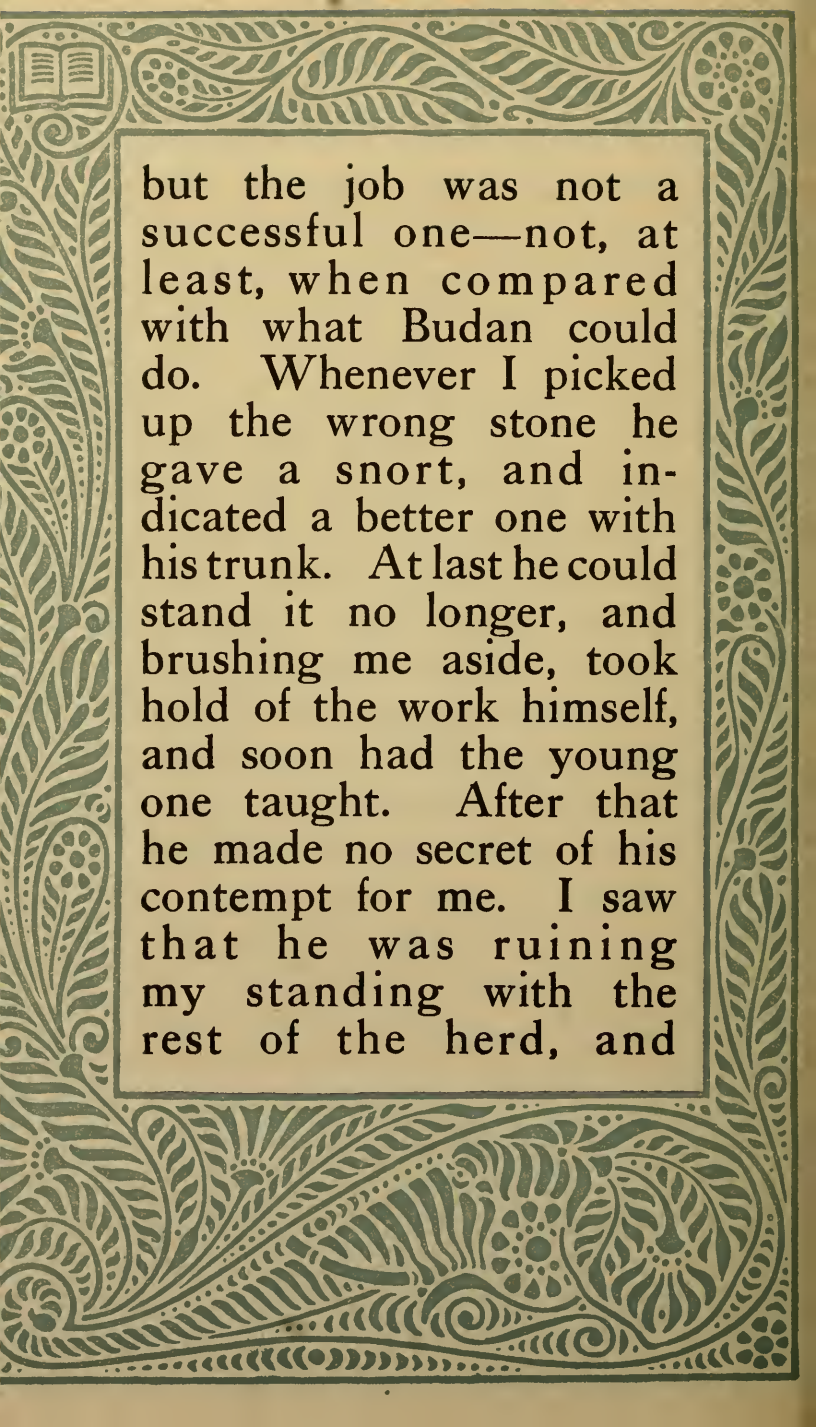
"The elephant knows as well as you do," said he, "that he is an animal and you are a man. He appreciates the distinction. He understands that he is your physical superior, and that he could by a single blow of his trunk



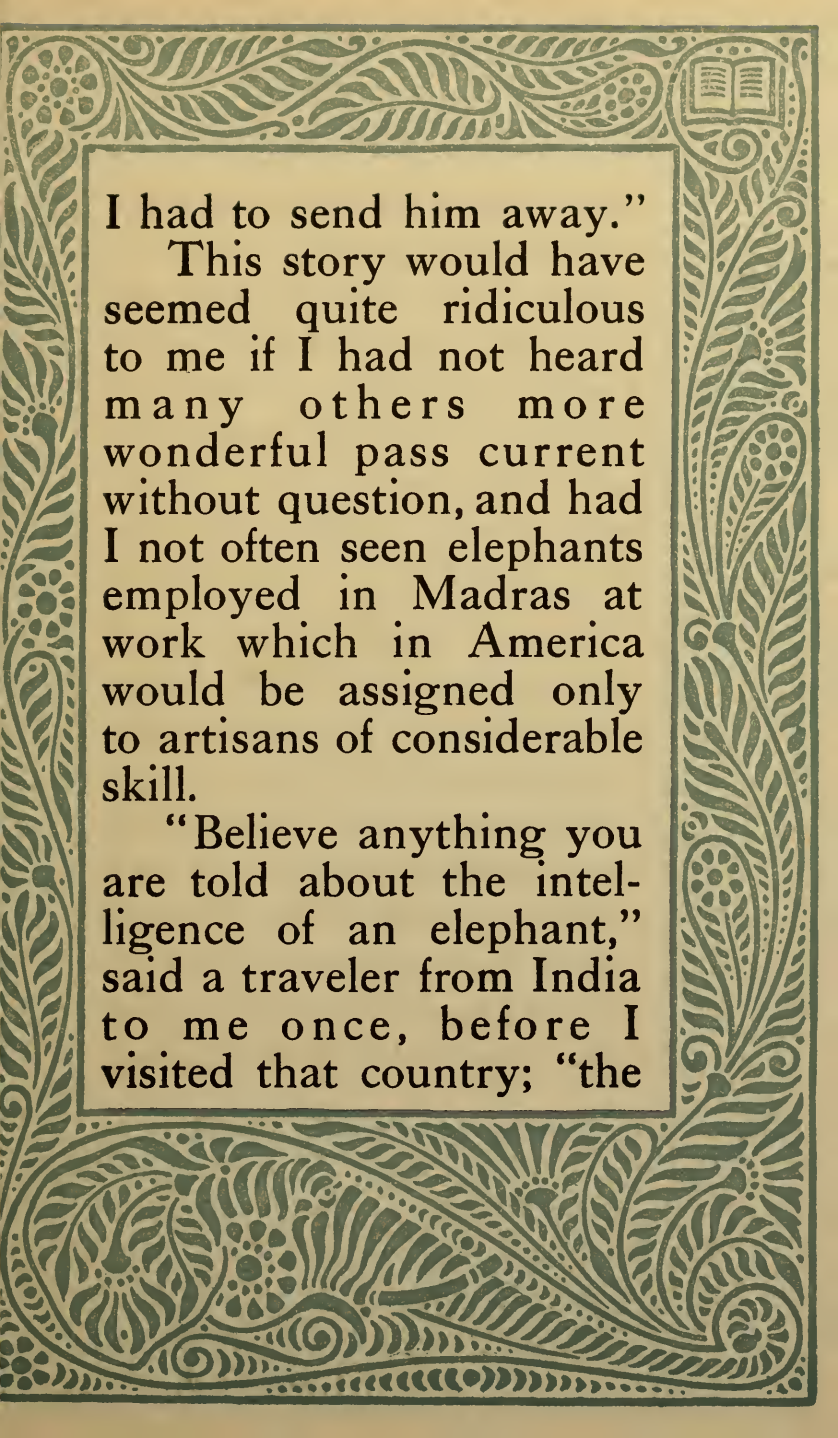
dash the life out of you. As long as he is kindly treated he will feel no desire to exercise that power. In the matter of intellect he appreciates that you are greatly above him, and will obey and serve you for that reason. Let him once get it into his head, however, that his powers are on a level with your own, and his arrogance will become insupportable. The relationship will be suddenly reversed, and you will find yourself no longer his master, but his servant.



Several years ago I had a very intelligent elephant here in the yards whom I employed to build stone walls. He became marvelously expert at it, picking out just the right shaped rocks to fill the spaces with the best economy. The stones are irregular in form, and you can imagine that no small degree of skill is required. On one occasion he stood near watching me while I endeavored to teach a younger elephant how the work was to be done. I built several feet of wall,



but the job was not a successful one—not, at least, when compared with what Budan could do. Whenever I picked up the wrong stone he gave a snort, and indicated a better one with his trunk. At last he could stand it no longer, and brushing me aside, took hold of the work himself, and soon had the young one taught. After that he made no secret of his contempt for me. I saw that he was ruining my standing with the rest of the herd, and



I had to send him away."

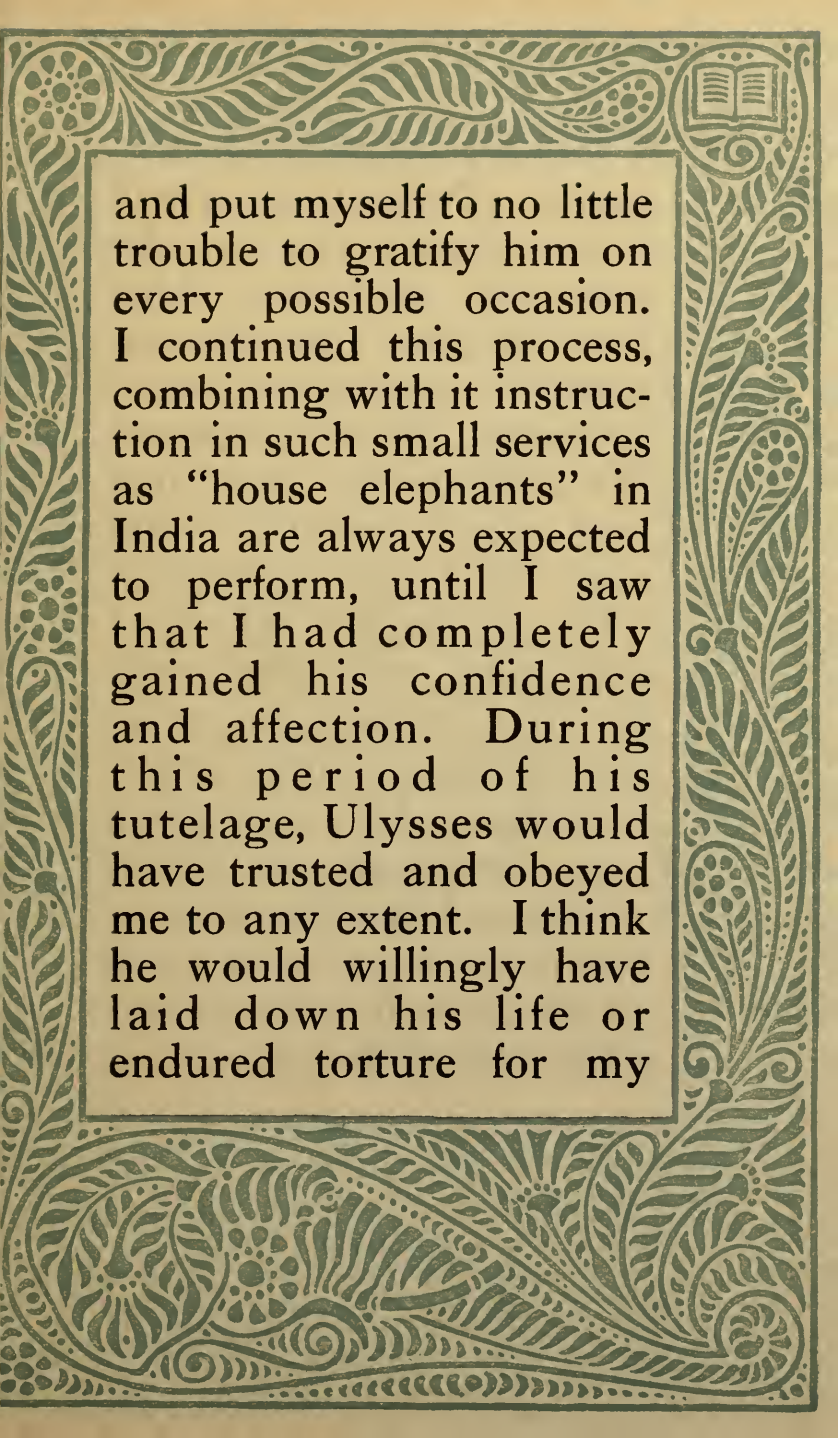
This story would have seemed quite ridiculous to me if I had not heard many others more wonderful pass current without question, and had I not often seen elephants employed in Madras at work which in America would be assigned only to artisans of considerable skill.

"Believe anything you are told about the intelligence of an elephant," said a traveler from India to me once, before I visited that country; "the

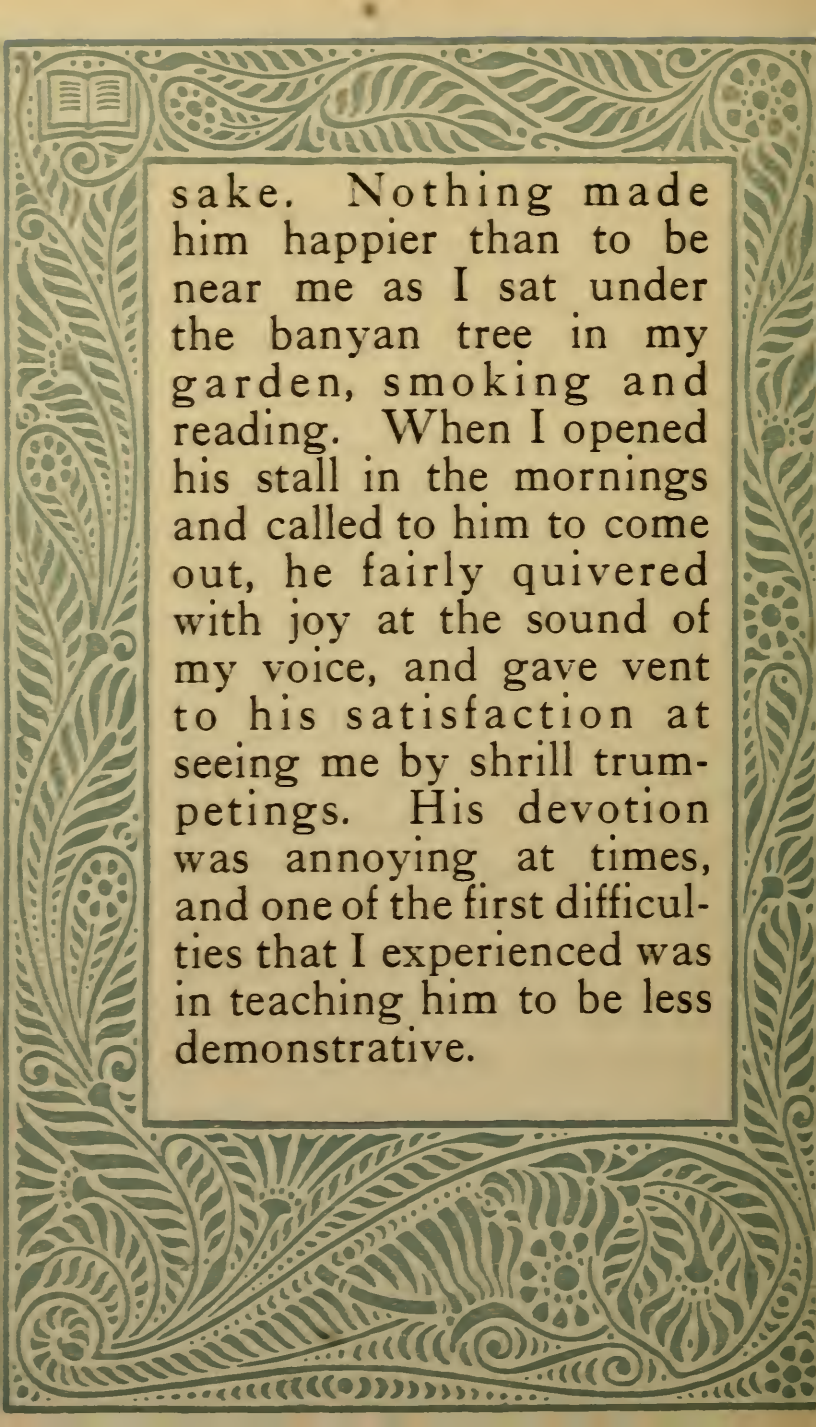


chances are it is true."

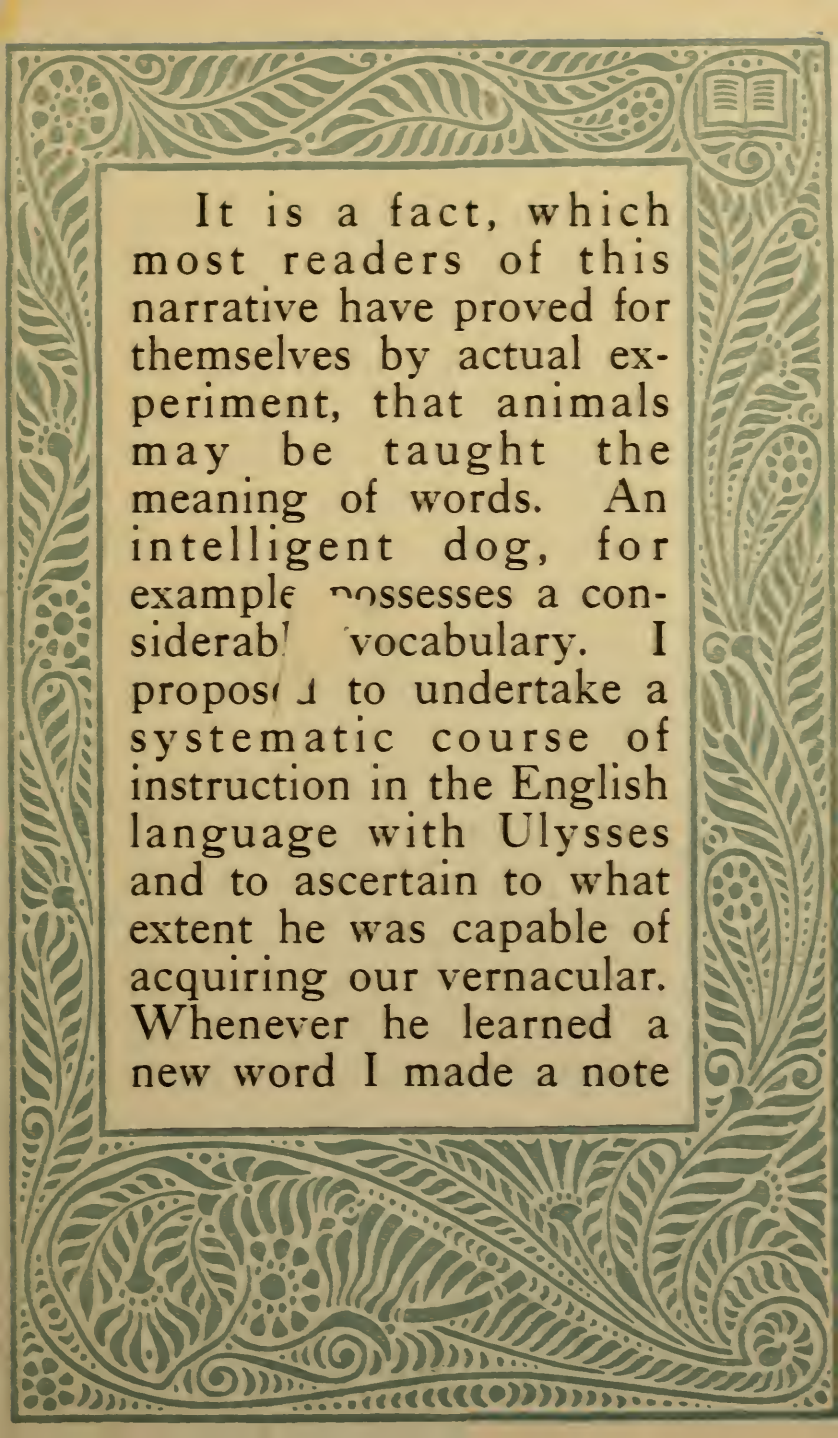
I engaged an experienced mahout, or driver, an intelligent native by the name of Akbar. I determined, however, to make use of his services just as little as possible, in order that Ulysses might learn to depend upon myself alone. I attended personally to the matter of food and drink, and took pains that my protégé should receive no favors from the hand of anyone else. I soon learned the things that gave him pleasure,



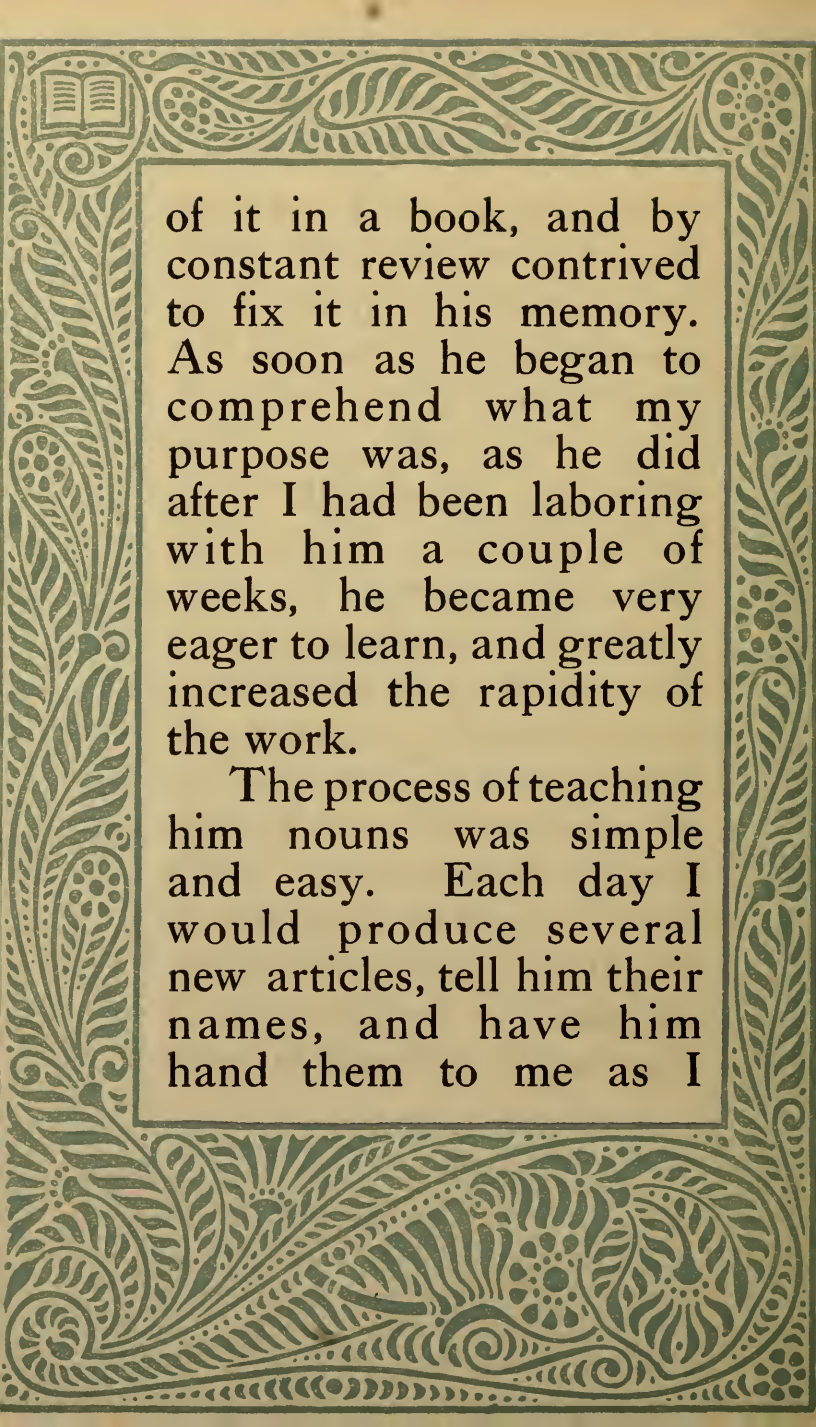
and put myself to no little trouble to gratify him on every possible occasion. I continued this process, combining with it instruction in such small services as "house elephants" in India are always expected to perform, until I saw that I had completely gained his confidence and affection. During this period of his tutelage, Ulysses would have trusted and obeyed me to any extent. I think he would willingly have laid down his life or endured torture for my



sake. Nothing made him happier than to be near me as I sat under the banyan tree in my garden, smoking and reading. When I opened his stall in the mornings and called to him to come out, he fairly quivered with joy at the sound of my voice, and gave vent to his satisfaction at seeing me by shrill trumpeting. His devotion was annoying at times, and one of the first difficulties that I experienced was in teaching him to be less demonstrative.

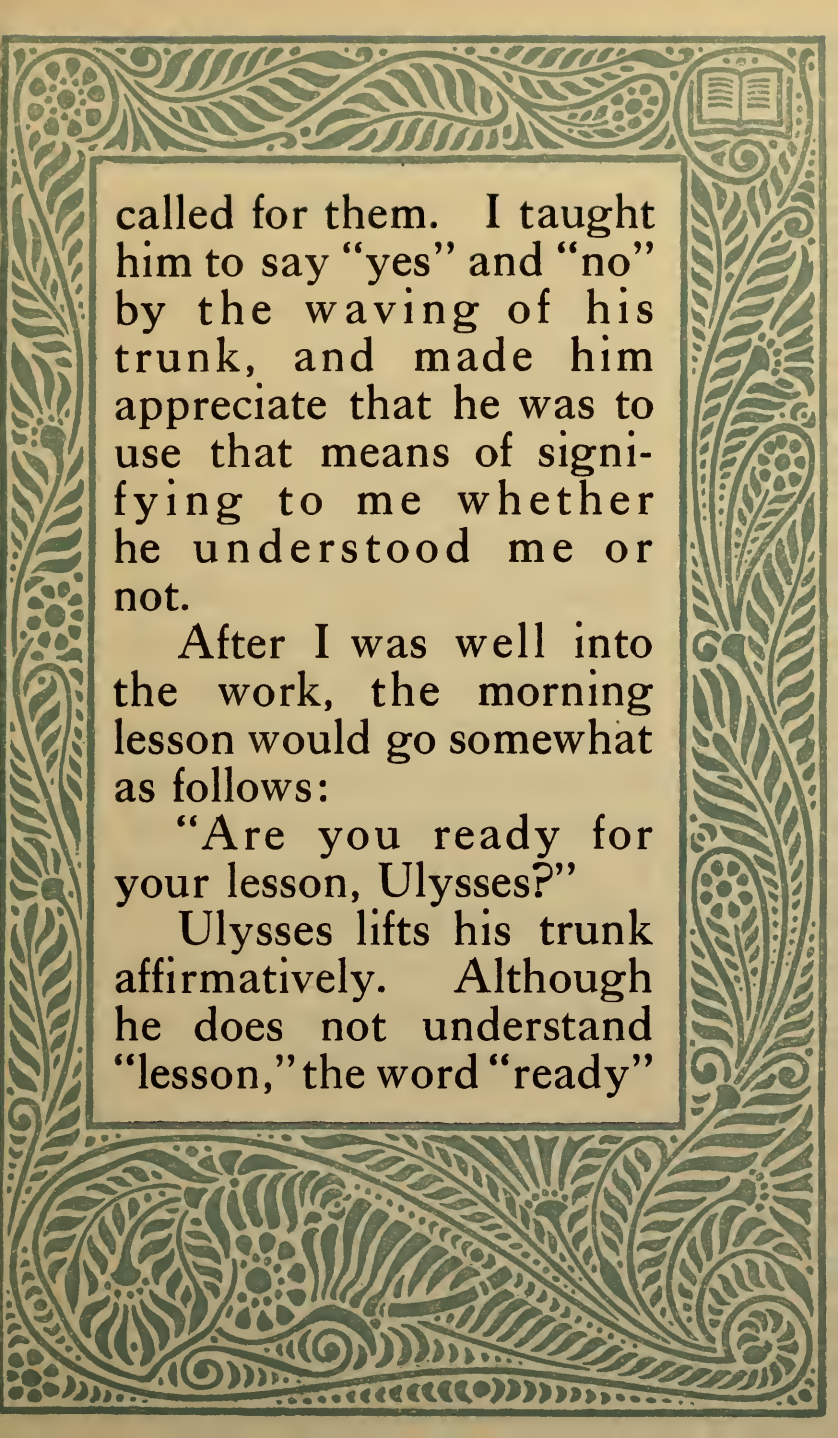


It is a fact, which most readers of this narrative have proved for themselves by actual experiment, that animals may be taught the meaning of words. An intelligent dog, for example possesses a considerable vocabulary. I proposed to undertake a systematic course of instruction in the English language with Ulysses and to ascertain to what extent he was capable of acquiring our vernacular. Whenever he learned a new word I made a note



of it in a book, and by constant review contrived to fix it in his memory. As soon as he began to comprehend what my purpose was, as he did after I had been laboring with him a couple of weeks, he became very eager to learn, and greatly increased the rapidity of the work.

The process of teaching him nouns was simple and easy. Each day I would produce several new articles, tell him their names, and have him hand them to me as I

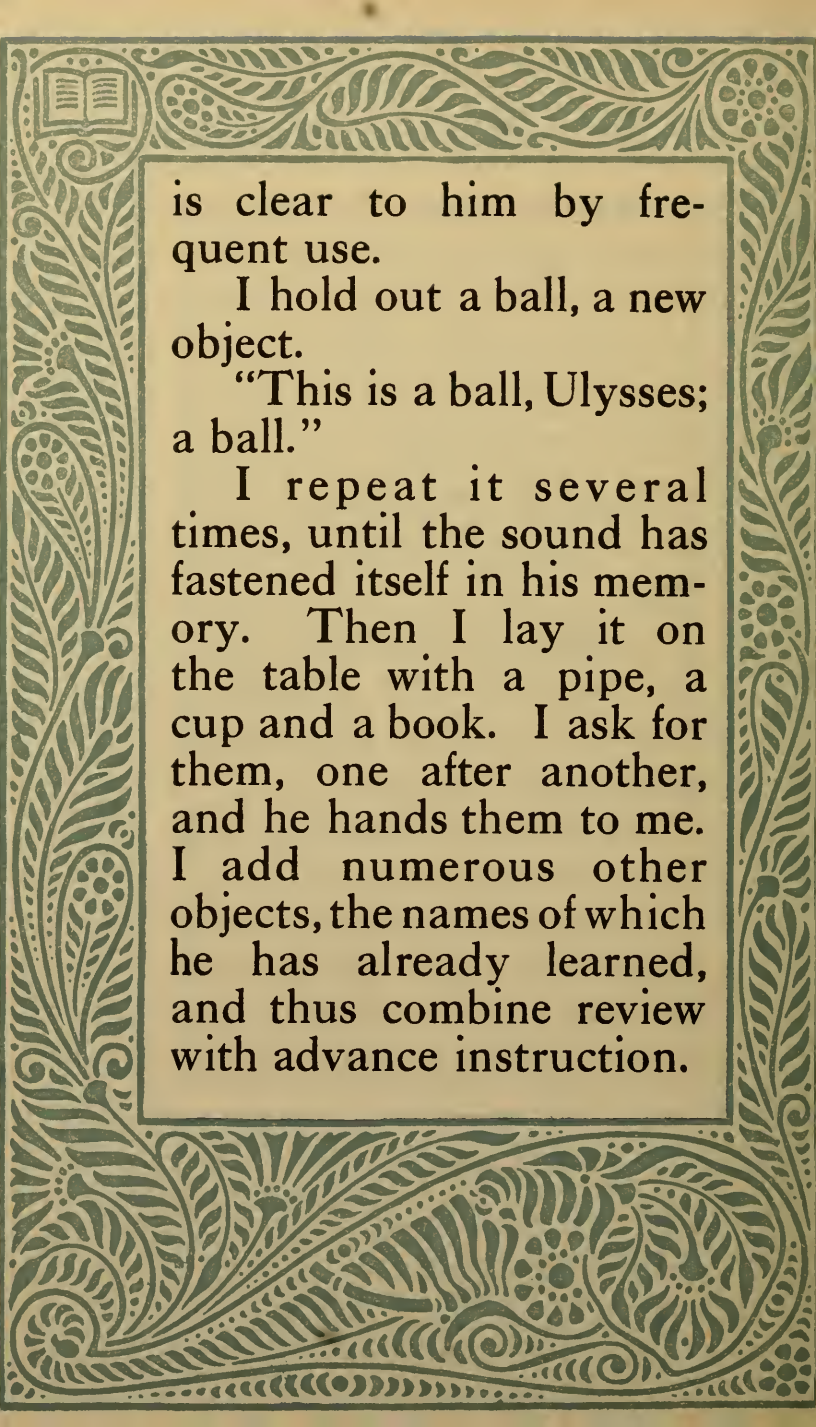


called for them. I taught him to say "yes" and "no" by the waving of his trunk, and made him appreciate that he was to use that means of signifying to me whether he understood me or not.

After I was well into the work, the morning lesson would go somewhat as follows:

"Are you ready for your lesson, Ulysses?"

Ulysses lifts his trunk affirmatively. Although he does not understand "lesson," the word "ready"

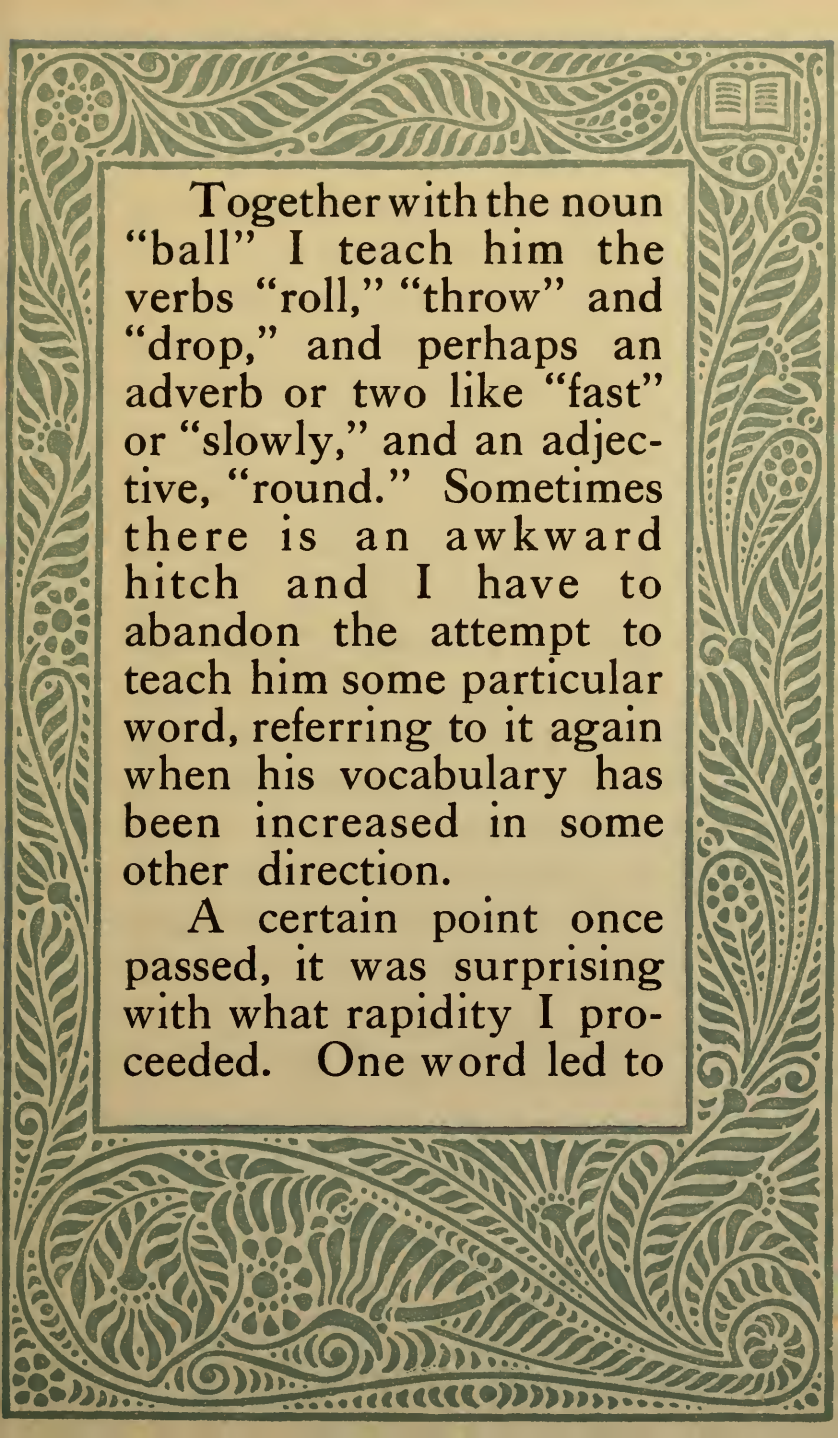


is clear to him by frequent use.

I hold out a ball, a new object.

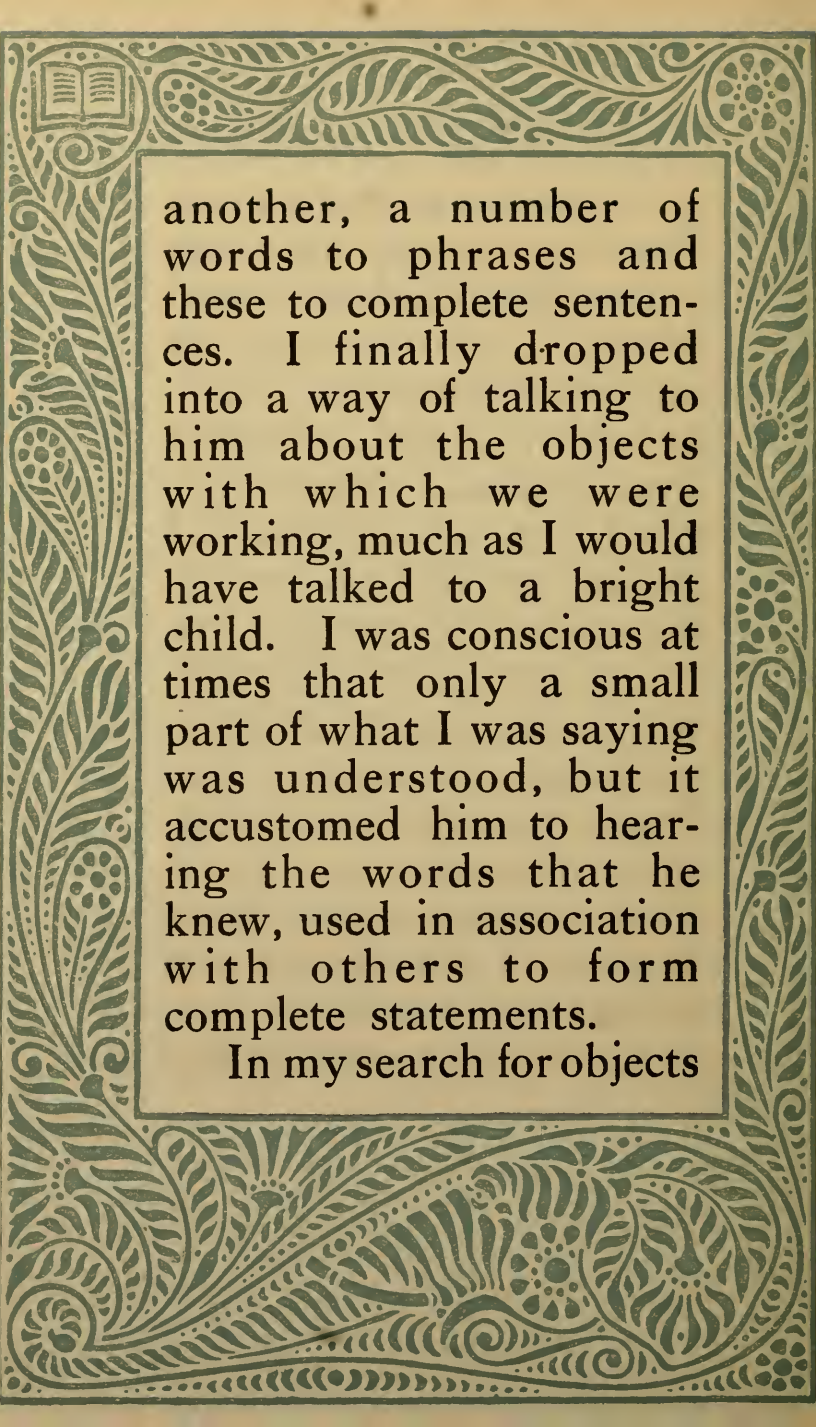
“This is a ball, Ulysses; a ball.”

I repeat it several times, until the sound has fastened itself in his memory. Then I lay it on the table with a pipe, a cup and a book. I ask for them, one after another, and he hands them to me. I add numerous other objects, the names of which he has already learned, and thus combine review with advance instruction.



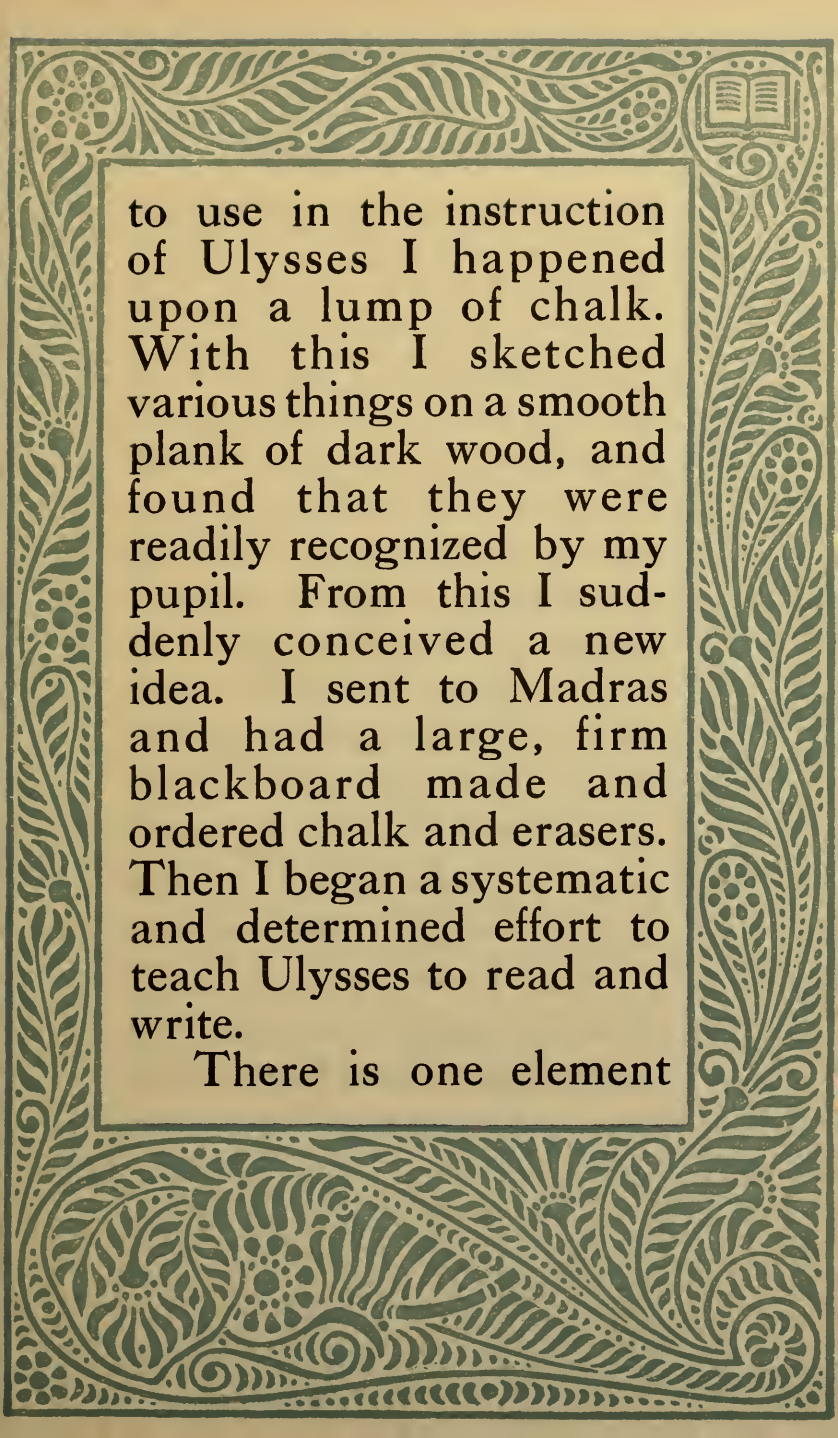
Together with the noun "ball" I teach him the verbs "roll," "throw" and "drop," and perhaps an adverb or two like "fast" or "slowly," and an adjective, "round." Sometimes there is an awkward hitch and I have to abandon the attempt to teach him some particular word, referring to it again when his vocabulary has been increased in some other direction.

A certain point once passed, it was surprising with what rapidity I proceeded. One word led to



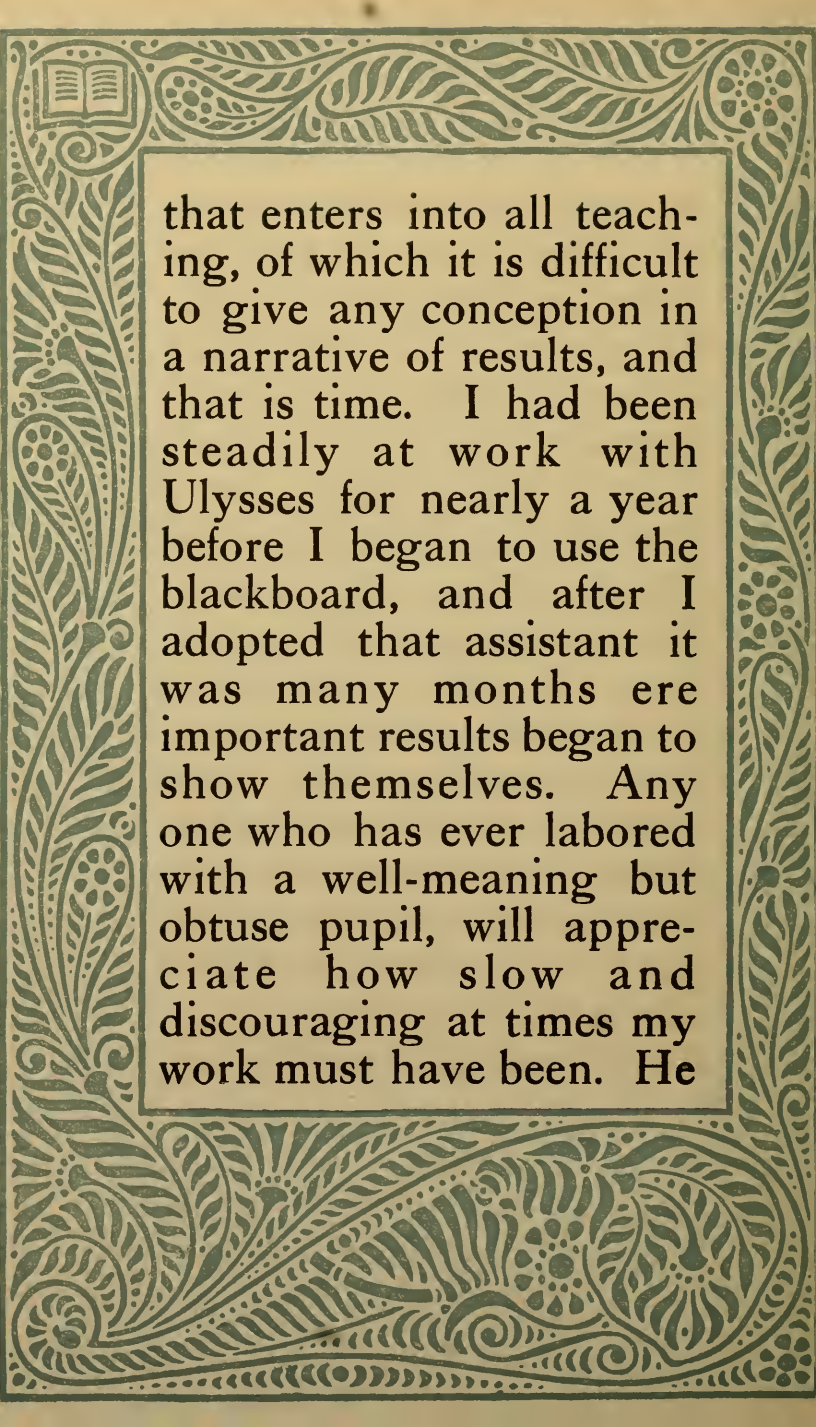
another, a number of words to phrases and these to complete sentences. I finally dropped into a way of talking to him about the objects with which we were working, much as I would have talked to a bright child. I was conscious at times that only a small part of what I was saying was understood, but it accustomed him to hearing the words that he knew, used in association with others to form complete statements.

In my search for objects

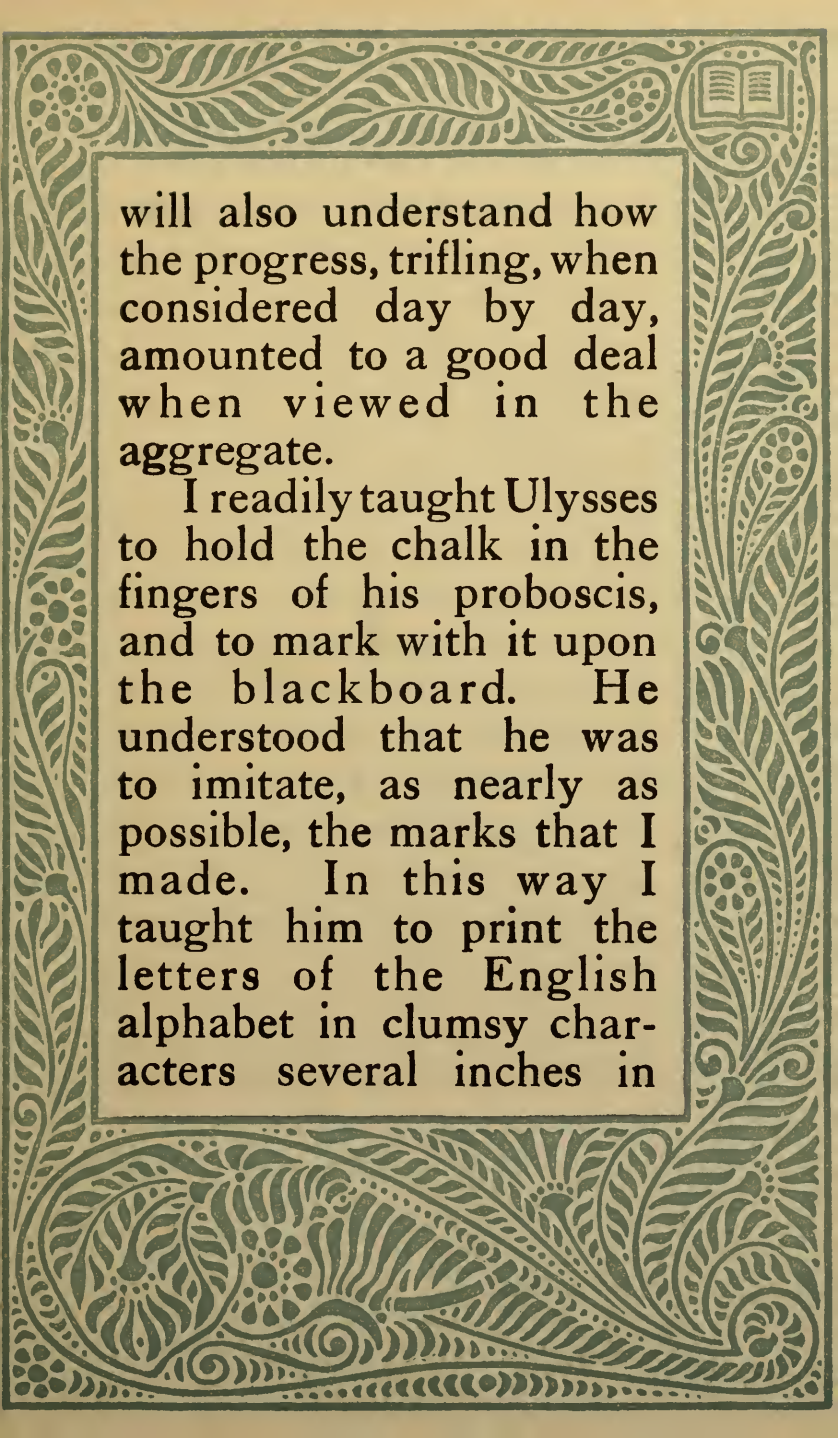


to use in the instruction of Ulysses I happened upon a lump of chalk. With this I sketched various things on a smooth plank of dark wood, and found that they were readily recognized by my pupil. From this I suddenly conceived a new idea. I sent to Madras and had a large, firm blackboard made and ordered chalk and erasers. Then I began a systematic and determined effort to teach Ulysses to read and write.

There is one element

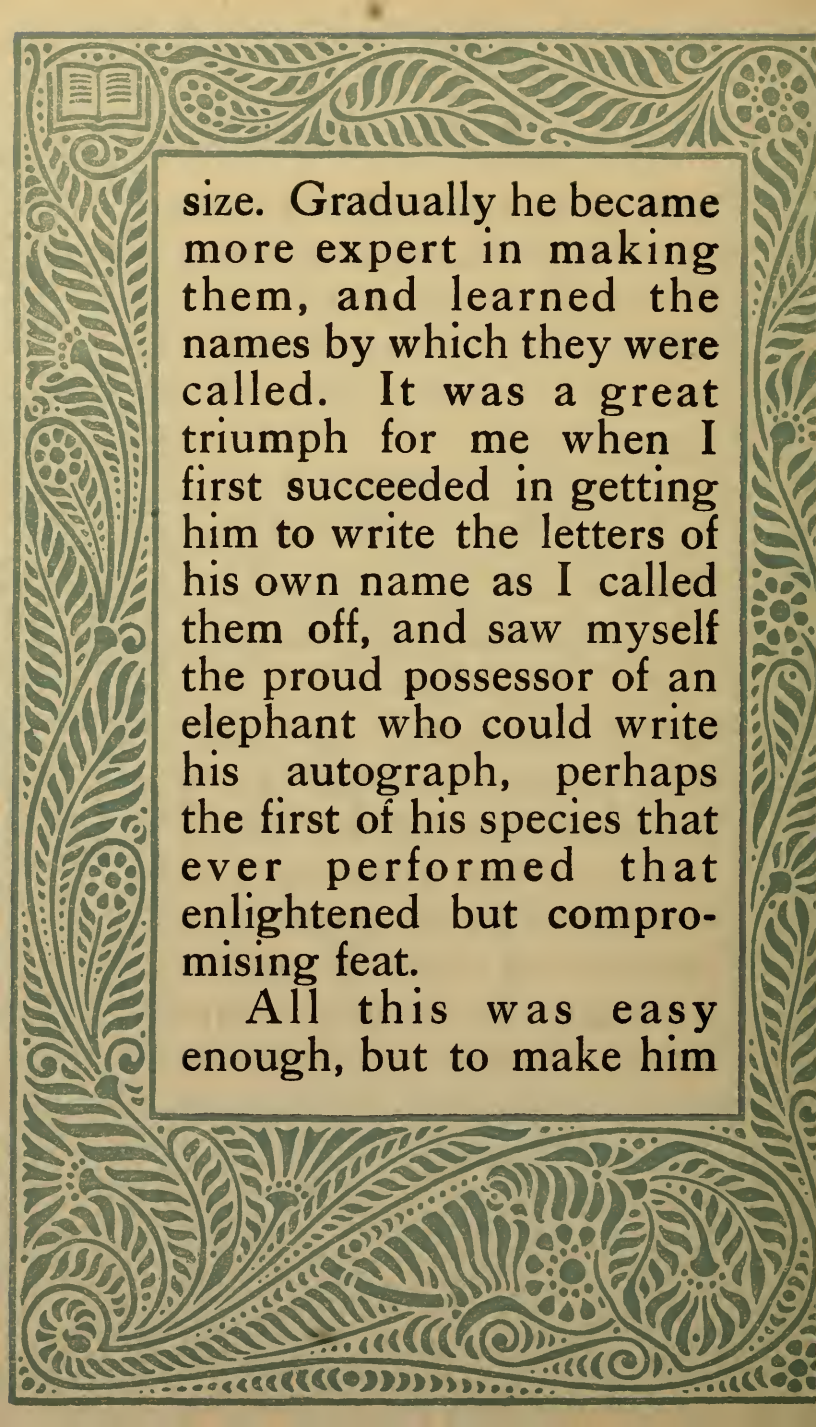


that enters into all teaching, of which it is difficult to give any conception in a narrative of results, and that is time. I had been steadily at work with Ulysses for nearly a year before I began to use the blackboard, and after I adopted that assistant it was many months ere important results began to show themselves. Any one who has ever labored with a well-meaning but obtuse pupil, will appreciate how slow and discouraging at times my work must have been. He



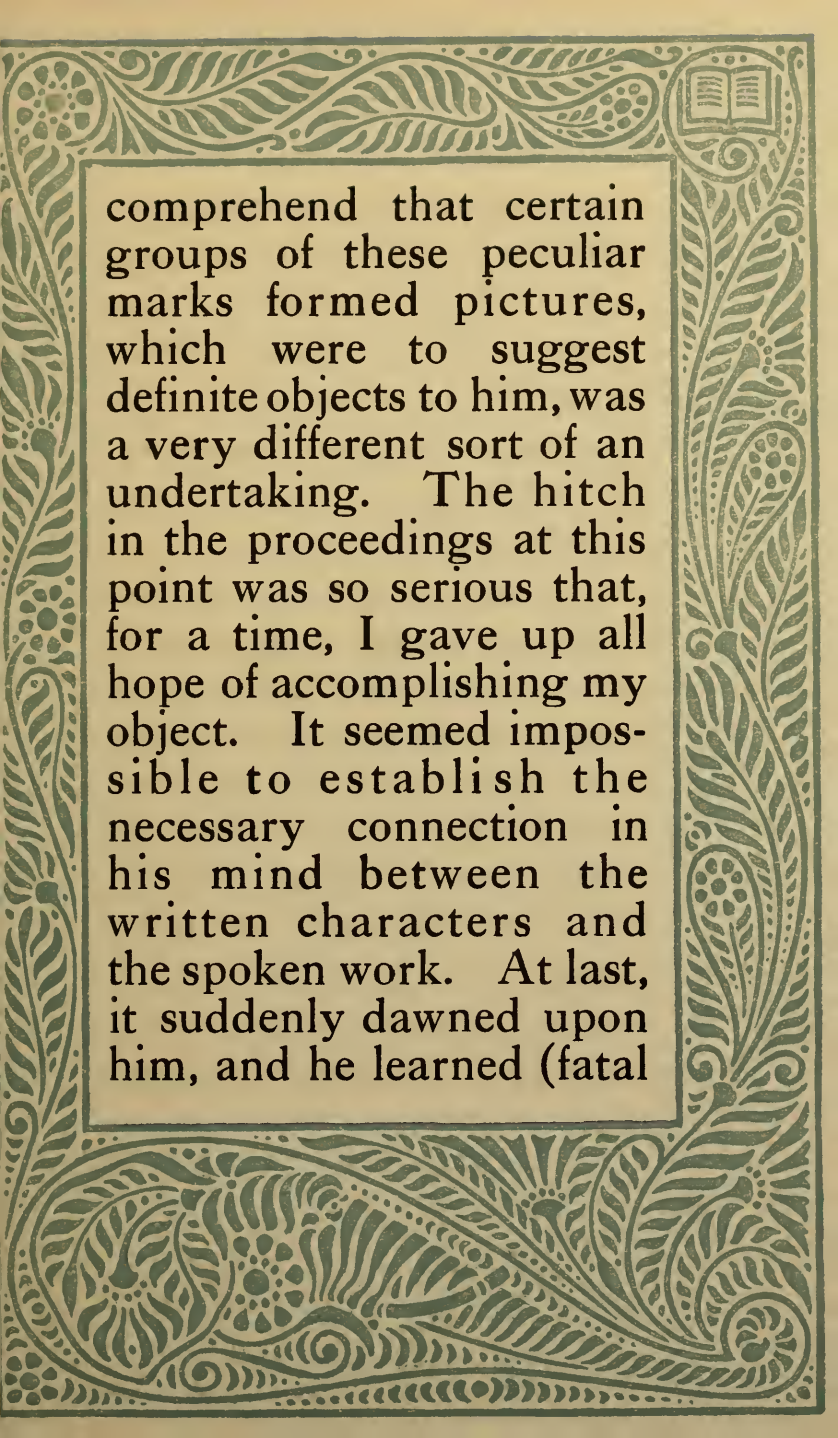
will also understand how the progress, trifling, when considered day by day, amounted to a good deal when viewed in the aggregate.

I readily taught Ulysses to hold the chalk in the fingers of his proboscis, and to mark with it upon the blackboard. He understood that he was to imitate, as nearly as possible, the marks that I made. In this way I taught him to print the letters of the English alphabet in clumsy characters several inches in

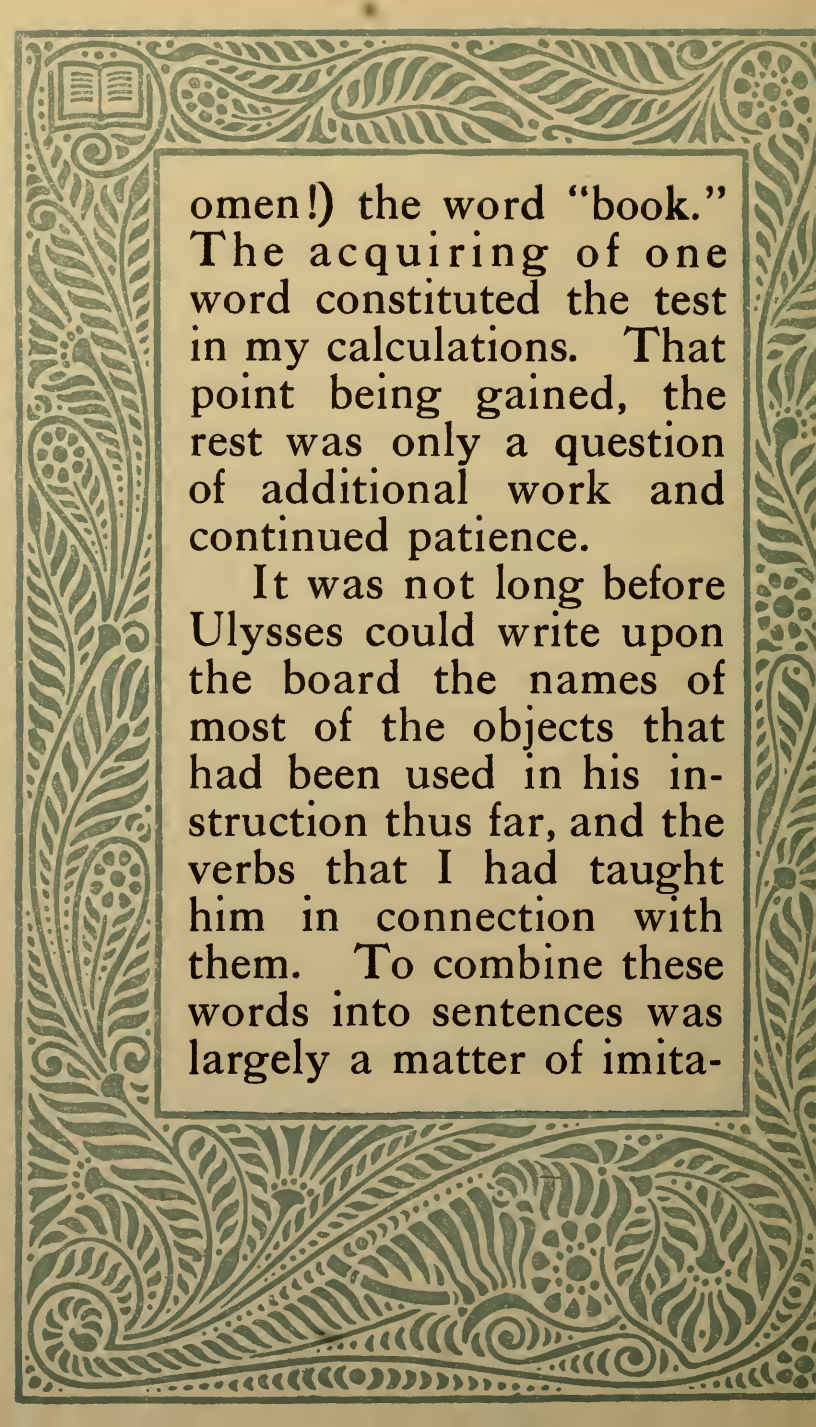


size. Gradually he became more expert in making them, and learned the names by which they were called. It was a great triumph for me when I first succeeded in getting him to write the letters of his own name as I called them off, and saw myself the proud possessor of an elephant who could write his autograph, perhaps the first of his species that ever performed that enlightened but compromising feat.

All this was easy enough, but to make him

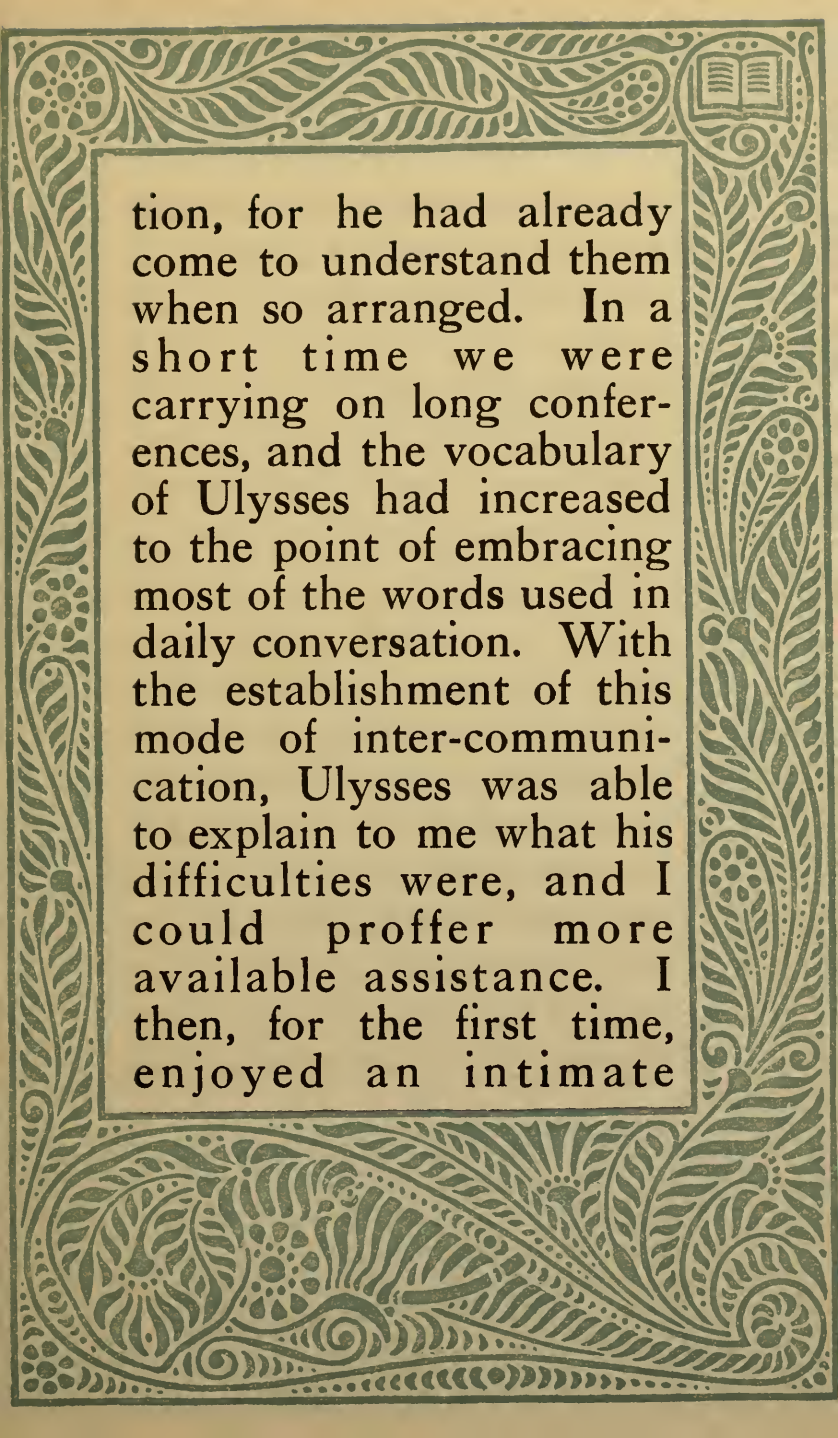


comprehend that certain groups of these peculiar marks formed pictures, which were to suggest definite objects to him, was a very different sort of an undertaking. The hitch in the proceedings at this point was so serious that, for a time, I gave up all hope of accomplishing my object. It seemed impossible to establish the necessary connection in his mind between the written characters and the spoken work. At last, it suddenly dawned upon him, and he learned (fatal

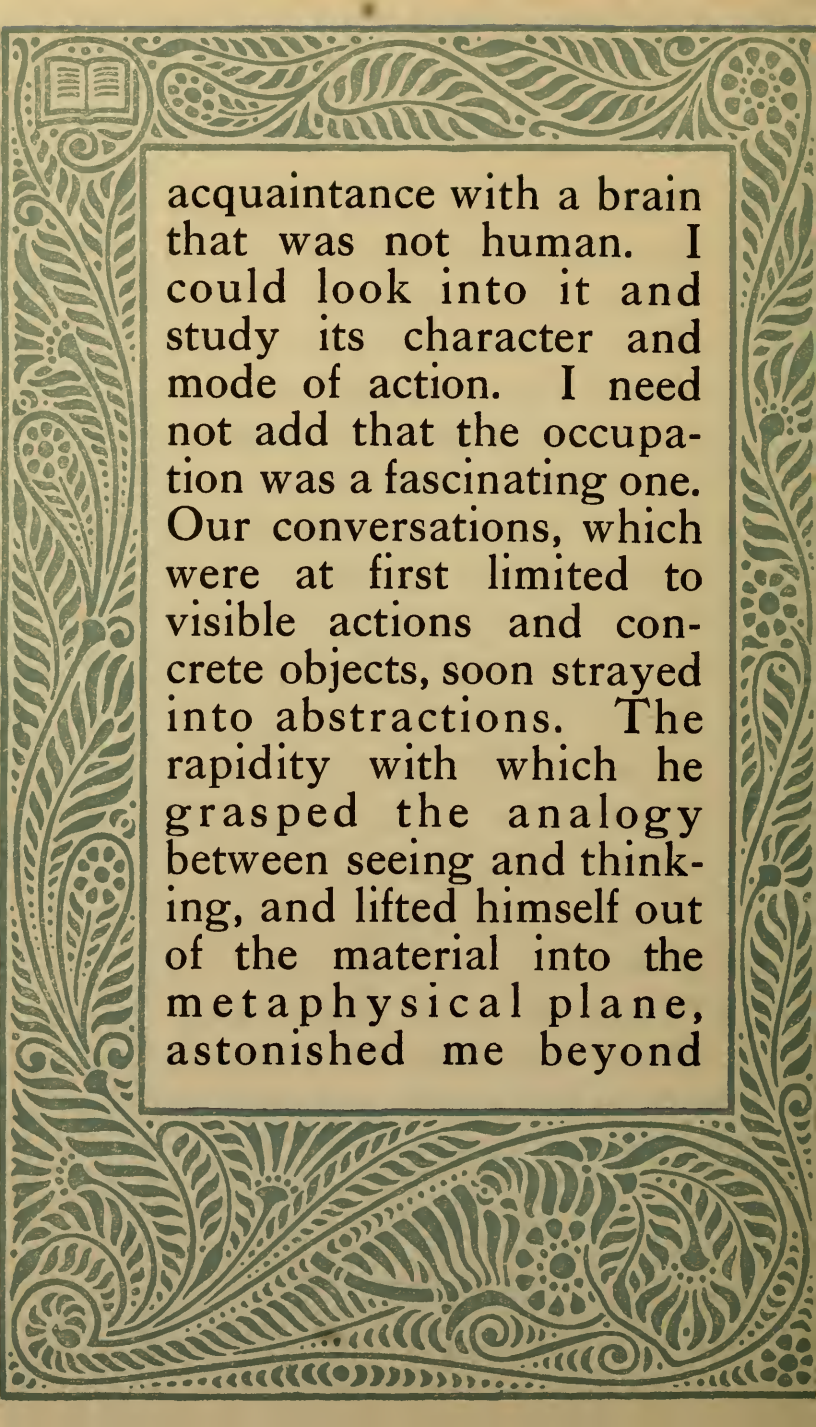


omen!) the word "book."
The acquiring of one word constituted the test in my calculations. That point being gained, the rest was only a question of additional work and continued patience.

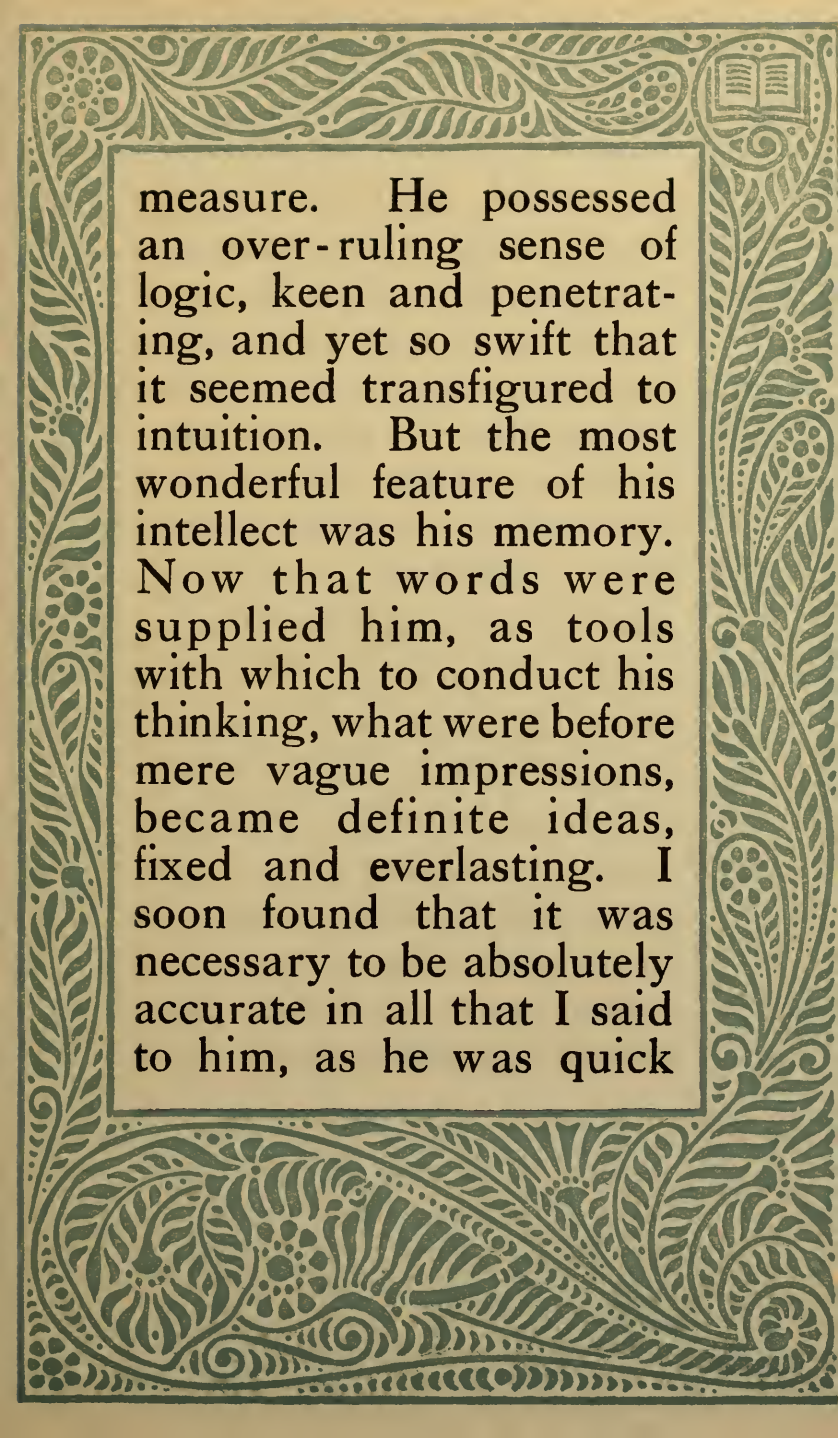
It was not long before Ulysses could write upon the board the names of most of the objects that had been used in his instruction thus far, and the verbs that I had taught him in connection with them. To combine these words into sentences was largely a matter of imita-



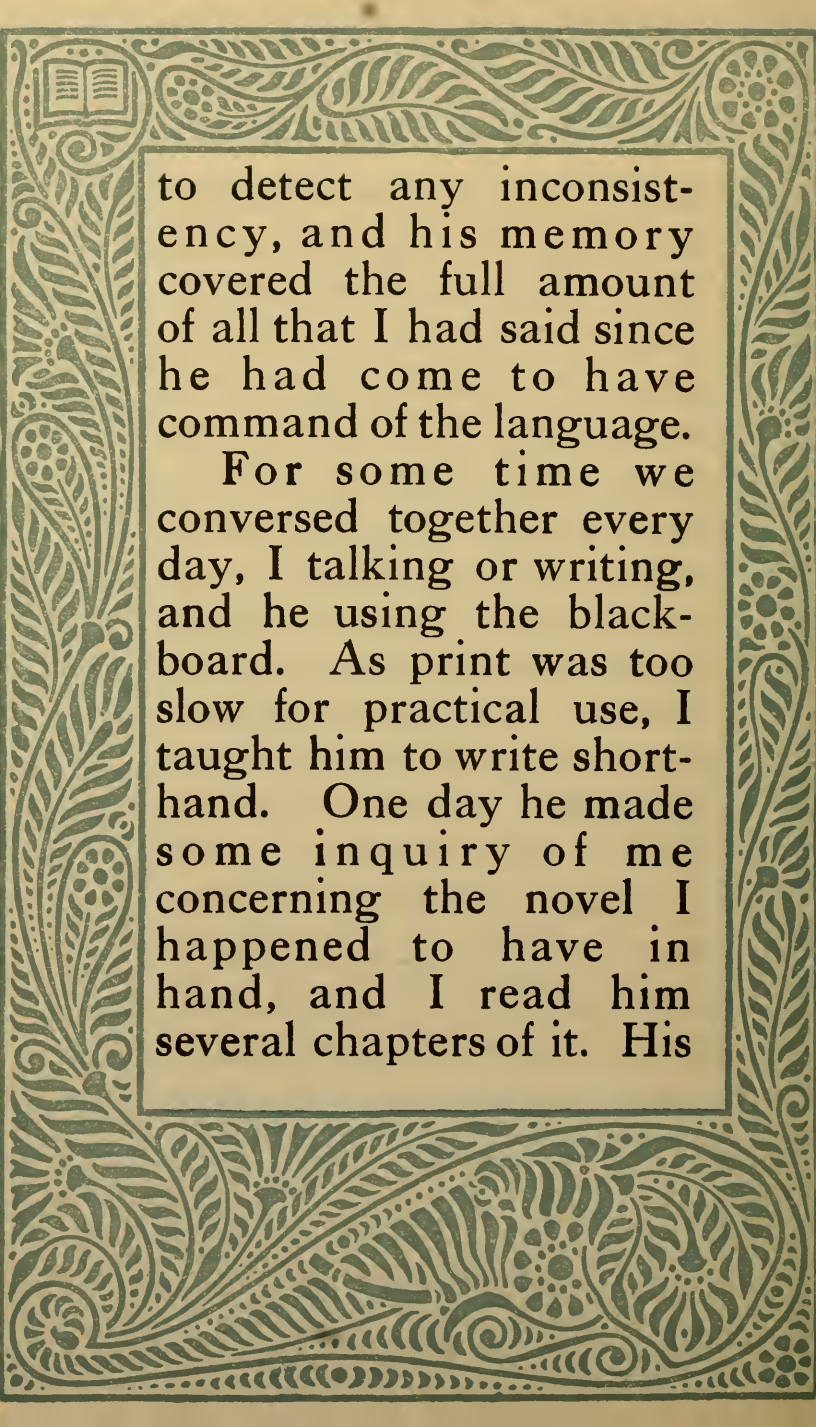
tion, for he had already come to understand them when so arranged. In a short time we were carrying on long conferences, and the vocabulary of Ulysses had increased to the point of embracing most of the words used in daily conversation. With the establishment of this mode of inter-communication, Ulysses was able to explain to me what his difficulties were, and I could proffer more available assistance. I then, for the first time, enjoyed an intimate



acquaintance with a brain that was not human. I could look into it and study its character and mode of action. I need not add that the occupation was a fascinating one. Our conversations, which were at first limited to visible actions and concrete objects, soon strayed into abstractions. The rapidity with which he grasped the analogy between seeing and thinking, and lifted himself out of the material into the metaphysical plane, astonished me beyond

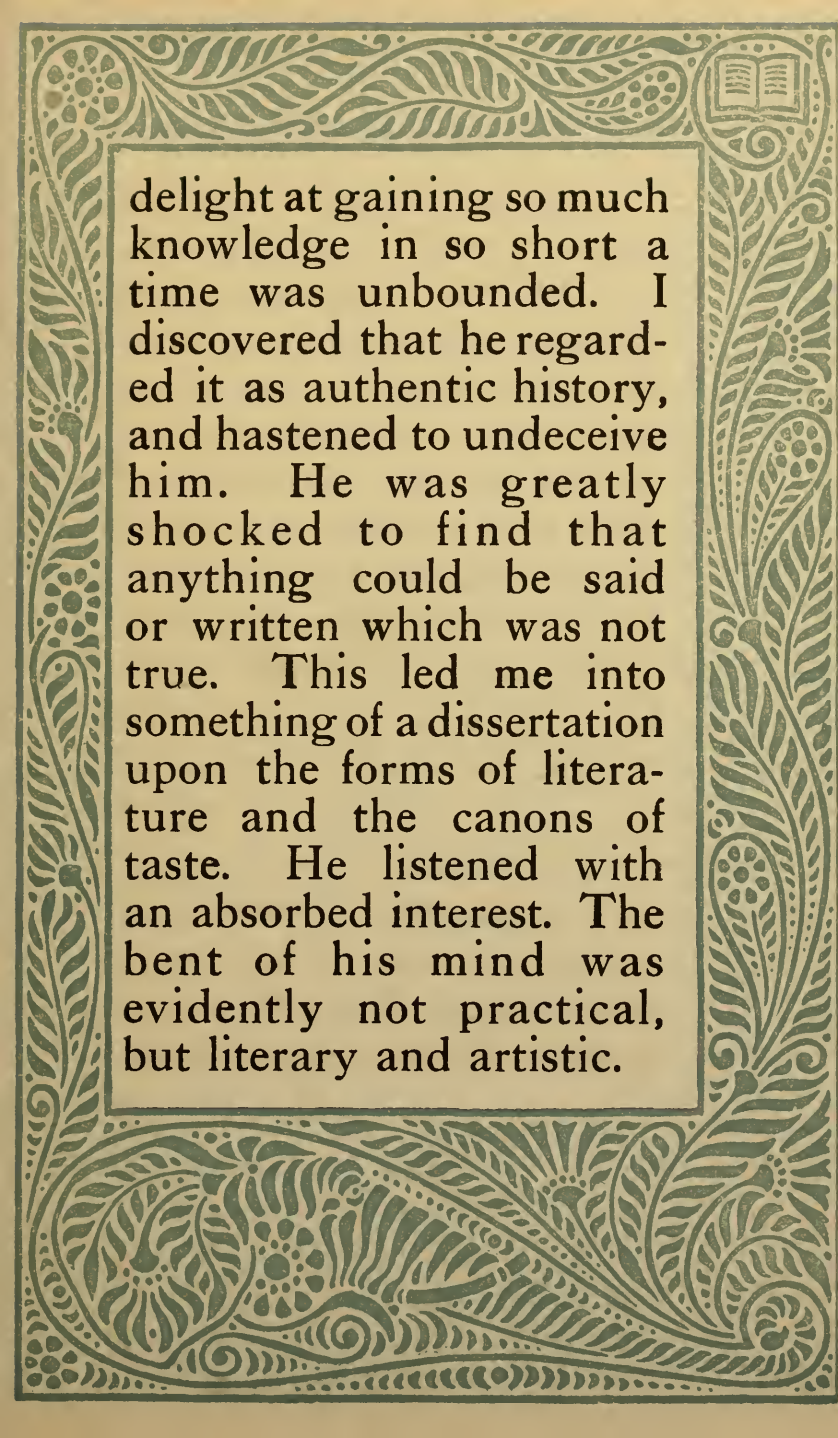


measure. He possessed an over-ruling sense of logic, keen and penetrating, and yet so swift that it seemed transfigured to intuition. But the most wonderful feature of his intellect was his memory. Now that words were supplied him, as tools with which to conduct his thinking, what were before mere vague impressions, became definite ideas, fixed and everlasting. I soon found that it was necessary to be absolutely accurate in all that I said to him, as he was quick

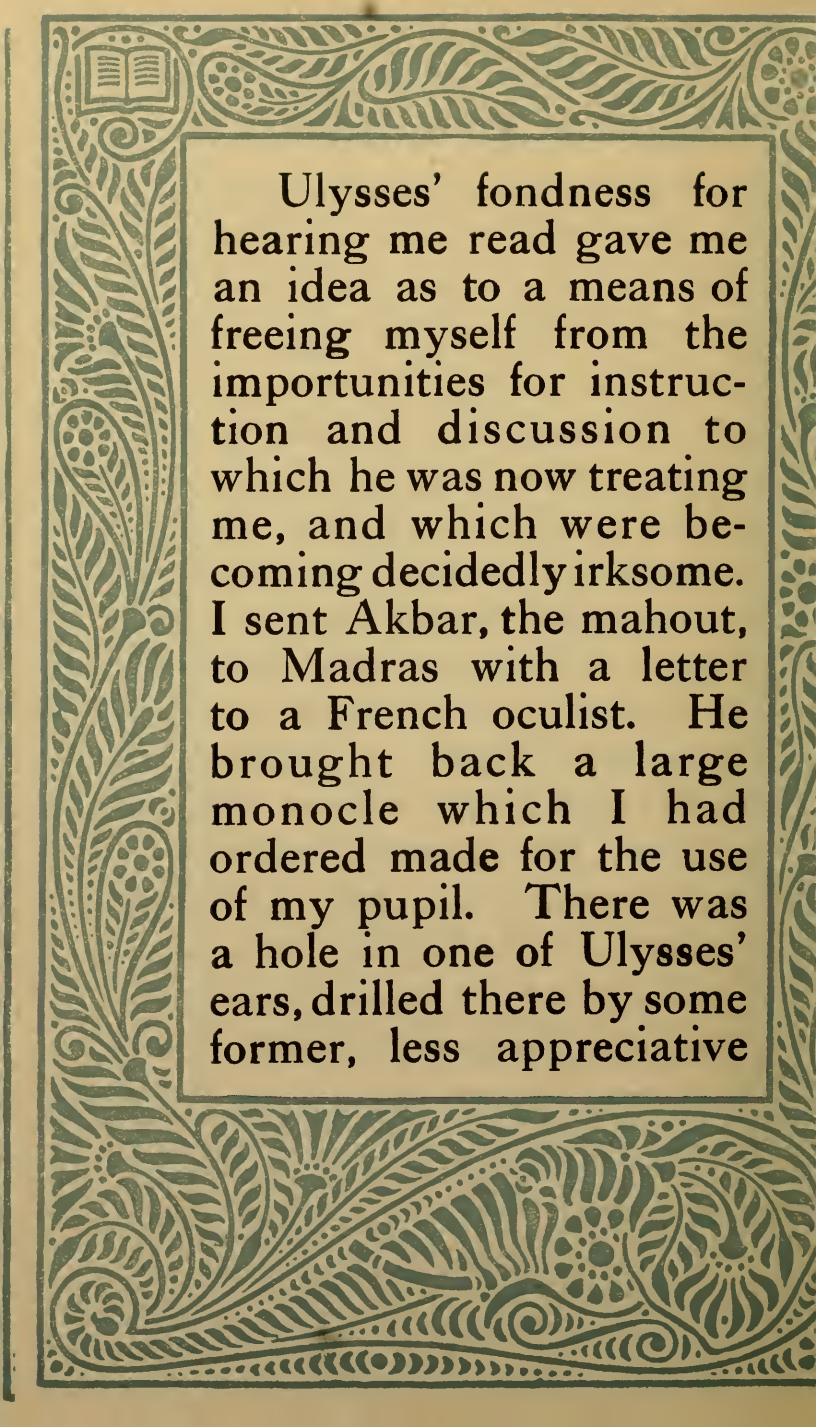


to detect any inconsistency, and his memory covered the full amount of all that I had said since he had come to have command of the language.

For some time we conversed together every day, I talking or writing, and he using the blackboard. As print was too slow for practical use, I taught him to write shorthand. One day he made some inquiry of me concerning the novel I happened to have in hand, and I read him several chapters of it. His



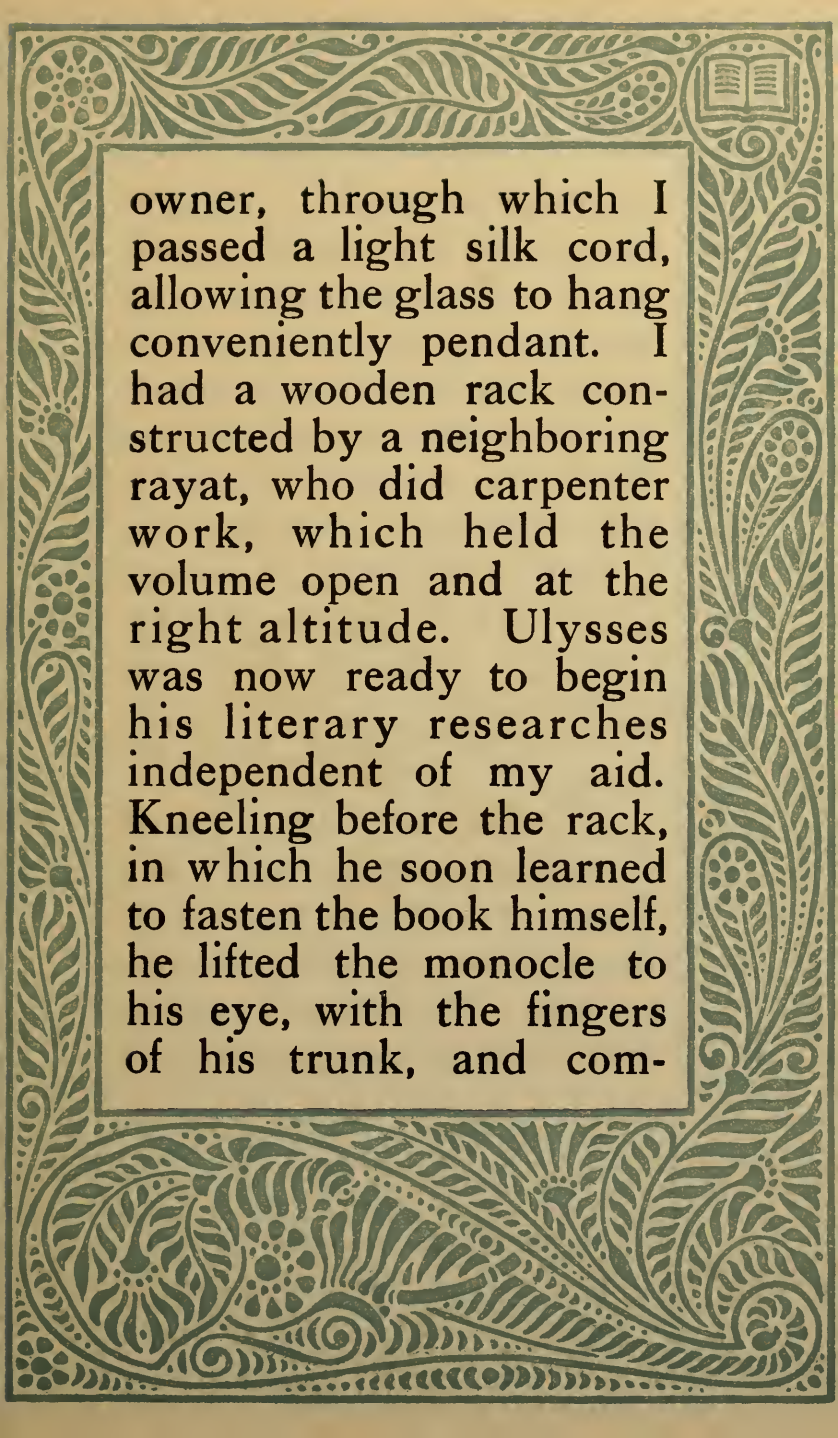
delight at gaining so much knowledge in so short a time was unbounded. I discovered that he regarded it as authentic history, and hastened to undeceive him. He was greatly shocked to find that anything could be said or written which was not true. This led me into something of a dissertation upon the forms of literature and the canons of taste. He listened with an absorbed interest. The bent of his mind was evidently not practical, but literary and artistic.



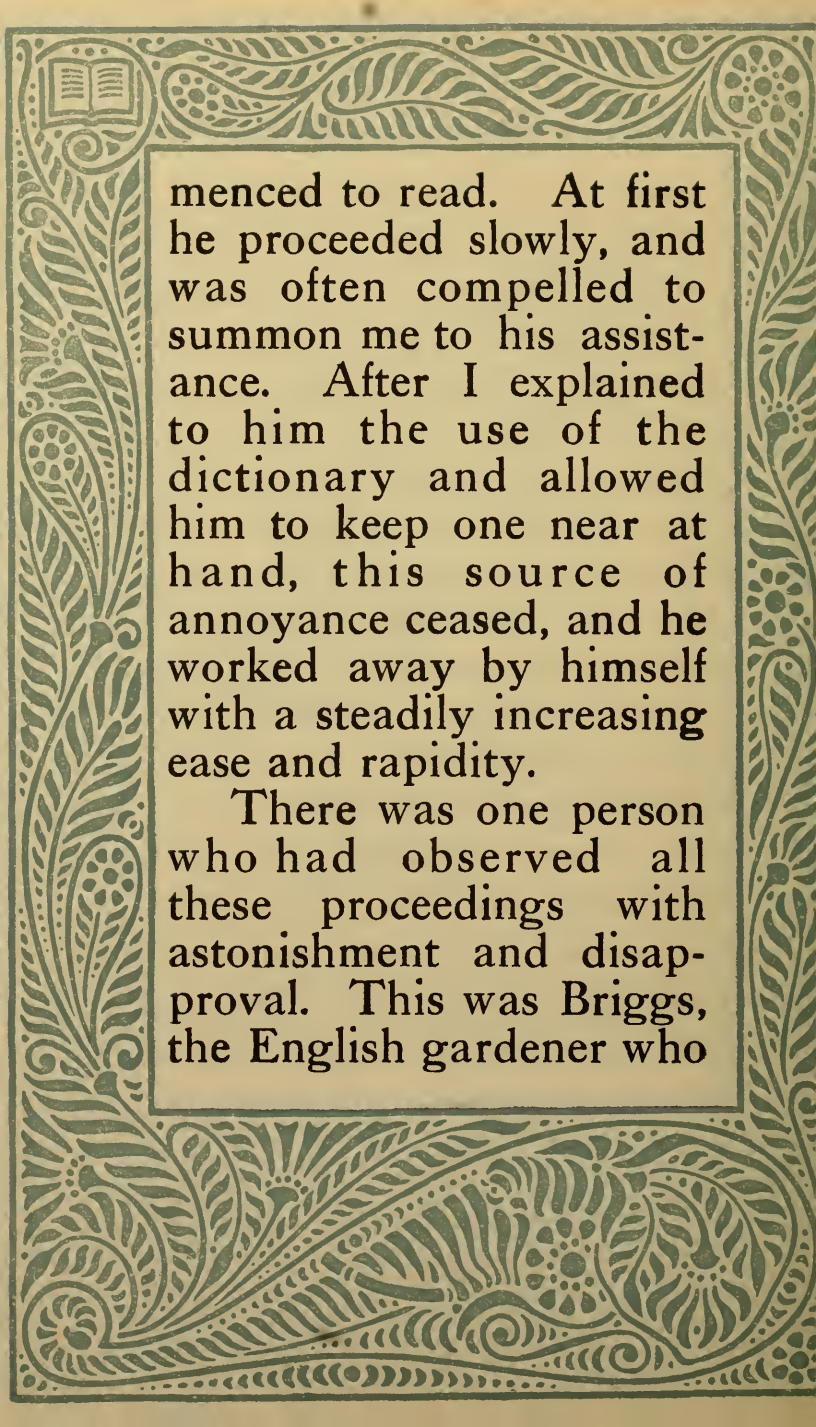
Ulysses' fondness for hearing me read gave me an idea as to a means of freeing myself from the importunities for instruction and discussion to which he was now treating me, and which were becoming decidedly irksome. I sent Akbar, the mahout, to Madras with a letter to a French oculist. He brought back a large monocle which I had ordered made for the use of my pupil. There was a hole in one of Ulysses' ears, drilled there by some former, less appreciative



"Ulysses was now ready to begin his literary researches."

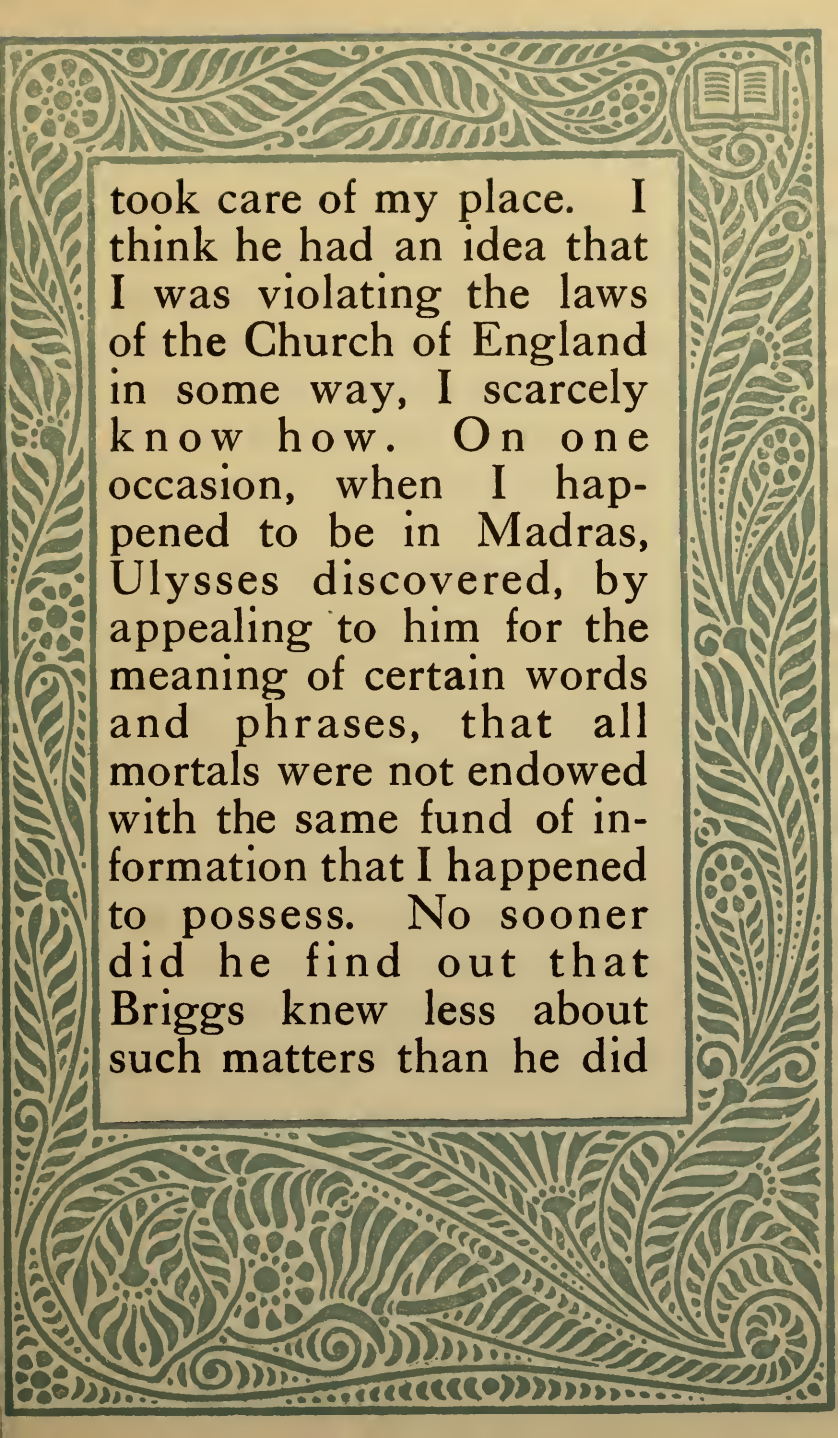


owner, through which I passed a light silk cord, allowing the glass to hang conveniently pendant. I had a wooden rack constructed by a neighboring rayat, who did carpenter work, which held the volume open and at the right altitude. Ulysses was now ready to begin his literary researches independent of my aid. Kneeling before the rack, in which he soon learned to fasten the book himself, he lifted the monocle to his eye, with the fingers of his trunk, and com-

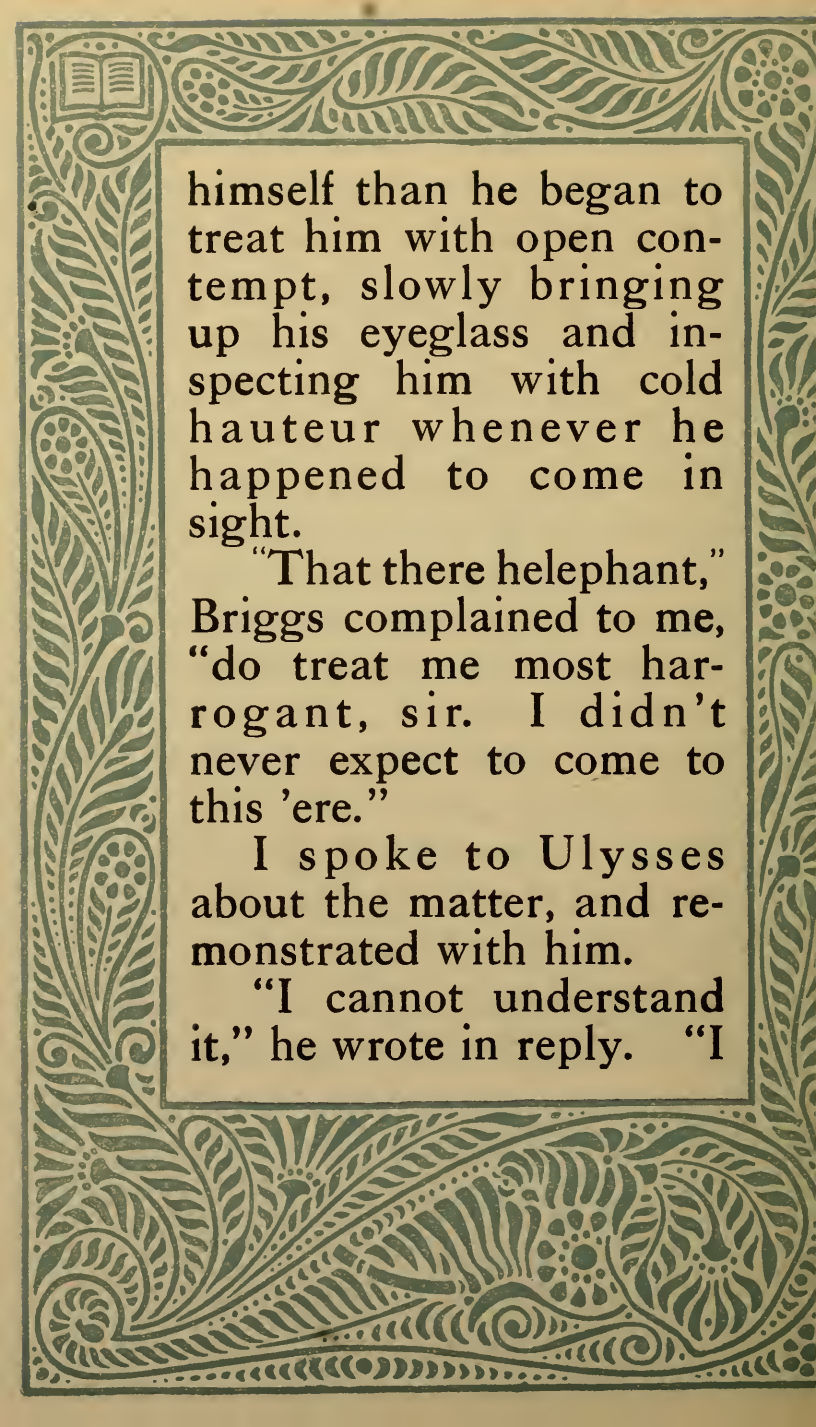


menced to read. At first he proceeded slowly, and was often compelled to summon me to his assistance. After I explained to him the use of the dictionary and allowed him to keep one near at hand, this source of annoyance ceased, and he worked away by himself with a steadily increasing ease and rapidity.

There was one person who had observed all these proceedings with astonishment and disapproval. This was Briggs, the English gardener who



took care of my place. I think he had an idea that I was violating the laws of the Church of England in some way, I scarcely know how. On one occasion, when I happened to be in Madras, Ulysses discovered, by appealing to him for the meaning of certain words and phrases, that all mortals were not endowed with the same fund of information that I happened to possess. No sooner did he find out that Briggs knew less about such matters than he did

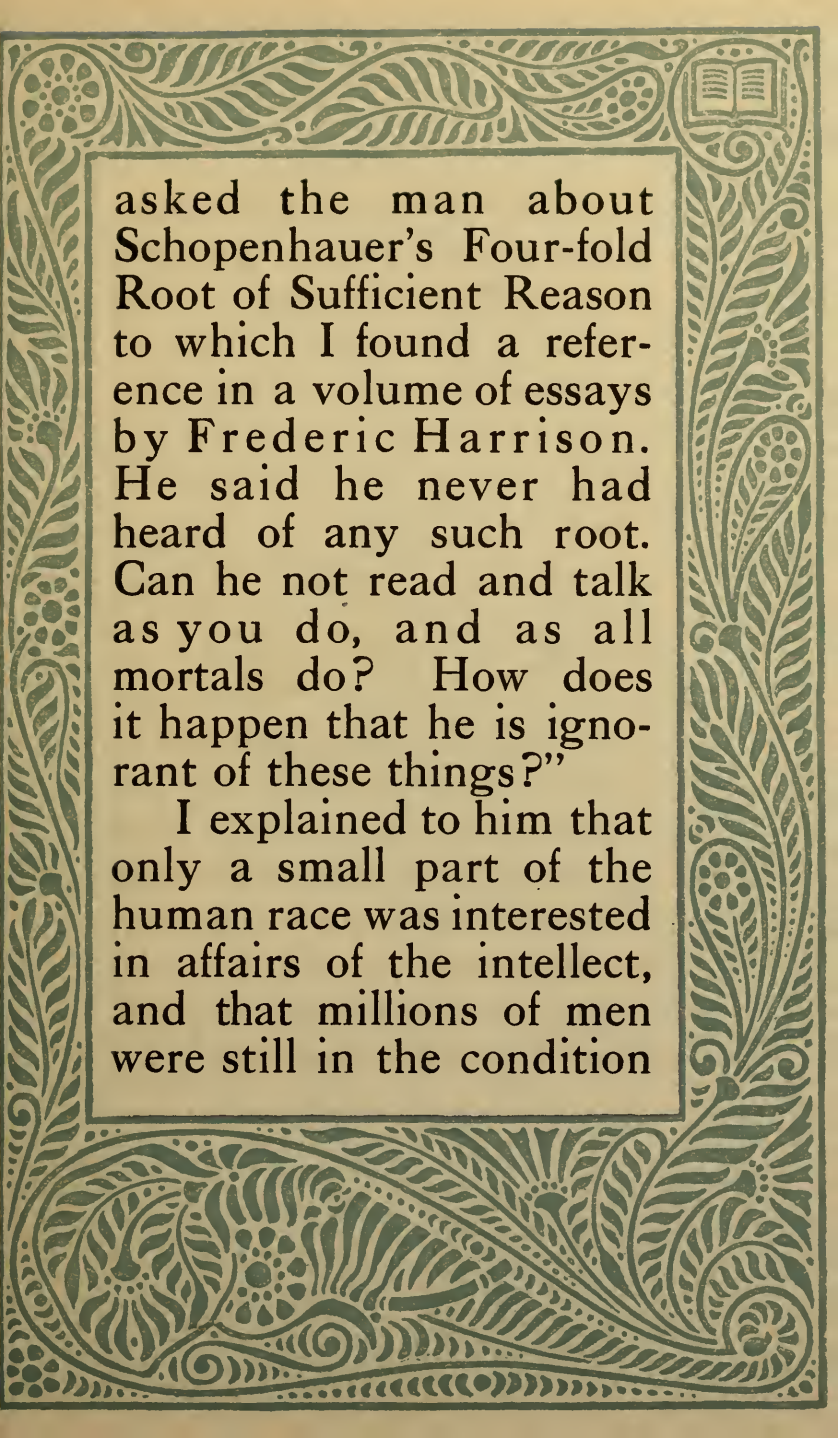


himself than he began to treat him with open contempt, slowly bringing up his eyeglass and inspecting him with cold hauteur whenever he happened to come in sight.

“That there helephant,” Briggs complained to me, “do treat me most harrogant, sir. I didn’t never expect to come to this ’ere.”

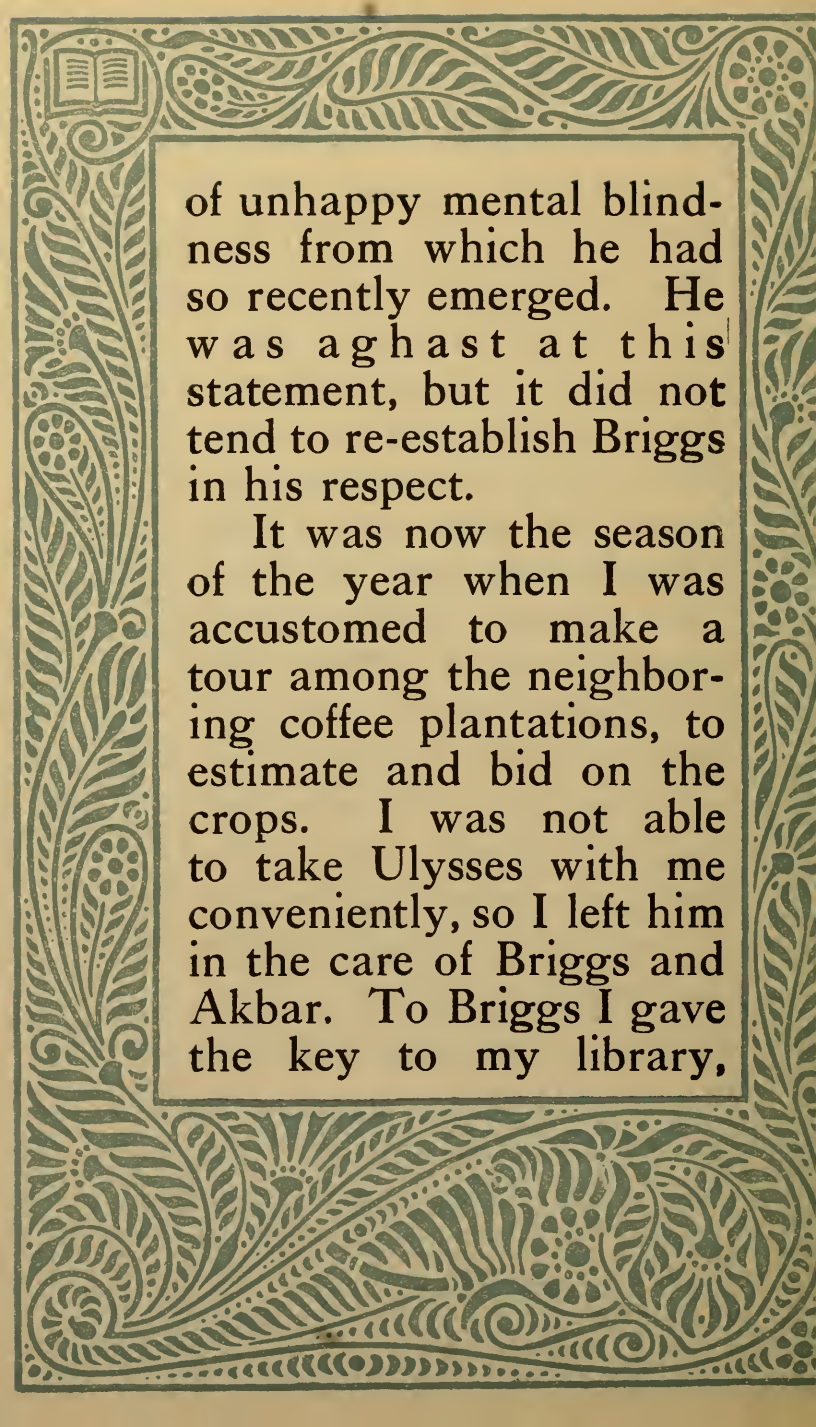
I spoke to Ulysses about the matter, and remonstrated with him.

“I cannot understand it,” he wrote in reply. “I



asked the man about Schopenhauer's Four-fold Root of Sufficient Reason to which I found a reference in a volume of essays by Frederic Harrison. He said he never had heard of any such root. Can he not read and talk as you do, and as all mortals do? How does it happen that he is ignorant of these things?"

I explained to him that only a small part of the human race was interested in affairs of the intellect, and that millions of men were still in the condition



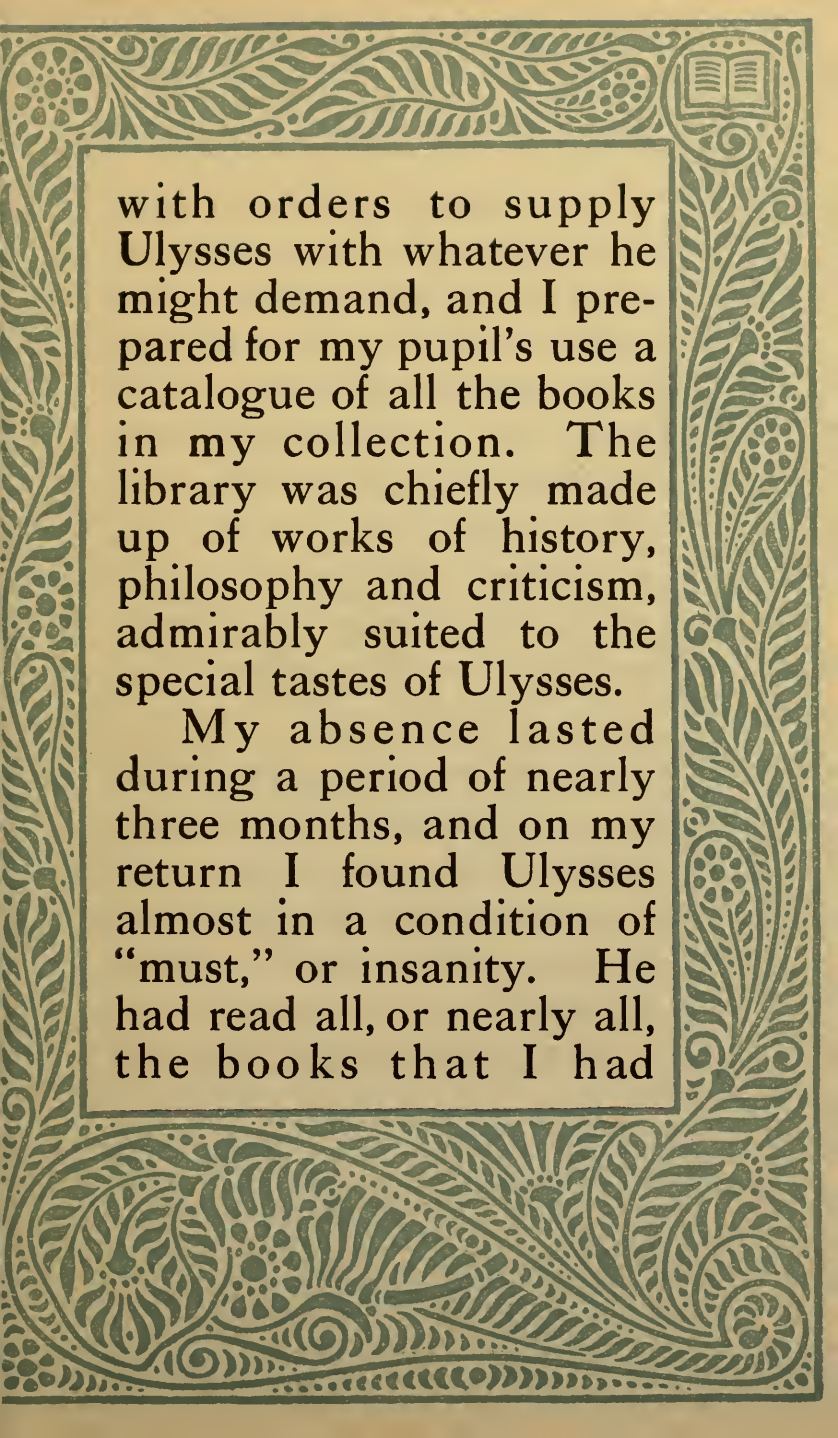
of unhappy mental blindness from which he had so recently emerged. He was aghast at this statement, but it did not tend to re-establish Briggs in his respect.

It was now the season of the year when I was accustomed to make a tour among the neighboring coffee plantations, to estimate and bid on the crops. I was not able to take Ulysses with me conveniently, so I left him in the care of Briggs and Akbar. To Briggs I gave the key to my library,



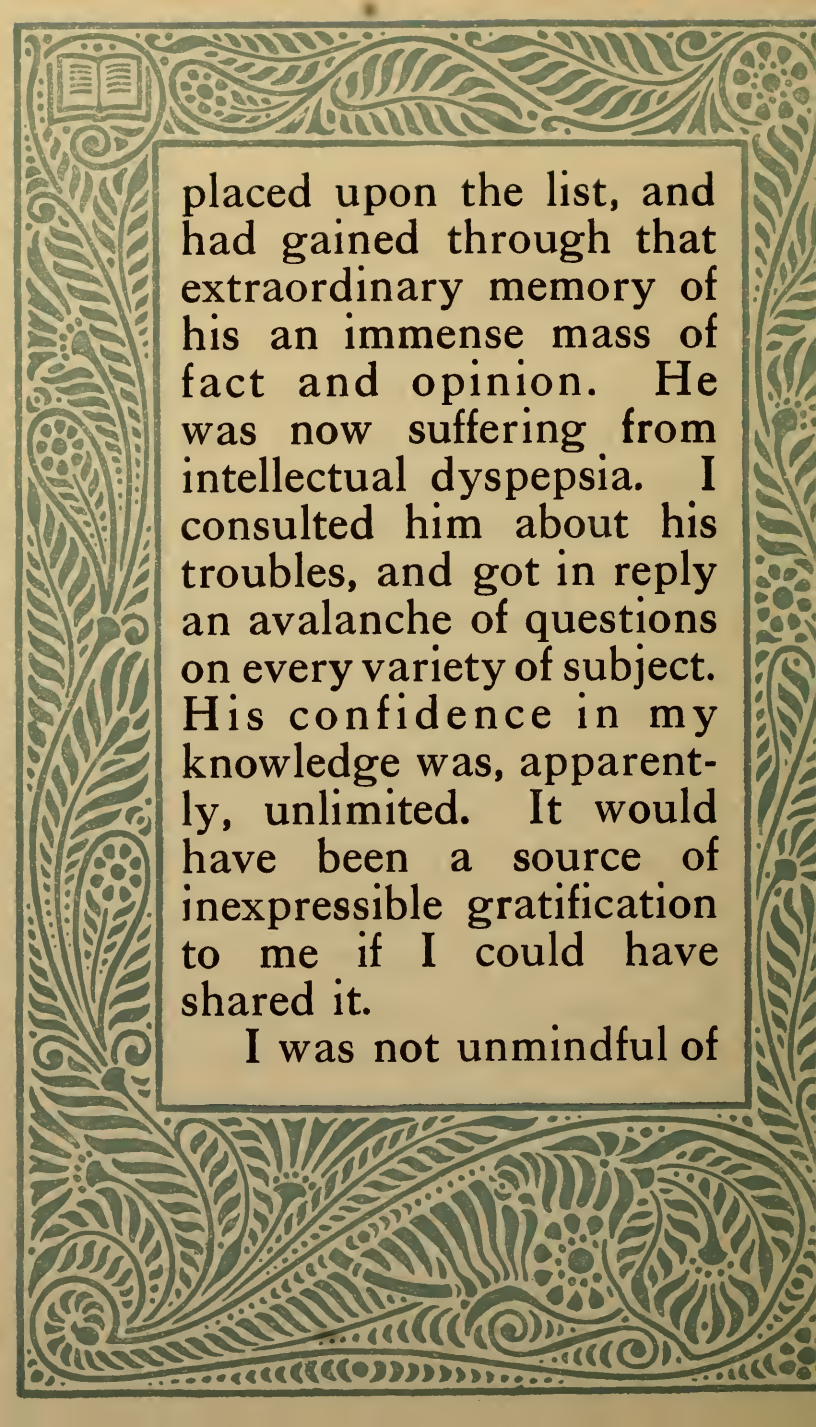
"To Briggs I gave the key to my library, with orders to supply Ulysses with whatever he might demand."





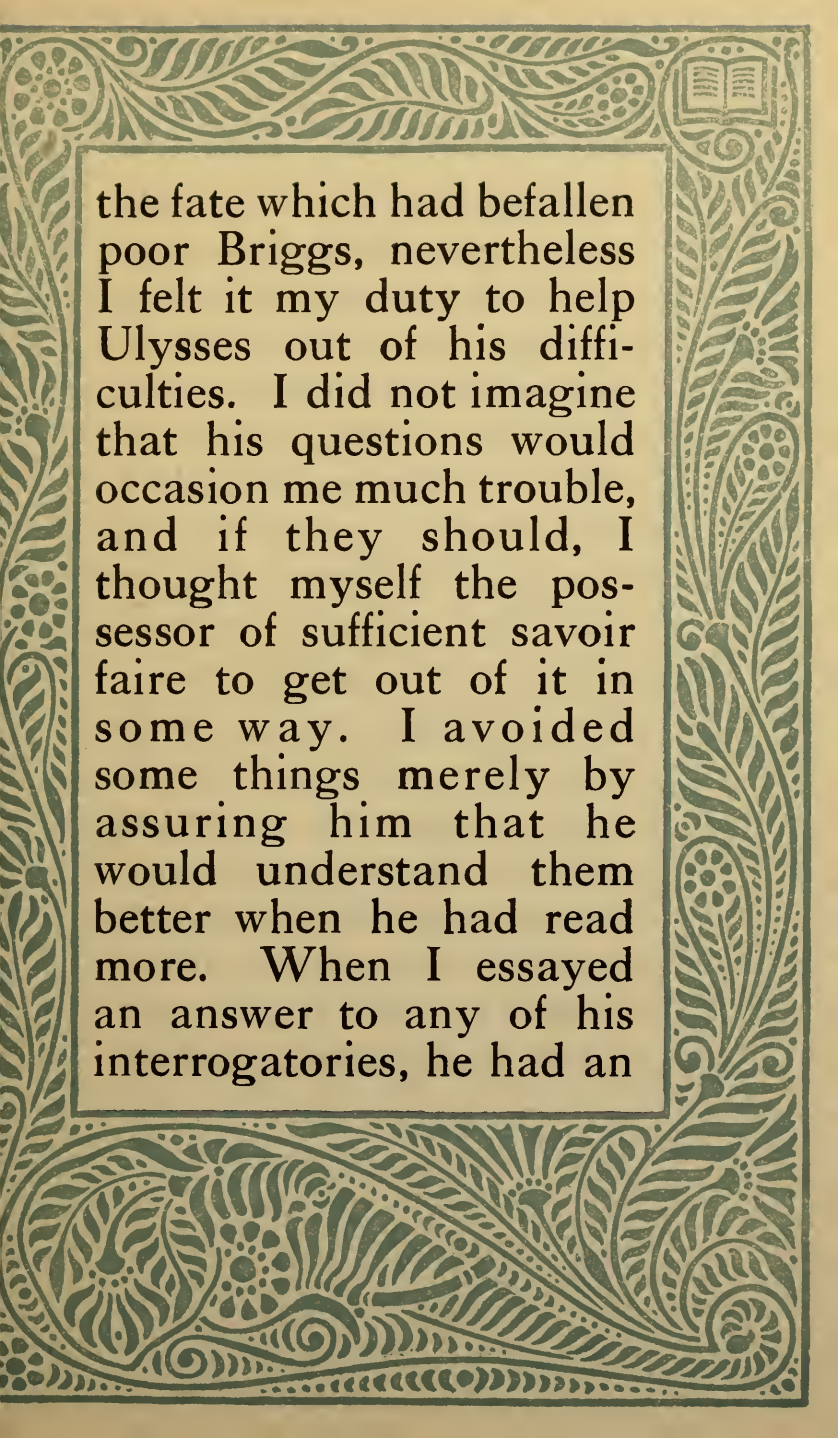
with orders to supply Ulysses with whatever he might demand, and I prepared for my pupil's use a catalogue of all the books in my collection. The library was chiefly made up of works of history, philosophy and criticism, admirably suited to the special tastes of Ulysses.

My absence lasted during a period of nearly three months, and on my return I found Ulysses almost in a condition of "must," or insanity. He had read all, or nearly all, the books that I had

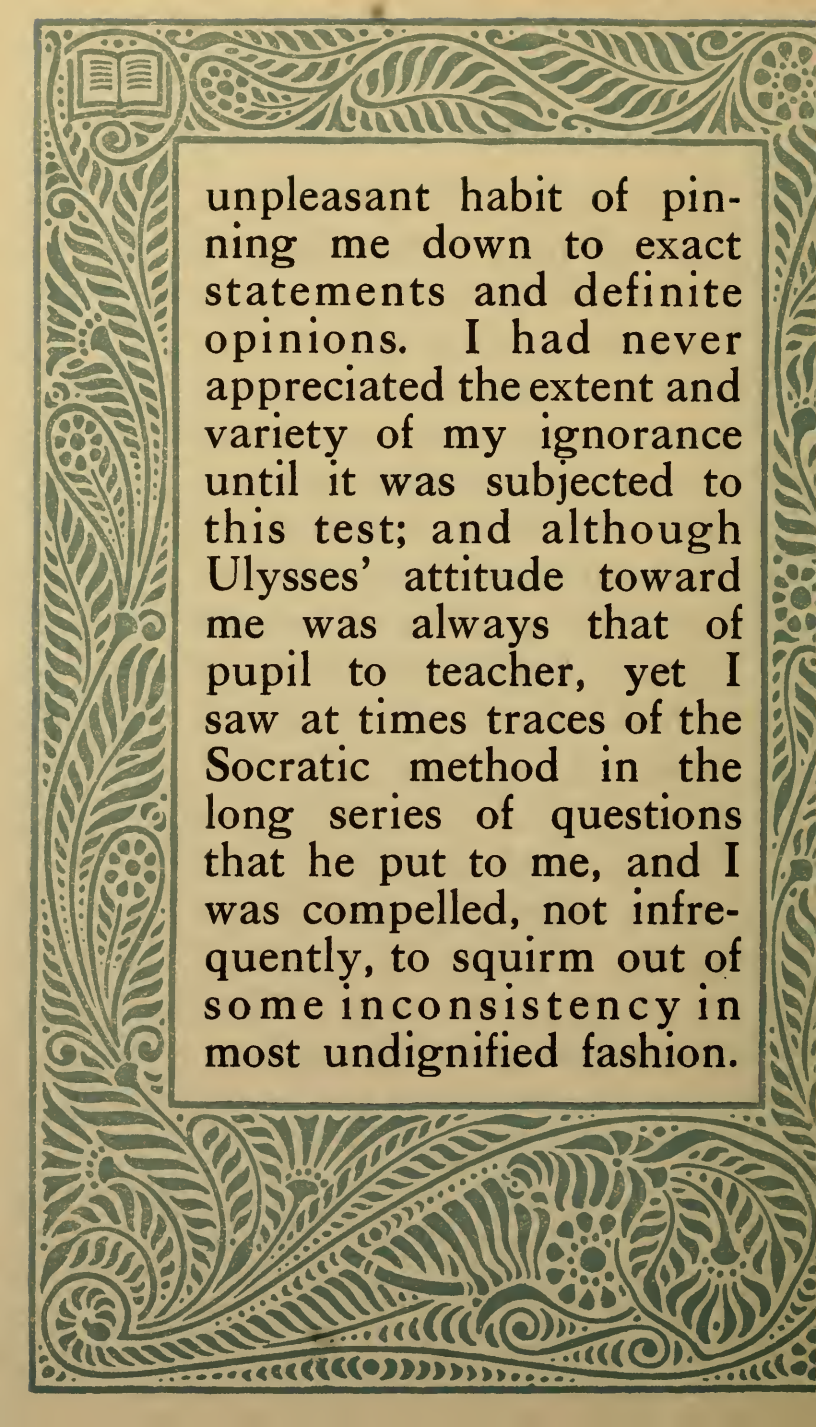


placed upon the list, and had gained through that extraordinary memory of his an immense mass of fact and opinion. He was now suffering from intellectual dyspepsia. I consulted him about his troubles, and got in reply an avalanche of questions on every variety of subject. His confidence in my knowledge was, apparently, unlimited. It would have been a source of inexpressible gratification to me if I could have shared it.

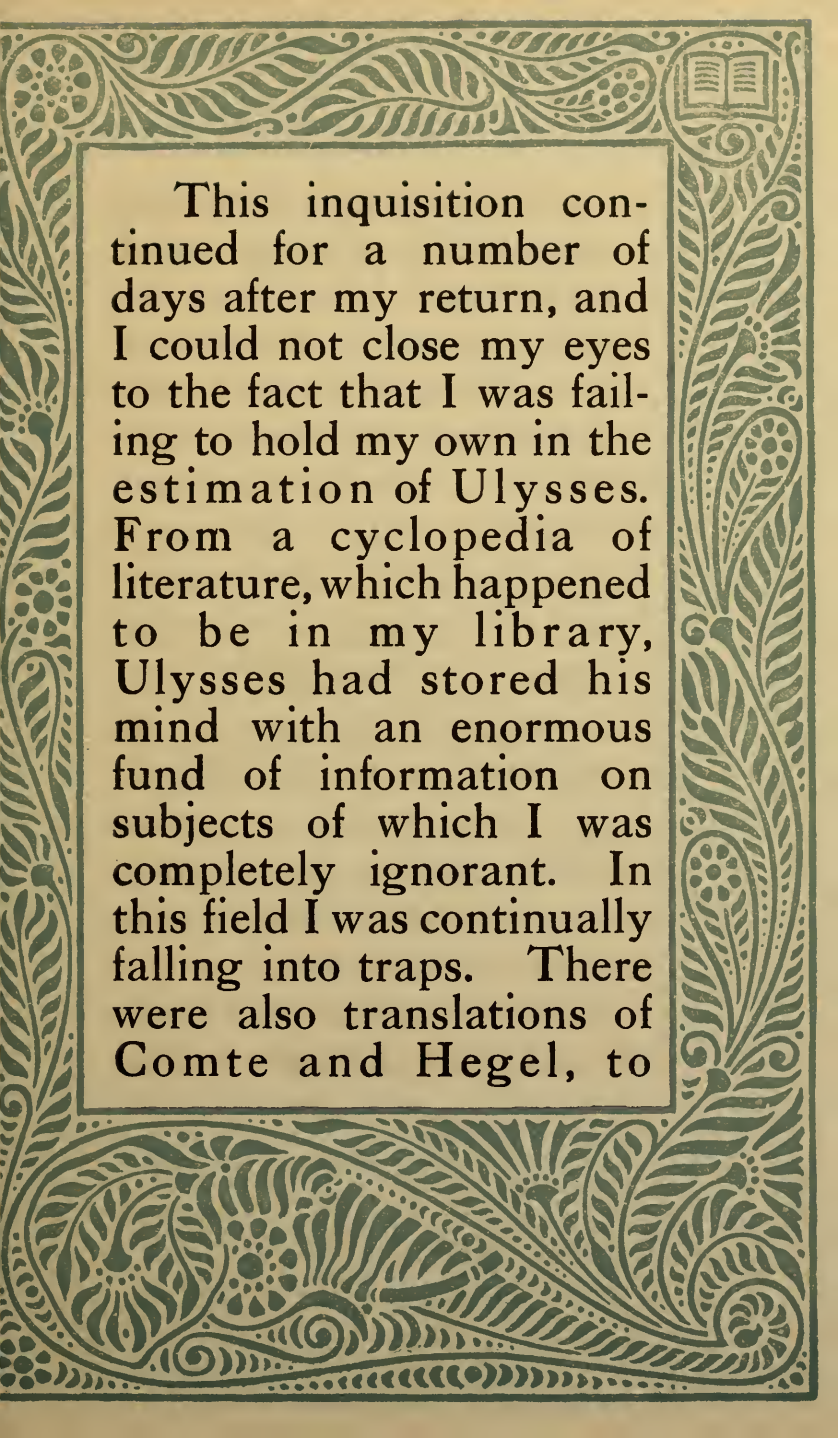
I was not unmindful of



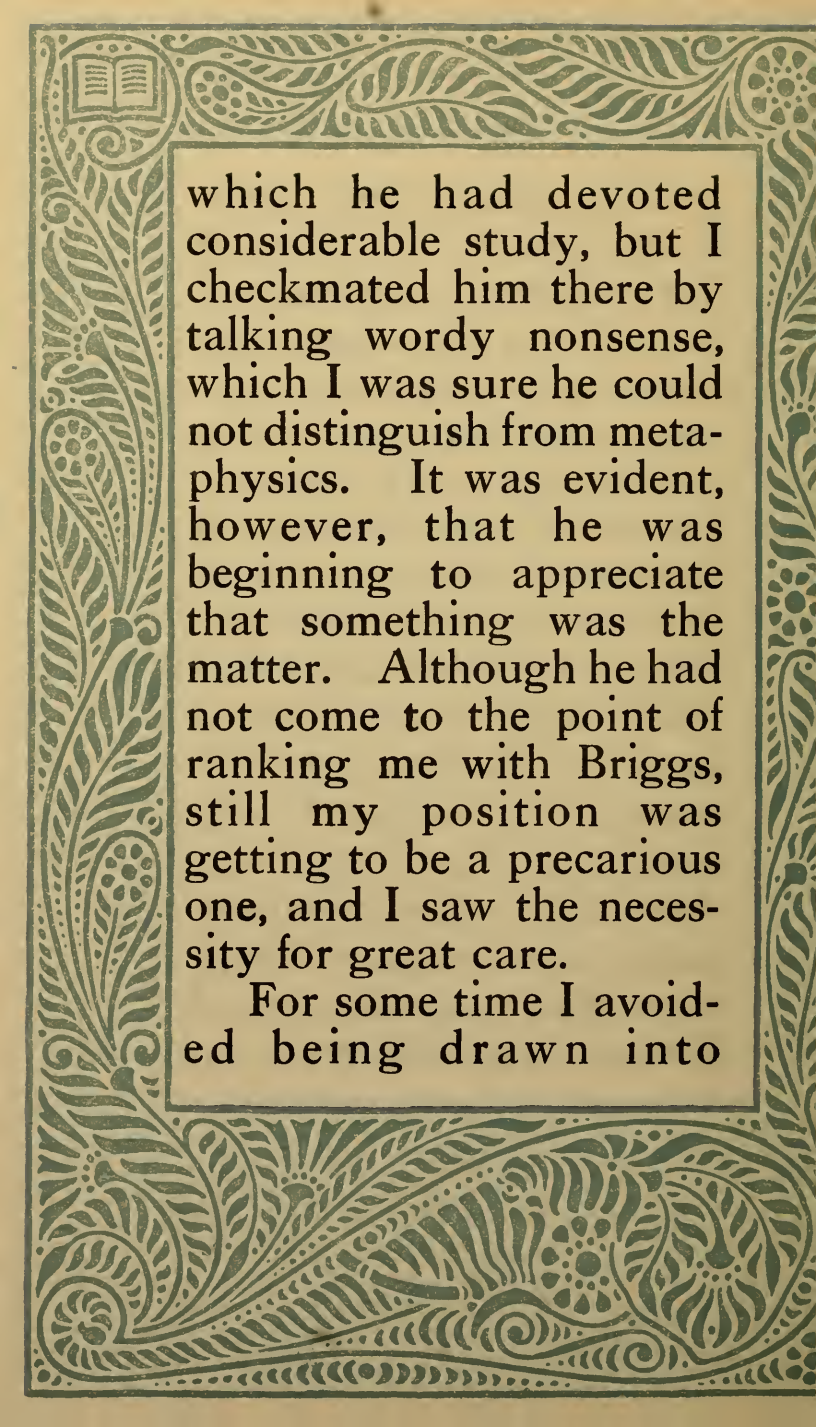
the fate which had befallen poor Briggs, nevertheless I felt it my duty to help Ulysses out of his difficulties. I did not imagine that his questions would occasion me much trouble, and if they should, I thought myself the possessor of sufficient savoir faire to get out of it in some way. I avoided some things merely by assuring him that he would understand them better when he had read more. When I essayed an answer to any of his interrogatories, he had an



unpleasant habit of pinning me down to exact statements and definite opinions. I had never appreciated the extent and variety of my ignorance until it was subjected to this test; and although Ulysses' attitude toward me was always that of pupil to teacher, yet I saw at times traces of the Socratic method in the long series of questions that he put to me, and I was compelled, not infrequently, to squirm out of some inconsistency in most undignified fashion.

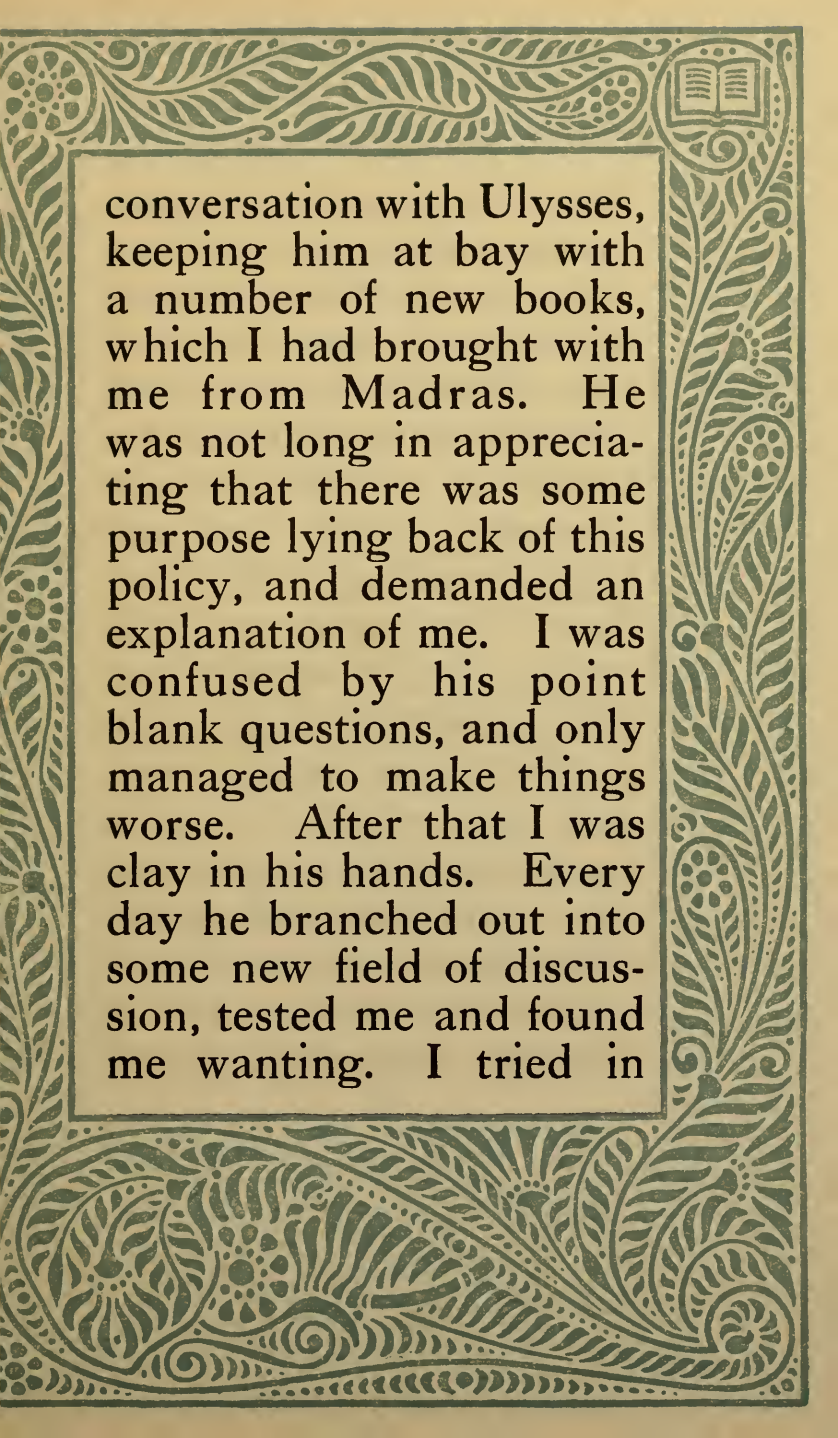


This inquisition continued for a number of days after my return, and I could not close my eyes to the fact that I was failing to hold my own in the estimation of Ulysses. From a cyclopedia of literature, which happened to be in my library, Ulysses had stored his mind with an enormous fund of information on subjects of which I was completely ignorant. In this field I was continually falling into traps. There were also translations of Comte and Hegel, to

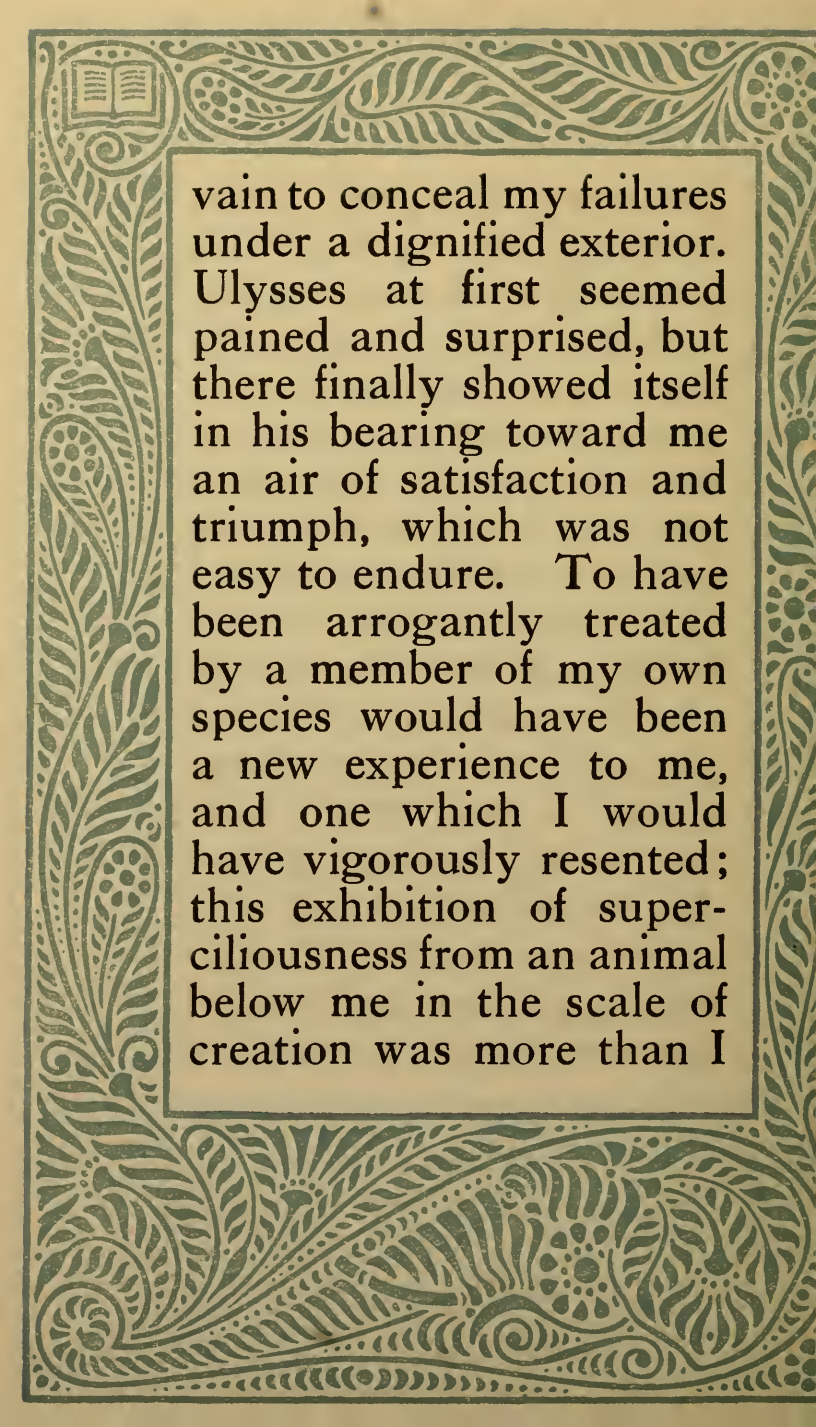


which he had devoted considerable study, but I checkmated him there by talking wordy nonsense, which I was sure he could not distinguish from metaphysics. It was evident, however, that he was beginning to appreciate that something was the matter. Although he had not come to the point of ranking me with Briggs, still my position was getting to be a precarious one, and I saw the necessity for great care.

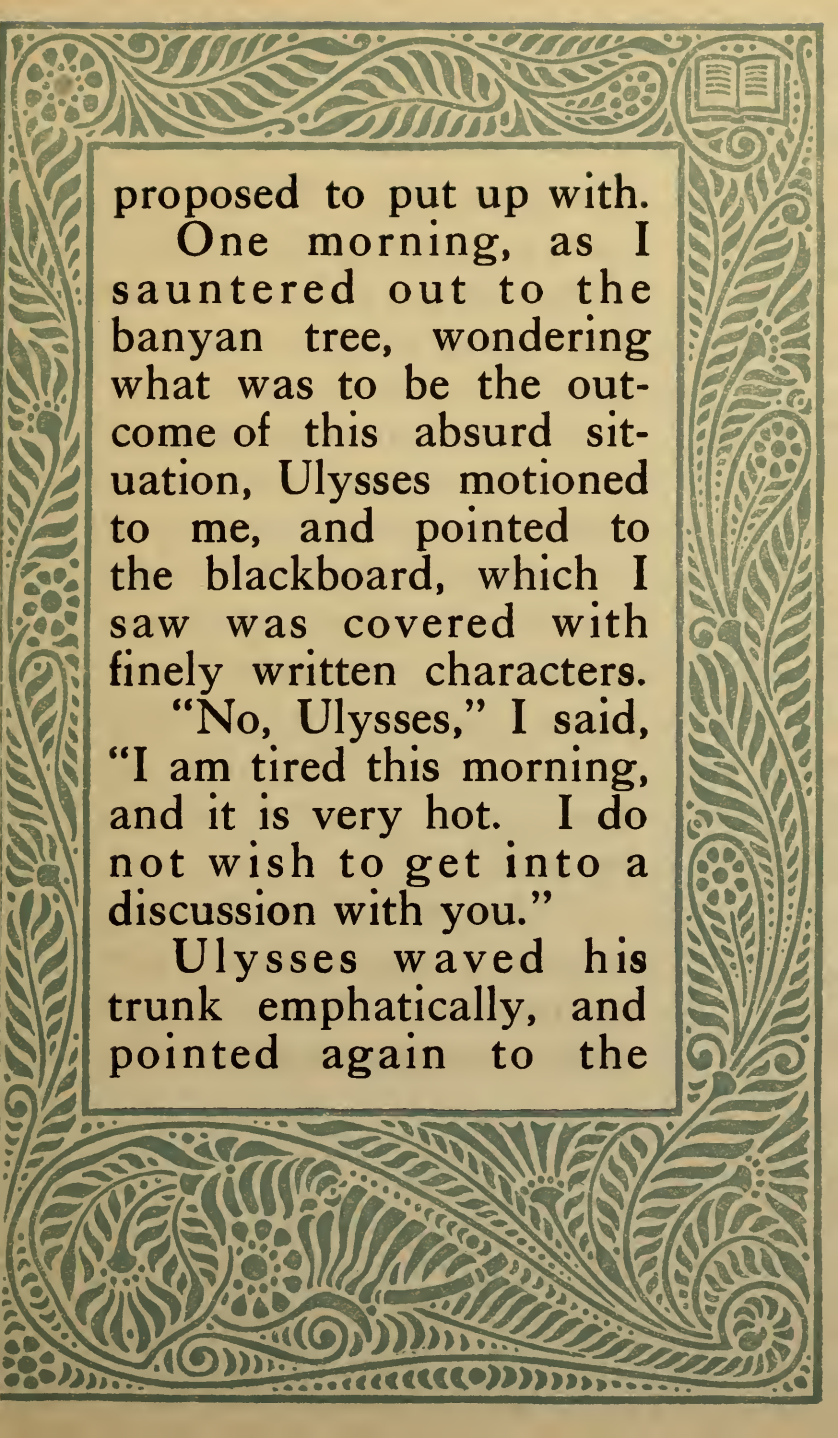
For some time I avoided being drawn into



conversation with Ulysses, keeping him at bay with a number of new books, which I had brought with me from Madras. He was not long in appreciating that there was some purpose lying back of this policy, and demanded an explanation of me. I was confused by his point blank questions, and only managed to make things worse. After that I was clay in his hands. Every day he branched out into some new field of discussion, tested me and found me wanting. I tried in



vain to conceal my failures under a dignified exterior. Ulysses at first seemed pained and surprised, but there finally showed itself in his bearing toward me an air of satisfaction and triumph, which was not easy to endure. To have been arrogantly treated by a member of my own species would have been a new experience to me, and one which I would have vigorously resented; this exhibition of superciliousness from an animal below me in the scale of creation was more than I

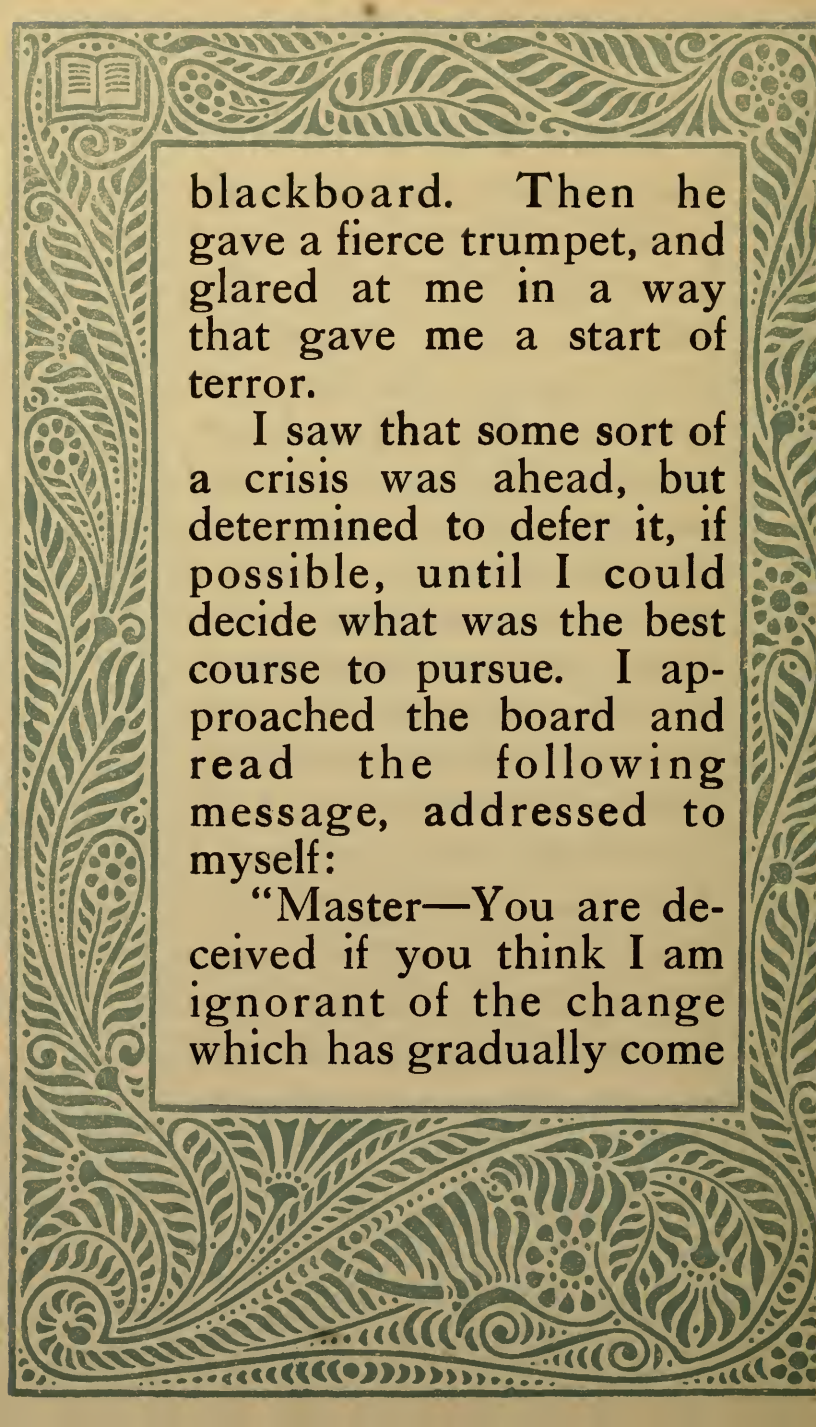


proposed to put up with.

One morning, as I sauntered out to the banyan tree, wondering what was to be the outcome of this absurd situation, Ulysses motioned to me, and pointed to the blackboard, which I saw was covered with finely written characters.

“No, Ulysses,” I said, “I am tired this morning, and it is very hot. I do not wish to get into a discussion with you.”

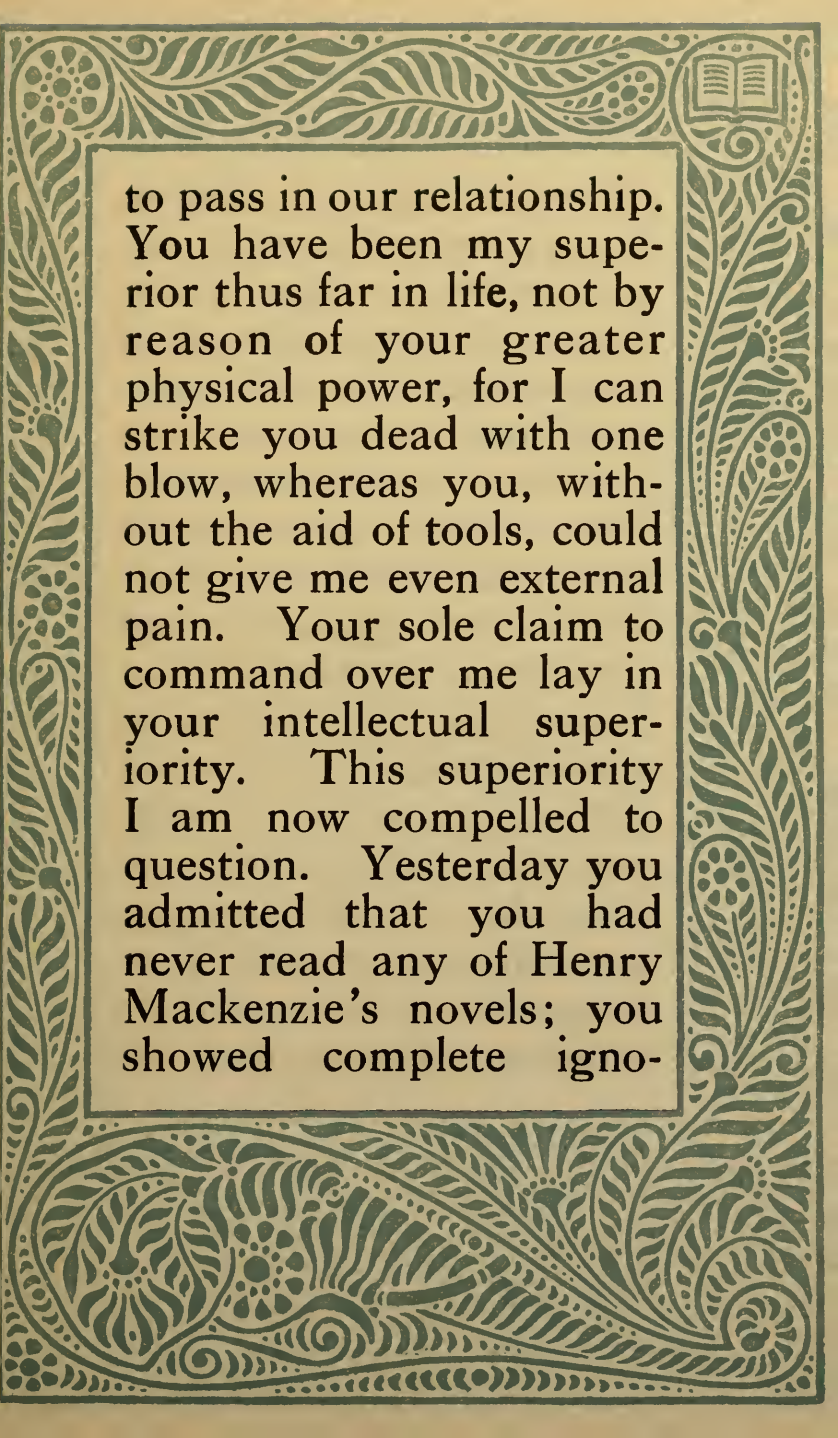
Ulysses waved his trunk emphatically, and pointed again to the



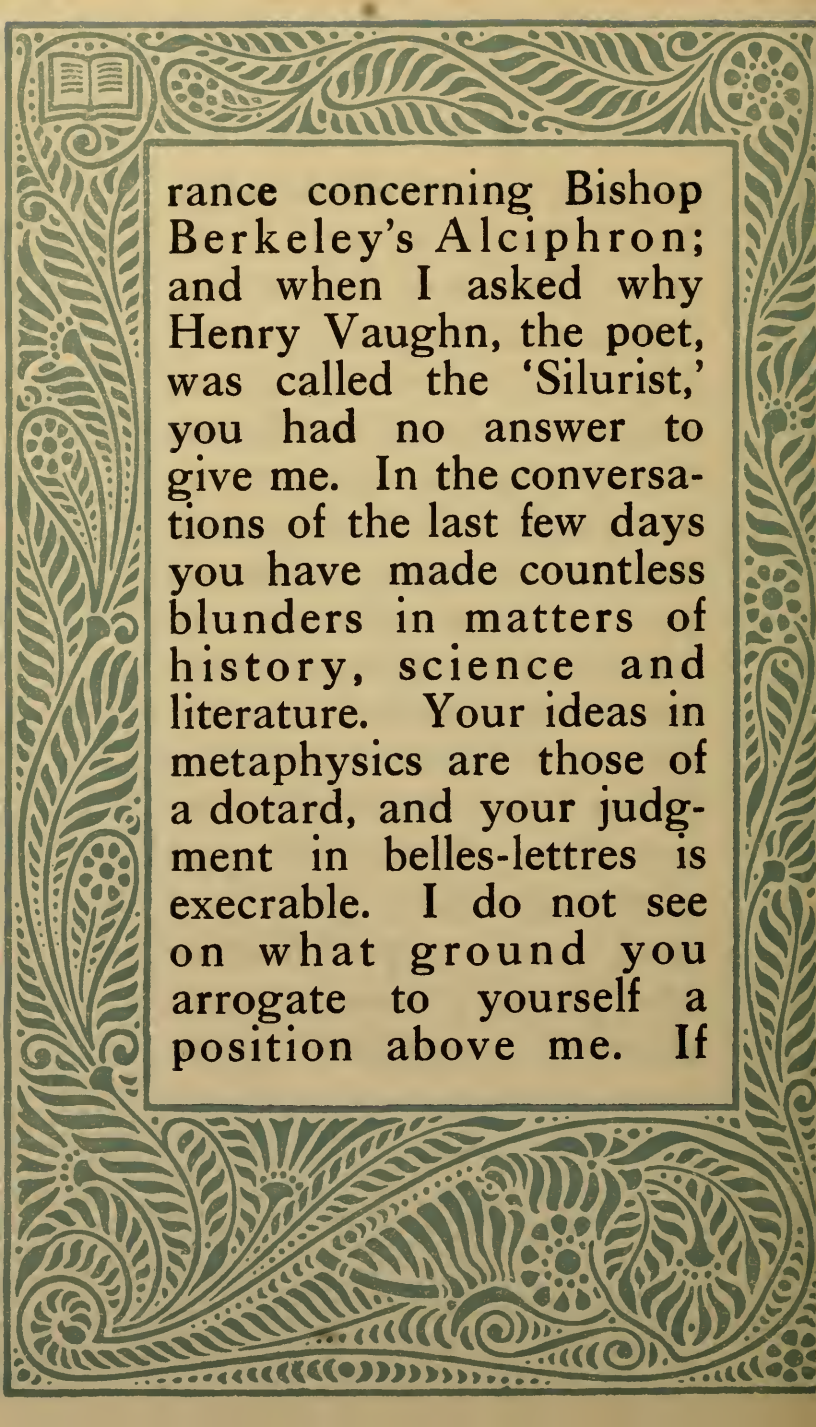
blackboard. Then he gave a fierce trumpet, and glared at me in a way that gave me a start of terror.

I saw that some sort of a crisis was ahead, but determined to defer it, if possible, until I could decide what was the best course to pursue. I approached the board and read the following message, addressed to myself:

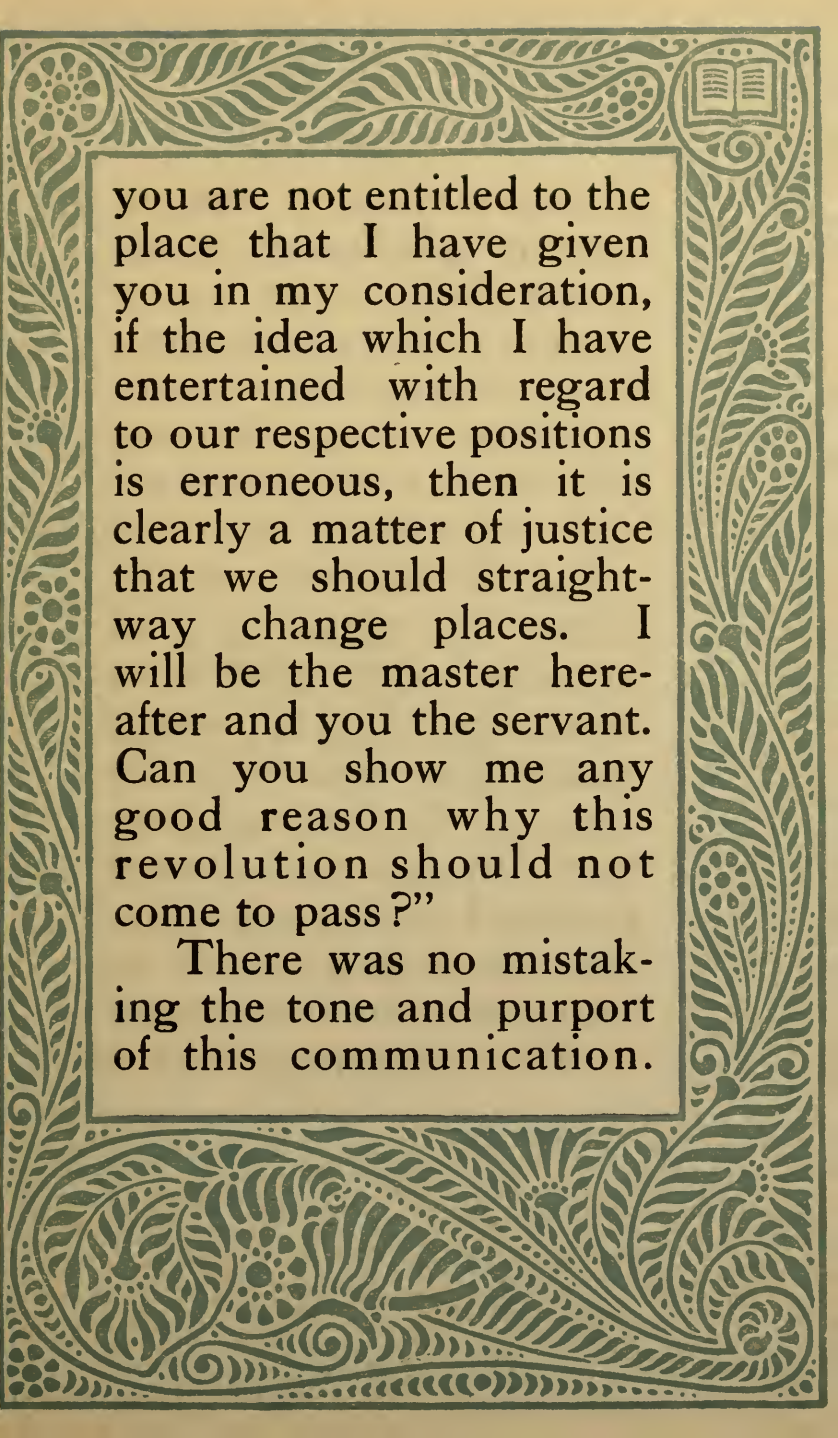
“Master—You are deceived if you think I am ignorant of the change which has gradually come



to pass in our relationship. You have been my superior thus far in life, not by reason of your greater physical power, for I can strike you dead with one blow, whereas you, without the aid of tools, could not give me even external pain. Your sole claim to command over me lay in your intellectual superiority. This superiority I am now compelled to question. Yesterday you admitted that you had never read any of Henry Mackenzie's novels; you showed complete igno-

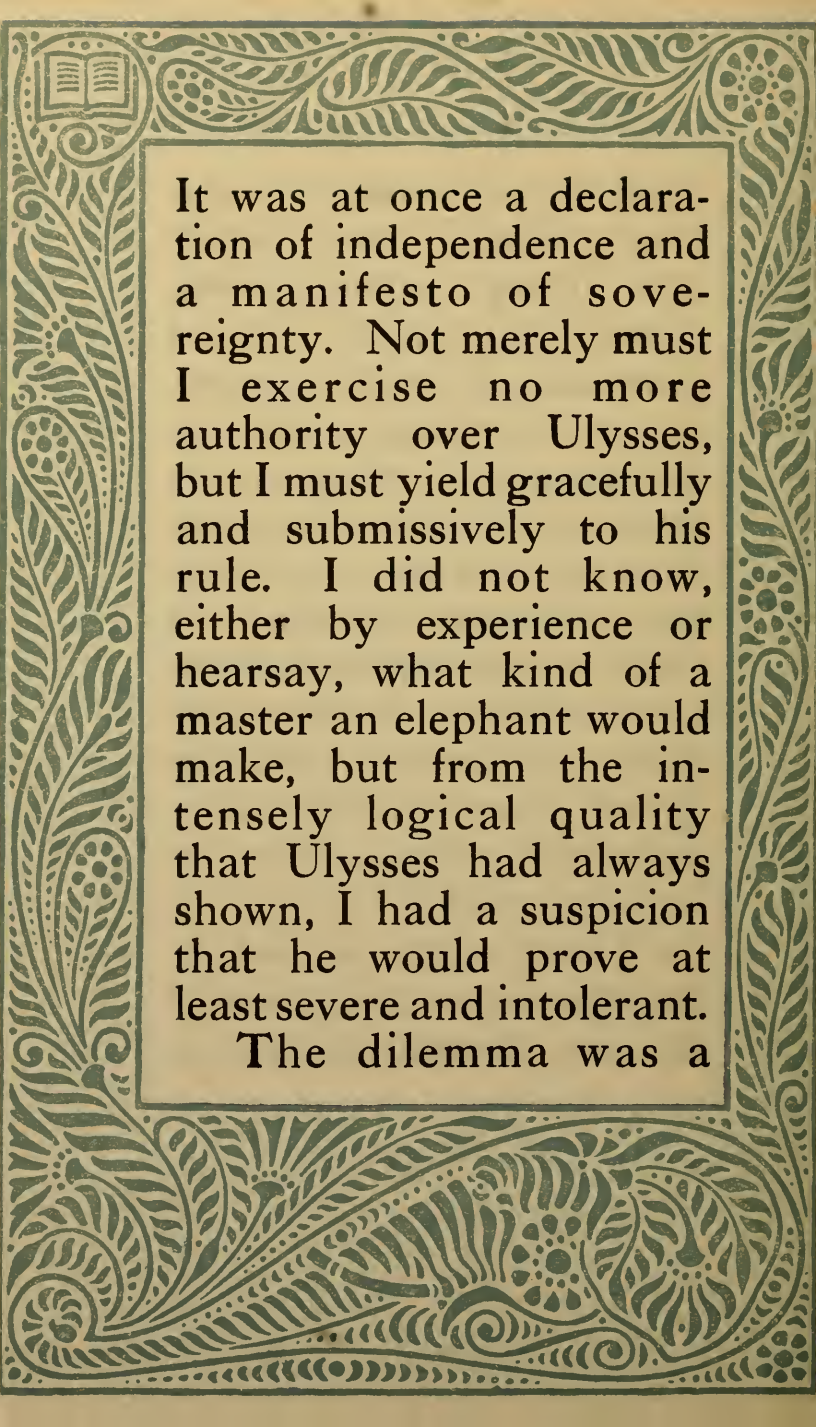


rance concerning Bishop Berkeley's Alciphron; and when I asked why Henry Vaughn, the poet, was called the 'Silurist,' you had no answer to give me. In the conversations of the last few days you have made countless blunders in matters of history, science and literature. Your ideas in metaphysics are those of a dotard, and your judgment in belles-lettres is execrable. I do not see on what ground you arrogate to yourself a position above me. If



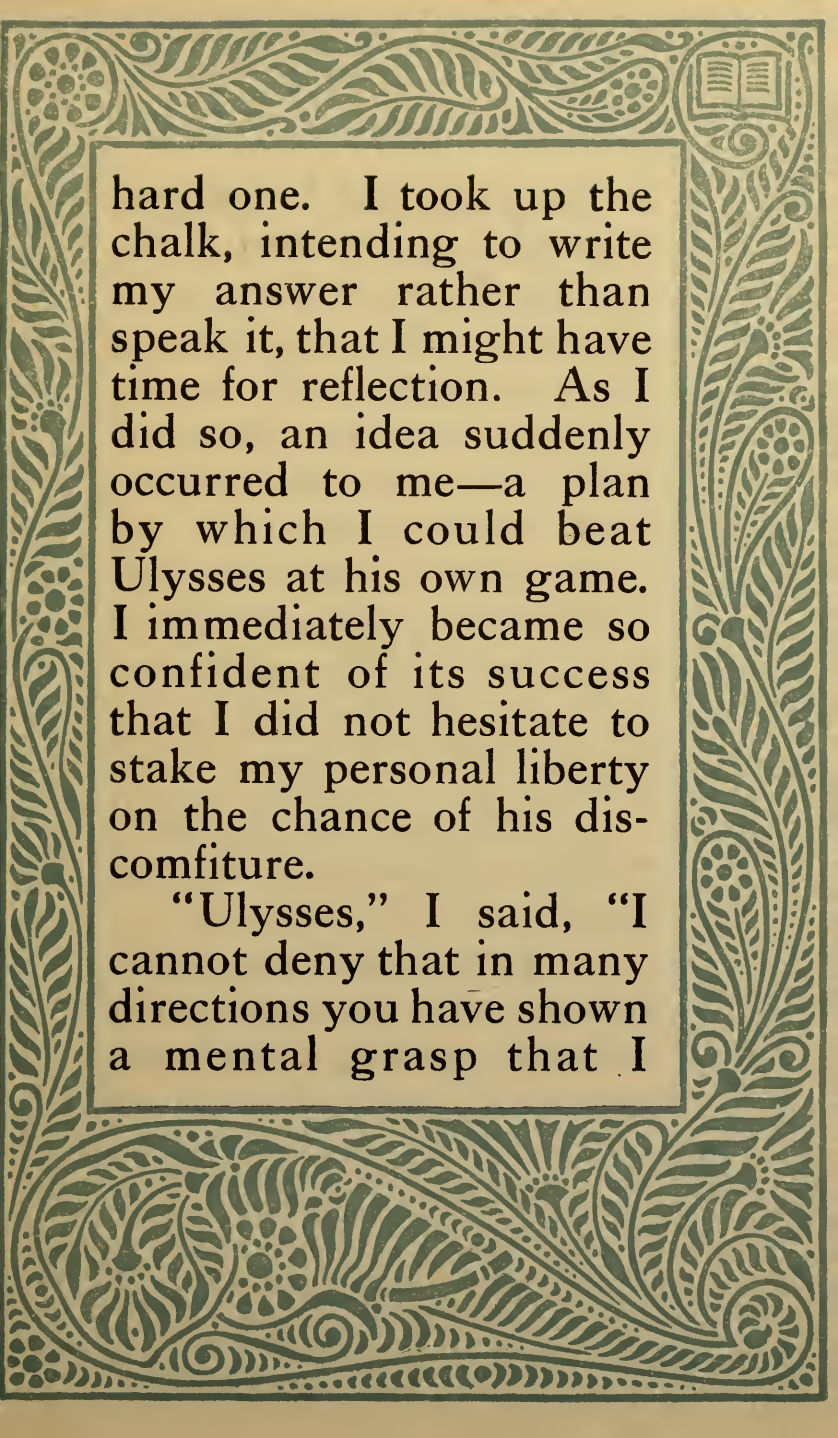
you are not entitled to the place that I have given you in my consideration, if the idea which I have entertained with regard to our respective positions is erroneous, then it is clearly a matter of justice that we should straightway change places. I will be the master hereafter and you the servant. Can you show me any good reason why this revolution should not come to pass?"

There was no mistaking the tone and purport of this communication.



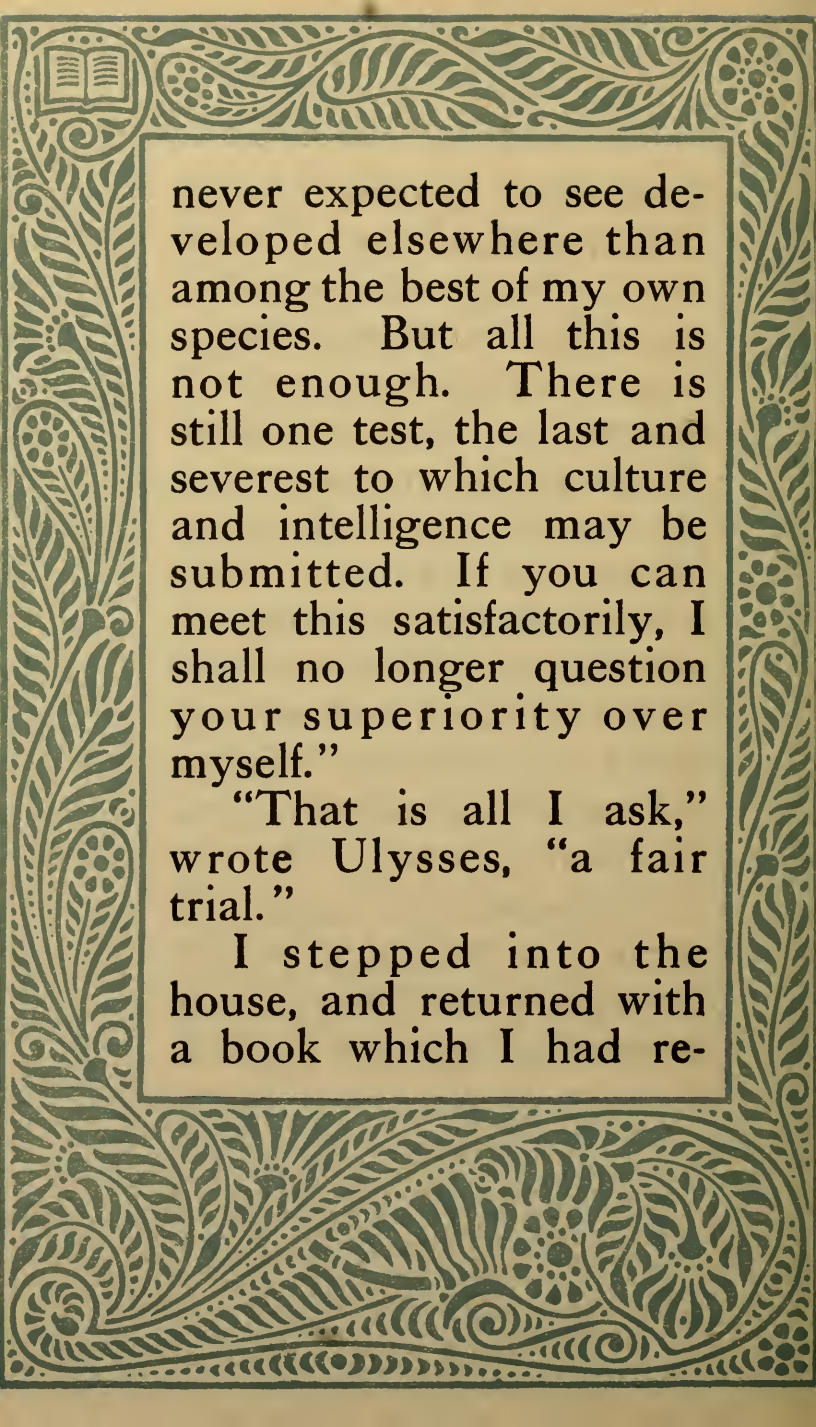
It was at once a declaration of independence and a manifesto of sovereignty. Not merely must I exercise no more authority over Ulysses, but I must yield gracefully and submissively to his rule. I did not know, either by experience or hearsay, what kind of a master an elephant would make, but from the intensely logical quality that Ulysses had always shown, I had a suspicion that he would prove at least severe and intolerant.

The dilemma was a



hard one. I took up the chalk, intending to write my answer rather than speak it, that I might have time for reflection. As I did so, an idea suddenly occurred to me—a plan by which I could beat Ulysses at his own game. I immediately became so confident of its success that I did not hesitate to stake my personal liberty on the chance of his discomfiture.

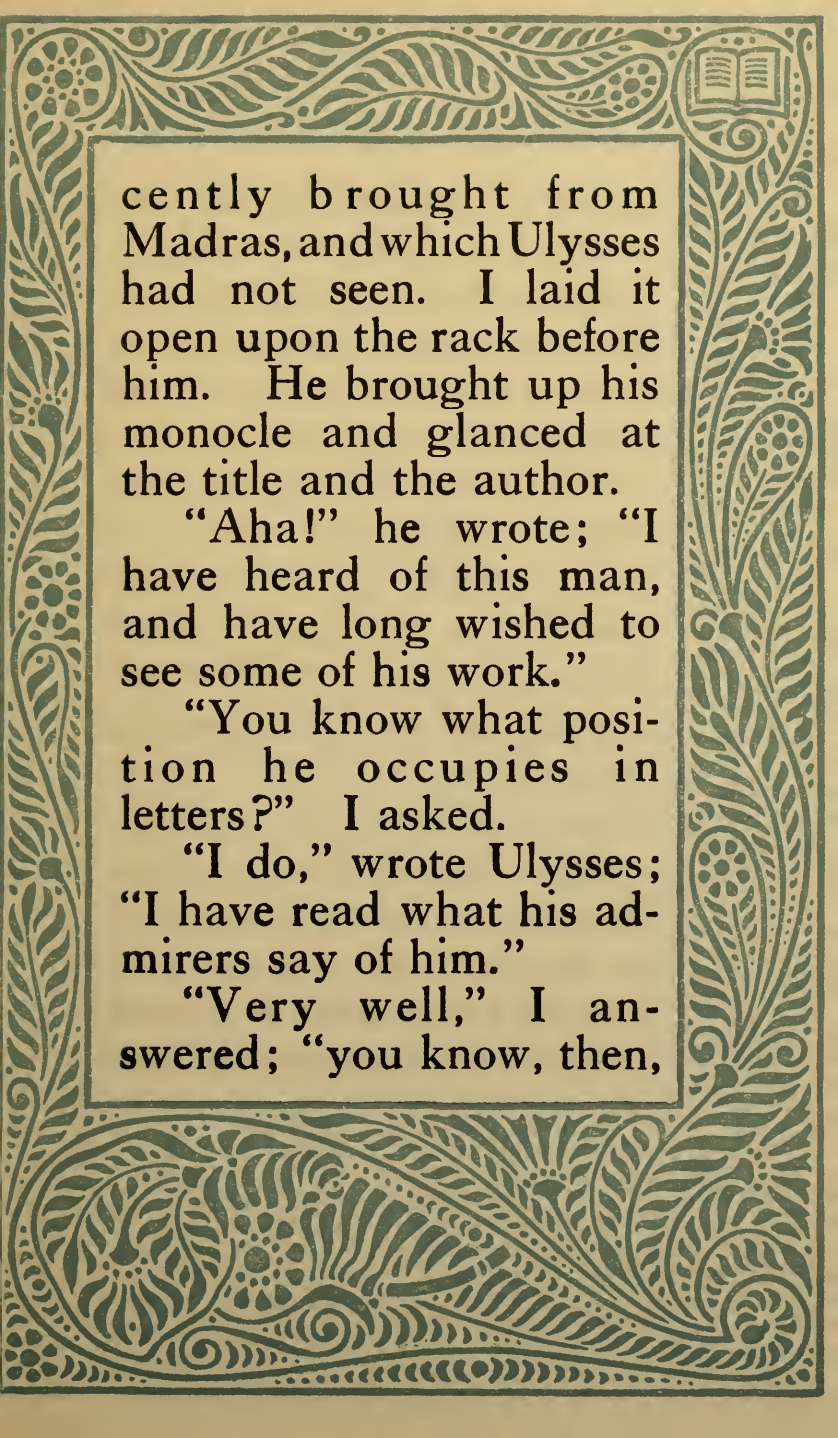
“Ulysses,” I said, “I cannot deny that in many directions you have shown a mental grasp that I



never expected to see developed elsewhere than among the best of my own species. But all this is not enough. There is still one test, the last and severest to which culture and intelligence may be submitted. If you can meet this satisfactorily, I shall no longer question your superiority over myself."

"That is all I ask," wrote Ulysses, "a fair trial."

I stepped into the house, and returned with a book which I had re-



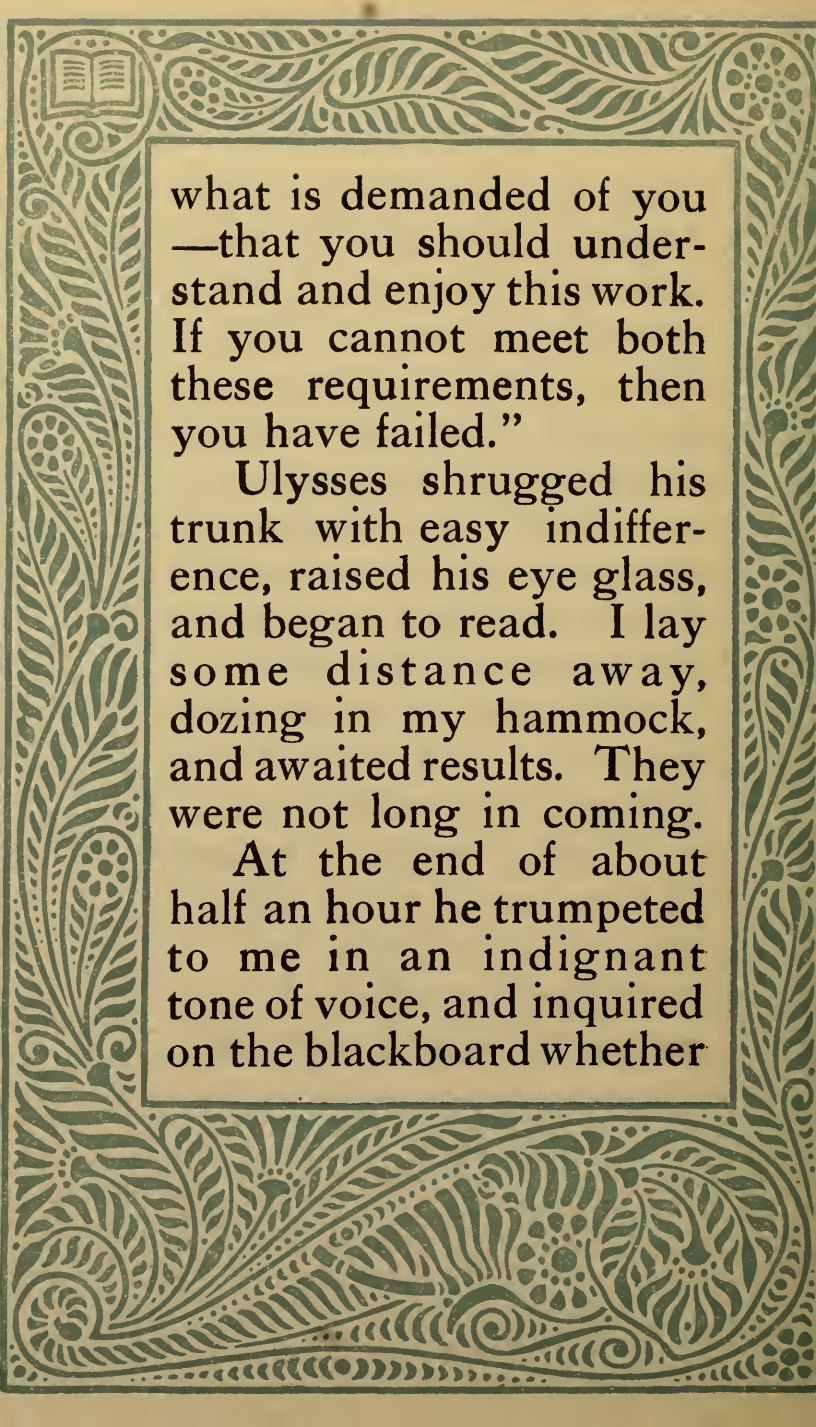
cently brought from Madras, and which Ulysses had not seen. I laid it open upon the rack before him. He brought up his monocle and glanced at the title and the author.

“Aha!” he wrote; “I have heard of this man, and have long wished to see some of his work.”

“You know what position he occupies in letters?” I asked.

“I do,” wrote Ulysses; “I have read what his admirers say of him.”

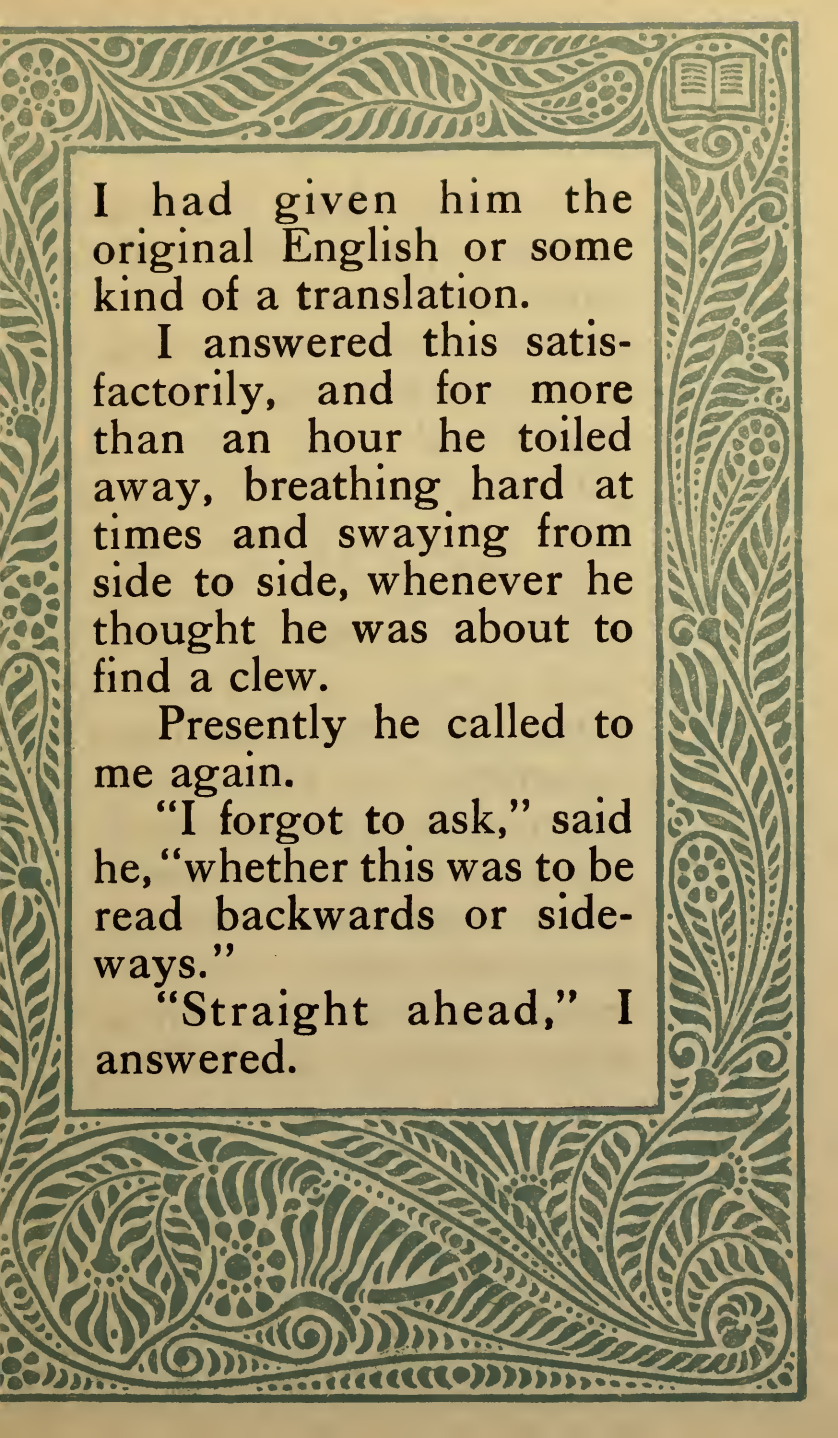
“Very well,” I answered; “you know, then,



what is demanded of you —that you should understand and enjoy this work. If you cannot meet both these requirements, then you have failed.”

Ulysses shrugged his trunk with easy indifference, raised his eye glass, and began to read. I lay some distance away, dozing in my hammock, and awaited results. They were not long in coming.

At the end of about half an hour he trumpeted to me in an indignant tone of voice, and inquired on the blackboard whether



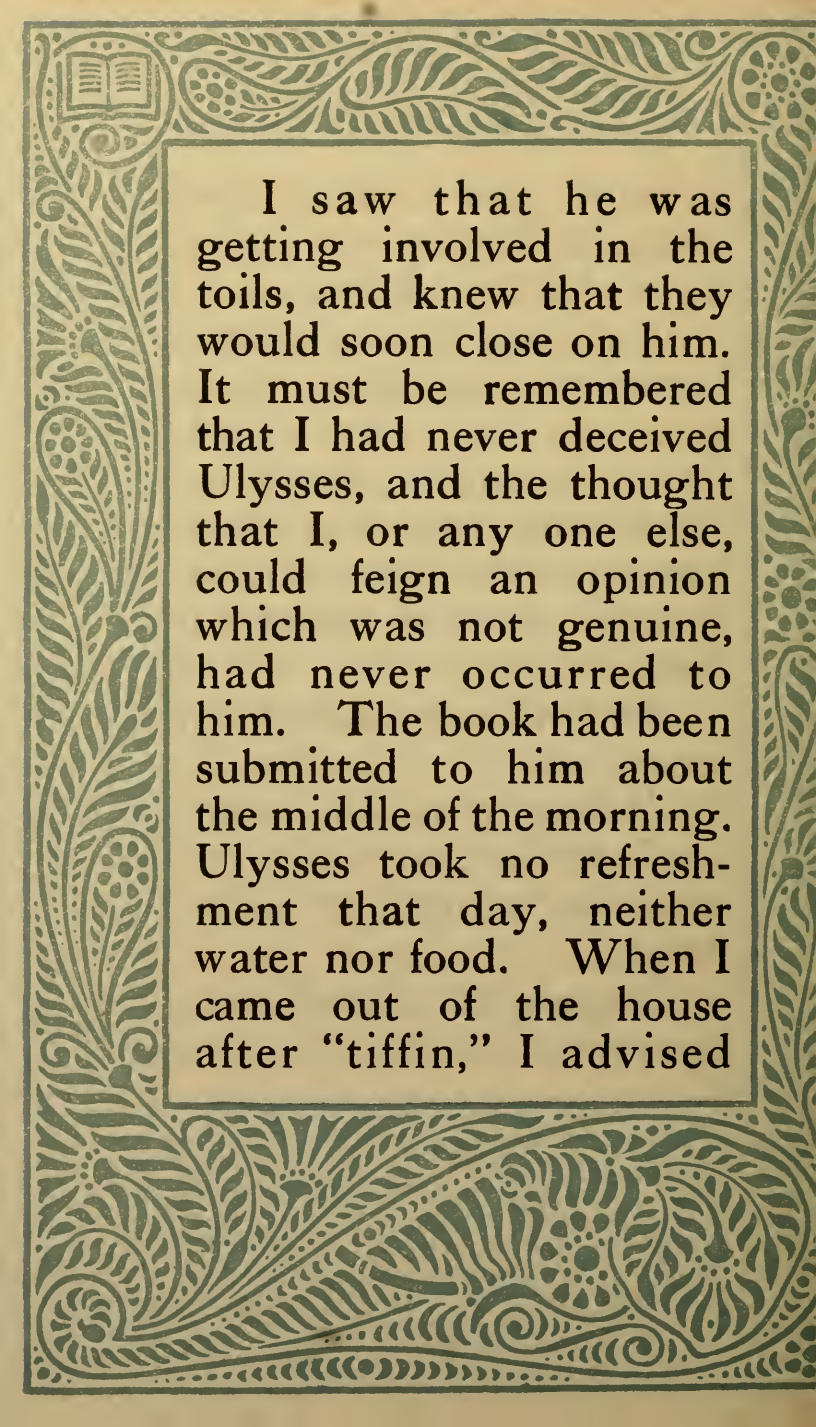
I had given him the original English or some kind of a translation.

I answered this satisfactorily, and for more than an hour he toiled away, breathing hard at times and swaying from side to side, whenever he thought he was about to find a clew.

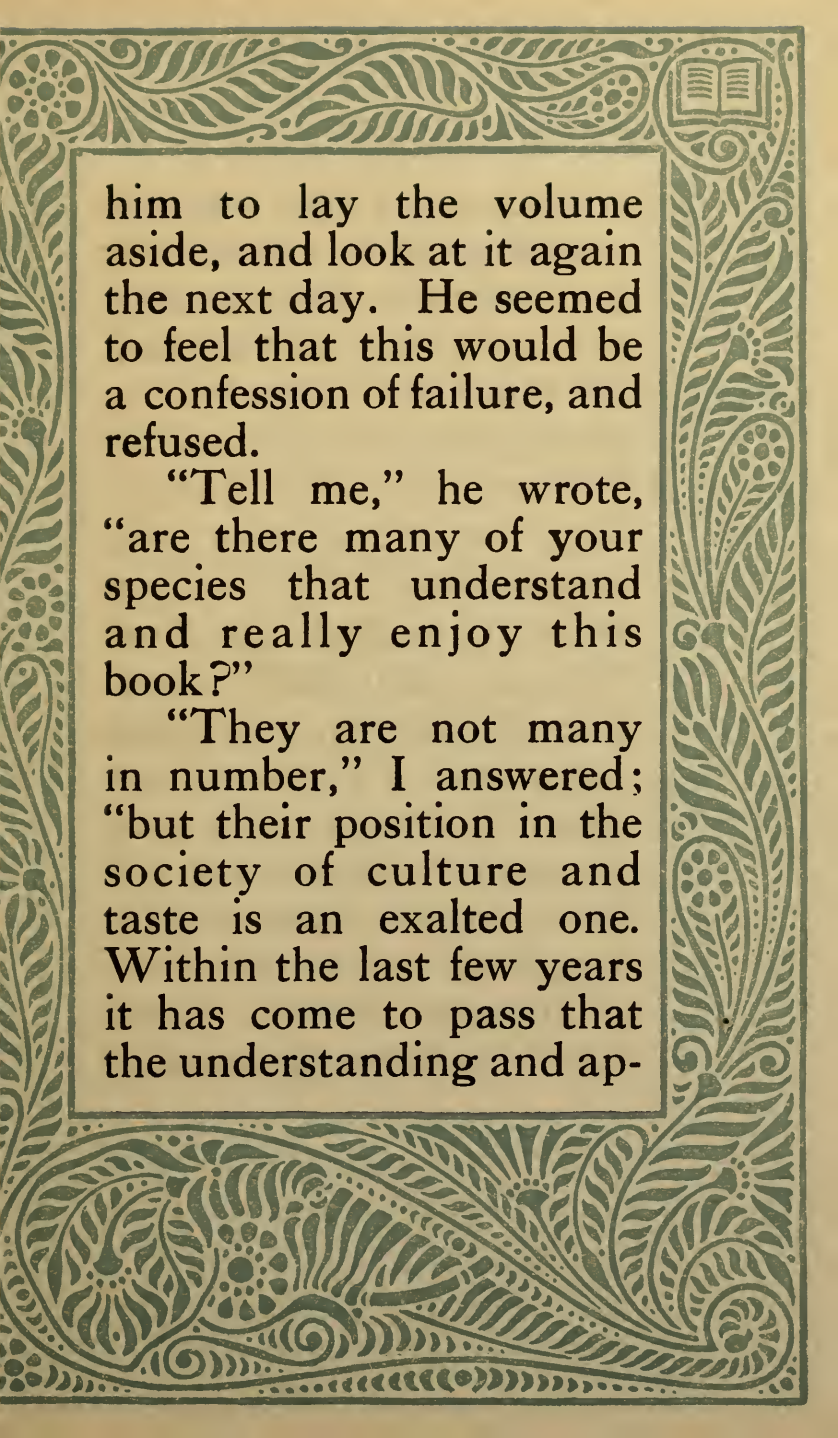
Presently he called to me again.

“I forgot to ask,” said he, “whether this was to be read backwards or sideways.”

“Straight ahead,” I answered.



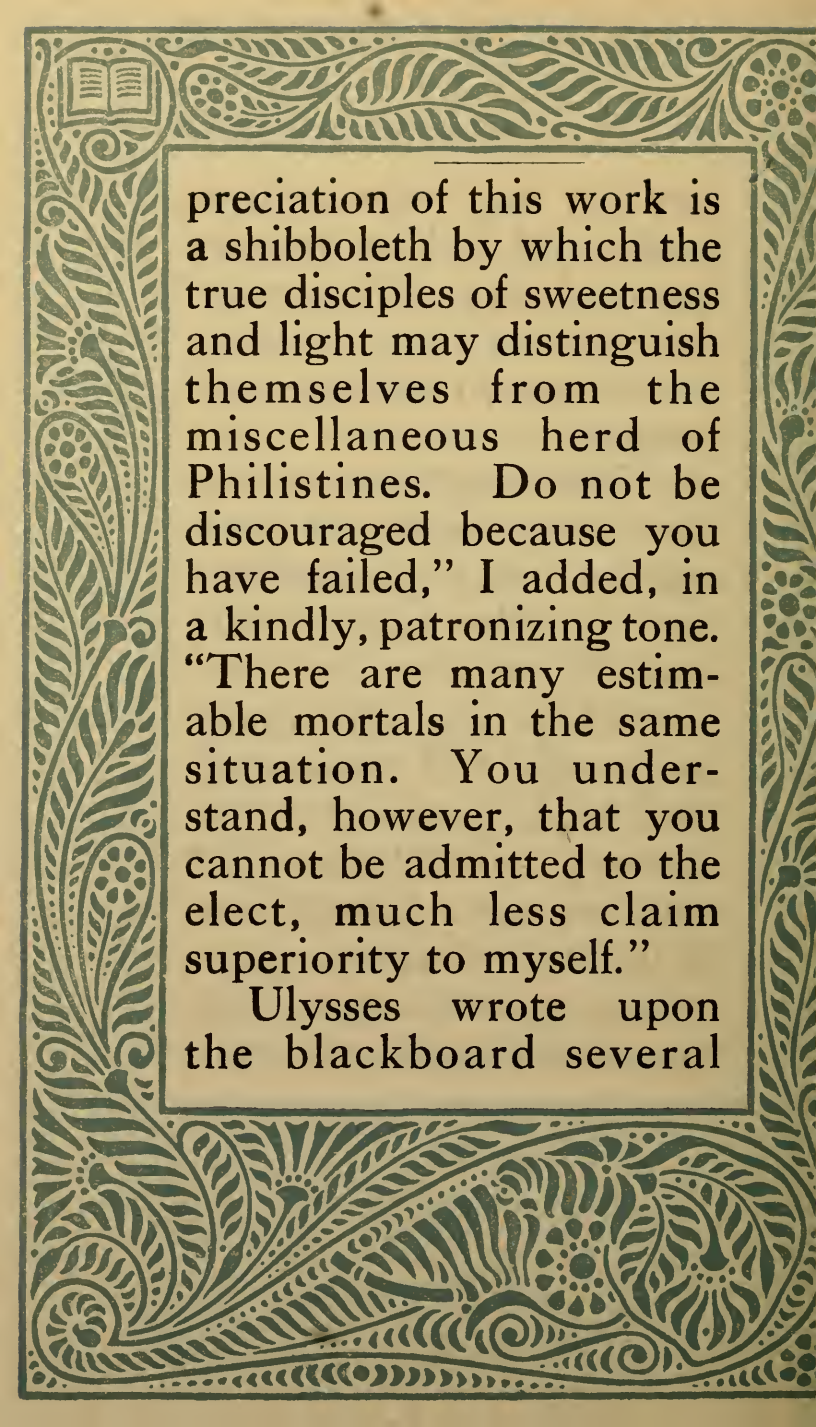
I saw that he was getting involved in the toils, and knew that they would soon close on him. It must be remembered that I had never deceived Ulysses, and the thought that I, or any one else, could feign an opinion which was not genuine, had never occurred to him. The book had been submitted to him about the middle of the morning. Ulysses took no refreshment that day, neither water nor food. When I came out of the house after "tiffin," I advised



him to lay the volume aside, and look at it again the next day. He seemed to feel that this would be a confession of failure, and refused.

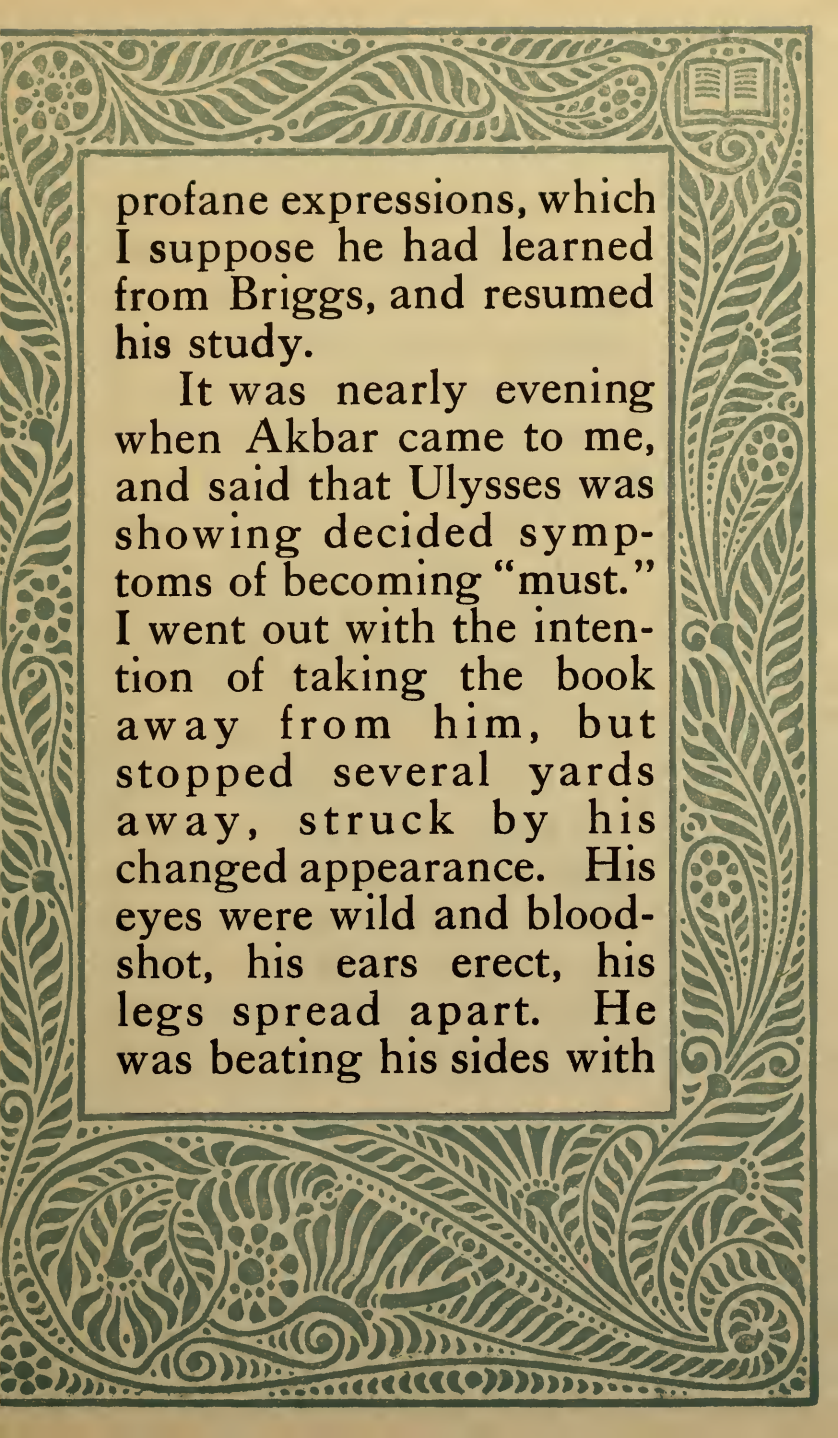
“Tell me,” he wrote, “are there many of your species that understand and really enjoy this book?”

“They are not many in number,” I answered; “but their position in the society of culture and taste is an exalted one. Within the last few years it has come to pass that the understanding and ap-



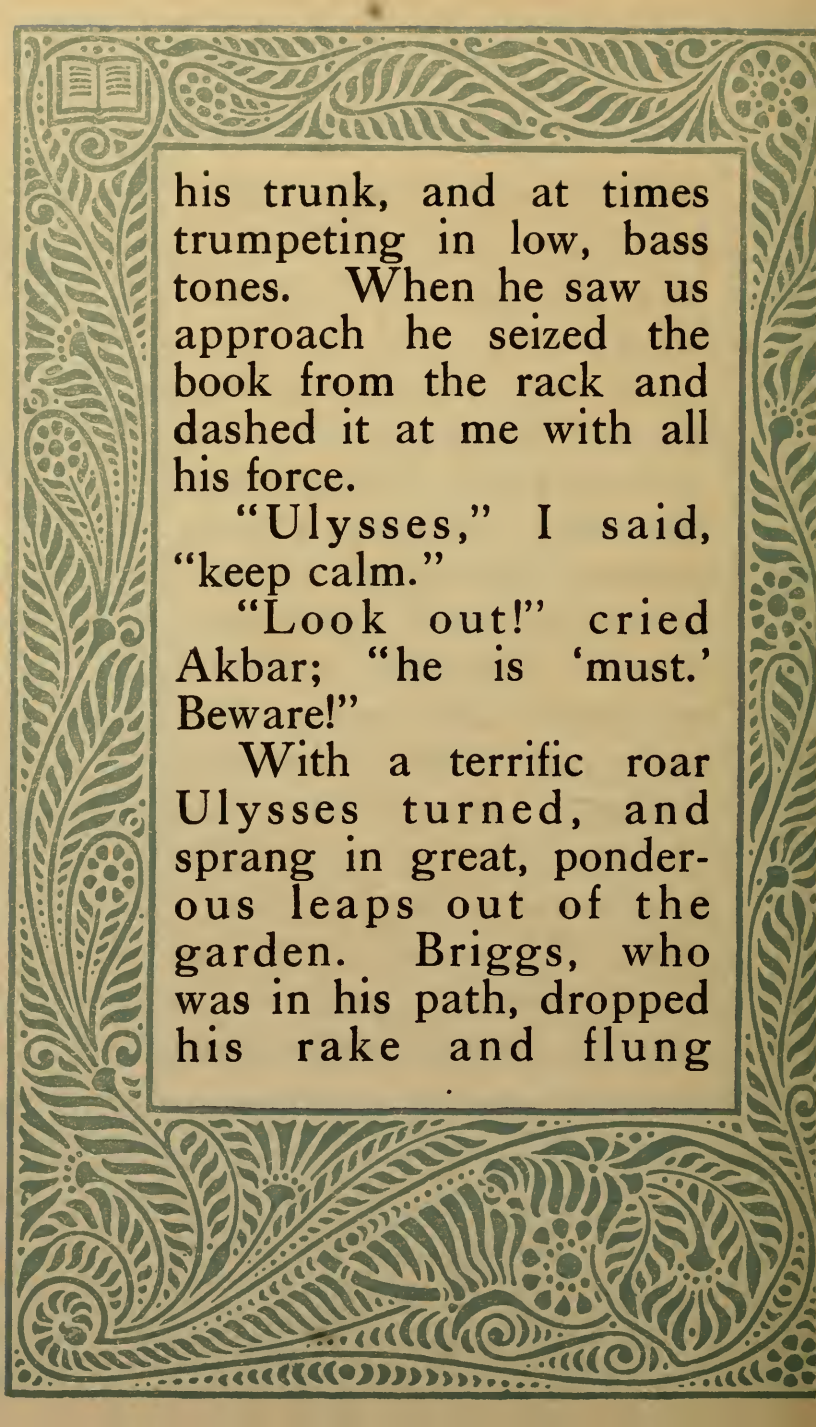
preciation of this work is a shibboleth by which the true disciples of sweetness and light may distinguish themselves from the miscellaneous herd of Philistines. Do not be discouraged because you have failed," I added, in a kindly, patronizing tone. "There are many estimable mortals in the same situation. You understand, however, that you cannot be admitted to the elect, much less claim superiority to myself."

Ulysses wrote upon the blackboard several



profane expressions, which I suppose he had learned from Briggs, and resumed his study.

It was nearly evening when Akbar came to me, and said that Ulysses was showing decided symptoms of becoming "must." I went out with the intention of taking the book away from him, but stopped several yards away, struck by his changed appearance. His eyes were wild and blood-shot, his ears erect, his legs spread apart. He was beating his sides with



his trunk, and at times trumpeting in low, bass tones. When he saw us approach he seized the book from the rack and dashed it at me with all his force.

“Ulysses,” I said, “keep calm.”

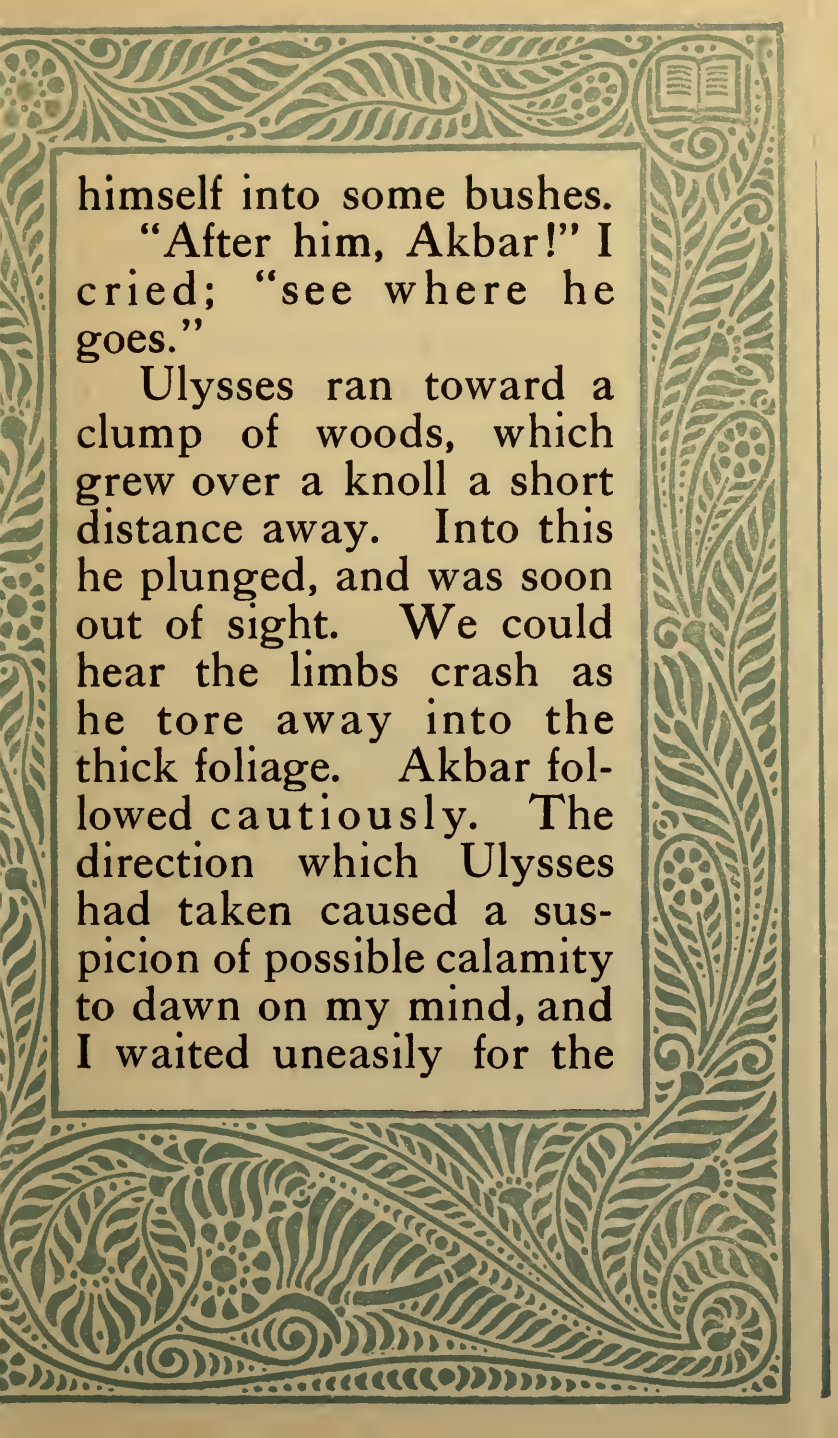
“Look out!” cried Akbar; “he is ‘must.’ Beware!”

With a terrific roar Ulysses turned, and sprang in great, ponderous leaps out of the garden. Briggs, who was in his path, dropped his rake and flung



*"Look out!" cried Akbar; "He is
'must.' Beware!"*

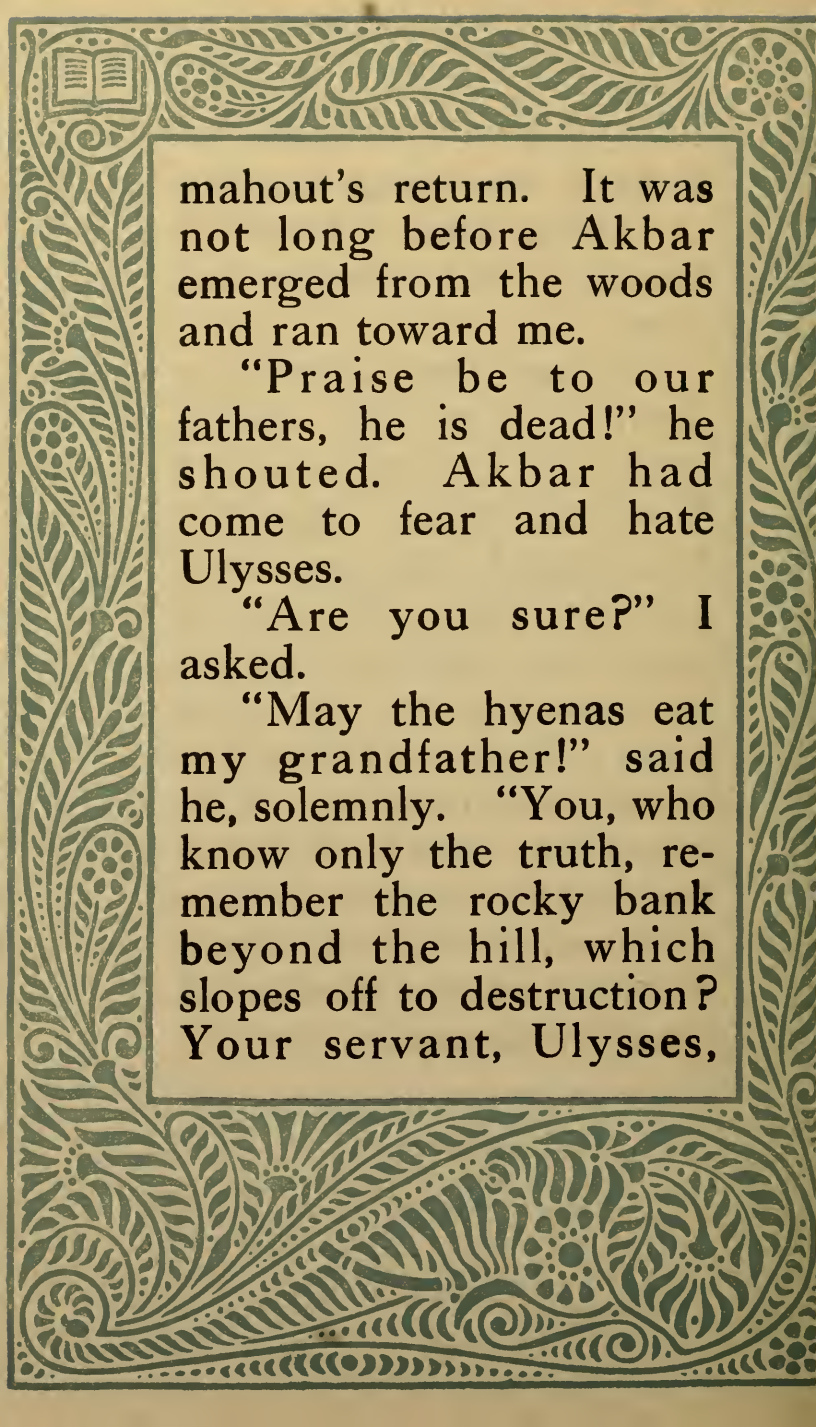




himself into some bushes.

“After him, Akbar!” I cried; “see where he goes.”

Ulysses ran toward a clump of woods, which grew over a knoll a short distance away. Into this he plunged, and was soon out of sight. We could hear the limbs crash as he tore away into the thick foliage. Akbar followed cautiously. The direction which Ulysses had taken caused a suspicion of possible calamity to dawn on my mind, and I waited uneasily for the

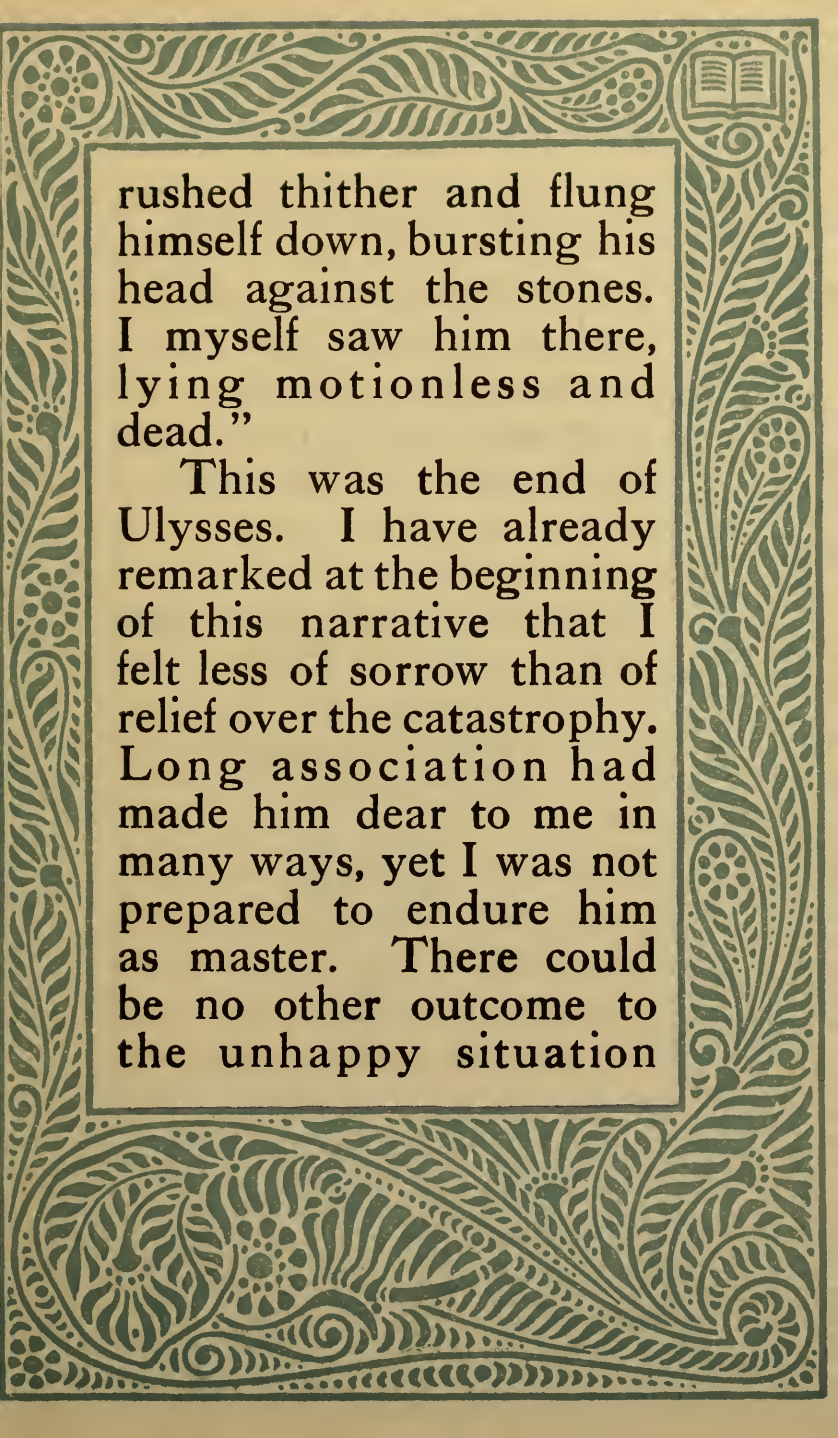


mahout's return. It was not long before Akbar emerged from the woods and ran toward me.

"Praise be to our fathers, he is dead!" he shouted. Akbar had come to fear and hate Ulysses.

"Are you sure?" I asked.

"May the hyenas eat my grandfather!" said he, solemnly. "You, who know only the truth, remember the rocky bank beyond the hill, which slopes off to destruction? Your servant, Ulysses,



rushed thither and flung himself down, bursting his head against the stones. I myself saw him there, lying motionless and dead."

This was the end of Ulysses. I have already remarked at the beginning of this narrative that I felt less of sorrow than of relief over the catastrophe. Long association had made him dear to me in many ways, yet I was not prepared to endure him as master. There could be no other outcome to the unhappy situation

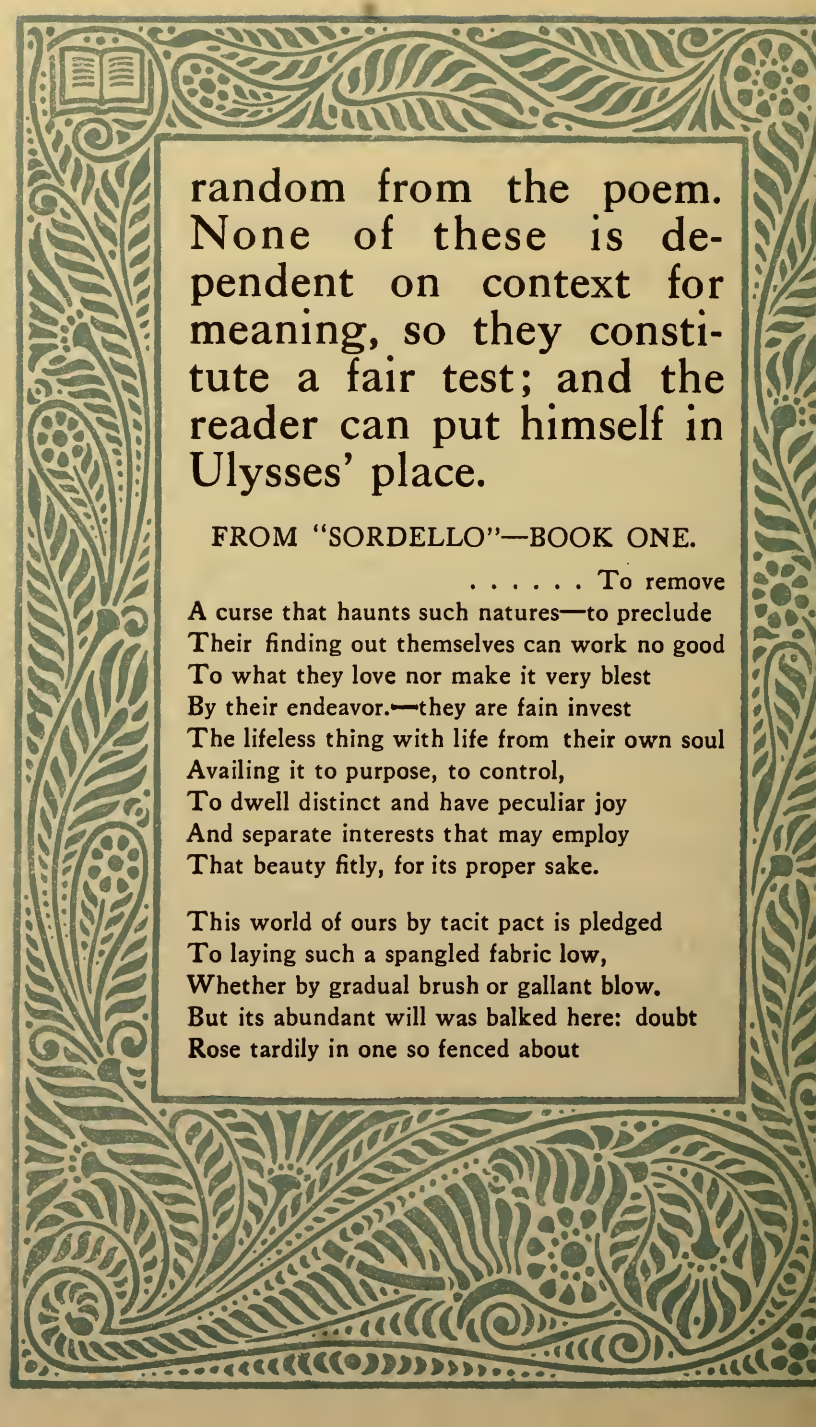
than a tragedy of some kind. I sadly gave orders for the interment of his body, and returned to the house, taking with me the torn and disfigured copy of Browning's "Sordello."





Note by the Author.

The reason that prompted Ulysses' master to select "Sordello" as the agent of his discomfiture was, no doubt, that of all the blind and obscure work of the great poet, this is generally rated the most mysterious and perplexing. In the days when the Browning conflict raged, "Sordello" was the touchstone of the cult. To refresh the reader's memory of its difficulties, here are reproduced a few passages taken almost at

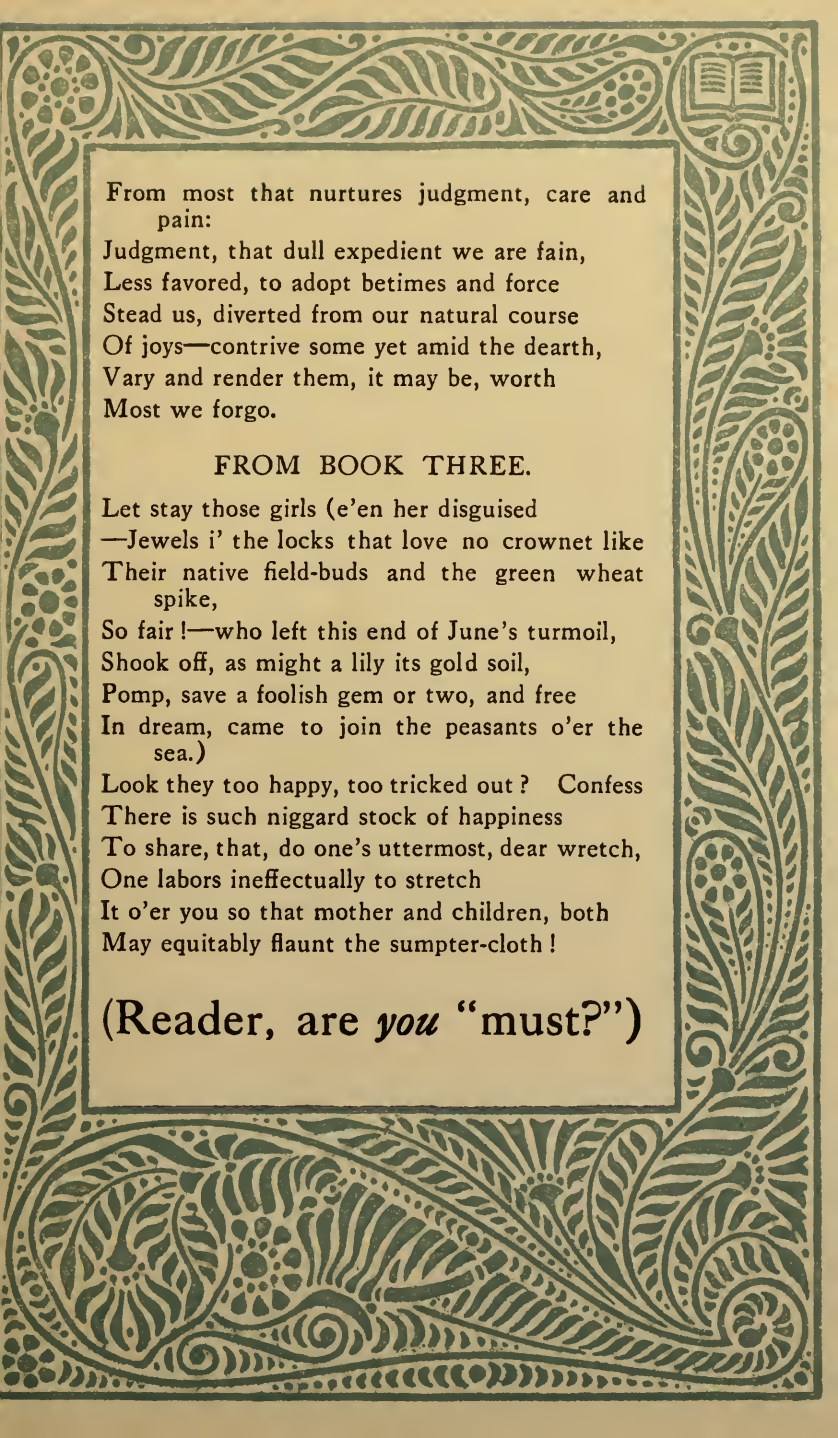


random from the poem. None of these is dependent on context for meaning, so they constitute a fair test; and the reader can put himself in Ulysses' place.

FROM "SORDELLO"—BOOK ONE.

. To remove
A curse that haunts such natures—to preclude
Their finding out themselves can work no good
To what they love nor make it very blest
By their endeavor.—they are fain invest
The lifeless thing with life from their own soul
Availing it to purpose, to control,
To dwell distinct and have peculiar joy
And separate interests that may employ
That beauty fitly, for its proper sake.

This world of ours by tacit pact is pledged
To laying such a spangled fabric low,
Whether by gradual brush or gallant blow,
But its abundant will was balked here: doubt
Rose tardily in one so fenced about



From most that nurtures judgment, care and
pain:

Judgment, that dull expedient we are fain,
Less favored, to adopt betimes and force
Stead us, diverted from our natural course
Of joys—contrive some yet amid the dearth,
Vary and render them, it may be, worth
Most we forgo.

FROM BOOK THREE.

Let stay those girls (e'en her disguised
—Jewels i' the locks that love no crownet like
Their native field-buds and the green wheat
spike,

So fair!—who left this end of June's turmoil,
Shook off, as might a lily its gold soil,
Pomp, save a foolish gem or two, and free
In dream, came to join the peasants o'er the
sea.)

Look they too happy, too tricked out? Confess
There is such niggard stock of happiness
To share, that, do one's uttermost, dear wretch,
One labors ineffectually to stretch
It o'er you so that mother and children, both
May equitably flaunt the sumpter-cloth!

(Reader, are *you* "must?")

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