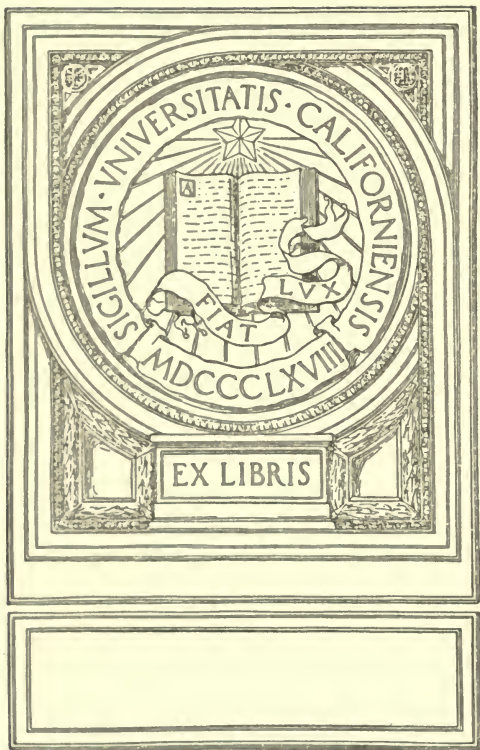




Flaxius:
Leaves from
the Life of
an Immortal

Charles Godfrey
Leland



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FLAXIUS

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LEAVES FROM THE LIFE OF
AN IMMORTAL



CHARLES GODFREY LELAND

AUTHOR OF 'THE BREITMANN BALLADS,' ETC.



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FIRST WORDS

THE *raison d'être*, cause for existence, and origin of this book, may be found in the following extract from a review of the *Florentine Legends*, which appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of June 19, 1895:—

‘Mr. Leland frequently refers throughout his narratives to a certain Flaxius. We were somewhat puzzled as to whom this Flaxius might be, until we came across the statement that the author had once begun a book entitled, *The Experiences of Flaxius the Immortal*. The reflections of the Immortal are quoted extensively in this volume, and we can only say we wish the Flaxius project a happy ending, and would not be surprised if the new sage, racy of Italian soil, as he appears to be, should even a little eclipse Mr. Leland’s old hero of Lager beer celebrity.’

For which kind word all thanks, and from the heart, since it suggested what had never been seriously thought of; for, in truth, the experiences had no more been written than the books which appear in the catalogue of the library given in the *Chronicle* of Pantagruel. Now, I have had all my life a strange love for works on varied subjects, in unity

of style, even as in Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* there are many melodies forming one work. Such were the best sketches of Irving, and such was my first original venture, *Meister Karl's Sketch-Book*, which had the remarkable fortune to attract, most unexpectedly, a very kind letter on it from Washington Irving, and subsequently another of seven large closely written pages, critical and laudatory, from Lord Bulwer Lytton, the novelist, who, with all modesty be it said, took several palpable hints from it for his *Kenelm Chillingly*, into which he introduced me under a pseudonym, as a small *memento*. And it is in this style that the present work is composed of different stories, which, however, make one *parure*, or, changing the metaphor, of varied dishes in one dinner met.

I beg the reader to pardon this fond disquisition, but it is natural for an author to think fondly of his first work, as it is for a mother to do the same by her first-born; and I was the more influenced to do so by its having been in the same *genre* as the present volume.

The comparison, made by the reviewer of the *Chronicle*, between the warrior-bard Hans Breitmann and his possible rival Flaxius, suggested the idea of making the two meet in this volume, the result of which encounter is two Breitmann ballads, never before published, with others which had indeed appeared casually in another form, but not as yet in any edition of the poems, and which will be assuredly

new to most of my readers. And as these later lays—of which I have only given a specimen—all turn on marvellous mediæval legends of magic, I will mention, by way of *avant-courier*, that I have in manuscript, and have been writing or revising this thirty years, a curious collection of *Ballads of Witchcraft and Songs of Sorcery*, which I cannot but think would greatly please all lovers of *occulta*, and which will be published should sign be given that it would be wanted by the public.

I would end by recording that this work is most kindly and cordially dedicated to certain friends who have greatly aided me at different times in collecting Italian folk-lore, that is to say, to Miss Roma Lister, who was from the first specially interested in Flaxius, and to Mrs. Tessa Arbuthnot; whereunto I might add the names of all who have for many years and in many ways shown friendship and cordial kindness—of late in sad trials by illness—to whom be all thanks.

CHARLES GODFREY LELAND.

FLORENCE, *June* 1902.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FLAXIUS AND THE FAIRY,	1
FLAXIUS AND THE GOD,	12
FLAXIUS AND ROOSEVELDT,	28
FLAXIUS AND HAMLET,	36
HOW FLAXIUS MADE THE FORTUNE OF EADWARD	53
FLAXIUS AND ASMODEUS,	70
FLAXIUS IN FLORENCE,	83
FLAXIUS AND THE EMPEROR JULIAN,	91
FLAXIUS IN HADES,	106
FLAXIUS AND ADELINDÈ,	126
FLAXIUS AND THE WERE-WOLF,	143
FLAXIUS AND BREITMANN,	163
FLAXIUS IN INDIA,	175
THE WONDERFUL STORY OF MISS JESABELLE ROCKHARD,	201

	PAGE
HOW FLAXIUS SAT AS JUDGE WITH A JURY OF TWELVE DEVILS,	242
FLAXIUS AND THE BOOKSELLER,	251
FLAXIUS IN THE FUTURE,	269
THE EVANISHMENT OF FLAXIUS,	304
BREITMANN'S LAST BALLAD,	318

FLAXIUS AND THE FAIRY

OR, HOW HE BECAME AN IMMORTAL

‘This work is a collection of Fables.’—*Sir Roger Lestrangle.*

‘There is no expression of politeness but has its root in the moral nature of man.’—*Goethe.*

‘There is no policy like politeness, and a good manner is the best thing in the world, either to get a good name or to supply the want of it.’—*Bulwer Lytton.*

‘Politeness is like Generosity; nay, I am not sure that it is not Generosity itself. But neither deserves respect unless perfectly innate—unaffected and natural.’—*L’Accademia.*

LONG ago, when Time was in its early dawn—*à prima pueritia*, or in its pink infancy—Flaxius the Neophyte was also in his youth; for which reason he and the world got on very well together. He was far from having attained to high magic, though of an eminently respectable old priestly-sorcering family, and of fairy descent, but he had in him those qualities which in any age advance the man who gets a fair trial. And that we may the better understand what these qualities were, I will narrate the first bud of incident, or rosy adventure, by which it befell that he too rose in life.

It happened one day that on the annual holiday or festival of Volterra, in the first Etruscan age, lied about by Inghirami, Flaxius saw in the street, among the many in the middle distance, a girl who was, *à prima vista*, evidently not respectable, or was

rather so far from it that it might not have been said, *habet pudicitiam in propatulo*. Yet there was nothing arrogantly offensive in the poor thing; she seemed to be of that kind whose whole life, like the donkey's, is a sad, mute speech to the effect: 'If you don't care for me—and I'm not astonished that you don't—then don't speak to me, but pray do not abuse me, for I can't help it—indeed I can't.'

This silent-violet eloquence was, however, lost on a group of two or three rude young men and girls who came howling along in high, red-poppy spirits, and who, seeing the poor forlorn creature, proceeded to hoot her in the manner peculiar to the virtuous vulgar of all ages, by hurling at her terms intended to make her feel deeply that she was indeed that which her sad attire proclaimed her to be.

'And out of the way of your betters, O Dirt, and into the dirt!' cried a youth, giving a bump to the Moral Calamity, which sent her reeling, so that she indeed fell in the mud of the street, at which all roared with laughter.

Now in all the country round there was not a taller or more robust bull of a young man than Flaxius, and seeing this, he gave the Guardian or Vindicator of Morals and Holy Virtue a blow which levelled him likewise in the grey dirt, and with as little difficulty sent the rest flying; for there was that in his patrician appearance, quite as much as in his iron strength, which inspired fear. He picked up the girl, bade her be of good cheer, and not mind what had happened; there was something marvellously moving and honey-comforting in his tone of voice, which snatched a grace beyond the reach of skill.

It is an art little known now to the world, that of

the voice trained to woo and win feeling, to inspire awe and emotion by musical tone—but it formed a part of cultured magic in early times, and Flaxius was at the head of the class in Enchanting natural elocution and Musical morality.

. . . And furthermore bestowed on her a silver coin, and was about to depart, when the girl astonished him by saying, in tones as marked and deeply magical as his own :

‘Why did you pity me?’

Flaxius replied, ‘Because you, doing no one injustice, were unjustly treated.’

‘Do you not see what I am?’

‘I see nothing beyond what I behold in all human beings, one cast by fate or chance into a certain life. And few indeed are what they fain would be.’

‘Then you despise no one?’

‘I very deeply despise all who make no effort to know or do what is *better*. I despise all who can only—I say *only*—realise their own dignity in the abasement of others. I despise the man who requires to own slaves in order to know that he is free. . . . I feel . . .’

‘There are not many who feel as you do,’ replied the girl. And this time in the voice Flaxius recognised that he was indeed speaking to a *magia*, or one of the initiated in high wisdom. Therefore he was not astonished to see in her eyes a strange and as yet unperceived expression of marvellous intellect and electric beauty, and note a divine dignity and grace in her carriage. She signed to him to follow her, and he obeyed.

‘No, there are yet few,’ he answered, ‘but there will ever be more and more in the ages to come. I

would that I could live to see the time when all slavery and social injustice will disappear. But will it ever be?’

‘Who knows,’ replied his companion. ‘Who knows how long we may live, or how bad or good the world may become, or anything?’

‘Do not the gods know?’ said Flaxius, amazed.

‘Who knows what the gods know?’ replied the *magia*. ‘They do not even know what they know themselves.’

By this high time the pair had passed as if by enchantment, or in a dream, into a strange mountain country, unknown to Flaxius. Wilder grew the rocks and road until they came to a marvellous place where the cliffs were like a vast range of rude castles all in one. As they approached, Flaxius saw them change to magnificent ancient structures. Then they entered a golden door, and soon were in a splendidly furnished apartment. The *magia* was now a being of unearthly beauty, robed in light. Before her Flaxius forgot—it is to be desired that modern realists would do the same—even the transcendental upholstery.

‘Remarkable Young Man,’ said the beautiful being (pray be it noted by the reader that all the phrases here given are far more poetic in Etruscan), ‘I have brought you hither on important business.’

‘At your command, Daughter of the Most Beautiful,’ replied Flaxius. This was a delicate compliment, according to magic, for it was from a high formula of worship, and was therefore tenderly blasphemous in the genitive. The lady smiled subjectively, not with her face, but in her intonation, as she replied in the ablative absolute:

‘ Know that I was this day what I was, for being what those were who insulted me, and truly in being every whit as base as they.’

‘ This is a kind of poem,’ reflected Flaxius. [A great many of the lyrics of that age were riddles, like some of the songs, and not a few of the novelettes of the present time, to say nothing of Browning.]

‘ I was doing a deserved penance, from which you rescued me. Listen ! I was born of the fairy race, but by long study, penance, and prayer to the Sublimities, rose to the higher order of spirits, beyond which are the minor gods, such as those to whom the great deities assign specialties in nature, or even in mortal life. My protectress was *Thana*, the chaste goddess of the moon, or Diana, and as power was to be gained by renouncing pleasure, I became proud of maiden *virtue*, believing it was a virtue in itself, and not one of the means thereto.’

‘ More and more interesting,’ reflected Flaxius, ‘ And a neat distinction !’

‘ And one day, in my vanity, I insulted one of the beautiful attendants on Turan or Venus, the Goddess of Beauty and Love ; for I reviled a Lasa, or one of the spirits who are attendants on and mistresses of the souls which come from earth. Yes, I insulted her, much as I was this day insulted by the mob. There was an appeal to the gods, and Tinia, the Lord of All, sentenced me to assume the mortal form in which you to-day first beheld me, and to endure the insults of men till I should learn higher truth, and until I should meet with a mortal who would treat me sincerely with true humanity. This I have done, and now I am not only freed from penance, but find myself advanced far beyond what I was,—going in

golden glory ever on. Yet I say, in truth, that I did not suffer once or in the least as a mortal, from the time that I was struck by the great truth in all its branches, that no one should be condemned for being what one is by fate, and that Inferno is not too bad for a prurient prude on the prowl.

‘But to *you*, who were in this my master, I owe great gratitude. By penance and prayer I have accumulated much power which I proposed to devote to advancing myself to higher lives. But it shall go to you in the form of two wishes. I can wait for more and work a while longer. Ask for whatever you can imagine, such as a mortal may require—wealth or power, choose!’

‘Your ladyship,’ replied Flaxius, ‘is decidedly determined to prove that in this world the less a man does, the better he is paid for it. Having been already rewarded a millionfold by the sight of your superb beauty, for what I declare in all sincerity seems to me to be a mere little street incident, in which I casually comported myself as a simply decent man should, I am, of course, to receive further recompense beyond all human conception. ’Tis the rule. So be it! Yet I pray you, most Beautifully Grateful, do not ascribe it to modesty or virtue if I am not extravagant in my desire. I have heard of a man who having been offered a wish by a god, forthwith wished that his future wishes might all be granted. Cunning, that! And they were all granted, so that in the end he became the most miserable creature on earth, and ended by wishing himself to the devil, and got there, as must befall most mortals who get all they want. Now as you, O Beyond-all-Dreams, are inconceivably my superior in wisdom, it occurs to

me that a single wish guided by your sagacity would be more to my benefit than a thousand emanating from my weak mind. Therefore, for a beginning, I wish that your Divine Loveliness would kindly tell me what my second wish should be.'

'There is in that wish,' replied the spirit, 'a combination of generosity, courtesy, and gratitude, such as a first-class god need not be ashamed of. Well, I will choose for you a wish that would suit few men. You shall live on earth, a philosopher, but ever in manly strength and health, as long as you will, and to the end of time if you choose it. You will see and feel so deeply into Nature—as I can well foresee—that the passing away of other mortals, races, or kingdoms, will be but as the passing away of other guests from a hostelry, or as clouds from the sky. For to such as you are, O Humorist! to live on earth or in heaven, amid ghosts or gods, would in the end be all one and the same; you would note it all with curious observation, and be the same unchanged in every age. For to him who has like unto thee attained to seeing things absolutely as they *are*—gods or geese are all one and the same.'

'What a stupendous truth!' thought Flaxius, 'and how beautifully expressed! I could go on listening to this lady till I should grow thirsty—for fame!'

'And they *are* all one and the same,' continued the spirit-lady, 'to him who is honest—which always means generous; they are all one and the same to the upright or charitable. How do you like your gift?'

'I am delighted, O my Eyes, beyond all expression, and now see how wise I was to trust to your higher wisdom. To tell the truth, O Diva, I was

dreadfully afraid lest your grace might bestow on me wealth—I detest business—unbounded dominion, ineffable winsomeness, æsthetic taste—O Rubbish!—gratified ambition—O Emetics!—and power—not being, I trust, a cad. For to tell the truth, I was fearfully afraid of all earthly blessings, and so as to secure the least of evils, resolved to take but one, as I was in politeness bound not to decline your offer of sugar-plums, and therefore choose what it seems best to you to give.’

‘You are, O philosopher,’ replied the spirit, ‘so ingenious in your generosity, that you make yourself almost discourteous. Man, I read your heart, and know that you are no more free from desire than are the gods; for to wish for nothing is to live no more. Now, will I hold you firmly, and give you more, whether you will or not. Thy first wish was no wish at all, O Flaxius; it was but a kindly gift to me to spare my power, and aid me on my road to higher life. Therefore, a wish still remains to thee, and I warn thee that the favours of the gods are not to be lightly cast aside. Therefore, make a wish now for thyself, and look that thou put into it all thy heart, and all thy self.’

‘Then, lady,’ replied Flaxius, ‘since I must ask for Something, I wish to know in what manner I can best show my gratitude to you for all this kindness.’

‘Go thy way for an incorrigible rogue!’ exclaimed the spirit, this time with a divinely genial smile on her countenance. ‘I see that thou wilt never be beaten at this game. Ages on ages hence, when thou may’st take a fancy to leave the world, there shall be inscribed on thy tomb: “Here lies Flaxius,

never surpassed among men or gods in generosity, courtesy, or coolness !”

‘And the gratitude, O Marvellous One,’ exclaimed Flaxius.

‘Thou canst show it best by remaining here as my guest, and regarding my house as a home. When weary of wandering about in the wide world, come here and rest, and ever be welcome. Here no haunting *Hintial* or Spirit of the Shadow can cast a gloom over life ; in these fairy palaces all is peace. ‘But remember, Flaxius,’ added the beautiful spirit, ‘that it is still not too late for thee to express and receive another wish. By the eternal law of the Aesir, this must be done within the fated, favourable hour when a spirit offers it. Opportunity is golden, and I ask it as a favour.’

‘Then, your Resplendent Picturesqueness and Benign Benevolence,’ replied Flaxius, quoting at hap-hazard what he could recall from the Etruscan prayer-book, and grasping desperately in earnest at the first thing he could think of which would be nice to have, or to be, ‘make me an Original Character.’

The Peri of Loveliness raised the two most beautiful little hands which Flaxius had ever seen, and slightly spreading the rosy fingers, struck them downwards abruptly, even as mortals do when they ‘give it up’ in mild despair, and are dead-locked, grassed, or gravelled.

‘I hope I utter no blasphemy against the power of the immortals,’ said the Beautiful One, ‘but I verily believe the gods themselves, O Flaxius, can add nothing to thee as thou art in that respect. O. Tinia, father of the deities, ineffable, overwhelming, and unspeakable Fulminator !’ she exclaimed, with

the passion of a wildly inspired divinity, 'am I not right, and if so, give me a sign, that I speak the truth? My destiny! what *can* one do with such a man!'

Over all Northern Italy there roared such a peal of thunder as the oldest *aruspices* or *lucumones* had never heard before. It rang in Rome, and rolled beyond the Alps. Vesuvius, by fair Parthenopis, answered it with the tremendous peal of an eruption, as Vulcan (termed *Sethlans*, the earthly deity of fire) answered his awful brother of the air. It drove the gods of the fields and roads, the fairies and satyrs, *silvani*, fauns, *dusii*, and all their kind, in terror to the mountain caves and forests. It pierced, like a spirit, to the depths of the darkest caverns wherein reposed the ancestors, and the dead amid the painted vases and mystic bronzes turned over in their eternal sleep; and every statue in the land was found next morning in a changed position, or bottom upwards. The *magi* consulted the *Ars Fulguritora*, written of yore by the nymph Begoe, to translate the mighty peal, for unto them its words were a distinct language. And as they overturned the holy utterance, syllable by syllable, from the dictionary into Etruscan, it read :

'Fear not, O daughter, for thou speakest truth :
That is about the size of it, in sooth,
For well I ween on earth no queerer *cus*
Did ever live than this thy Flaxius.'

[*Cus*, be it observed, is a terminal noun signifying a person of any kind—as *rusticus*, *grammaticus*, *clericus*, and many other kinds of cusses—its use here being a proof of the immense antiquity of the

Sabine Latin version of the original from which this tale is taken.]

Ab hac origine et itinere terrestri illuc profectus est—
‘twas thus that Flaxius got his start in life.’ *Ab hoc disce—*‘learn from his legend this,’ concludes the scroll :

‘Be it a slipper or be she a shrew,
Be civil to women whatever you do!’

FLAXIUS AND THE GOD

‘ Every Divinity—no matter who—
Is but the ideal of an age or race
Which makes its god, though it be not with hands,
Just in the form which it would like to wear.
And every man in this is like his age.’

AGES have passed away since Flaxius found himself one twilight in autumn in the wild Lombard land of Northern Italy. Towering far as eye could see, vast cliffs or mighty peaks sprang up like living forms, with precipiced sides falling gracefully as classic draperies; bold and strange and all unlike the rounded hills and undulating plains of other countries. Before him spread, as if into a steel-blue eternity, the shining Mediterranean; all about him seemed beautiful, cold, and strange as in a dream. The western sky was one even hue of rich, ripe orange turning into brown. Upon a distant headland rose an ancient tower, by which rested a vessel with one long, sloping sail. A chill stole o'er the whispering breeze, and the evening star shone gently forth.

And standing there high upon the mountain, the mystic magian and undying one looked around among the rocks and said :

‘ Here it was that the Fairy, who is so obliging as to rule my destiny, as yonder star is said to rule the heart, bade me come at dated day and hour to

meet with one, whose acquaintance, as she assured me, would prove to be remarkably interesting. Truly with all my utmost stretch of thought, be it in levelled prose or rolling poetry, I can conjure up nothing personal here, or make any spiritual bread out of these stones, but then, 'tis only purblind ignorance which vows that all is nothing which it cannot see. Now, as there is no form near me, and as I can with sorcerer's sight see for fifty miles adown, and all around the land and sea, I opine that he, the beloved personage, to keep the tryst must come here on the wings of thought far sweeping. Light of my Soul, I give thee half an hour !'

But as Flaxius made this last remark, he observed a Cypress plant, about six feet high, with leafage reaching to the ground, a furlong distant on a cliff, was evidently moving from its place towards him, and, as it moved, was growing human in its form. The head became distinct, the shoulders next, then the lower foliage unfolded in a long dark robe.

Like all illuminati—such as you and I—Flaxius drew critical, philosophical deductions first, before examining vulgar details, in these words :

'I wonder, now, whether the seeing saplings waving in the wind did not first suggest to man, ghosts? But this is really a Being. Fairy mine, I did not think that thou wouldst play a miracle on *me*! Thaumaturgy among us is really too bad. But perhaps,' he added, 'it is a fancy of the gentleman himself—habit becomes strict nature with us all.'

As the form drew near him, Flaxius recognised in the face and mien of the stranger, though it

would not be apparent to the world, a Gymnosophist. So they were once termed, whom we should call Brahmins—that is, Indian sages. Evidently the stranger had come far astray into the Italian land.

Now, as Flaxius had passed a century or two of his youth in company with his friend Pythagoras in study at the leading Indian universities, he understood the stranger at a glance. Therefore he addressed him familiarly in Romany, which is a cousin to Hindi, which is a grand-daughter to Sanskrit, and therefore all in the family and generally spoken :

'Latcho divvus prala! Būt mishto hom dikàv tute!' ('Good day, brother! Right glad I am to see thee!')

But the stranger gravely replied in the mother of Sanskrit, or ancient Aryan of the Tertiary period :

'I am of older race than thou hast deemed. I was among the fathers of those who first came into India from the far North, and I speak the tongue which is destined in its descendants to encircle the whole world. And thou, too, knowest it, Flaxius, as I know thee, for we have met ere now, long since, beyond the Ganges, though thou now speakest flippantly, like a mad college youth, in the language of the roads. But thou art only a boy as yet in years, and wilt learn wisdom in time. And the fairy who watches over thee has sent me here that thou mayst have a lesson which will profit thee so far as thou art wise, and redouble what there is in thee, be it small or great, and mend thy flippant speech.'

To which Flaxius humbly and gently replied, in good Sanskrit :

'Few, indeed, O father, are the diamond dewdrops

of immortality which have fallen into my vase from the infinite heaven of wisdom ; barely the flavour of a taste of the Amrecta cup of true knowledge has come to me from the depth of the soundless sea of Truth, and if thou canst add to it ever so little, it will be most gratefully received. I am as one who murmurs feebly in a sleep, mid broken dreams. I pray thee, waken me to life and light !'

'It is not from me, Flaxius,' answered the Aryan sage, 'that thy lesson is to come, but from one nearer allied to thee in that philosophy of life which thou art next to learn. My footsteps wander in the silent paths, far beyond humanity and the visible scope of sense ; thine have not yet trodden all the ways of the world in which thou hast a part. As yet, for thee, there is perfume in the green valleys, amid violets and asphodel ; for thee, birds still sing in leafy trees ; for thee, the lovely nymph amid the reeds still smiles and beckons with a cautious air, and brave men welcome thee with the wine-cup in the weaponed hall ; for thee is yet the ring and the crash of arms, and the joy of battle, and council among sages and kings. All of this I have left far behind me—for it was my fate. Whether to press on through the ages, or exhaust the age ere leaving it, is not a question for us. To every one let his road and ours be plain.

'Now, as to him whom thou art here to meet. Here in this land, as indeed in many others, long ere thy Etruscan ancestors had brought Egyptian and Greek art or culture into their own rude strength and tremendous superstition and faith in ancient forms, there were men who after death became spirits, and were worshipped as gods. Yet even then,

so inherent was earth in their natures, they remained of the world worldly, and existed in that nature which we of India ever aspire to transcend. Among them was one who vowed never to quit this world and human life till he had mastered its last secret.'

'A most original and glorious god, that!' observed Flaxius, 'and one rather to my mind. Was he, think you, square right or round wrong?'

'Being assumedly in his right mind, he did nothing wrong,' answered the Aryan. 'Nay, there is a point to come, in the dim and remote future, where our paths will meet. But, to the god himself! Look about thee, and tell me what thou seest?'

'I behold,' replied Flaxius, after a pause, 'vast rocks, or remnants, as it seems on closer look, of some tremendous architecture of long lost ages, of rudest form, yet worked with giant will, so worn by time and so tossed in confusion that few would trace in them the hand of man. I myself did not at first observe that these were ruins of some massy building.'

'What modern culture would not note,' replied the Aryan, 'has, however, been retained in popular tradition, for the wild shepherd who pastures his goats amid these rocks, or the old crones while spindling in their shade, record, in what has been called the "Gospel of the Distaff," tales of a time when there was a mighty temple in this spot—a marvellous building of high walls and towers, from whose lofty summit men beheld the sun while it was still dark on earth, or, as legend grows in greatness, all night long. This tale their ancestors brought from the icy North, where, indeed, it is true enough in a way, and ever will be.

‘Therein dwelt the god, who had been a mighty man, uniting in himself all that was of the earth earthy, of human craft most crafty, of strength the strongest, of honeyed sweetness the most sweet, of mortal bitterness, the bitterest. He gave himself unto the very life of the life of what the Egyptian Hermes has called the downward-borne elements of God; but suffered not a fibre, a breath of that which transcends life—or what we call the spiritual or divine—to mingle with, or enter into his sphere. Hence, dealing only with material things, he found that all things material do somewhere clash or fail, and that, however high human thoughts may rise, there is always some higher point whence they appear as mockeries and failures, or foolish incompletions. He ended—supposing an end—by seeing in all things that which, beginning as almost senseless fun, and witless laughter in apes and boors, rises to humour and true wit in culture, flits as the paradox o’er many a problem of life, thrills or charms or terrifies as contrast or contradiction in the struggle of forces, appals and bewilders us in the agony and suffering, pain and tragedy of the elements and man, and ends all in death and new birth. To him in all is one stupendous humour, whether in laughter or in weeping, or in the deepest human wisdom—for in all lies *the paradox* always visible from some point to the god.’

‘Verily,’ observed Flaxius, ‘*that* is having a keen perception of a joke on a tremendous scale. And considering that all nature hath as yet appeared to me as consisting principally of conundrums, I should infer that our god will find no lack of work or of amusement for some time to come. Truly, I

begin to surmise that there is more wisdom in the world than the wisest are aware of, and that the greater we become the greater are our jests and the more poetic our *quodlibets* ; yea and that even a pun may be so sublime that a church may be founded on it. It has indeed occurred to me many a time that many a doctrine, creed or law divine, for which myriads of lives have been lost, is all *bosh*, as ye say in your ancient Indian tongue, 'mere noise and nonsense.' Like bricks set in a row on end by children, they only knock one another down in due succession at the last.

'Therefore Humour in its highest and holiest, or most diabolical sense, is the one true *aurea catena*, or golden chain which runs through all things, so far as man can know them. Yes, it is like a tremendous rock which I once saw even in thy native land, O Sage. It overhung the road so terribly that the heart of him who passed under it quaked with fear, but when it was passed, men, looking backwards, beheld that in the sunshine it wore the form of a great grotesque face beaming with winky laughter.'

'Thou dost indeed rise to the occasion, Flaxius,' replied the Sage, with an expression which seemed almost like the reflected, far-away, dim phantom of a pre-historic smile. It was his first for seven hundred and fifty-three years, reckoning from the fifteenth of August, which is the Ascension Day of Buddha. 'Almost thou persuadest me that the god has a convert ready-baked to his hand. But it is past the sunset, and I know that we are awaited. Follow me!'

He led the way along a winding path or easy footway, now beside vast, uplifted stones, now by

the edges of tremendous cliffs, at whose base, far below, was heard the sound of a torrent, like human voices laughing together; overhead leaned, far out, graceful trees or shrubs, like daring girls seeking to look below for coming lovers—kneeling on tufts of waving mountain vines, softly lighted by the stars and rising moon.

The breeze came from the sea to woo the night, and its cool breath was pleasant to the giant-like young Etruscan, but the Indian sage drew his cloak about him, and as he seated himself on a stone said:

‘Yet a few minutes and we shall be before the ancient god. Know that long ago, even during the days of the earliest dwellers in Italy, there was a civilisation which far transcended that of savages, for wherever there is a race with genius there will be work, however rude, to prove it. At that time, the spirit of whom I spoke had here a temple. Then in a later age, when other races such as thine, O Flaxius, invaded Italy, these people, forewarned by divinity, left the marvellous image brought from some Asian clime in which their deity had dwelt, and, walling up the shrine with utmost care, laboured long to destroy all outward traces of man’s work, and fled.

‘Then the god, who had before ever been present in the statue, also left the cave. But once a year does he return to it, to revivify that which was once himself, unto mankind, even as in all countries feudal possessions are held by the tenure of annual presence and the performance of some deed. And the performance to which he is pledged, is to answer to such words as may be spoken to him, which indeed are few and far between, since among the

spiritual and Theosophists, there are not many who care for such inveterate old heathenism, and hard-pressed, material, firm-baked worldliness as his.

‘Thou, O Flaxius, having by mortal virtue won the grace of an immortal *Fata*, or celestial fairy who is well nigh one of the gods, hast had the strange chance of a man who is to be perfected in worldly wisdom, and therefore art sent to confer with him who mastered it in the past. Long it is, I ween, since he ever saw before his shrine such a neophyte as thou art!’

‘And now let us enter!’

Saying this, he pressed aside the boughs and leaves of a dense thicket or copse, finding again a passage, till he came to what seemed to be a bare wall of rock. Here, he tapped thrice with his staff, whereupon a door opened, and they entered a wide-arched hall illuminated by a very soft and brilliant light, whose source was not visible, but seemed to be in the air itself. A single and silent form, that of a youth of beautiful, but strange type, as of another race, led them to the baths, where they found, after their ablutions in perfumed water, fresh linen garments ready for them. They were then taken to another apartment where a meal was spread. It gave no great promise, being simply a cake for each, with wine, which, however, in no wise astonished sages who knew the secrets of transcendental cookery, and of draughts distilled with Rosicrucian skill. And then, being greatly refreshed, the Aryan spoke once more:

‘Thou wilt now behold the god, and I bid and beg thee earnestly, that thou, ere speaking, wilt con-

sider long and very seriously his countenance, following it to the very depths of its expression, and through all the shadows and tones of meaning which it awakens in thy memory or imagination. Now if thou art, as becomes a true student of wisdom, keenly perceptive of the soul in the face—that is, a genuine physiognomist—then wilt thou, with the aid of what I have told thee, know enough to learn more.’

And with this they went into a great hall. At the further end, in a wonderfully quaint shrine, which seemed like a dense swarm of blinking jewels and living gems swimming in gold, was a most marvellous image. It was apparently of some strange creamy-white or ivory-like material, browned or veined by great antiquity into rich dark tones and blending polished hues, as if time had completed on it with unusual care the daintiest part of the hand-work of the artist. One would think it had been made by Keats. In the form itself there was manifest a most archaic rudeness; there was in it nothing of the divine grace of the Greek, and yet it had not the ugliness of the old traditional forms of the Egyptian, for he who made it had gone straight to nature, copying what he saw there without convention. It was the converse of art.

Flaxius bowed low before the form; the Aryan prostrated himself flat on the ground, uttering a fervent prayer in many strophes, burning incense withal, and chanting an invocation. But the young Etruscan gazed boldly at the god, steadily and without fear, as a Norse champion might have gazed at Odin or Thor, had either faced him. And as the mystic light shone on the deeply inscrutable countenance of the Aryan sage and the splendid self-confidence

and jovial air of Flaxius, like an Asiatic pre-figuring of the Roman or of the race predestined to conquer the world,—and finally on the marvellous mystery of the god, the wisest observer might well have thought that even in those days such a trio was without its equal on earth. There they were, even as they are to-day: the transcendental Oriental, the vigorous prototype of the coming Europe, and the obscuring image of the giant Past—a goodly picture for the artist who could do it justice!

And what Flaxius first beheld in the face was the coarse and laughing look, not even of the lowest faun or satyr, but of a boor or clown ‘grinning through a horse-collar,’ such as I have seen in a head of the fourteenth century in an old hall in Herefordshire: a look changing, an instant later, into the expression of a devil, with an unutterable depth of malice and despair, as of lunacy in man. But whether it was the play of the mystic light, or of something more marvellous within, he suddenly saw a new soul in it, as of a higher and more cultured fiend—a Mephistopheles who denied all things and smiled on all; and yet it was the same face, and anon there came insensibly the expression of the sage who, cold and calm, observes all human error and earthly change, like one studying insoluble problems.

‘Now we have come,’ thought Flaxius, ‘to the earliest Greek philosophers, Cynic and Stoic and Epicurean—sunshine on ice!’

And anon it was the poet, seeking his similes and correspondences in nature and man, caring not, so that he found the beautiful and vivid, how contradictory the elements might be.

‘Ha! art thou there, Hesiod—or is it Homer—or Sappho—or seest thou thy singers of the Mahabarata and Kalidasa?’ inquired Flaxius of the Indian. ‘Yes—’tis all the same—the simile and the antithesis—the contradiction and anomaly which point man’s highest poetry.’

But the face was ever the same nor had it changed.

‘And last of all I see the seeker into all,’ reflected Flaxius. ‘He who from the lowest sense of incongruity, as from the deepest agony of passion and faith, from the highest truth evolved by philosophy, as from the whirling million-folded threads of the garment of God, draws only the conclusion of strife and absurd change. The eternal Wheel of the Law, held by a laughing fiend—all is Humour—and thus endeth the first lesson!’

Then he spoke to the god.

‘I perceive that I can see in thee no more, since I have got back to my beginning. Doubtless there are in thee higher phases which I, the mere pupil, cannot perceive. All of us cannot fathom everything. But what I have learned during this past hour transcends all that I knew before, and I must live ages upon earth to master it. Humour is the perception of incongruity and imperfection, of contrasts and errors; the truest humorist is he who sees it with the most philosophy and truth.’

There was silence, and then there came a deep yet soft and solemn voice from the god :

‘Thou hast learned all which I expected from thee—now learn to live in life, and take it as it comes, since gods and men are all subject to the same laws. *Seek* continually. Knowledge is the soil which when

well cultivated yields the grain by which thou canst live. Children, go in peace, I have spoken!

‘He spoke well,’ said the Aryan sage; ‘very well, but not beyond his past. Mine is another road. The true and far-advanced sage, my Flaxius, can by penance and contemplation rise through the ages far above all changes and contradictions of nature and of matter, and pass through the Gate of Nirvana—to eternal and unchangeable peace and happiness. Whether it be, as some suppose, into absorption with the highest happiness, or to pursue new fields of individual actions beyond all that intellect has ever dreamed, I know not, but that he can escape thereby the miseries of change, I *do* believe.’

‘But that is only for one in millions,’ remarked Flaxius.

‘Eternity is long,’ replied the Sage.

‘I think,’ answered the Etruscan, ‘that as all truth is three-fold, there may be yet a third way. What it is I truly do not know, but I will think of it. Meanwhile I have enough to do for many a year, in following out what I this night have learned. Before I endeavour to excel in the higher heavenly mathematics and celestial algebra and transcendental curves and equations, I will first master this earthly arithmetic. Perhaps a few of your sages might find the gate of Nirvana sooner if they would do so. You Theosophists forget that you are here in this world as ants, and that the visions and thoughts of the eagle—however grand and fine they may be—are misplaced in the emmet. Speculations in billions of æons and millions of millenniums and blue eternities are folly for men whose manifest measure of

black and white time is the change of day and night, the course of seasons and the path of years. You narrate minutely what occurred for thousands of Kalpacs to the gods, yet cannot trace your own human history accurately for more than a few centuries. To me it seems that knowledge—like charity—should begin at home. And like unto it, friend, but even worse, do I find your esoteric reincarnation. The gradual evolution of all men through revolving cycles, which requires for ‘complete unfoldment’ a solar system on the seven principles through each of which the soul makes seven rounds, in seven races, and so on through seventy times seven sevenings, with seven times seventy new senses, seasonings, and so on, ere you can get the human being into good form, reminds one very much of the machine depicted by Hogarth. There are in it steel wheels and springs, cogs, latches, levers, eccentrics, valves, and God knows what all—to draw a cork!

‘You reply that Eternity is long, and by that saying you refute yourself. For life seems to be all to him who is in it. And you require man to master, study, understand, and in life live up to a system which he can only comprehend, or do anything with in a million of years. Wherein, O friend, thou art illogical.

‘And yet, O Aryan, I thank thy faith, for the time was not quite lost which I spent in studying it. For even as oysters lead to soup, and soup to fish and good *pièces de résistance*, or beef and game, so do I prophetically foresee that this thy Indian soup of speculation will lead to German metaphysics, which will conduce to the fish of a *Natur-philosophie*, which

will bring man to the English roast beef of Darwin and Huxley, and solid pudding thereunto.

‘And I thank thee for introducing me to this god, in whom I find incarnate the moral aspect of the mere materialism in which I, for the time, live, move, and have my being. Truly, it is not quite enough for one who would fain think that ’tis not all of life to live, nor all of death to die, but it is all in all sufficient for the disciple of Epicurus and Lucretius, which it is well to be for once in life’s journey, wherein we must sometimes stop in queer inns of Hedonism.

‘Now may we in the ages often meet! Farewell until our paths again are one!’

And with this each went his way again into life.

‘*Hæc fabula docet,*’ wrote the great master as a note, ‘this legend teacheth a lesson which may peradventure not be unto all quite so plain as a fly in a milk-pan, or the sun at noon-day, *oculis subjecta fidelibus*, or “before our werry eyes,” as the elder Weller hath it, or as intelligible as one-third of the sermon of Arlotto was to himself—*che n’intese lui*—for which reason, O refined reader, I will explain it to thee! The ancient godkin whom I did interview represents the practical wisdom of life as based on a narrow materialism which sees in all things only atoms and chance, and believes that nature does but carry out things to a certain extent when they fail, or roll the stone up a hill, whence it comes tumbling back on Sisyphus. Therefore his worshippers found in life only contradictions—and paradoxes without end. Now it is true that these abound in life, and are the soul of humour and of poetry, and exist from

laughter up to sublimity in everything material—yet is this crude materialism far away different from that Evolution which I afterwards learned, which goes deeper than atoms, and believes in infinite progress from stage to stage, in ideals, and the ever-advancing power of volitional consciousness or human will. In the course of progress through the ages, paradoxes disappear, or else are succeeded by high and nobler and purer forms of the complex and contradictory.'

FLAXIUS AND ROOSEVELDT

When Julius Cæsar gave the deputies
From Gaul their rights and treated them as men,
All Rome roared out in rage, because in Rome
All foreigners were held as vile and low :
And thus it was that Cæsar showed himself
Most perfectly the bravest of mankind,
And fittest man of all to rule the state.'

Comment by Miss Winifrede Orr, on the following chapter.

'And the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.—*St. Luke*, xv. 2.

THE wise and great Flaxius in his steps from century to century did much to endear himself to the men of the present, who take a pride in their northern ancestry. For when no elegant Roman scholar would have given a rusty denarius to know what was going on in the whole world, north of Italy, our sage made himself intimate with Odin and Thor, not to mention the God Frey (whose name is yet borne by descendants of the old stock), had been favoured by Freya, had read the first edition of the Edda scraped in runes on birch-bark, had suggested emendations in it, and so on. He was a great friend of Olaf Tryggvason, whose true history, and it is a marvellous one, yet remains to be written. And here-and-thereing about, it happened that he came into the Netherlands, where he made acquaintance with King Gambrinus the inventor of beer. But, in fact, it was Flaxius who, having in India learned from Vishnu the art of brewing *Soma*, which

is now generally agreed to have been India pale ale, taught him the secret. And not to digress, I would here note that Bass has his name from Bassaro, a place in Lydia, where Bacchus had a temple, which name is supposed to be derived from the Hebrew *Bassar*, to gather in a vintage, because in those days beer was regarded as a sort of wine, an idea still preserved by German poets, who call it barley-wine. As for ale, Flaxius affirms that it is found in the marvellous myth of Ale-sia, a city of Sicily, where there was a fountain, which foamed up joyously at the sound of music, so that the froth ran over the brim, just as Lager is believed to foam in the glass when students sing. For which the reader may consult Pliny (*lib.* 3), and Solinus. As for the Lager, I have witnessed that miracle myself—and hope to see it again. And it is also true, as it is lovely, that the beautiful, clear Pilsener beer, as well as that of Vienna, will leap up in joyous bubbles when it hears an orchestra play, as ye may see for yourselves, according to Puttuli, if you chance to be present when it occurs! And it is for this reason that the Cup of the Winds, which is before me as I write, a goblet of the tenth century, carved from wood, and undoubtedly a Lombard beer-cup, has on it the four Modes in music, each represented by a female figure playing on a musical instrument, and all their skirts blowing in a high wind, to signify *aria* or melody, which is a pun in wood, even as the Catholic Church is one in stone.
Ergo bibamus!

And while thus up-and-downing in the North, Flaxius came to Holland, which had at that time been but recently taken by the Dutch. Now at this

particular period, or P. P., as a friend of mine used to denote the great dates in the margin of his history, the Netherlands were under the dominion of Siegfried the Dragon-killer (as you may learn from Wagner's opera), who had for a wife eventually the fair Chriemhilde, so sweetly described in the *Book of Heroes* :

'Her heart in beauty burning—a ruddy ruby shone.
The gleaming of her eyelets was like the glowing moon.
She clad herself in roses and pearls as bright and rare :
Yet none came to the maiden to give her comfort there.

She was right fair of figure and slender in the waist,
Like to a golden lustre, naught in her form misplaced ;
Her hands and fingers perfect, each unto either trim ;
Her nails so white and shining, you could see yourself therein.

Her hair was bound in beauty with noble silken twine,
She let it flow a-downward, that lovely maiden fine.
She wore a crown with jewels, and all of gold so red.
Of Elberich the Dwarfing she had in truth great need.

And in that crown bright shining lay a carbuncle stone,
Which even in the palace like a bright topaz shone.
Upon her head the ringlets in glossy masses lay ;
They gleamed as clear and brightly as doth the sun by day.

She stood alone, unheeded, right sorrowful her mood.
How beautiful her colour, it was like milk and blood ;
And through her locks so purely the neck shone white as snow.
Ah ! Elberich the Little felt deep the maiden's woe.'

Then in time her sorrow was relieved, and amid the conflicting jar of legendary songs, it appeared that she married Siegfried. But her great deed was to lay out a glorious and wonderful garden of roses, or Roosevelt, in German Rosengarten, of which Carlyle writes :

'Chriemhild, whose altered history makes such a figure in the *Nibelungen*, had, it would seem, a rose-garden some seven English miles in circuit, fenced

only by a silk thread, wherein, however, she maintained twelve stout fighting men, and these, so unspeakable was their prowess, sufficed to defend the silk-thread garden against all mortals. A good antiquary, Von der Hagen, imagines that this rose-garden in the primæval tradition glances obliquely at the Ecliptic, with its Twelve signs, at Jupiter's fight with the Titans, and we know not what confused skirmishing in the Utgard, Asgard, or Midgard of the Scandinavians.'

Of the great battle of all the heroes of the North about or in this rose-field, I will say nothing. Suffice it to write that in time the fair Chriemhilde had a son by Siegfried, 'though history passes it over, oh,' and this offspring grew up to be a glorious youth, who was known as the Lord of the Rooseveldt, from his patrimony, being often called simply Roosevelt, for brevity's sake. And he was a credit to his highly respectable ancestry, first making himself famous in learning and letters, then in council, holding divers offices, and yet again in a war with Spain, wherein he gained great renown, till in the fulness of time he governed Holland, or had a kingdom therein, which he administered with wisdom and grace.

Now there are some folk who are brave in one way, and some in another; some braving-mad when drunk, and others only bold while sober, or to show off, or to gratify temper; but Roosevelt was brave all round, having not only physical, but in the highest degree moral courage, for he had that of his Opinions, which is the noblest of all. And Flaxius to his great joy observed this.

The king had soon seen in the Sage great wisdom and a genial spirit, and had therefore made of him

a friend. It came to pass one day that as they were riding near the Rhine, they saw seated by the roadside a poor man, of very dark colour, yet one who seemed as if he might be far better than his looks.

‘Whence camest thou?’ asked the king.

‘With the sun whose livery I wear, from the South. I am of the dark races, and was brought here a captive.’

‘What hast thou seen?’

‘I have seen sorrow, and felt oppression, heard curses, tasted bitterness, and smelt the air of dungeons, and all because of my colour, for God knows my soul is white enough, and were my skin the same I should be called learned, and, perhaps, something more. Yet at this minute I am hungry, and few, indeed, are they who would give me food, and none who would eat with me.’

‘By Frey and all the gods!’ cried Roosevelt in anger, ‘come thou with me, friend, and we will see whether no man will keep thy company! For I am lord of all this land, and I swear that this day thou shalt dine with me in my palace, sitting at my table with me, and may Loki and Svanttowit, Teuston, Vith, and Busteric, Chrodo, Swackenhammer, Irminsul, Hela, Hellwolf, Zerneck,¹ and the whole gang, do their worst with me, if I stand not by thee!’

So they went to the palace, and the pilgrim was bathed and clad in seemly garments; and when the horn was blown for dinner, and the band struck up, lo! there sat the dark man at the royal table, and Roosevelt treated him as he did the other guests.

¹ *Zerneck*. It was over this deity that George Borrow came to grief when he ridiculed Walter Scott for making an old Saxon witch swear by him. For the Saxons did adopt Zerneck, though he was the *Cerneboh* or black god of their Slavonic neighbours.

But the dark man behaved modestly, like any other gentleman, conversing chiefly with Flaxius about foreign countries.

'There will be a row about this,' said Flaxius to Breitmann, a northern warrior, who spoke a barbarous Dutch, and who was something of a bard, because he had sung a 'bardy.' He was Poet Laureate.

'You pet all you got on it,' was the reply. 'All de small minds who had rader live in a liddle country dan in a pig von, will pe hoppin' mad. And efery man who has nodding boot a white colour to make him respectable, and a crate many pious beople among dem, will fluke and coorse and damn der Roosevelt; for peing too moosh like de Lord Jesus, who did in his vay de fery same ding. I shall have to sing a song apout dis.'

It is certainly true that what Breitmann (who as a poet was also something of a prophet) predicted, came to pass. For there was great rage all over the land, and people cursed, and 'swore in high Dutch,' and abused their lord for being morally brave and good; and it was noticed withal that everybody in the land who came of a race which had ever grunted and groaned because it had been 'persecuted'—and there were a great many of these—all cried out the loudest against 'the nigger,' to show their social superiority. But the king, knowing that he had done right before God and man, cared not one broken straw for them all.

'Go thy ways, O King,' said Flaxius admiringly, 'for the best and noblest, kindest and bravest man who ever sat on a throne, and had the least fear to do what is right. Others have been of good descent and brave, some again brave and learned, others as

bold and honest, but of them all, thou alone art all, and with it the only one who dared be a friend to the downtrodden and oppressed. Now for this, God bless thee, Roosevelt, and thou shalt be blessed! And even if the future has no more great or glorious deeds for thee, rest content. Thou hast shown more true courage than any monarch before thee ever did, saving Christ, the Lord of all the world.'

Then it came to pass in the year 1901 . . .

But here the chronicle abruptly ends.

History repeats itself.

Now the Laureate kept his word, and made a song, which he sang to a harp, which song travelled from Scheveningen up the Rhine, till it arrived, about a month later, at Cologne. It was thence transferred to Heidelberg by a wandering Minnesinger to Constance, which lies on the Bodensee, as is affirmed in a very ancient ballad, which consists of nothing else but this fact repeated fifty times in different forms, in which it bears a great resemblance to much modern intellectual effort, as displayed in political speeches, sermons, and the like. And from the Bodensee it was colported by divers wandering students and Handwerksburschen through German Switzerland, till one warm day it crossed the Alps and got to Verona or Berne in Lombardy, where I believe it stopped, albeit there is a passage or two in the *Divina Commedia*, which indicate that Dante had possibly come across some rude Italian version of it. And this was the *Lied*, which I have followed closely:

DER NOBLE ROOSEVELT

'It is writ in many a shtory which came from olden time,
In legends full of glory, in many a minstrel's rhyme;

Dot he who acted kindly since history began,
And gently to all people, was der truest gentleman.

And among de very truest of dis kind in der Welt,
As die Rose among de Ritters, I put der Roosevelt ;
For brave in dis, or dat, in deed, is many a king or knight,
But Roosevelt's der only von dot's brave in all dot's right.

Grand in der crash of pattle among de cavaliers,
Grand in der rush of warriors among de breakin' spears,
Vhen Odin to de Northmen his help in glory brings,
Und de Spaniards fly before dem all shkared like avery-dings.

But vhere he show der grandest and rise to der Beyond,
On de oder side of Jordan, above dis eart'ly pond,
Is when he knows he's in der right he's efer at his ease,
Und in spite of all de tyfels, will do yoost what he please.

So Gott be-help him onwards unto a glorious end !
For de trodden-down and lowly efer find in him a friend.
Votefer snobs and copperheads against his name may bring,
Heaven pless dee for dy nople heart, O Roosevelt, my king !

FLAXIUS AND HAMLET

SHOWING HOW THE PRINCE OF DENMARK, WHEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WITTENBERG, LISTENED TO THE LECTURE ON ROMAN HISTORY BY THE LEARNED FLAXIUS, AND WAS TAKEN BY THE LATTER TO A BALL, AND INTRODUCED TO THE FAIRY QUEEN.

‘O valiant Hamlet, and worthy of immortal fame, who, being shrewdly armed with feint of folly, covered a wisdom too high for human wit under a marvellous disguise of want of sense, and in that subtlety found means whereby he did protect himself, and yet revenge the murder of his father long before.’—*Saxo Grammaticus*, Lib. 3.

IT happened once, amid the blaze, the splendour, and the symmetry of the centuries, as they whirled magnificently on—many ere this of ours, yet many more after wise Flaxius had his natal day—that the scholar went to the University of Wittenberg to see what he could pick up in the way of ideas. For, with all his experience and erudition, he was always learning something new, as any man may at any hour in this world school, if he be not too proud to note facts; as somebody’s wisdom hath it in Latin: ‘*Ea est vera nominis existimatio quæ non ex sermonibus, sed ex rebus istis deducitur*’; or, as an Englishman more concisely expressed it: ‘There’s nothing like facts to learn from.’

And being a man of marked, yet modest mien, who conversed in Latin with singular purity, and one who, when he so pleased, could construct his

whole discourse out of nothing but quotations from the classics—or from the works of his auditors, which was even more agreeable to them—he was soon held in great esteem. And having read in public a paper, *De vera Essentia Verborum*, in which he demonstrated from A. Artemidorus down to Z. Zoilus, that words have souls, he came to be regarded as *clericus vel addiscens*, almost a professor.

So it befel one day, when a certain teacher named Brunkenstrophius was incapacitated—owing to fourteen bottles of Rhenish wine the night before—from lecturing, that Flaxius kindly took his place, and read to his class in Roman history, the subject for that day being Nero.

Now, as Flaxius had had the great advantage of having been long personally acquainted with this emperor—to whom he was introduced by Seneca—and had been present by special invitation at the brilliant reception which was lighted by a whole congregation of early Christians rolled in pitch and ignited, had talked with Locusta, and seen the stupendous spectacle of the burning of Rome with an Imperial orchestra of one, and received an estate for exclaiming, '*Artes omnes novit Cæsar!*' and was finally in at the death of that remarkable artist, he had almost as good a conception of the true character of the latter as sundry modern novelists and immoralists, who have so black- or white-washed him by turns that his memory seems to be like the Cathedral of Florence, or a zebra, or a chequer board, or a bad photograph, or what the Liberal and Conservative press in turn declared of G.O.M.—that is to say, an alternation of ebony and ivory, of coal and alabaster, the raven and blanche

dove, or a Prussian sentry-box, or a cup jewelled in niello, or Saint Paul's, or a cardinal's conscience . . .

According to Flaxius the emperor was in himself something such a combination, well nigh beyond all the analysis of our modern moral chemistry, the wondrous product of a monstrous age, a terrible Thought elaborated with agony from a mighty but corrupt world, one who, in the true spirit of history, was more a symbol than a man; mere bronze medal from the iron die of his time. The lecturer could well nigh believe that no Nero, *per se*, had ever existed at all, but had been a mere *simulacrum* or phantom set up in a high place, wherewith the Mighty Powers who rule the world had mocked or lessoned man; a Pharos, or beacon-tower with an effulgent burning-head, standing deeply footed in the freezing-cold, damp, roaring sea—a giant giving light in agony, and warning ships not to approach, and, like old Pharos, fearful in his pride.

There was a kind of daïs or higher range of seats and desks, at which sat only the young noblemen who were studying at the University, and among these was one who, to Flaxius—who was a marvellous reader of men, not only by metoposcopia, or physiognomy, but by all which was indicative of the soul?—seemed to be as far beyond all his fellows as an eagle would be amid the dullest, pettiest featherlings of a barnyard. Yet, though very quietly dignified, he was devoid of that arrogance of rank which displayed itself so conspicuously in every detail of dress, every gesture, and in the very intonation of every word of the aristocracy of that time; for he was truly too much above them to affect even

their superiority—a thing in which the German noble of the present day hath still almost everything to learn, especially in Prussia. For even yet among these good folk, well nigh all the joy of life, and mental life itself, consists in the happy reflection that a majority of mankind are (by law, at least) their *inferiors*; which stupendous idea (it being generally their only possible one) they contemplate even as a Hindu saint contemplates God, to the exclusion of all other conception. This reflection has been concisely made into a law of ethical science by one of their number, an Austrian named Von Mannteufel, in the words, '*Humanity, properly speaking, begins with the rank of count.*'

This young nobleman was, indeed, so elevated in rank that he could well afford to dispense with vanity, since he was heir-apparent to the throne of Denmark. His name was Hamlet, and there was that in his appearance which would indicate—to even a less clairvoyant eye than that of Flaxius—an original character of the strongest type, devoid of the eccentricity which attracts comment, learned in philosophy without pedantry, endowed with a personal grace of manner suggesting natural courtesy and a marvellous observation by a quiet eye—all of which might be seen in him by all. But Flaxius noted in him something far deeper: a soul which, if not yet risen, was rapidly rising above the storm and whirl of all things in life and time, be they great or small, so as to behold in them all the mere passing show of a drama, yet feeling all the time that *in that drama* there would be incidents which would wreck this mere mortal life and wrench his soul with agony. He who has this tremendous dual action to undergo

in life—that of being a true philosopher, yet a great sufferer—will assuredly have a strange foreboding of it, and to such a mind the idea of Nero, as presented by Flaxius, in its similar doubleness, was a marvellous revelation. He had long suffered from that problem which a great poet has expressed by saying that—

‘ Not in that strife,
Wherefrom I take strange lore and read it deep,
Can I find reason why I should be thus :
No—nowhere can unriddle, though I search
And pore on Nature’s universal scroll
Even to swooning, why Divinities,
The first born of all shaped and palpable gods,
Should cower beneath what, in comparison,
Is untremendous Might.’

All of which Flaxius the immortal, who could read the soul in the glance, and who saw that he had before him one into whose essence Immortality had cast its brightest rays, deeply divined. So it came that he lectured to Hamlet alone, rising far beyond the rest of the audience. And, mindful of his man, who, he felt, was thirsting to think, he made good long pauses, which his auditors deemed were to give himself rests to make new bounds.

The lecture was at an end, and Hamlet, by a sign, intimated to his friends that he would fain be left alone. When all were departed, he, with courtesy beyond the time, arose and approached the professor, and said :

‘ Learned master, thou hast touched with such unerring hand the harp-strings of my heart, and drawn from it such marvellous chords that I would gladly have them combined in more coherent melody. Even as a bee in a bewildered flight, driven by the wind, at chance may light upon——’

‘A flower,’ said Flaxius, ‘which gives him rest.’

‘And in which, too, he finds a honey-store, such as he never found in flight before,’ subjoined the prince gently.

‘Yet around which some curling petals close somewhat too tightly for his eager search,’ added Flaxius, almost with a smile. ‘Truly to thee who art born to be a prince among more than mortals, I will gladly lend what aid I can to clear away the tangling, hindering leaves.’

‘Learned master,’ replied the prince, ‘I would first deeply reflect on what I have heard, since I as yet toil slowly after you. And if it be your pleasure, I pray you seek me this evening in my library.’

‘I will be there,’ said Flaxius, ‘with joy.’

Flaxius the Immortal, and the prince who was unconsciously an aspirant for immortality, sat at a table under antique, grotesquely carved arches, before them a flask of Rhenish, and the works of Hesiod and Homer. In the face of the Master there was the calm dignity of centuries; in that of Hamlet the quiet of a summer sea, beneath which tides are working which may break bounds in time of storm. They had long held deep discourse, and during the time Flaxius had penetrated more deeply with every utterance into the soul of the young man. At last, after a pause, the Master said:

‘He who has risen so far as to find a reality in the tremendous action of the infinite in nature, and who has dwelt so long and earnestly on the change of dynasties of gods from Saturn to Jove, of old worlds into new, on man in his stormiest moods and the rabbit sporting in the thicket, birds and clouds

and life still circling on, till all such thoughts are most habitual—has gone too far to retreat. He has advanced beyond his fellows. If he be weak and break down under the stupendous load he will go mad, and readily will men esteem him so, as they do all whom they cannot understand. If he succeed, they may deem him a poet or a god. But the imbroglia is sadly worse when the man is not a hermit, or one alone in life, who can battle freely with his destiny. If he be one who is enmeshed in some dire tragedy with others, which he, being human, must humanly endure and suffer, and yet is always having his wonted glimpses of the infinite, as prisoners catch glimpses of the sun, then he has before him such a battle and a strife as deserve to bend the decree of fate for very pity. Those who achieve victory over it all live for ever. Now know there are two lives beyond the grave: one the vital life which ever was, and can never pass away; the other the life of our great deeds, imperishable in the mind of man.'

'Ay,' replied the prince, 'and I feel in my deepest soul, great master, not only that thou speakest truth, but thou ne'er wouldst tell me this, didst thou not divine by some mystic power, all unknown to me, that I am destined to such warring woe? Worst of all is it for me that I have added into all of this the *weakness* which must be truly overcome, a wax in the bronze which must be melted out, a love of sleep and ease and pleasant dreams.'

'Go on, thou hast more to say,' replied Flaxius.

'Well, this remains,' rejoined the prince, after a long pause, a draught of wine, and casting his glance briefly at the scrolls before him. . . . 'In all

these lives of mortals in the past, who rose by power to immortality, I find some golden glimpse vouchsafed to them of the supernatural, some comforting assurance of beings now invisible to me, of gods, guardian angels—"followers," as my northern ancestors called them, or the beautiful *Fylgia* who flit over the ocean after the heroes whom they protect. Truly, if I could only so much as see and talk once with moonlight fairies and merry elves, or a sprightly goblin, I, being only human, should have some strengthening assurance that life is not all a struggle with mere mortals and matter. Even in so little as what I ask, I should realise that I shall live. Do I speak wisely?'

'Yes,' replied Flaxius, 'there are men dying with hunger whom a crumb may save. This much may be granted to thee. 'Tis little enough. All over doth this outer life an inner life enfold, one of exquisite beauty and grace, as the rough seaweed and grim, ugly moss, and ragged madrepores, and hard crust envelop the exquisitely curved, snow-and-rose-bloom, blushing shell, the only thing on earth which is like in hues to a lovely maiden. Around and about us there circles ever in viewless beauty and undreamed perfume, moving to music all unheard by man, a thronging host of attendant beings; following sweet missions and holy bid-dings; talking in mystic tongues, of which echoes may be caught in the breeze, in the forest, and in tinkling springs or falling fountains. Truly, I forget myself when I abstract my mind an instant towards them from this our earthly sphere. Yes, 'tis but little for thee to ask, who hast before thee such a destiny, to live immortal in a poet's verse!

Yes, I will give it, and with all my heart, and thou shalt see the light invisible, and hear the music never meant for ears, to such degree as a beginner may. I see thee smile—well, be it when thou wilt; but, as thy wont is, thou requirest time to think on what I've said. Go, take an hour. There lies not far beyond the city gate, in a wild place among the lonely rocks, an old and crumbling castle, which all men shun as a haunted place; and in its hall fairies and goblins hold their revelry from midnight till the morning red is seen. Thither together we will wend our way.'

'It might seem marvellous to me,' said Flaxius, as he, with Hamlet, walked forth in the summer night under the stars, 'that thou, O Prince, who livest in the contemplation of greater marvels, who seest the miracle of the growth of flowers and the wonders of the circling universe which amaze even the spirits of earth and air, shouldst crave a mere glimpse of that which is after all only something new and unaccustomed, did I not know how deeply the desire of what is new to him is implanted in man. Yes, it is so deep that he who masters the problem treads on the verge of the Infinite. I myself ——'

But here he paused and said: 'Yonder rises the tower, built, as tradition tells, by a sorcerer who, chanting a spell, with every word broke from the rock a stone, or conjured dust and air to solid blocks, and moved them into place. And 'tis no more than man himself will do in days to come; and none will deem the deed a miracle. Hence it is written in ancient chronicles, *in veterum libris observatum est hoc fieri*, that the building has ever been haunted,

nymphæis et fatis, and by those strange spirits of the elements, whose homes being in the crimson gold of sun-dyed skies, or deep in earth, where marvellous gems and metals abound; or in forests; like the *Silvani* and *Oreades*; or in streams like the *Naiâdes*, have by natural affinity a passionate love for poetry, and all that is rare and beautiful, wild or strange, be it in what form it may. For as nature is not only lovely and comely in her very self, becoming more so the deeper we penetrate her veriest being as *natura naturans*, so is she also in her freer actions often gaily contradictory, merrily and quaintly discordant; jingling bells to her sweetest music, and singing sweet *ritournelles* of violets over grey and ancient graves. For every one of which freaks, be they as mad as they may, there is some echo of a goblin, Flibbertigibbet, fairy, implet, bogle, brownny, pixie, urchin, Puck, Robin Goodfellow, ouphe or oaf, nixey or pixey, duergar or troll, sprite or pigwiggin, sylph or sea-girl, salamander or fire-maid, Heintzelmann or Waldmeister, Kobold or Bergmannlein as here called, siren, satyr, or faunus, lemur or lamia; yea, and thereunto as many more as this outer crust of creation hath manifestations, which in themselves are ideas and immortal types, with a life such as science hath not as yet apprehended, though it will also be clearly known in ages to come. For know, O Prince,' continued Flaxius, with an air which had in it something of the poet and the god, 'that in due time will dawn upon the world a science, of which some of the learned now have not the faintest scent or touch, which after denying and destroying the gods, goblins, and devils, *in toto corpore*, as now believed in, will end by showing them in matter and

in truth, and that in a thousand times more marvellous form than any fairy-tale maker ever fashioned or felt. For little as he knows it, man, instead of leaving the marvellous behind him in remote ages, began, in truth, utterly without it, and is now advancing towards and into it, with giant footsteps. Ah, here we are at the gate of the elfin-castle,

“ which men did raise
 In the ancient giant and goblin days
 When they sat with ghosts on the stormy shore,
 And spake in a tongue they speak no more !”

‘ Now for a season be a child again.’

As they stood at the gate of the silent pile, they heard, far, far away over many a hill and dale, the crowing of a cock, and the faint chimes of midnight from the town, and then the cry of a sentinel owl from the green-tapestried elfin-tower. To which Flaxius briefly replied in a strange utterance of some fairy kind, when the gate opened, and they found themselves in a scene, which would not have appeared quite unfamiliar to any child who has beheld a gorgeous and exceptionally tasteful *féerique* in Paris, or an unusually marvellous Christmas pantomime in London, combining all the splendours of Aladdin’s palace with all the goblinries of Mother Goose, save that *this* was a thousand times more splendid, more varied, more grotesque, and more amazing. And having entered, Prince Hamlet stood by the door rapt in utter admiration at the marvellous art which in ever-changing, never-resting beauty and quaintness, was displayed before him.

‘ The witches have their Sabbath in the Blocksberg,’ said Flaxius ; ‘ the fairies and all their kin hold their own grand merry-makings, but much oftener, being

merrier folk, here and elsewhere. Witches and devils select scenery suited to their taste; fairies conjure up their bright magnificence and airy shows most gladly. In Germany they revel in ancient halls of castles such as this, in imitation of the mortals who preceded them, as is shown by the marvellous legend of the old Count von Hoya.'

'And *that*?' said Hamlet.

'Was only this: that the fairies came to the old count and begged him to lend them his great hall for a ball for a single night, with the condition that he, the master, might be present, but that no other mortal eye should behold the revel. So at the midnight hour:

In they came tripping,
Fairy-maids, elfin-men,
Little and beautiful,
Golden, gem-glittering,
Two-fold or triple-fold,
Ten-fold and twenty-fold,
Till the great hall,
Splendidly lighted,
Looked like the crown,
Thickly bejewelled,
Of a great monarch.

So they danced, as you see. And the jolly old Graf danced with them.

Small was the lady
Who was his partner;
Three inches high.
Often he lost her
In the gay multitude,
Seeking her, finding her;
Often he picked her up
Twixt thumb and finger,
By her small wings,
Even as children
In summer catch butterflies.

When all at once there was a dead pause. The music ceased, the dancing stopped, while from above was heard an awful, scolding, human voice. It was that of the old Countess von Hoya, who having heard the music, she sleeping above, lifted a trap-door and looked down at the spectacle. Truly she was in a great rage to see such a festive scene to which she was not invited. It all died out like an extinguished taper. Tradition says that the queen of the fairies gave the count in reward for his kindness a miraculous sword, ring, and horn, which his family still preserve; but to punish the countess, laid a ban upon her descendants, that there should never be at one time more than one heir of the name, and it has ever been thus as predicted.'

'So in this life even spirits mimic man. A man confirms all things unto himself,' replied Hamlet. 'This is a brilliant scene, surpassing dreams,' he continued, as the elfin guests came pouring in, 'but I note that they are not all butterfly-minikins.'

Which was quite true, for they were of all sizes, from that of smaller humanity or lesser youth, down to the tiniest sprites who hide in honeysuckles, and wear rose-leaves for cloaks. Among them all Hamlet and Flaxius towered like giants; nor did they seem out of place, since in the mien and eyes of both there was the expression of something not of earth or common life, which is never absent from such men, but which here, in the mysterious magic light which filled the hall, coming from no visible source, seemed to proclaim itself with tenfold power.

At the further end of the apartment was a throne of unknown splendour and material, in which were intertwined thousands of strange characters, red and

black like ruby and sable onyx. It seemed as if it might be a fairy antique, ancient of the ages, and on it sat, under exquisite rainbow drapery, a female form, of such ineffable loveliness that Hamlet murmured to Flaxius that he had found in it a new ideal for beauty—it so surpassed, yet was so different from, all he had ever dreamed of woman's charms. Thereupon the queen, for such she was—who heard and perceived all things—looking at them, smiled, and beckoned an approach, when all the small folk parted right and left, leaving a lane by which they went their way unto the throne. And bowing low before her, Flaxius, holding Hamlet by the hand, said in tones of marvellous melody, learned of yore in the magic schools of Etruria :

‘To thee, All-Beautiful !
Type of all Loveliness !
Queen of the Elfin world !
Life of all Fairy Land !
I with all reverence
Bring a young mortal,
Hamlet of Danamark,
One little witting
What immortality
He may inherit,
Shouldst thou bestow on him
Thy benediction !’

To this the Fairy Queen, gazing on Hamlet as with intense interest, in which sympathy and deep pity were most perceptible, replied in tones which might have checked the torrent in its course or called the eagle, wooing him to hear :

‘Well do I know thee,
Hamlet of Danamark !
Seldom was mortal,
Born to such sorrows
Never did mortal

Grapple more bravely
 With a grim destiny
 Than thou art fated
 To find in the future.'

Hamlet, in the same staff-rhyme, but in Danish skald-tone, which was his humble best, replied :

'As to the swimmer,
 A sea-wolf before him ;
 As to the traveller,
 Grimpest bear meeting ;
 Or as the wren,
 With the owl over her,
 Is the foreboding
 Of a great Norna
 Unto the fated.
 But when the Norna
 Is Queen of all Beauty,
 Mingling iron destiny
 With golden compassion,
 Giving the bitter
 In honey well-coated ;
 Gently and tenderly ;
 Little the fated one
 Recks what may happen.
 Mishap and misfortune
 Are meted to many,
 Few among mortals
 Ever escape them.]
 If the All-Loveliest
 Gives him her pity
 He's to be envied.'

Now as Flaxius was the politest man at heart on the face of the earth, while the Fairy Queen was incarnate politeness itself, this lyric, which had such a charming accompaniment of courtesy as went beyond music, made the most favourable impression. And the Sage having, as court etiquette then required, uttered his first words in metre, now expressed himself plainly in prose, saying :

‘Beautiful Spirit of the Strangely Beautiful, who alone givest to poetry the elfin-charm of *Romance*, well do I ween that this young Prince of Denmark is so entirely thy subject, and one so noble in truthfulness, and so true in his devotion to thy charm, that he has not uttered a word of flattery, in saying that the direst misfortune of life seems to him to be but a little thing, since he has gazed on thy face and felt thy sympathy. And truly, unto any on whom the Queen of Faerie and Romance has once really smiled, this world and all its woes need seem but a little thing, since it is perfect assurance of an immortal life beyond. But, I pray thee, make this clearer to him, that he may leave with a lighter heart and be the better able to endure his fate!’

The queen, as if deeply reflecting and as deeply moved, replied in gravely measured, softly modulated voice :

‘Nepenthe soothes the vulgar mind alone ; to the higher soul unfading amaranth brings in time forgetfulness of pain endured, and bestows keenest enjoyment of the glory to come in the far future. Romance and poetry in purity and power can bend the decree of fate, and that boon I bestow on thee, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark! Listen, for I predict that thy life shall be a poem—and in days to come, long after thy earthly sufferings shall be to thee as naught, I will create my greatest work in the Greatest Poet of Romance whom the world will ever know. And he shall sing thy life in his greatest song, and wherever on earth true poetry is loved and known thou shalt be known and loved with it. This can be done and this I swear to do. Thine be the amaranth—I can no more. In proof

whereof I place upon thy arm this golden ring of amaranthine form.'

And as she spoke, all seemed to fade before his sight. Only to the last he felt deeply gazing into his soul with infinite love and sympathy the violet eyes of the Queen of Fairy-land and of Romance.

When he awoke it was early morning. He lay on soft moss amid the crumbling ruins of the old castle—in sunlight, hearing bird-song all about him. By his side sat the Sage.

'He would have thought it all a dream,
Save that upon his arm
Was bound the gift of the Fairy Queen :
Titania's wondrous charm.'

'*Tempus est abeundi*,' quoth Flaxius. 'Tis time for us to go! But, *litera scripta manet*, what is written by fate will come to pass, O Hamlet, my son, and dear and gracious Prince. Breakfast awaits us, and I must think over what I am to say in my lecture on the Emperor Titus.'

HOW FLAXIUS MADE THE FORTUNE OF EADWARD THE GRANDSON OF AEOLFRIC

‘It is wise for youth to bow to age’s wisdom.’—*Norse Proverb.*

‘For truth is one and right is ever one.’—*Spenser’s Faerie Queene.*

IT was in the very old time of merry England. In the days when there was so much merriment among those who were above the line of safety, and so much misery for those who were below it as would have appalled a modern sociologist. When a man who was out of prison, and not positively starving to death, contrived to be happy. When, according to the testimony of all writers from Caedmon down very nearly to Chaucer, there was such suffering from all kinds of oppression among the poor as to make the heart sick to think of it. Out of which very time there has come to us such gay and festive song and chording of harps, twanging of citterns, ringing of goblets, gay hurraing, archery, dancing round maypoles and valentining as to make one thrill with joy to think of it. For the only rule of life then was:

‘Eat, drink, and be merry while ye can,
For to-morrow we’ll perish, be sure, my man ;
Make the most of what fate will lend you,
Then go wherever the priest may send you !’

And it was in the north, at a time when Anglo-Saxon and Danish-Icelandic were beginning to be English, and there was still much sound old heathenism in men's hearts, and witches rode over the midnight sky, while fairies danced in moon-lit rings below—then it was, I say, that the immortal Flaxius paused one fair day on his pedestrian path in Northumberland.

‘A tall spreading forest there he found,
With a woodman at work mid oak-trees near,
The strokes of his axe broke the silence round,
Till the traveller called aloud, “Come here!”’

And he that was called came, and Flaxius looked at him steadily ere he spoke, but with evident approbation and interest. He was a young and lithe but strong and vigorous man, handsome, almost to beauty, in face, with a straight nose and a keen, dark eye, in which there was indeed naught repulsive, but something strange, such as one sees in the glances of uncanny folk who know things of which they do not speak to their neighbours. His dress was but little superior to that of the ordinary peasant, but there was something in the manner in which it was worn, as well as in the bold mien, and almost graceful bearing of the youth, which indicated rank or ‘birth.’

‘God be with ye!’ said Flaxius to the woodman. ‘I would fain rest here a while and chop a few words with thee, so thou be not too busy with thy chopping of wood.’

‘Nay,’ replied the youth, with a quaint pursing of the mouth, ‘many strokes fell great oaks, and many words bring merry jokes; while as for the resting

never yet saw I the time when I would not pause to listen to those who are wiser than I am :

“He who listeneth to eld,
Himself shall be in honour held.”

As my grandfather was wont to teach me with many a brave tale to prove it.’

‘Thy grandfather,’ replied Flaxius, who had meanwhile studied his face more attentively, ‘was Aeolfric Adelwit, whom men called the learned and the traveller.’

‘By Freia!—I mean the Holy Virgin!’—exclaimed the youth astonished and delighted, ‘thou art either a wizard or one who knew him, and it may be,’ he added, lowering his voice and looking round suspiciously, ‘perhaps a bit of both, for my grandfather who is now, I trust, in Valhall among the heroes and sages—I mean in heaven among the saints—was called a sorcerer by the fools hereabouts.’

Flaxius smiled. Each looked at the other with one eye closed ; the Sage shutting the right, and the youth the left, which is the sign by which the initiated of all grades recognise one another, and the one generally used by Mahatmas and others in the Karma business—as it was by the augurs of yore—when there were true believers present or under discussion.

‘I was even about to take my noon-day rest,’ said the woodman, ‘and if it please you to partake my poor meal—thin cider and bread and bacon—I would it were for your sake wine and a capon!’

‘Knowest thou, O Eadward, grandson of Aeolfric,’ said Flaxius solemnly, ‘that whoever made a wish

in that moment past—at that special position of the planets—but unwittingly—obtained it. Behold!’

And saying this he opened the basket which the youth had taken from under a thicket, and opening it drew forth a large cold roasted capon, a manchet of bread, and a mighty flask, with fruit.

‘By the divine banquet of the boar *Sahrimmir!*—I mean the Holy Supper!’—cried the youth, ‘thou hast come in a lucky hour to get a snack, O blessed traveller!’

‘Therefore,’ exclaimed Flaxius, producing a great silver goblet from his pack, which he filled from the flask, ‘therefore, O my son, *drink!*’ And just then the sunlight catching the stream awoke in it a wide-spreading, ruddy gleam, and his whole face, yea his very form, seemed to be bathed and steeped in ruby, ruddy light, as a piece of red glass in a cathedral window. And so he looked more like a glorious Bacchus, or merry Jupiter, transfigured and idealised into a gay glory in a sun-set sky, wherein the early stars were piping merrily a roundelay for vespers, and the clouds like fauns did cluster round to hear.

‘I have seen my grandfather, by Saint Eadward!’ said the youth, for once getting in a Christian swear successfully, ‘draw good ale from a hole bored in a beech-tree, which was thought to be a wondrous sorcery—I meant miracle—by the folk hereabout. But he never managed such a tap as *this,*’ he exclaimed, as he took a pull, which might have half emptied the Gialahorn, and would have excited the envy of the *Hornbruderschaft*, or Hard-Drinking Brotherhood, founded by the great Bishop Johann von Manderscheit in the castle of Hoh-Barr.

‘And by Odin who was fed on wine alone!’ (here he balanced the religious equation), ‘and like his holy cup, it refills itself!’

‘I bestow it on thee, Eadward, grandson of Aeolfric, for thy grandsire’s sake,’ said Flaxius; ‘and it shall remain full, I swear, so long as thou remainest an honest man, a true kind heart, friendly to those in need, and a good, valiant, joyous drinker and *bon compagnon*. *Waes hael!*’ he added, taking a draught which was indeed *pari passu* with that of Eadward’s:

‘Like and like do gladly greet,
Same with joy the same doth meet,
One good turn deserves another,
Therefore drink with me, O brother;
Even as in days of yore,
Commodus, Rome’s Emperor,
Drank his boon companions dumb:
Exsuperantissimum!’

‘*Trinc hael!*’ replied Eadward, with a look of deep, steadfast, honest gratitude. ‘And as I cannot speak my thanks, O my greatest benefactor, therefore do I drink them!’

Nor was the young Norse-Saxon, as he said this, far unlike a jolly troll or faun himself, for the glowing golden red of sun- and wine-light shone over him and glinted in his hair, which was like waves of topaz, hanging over his eyes and rolling down his shoulders like a tufted oriole or aureole.

‘When autumn browneth wood on hill,
And the nights are growing chill,
Then upon ye wagon strong,
Ye see caskés borne along,
Black and foul without as sin,
Full of wine and ale within;

Red fire wine and golden ale,
Where from many drinken hale,
With merry song and minstrelsie :
As I do drink, all-heart, to thee !'

And he who had peeped into that shady dell on that summer day and seen the pair, amid green leaves gay, with the wondrous wizard *aura* or rich flood of wine-light all round them, as they caroused and sang, would have verily believed he saw two joyous pagan sylvan gods who, hidden well away behind the age, had met to live the gay old times again.

'And now tell me, Eadward,' said Flaxius, 'to a hair, how it goes with thee in life?'

'My grandfather, as thou knowest,' replied the youth, 'was learned, and had travelled in many lands. He went to Norway, whence he never returned. It was said that when King Olaf Tryggvason assembled all the wise men in the old heathen religion in a house to which he set fire, and in which they were burned alive, my grandsire also perished. And it was a cursed deed, whoever did it. Something of Latin and other lore I learned from my grandfather, who bade me keep it ever a secret, saying that "he is a fool who shows his lore to any save to his superiors therein." But what land my grandsire left, my father lost, so that all I have now is a field and a wood and mine own arms. Yet with some wit, and selling and trading cattle, I keep my home, truly in no great style.'

Flaxius mused and said, 'I knew thy grandfather, and though he was not far advanced as a magian, yet he had fairy blood from distant strain, and he was, above all things, a good and honest man. And

it is among us a duty to aid the descendants of all such men, when they are deserving. Now I will help thee to help thyself; but note well, Eadward, never in thy life didst thou so need every virtue as thou wilt need them now to succeed. For this is the usual secret of rising to Fortune. Some friend puts our feet on the first step of the ladder, or guides us to it, but we must climb the rest ourselves.'

'Something like this,' said Eadward, 'did I once hear from my grandfather :

'“Look well round thee with thine eyes,
Where'er thou art, if thou wouldst rise ;
It is not by a single flight,
But step by step we gain the height.
So up the tree the emmet goes,
Even as Rolf the Giver rose.”'

'Well sung,' quoth Flaxius, 'and pass the cup! Now take this dried leaf.' He gave to the youth a doubled strip of parchment, like a thin book, in which was indeed a leaf.

'To-night or to-morrow go, bathed and fasting, to bed. Then eat this leaf and note what thou shalt dream. Do exactly to a hair what thou mayst be told to do—nothing more nor less. After that all will depend on thy own good sense, courage, and kindness. And when one year shall have passed by thou wilt see me again, to render count of all that thou hast done.'

So they parted with kind words, the youth to try his fortune, and Flaxius, like Odin, ever onwards to the North.

A year had passed, and the Immortal Sage sat in a wild and adventurous-looking place, deep buried

amid lonely woods and cliffs, by a headlong torrent, before the Odin-stone, a strangely shaped rock, seeming like a Druidic megalith, through which there was a hole of a foot in diameter. It was a striking object, and Flaxius well knew it had a tale. For he had been there and then.

He heard the trampling of a horse in the woods. He looked up and saw a magnificent steed, on which sat a knight in splendid attire. The rider dismounted; it was Eadward; and the two embraced.

'Yea, I have the flask, and it has never run dry,' said the youth, producing it.

'That tells a good tale,' replied Flaxius. So they filled and drank. 'And now let me hear the details.'

'Make spede is a good rede,' replied the knight. 'This is the story which I set before ye.

'As you bade, I ate the leaf, and went to bed. And in a dream there came to me a white lady or a *Norna*. Such beauty did I never see before. And she said, "Eadward, grandson of Aeolfric, go tomorrow to the Odin-stone, even where we now are, and watch for one hour. Then do as thou wilt." Word no more spake she, but vanished, and I awoke.

'So I went with my cross-bow and knife to the stone. And here I watched for one hour, yet I saw nothing. Then, as I was about to go, I saw a strange thing. For there came creeping through the hole in the stone a fox. And such a fox I never saw before, for it was of a beautiful tawny, soft, golden colour; and on it was a large black cross. And though I was in awe, Something—it seemed like a voice—bade me slay it. I did so, and skinned it, and wrapped the skin and put it in my bag, and went my way.

‘ Now there is—it may be half a day’s walk from here—a rock on which Ulf the Dane, in olden time after a great battle, had carved the image of a wolf, with runic knots and letters, very curious to behold, and there I paused a while to rest. And, anon, there came to me a man, an outlander, as I weened ; but he pleased me, and we held discourse. He was not rich of apparel, but he had this horse here, and a better I never saw ; for truly, by Sleipnir!—I mean by the White Steed of Death seen by Saint John!—there is not its like in all the land.

‘ So we talked, and I gave him of my wine. And we spake of elves and wizards and dreams. And then he said, “ I will tell thee a strange tale ; for indeed it was a dream which brought me hither, but, I fear, to little purpose and no good, as the troll said of the long talk which ended by his being turned to stone.

“ And this,” he said, “ is sooth and truth.” And he sang :

“ Unto King Ulfbrand
 Thus spake the wise man,
 He the deep learned
 Servant of Frey :
 ‘ Danger is over thee,
 Wild screaming war eagle
 On the moss-grown tree,
 By the white cataract,
 Calleth on death to thee !
 And the claw of the bear
 Has scratched runes on the beech-tree ;
 And thy realm will be lost
 Unless thou winnest
 The skin of a fox
 Of colour pale golden,
 With a black cross.’

“ Now the king was sore afraid, and offered his

daughter to any of his nobles who could win him the prize. And I, with small hope, asked a witch, one whom I had greatly befriended—yea, saved her life and given her shelter. And she studied her spells seven days and nights with great pain, and then bid me obey my first dream. And I dreamed that I should trust in and abide by a wolf for three days. And coming here by chance I heard this rock called the Wolf; and so at hap-hazard here I have remained, but nothing has come of it, and I fear me that nothing will.”

‘Then it came into my mind,’ said Eadward, ‘hearing this, that I myself should go to King Ulf-brand and win a great reward. And yet again that this would be foul play to the man before me, and that thou, Flaxius, didst bid me to be generous and true. So I prayed in my soul to all the gods.’

(‘And a sweetly-mixed mythology thou hast, my dear boy!’ reflected Flaxius.)

‘And then said to the man, taking the skin from my bag: “Is not this what thou seekest? Take it in God’s name, for I believe it should be thine.”

‘Then he turned white and red for joy and amazement, and said:

“I will not haggle and cheapen with thee like a pedler, for ill fate befalls the man who is mean in buying such things. All that I have in this world, save my land, is this horse and ten gold pieces and I give them to thee, and I would I had more.” So I took his horse, but I gave him two gold pieces for his journey as fare-gold, and so he went his way.

‘But I rode on, unthinking and wondering whether I had done wisely, yet hoping hard as did Gautrek when he fought the bear. When, following

a road, I came upon a horse which had been hard ridden, with bloody sides. It seemed to be dying, and yet anon, a furlong further in the woods, I found a noble knight, lying by a brook, who seemed in as evil case as the horse, for he was sore-bruised and could hardly move, and barely speak.

‘Then I asked him what it meant and he replied in pain :

“For two days I have fled before a band of foemen who will be here anon. And they seek my life.”

‘Then I gave him to drink from thy flask, O master, and verily it was a marvellous thing to behold how it revived him. For he rose up and said :

“Had I thy horse I might even yet escape. There are men who would fight thee for it, but thou hast, I think, saved me with thy wine and I will do naught in dishonour. But if thou lovest God and hast man’s faith in truth, I pray thee lend me thy steed, and it will be no loss to thee.”

‘As he spoke I heard far away a sound as of a mountain brook, and I knew it was men riding at full speed, and as it became like a clatter of hail and wind, I cried :

“Take another drink of wine and mount my horse in the names of Odin and Christ, and ride for thy life!”

‘And he did, but paused to draw a ring from his finger and say :

“Three days’ ride to the west lies the castle of my father the Earl of Ellaborne. If thou canst, carry to him what is in the mail on my horse. Show him this ring, and repeat the word Truth three times.”

‘ And with that he was off like an arrow and he had good cause to ride, for ere I could have counted a hundred, there came a band of riders fierce as wolves, who asked me if I had seen a knight pass that way. Now they had not seen the foundered horse, for they came by another path. And not being minded that they should slay the knight, I delayed them while I could, giving them to drink, and then showed them the wrong road, for between a lie and a die, or a man’s life, there’s short choice.

‘ Now when I returned to the horse, I, being somewhat learned in such matters, found him in better case than I deemed. And having poured wine down his throat, and cared for him, and given him rest, he was soon in good case to ride. And there was in the mails much gold, and certain parchments which I had lore enough to discern were great state matters for the king, and I saw that I had come into affairs of life and death for all the land.

‘ And minding the proverb: “ He must be a thin blade who would slip between great stones,” I went by the loneliest ways, in dark valleys and woodlands wild, till I got to Ellaborne Castle. And there was mourning and all were in dire distress, weeping and heart-sunken, because the old lord had heard his son was slain. But when I arrived with the horse, which was known to all, there was mighty to-do, and great questioning, but I spoke word to none, till I was brought before the great earl, and it was pitiful to see how broken and sorrowful he seemed.

“ And thou hast come to prove to me that my son was truly slain, hast thou not,” he inquired, “ since thou hast brought his horse?”

“ Nay,” I replied, “ by Odin and Frey who brings

fortune! I know he escaped alive and well, for when I last saw him he was galloping away on a safe road, mounted on the best steed in Northumbria, with his pursuers on the wrong track.

“Man!” cried the earl, “if what thou sayest be sooth, and if thou didst aid him to escape, and saved his life, then, by God’s glory, thou shalt have castle and lands—if thou canst prove it.”

“For the proof, O my lord,” I answered, “here are the papers and gold.”

“Ah, the papers!” cried the earl. “By the splendour of the Virgin, though I love my son better than my own life, I had liefer he had died than that those papers had been found by the enemy. What is thy name?—Eadward—know that this day thou hast saved England!”

“The proof, my lord,” I said, as I gave him the ring, “is this—and the words, *Truth, Truth, Truth!* And know of a truth, for I will swear it in any shrine, that I did not save thy son’s life for gold, or fee, or aught promised or hoped for, save the price of my horse, nor would I have stuck at that to keep a goodly knight from being murdered.”

“True as gold art thou,” said the old lord, “and of good blood, for now I know thou art the grandson of Aeolfric, who was noble, but poor as he was learned.”

‘Then he heard the whole tale from me and said:

“Thou hast this day built up the fortune of thy house. And if the king do not raise thee to honour, I will.”

‘But the king treated me nobly, and the end thereof was that I am a belted knight, and lord of

castles and broad lands, for I went into the war, and fate favoured me, and now I have wealth and fame. And I have wedded a niece of the Earl of Ella-borne, whom I love better for herself than for her possessions. All of which, Master, I owe to thee; and thanks are all I can give to such a mighty master of fate as thou art, but if I could give thee my life I would.'

'I believe thee, my son,' replied Flaxius. 'But what became of the young earl?'

'He saved himself, and we are now as brothers. Yea,' he continued with a smile, 'to him alone have I confided the holy secret of the Miraculous Bottle.'

'God-a-mercy,' exclaimed Flaxius; 'tis well there's not a headache in a hogshead of it, else I trow ye had topped yourselves into Hela, or up to Valhall. To fancy two young Norse-Saxons with an unlimited well of wine is terrible!

'But, let us drink!'

'*Hæc fabula docet*—this fable teaches,' annotated the master, 'a marked moral lesson, which is greatly needed at this present day, and which no man has as yet taught. It befell about thirty years ago, when people began to doubt the ancient doctrine of so much pudding here on earth for so much piety, always punctually paid, that divers young scapegraces of the press, who wished to appear, as Verdant Greens always do, interestingly wicked and sceptical, began to write *comicas fabulas* or merry tales, wherein the little good boys all came to grief; as, for instance, how Master Benjamin

Benevolence gave his penny to an old nigger and earned a whipping from his mother for so doing.'

These writers left out of sight the great fact, that, because there may not be a Moral Providence which keeps a book account to a farthing with all mortals, it still by no means follows that there is no decency, honour, or honesty, or moral retribution left among mankind, as their immensely funny tales would lead the heedless to believe. For, bad as this world may be, there are still gentlemen extant, in dealing with whom the current moral standards of Mark Lane, Houndsditch, Wall Street, the Stock Exchange, and similar dens of sharps and sharks may well be laid aside. There are still men who reciprocate generosity with generosity, and the 'devilish shrewd' fellow is to them a natural object of aversion. Because they know that he who cannot be *done* will infallibly *do* his best friend in the long run; and the man who is cheat-proof is a miraculous exception if he be not a cheat himself. In short, that it is more creditable to be taken in than to take others in, the which statement, when made by me to a young lady from Toronto, was received with the astonished remark, 'Well, that *is* a new idea!'

Now it befell the young hero of this tale, or Eadward, to have to deal with only honest or honourable men, and he did exactly what was right under every circumstance, the result being that he was promptly rewarded, showing that virtue is not always punished, as current literature inculcates. And if there were one hundredth part of the pains taken to teach youth the vast superiority of honour to wealth, which there is to stimulate them to acquire the latter, then we should indeed find far

more gentlemen in the world, and, in due proportion, due reward for decency. And there is many a millionaire who would give half his money to be a gentleman, a man of true honesty and nobility of soul; but there was never yet one who was truly of the latter who would exchange aught with the former. For whatever the vast multitude of howling cads may think, the gentleman is the superior in that in which he *ought* to excel; and this superiority or moral mastery is better worth having than carriages, opera-box, and a fashionable family,—who wish you were dead for your money.

And this lesson—that there may be circumstances in life when the sharp game is not the best, and when the very shrewdest would come to grief, unless guided by natural generosity and nobility—deserves to be deeply studied by the world in general, and sharp Americans in particular, to judge by my personal experiences of both.

And I would that the novelist and literary man, and all who write for the public, would teach this thing in spirit and in truth, if they can with real sympathy, and not go on for ever as most—ay, the very utmost of the most do—preaching it in a formal, listless, ‘be virtuous and you will be happy’ way, while they depict the advantages of wealth and the merest mammon varnished with fashion and style, with all the gush and fire and power of art which they possess. But a book written with earnestness, setting forth *genially* that *honneur passe richesse*, is as yet among the curiosities, yea, the *rariora* of literature. There is indeed no lack of authors who say this thing, and who think perhaps they mean it; but they do not send it home to the

heart, nor prove it, nor illustrate it, so as to awaken in the mind of the reader a deep sympathy for honour as compared to wealth. No, not one, as they should and perhaps could do.

For it does not occur to you, O dearly beloved, that all these infinite scenes of flirtation in Belgravia or Cameliadom, showing how She would, and then wouldn't, and then was *incomprise*, and anon capricious or top-lofty-minded, or interesting and mysterious-miserable, and how He, *pauvre malheureux!* with his gnawed moustachios and dreadful devotion, are all nothing but the direct results of too much money and its consequent idleness or *ennui*. And the other ways of plot-making, and interesting the reader, are, with few exceptions indeed, all cakes from the same dough. Therefore am I reminded of the French author's recipe for a novel: '*Commencez toujours avec un million.*'

And as it seems to me that literature for the multitude can hardly sink lower than it has done into this swamp of wealth of late years, I have hope that it will ere long begin to rise.

FLAXIUS AND ASMODEUS

Out of mere mischief and mockery grew evil, even as Loki from playing boyish tricks became the devil. To do evil is one thing, to study and understand it is another, but in all ages men have confused the two.

'TWAS on a Syrian summer afternoon, therefore a warm one, that Flaxius sat in the silent solitude of a ruined city of most ancient days, in Midian, a place wherein the satyr has not even yet met the English tourist, nor the Egipani, or demons of the lonely wildnesses, been called to stand and deliver statistics to the German *savant*.

He sat on a wedge-inscribed stone, about a young bird's flight from what had been of yore a purple-lined palace of sweet sin, but so tremendous in its majesty, even in decay and decency, that the sternest Puritan who ever iconoclased a cathedral would have thought twice ere ravishing this House of Baal.

'Beauty,' said Flaxius, 'may be its own excuse for being—very naughty—but grandeur, even when touching in its old decay, is more than an excuse; it is a vindication for the sins, however great, of all who are possessed of it. And they were great in glory and splendour! How great the men were who dwelt here in the olden golden time! and how little idea has any man on earth in this age of small things, of

what it was to live in greatness, though it were in great delusions.'

As he said this—'twas in the first dimness of twilight—a breeze began to stir the palms and he heard the hoot of an owl, which was re-echoed far and far away by the monotonous and much more unmusical song of some Arab peasant at his plough.

'I would like to know,' quoth Flaxius, 'whether the song of the owl portends the death of that *peasant*, or the song of the peasant the death of the owl? Methinks the owl has the worst of it, for the ploughman hoots fifty per cent. more horribly. Now, of the nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine divinations invented by Kai Umarat, the first of the Magi, and first born of Adam, can I not find one here at hand to settle the weighty question?'

As he said this, while idly digging in the sand with his staff, he struck something hard, which shining, seemed to be of bronze. The sage picked it up and found he had unearthed an axe of the richest and deepest green *patina*.

'Just the thing,' thought Flaxius. 'Thou comest, as Germans say, "unto the call." It was by Axiomancy or the balanced axe that the ancients were wont to decide a question—halfpence to toss not having been then invented; and I can bear Pliny out in his assertion that the game was extremely fashionable. In neolithic days they drew a circle, bisected it with a line, put the *kelt* in the middle, and made it spin, inferring from the way it pointed when at rest whether Yes or No had been vouchsafed. The thing still exists as a little game among American Red Indians. They spun on their axes, *unde nomen derivatur*. The Romans hung the hatchet with a

cord ; and if I remember aright, Francesco della Torre Biana¹ declares that the fall of Jerusalem was thus predicted. I wonder who predicted it ?'

Whether it was from the ground, or the tombs, or the ruins, or the great palm-tree was not apparent, but there was heard a hollow sound like no earthly voice, but a sound as of wings. There was a mocking tone in it which said :

'I, with that axe which thou holdest in thy hand.'

'And who in the name of Desolation art *thou* who dwellest here in solitude ?' inquired Flaxius.

And the voice replied :

'Aschmodai.'

'What! Asmodeus, the Devil on two Sticks! Well, old friend, I was a fool to put the question, for I now remember (and Wierus has said it) that thou art the demon of all games and gambling. I would fain see thee again. What ho, *Chammadai! Sidonai! Aschmodai*, appear! In the name of thy master Am-oimon!'

'Thou forgettest,' replied the Voice, more mockingly than before, 'that according to the *Pseudomonarchia Dæmonum*, he who invokes Asmodeus must stand firmly on his legs and call loudly.'

'Well,' replied the Magian, 'I am seated firmly *sur mon séant*, which will do just as well, *sans cérémonie* among old friends, and since thou hearest me it is loud enough. Come forth, I say!'

And, lo! there came forth from the doorway of the ruined temple an unearthly form, in appearance awful and appalling, but so strangely mingled with the grotesque, a demon with the laughing nightmare, that the wisdom of this our age,

¹ *Epistola delict. sive de Magia*, lib. i. cap. 24.

and all its art of pen or pencil would have failed to depict it.

It paused in silence, seeming like a statue, and when the Magian himself spoke, it was not in words but with Thought to the arch-demon of delusion and of mockery :

‘I see thee as thou art, O Spirit, who wert once mighty to impose on man in so many forms, O stupendous scarecrow of the past, and its jester withal, for the day is wellnigh gone by when mankind at large can grasp thy paradoxes ! Yea, they are rapidly becoming a vexation, or a bore, or a trifle, as the idol of the past becomes the nursery toy of the present.

‘Truly, there was a time when Dante and Milton and many more were, to every word, living truths for all who read them, and the form was animated with the idea. Now, the Inferno burns no more, Pandemonium and Theism and Satan are all mere senile fables. What remains is the art of the poet—nothing more—a beautiful, petrified figure—very beautiful—but—dead. And thy spirit, O Daemon, in its best meaning, still lives in Aristophanes and Shakespeare and Chaucer, and Rabelais and Villon ; but the comprehension of it is dying—dying fast, O Daemon!—and ere long they too will be petrifications, wearing indeed the outward semblance of what they were, but from them life will be gone. Men think that they still enjoy the poet in spirit and in truth, but what they really enjoy is only their own criticisms and sense of vain intelligence—and with *that* the signs of death begin. For where intelligence and self-knowledge awaken, feeling for that which is without us ceases. It was never meant that man should

enjoy at once the two extremes of pleasure—even as the Catholic moral casuist determined that man could not combine the extreme of passionate love with the holy sweetness of relationship. Yes, the humour and absurdity, and wild contrast which was the deepest problem in human nature, become before criticism a poor shadowy thing. And thus endeth the first lesson. Let me look a while longer into thy eyes, O Daemon, and find a second.'

And yet anon to Flaxius, as he gazed on the form, it was as if he were looking through some wondrous arch into a Vanity fairy-land, and, advancing, saw at every step newer and stranger arches, richly and wildly adorned; through which, as in a marvellous vista, he beheld Infernos, Paradises, Fiddler's Greens, Edens, Tom Tiddler's grounds, convents. These he knew were lupanars, witch-burnings at which holy men sang hymns to God, martyrdoms for smoke, or the toss of a farthing, millions killed in battles for quarrels about things which had no existence, men and women tortured to death for not believing in nothing but a farce—ages following ages, all mad with lies against Nature. And busy in it all was the spirit Aschmodai or Asmodeus, whose business it is on earth to turn chance to mischief, to inspire all the manias and follies and delusions which make men fools in every way, and awaken in them vanity and error. And it was no wonder that, as he beheld him, something like a vision or a song swept through the soul of Flaxius. For this was He

'Who grappled once with mighty Solomon,
And cast him from his throne, and then in turn
Was fettered heavily and made to work
On the great temple of Jerusalem,
To which he gave its last magnificence

Beyond the monarch's hope, yet jeered at all ;
 Yea, at his chains as at his victory ;
 And who, as he was borne in fetters thus,
 When all men deemed him sunk in deep despair,
 Burst out a-laughing. "Wherefore art thou glad?"
 Inquired a sage. He answered, "Lo, I laughed,
 Because I saw a conjurer in the street,
 Who promised unto all his dupes to tell
 Where buried treasure lay, yet never knew
 That such a treasure lay beneath his feet,
 Even as he spoke during his conjuring."
 He too it was of old who tempted Job :
 Nay, there are Rabbis who maintain to-day
 'Twas he who as the Serpent tempted Eve,
 Not out of evil but from mockery,
 Deeming the Tree and all a mighty joke,
 The farce primæval, out of which has grown
 A thousand-farcèd series which men call
 The History of Man—which were indeed
 A mighty jest to devils, as the frogs
 Were to the boys of old—and might be too
 Unto the baratrachians, were not
 The pebbles which are cast, so sharp and large,
 Yes, in a thousand times ten thousand forms,
 As mocking devil, or as god supreme,
 Asmodeus is known unto the world.'

'Do not forget,' said Asmodeus, 'my last—albeit my weakest and most stagey and shallow incarnation—the Mephistopheles of Goethe. Yet he made me say one good thing, when I call myself, "*der Geist der stets verneint*." Do you know what *verneint* means?—for if you do, you know more than most folk.'

'I opine,' said Flaxius, 'that it means "denies."'

'That, and something more,' laughed Asmodeus. '*Verneinen* meant, of yore, also to enchant, conjure, bewitch, or humbug. *C'est mon métier*, I cast a spell on every work of man, and make thereof in time a mockery—all mockery is denial in the end—denial is the bringing all to naught.'

'Truly, from thy point of view thou hast seen

rare jests in thy time, Aschmodai,' said Flaxius. 'A history of the world, written by thee, with comments, would be amusing reading—as would the review thereof in the *Presbyterian*—and I could find it in my heart to wish a plague on ye both, did I not know that there are some grains of truth between ye.'

'Ay, I should catch it hot beyond a doubt,' replied Asmodeus, 'for the less intellect a man has the more he believes in it, and is therefore the more furious with those who mock the sublime wisdom in whose army he is a corporal. But what thinkest thou, Flaxius, of Thought?'

'I read not long ago,' replied the Sage, 'an essay by a she-philosopher, who said that as we ever deeper go into the subtlest mystery of things, the more impossible it still becomes *not* to perceive an action as of mind, working co-relative with natural law. The good girl left out of sight the small fact that thought and natural law may be one in Nirvana. It is a marvellous, apparent law that man is not allowed to solve the problem as yet; could he do so he would settle down into superstition or atheism—both unprogressive.'

'Ay,' quoth Asmodeus, 'thought and natural law now carry one another alternately. See the boys in Florence when they play at *scaricabarile*. One boy, back to back with a rival, locks arms with him, and so they lift each other up and down.¹ 'Tis a game much resembling polemics, because in it both of the combatants—whether lifting or lifted—appear by turns ridiculous.'

¹ *Scaricabarili*, 'unloading barrels.' 'Ludus est puerilis qui a duobus tantum peragitur. Alter enim alteri terga vertunt, brachiisque mutuo implicatis, se alter alterum vicissim humo tollunt. Unde significare volentes duos alterum in alterum alicujus peccati culpam

'Ah, well,' replied Flaxius, 'it is a vigorous game, and developes muscle, as does all struggling. Out of peaceful parthenogenesis and idleness, starvation, and the struggle for life, evolve energy and male strength, intellect, and will. But, Aschmodai, what thinkst thou more of Thought.'

'Though I was one of the very first thoughts ever thought, if not the first itself, as many think,' replied the Spirit, 'the answer to that question is still unto me a mystery. Yet as we see that in life the crystal precedes the flower, or organic growth, monsters come before man, Egyptian pyramids before Greek and Gothic grace, barbarism before enlightenment, so do I deem that natural law preceded thought and involuntary action will, which was first, creatingness or a creator. With the first motion in matter came the first act, in the unorganic the organic was born ;—but how this was it knew not, nor do we know, O my Flaxius, for truly there is an immense amount of things which it would be better for man to look after before he afflicts his small soul with the problem of the egg and the hen. But so long as man shall make a fool of himself, either as atheist, theist, or agnostic waiting to see how the fight will turn, so that he, the Mugwump of faith, may join the conqueror—even so long shall I, Aschmodai, live in glory and triumph. This trinity has been my very life, even as alchemy drew from the spirit of the three its *elixir vitæ*. And mighty have been the mockeries and many the jests which I

refundere dicimus : *E fanno a scaricabarili*. Inter hoc autem et illud de quo supra : *Fare a scaricalasino*, ea est differentia quod hoc significat alterum in alterum culpam suam rejicere ; illud verò simpliciter alicujus criminis culpam a se dimovere.'—*Angeli Monosinii Floris Italicae Linguae Libri Novem*, A. D. 1604.

have drawn from it, nor is the merriment as yet quite o'er—albeit I know that I am perishing—and passing with the Triad fast away. Oh, it was glorious to behold the Jew—the original inventor of man's vilest vanity, Chauvinism or national pride, who first created religious oppression, and believed with Rabbi Jochanan that, "as the best of serpents deserves to have its head crushed, so the best of Gentiles ought to be killed"—'tis sweet, I say, to live to hear him raise the martyr's cry, even as the Pope is now raising it—"the po-oo-r Pope"—as a prisoner in the Vatican! Then were the discoverers of the art of Martyrdom avenged by seeing the humblest among them made the gods of the oppressors; and so Men all rolled on into time, burning and torturing millions, especially old women, for the love of Him whose one great doctrine was mercy, charity, love, and sweetness. Then there were revolts of the oppressed, and peasants' wars and gladiators' revolts, and French Revolutions—alternate black and white—and in it all hell throve, and I laughed.'

'But thou art dying.'

'Well, my Flaxius, I have had a call. Thou rememberest the tale of the Three Warnings, or how Death promised a man that he should be signalled thrice ere called away. So he became lame and deaf and blind—these were the three.'

'And when was thy first warning?'

'When Christ preached unconditional altruism unto mankind—cosmopolitanism and equality. That lamed me.'

'And the second?'

'When a Hindu set up a religion on the word *Sikh*. It means, "seek!" What goes beyond faith,

unbelief, or uncertainty is to inquire and search and seek for truth. So I was deafened by that awful cry.'

'And the third?'

'Aristotle, Friar Bacon, Francis Bacon, Darwin, Induction, Evolution. That will soon finish me. But the first blow was the worst, and I knew it. I bore up well, and made a gallant fight, but I am dying. *Vicisti, Galilæe!*'

As he spoke, the full golden Syrian moon shone o'er their heads in an unclouded sky, a gentle breeze was wantoning in the palms, yet from afar there came a jackal's cry, and then the booming of a lion's roar.

'I shall pass away, my Flaxius, but I shall live again in some form; evil or good, my spirit cannot die. For there is a *good* in me—a good of strength—and while matter casts a shadow, or contrasts and paradoxes exist, I shall be. All in a softened form I will prewise. As the sun which set is followed by yonder moon, so shall I be softer, and yet as eternal. When God shall assume a higher form, I shall inherit the old throne and sceptre.'

'Yes,' replied Flaxius, 'it well may be. Shelley and sundry other inspired lunatics had that idea; 'twas known to the Greeks, not without thy aid, O Aschmodai! For thou hast always thrown doubt and a fine frenzy and confusion over all great truths.'

'*Rectè dixisti*, thou speakest truly,' answered Aschmodai. 'Had all been all at once, nothing had ever been.' Son Flaxius, thou too art a moon, and thou art my son; but thou wouldst fain enjoy the paradox without the pain. As the old hard-gripping peasant grows rich, unheeding of what misery he

makes, while his cultured heir grows gentle and amiable, so wilt thou, and the world which has been enriched by the past, grow milder. *Le diable est mort—vive le diable!*

‘*Hæc fabula docet,*’ penned the sage, ‘that men, with all their wisdom, do not train their wondrous power of putting numbers together to make sums, or the faculty of deduction, by means of which stupendous results of prophecy may be attained. This might be increased to a degree which would seem to us miraculous. Edgar A. Poe had strange intuitions of what might be in his theory that he who observes all antecedents and possible combinations may surely foresee consequences.

‘And, as his name reminds me, Poe mentions that at Palæchosi, in Sparta, there is existent on a stone an inscription L.A.S.M., which is probably a part of GELASMA or Laughter, indicating a shrine to the merry god. Apropos of which M. Marcel Schwob remarks that laughter is destined to die away with advancing culture. “It is,” he declares, “a mere *tic*, a gross physical manifestation of the perception of disharmony in the world, which will vanish before complete scepticism, absolute science, general pity, or intolerance of suffering and respect for all things.” This idea should assuredly please Anglo-Americans, among whom, while a sense of humour increases, the laugh diminishes, till we generally find in their greatest jesters men who never laugh at all.

‘But M. Schwob errs in his *Essai de Paradoxe sur le Rire*, when he declares that this species of contraction of the zygomatic muscles is peculiar to

man, it having been an indication of his feeble intelligence and the conviction of his own superiority. The Newfoundland dog laughs at times, and that with an expression which is completely human. I had heard of this several times before I witnessed it, and also heard that the expression, though droll, was so uncanny in a dog as to awaken something like awe, as I, indeed, experienced. These dogs have a keen sense of humour, entering with intelligence into the games and romps of boys. But the error of M. Schwob, as well as that of Matthew Arnold, is to believe that seriousness or mere gravity is essential to genius. The French writer is of opinion that laughter expresses only sneers, sarcasms, vanity, and short-witted scepticism. It means far more than this to greater minds. As the Schwobian view is diabolical, so is there, on the other hand, a divine humour, a sweet and sacred *gelasma*, which we only do not associate with sacred things and grandeur, simply because we know nothing about their true inner nature and are not at home there. There is a sweet laughter of innocence, purity and youth, in which a smile always irradiates the face, lighting it to higher beauty. Is not a smile divine? Is not all beauty as the smile of God in nature? And there is also a bitter smile—a sardonic laugh—the very life of Aschmodai, and the meaning of this chapter is that this laugh is vanishing in the world, and with it the brutal bray and idiotic ‘yawp’ and silly snigger of the vulgar mind; but that the merry musical laugh of the gentle heart, and the smile divine which thrills the heart of love like wine, will remain to man, after asinine seriousness shall have vanished for ever.

'Tis a delicate thing to draw the lines which divide the gold from the dross, and show how the *harsh* humour will be neglected in Shakespeare and Rabelais, as theology is dropped from our admiration of Dante, but all of them will live in so far as the angelic smile beams in them.

Note that had this world been without variable-ness or the shadow of turning, darkness and light, or night and day, rise and fall, it had not been at all; and that, while there shall be change and contrast and evolution, or nature itself, there will be humour, which is the soul and life of laughter, and though it has been easily checked in this priggish *fin de siècle* (when dolts have wellnigh got the upper hand, and dismal dulness shadows all the land) yet with the great coming Renaissance of Nature, which is just beginning to show under the aid of science, as the morning redness comes with the rising sun, men will laugh merrily once more, not in bitterness, but in love.

FLAXIUS IN FLORENCE

OR, THE GOBLIN OF THE TOWER DELLA
TRINITÀ, BY THE PORTA SAN NICCOLO.

‘They do not speak as mortals speak,
Nor sing as others sing :
Their words are gleams of starry light,
Their songs the glow of sunset bright :
Or meteors on the wing.’

THE following story belongs to this book ‘in good faith of all sorts,’ be it salted, pickled or sugared ; since it was originally the first ever recorded of the great and good Flaxius. But as it was of Florence, Florentiny, so, following the saying, ‘first come, first served,’ and being engaged on *The Legends of Florence*¹—in which book the lovers of romance and the occult will find many a rare treat, showing how all Florence is a charmingly haunted city—therefore did I first introduce the sage in it to the world.

And in the introduction I said that the legend is of great antiquity, since there is a hint of it in an ancient Hebrew work by Rabbi ben Mozel-toff, or the learned Rev Gedauler Chamar, besides being found in poetic form in my own great work *The Music Lesson of Confucius* ; also in a marvellous cabalistic manuscript which I bought in sight of Santa

¹ *Legends of Florence*, 2 vols. : London, D. Nutt.

Maria Novella, which describes how the *Bathkol*, or Daughter of the Voice, may be caused to be heard within our soul, and teach us all kinds of magic.

Money is the root of all evil, and Flaxius, who went to the root of everything, of course wanted it. How he often got it is set forth as follows :

FLAXIUS AND THE ROSE

MIDNIGHT was ringing from the cloister of San Miniato in Florence on the hill above, and Flaxius sat by the Arno down below, on the bank, by the square grey tower of other days, known as the Niccolò, or *Torre della Trinità* because there are in it three arches. . . .

It was midnight in mid-winter and a full moon poured forth all its yellow light over Florence as if it would fain preserve it in oil—or amber—and over the olive groves till they looked in the distance like moss-agates in topaz.

‘Or I,’ quoth Flaxius, to carry out the simile, ‘like a fly in hock!’

Yes, it was a clear, cold Tuscan night, and as the last peal of bells went out into Eternity and faded in the Irrevocable, thousands of spirits of the departed began to appear, thronging like fire-flies in June, through the streets, visiting their ancient haunts and homes, shops and shades, greeting, gossiping or arranging their affairs just as the peasants do on Friday in the great place of the Signoria—as they have done for centuries.

Flaxius looked at the rolling river which went rushing by at his feet, and said :

'*Arno mio!* you are in a tremendous hurry to get to the sea, and all the more because you have just had an *accessit*, a remittance, of rain from the mountain-banks. *Buon pro vi faccia*, much good may it do you! So every mortal fain would rise and run. So every shopman hurries to become a great merchant when he gets some money, and every farmer a signore, and every signore a great lord, and every great lord a ruler at court and over all the land—*prorsum et sursum*. And when they *get there*, or when you get to the sea, then ye are all swallowed up in greater lives, interests and actions; and so the rivers run for ever on—longer yet ever seeming less unto yourselves. And so—*ad altiora tendunt omnes sic*—all to the Higher ever doth aspire, the flower-edged torrent and the Florentine' . . .

When he suddenly heard above his head a spirit-voice, clear, sweet and strange, singing not in words, or on the ear, but by tones of unearthly music, of which languages there are many among the un-earthlies, each unto its 'chaos,' all being wordless songs or airs suggesting speech and yet conveying ideas more rapidly. It was the Goblin of the Tower to him of the tower next beyond on the further hill, and he said:

'How many ghosts there are abroad to-night!'

'Yes; it is a fine night for ghosting. Moonlight is mid-summer for them, poor souls! But I say, brother, who is yonder *Frate*, the dark monk-spectre, who always haunts your tower, lingering here and there about it? What is the spell upon that *spirito?*'

'He is one to be pitied,' replied the goblin of the *Trinità*. 'He was a good fellow while he lived,

but a little too fond of money. He was afflicted with what the doctors called in Rome, when I was young, the *amor sceleratus*, or *sal aeratus habendi*. So it came to pass that he died, leaving a treasure, *mille aureos*, or a thousand gold crowns, buried in my tower, unknown to any one, and for that he must walk the earth until some one living wins the money. For money is as life to all men, and he who destroys it is, in a way, a murderer.'

Flaxius pricked up his ears. He understood all that the goblins said, but they had no idea that the man in a scholar's robe who sat below knew Goblinese.

'What must a mortal do to get the gold?' inquired the second goblin.

'Truly he must do what is wellnigh impossible,' replied the Elf of the Tower, 'for he must, without the aid of magic—note that—bring to me here, in this month of January, a fresh, full-blown rose.'

The voices were silent; a cloud passed over the face of the moon; the river rushed and roared on; Flaxius sat in a Vandyke-brown study, thinking how he could obtain peace and repose for the ghostly monk, and also get the *solatium* or reward.

'Here is,' he thought, '*aliquid laborare*, something to be worked out. Now is the time, and here is the chance, *ingirlandisi di lauro*, to win the laurel wreath. A rose in January! What a pity it is not four hundred years later, when people will have green-houses, and blue-nosed vagabonds will be selling red roses all the winter long in the Torna-buoni! Faith! it is sometimes inconvenient to be behind, or in advance of the age!

'*Eureka!* I have it!' he at last exclaimed, 'have

it by the neck and tail! I will *spogliar la tesoria*, rob the treasury and spoil the Egyptian. *Si non in errore versatus sum*, unless I am stupendously mistaken, monk, thy weird will soon be dreed, thy penance prophesied will soon be o'er!

Saying this he went into the city. And there the next day, going to a fair lady of his acquaintance who excelled all in Italy in ingenious needlework, he had made of silk a rose; and so deftly was it done, that had it been put on a bush you would have sworn that a nightingale would have sung to it, or a bee sought to ravish it.

Then going to a Venetian perfumer's in the Via Vacchereccia close by the Signoria, the wise Flaxius had his flower well scented with best attar of roses from Constantinople, and when midnight struck he was at the tower once more, where he called to the goblin.

'*Che vuoi!* What dost thou seek?' cried the elf.

'The treasure of the monk.'

'*Bene!* Give me a rose?'

'*Ecco!* There it is!' replied Flaxius extending it.

'*Non facit*—it won't do,' answered the goblin in Latin, thinking Flaxius to be a monk. 'It is a sham rose of silk, artificially coloured—*murice tinctorum*.'

'Smell it,' replied Flaxius calmly.

'The *smell* is all right and sweet, I admit,' answered the guardian of the gold. 'The perfume is delicious'—here he sniffed at it seriously, being like all of his kind enraptured with perfume—'and that much of it is, I grant, the real thing.'

'Then tell me truly,' replied Flaxius, 'and swear by thy great ancestress Diana, the mother of the Spirits of the Night, and her sister-daughter Herodias,

and her Nine Cats, by the Moon and her eternal shadow Endamone, and the word which Bergoia whispered into the ear of the Ox, and the Nails of Nortia, and the Lamia whom thou lovest!—what is it makes a man? Is it his soul or his body?’

‘Man of mystery and master of the old Etruscan hidden lore!’ replied the awe-struck goblin, ‘it is his soul.’

‘And is not the perfume of the rose its *soul*, that which breathes its life, in which it speaks to fairies or to men? Is not the voice in song or sweetened words the perfume of the spirit ever true? Is not ——’

‘I give it up,’ replied the goblin. ‘The priest may turn in now for a long, long nap. Here, take his gold, and may you have a merry time with it; there is a great deal of good drinking in a thousand crowns, to say nothing of the eating! Do you ever play at dice, old man, *ludere latrunculis*? When you do, I promise you three sixes. By the way, I’ll just keep this rose to remember you by. *Addio, a rivederla!* Good-bye and *au revoir!*’

So the bedesman slept among his ashes cold, and Flaxius, who was a stout carl for the nonce, with a broad back and a great beard, returned, bearing a mighty sack of ancient gold, which stood him in good stead for many a day. And the goblin is still there in the tower.

‘*Hæc fabula docet,*’ wrote Flaxius, as he revised the proof with a red pencil for which he had paid a penny at Ancora’s ancient stationery shop in the Via Condotti, ‘this tale teaches that in this life there is naught which hath not its ideal side or idol

inner-soul, which may raise us to high reflection or great profit if we will but seek it.

‘The lower the man the less he sees, and the lower he looks, but it is all to his loss.

‘Now every chapter in this book, or in that of thy life, O my son, or daughter! may seem to thee to be only a rose of silk, yet do not stop at that, but try to find therein its perfume.

‘For thou art thyself, I doubt not, such a rose, even if thy threads, as in most of us, be somewhat worn or torn or faded; and yet thou *hast* a soul far better than many deem who see thee only from a distance. And this my book is written for the perfume, not the silk of my reader. And there is no person who is better in any way than what the world deems him or her to be who will not find in it comfort.’

But, friend, how was it that it came to pass that I found out this veritably and authentically ancient legend of the Tower of the Triple Arches, which, when I wrote, rose opposite my window over the Arno? My dear reader, it was written down for me by a witch, in very truth, who had learned it of her strange kind and with it many more, which you might have collected as well as I, if you could have kept such company and wandered in such paths as I did. And know that the Sleepy Hollow of the Hudson is not more haunted by marvellous spirits of a bygone age, or more strangely shaded with legends of goblins and fair, quaint mysteries of the golden time than is this city which is named from Flowers, or it may be from Flora, *la belle Romaine*, the beautiful sorceress who bewitched all with love. Villon asked what became of her:

‘Where is there left on earth a trace
Of Flora once the Roman fair?
Or Archipiada and Thais,
That bright and ever queenly pair?
Echo will fling the question back
O’er silent lake and streamlet lone,
All earthly beauty fades away,
Where have the snows of winter gone?’

Here the old Roman enchantress yet lives as much as she ever did in fact in Rome,—for she was there only a world-old Indian myth of pleasure and beauty,—in the city of the Lily. And here indeed there is, according to legend, a goblin by every bridge, an elf in every tower and old palazzo, a fairy of the ancient Roman kind in form, changed to a later hue in colour, a witch *aura* lingering in many a darkling corridor and chamber, a something between sweet perfume and the conjurer’s fumigations to raise spirits. I have learned that in my barber’s shop opposite the great column of Cosimo, San Zenobio once wrought a miracle, and in my café, a fair maid was bewitched into a cow.

‘All over doth this modern life
An ancient life enfold.’

These things you may read in full in many a story, as set forth in *The* (aforesaid) *Legends of Florence*, which grew out of the first draft of the sketch of Flaxius.

FLAXIUS AND THE EMPEROR JULIAN

‘The Emperor Julian in his *Cæsars* gives the preference to Marcus Aurelius, who having been greatly honoured for his merits, replied modestly “that it had always been his care to imitate the gods.”’—*The Spectator*, No. 635.

‘I SHOULD really like,’ said Flaxius to his attendant pocket-imp, Puttuli, ‘to see this grand young man, our Emperor Julian.’

[‘*Grand jeune homme*’ was a term applied in later days to Mr. James G. Bennett, of the *New York Herald* by the *Figaro*, but Flaxius was the inventor of it.]

‘Nothing easier,’ replied the goblin. ‘You give the *atriensis*, or janitor, a hundred *nummos* or *sestertios*, or a ring, or any trifle, and so you may be admitted to a private-public view. For a *sestertium* he will manage an opportunity to speak to Cæsar. But you can have a good street view for nothing, and I think,’ added Puttuli as he critically eyed his master, ‘if he saw you he might speak to you; he isn’t at all particular as to his company.’

‘*Gratias tibi ago*, thank you for the compliment,’ replied the sage, ‘but as it concerns an emperor, we may as well do things genteelly. Assume a respectable form, if you know how——’

(*Gratias tibi, or not tibi ago,* murmured the imp.)

'— and hire a place *dans la première loge*. For a *sestertium*.'

'Would your excellency like to carry a *bouquet*?' inquired Puttuli impudently.

'A good idea! Yes, order me one of rue, concordia and verberna.'

'Well, of all the nosegays that ever were nosed, that is the queerest,' answered the servant. 'But, *fiat voluntas tua*, my lord's will be done! A great deal of rue with plenty of concordia, and most of all verberna. I will go to the pretty herb-seller in the Suburra. She has the vegetables.'

'I must choose a lucky day,' said Flaxius.

'To-morrow,' answered Puttuli, 'is the three hundred and sixty-fifth day of the year three hundred and sixty-five A.D.'

So it came to pass that, twenty-four hours after, Flaxius stood in the grand hall of the imperial palace amid the row of suitors and courtiers and other great or wise, or otherwise, folk who awaited audience of Julian. He looked at the emperor with approbation.

'I knew the first Julian,' he reflected; 'the man who bought the empire at auction and resigned in sixty-six days. He was indeed a *caducus*,—a word which will live in later days as *cad*—an imperial snob. This is a horse of another colour.'

Meanwhile the emperor who had the keenest eye in Rome for observing all sorts and conditions of men, and who, after sitting an hour in the amphitheatre, could describe the appearance of everybody present who was anybody, had not failed to note the tall and stately form of the philosopher, and

his grandly flowing beard. Now Julian, having a very fine beard of his own, was deeply interested in this subject, as appears from his great work *Misopogon*, meaning 'Enemy of the Beard,' that is to say of wisdom, to say nothing of his 'Letters.' And as Flaxius had a very beard of beards flowing and curling in indescribable magnificence, and as he wore the purely white, long-flowing robe which indicated the professional philosopher, a being dearer to the emperor than the prettiest woman living, he gazed at Flaxius with what became absolute approval or admiration.

'By Esculapius and Jupiter!' he exclaimed, 'that is a good-looking man. Something in my line, I think! Who is he?'

'Cæsar!' replied Puttuli, who had assumed the form and voice of Bumbulbulus, the court factotum, 'that is the great Flaxius, a sage who has travelled all over the world, and who is reported to know everything from the works of Moloch the Pismirist, up to those of God.'

'That is a large order,' replied the emperor reflectively, '*magnum postulatum est*. But bring him here that I may measure him.'

'That will take more time, O Cæsar, than it would for him to measure you!' thought Puttuli, as he departed. 'He needs a long line who would sound such a sea as the Master. Come now! I think we are as good as established at court.'

Now the emperor had for many years been devoted to magic and *occulta*, and observing the herb-bouquet which Flaxius bore, grasped its hidden meaning with great pleasure.

'*Salve, Cæsar!*' said the sage.

‘*Salve, adeptel!*’ replied the monarch. ‘So thou hast mastered the lore of the Etruscan, as I read by the *Concordia*, “*Janus adorandus cum quo Concordia mitis,*” as Ovid saith; of Egypt, as the rue proclaims; “*cingebat rutæ quæ coma multicomæ*”; and of Persia, I see by the verbena, *Verbenasque adole pinguis et mascula thura*. Hem! Virgil!’

‘I have heard, even in the remotest region of the earth,’ replied Flaxius, ‘that what Cæsar could not do in the way of apt quotation was not worth doing.’

‘*Um!* I flatter myself that I know a thing or two,’ replied the emperor—the very phrase occurs in his *Epistolæ*—‘but like Apicius with the British oysters, I am always ready for a few more. And I read it in thee, O Flaxius,’ he added, suddenly changing his whole mien and manner, and looking through his tangled locks with that strange, unearthly glare which so impressed his contemporary familiars, as if he had become another man, ‘that thou canst teach me much which I do *not* know, therefore I ask thee to sup with me to-night.’

The emperor said this, turning away so abruptly, that all present who did not know his ways inwardly thanked God, according to their heathen or Christian faith, that they did not stand in the shoes of that philosopher with the flowing beard. But those who knew him better looked gravely, and said, ‘Cæsar hath found a new friend!’

But Flaxius himself was deeply amazed when Julian, leading him to a table, by which stood a single Greek servant—there was no other soul present—showed him with some pride that the meal consisted only of a grilled fish and *garum*, with bread and olives, new cheese and fruit.

‘There is your supper, Flaxius!’ he exclaimed, ‘and much good may it do you!’

‘By the lance and laurel bough or olive of the god Honour, whose temple is by the Campidoglio!’ cried the sage, ‘what am I, O Cæsar! that thou shouldst treat me with such esteem!’

‘*Non rectis oculis aspice*, never do you mind that,’ replied Julian. ‘Truly if I were going to entertain a Bythnian prince or a sow-bellied contractor for the army, whom I hoped some day to crucify, I would have given him a hundred courses of ortolans stuffed with oysters, and galantine with truffles and pistachios, and all that sort of thing. But to a philosopher whom I wish to treat as a brother, I give just what I am accustomed to eat myself. One cannot be a slave at the same time to his brain and his belly—*non potes Tethidem simul et Galateam amare*, as Lucian says.’

‘Now, I see,’ reflected Flaxius, ‘that when a man is a gentleman at heart, he can turn even his vanity to a kindness. A marvellous character is this Cæsar, and one who will do much to be misunderstood in history.’

So they held wondrous discourse of great and glorious things in philosophy, over which the emperor quoted nearly all the Orphic sayings, with the Poemander of Hermes, and finally came to what he had been aiming at from the first, by bluntly asking:

‘Knowest thou aught of magic?’

‘O Cæsar! do not think I seek to quibble or raise a sophistical cloud between us,’ replied Flaxius, ‘if I ask thee what is the meaning of magic.’

‘It is,’ replied the emperor—who had been there before—‘the violation of the laws of nature.’

‘And what is nature?’ asked the Sage.

‘H’m!—the eternal order of things—the action of laws, or *potentia quatenus in potentia*.’

‘Rather vague, yet good so far as it goes. But, Cæsar, if there be but one substance, though you call it matter in one form and spirit in another, and one eternal law manifesting itself in infinite forms, there can be no violation of them. Miracle or magic is only *something which man cannot explain*, something which puzzles and astonishes him. *Si placet*—give me an example for a miracle!’

‘I am devilish thirsty,’ replied Julian. ‘That *garum* or fish-sauce is pungent enough to make a Nazarene drink a gallon of strong Sicilian wine. Now, if you could pour me any kind of wine which I may call for out of one and the same bottle—

‘It may be done, O Cæsar! but remember that to do this one must invoke the invisible spirits or forces of nature, whom we call the gods, to aid in such mysteries.’

After a long pause of reflection, the emperor slowly replied, ‘Granted.’ He did not see that Puttuli, reduced to his natural stature of three inches, and who sat unseen behind him, advanced his thumb to his nose, and waved his fingers, making thereby an ancient and mysterious Egyptian sign used by the priests of Memphis when they initiated some great sage to their rites.

Then Flaxius winked to Puttuli, who presently reappeared in the form of Bumbulbulus.

‘Go to my rooms,’ said the sage, ‘and bring hither the ancient goblet of Bacchus!’

The goblin obeyed, and returned with a very large bottle of black *cuir bouilli* or moulded leather. It

was of graceful shape, apparently of great antiquity, covered with exquisite silver relief, representing the deeds of Bacchus. Handling it with great reverence, Flaxius pronounced over it in a voice which was half-singing, such as one may hear to this day among witches in Italy when they chant the following :

INCANTATION TO BACCHUS

‘Golden master of the earth !
 King of joy and lord of mirth !
 By thy mother the divine,
 Of the ancient Cadmean line !
 Semele of Earth the pride ;
 Who of Jove’s great splendour died !
 By the Seasons, who in truth,
 Nursed thee from thy early youth !
 Or fair Ino, who they say,
 Brought thee from Arabia !
 By the lion’s form you wore
 When gods and Titans fought of yore !
 And by the holy miracle
 Of which the morning poets tell ;
 When from Naxos thou didst sail
 With a gentle, favouring gale,
 And pirates sought to conquer thee
 But fell into captivity :
 By the hour when thou did’st go
 To the darkling realms below,
 And brought thy mother, “ever bright,”
 To the upper world of light,
 And all that Nonnus ever sung
 Of thee with mystic, golden tongue !
 I conjure thee—the all-divine—
 To give me what I ask, of wine !’

Saying this he took a small gold cup and said :

‘Now, Cæsar, ask for what wine thou wilt.’

‘Let it be Cæcuban,’ replied the emperor.

Then Flaxius poured forth wine from the bottle into the cup, and extended it to Julian.

‘Cæcuban it is, sure enough,’ replied the emperor

when he had drunk to the last drop, which he poured *super naculum* upon his thumb-nail.

‘Wilt thou have another draught?’ inquired Flaxius. ‘If so—of what?’

‘Falernian,’ answered the emperor.

‘Sit,’ replied Flaxius. ‘Here you are. But, O Cæsar, I have not hung an ivy garland as yet round the cup, as the conjuration requires.’

‘*Vino vendibili suspensâ hederâ nihil opus.* Good wine needs no bush,’ answered Julian. ‘The miracle is wrought, and I wish that all were as agreeable. And now, Flaxius, since thou sayest that all miracles can be explained by natural causes, I pray thee to naturalise me this, for verily *ut turris super omnes*, it is a huckleberry above my persimmon, and I would like to know how it is done.’

‘Easily enough, O Cæsar. The bottle is made from a certain flexible substance, and it contains many chambers or cells, in each of which there is a different kind of wine. When I press on any one of these it pours forth its content.’

‘Then the incantation was all gammon?’ remarked Julian.

‘Not so, O Cæsar. It made the miracle.’

‘*Hum-um-um-ump!*’ replied the monarch. ‘And yet, Flaxius, it still seems to me that there are and must be miracles surpassing all human skill and knowledge, which the utmost wisdom cannot compass or explain, and *never* will.’

‘Can your Greatness give me an example?’ replied Flaxius.

‘It is written in thine own ancient Etruscan chronicles,’ replied Julian, ‘that in the early time the mysterious nymph, Begoe or Bergoia, before the

world, and in the Capitol, slew an ox by whispering in his ear a single word. Now, I believe, that had I tried, I might have worked out an explanation of thy Holy Bottle; but in the miracle of Bergoia I have reflected many a time and oft, without solving it, and therefore do I conclude that it *was* a violation of the laws of Nature.'

'O Cæsar!' replied Flaxius, 'great is the man who can infallibly decide where human reason leaves off and Divinity begins, for, *nusquam est, qui ubique est*, that which is everywhere is nowhere, and this is true of miracle. But what if I perform for thee—openly before all thy court—and all Rome if thou wilt, that same miracle?'

'By Hercules!' cried Julian, amazed and delighted beyond measure, his wild and mysterious eyes gleaming so as to make a very respectable miracle of their own if he had but known it, 'thou art a man of gold, set with gems—the first real sage I ever found in the stuffing of this duck of a world. And you really will in good faith—*honestus Indicus*—slay the ox with a whisper!'

'Thou shalt see it, O Cæsar,' replied Flaxius. 'But it seems to me that the miracle would be improved on, if instead of an ox we were to substitute a man. For it might be said by the sceptical that we had poisoned the ox beforehand.'

'By Medea!' exclaimed the emperor admiringly, 'I never thought of that!'

'While if we take a man who declares himself to be in good health, there can be no suspicion. Now, Cæsar, thou hast, I doubt not, in thy prisons more than one unlucky wretch condemned to the torture and the crucifix, to whom a quick and painless

death would be as a divine blessing and great joy?’

‘*Depone!* bet your head on it!’ cried Julian. ‘I sent one this morning to the Mamertine—hell would be too good for him—and I meant to give him a fore-taste of it by means of preparation.’

‘He will do,’ replied Flaxius.

So on the following day, when the emperor and his court and all Rome assembled in the great amphitheatre, there was led in a ferocious, giant-like and bitterly wicked-looking Gaul, who, expecting to be tortured to death to make a Roman holiday, was on his best behaviour as regards defiance and dying game.

‘Man, whence comest thou,’ asked Flaxius.

‘From Lutetia,’ was the proud reply.

‘*Ame de boue,*’ thought the sage in a language of the future, and then asked:

‘And what is thy religion?’

‘I worship the devil; it was the last fashion ere I left home.’

‘You expect torture!’

‘I do not fear it. It will pain me, but when dead, I shall be amply revenged on ye all, if hate and hell can do it.’

‘If I could give thee out of pity a sudden painless death, wouldst thou declare that thou in all thy health and strength forgivest all men?’

The Gaul glared at him stolidly and grimly and then uttered in a strange tongue which none understood.

‘*Mais, nom d’une pipe, pourquoi pas? J’aurais bien de quoi m’amuser sans me soucier de ces b-là!*’ And then in rude Latin he said:

‘I consent. Hurry along with your washing, and get the pigs in!’ And he made the declaration.

Then Flaxius, who bore in his hand a long wand, as all the Magi were wont to do, touched him with it, while whispering a word in his ear. And the man fell dead at full length, while a thrill of awe and a murmur rose from all Rome, at sight of this mighty deed. And the great and wise and even the good, or such few of the latter as were present, *rari nantes*, thronged about him, and adored him.

‘And now, Flaxius,’ said the emperor, as they sat in solemn concert over the Holy Bottle, which his highness was never tired of admiring, ‘if thou canst explain to me on natural grounds how thou didst slay that Gaul, then “by Gaule!” as Julius Cæsar said to Vercingetorix, I will believe, or disbelieve, anything!’

‘Yea, Cæsar, I will do it,’ replied the sage. ‘Now if thou wilt remember Begoe or Bergoia, her who slew the Ox with a single word, left to Rome a book on the *Ars Fulguritorum* or the averting, that is to say, managing thunder and lightning, and this book, which is in the ancient Etruscan tongue, and hard to understand, for those who know the language, is even yet in the temple of the Palatine Apollo, where I read it. And it explains that the lightning is caused by an invisible but terrible secret force, which like heat pervades all things while seen by none, and this is the awful power of the Divinity to smite the earth, and it was by means of it that Bergoia slew the Ox. And know that there was in my wand a charge of condensed thunder and lightning, quite strong enough to knock a bull sky-high.’

‘But the word?’ asked Julian who had not quite recovered from his ideas of miracle.

‘Truly, Cæsar, the word was *Electricity*, which is as yet unknown, but which in ages to come will be the great heritage and power of mankind. For as when thou art done with a garment thou givest it to a servant, so the gods when they have somewhat worn out their attributes and glories, hand them over to men.’

‘*Semper similem ducit Deus ad similem*, and so the gods lead ever like to like. Ah, it *is* wonderful. And now, Flaxius, the light begins to shine in on me, and I see that there is indeed a higher and far more wonderful magic and miracle than the poor, thin Thaumaturgy which I sought for once. For true magic is the mastering the awful power and secrets of nature. Now I see that because thou mightst explain to me by natural means how Christ fed the multitude, or raised the dead or healed the sick, it would be none the less wonderful, for genius, even the genius to amaze and nothing more, is miraculous.’

‘That will be better understood, O Cæsar, in times to come when science shall have risen to glory, by means of such stupendous genius that no man can help revering it.’

‘Ah!’ said Julian with a deep sigh, ‘happy the age and happy mankind when there shall be but one faith, whatever it be! Thou wilt never know what I have suffered between the old faith in the Gods and Christianity. As Terence says, I think, somewhere in the *Andria*:

“How happy could I be with either,
Were t’ other dear charmer away!”

‘Yes, Cæsar, yours is a hard case, and all the harder because you wish heart and soul to do what is right.’

‘Orcus and hell, heathen and Christian, take me if I don’t!’ replied the emperor in a passion and looking as wild as a panther on the spring: he who had seen him then and there would have believed him to be some young god enraged. ‘What the devil *can* they expect a man to do who has seen what *I* have seen, and gone through what I have endured? Well, I began in good faith enough as a Christian, and in truth I was cut out for one as few young Roman gentlemen are. I was never sensual, cruel, nor over-selfish.’

‘Right you are, O Cæsar,’ thought Flaxius, ‘and a very good Christian gentleman you’d have made, if your guardians had let well alone.’

‘So I, with a deep love of ancient heathen beauty and art and poetry, was put into a cloister, where the meanest, monkish, shaveling spite made a sin and a shame of all that I loved. It was not belief in their own faith, but the bitterest hate of what they called heathenism, which chiefly inspired every one of them. That was their real religion—all the rest was mere form—the adaptation to their ritual of what I knew were old Oriental ceremonies. Then I began to think out, O Flaxius, what has ever since been the idea of my life: Why cannot man keep the old faith in Beauty, and all that was charming in the old religion, and unite with it the humanity and higher truth of Christianity.’

‘There will perhaps be a time, in the dim and remote future,’ quoth Flaxius, prophetically quoting Gladstone, ‘when that idea will occur to others.’

‘So I dreamed that I, as an Eclectic—having read something of Ammonius Saccas the Egyptian—would be the apostle of the new combined religion. Well! time passed, and after I had become Cæsar, it occurred to me to examine all the faiths into which Christianity had split, and a nice job it was! Pheugh! everything from Trinitarians, Arians, and Unitarians down to Cainites, who worship the flesh and sin and the devil, all hating the common enemy but hating one another worse, like the Jews who slew one another in the siege of Jerusalem while all fought Titus.

‘O sage,’ he resumed, ‘when I think how beautiful and noble, how holy and perfect were the conceptions of Christ, and how it was His ideal that every man should commune directly with God, and when I see how each one of these sects steps in and proposes with saints and forms to do for you what you should do for yourself, I cannot wonder at the scarcity of Christians. Yet there is a stupendous truth in Christianity, the truth of human rights, which even they cannot crush. *Magna est veritas et prævalēbit.*’

‘And the old religion?’ asked Flaxius.

‘Well! it admitted the Beautiful and let a man philosophise freely, and did not make devils out of all the sweet and fair conceptions of poetry, of fauns and nymphs and Oreads and all; and so, as I believe that nature must prevail in the end with man, I went back to it. Yet the old religion is not humane. It admits slavery and inhumanity, it allows the grosser passions of cruelty and lust full play, evil nature as well as good, and it needs reform. I would fain be that reformer.’

‘Now here is a great man,’ thought Flaxius, ‘who is either two hundred years behind his time, or a thousand or more in advance of it. He means well, but is out of the age.’ Then speaking aloud he said:

‘Cæsar, there was once a king of Bithynia or Cappadocia or some such country, who had a mind to marry. Now the king next door had two daughters; both were beautiful, but one was as Venus and the other as Minerva. One was beautiful and voluptuous, witty and charming, while the other was wise and just, humane and ever careful that no one should be oppressed. Now which of these should he have married?’

‘Had I been in his place, I would have married both,’ replied the emperor.

‘But that was impossible.’

‘H’m! Well, in that case I should have taken the wise one.’

‘That,’ said Flaxius, ‘is what he did, and it is what the world will do: it will adopt the religion which, despite all the corruption with which man surrounds it, promises the greatest good to the greatest number.’

‘I believe that thou art in the right, O sage!’ replied the emperor slowly. ‘However, *jacta est alea*, the die is cast, and I shall ever remain Julian the Apostate. But what will be the end of it all?’

‘Thou wilt die nobly as a king should die—in battle for thy country.’

‘Then,’ said Julian, ‘I am content.’

FLAXIUS IN HADES

SHOWING HOW FLAXIUS WENT DOWN INTO HELL,
AND OF THE MARVELLOUS THINGS WHICH HE SAW
AND LEARNED WHILE THERE

‘To the Esthete who regards all Nature and Eternity as a mere paint-box for art, hell is a necessity, as is illustrated by Ruskin when he howls that “in the utmost solitudes of Nature the existence of hell seems to me as legibly declared by a thousand spiritual utterances as that of heaven.”’

‘THEY manage these things,’ said Flaxius, ‘I verily believe, better in hell.’

‘You have been in hell, I suppose,’ said the goblin-snob, with the most civilly impertinent air in the world, to the sage.

‘Strange!’ reflected Flaxius, ‘that a place which may be readily reached in a minute, if we may believe the common exhortation of the vulgar, or even in an instant by the aid of electricity as they manage it in America—with I forget how many volts, but “in a demi-volt”—should be unknown to me. I must consult the Fairy. Decidedly, my education has been neglected. I have not yet made the grand tour.’

Flaxius was living then near a town in the Austrian Tyrol, in a lonely, grey, and ancient ivied tower and small house, hidden away in the mountains; and there, with his usual disregard for appearances, he

had installed a small gypsy family whom he had found camped in the woods, three chairs, a table, and a stupendous service of gold plate: this last not for luxury but because it was the first which, as a buried treasure near by, came to hand. The Goblin of the Tower had revealed to him its existence, and he used it because it saved him the trouble of going to town for crockery. His servants had instructions, whenever sent to buy anything, to steal one half the money, and then half of what they bought, under penalty of severe punishment, which had the natural result that whenever they could do so without detection, they never stole anything. Once, indeed, when his boy Lajos impudently brought him a manifestly superabundant supply of fruit for a half florin, or more than he expected, did Flaxius proceed, I cannot say to spoil the child, for the young devil was beyond all spoiling, but to break a rod on him. Whereupon he fell on his knees in tears, but was pardoned on promising never to be honest any more. Even Flaxius, great as he was, could not have his own way in everything, for things got to such a pitch at last, that these gypsies would tell the truth before his very face openly with the utmost impunity, and even without blushing.

It was midnight, and Flaxius the Immortal sat alone in his baronial hall. True, it was only about twenty feet in length and fifteen in breadth, but it was a hall. The walls were rich, or, at least, ragged, with Roman-picturesque and very-much-battered stone carvings, representing a lettuce-like confusion of crockets and finials, in which were nestled angels as ugly as devils, and devils not much prettier than

the angels, like crayfish, or *écrevisses*, in foliage, the whole resembling an early Christian or Pre-Raphaelite salad which would have enchanted a Gothiconolator.

There was in the hall a large black Cat and an Owl, both of whom had come in uninvited from the Without, and joined the family, on speculation, from a desire for human sympathy and love, also for mice and any little edible odds and ends which might be obtainable. There was, too, a florid chimney-piece, so large that the hall seemed to be only a portion of it, or adjunct, just as the body and tail of the pricklefish seem to be only a part of his vast ogival jaw. In it blazed a fire, and by, or in that fire, sat the house goblin. His name was *Slangbrand*, and he was engaged in swallowing live coals, and then blowing out a storm of sparks from his nose, or *de retro*—as ye may see exemplified in Callot's picture of Saint Anthony—anon swallowing the poker like a juggler, and then rising and falling on the smoke, up and down the chimney, like a ball in a fountain, to the great admiration of the Cat and the Owl, who constituted his audience.

Then Flaxius himself took a coal from the fire, placed it on a small silver dish on the table, and sprinkled on it a powder which burned, emitting an intensely aromatic and most agreeable but strange perfume, the magian meanwhile murmuring an incantation. A beautiful, soft light diffused itself all over the room; 'twas like a delicate, rosy Aurora with a memory of moonlight, and not without stars, for in it shone two celestial eyes, and then anon the Fairy stood revealed to her worshipper.

'Joyful greeting to thee, Flaxius!' said the *Fata*.

‘Deepest reverence to thee, O loveliest in form as in spirit, of all thy kind!’ replied the magian in a tone of deep sincerity.

‘And how goes the world with thee?’ inquired his queen.

‘With the world ever something new, as of old. As for me, and it was for this that I summoned thee, I would fain go——’

‘Go whither?’ inquired the fairy.

‘Go to hell!’ replied Flaxius.

‘Wherefore this unprovoked hostility?’ asked the spirit.

‘It was not spoken in the vocative,’ replied Flaxius. ‘I did but indicate the route which I fain would take, not commend it to thee, though by the twelve gods!’ he added passionately, ‘happy indeed would he be who on such a journey could meet with such an Eurydice!’

‘Flaxius,’ replied the fair one, ‘thou hadst ever so much modesty as to declare thyself unfit for heaven, and too much pride to allow that thou wert fit for the lower regions. Therefore didst thou elect to remain on earth to study and master its problems as thoroughly as it was in thee to do so, maintaining that of the few magians who like thyself had mastered immortality, too few prepared themselves, as they should do by studying the rudiments.’

‘Ay,’ replied Flaxius with his worldly smile. ‘They are mostly like boys who would fain run straight from their school to their dinner, not tarrying just for a little wholesome exercise to give a better appetite and health. But the truth which forces itself on me more and more is that hell and earth are so nearly allied that it becomes more and

more difficult every day to investigate the one without knowing the other, even as a knowledge of chemistry becomes essential to an astronomer.'

'You are quite right,' replied the fairy. '*Sit tibi voluntas*, you shall have your wish. Fortunately it is extremely easy to get there, especially to obtain a place as permanent boarder, but even as a casual visitor I can assure you special honour. All the great geniuses of yore made a three days' visit to the realm; it was a ceremony *de rigueur*, a kind of court presentation which no well-bred immortal could omit. I do not consider,' she added reflectively, 'that hell is exactly the place to which I would recommend parents to send their boys for an education, but for men of intelligence there are a great many valuable ideas to be picked up there. And when would you depart?'

'Now, if you please.'

'Said and done then,' answered the spirit. '*Dicto citius*, as Virgil used to say to you—in *un batter d'occhio*—*in un balen*—*in un amen* !

' In a wink and in a flash,
In a snap, and at a dash,
While a priest "amen" could say !
From this earth now pass away
To the mystic world below,
Which all men dread yet none do know !'

As she uttered this incantation, Flaxius sank back in his great arm-chair to a deep sleep. The fairy looked at him with a loving glance, evidently with earnest and sympathetic thought, kissed his forehead, and softly sighed :

'Ah well, Eternity is long !'

And turning to the goblin she said :

‘Slang, take heed that no mortal enters this house for three days and nights, and see that the master here be not disturbed! And do ye,’ she added to the Owl and Cat, ‘take care also that no noise be made hereabouts, and if ye do your work well, ye shall become witch and wizard in human form. Farewell!’ Saying this she winged her way heavenward:

‘To the joyous realms afar,
Where the angel dwellers are.’

Now of the four members of that happy family, it would have been difficult to say who was the most delighted. Flaxius surely, because he had been sent to hell; the Owl and Cat certainly because they hoped to rise to the most degraded state of humanity; or Slang assuredly, simply because he had been spoken to by a queen and charged with a commission. And the three latter solemnly swore among themselves that if a mouse or bird so much as ventured to cheep or chirp about the house, they would rend it limb from limb, and have it served up for supper. According to the Penal Code of the Goblins. V. CXXXIIIV, *libro alto, capitulo nullo, folio nigro*.

As all the richest and most artistic or artful adornment of cathedrals or palaces, diamonded with panes of quaint device, ‘innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,’ and twilight saints and dim emblazonings, with half unearthly, holy, elfin shade, is all as trash and gingerbread, compared to the greenwood with its ineffable beauties of summer, and golden glory of autumn, so is all earthly music

ever played mere scrannel-piping contrasted with that in which the soul of Flaxius seemed swept away, as he sank to sleep under the spell of the fairy. For he always loved music in every form, however made or by what mind composed; and that which now seemed to be life itself and waft him on, was what he would have had idealised for him, or that which he would have wanted had he known how to want it. This fulfilment of ideals in every form was the introduction to and the great moral lesson of Inferno. For therein lies such temptation as is mercifully spared to man on earth.

‘By the glory of the gods!’ said Flaxius, rousing himself to strength, ‘if the devil can bring art like this to bear on common mortals, who the devil can be saved? Truly it was high time for me to get out of the ruts of earth for a season, when there are such tremendous paradoxes as *this* to solve outside it. And I thought that the problem and puzzle, and contrast, and anomaly were confined to life—*me stupide!* Verily, I say unto myself, Flaxius, that I foresee I shall find the very humour of humour in the mystery of hell, as this music intimates.’

And the music dying away, yet not quite vanishing, for Flaxius while he was in Inferno always heard it—just as in a garden we scent perfume of some kind, rising or falling—he found himself on the summit of a marvellously pleasant hill amid rocks and trees, grass and wild-flowers, with a mossy bench under an arbour, such a place as of all others he loved. He sat down on the bench and saw that there was before him a tremendous, yawning mountain gulf or valley, miles deep, but what lay beyond he knew not, since it

was all covered with a veil of rolling, purple cloud of richest hue, in which he saw eyes of light wander like stars. . . .

Then he perceived standing by his side, a very beautiful woman, young and lithe, holding a flask.

‘Have I not known thee of yore, O sister?’ asked Flaxius in Etruscan. ‘Art thou not of the *Lases*, who receive the spirits of the departed?’

‘I am of the *Lases*, and I am Alpan, or Alban, the Fairy of the Dawn, and their chief,’ said the maiden gently, ‘and I am sent by the lord of this land, whom men know as Pluto, to welcome thee. But first—behold!’

And as the music, sweet beyond dreams, again rose gently—as in a play or orchestra—the *Lasa* waved her hand and, the purple cloud vanishing, revealed to Flaxius such a vision of stupendous and beautiful palaces—all forming one—as he had never in all the splendour of the antique world seen the like of. He recalled Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis, Athens, Alexandria, Rome, the temples of Greece and of Egypt in all their massive mystery, the marvels of the Buddhist structures of Cambodia and India, the awful grotesques of America, the stately Lombard-Norman cathedrals of the West—the Gothic glory of Europe—and all seemed to be poor and wretched, yea, squalid, beside the grandeur, magnitude, and elaborate perfection of what was now before him.

‘This must be,’—he said, but he could speak no more, so overwhelmed was he at the sight.

‘Yes,’ added Albana, reading his thought. ‘It is—Pandemonium—the first structure ever erected.’

‘Ay,’ replied Flaxius recovering, of course to

make a reflection, 'and I see that architecture has step by step sunk, as man has risen. Another paradox! And this,' he suddenly exclaimed, 'is hell!'

'Yes, Flaxius,' replied the fairy with a sad smile, 'and be thankful that thou comest here as an immortal who will depart as soon as thou shalt have learned the mystery, for verily with thy love and knowledge of the beautiful in art it had also gone hard with thee.'

'Another paradox!' thought Flaxius. 'So, *tout lasse, tout passe, tout casse. En avant!*'

'And now,' said Albana, 'for new sights! But wait! Drink from this flask! All who enter this realm must do so!'

'I know it of old,' said Flaxius. 'It was the draught of the mysteries given me by the Fairy when I was made immortal. I drink to thee,' he said, 'O terrible ruler of this wondrous world! Yes, to thy realm and to thy mystic spouse! and with them to the angel of my dreams! and also thee, my fair, angelic guide!'

As he said this, there came from the depth below an ebony car or boat, exquisitely inlaid with gold in richest profusion, which rose slowly, quivering with the music, to their feet. Then there was a far, soft sound as of melodious chimes of a thousand bells.

'Enter with me,' said Albana. And having entered, they floated slowly over the gulf: they saw the city palace in new forms, while far beyond a landscape of marvellous beauty also developed itself, and in it too were other palaces, towns, towers, burgs, and viles or villas, castles, and immense

ranges of crenellated, arched walls with glorious gates, and over the walls grew or hung masses of trees or clustering vines, bright with a mystic beauty of their own.

They landed at the edge of an immense marble precipice, which was however richly carved far adown with quaint devices, the more beautiful for moss and grey lichen. There appeared to be nothing freshly new, yet nothing ruined in the whole land; all spoke of an old time for ever young.

‘You see no escort,’ said Albana. ‘You are too great a visitor to be received with a cortège, or a procession, as we welcome the small great men of earth. It is long indeed since any one was received with such honour as this. You are deemed to be above ceremony.’

‘Charming!’ thought Flaxius, ‘the greatest mark of attention which I ever received in my life is the most devoid of all semblance of politeness. Another paradox, but this I understand.’

‘I think, beautiful Albana,’ he remarked, ‘that your company alone is here considered the highest compliment which can be paid to a guest.’

‘His majesty the king has said so,’ replied Albana simply. Meanwhile they had been passing along streets and scenes of surpassing magnificence or beauty, and after traversing a garden of the gods came to an immense open portal which they entered. And so on and ever on through stupendous colonnaded corridors, and cloistered squares with innumerable groups of statuary and fountains like vast rivers trained to play, great as the Nile when freshets fill its flood, leaping on high a mile, then roaring down through arches strange and high, fall-

ing over thundering waterfalls, broad and deep as Niagara, by towers like that of glorious Babylon which met the clouds; and above and beyond and higher yet again, like stairs of mountains beyond mountains growing dim, were walls of citadels like snowy marble, with a coral blush in the sunset, and domes like diamond, and pearly spires, glinting with gold in every form of grace.

When at last passing along a turquoise-walled and opal-paved arcade, to which unbroken divans of lapis lazuli, inlaid with silver, seemed more beautiful for inexhaustible masses of all shades and kinds of blue flowers hanging from vines, growing in vases of sapphire, so that the very air seemed to be of a dreamy azure hue, they came to a door and passed into a hall.

Wherein sat, not on a throne, but in a throne-like, ebony, high chair, at a table, a man of god-like mien and marvellous dignity.

So far beyond anything human in his awful beauty was he, that Flaxius was more deeply impressed by him than by all the wonders which he had thus far beheld. And truly, as Flaxius reflected, when a man has passed some scores of centuries in forming ideals of the beautiful and finds his ideal outdone, 'tis time to look about for *new powers*!

The Olympian Jove with a shade of Lucifer, the Spirit of the serene heaven mingled with the darker yet still beautiful earth below, the two united as by a spirit in the eternal yet ever intermingling ocean of the eye. Such he appeared, and Flaxius recalled Goethe:

‘The soul of man
Is like the water.
From heaven it cometh

To heaven it riseth,
And thence at once
It must back to earth
For ever changing.'

Moreover there was in the wonderfully grand face something sympathetically human, and humanly chevalresque, even touching in genial moods on the 'devilish handsome fellow.' 'I have heard,' thought Flaxius, 'of a town in Western America, wherein appeared a married lady of such irresistible beauty that all the male inhabitants of the place, even unto the deacons, gave up the commandments, or more especially one of them, as a bad job. A few like his majesty, turned loose on London society, would convert Mayfair into a divorce court.'

For he had at times a smile, a laugh which went like an electric flash of champagne to the heart of your heart, which is the reason why the inhabitants of a certain American State, with the exquisite poetry peculiar to their refined natures, call apple brandy 'Jersey lightning,' it being so potent that a taste thereof goes flashing and coruscating through the soul, suggesting Etna in full play on the great fourth of July Day of Judgment, when the *sæculum*, or *fin de siècle*, or the age, is to be dissolved in sparks, since having gone up like a rocket it is to come down—like the stick! This glance had Pluto, and Flaxius found it useful, because by means of it his majesty rendered clear, or, as one may say, coloured, like an artist, the outlines of his spoken arguments.

'You are truly welcome, Flaxius!' said the Lord of the Underworld, 'as are all immortal mortals who have raised themselves as types of ideas to such a power that they can pass my realm as tourists between heaven and earth without becoming

mine. Ah! that is a very vulgar error on earth that I pass my time in trying to catch souls! Did men but know how I pass all my life in painful effort to get rid of them! Well, I have seen here in days of yore, each for his three days, Adonis—ah, *he* stayed six months, by request of my wife! Orpheus—music—poor fellow! . . . Socrates, Buddha, Dante—you know the list—and so on down to Emanuel Swedenborg. And every one of them saw hell after his own fashion—and then raised it after his peculiar style to earth, and no one interfered with the seeing thereof. . . .

‘But, my Flaxius,’ resumed Pluto, with a genial smile, ‘is there any reason why we should not drink, although we are in hell?’

‘*Raison de plus*, most men would surely think,’ replied Flaxius.

And at the word there were before them two goblets creaming and streaming over; and Flaxius noticed that the infernal care of details was exquisitely carried out in this, that the *drops* which are generally a great drawback to the over-brimming beaker, did not fall on his clothes and wet or stain them, but, becoming diamonds or pearls, rebounded dry.

And the draught was transcendental—so cool, so piquant, so enlivening! Pluto smiled.

‘Confess, Flaxius,’ he said, ‘that hell is not, as you find it, exactly what man imagines it to be?’

‘True,’ said Flaxius emptying his goblet, which refilled itself; ‘and yet I imagine that I am as far as ever from knowing what it is!’

‘And that distance,’ replied the monarch, drawing his own glass, ‘I will diminish for thee, O thou Sage

of Sublime Common Sense, for thou shalt have a nearer perception of the truth and what Inferno is than any of thy predecessors.'

Now, Flaxius, comfortably seated in a high-backed chair, with the towering, Jacqueline can, or goblet, foaming before him, listened, *arrectis auribus*, graving every word which he heard on the tablet of his soul, even as Alba seated on a Greek tabouret at a little distance was doing on a leaf of ivory with her stylus. [And here notes Flaxius in the margin: 'It is a curious fact that Alban is depicted in Etruscan vases as holding a stylus or pen, and that the witches of Tuscany, who still know her as Bellaria, declare that she is the spirit of the Pen, and is the one to be invoked by all who would write, *i.e.* compose well. *Aurora Musis amica.*]

'Know, my Flaxius,' began his majesty, 'that earth and all its trials, troubles, and torments diseases, and miseries, ceases even for the worst and wickedest when they come here. We begin with them all *de novo*, on an entirely new system—the old body is gone and we are done with it. Physical torment ceases with the old life, for even the most earthly. Only ideas and earthly ideals remain, and to these is given full scope and free play. All begin here with unlimited freedom and indulgence.'

'If I may interrupt your majesty,' said Flaxius, 'I would remark that many people would suppose that you are, by inadvertent error, describing heaven.'

'Yes,' replied Pluto, 'that is indeed the heaven of every fool. But it is the surest way to come to grief in the long run. The ultimate extreme of hell or of punishment is for every man to be left

utterly to himself, to have his own way, to follow his own fancies, to rule as he lists, and do uncontrolled just what he likes. Few and far between have those mortals ever been who, gifted with power, would not damn themselves on earth if left without guidance or control.

‘Now this is *hell*, and if thou wouldst know what the word really means, I reply, “a place where every one can do just what he pleases, and have all that he wants.” Every one entering here is supplied with such a world as he desires, with corresponding scenes and companions—he himself unconsciously drawing them all from memory and imagination. But note—for it is an important point—that they believe it all to be real, and in a certain sense it is so, for they have given to them the power, which science will some day give to man on earth, of perfect synthesis by volition—that is of drawing out the elements by *will* from the *prima materia* or *materialising* unseen elements, or conceptions.’

‘I understand,’ said Flaxius. ‘Gods in a small way. Demiurguses. Make things!’

‘They think so,’ laughed Pluto. ‘All here believe for a long time—as they believed like fools on earth—that all which they saw on earth or see here is real. What is real is unchangeable and eternal. Who lives in Evolution, as all do on earth or in matter, lives in the Transient. It is when they realise by mere satiety the unreality of things that their punishment comes—that of despair. Then after a season they begin to exert themselves to seek higher ideals or something new, which being attained, there comes again satiety, and then renewed effort, every new stage becoming easier, until at last

man rises to the gods or God. The best experience disappointment and rebuffs; but they go on. The wise who on earth have shaped better ideals, the altruists and benevolent philosophers or Christians, and people who have not meddled with others, or lived entirely in the eyes and opinions of others, or revelled in notoriety, or been selfish and tyrannical in the small or great relations of life, these do not remain long in our world of shams. The honest poet or artist or man of letters is let off very easily, as indeed are all who have been kinder to mankind than mankind has been unto them.

‘The world is ever advancing,’ continued Pluto, ‘and to satisfy the soul with what is for the time around it on earth, or to think of carrying it on for ever into the future, as *all* creeds do’ added his majesty significantly, ‘is *to stop*. (Flaxius, my son, be thou not like to them, but keep that holy emblem the Cup going.)’ They both drained, and the Lord of Hades resumed:

‘The selfish nature thus gratified and satisfied with temporary forms does not lift its mind to, or progress with—Evolution.’

‘Ha!’ quoth Flaxius, ‘light is coming fast; I do begin to feel I have indeed immortal longings in me! This then is the faith so long foretold—which is neither Buddhist nor Christian, nor Material.’

‘Ay, Flaxius, it is the very truth, as it seems to me every one might surmise from the very infinity of creative forms in nature, from the ideals which they declare and the inexhaustibility of matter and force. All goes on, slowly it seems, but there is eternity to work in, and its great law is progress.’

'Now Evolution is the creation of new laws from old, of new types from others exhausted, of new ideals, as new patterns are created *ad infinitum* by a revolving kaleidoscope, a continual out-blossoming and ripening of flowers which were once small, wild blossoms and are now hundred-leaved *grandifloræ*. And these again will be raised to newer and more magnificent forms. And you need not ask what is to become of Man in all this, for, rely upon it, where all is progressing, all is well. He who is magnanimous, and who can grasp in its fulness all this scheme, will not be afraid to cast himself headlong into the foaming flood and trust to its bearing him safely on. Fortune favours the bold, and he who *is* afraid, whimpering "What is to become of poor little *Me?*" will be carried away in time all the same. But that man never loved the beautiful or nature who feared death.

'Now we may consider all mankind on earth as a single man in hell—living in Evolution, yet ignorant of it, opposing it with his self-formed, conservative ideas—an old woman sweeping out the sea with a broom—and you have the key to the whole.'

'It appears to me,' observed Flaxius, who had listened to these remarks with evident approbation—if the taking a drink ever and anon and sighing with content could be interpreted as 'Hear! Hear!' or 'fervent applause'—'that there is a marvellous spirit of romance and poetry and wild adventure in Evolution as you set it forth, and exquisite inspiration to a higher devotion, and a purer and far more vigorous religion than man has ever before dreamed of. For this faith in nature with her ever-unfolding ideals, and that of self, in "*What* I know not, but

in the best, *that* I know!" is so bold and knightly that before it all that was ever presented to man seems poor and weak and dim. The Church and conventional cant, or modern life, have well-nigh crushed out in man every trace of daring or chivalry, and this religion has in it that which will revive such qualities on a far higher scale than was found in the Middle Ages.'

'Saving this, Flaxius,' added his majesty, 'that Evolution asks man to understand pure science as a basis and accept its deductions as to evolving ideals, and not rely entirely on tradition which is well-nigh folk-lore. And when the simple truth of anything has once been studied or accepted, the poetry and romance soon follow. *Crede experto Roberto!*'

'Ay, by the Father of the Fathers of Faith!' exclaimed Flaxius, 'your majesty has had some experience. May I venture to inquire,' he added, 'what part this ever "freshly fresh and newly new," as the Hindus sing it, this ever-beautiful and good young lady whom I see here has in your tremendous *pension*, or boarding-school for eternity?'

'Eternity!' said Pluto, with a smile. 'Nay, you have not yet heard the last word. But as for Albana——' Here he gave a glance of ineffably respectful, fond kindness at the subject of their discourse. 'You have seen in life in many lands noble women who, as Sisters of Charity or slummers—go anywhere to do good. Albana ranges through hell, earth, and heaven. The pure soul is everywhere at home, and love hath no bounds. We are not so cruel in our punishment as to leave souls entirely to themselves in the task of rehabilitation. She and

her sisters—love and love alone—suggest to the despairing new ideals of life.’

‘Ay,’ cried Flaxius, ‘hell is the gate to heaven, that I see. A lesson which I should have learned on earth. Yet man has been there longer than I without learning it. It must be so—“Pluto, thou reasonest well,”’ he added. (And to himself, ‘I suppose the reviewers will light on *that* as a typographical error.’)

‘And now,’ said his majesty, ‘the lecture is over for to-day. Go with Albana as a Beatrice through my realm and visit the condemned in their homes.’

‘And the *last word* to which you alluded?’ inquired Flaxius.

‘It is,’ said Pluto, with a smile, ‘that all which you have seen, or shall see here in Hades, as I have indeed plainly said already, is, to speak Sanscritically, only Maya, or Illusion. All smoke, but it rises from a real fire. *Ite!—missa est!*’

‘And what did you think of the Lower World?’ inquired the Fairy of Flaxius.

‘That it is misnamed, O Soul of the Violets!’ replied the Etruscan, ‘since it appeared to me as being one degree higher than this. For in it the average Philistine and guinea-pig and sinful gossip are gently led or induced to find out that they are fools or evil-doers, and that he who gives himself most earnestly to life goes deepest into death. Now man is destined to slowly learn this lesson through the ages, and as he progresses in it, Science will, step by step, overcome death. So that as we become idealists, so shall we also advance into earthly immortality. That, your Fairyness, is what I conclude from what I beheld. In fact I am so smitten

with admiration at the beautiful humanity of hell as I saw it, that I can only declare that if there is really no such place there *ought* to be one !'

'It will do just as well if you write and publish an account of it,' replied the fairy. 'The main thing is to teach mankind the great lesson that most men left to mere commonplace and earthly ideals must inevitably damn themselves.'

'Beyond this, O Loveliness,' resumed Flaxius, 'I was induced to reflect, that to avoid hell, satiety, and despair, it is necessary to have an iron *will*, and one formed on the strictest moral lines. And he who can make a perfect will unto himself, so as to make his whole soul or intellect obey his spirit or conscience or God-within, has won all that he needs in time or eternity. This, O Life of Endless Light ! is the great lesson of Orcus.'

'It would have been well worth going there to learn that,' said the fairy, 'had it even been all fire and suffering. But haste and write it down, for many there be who need the lesson, which is the highest of all in true wisdom.'

'He to whom the devil grants
All he wishes, all he wants,
However gaily time be passed
Will catch the devil at the last.'

FLAXIUS AND ADELINDÈ

A LEGEND OF THE EARLY LOMBARD DAYS,
BEING ONE OF THE VISIONS WHICH FLAXIUS
HAD WHILE IN HELL

‘Said Chider the immortal, the ever young :
“I passed by a city, a man stood near
Plucking fruit that in a fair garden hung.
I asked, “How long has the city been here?”
He said, as the clustering fruit he caught,
“There was always a city in this spot,
And so there will be till time is not.”
Five hundred years passed by as before :
I was standing upon that spot once more.’

WHILE the learned Flaxius repeated these lines with strange feeling, as if recalling to him missing memories, he looked intently at every object round as if he would wring from it some buried mystery or long-hidden secret. It was twilight-tide in the last golden-brown of a Carpoccio sky. Broad and wide in the rapidly dimming distance were undulating hills covered with vineyards and olives, like a waving sea topped with green foam ; here and there were hamlets of white houses, and above them stately towered castles, like shepherds watching flocks of sheep at eve ; long lines of stone walls, flowing with maiden-hair or helmeted with cactus—all softly fair and far away !

It was a beautiful picture ; but what interested the man of many years, and by-gone lives, was what lay close about him—the grey and mossy relics of

an ancient ville—it may have been a quaint, small town of well-marked fortalices, or a brave and beautiful little city in Lombard times—now all abandoned in its solitude. Here and there a run of ivied wall and a square tower still held themselves up respectably, as if opposing a stout heart to bad fortune;—a fine thing to see in any ruin, be it of man or marble. There were hillocks—ruined arches—and now it was all a home for ghosts and owls, or else some shadowy night-hag wandering slow.

And as Flaxius considered the masses of ferns and weeds, and saucy acanthus, and golden blossoms of many kinds, and arrogant asphodels, which seemed to crowd themselves into the ruins and say: ‘Poor things, *we* will protect you and make everything look respectable,’ the sage reflected:

‘’Tis all, as in every city—where *la génération qui vient se moque de la noblesse qui va*—golden blossoms or guinea-pigs—flaunting weeds, rotting while they cover that which is older and nobler!—*avanti!* Dandelions—*pisciaccane* in Italian—with your flowers like golden florins, and your dandy-lions of sons, begone!’

As if in answer to him he heard a bell from some church cloister far away strike twelve, softly and slowly, as if the chimes had been transfused through the honey-golden summer air which lingered into night. And with the last note all the weeds and flowers vanished; the ruins revived, shooting up again into ancient glory; towers rose from the dust—façades en-niching many a form of forgotten saints—transfigured and idealised, and over all zig-zagging and working wildly into life-like, pictured dreams, innumerable arabesques of old

Lombard vines and monsters, warriors fighting dragons whose tails ended in branching dragon-wort and dogs who were half dog-wood, chasing wolves who were three-quarters wolfsbane—puns in stone, for those who can read them.

Stern and unmoved sat the man of many ages, looking at the wondrous transformation scene, as if at the opera. Like one who has had for years a season ticket, he keenly looked to see if it were well done, for he was a member of the Eternal Press which reports history, the great *Times* of all time.

And verily he who has mastered the course of the circling ages in chronicles, and feels their soul, and has learned their lesson, may sit like Mephistopheles before the Sphinx and put such mocking questions as he will, with all the might of all that man may dare.

Then, one by one, and two by two, lights began to appear in the windows, and a great beacon fire, at first all violet, and anon waving into blended emerald and scarlet flame blazed out on the summit of the donjon-tower. And soon all the scene was translucent and fluent with a wondrous glow as if an Aurora had been suddenly born, or the Goddess of the Four Winds, amid blazing laurel and roses while the fairies sang a pæan of welcome (as a Romagna legend tells the tale). For with the outbursting light, there rose a strange, sweet chorus of unearthly voices in the long-forgotten, Lombard-Gothic tongue; and Flaxius hummed softly to the air:

‘Five hundred years have passed by as before :
I am listening to the song once more.’

Then shadowy forms were seen among the shades, as if born from them, and blending in them, and as the light grew, they too became beings of light and colour and beauty, lords and ladies of the olden time with their pages and maidens dressed in the Latin-Lombard style; in which as in its sculptures, a rude, Northern strength submitted to, and was blended with, Romano-Greek grace and ornament, even as Hercules was subdued by Omphalé.

‘Five hundred years,’ hummed Flaxius, ‘that garb once more!’

In step with the music, and as if moving with the waves of coloured light, gracefully and stately as swans in a dream, there came by a walking group of gentlemen and ladies, who, seeing Flaxius, paused while one from the latter said to him in old Italian:

‘Mortal, since thou art here sleeping at midnight and in full moon-tide, thou hast won the power to behold us, and share our festivity. Join us and enter the castle.’

Gravely and almost sadly answered the man of the ages in the old Lombard-Gothic tongue:

‘I am as little mortal as ye are immortal, ye shadows of ghosts of days long passed away! But what ye offer me in courtesy, I do with thankful courtesy accept. My lord Agobard of the Amal race, I was by your side when you routed the Romans at Ravenna, and when you retreated, beaten yet glorious before the Huns in the Mark of Tuscany. Know that your name is still to be read in old chronicles. My Lady Chlodoviga, now Luisa, I am glad to see that your fire-sapphire eyes still flash as fiercely from under your golden hair as they did when we last met.’

‘Knowest thou *me*?’ exclaimed a giant-like and ancient warrior, with a vast grey beard, yet who had all the fire of youth, and by whom stood a younger noble who was like the elder in all save age. ‘Am I still remembered on earth?’

‘Well do I know thee, Master Hildebrand, and not I alone but all men living, where’er resounds the German tongue and German hymns to God are sung, for all men who can read it have read the Song of the Father and the Son, of thee and of my Lord Hahdubrand now by thy side, unto whom I offer greeting. While the Book of Heroes shall live ye will live in it.’

‘And *thou*, great master, who hast the serpent tongue of Gunlaug?’

‘Ask me not, but I am of the sorcerer race of the God Frey, and was ere thou wert born.’

So in music and light they all gravely passed into the castle, through brilliant, buzzing groups, harpers and horn-players and *citharædi* making music—threading the mazes of a torch-dance, till my Lord Hildebrand led Flaxius before a lady seated beneath a canopy on a double chair like a throne. The canopy was of light-brown silk from Sicily and on it were heavily embroidered dragons and leafy branches in black and gold, with many red and gold disks. The throne was of dark nut wood and ivory.

She who sat on the throne was a queen of beauty, of a beauty long passed away with the chivalry and romance of the early Gothic time. For every age, as Flaxius said, has its own beauty, which busts or portraits never portray to those who come after, though they may have been perfect likenesses,

any more than the dried flower retains its early perfume. For there was in the woman's face a nameless, stern, firm will, an unfamiliarity with little things and small sentiments, the steady glow of a soul which knew only great aims and was used to great efforts, and such were all who were leaders in those days, and in each other they all read their like, which is a noble thing for noble minds. Yet there was in her eyes a glow and glory of beauty and of passion which betrayed unearthly blood and immortal longing, and as she looked with a smile of welcome at Flaxius, there flashed into his mind a feeling of joy which she little suspected, that he was not one who could be bewitched or silenced or bullied by any magic :

‘Five hundred years have passed by as before,
I gaze upon those eyes once more.’

‘I present to your princely highness,’ said Lord Hildebrand, ‘a stranger of great wisdom, whom we found within the domain. Who he may be, Lady Adelindè, I cannot divine, but I warrant him well worthy a warm welcome.’

‘It is given with a good will,’ replied Adelindè in a deep, sweet voice, which was as marvellous and strange as her eyes, and which seemed like their light changed to sound. ‘And be not alarmed or astonished, sir stranger, to find yourself in what is doubtless to you a marvellous scene of enchantment.’

‘I am not,’ answered Flaxius simply, as he gazed at her. ‘There is nothing here so wonderful as thou art.’

Now be she fairy or sorceress or ghost-devil of a peeress or diabolical princess, a woman is always a

woman, and the Lady Adelindè, who was something of all of these at once, divined that Flaxius was no common mortal such as she had been accustomed to catch and cajole now and then, to turn out of doors that he might find himself Rip van Winkled or Barbarossa'd or Seven Sleepered and seven years older in the morning, lying with a rheumatism on a cold stone. The lightly-rosy snow of her fair cheeks flushed to richer red at the steady glance of the stern, grey-blue eyes of her grim guest, in whom she at once felt a power perhaps beyond her own—*chi sa?*—and it was with a tone into which she infused her very best sorcery—the kind formerly conserved for kings—that she invited Flaxius to rest himself beside her on the throne.

‘You will join our banquet?’ she asked with another professional smile.

‘I have had nothing to eat all day,’ replied Flaxius, in true old Lombardo-Roman tone. (Note that there was a great deal in this manner and tone, and the princess caught it.) ‘For we all require food,’ added Flaxius. ‘Mortals or spirits, all eat and drink.’

‘*We!*’ reflected Adelindè. ‘The “mortals *and* spirits” was an after-thought! I wonder who or what he is!’

‘Even mortals,’ continued Flaxius, ‘require scent and taste in their food, else it would not nourish them. Mere spiritual beings live simply on taste and scent, while the still more refined, or divine, exist on perfume alone. You, fairest Adelindè, have, I doubt not, very often dined on a daisy, had the scent of a pink for an *entrée*, and a sniff of a rose for dessert, but that much you absolutely

required. There were even mortal queens of yore who were thus refined. Chrimhilde was one. The chronicle does not mention it, but it is true that when our old friend Hildebrand, with hero Hagen, ravished her rose-garden, they destroyed her larder.'

'No, he is not a common mortal,' flashed Adelindè through her mind, for she always thought in sheet-lightning ere she spoke. (And I pray you note that this metaphor is truthful enough, for a later Latin writer tells us that the voices of all unearthly beings are like thunder, there being even in their softest, dulcet tones—*si symphonia canere vel ad tibiam versus fundere*—even when they sing their sweetest in symphonies or pour forth their souls unto the witching flute, a softly murmuring undertone, or strange, dark suspicion of the grandeur of the Voice of God as it speaks in the stars.) And the spiritual sheet-lightning of Adelindè's thought was materialised in her glances.

Meanwhile the banquet, or revel, grew wild and bold. Flaxius ate like a mortal, or like three—('Decidedly he is only human,' thought Adelindè)—and drank like four, five, or six. But there was no change in the grey-blue eyes, or in his voice.

'No, he is in-human,' reflected the lady. 'Mortal man could never drink like *that!*'

Yet she had seen stout drinkers in her time, in the old Roman-Longobardi days. Yes, they drank like bricks, for, as ye know, a dry brick will absorb its own equivalent of fluid. Which the Latins rendered, *Ranas superat bibendo*, and the old Italians 'like a German' or a cardinal—cardinal virtues being, alack, more like carnal vices in those days.

Wilder pealed the music, louder laughed and roared the company. From a revel which would have maddened a mortal, it became a Sabbath of sorcerers and witches, a Pandemonium of passions, an Inferno broken loose. Even the figures in the marvellous mosaics on the vaulted ceiling above—saints and kings and queens and warriors brave, such as we still see at Ravenna—became animated and danced or embraced, trailing after them gorgeous and jewelled robes, so that as there had been over much decay and silence and death before in the ruin, even so there now seemed to be as much excess of life and tumult. . . . A reverend bishop reeled and tumbled down . . . while saints too fondly fondled saintesses—a rosy wine-light seemed to tinge the air, as if the very hall itself were drunk, and all were swimming in a ruby sea. *Quasi vinis Græcis Neptunus suffudit mare!*

The princess, wild as a mænad, wanton as a faun, had cast herself on the heart of her guest, while she seemed joyous as a mad panther,—the maddest of all things when gay,¹—but she still realised to her unbounded awe, that she in all *deliria* of delight had never for an instant cast a charm or fascination over her mystic guest.

But what was to her astounding, well-nigh petrifying, a thing new to her since a thousand years, the princess felt a mighty thrilling influence in her heart, a new-born spirit speaking in her soul, that she herself was at last being won, instead of being the winner! But why this should have so fearfully

¹ The frolicsomeness of a panther suggests intoxication. In this it surpasses all other animals. Therefore the car of Bacchus is drawn by panthers.

struck and startled her, not without a joyous after-glow of hope, will appear anon.

‘Great and marvellous man,’ she at length exclaimed, recovering her breath—then bursting into her true self and life,—’twas like a pale moon exploding into a noonday sun—‘tell me who or what art thou, now speaking our long-forgotten Lombard tongue, knowing all my court and me, inaccessible to my power, and oh, that I should ever dare to think and dream it! perhaps mastering me!’

‘Dost thou desire it?’ asked Flaxius calmly.

‘Does the lost soul desire to be freed from hell?’ cried the princess, in a long, wailing tone of a spirit in despair. ‘Does the prisoner on the rack wish the torture to cease? Man of mystery!’ she suddenly cried, ‘dost thou know my life and my doom?’

‘Well do I know it,’ replied Flaxius, ‘and now look me well in the eyes, thou daughter of the old Lombard line of kings, and yet a spirit’s child, for thy fated hour has come at last. Yet ere I tell thee more, answer me, great soul, what has this life which thou didst take of thy own free choice—when thou hadst liberty to choose among all—what has this life become, which was, as thou didst once declare, the only heaven thou couldst understand?’

‘It has become a hell,’ replied Adelindè, with an immortal shudder; ‘a hell of weary, worn-out, oft-repeated imagery of splendour, a tiresomeness of idle power, with the real torment of the conscience that I was—a fool!’

‘He or she is a long way advanced towards freedom or wisdom,’ quoth Flaxius, ‘who has found out that he—or she—is a fool. Well, lady, thus it was that centuries ago there lived on earth a beautiful

princess of the Lombard line, who had a sorceress mother, and a fairy Amal-Alruna ancestress, and who, having been trained to all the mysteries and magic of the North, as well as of Rome, and of many races, attained to such power as had rarely been given to woman. Yet through it all she retained beauty and the love of power and pleasure, of magnificence, and the keen, fierce delight of preying on the hearts and lives of men, and of living, even as thou livest here now, Adelindè !

‘ And having gained great power, and on one occasion by mighty worship and great services to *Tinia*—the great ruling spirit of the Tuscan land—obtained full and free choice as to her future life for ever, she said : “ What that life for saints may be I know not, but this I know, that the life which I now lead is all that heart can desire, and I would fain live it so long as a single fibre of my soul remains as it is.”

‘ Near and dear to her in those days was one who had lived in the ages, and been her teacher, and more, and had tried to win her from her worldly wont, and all in vain. So they went their ways, she to splendour and pageantry in life and after life, and he to study and observe in existences beyond her ken. And in her gaiety and luxury the ages rolled on, and as they rolled, there wore away the happiness of her elfin life, and torment set in, the torment ordained to every one on earth who succeeds in having to satiety and excess his own will.’

‘ Man, thou speakest true,’ wailed the princess, as the voices of revelry sank lower, and the figures fading began to pass away, and the lights grew dim. The music became softer in its modulations,

and the mind of Flaxius ran insensibly into unspoken song, in accompaniment with the line :

‘Five hundred years have passed by as before.’

‘One by one,’ he resumed, ‘the enchanted princess lost her passions and longings. She had delirious desires, keen appetites, an immortal and beautiful thirst, an exquisite appreciation of all that is beautiful, dainty caprices, delicate and true. Wit, humour, whim, wild-will, and Attic salt were as life to her ; she revelled in music and song and letters—as thou dost in this life, or as thou didst when in the body.’

The poor princess grew tearful ; the marble parlor of her fading cheek might have made sorrow in the hardest heart.

‘Yes, it all wore into triteness and commonplace, even the being hungry and eating, desiring and realising the same things over and over again, for *she* had a soul, and every soul is damned, as soon as it is clogged and stops working, like a bee that has wished itself into eternal honey.’

Adelindè cried on.

‘But one thing survived—it generally *is* about the last thing to die out of any woman’s heart—and that was the desire to fascinate men, to win them, to impose on them, and to have her own way. She felt it in her head and heart like a curse ; she knew it was the poison of her soul ; everything else grew stale, but that kept fresh.

‘And it had been decreed that if she could ever meet a man who could resist and conquer her, the spell would end ; but, alas, she had wished for and won such a stupendous stock of enchanting charms that she was perfectly *irresistible* and simply dis-

tracting, which is a thing that stands between many a woman and her salvation, in all ages. For it has kept more souls in the dark, and made more ugly fools, who might have become spiritually beautiful, than any cause on earth. So from such mothers many men are fools: an Agrippina has always a Nero for a son.'

Crushed to naught, fair Adelindè wept, till, lifting her eyes to those of the guest, a sudden, tremendous convulsion, one of transcendent rapture, mingled with strangest amazement, thrilled over her. She bent on him a glance which might have split a stone.

The music played on ever more softly, more sweetly to their words in perfect time.

'Now I know thee, Flaxius,' she cried. '*Vicisti*, thou hast conquered! The last link of the chain which bound me for centuries to earth is broken. And even in the hour in which we meet, beloved master, and in the instant of our love, because it *is* our love, and I am conquered, I leave thee for the better life beyond! But, ah! to have remained with thee, I would have gladly endured this ghostly existence, which had become a torment. All this is ended. Now these walls will know me no more; the peasant benighted will no longer see strange lights flickering over the ancient ruin; the enchantment has departed, and the spell of golden glory and glamour will no longer shine at midnight in these halls. The wanderer may now safely sleep here; he will behold no longer the elfin array, or my Lombard lords and ladies of the olden times, nor be enchanted by their queen. Sound for the last time my fairy music—your sweet strains will never more be heard in the

court of Adelindè! Farewell, O master, we shall meet again soon, and full often in a better life—such as thou hast chosen—a life not clogged by earthly desires or petty worldly aims.’

As she said this, the princess cast herself in a last passionate embrace on the breast of Flaxius, and as she did so, he felt that her life and form were passing away to a purer, more idealised existence. The figure faded, the features, the face, last of all the ineffable splendour of the Sorceress’s eyes, in which there was the radiance of a divine, parting smile: she spoke no more, the music died away.

‘O love, in thy glory go!’ said Flaxius. ‘Never yet passed into life eternal a sweeter soul, never yet was a fairer goblet of the ancient time remelted into a nobler form. O love, in thy glory go! Lovelier form did never fade, brighter rose was never broken. ’Tis but a brief minute since thou wert in thy inferno of despair, and now by one instant’s flash of love and humility, thy beautiful soul is passing through the golden-pearled portals, and through the halls of the heavenly unknown. Even I cannot tell, not in this short space, what sphere contains the fairy soul that hath forsook her mansion in this earthly nook. O love, in thy glory go!’

Silent and alone sat Flaxius as the shades vanished one by one. Last of all there stood before him the giant forms of Hildebrand and his son Hahdubrand. The warrior pressed his hand and spoke no word, but Flaxius read in his eyes deep and full feeling—the knowledge of all that had passed, and a farewell.

‘Yes, farewell, my brave old companion of ancient days,’ said Flaxius. ‘Thou, too, mayst pass away to lands beyond. Thou didst battle for glory and

fame, and hast learned from me that it has been truly won. *Du kannst zu Land ausreiten*—so, warrior, fare thee well!’

So he sat there till all had passed away, the glitter and glamour of chivalry and a fairy court; till the high towers had become a low, grey ruin, and the spiders’ webs hung again in the palace halls, and there were vines on crumbling walls, and the stones, themselves to ruin grown like him, seemed death-like old. Then, as in waves, the weeds grew again up to where he sat; and as the rising sun cast its first ray on him, he started as if from a dream.

‘*Comedia luget, scena est deserta,*’ he murmured. ‘Now if I wished to preach a new faith to mankind, Adelindè has given me the text. For I now see that hell *is* the place where every mortal can have to his heart’s content his own desire, as Pluto declared. And this hell may be on earth, in life, and all may know it in their very hearts.

‘*Hæc fabula docet,*’ wrote Flaxius on the revise, ‘two or three morals not mentioned in the conclusion. *Item,* the Spirit that is in the trees, the Being in green leaves among the groves, the rocks and waters, or the wanton weeds, reveals unto the poet wondrous things which, being written, are as real in truth, in beauty, and in goodness for the world, as aught that ever happened in the past. He who has mastered this in every sense lives in a fairy-land while here on earth, yet they are few who ever master it.

‘And yet again that great prosperity gives birth to a vanity which is often an intermittent weakness in men, and a steady madness in women, as may be clearly discerned in the memoirs or lives of all who

have flourished in the atmosphere of courts, wherein, as in a hot-house, things worth no more than weeds in nature or in their proper state, are as exotics, nursed up into such condition by prosperity, that they despise every flower or plant which grows in the open air. For who, indeed, has not known some feeble-minded man or woman whose head has been so turned by having everything he or she wanted, that either is fain to scream as at some great inhuman injustice when a miracle is not wrought in some dire need—as in the want of “diamonds like the duke’s”!’

‘Now it was in the instant when her vanity was humiliated for ever, and she realised that there was, indeed, a man who was too much for her, that Adelindè first saw herself in very truth as she was, like Hawthorne’s Man of Straw, and grasped the tremendous truth of Christian humility. Which is enough time for a great mind to be saved, just as one handful of powder will in an instant overthrow a lordly tower, while it may require a ton thereof, and a long time, to destroy a mud-bank.

‘But every mortal, be he who he may, has learned a great lesson, and taken his first step to divinity, when he has learned in very truth that he is not a god.

‘Finally, there are many who imagine that old age cannot attack a man while he has health, strength, and physical or worldly appetite. And so long as he is a brute or a fool, were it for a thousand years, he could indeed go on eating, drinking, and frolicking with his kind. But with experience there comes a soul, and to that soul in time a weariness of all that earth contains, be it what it may. Now it is

a curious thing to observe that as the average growth of intellect in England has increased—I pray ye here put on your studying-caps—the average of life and the duration of vitality and intelligence has increased with it. When the great Duke of Marlborough pleaded extreme old age in asking for merciful indulgence—he was then sixty-three—no one thought it strange. 'Tis hardly worth the while to say, that now, few people would lend grace to such a plea, for life is lengthening, and 'twill lengthen on slowly—it may be—surely, into wondrous Time.

FLAXIUS AND THE WERE-WOLF

THE WONDERFUL STORY TELLING HOW RANDOLPH OF UPSALA ATE THE SHEEP, AND HOW MR. RANDOLPH OF WALL STREET DEVOURED THE LAMBS.

‘Now there are some people who think that those who believe they are Were-wolves only suffer from what is called by doctors *Lycanthropia*. But others hold that they are indeed changed to brutes, and this cannot be denied, and those who deny it are all infamous liars.’—*Peter Goldschmied, Hexen Advocat.* 1705.

IT happened once in the days of sword-songs and sagas, runic sorcery and sea-dragons, that Flaxius found himself in Sweden on a summer eve, gazing at the town of Upsala. He sat upon the little hill before it, where, as tradition tells, Odin was buried. Ye may see his bones, to-day, in a paste-board box in a case in the Stockholm Museum, where I who write these lines was allowed to reverently touch them, which is indeed a favour only accorded to a pious few who still worship the gods, disguised as folk-lorists and archæologists—*quorum pars sum.*

Now as Flaxius looked upon the strange city, and

the old tower, with its eight arches typifying the eight rings or armlets of the All-Father, he observed here and there on the walls, swinging in the wind, the corpses of the strangers who were caught straying about the country, and were then sentenced to *sus per coll*, or be hanged, slung up, or hitched to swing, dangle, swaggle, and go bibbety-bob in the breezes, as a sacrifice to Odin.

‘A somewhat severe custom,’ mused Flaxius gently, ‘yet doubtless not without its peculiar advantages. The stranger within our gates often seems to us well worthy of being gated, when he gets the entire government of cities into his hands, and runs the taxes—into his own pocket; as I with eye prophetic do foresee will be the case one day in Western lands, but late discovered by these valiant Norse.

‘But for the Sacrificed on yonder walls. I remember how upon a time in Rome when Nero made full oft grim martyrdoms, that a disciple of Paulus asked—hearing me declare that there was humour in all things—if it could be found in the awful conception of a God dying as a criminal to show his humility and love for the world? And I can recall how Odin once coming as stranger, or in some disguise, into this very town, he being their god, was seized at once and hung on yonder wall, as a due sacrifice unto himself. Over which thing he merrily exults as if it were a wondrous racy joke, as we may read in the Edda:

“For nine nights,
I hung on the wind-rocked tree
A sacrifice unto myself.”

Truly the idea was too much for me, but not for

the All-Father of the Northern gods, who found a grotesque humour in the conception of a Creator baffled by his own work. So he carried out the jest by being hung. Ah well! he lost the game after all, which shows that the Scandinavians were not good myth-makers. We managed these things much better in Etruria, Greece, and Rome. "There's nothing sacred to a pioneer," says a French proverb, and Odin was the *Sapeur* and leader, and discoverer for all the North. The Norseman and Norman were his children. Od or Hud was his name as 'the traveller,' and Henry Hudson was of the blood. Like an old traveller, Odin would have his joke.

'But as to this custom of stringing up, or scragging strangers, and making them dance upon nothing in honour of the Lord Odin, it behoves me to look to myself with care unless I too would wear a tight cravat, and I care not for such worldly vanities.'

Saying this he wandered on and away, till he came to a lonely place amid rocks and trees by a headlong stream, where he paused. Suddenly his attention was caught by a cry, which he found came from a pit hard by. It was a deep and powerful voice. And to it Flaxius replied:

'Who calls?'

The voice answered:

'I am one who has fallen into this pit, and have not the power to come forth.' Then he sang in staff-rhyme:

"To catch the Band-olf,
To take the Adelolf,
Bertolf, Eginolf,
Frekulf, Aistolf,
Hedenolf, Ingolf,
Kelolf and Kunolf,

Orkulf, Ordulf,
 Ludolf and Rachulf,
 Ralf and Ranulf,
 Wolfram and Tackolf,
 Theodolf, Unolf,
 Wolfart and many a wolf,
 Men with the sword,
 Bearers of Lances,
 Go forth to battle.
 To catch the Were-wolf,
 They dig the pit-fall,
 With runes and sorcery,
 Witch-rhyme and magic,
 So well they guard it
 That the wild wolf-man
 Falling into it,
 There must remain,
 Starving, a prisoner,
 Until a sorcerer,
 Pitying, comes to him,
 Breaking the witch-spell.”’

‘Which means in prose,’ said Flaxius, ‘that a poor devil of a sheep-stealer, *alias* a were-wolf, is here in the pit—more’s the pity! There is to my mind indeed—I know not why—something less of crime in stealing mutton and venison than some other things; in fact I remember that a great Etruscan dramatist, now forgotten, once made deer-poaching almost sacred. And I recall how a bold, brave man said to a judge in my hearing: “Jedge, I’m glad you punished that mizzable creeter so severely for stealing hens. Being naterally strong in the back, it *hes* befel at times when the country was thinly settled, that I myself have now and then inadvertently stolen a sheep, but I allays had the moral grandeur to refrain from Hens. *Hens!* O the low, poor, ornery, medium-minded cuss!—he orter to be *ashamed* of himself!”’

The man in the pit uttered an exclamation not over-pious.

‘It would serve these Swedes right, for their hanging strangers at Upsala,’ pursued Flaxius, ‘if I were to pull this poor devil up into the light of day. Let us see how they have laid their hocus-pocus of runes and witch-knots! Why rubbish and trash!’ he exclaimed with a scornful laugh, ‘an old Roman witch who tells fortunes for a penny would undo this sorcery with a pin! Ahem, let me try :

‘Aldebarantiphoscophornio!
 Bombochidescluninstaridé sarchides!
 Tarchun, Hinthial, Tara !

There—the charm is broken! Were-wolf, my son, come forth!’

And sure enough the pittite came forth. His appearance was *not*, to draw it mildly, as Flaxius observed unto himself, ‘absolutely prepossessing.’ *Punchius*, a celebrated Roman jester of the Lower Empire, once remarked of such an appearance, ‘that he would not be a nice customer to meet of a dark night in a lonely lane, on the loose.’ For he was red all over, as if with excessive health, and awful in muscle, an over-done Hercules, like to the Cacus of Baccio or Bandinell in the Signoria of Florence. His arms hung out from his sides like a turtle’s fins, because the bulging biceps were so great. His hair was red and dishevelled, and his eyes glared from under it with unmitigated ferocity, like those of a wild cat staring from a pig-pen. He bore on his left arm a wolf’s skin.

But suddenly, ere Flaxius could speak a word, the two found themselves surrounded by a crowd of furious rustics, who had evidently been ambushed on the watch, in the forest, about the pit. They rushed upon the pair with angry cries, accusing Flaxius of

having delivered the Were-wolf, also of being a stranger, and ere they were aware, cast over them a net in which they were helpless.

‘*Flagrante delicto,*’ thought Flaxius. ‘Misplaced humanity oft leads to woe. He who lets a rat out of a trap loses his cheese. What next?’

The next was that the culprits found themselves imprisoned in the witch-tower. Its walls were about twenty-five feet in thickness; there was just room in it for two to sit on a bench, and there was one grated window to admit air.

They looked at one another. Flaxius began to sing a song written some time after by the Trouvère, Marie de France:

“When lays abound, ’twould ill beseem
Bisclaveret were not a theme;
Such is the name by Bretons sung,
And Gar-wal in the Norman tongue.”

‘*Gar-wal!*’ exclaimed the other prisoner. ‘That means me—a were-wolf. ’Tis not our tongue, and yet I know the word.’

‘So I suppose, my son, therefore I sang,’ rejoined Flaxius. ‘So now while we are resting a space, from our romantic adventure, ere we get out of this somewhat limited apartment, I pray you tell me all your story clearly . . . in simple words, and few.’

‘By Fenris!’ exclaimed the Were-wolf, ‘I will tell you the truth. Loki and Hela take me if I lie! I was a free, simple *bonde*, a plain small farmer, and I lived from a flock of sheep. It was my all, and hard was my life withal. Now I had a rich neighbour, and one year my pasture was ruined by flood and storm, and this man being crafty, and I as simple as

a child, he persuaded me to pasture my sheep on his farm for half the lambs to come. But he so managed by head-craft and law-craft, as to take from me all I had; and when I followed my claim at the Thing or court, it went even worse with me, and I was cast into debt, and made a thrall or slave.

'Then I was mad with rage. Short words, master—I met a witch who gave me a spell, and I made myself a were-wolf. Then I slew all that man's sheep . . . one by one . . . I set fire to his home—his family all perished in the flame—he escaped, lame and a beggar. And I was made a Wolf's Head.'

'Truly a pretty tale!' remarked Flaxius. 'Apuleius might have made something of it. *Entre chien et loup* in this twilight, my son—or *entre nous*—hast thou more to narrate?'

'Yes. I had taken from my foe's house a goodly treasure of gold rings and coin, which I have concealed. Now, if any sorcerer would take the wolf-spell from me and change my face, I would buy me a ship and go a-pirating as a Viking, and so reform and lead an honest life.'

'Truly men's ideas as to *honesty*,' reflected Flaxius, 'are indeed somewhat involved—or as we may say—conventional. But what dost thou think, my son,' he said aloud, 'as to our present prospects?'

'Simply, my lord, that we shall be burned alive to-morrow in honour of Odin.'

'All lost—except honour,' quoth Flaxius. 'But, my son, I have no fancy to figure as a *rôti*, albeit I propose to be a *pièce de résistance*. Let us for once in our harmless and innocent lives vary the monotony of moral goodness by evading the law. All novelty is pleasing.'

‘And how shall we do it?’ asked the man amazed.

‘Thou art a strong carl,’ replied Flaxius, ‘and I warrant me that thou couldst tear yon window grating out of its place. And I—’tis a mere trick, my son—can increase thy strength ten-fold. Only drink now and then from this flask. So, so! bully boy, to work! Work while I sing to thee a magic spell taught by the great Ir-Ving.

“Hinculus dinculus trinculus!
 Holy boly bum!
 The Latin for chain is *Vinculus*
Nunc inspiratus sum!”

It was with intense awe that the Were-wolf listened to these words, and in full faith that he attacked the grating, which he pulled away as if it were straw.

‘Now try a stone, my son!’ exclaimed Flaxius. ‘Nay—take a pull first from the flask. There is a spirit therein, unknown to thee—*spiritus vini Gallici, duæ unciæ, fiat potatio!*’

Crash came a stone weighing a ton, then another, then a third. The Berserker rage was on the giant. Soon he had made a hole through which one could have driven a coach, but he kept on.

‘Softly, softly, my dear boy!’ interposed Flaxius. ‘Thou art too good an actor, and wilt bring down the whole house about our ears. Now, if thou art ready, I see the new moon rising o’er yon trees. Ha! Hesperus! I give thee greeting fond! Come to the green wood; let us haste away!’

It was a drop of twenty feet from the window, but the red man took it like a mountain goat, and then caught Flaxius in his arms, like a ball, albeit the

latter was none of your light-weights, neither was he small. Now, as the Wolf was still *berserk-wode*, or half-mad with the tremendous magic potion, he gave a fearful yell, turning townwards,

‘And shook his gauntlet at the towers,’

when catching up Flaxius on his back, he ran with him, ‘as a fox might run with a goose,’ thought the passenger, at headlong speed, along the road and into the woods, crashing through boughs and thickets, over rocks leaping, through torrents splashing; a-down a force or waterfall here, up a hill there, while Flaxius sang:

“Va petit postillon !
Va en avant, vite, vite !
Tu vas comme l’aquilon
Sur ta jument favorite ?

Go on, my postillion !
Before thee lies the way !
And thou art like an eagle fleet
Upon thy gallant grey !”

Truly the similes were all a little mixed, but they were in a devil of a shaking, jumbling hurry, and there was no pause till they found themselves far away in a lonely land, where it seemed as if the cock never crew, the sun never shone, and the wind never blew. There the Berserker threw himself matt and flat on the ground, out of wind, and dead broke. And then Flaxius noticed that he had in his right hand a sheep, which he had caught up on the way as he ran.

‘Truly there is a good soldier lost in this man,’ said Flaxius. ‘He can forage even during a retreat.’ So there was resting, cooking, and camping *au clair de la lune*; and the next day they went on, and so

to the North for many days more. The wolf-man seemed to be bound for a certain place, and Flaxius followed to see what would come thereout.

When on a time as they sat in a sunset on a headland overlooking a fiord, and far away from Upsala, the Wolf-man said :

‘Master, wilt thou take from me the spell which forces me when the moon is full to don this skin and raven as a wolf? For, anon, I shall begin to feel fierce convulsions throbbing, and wild commotion in all my blood, and raging madness for murder in my whole soul, the time for it being nearly come, and then I spare neither beast nor human being. Now, if thou dost not care to work the charm, there lives near this place, a-down in yonder dale, a Finn who is a famed sorcerer, and to him will I go for relief.’

Flaxius replied musingly, more to himself than to his follower :

‘Yes, it is true. Long, long ago in Greece, I made research into the *Lycanthropia*, which is one of the oldest mysteries of mad humanity. And it was in happy, sunny Arcady—*et in Arcadia ego*—where all was like a proverb of sweet peace, that it first showed itself to the world.

‘In that land, my son, was a wicked king named *Lycaon*. Once it happened that the great god, who was as the Odin and Frey of your faith in one, whose name was Zeus or Jupiter, and in Etruscan, Tinia, came in disguise to this Lycaon, who, to test the divinity or magic of his visitor, set before him human flesh cooked as mutton.’

‘But that was a *great* sin!’ exclaimed the Wolf-man, who was listening with round eyes and full

belief. 'To treat a *guest*, who should be sacred to the vilest of the vile, in such wise was *nidering*.'

'It was *très* low-flung, my son,' said Flaxius, who had a habit of prophetically borrowing phrases from vocabularies of the future. 'Yes, *niederträchtig*, scandalous, ribald, scrubby, pitiful, vile, infamous conduct—*infra dignitatem regis*. And it was promptly punished, for Zeus, on the spot, turned the king and his sons, who had had a hand in the little game, all into wolves—the first wolves ever seen—and they ran howling away through the door into the darkness, like mad.'

''Tis a fine tale,' said the Wolf-man. 'And so the first of us was a *king*, and if he was wicked, he was bold to dare such a deed.'

'But whence came this *mania*,' continued Flaxius, talking to himself, 'since there is a scientific cause for all things? *H'm-h'm!* the Arcadians were of the primæval race of the Pelasgi, who dwelt secluded from the mob of Asiatics, Egyptians, Levantines, and God knows what all, who fused into Greeks in time. In lonely valleys, deep in mountain dales, they pastured flocks, fought with the beasts of prey, and kept unchanged a mass of the wildest tales of sorcery and witchcraft in freshest faith. So they knew *fear* in its strangest form—the *panicus terror*—which seizes on mobs of men or beasts, and the *deliria* of spectres, as no other Greeks knew them. Out of such fear grew the bewildering *insania zoanthropica*, and the awful *insania metamorphosis* of which Nebuchadnezzar was the prototype. Finally we get to the *dementia lycanthropia*, so interestingly exemplified in thee—O my son!' he exclaimed, turning to the other, who had sat open-mouthed with wonder and

admiration at the speech, of which he had not understood one word. 'By the way, what is thy name, my son?' he continued.

'Ranulf, the mad wolf, is what men call me,' said the other proudly.

'*Mon fils, ce n'est pas l'instant pour la vanité humaine,*' rejoined Flaxius mildly; 'but as regards removing this disorder of thine, I would fain see how thy Finn will work it. I promise thee a cure in any case.'

They went down and on, till they came to a large, low cottage, buried amid birch-trees and willows. At the door sat an old man weaving baskets, droning to himself an ancient lay, while by him crouched an immense cat of some wild kind. The Finn was dressed in furs and woven bast, or softened willow wood in strips; his face was withered, but his eye was keen as an eagle's, and as his glance met Flaxius, the two understood one another,

'The curse of Ilmarin, or of Fenris, lies heavily on him,' said the Finn, indicating Ranulf.

'He hath a double curse,' replied Flaxius, 'with him it is *at leysa or laedingi eda at drepa or droma*,—the wolf hath two fetters to break—for he is firstly mad, and secondly outlawed, so that he must be mentally cured, and then disguised so as to escape the law. And I would fain see, my brother, how thou workest thy spell.'

'By the Great Oak!' exclaimed the sorcerer with a shrewd twinkle of his eye, 'I doubt not that our methods are much alike. But if it please you, O wise lord from the far Out-gard, to see my simple work, I will most willingly do my best.'

Saying this he took them into a room which was

closed and windowless, but in which burned a large, rude Lapland lamp; and having made Ranulf drink of a certain potion, he rubbed him over with an ointment, in the smell of which Flaxius detected certain ingredients which were to him far from being unknown.

‘Ahem!’ he reflected, ‘extract of mandragora, opium, henbane (order *solanaceæ*), sulphur, bitumen, verbena, *amico mio, dove diavolo avete pigliato tutte queste coglionerie*—where the devil didst rake up all this stuff? Yea, from the very ends of the earth do these Voodoos and conjurors correspond, and the Shaman of Kamtschatka sends the *Ammanita muscaria* unto Timbuctoo for sorceries. Proceed, O friend, I pray thee with thy wōrk!’

The Finn laid the patient on a bed, lighted a pan, in which were strange fumigants, and bade the Were-wolf look him long and steadily in the eyes; which he did with ten owl-power till he began to blink like a judge after luncheon, and finally went into a deep sleep. Then the shaman, taking a kind of large, oval-shaped tambourine, covered with reindeer skin, on which were drawn many mysterious, rude figures, began to beat it gently, while he sang in strange and evidently carefully measured and elaborately trained tones, the following:

‘By the soul of him the father!
 By the mighty Wainamoinen!
 By the sun and moon and planets,
 And their light upon the water!
 And the water all surrounding,
 And the forest by the seashore,
 And the bear within the forest!
 And the runic mystery written
 On his paw, and by the letters,
 Which the lightning writes in darkness,
 Only read by Ilmarinen!’

By the One, Three, Five and Seven,
 And the Four which causes growing,
 Ever giving, life-begetting :
 Wolf, I charge thee leave this mortal !

Fly along the running river,
 Fly across the ferny mountains,
 Fly into the pine-tree forest !
 Flee across the birch-edged meadows !
 Hasten to the oak-bound valley,
 Or where slopes are dense with beeches,
 Wade in haste through shallow water,
 Where the fishes dart in terror !
 By the rock on which the warriors
 Cut of yore their strongest record,
 With the mesh of interlaces,
 Which avert the witches' glances :
 Wolf, I charge thee, leave this mortal !
 Leave him so that when awaking,
 He shall never more remember,
 That he ever wore the wolf hide !'

Thereupon was heard near by the sound of a wolf howling, and, as one would think, praying and expostulating with the shaman, who was, however, very firm, and when the Wolf was over bold, began to sing again :

‘Fly along the running river !’

Till at last the Wolf was heard at some distance, and then still further away ; his voice ever less audible, until it seem to disappear amid rustling leaves, and mingle with the wind.

‘Admirably played, my brother,’ exclaimed Flaxius ; ‘Apollo never did the trick better. Hypnotized to perfection and cured—like a ham ! Yes, the wolf will be no longer at his door. And, my dear doctor, I like your *mise en scène*, your drum and your poetry and perfumery. By the way I can give you a hint or two as to improving the narcotics in

your ointment, and yet, who knows? perhaps for your rough folk you have the best *fiat lotio Cras mane sumendus.*'

'And if Ranulf would like to go a-Viking,' said the shaman, 'there is a rich man hard by who has a fine ship to sell cheap, with forty men all armed, and well.'

'Just like your provident kindness,' responded Flaxius. 'Always the same thoughtful old chap. And now for your fee—you won't take it—ah yes, *inter doctores*, among us members of the Faculty, of course. But permit me,' he said, producing from his pocket a second flask of the mystic alchemical, spagirical essence, 'to present to you a medicine which is as yet unknown in the North. Taste it and try its virtue on yourself! *Jameson, Dublin.*'

Saying this he uncorked the bottle, presented it, and the Finnic sorcerer, as the saying is, 'took a sight'; that is to say, the bottle ascended at an angle of forty-five degrees from his mouth, so that his vision glanced exactly in a line with the side, as if it were a pistol. He took very deliberate aim, was in no hurry, being evidently determined to make a line-shot, hit the bull's eye and bring down the game, and then *clucked*. The shot had been fired. Then turning to Flaxius he spoke no word, but uttered a *wink*, and such a wink as Flaxius had never seen before in all his mighty experience. The charge had gone home, and he had brought down his racoon, killing him dead at a shot.¹

¹ Mr. A. Savage Landor, in his very interesting book of travels among the Ainus makes mention of the marvellous power of expressive winking with which these northern savages are gifted, and I have observed the same among Red Indians. They learn it from their pow-wows or shamans.

There was a Finnish shaman sorcerer who had a wondrous interview with Hibernian spirits all that night, and who was found next morning buried in a magic trance. And far out at sea there was a solitary Viking sail bearing southward, and from the oarsmen came the chorus of a song in Icelandic :

‘Sing hey ! sing ho ! for the land of flowers !’

Ages had come and gone, and the cobwebs and dust had gathered three inches deep in crust on many an old bottle of wine in many an ancient cellar, when Flaxius found himself of a bright, crisp, autumn day in the city of New York, presenting a letter of introduction to a retired stock-broker, whose home was situated up the river, in the Catskills. This gentleman was named Randolph, and Flaxius was much pleased with him. He was a genial, jovial, merry-go-tumble man in a general way, with a quaint American *mot* for every circumstance, and quick at filling the kettle whenever there was any fun to be boiled ; but he had withal evidently a tremendous hard pan, or substratum, of what is called *horse-sense*, which is a sixth sense supplied by nature to her Western children. He was immensely powerful, in fact a perfect picture of excessive ruddy health, being one of those enviable muscular beasts who can bend a horse-shoe, or tear in two a pack of cards ; and he had a tremendous shock of red hair.

This ‘powerful party’ took a great liking in turn to Flaxius, forcing him to come at once, ‘to stay his time and plenty of it,’ at his villa on the Hudson ; where, what between reed-bird, venison, soft shell crab, terrapin and snapper soup, Spanish mackerel

and blue-fish banquets, pretty faces, festivities, drives, and gaieties, the guest drew comparisons with the pleasures of ancient Rome and Paris, not in all respects favourable to the latter.

It is an invariable rule in life, that however powerful and reticent a nature like that of Randolph's may be, it inevitably runs into intimate confidence when it meets with another of the kind of Flaxius. Mercury does not melt more surely into lead than the strong animal soul combines with a stronger intellectual power. And the end of it was, to abridge the tale, that one day Mr. Randolph told to his guest the story of his life.

'I was the son,' he said, 'of a farmer who lived in one of the eastern counties of Massachusetts, and who, being favoured by fortune, accumulated about one hundred thousand dollars. I was an only son; was sent to Harvard, graduated, and went to practise law in New York.

'Now with all these advantages, and some plain, hard-working common sense to boot, I still fell into the teeth and claws of a rascal. All that I can say in my own defence was that he took in and ruined many a far shrewder and more experienced man than I was. He was eminently pious, having what we here call 'New Jersey piety,' the kind which forms a part of every-day life, even as the skin does of the body. It is never laid aside, even by the thief in prison or by the keeper of the lowest den of iniquity, as was shown in the case of the Wickedest Man in New York, who was withal perfectly sincere in his piety and neither a Pharisee nor a hypocrite.

'This man was a stockbroker, and he induced me

by a series of marvellously ingenious tricks and devices to intrust to him the whole of my property. He was one of those great 'operators' who are technically said to live by slaughtering sheep or lambs.'

'Ahem!' interrupted Flaxius, 'you said *lambs*, I think. So he got all your flock?'

'Every handful of wool, and left me as bare as the back of your hand. It was by a very simple swindle. He invested my money, or that of others, in stocks, which were manipulated or depreciated by tricks to far below their value. If a man is a thorough rascal it is easy in the immense range of insecurities to find something which can be thus run down, or up. So my broker, when they were *down* bought them in for himself—it did not take him long to use up my hundred thousand. When all was gone, one of his clerks told me the whole story.

'I calmly and deliberately determined that I would devote my life and all its energies, without one qualm of conscience, to revenge. I swore I would hunt him, as a wolf.'

'Ah! I beg your pardon,' exclaimed Flaxius. 'But this is becoming extremely interesting.'

'As a wolf hunts a deer. So I went into Wall Street and worked as few have ever done to learn all its tricks and devices, and I had a great advantage, for while others worked for money, I only sought to learn how to work.

'Well, it came to pass in time that I knew that my enemy had invested a very large part of his means in a certain manufactory, which was in a remote district, several days away from New York, with which it had only a partial railroad

communication. I managed long and well, till I contrived to have it telegraphed that the entire town had been utterly destroyed by fire, and then we cut the telegraph wire, and tore up the rail. For three days we had that stock down to nothing, and bought it right and left.

‘The wolf was loose,’ remarked Flaxius.

‘You bet! And the best of it was that we ran it all over town that mine enemy had got up the whole thing himself to bear the stock! So be sure he was tee-totally ruined, but then he had *miscal-cu-lated!*’

Mr. Randolph uttered this with an expression which was distinctly lupine, showing his teeth in a style which recalled to Flaxius an ancient witch-tower in Upsala, and corpses hanging on the walls in the evening sunlight, and a story about certain sheep and lambs, *et cetera*.

‘Yes, it was a glorious, a noble operation,’ continued Mr. Randolph, ‘and perfectly successful. I got my hundred thousand back again with interest, every *plunker* of it. ‘Plunker’ is Cambridge College for a dollar.’

‘*Palanco*,’ interpolated Flaxius. ‘The Florentine for a two soldi piece. The same size.’

‘And that was only the beginning of my luck,’ continued Mr. Randolph. ‘For of course the truth oozed out, and it gave me a magnificent reputation, in Wall Street.’

‘Truly enviable,’ remarked Flaxius. ‘Were there many, think you, among your—colleagues—who would have done the same?’

‘No,’ replied Randolph proudly, ‘not a beggar of them. They hadn’t the nerve for it.’

‘It seems to me,’ reflected Flaxius, ‘that the ideas of mankind as to honesty are somewhat conventional. *Où, diable, va l’orgueil se nicher?*’

A few days after, Mr. Randolph invited Flaxius to take a sail in his yacht. And as they went along before the breeze, the host said :

‘I don’t know why it is, but the being on board my craft and hearing the waves, makes me feel as if I were an old Norse *vikingir*. Strange, isn’t it? By the way, my family was of Swedish origin, and yet the name Randolph is *Virginian*.’

‘H’m!’ replied Flaxius, ‘Ranolf is Norse enough. It means a raging wolf.’

‘*Hæc fabula docet*,’ wrote Flaxius on the blank end of the revise, ‘this fable teaches, that life is very much the same old dish over again: the solid beef or game of the dinner in the olden time re-cooked a little and laid lightly on toast for a more refined modern breakfast. And whether it was Thou and I indeed, or the Elements and Forces which make us, this much is certain, that *somehow* and *somewhere* we ever were, and as *something* ever shall be still acting. This is as much of immortality as a wise man requires, and a deal more than most of us deserve. Let us pass on to another story.’

FLAXIUS AND BREITMANN

'It is told in ancient story how to the Flemish court,
There came a knightly minstrel who made them royal sport,
That was as brave a Recké as ever yet was seen,
At fighting or at singing he won the prize I ween !
So stately in the festal hall, he caught each lady's eye.
And when it came to revelling he drank the cellar dry.'

WHILE swimming onwards down the stream of Time, it chanced all in the merry, golden hours of spring, when rivulets dance, and birds are on the wing :

'And a starry silver glory
Is at daybreak over all,
When the dews, like gems in story
On the queen like blossoms fall,'

that Flaxius, when in Innspruck, sat one afternoon in a shady beer-garden by the rushing river, listening to two nightingales in a cage, which were singing duets or holding talk in nightingale tongue, with two wild ones outside. The latter were complaining bitterly of the hard time they had of it to pick up a living ; while the imprisoned ones bewailed that their engagements to sing to select audiences did not allow them the least liberty, though they lived in luxury, being taken in whenever it rained and fed on ants' eggs, *ad libitum* ; which are the same to nightingales as Whitby oysters, caviare and *pâté aux truffes* are to us.

Flaxius observed that a broad-shouldered, big-bearded, tall, and knightly man, who seemed to be

half soldier and as much minstrel, sitting at the next table, also listened to the bird-songs with a smile, as if he partly understood them. On a closer examination, Flaxius recognised in him the Ritter Hans Breitmann, whom he had met in earlier times,—the same Breitmann, having in a small and very quiet way a humble little sixpenny immortality, just as the odd fish in nature have been preserved from the earliest types, while better kinds, which shone more brightly in their day, have vanished.

The sage bowed to the minstrel, the Breitmann waved his beer-mug to Flaxius, and the two drank politely, one to the other, and to old times.

‘You seem to understand bird-language,’ remarked the other.

‘*Nun*, yoost a liddle,’ replied the bard, who spoke all tongues in a curious patois. ‘Enough to get hints or dips for songs. All poets know someding of it, most of dem a crate deal petter as I. Yoost so de Gypsy Zigeuners play bird-songs—de whole orchestra—nefer twice alike, *ach ja! alles sehr schön*, peaudiful!’

‘Could you sing me a song learned from the nightingales?’ asked Flaxius.

‘Cerdainly,’ replied Breitmann, ‘mit bleasure,’ and, draining off his beer, he unslung the lute from his back, tuned two chords, hemmed, and then sang of—

LONG, LONG AGO

‘When de nightingale was singing,
All in de cool of eve,
To de pleasant breeze,
And de birds were flingin’
Perfume from de trees,

Hei da, ri dé!

Hei da, ri do!

I sat by my love so fair and gay,
 As we had sat for many a day,
 And *ach!* *wir warn so frô,*
 Loving—as dere we lay!

Dame Nightingale, de wood bird small,
 Sang to us a melody,
 How love outliveth all
 Whate'er on earth may pe ;

Hei da, ri dé!

Hei da, ri do!

“Love passeth all both great and small,
 So now sing afder me !”

We sang old songs togedder,
 Songs of de merry time,
 And light ash any fedder,
 We maked full many a Rhyme,

Hei da, ri dé!

Hei da, ri da

He da ri da Laun!

Unto a lute we sang dis lay,
 And so we passed de live-long day
 Until de Sun went down.

We sang old songs togedder
 Of loves long passed away,
 All in de pleasant wedder
 Ash in de grass we lay.

Hei da, ri da

Hei da, ri dá!

No more can I rememper, yet
 What I recall I'll ne'er forget
 So long as life is gay !’

And as the Breitmann sang and tinkled his lute, the nightingales who were present joined in—’twas like Jenny Lind and Parepa Rosa in a duet. I mention this, because in a later age the souls of the two caged nightingales did actually reappear in human form as J. L. and P. R.; even as vultures whom I could mention have reappeared on the Stock Exchange; and black-beetles as clergymen

about town ; and butterflies as professional beauties ; and divers ducks as doctors ; and an old owl as Premier. But to return.

As they sat there at twilight tide, talking over old times when they had met at the court of brave King Roosevelt in Holland, there came the sound of a far-off bell ringing vespers, and Flaxius said :

‘Ever since the earliest times men have believed that there was a holy influence in the sound of a bell. The old Etruscans and their children, the Romans, made them of bronze, and sometimes of silver, all to keep away witches and evil spirits. In fact, from the immense number which are found, it would seem as if there had been, at least, one to every human being.

‘And dot was kept up py de Christians,’ added Breitmann, ‘who peliefed a great deal still more in dem, and to dis tay it is said dot witches are afraid of bells, witch is de reason de priests keep a ringing dem all the while. As you see py de woonderful story of der bell of Kaltern, here in Tyrol.’

‘Tell it,’ replied Flaxius.

‘I can sing it if you would care to hear it,’ answered Herr Breitmann. ‘Dot comes easier to me.’

‘All the better,’ quoth the sage.

And Breitmann chanted :

THE BELL OF KALTERN

‘Oh the church bells at even,
How sweetly they ring !
Like angels in heaven,
They murmur and sing !
Where music can travel
Their echoes are found :

And naught that is evil
 Can list to the sound :
 So softly, so quaintly they chime in their play,
 So gently, so faintly, then dying away,
 Fading out, with the day.

Now no witch can hold out where the church *Glocke* hang,
 For the bells being blest they're afraid of the clang :
 At the very first sound when 'tis heard *they* are lost,
 And shrivel like roses when touched by a frost ;
 And the devil himself would be off on the wing
 When the great bell of Kaltern began with its ring,
 Ha, that "busted up" as a terror to see
 In grand scatteration the whole company :
 And good Christians, like us, aren't more frightened of hell
 Than the witches were scared by the sound of that bell.
 Until at the last, when their patience was past,
 And the very end-thread of the skein being spun,
 They swore there must certainly something be done.
 And something they did too at once in the cause :
 And you soon will surmise what the handiwork was.

There's a widow in Eppan
 With glance like a dart,
 A terrible weapon,
 Which strikes every heart,
 With the softest of laughter,
 The sweetest of smiles,
 Lord knows what comes after,
 When once she beguiles !
 And this lady of Eppan
 Is charmingly dressed.
 She feeds upon capon,
 With wine of the best.

Though whence she derived all her food and the clothes,
 Or how she got these things, or came to have those,
 Is what she did never to any disclose,
 Which kept people talking as all may suppose
 Either "over the pumpkin"¹ or "under the rose !"

Now when people before them have always a curtain,
 There's something behind it, not right, *that* is certain.
 And all were assured that this beautiful widow
 Hung out what the French call a very large *rideau* ;

¹ 'Over the pumpkin' (also the sun-flower) *i.e.* openly, these being very visible objects.

[In German Gardine ; a kind of a pun ;
Since in dialect, girl and a curtain are one.]

But Hermann von Valk,
A chivalric young blade,
Who was not of talk
Or of scandal afraid,
Was all the more taken,
Enchanted and shaken,
Enraptured and mashed,
Bèglamoured and smashed,

By the beautiful eyes and the wonderful mystery
That seemed to envelop this Lamia's history.
And one day when in sport the fair widow would task him
He swore he would do anything she might ask him,
He cared not a straw, if 'twere that or were this,
If she only would give him one rapturous kiss !

With the winsomest smile,
That would fetch you a mile,
And a soft in her voice
That would give you no choice,
But to do as she wanted. " My dearest," said she,
" I can only ask something chivalric of thee,
Such as noble young gentlemen ever perform
When their hearts and their heads are courageous and warm.
And that which I want, you can easily grant—
It isn't a matter of shall I? or shan't—
In fact 'tis as easy as jumping a hurdle.
Just climb a church-steeple while bearing this girdle,
The steeple of Kaltern—you know it full well—
And binding—you *shall* turn this belt round the bell :
Bind it and wind it, when you have twined it—
When this is done and my love is returned, he
May kiss, if he like, to the end of Eternity."

Now as you may have guessed,
This young Hermann von Valk
Was not—truly confessed—
A man easy to balk ;

So as soon as the widow her yarn had spun
He jumped to his feet and cried eagerly—*done !*
" For such a reward I here swear, by my soul !
I'd belt all the bells in the land of Tyrol !
Give me the girdle ! I'll tell you what,
I'll return this evening"—and off he shot.

Now though this Hermann had no scrupulosity,
Yet, as a German, he'd great curiosity,

Which thing is the mother of all suspicion,
 So he turned it all over with great precision,
 And he said to himself, "I wish I could tell
 What it is that she means by a-belting the bell?
 It's very mysterious—hem!—let me see!
 Suppose I first try it a bit on a tree!
 There is nothing at all in the way to prevent
 Such a little and harmless experiment."
 So half-unthinking and half in joke
 He bound the girdle about an oak.

It was a grand tremendous tree,
 As vast as man did ever see,
 Standing alone so grave and solemn,
 With trunk as tall as the highest column;
 But scarce that girdle was brought around,
 And scarce the belt on the bark was bound,
 When a crash like a thousand thunders came,
 And before his eyes all swam in flame,
 As if hell had broke loose in very fact,
 And from top to bottom the oak-tree cracked,
 And the fragments flew afar and wide:
 While Hermann von Valk lay stunned aside.

The bells, in time, had rung several tenses,
 Before the young gentleman came to his senses,
 And, when he got there—"My life!" said he:
 "I am glad that I tried that belt on a tree,
 For if I had bound it round the bell,
 Which the witches all fear, like poison and hell——"

When having said this, he suddenly stopped
 As if an *idea* on his senses had dropped,
 And he roared "*Donnerwetter mit Hagel und pitch!*
 Now may I be shot! but the widow's a witch!
Es leuchtet mir ein! I behold it clear
 As I see yon moon in her silver sphere;
 That was a nice little task the "widder"
 Gave me to do, now I come to consider!
 Suppose instead of a tree, I had placed
 That elegant article round my waist!
That were a beautiful change of scene?
 The devil take her—where would *I* have been?
 So sure as Bohemians drink *slivovitz*,
 Burst to pieces and blown to bits,
 So now I will go to my home, alone,
 Beautiful Madame—with you I've done

I can stand a great deal," he said with a sigh
 "But not the devil—and so good-bye."

By this adventure you plainly see,
 That two of a trade can never agree,
 What one had tolled, the other can't tell,
 And a belle, if a witch, is afraid of a bell!

'Well sung, Herr Breitmann,' exclaimed Flaxius.
 'And the tones were as sweet as the story is strange.'

'Vot do you really dink of it?' inquired the singer
 with some interest. 'Can it pe true?'

'H'm! very likely. You must know, friend Breitmann, that from much strange but little thought of proof, I believe that from the Etruscan and Roman priesthood, the witches and wizards of a later time inherited much knowledge, and many strange secrets regarding electricity; and this granted, we can explain many of the most remarkable miracles attributed to them. Now, admitting that they were up to producing a spark by a small charge and making an explosive, the widow's belt becomes intelligible. In fact, a few ounces of dynamite——'

'Vould pe a mighty crate power, when a woman wanted to plow a man oop,' laughed the minstrel.
 'And denn dere was poison, vitch dey understood petter still. As is set fort in a pallad of de town of Munich.'

'I would like to hear it,' replied Flaxius.

'We would like to hear it,' sopranoed the nightingales.

'I would like to hear it,' chirped a sparrow on the wall in *contralto*.

'And we also,' cooed the baritone spirits of the evening breeze, as they stole through the dense foliage, rustling overhead.

The Breitmann tuned his lute, and sang the ballad
of

NARR HANS'L¹

' Oh ! Munich is a merry town, 'tis writ by many a pen,
And all its city counsellors are wondrous merry men,
And when they meet for banqueting, to revel or to sing,
From the Rathshaus to the Frauenkirch you hear the music ring.

And every master hath a squire that on his lord must wait,
To fill his goblet up with wine or change or fill his plate,
And it always was expected, like the chorus to a song,
He must laugh at all his master's jokes and help the fun along.

Now one of these attendants was an odd fantastic wight—
You could see it in his features that something wasn't right—
An anxious, solemn countenance with sorrow interwrought,
Like one who knows that he is mad, and trembles at the thought !

And if cruel people vexed him when his heart was stirred with
drink,
He would rave and cry the maddest things that any one could
think,
And scream and weep and beg them all for mercy in his pain,
Which made them roar with laughter and begin to tease again.

They called him the Narr Hans'l, that is Jack Lunatic.
And all the lords resolved one day to play this man a trick.
So they made him eat a herring till he almost died with thirst ;
And then gave him wine to quench it, but that was not the worst.

For the wine had all been mingled with pepper for a trick,
And a subtle drug or medicine, which made him sadly sick,
So that he ran about in pain, with many a mad grimace :
It made the noble gentlemen all roar to see his face.

Well, well ! the fun was over and the jest was half forgot :
When again there was a banquet in that ever merry spot,
And since Narr Hans'l made such sport for every guest—to dine,
They chose him for the Kellner, or Master of the Wine.

The music pealed so merrily, there all was *Saus und Braus*,
Till the chairman gave the word " Schenk' ein ! " and then the
sign " Trink aus ! "

And this was at the Ending, when every gentleman
Must drink the *Supernaculum*—drain to the last his can.

¹ Jack-fool.

To a drop upon the thumb-nail, nor leave behind a "rest."
 And the wine for this last drinking was of the very best ;
 Every cupful cost a florin—of that there was no doubt,
 It glowed like golden sunlight when Hans'l poured it out.

Ha ! What can be the matter with the noble President,
 That he looks as pale as ashes and extremely discontent ?
 And now he's falling backwards in deadly agony :
 And now—O Lord ! the others are all as ill as he !

Ha ! What can be the matter with Narr Hans'l through it all ?
 He is laughing, he is screaming, he is dancing in the hall.
 He is changed into a devil—he gave a comic sigh,
 And played upon his *Cithern* as he saw the *Herren* die !

There are four-and-twenty dead men a-lying in the room,
 The tapers burning lowly, all fading into gloom ;
 The waiters with the music have all in terror fled :
 There sits alone Narr Hans'l, a-singing to the Dead !

A-singing wailing ditties, all in the saddest strain :
 How they poisoned him with pepper, and he poisoned them again.
 Till he screams : " It all is over—and the wine is of the best !"
 He drank a flowing goblet, and is lying with the rest.'

'It is a sad song !' murmured Breitmann, as he struck the last chorus.

'Very sad,' replied the nightingales.

'It makes me cry,' chirped the sparrow.

'Mournful, indeed,' sang the evening breeze.

'Well, away ! There's a lesson in it for all,' concluded Flaxius.

Comment by the Editor.—If there are any readers who would prefer these ballads of Hans Breitmann in the original German English, he or she may find them, and many more quite as good or better—or even worse—in a little book entitled *Hans Breitmann in Germany*, published by T. Fisher Unwin. Of which book, several critics remarked that there was so much German in it as to render it unintelli-

gible, which, as elsewhere remarked, was much like declaring that there is too much Latin in the poems of Virgil or Horace, or, in truth, of Merlinus Coccaius, or the bard who sang the Polemo-Middiana. So reflecting on him who proposed to make a translation of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* into English, the editor has ventured to clothe these two Breitmann ballads in so much of our current tongue as his humble means permitted.

Which reminds him of a little story.

There was once a French artist who found a picturesque old beggar on the Pont Neuf.

The beggar was striking.

Il sautait aux yeux, he leapt to your eyes.

He was seventy years of age.

He had a long white beard.

He was clad in a long, picturesque, ragged gabardine.

A gabardine is a dressing-gown.

For ladies it is a *peignoir*.

Short sentences make long copy.

Copy is paid for by the page.

To return to our sheep.

The beggar held a long, rude staff.

Like Esculapius.

Or a Chinese barber.

The artist was charmed with his appearance.

He asked the beggar to come next day to his studio.

The beggar assented.

Now as he had never had his portrait taken before,

The beggar supposed that he must come in his best.

That is to say *endimanché*, that is to say in Sunday togs.

So he removed his beard,
And appeared in a shabby steel-pen or tail-coat.
With a cane with a glass head,
And his shoes blacked,
And a red waistcoat.

When the artist beheld him,
He exclaimed with horror,

'Oh, mon Dieu !

You are spoiled, you are spoiled !'

Now if this artist had been a Leonardo da Vinci, who could make a beautiful Madonna out of an old man as a model, he would have copied the beggar all the same, seeing the Reality which was in him.

But he did not see it.

FLAXIUS IN INDIA

THE STORY OF SAKHARA AND ARJUN, WITH
THE WONDERFUL TRANSMIGRATIONS OF
DSCHIM CROW.

‘Gli Indiani e i Persiani e in generale tutti gli Orientali ammettevano la Metempsicosi come un dogma particolare al quale erano molto affezionati.’

Gran Dizionario Infernale da Francesco Pique.

Now it befel once in the golden time, meaning the good-olden or aureate age, which Hesiod and other poets write of, that Flaxius having seen the dragon world, with all its thousand brazen eyes of glittering cities, and looked bravely at them, and read their meaning, found himself in north-western India, in a then famous city called Chotahazripoora. As for the date, it was somewhere the other side of the year One, which is tolerably accurate chronology for Indian records, which were not very well kept by the Sanskrit Civil Service about that time, or any other, with all their wisdom.

And in this particular *poora*, which is in Greek and Gypsy *foros*, whence *forum*, so called from its great wealth, Flaxius became a great man at court, because he despised riches and was a sage, being, of course, greatly honoured and admired and coloured up as an incongruity, and inexpensive at that. And at last the king consulted with him on all matters,

social, familiar, or financial, from taxing a province down to buying a new bayadere. In all of which the Immortal displayed singular sagacity and exquisite good taste.

This monarch had, of course, three sons, by which ye may know that I have started on a fairy tale, the head of which is, as usual, the part which comes last, or the youngest. This third became very dear to Flaxius, because he was a brave, frank, innocent, clever youth, worth looking after and loving. And his name was Arjūn.

Now in the gust and whirlwind, and flit and flow of hailstones and rain-drops which make the pelting incidents of court-life, there being little rest or peace in it, Flaxius began to note that a cloud was coming over the soul of Arjūn, and from this antechamber of the dream, he soon passed to the bright hall of perception, that his pupil or friend was in love. And ere long the expected confidence came in these words :

‘Thou knowest, O wise among men, that I have never set my heart on love of woman. For the article in its best quality has ever been so exceeding cheap and abundant about our court, and I have had so freely my pick and choice of *primeurs*, that it was unto me only as my meals. Moreover, all the books which I have studied have taught me that the preferring one girl to another is mere idle fancy, even as tastes in food are simply the result of caprice and custom, and that female nature is all, in fact, folly. This I did steadfastly believe, till it chanced that one day in the woods far beyond the city I met with a maid of exceeding beauty, who, as I found by conversation, was so witty and wise, original and

good, that it soon appeared to me that I had all along been in ignorance and error as to what Woman might be. And, in short, all my philosophy went to the Seven Hells, where it may remain for ever for all I care, being in love through and through—dyed in the grain.

‘And this girl, Sakhára, is the daughter of a Brahmin of kingly race, but exceeding poor. So when I told my father of my love ——’

‘Why then,’ interposed Flaxius,

“Fire flashed from the monarch’s eyes,
And high his wrath began to rise.”

‘Yea,’ replied Arjūn, ‘and, in short, he swore by the Cow that I should never marry her unless it were shown to be the special will of the gods.’

‘H’m!’ observed Flaxius, ‘I have noticed that the special will of the gods is generally manifest in anything to which we agree, and could the king be brought to assent to this, in any way, the divine sanction would soon be perceptible. Therefore, my son, fret not thy soul, but go and amuse thyself, for in love-troubles, as in all others, he who is least uneasy comes the soonest to ease. I will see what can be done.’

It came to pass that the next day, Flaxius, while walking in the forest and listening to the chattering of the holy monkeys in the trees o’erhead—whose conversation was, however, of a most frivolous and unholy character—met with a man who was evidently a poor devil on general principles, but who appeared to be a decidedly superior person, when one investigated the particulars, for he had a very intelligent face of dark hue, a keen, shrewd eye, and a goodly mien. He was clad in black.

‘I beg you, great sir,’ he said to Flaxius, ‘to take heed how you speak to me or even look at me or let my shadow fall on you, else you will find yourself in for hell or a long penance, for I am a pariah, and my name is Dschim Crow.’

‘And I,’ replied Flaxius, ‘not being a fool, and having travelled in many lands, and seen the vanity of all things human, would probably be ranked with you, could the Brahmins read my soul.’

‘Ay,’ answered the outcast, ‘’tis one of the precepts of our philosophy, that mankind are all divisible into the found-out and the not-found-out.’

‘A good saying,’ replied Flaxius. ‘Have ye then a philosophy?’

‘We are the only true philosophers,’ answered the Pariah, ‘for ours is the sole system that teaches the error of excess of wisdom, law, and goodness. As is shown by our literature, which comprises every work of true humour ever written in India.’

‘Better and better,’ said Flaxius; ‘and I believe you the more, because such a literature is the natural result of such a principle. And what are some of the works to which you refer?’

‘There is, firstly,’ answered the outlaw, ‘the story of “Vikram and the Vampire,” in which the *Baital* teaches the sage in a series of twenty-five lessons how to show himself a fool just two dozen times, by being over wise.

‘Secondly, the “Life of the Gūrū Simple,” by which we may learn that a good man may be a great goose.

‘Thirdly, the “Marvellous Tale,” showing how Boorum-bunder Pop, the Buddhist, broke open a poultry-house and stole all the fowls, by virtue of the holy fourteen formulas of Sakhya Mūni.

‘Fourthly, how Ah-Sin the Chinese sage, who had been converted to the true religion, and came to the Gate of Nirvana, descended to earth, and meeting Brahma on a pilgrimage in human form, cheated him out of all his money at cards.

‘Fifthly, how the holy Brahmin, Baro Chor, pilfered from the divine cow of Waschishta a pint of the milk of experience, from which he churned the butter of wisdom, which is in twenty thousand *slokas* or verses.

‘*Parraco tute,*’ replied Flaxius in Prakrit, ‘I had rather thou wouldst read it than I. Any more?’

‘There is the divine legend how Krishna, the chastest of the gods, made love, in extreme, to twenty thousand milk-maids all at once, with the moral of “Be virtuous and you will be happy.” After which he was always blue in the face.’

‘Truly, I do not wonder at it,’ remarked Flaxius. ‘I have seen a man look blue for less than that. Any more?’

‘Well there is the Thieves’ Bible teaching the divine worship of Kàli, which they study devoutly in spirit and in truth, all the more because it teaches them how to commit burglary, personal theft, and murder.

‘And with this the *Bāro Lil*, or Scripture of the Trablūs Dom, who call themselves the Rom or Romany, teaching the sanctity of stealing shirts from clothes-lines, the piety of pilfering hens, the holy art of passing off bad horses for good, and the divineness of telling fortunes.’

‘A goodly library!’ remarked Flaxius. ‘Dost thou know aught of magic?’

‘I have picked up a few tricks,’ replied the Pariah,

‘which I learned from a Mahatma, such as the three card game, thimble-rig, floating in the air, putting cigarettes under cushions, and sending letters from a distance. My one great game is, however, to turn a girl into a tree, or the reverse. But with all my fine accomplishments I could never conjure up my wife or a dinner, and I need a meal now, most deucedly.’

‘Friend,’ said Flaxius, ‘I will conjure thee up a good dinner and teach thee the art of doing it, if thou wilt impart to me those tricks of thine.’

‘By Yamen!’ cried the jovial Bohemian, ‘thou art generous, for I deem thy secret worth forty of mine any day. He who hath a woman may have nothing to eat, but devil the place was I ever in where, if I had a bountiful dinner, I could not get a girl to share it with me. By the way,’ he inquired, ‘does this dinner of yours embrace drink—not water, you know, but *tátto pani* or spirits?’

‘Also that,’ said Flaxius with a smile. ‘Behold!’

There was not far from them a large earthenware pot, left by some traveller. Flaxius bade the Out-cast dig a hole in the ground. In this the pot, upside down, was half-buried. Then he chanted in a mystic ancient Indian tongue :

‘Baro duvel dikkamì,
Kūshto hāben, well avri !
O choro Rom se bokalo,
Kekno mäss, kek kokalo;
Kekno kil, ne kel pā mui :
Bitcha leste sari dui,
Te tatto pani kater Rom,
Om mani padmi hom !’¹

¹ This exquisitely beautiful incantation poem will be readily intelligible to every Sanskritist, with the exception perhaps of the last line, which is in a later vulgar dialect. It means, accurately translated : ‘I am a gypsy foot-traveller.’ In common dialect it would be, ‘*Ro-mani pat-engro shom.*’ *Omani* for ‘*Romany*’ occurs in *The English Gypsies and their Language*.

‘Mighty spirit, look on me !
 Let a dinner come from thee !
 Outcast hungers here alone,
 Hath no meat and ne’er a bone.
 Cheese nor butter for his mouth,
 Send to him, I pray thee, both !
 Also spirits in this hour,
 O Jewel in the lotus flower !’

And this done, the feast began, for on removing the pot there appeared beneath it a rice curry, surmounted with a fine piece of roast beef, garnished with chillies, two chupattis or wheat-cakes, jaggree sugar and a great flask.

‘Now by the thousand years in hell, which I am to catch for eating that beef,’ exclaimed the Outcast, ‘I call that a good meal. Thank the devil and your lordship—if ye be not one and the same—and for what I am about to devour, make us truly thankful,’ as the tiger said when he ate up the Buddha. *Yeck lav se tacho sã desh:*

‘One word’s as good as ten,
 Leather away—Amen !’

‘And *toddy*—by all the goblins!’ he exclaimed as he sampled the bottle, ‘strong and abundant enough to demoralise an elephant. Verily I can now be clear through to the further end of my ideal of bliss, for, as your lordship knows, *that* man is a *bachtalo beng* or lucky devil who knows when he is well off, or as the great Sanskrit poet, Jan Kitz, sings:

“It is a flaw,
 In happiness to see beyond our bourne,
 It forces us in summer skies to mourn,
 And spoils the singing of the nightingale.”

‘Therefore let us *not* see beyond our bourne—at least not till we get there; which, as our great

ancestor Cain says in his precepts, is more than most men manage to do.'

'Was Cain thy ancestor?' inquired Flaxius. 'I would fain hear the legend if one there be?'

'Thou shalt hear it in spirit and in truth,' replied the Outcast. 'In the spirit of toddy, and on the truth of a gypsy, know then, what is known to everybody of every language, and in every land, that in the beginning were Cainos and Abelos. And unto them was a sister. And Cainos slew his brother and took his sister to wife. But she, being told that it was wrong, fled from him, and took refuge in the sun, where she dwells to this day. Then Cainos for all his sins was sent to live in the moon, and because it is cold, there he is always bearing thorns to feed the fire. And longing for his sister, he, in the moon, ever pursues her. But others say that when the sun has set and ere the moon has risen, then they meet, which accounts for their love lasting so long, since they do not see too much of one another. But however it be, they are gods of all us wanderers, because they are always wandering over the heavens. And we are their descendants, and therefore under a curse, for which indeed we do not care a curse—when we can get toddy!

“When the evening fire is burning,
And the women return from town;
And the crows to their nests returning,
We will drink till the moon goes down:

And merrily sing and prattle,
While music rings over the plain;
And if there's enough in the bottle,
We'll drink till she rises again.”

'Now the sun is called in our tongue Kam or

Kàn, and the moon Tchen or Zen, even as tongues turn it, hence we their children are the Zen-kan or Zingan. And this is the true story of our race, whence ye may see what a fine lot we are.

‘And now, your Illustriousness, since it takes two to make a bargain, or as a bargain requires a pair, which must consist of a couple, and as duality demands separate units, or a double of singles, and a duplicate repeated units, and twins bi-fold births, and as according to the Vedas there are needed twice-five fingers to make a hand-shake, and the Shastras assert that if one parent be wanting there can be no child born—

‘Heaven-a-mercy, man!’ cried Flaxius, ‘what the devil art thou driving at?’

‘Only this, O heaven born! that as thou hast kept thy word and given me the dinner without an end, and the flask inexhaustible, I will forthwith repay, reciprocate, discharge, settle, acquit bequests with, strike a balance, clear off old scores, liquidate, poney up my dues to the tune of “On the nail,” and show myself a man of honour and a gentleman by telling thee how to turn a tree into a girl or a girl into a tree, albeit I do not guarantee the quality of the timber. But by their fruit shall ye know them.’

‘’Tis well,’ answered Flaxius. ‘Proceed with thy process.’

And the Outcast proceeded. But here I must draw the veil of secrecy over the mirror of curiosity. I did not mind, O reader, letting thee know how to raise a dinner by means of sorcery, but I draw the line at girls. For there are, as it is, rather too many girls in the world if we may believe the

Census, and too few trees, if we are to put faith in agricultural newspapers, and therefore I think it just as well that this metamorphosis be not added to those of Daphne and the Dryads.

When Flaxius returned to the *Ruppeny-gav* or Silver City of Chotahazripoora, he went straight to the golden palace or *Sonafilisin* and entered the *Tatcho-bar Kamora* or Diamond Chamber, where he found the king shadowing the day time of his lordly soul in the dark void of night with sleepless woe, which is to say that he was in a gloomy fit of the blues and bored to death.

‘*Sarshān*, your majesty. How art thou?’ inquired Flaxius in the court tongue.

‘*Sarshān yer kokero, puro!* How are you yourself, O ancient?’ replied the mighty monarch. ‘As for me, I am in trouble. I have, as thou knowest, more than a thousand mothers-in-law in my family?’

‘Yea,’ replied Flaxius, ‘and I have known a man ere now to be always in hot water with only one.’

‘And they are all nagging me to get first of all my three sons married, and then the daughters. Canst thou see a way out of it?’ he added anxiously.

Flaxius reflected a long time, in order not to make his wisdom too cheap, nor yet ‘to set himself by flippancy too light, too high above the level of his king,’ and then replied:

‘Thou knowest, O sublime Superiority, that I

have deeply studied the science of dreams, and can command them. Therefore will I somnambulate in sleep, and draw conclusion from its imagery.

“The figments and conceits, the myths and fads,
 The grey chimeras and the visions blue;
 The phantasms and shadows of the soul,
 The whims and vagaries and rhapsodies,
 Extravaganzas of the booming soul,
 The hum-bugs which go sailing in the dark,
 The air-drawn dodgers and the bug-bears wild,
 The Flying Dutchmen in the sea of sleep,
 The castles in the air and homes i' the moon,
 Utopias and fair Atlantises,
 The happy valleys of the bards of yore,
 The fairy lands and the Millenia
 Of Prester John and of Micomicon,
 Wherein Alnaschar found *le pot au lait*,
 And where the fay Morgana rules supreme,
 Shall be explored down to their deepest dream,
 And the last shadow of their last ideal,
 And the last fairy coin struck in their mint
 Be studied deeply in the minutest case,
 To answer well thy question, O my King !”

‘*S'e pmi duvel!* As my Spirit may help me!’ cried the monarch in admiration. ‘I will say this for thee, Flaxius, that beside thee as a bard Kalidasa is nowhere, and that what thou canst not do in poetry is not worth a d-oin. Therefore, let us drink!’

And they drank.

When Flaxius appeared the next morning before his majesty, it was with the grand and important air of a man who has been dreaming on a royal order, and filled up every detail in first class style. The courtiers looked at him with awe, and even his Highness regarded him with a kind of fearful respect, as if apprehending that he might go off, or explode, or burst in some mysterious way. He was

manifestly relieved when an attendant maiden brought to the sage a golden goblet of Soma, or India pale ale; and when the wise man had drained off about a pint thereof, he sighed as if all danger of a conflagration was for the time extinguished. So great a thing is it to be known to be possessed of a secret.

‘By your majesty’s royal command!’ said Flaxius—and all around became as still as the mice-stars in heaven before the cat-moon—‘By your majesty’s royal command I dreamed and I found myself in a far isle of light holding a trumpet shell of pearly hue, which Glendoveers do blow whene’er they meet. Then from a bowery strand just opposite—an island of the sea—there came enchantment with the shifting wind that did both drown and keep alive my ears. And as I listened all my sense was filled with that new blissful golden melody; a living death was in each gust of sounds; each family of rapturous, hurried notes, aunts, cousins, nieces, daughters, all most beautiful, fell one after one, yet all at once, like pearl beads dropping sudden from their strings.’

‘Ahem!’ muttered the Outcast, who had in the daring disguise of a respectable person found his way into the assembly. ‘It seems to me that I have heard something like that before!’

‘Then,’ continued Flaxius, ‘there rose amid wild clouds incarnadine, the form of Siva with his glory on. He bore in one hand the *Triçula* or trident; and without speaking, he pointed impressively at its three points.’

All present were in breathless awe.

‘Then he disappeared, and I beheld the terrible

Vishnu. He held up his three fingers and vanished in turn.

‘And anon from the cloud there came an awful Rakhshi or demon. And he held up three arrows—winked at me and nodded, and disappeared in a clap of thunder !

‘From which I learned, O king, that thou must gather together all the most beautiful princesses who are eligible. Then turn all the people in the town out of their houses for one day, and put a princess into every house.’

The excitement was at its height.

‘Then, O king, let thy three sons, armed with bows and arrows, send each a shaft at random into the city. And where it hits, there will each bride be found.’

‘What thou hast said, O Flaxius, shall be done,’ replied the king.

And it was done, *secundum artem*, in the proper way. Each prince took his place at the great window, and let fly an arrow. The eldest and the second-best son, one after the other, hit a house. It was considered a great miracle that both of them were perfectly delighted with the success which attended their aim, but Flaxius, observing a wink in the eye of the Outcast, elicited from him the fact that both of the princes, who were excellent archers, had been previously and respectively in love with these very girls, and that there had been, in fact, a little arrangement made by the help of the gypsy. For as Rum Kove, the poet, sang in Zend :

Full many a shaft at random sent
Hits mark the archer surely meant.

Now it happened that Arjūn, the youngest, could pull the long bow better than any of them ; in fact, he had been heard to say that he could split a hair at a hundred yards, or hit a thunderbolt with a bolt head as it passed whizzing by. And there was in the armoury of the palace a mighty bow which no one else on earth could bend, which he chose for this occasion, but by the secret suggestion of Flaxius he aimed over the town. And when he discharged the arrow, he gave the bow and it, at the instant, a peculiar impulse, which skilled archers understand, so that the shaft flew miles away far into the forest.

Then messengers were sent to trace its course, which they did ; and on returning repeated that they had found it sticking in the top of a tamarind-tree, in the foliage, like a hairpin passed through the chignon or gathered hair of a maiden.

So the king summoned Flaxius and all the learned men to know what should be done. And it was unanimously agreed that Arjūn must marry the tree ; there being many precedents to prove that trees were a kind of human beings, only that they grew with their heads in the ground, their forked branches being legs. Also, that according to legends of many lands, men have descended from them.

[On which subject the Outcast expressed his assent, *sotto voce*, to Flaxius, but added that he believed the said men had first ascended them to steal fruit.]

So there was a procession formed ; and going to the tamarind-tree, the king and prince and all concerned bowed before it, expressing hopes that it was in good health ; and finally proposed the

marriage. When at that instant came a charming breeze, before which the tree bowed its head as if in assent, and the match was concluded. Then rich gifts were laid before the bride and left there with a guard, and the king and his cortège returned home.

When lo! the next day there were found spread on a table in the grand hall of the palace, other gifts, exceeding rich, with a purple scroll, on which was inscribed in letters of silver :

‘The Tamarind herself commends,
And to the prince these presents sends,
And humbly begs of him that he
Will seek the forest speedily ;
Unto the spot where she doth bide,
And bear away his loving bride.’

So they all went once more. And when they were before the tree, they saw it slowly shrink to smaller space, its foliage turning into curling hair, till in its place there stood a maiden fair.

And this was, of course, the fair Sakhara, who being found to be of royal blood, was duly wedded to Arjūn—the king sagely observing that ‘it was manifestly the will of the gods.’ And here endeth the story of her and of Arjūn.

Now by the powerful influence of Flaxius there was a special investigation of the case of the Out-cast, by the entire College of Brahmins, with a view to his rehabilitation, since there were precedents for it. And it was found that in a previous existence, a million of years before, he had been a Crow. And of him the most learned of the Brahmins discovered the following history of his Jatakas in an ancient Sanscrit scroll :

THE HISTORY OF BHUSANDA

Contemplate steadfastly the divine glory, cast thy soul into the sparkling depths of the infinite sea, whose fishes are gods, whose waves are the ages!

It is written in the Ramayana, it was told of yore by the Rishis. Once there was a man named Bhusanda, who was the Crow that related to the eagle Garuda, the bird of Vishnu, the deeds of Rama to convince him that the latter was greater than Shiva and Vishnu.

Nor was Bhusanda utterly evil, neither was he bad, but the spirit of mockery was in him, for, ever doing good deeds, he wanted reverence; he was as a silver bell with a flaw.

And when, a youth, Bhusanda was worshipping Shiva in the temple, there entered the holy Gūrū, his teacher. And Bhusanda, seeing him enter, for a jest, being also mightily exalted with ideas of his own wisdom, did not greet or notice his Gūrū. Which thing the teacher, in his extreme humility and mildness, would have passed unnoted. But the God above, in his rage at this insolence, thundered from heaven at Bhusanda the awful doom of eternal damnation.

Then the Gūrū who knew not revenge or anger, flung himself on his face before the God and prayed for a remission of the sentence. And the God, relenting, said:

‘He shall pass through one thousand transformations, in all of them shall he be poor, but crafty and wise. He shall adore Vishnu, yet ever call aloud my name!’

Then after his death, he became a serpent, and

so passed through a thousand forms, and at last became a Brahmin again. Yet was he still, as erst, incorrigible; and the devilry of quizzing and satire would not leave his heart, despite his goodness. Among men, gods, and devils, no one dared so much as he for a joke.

Now there are ten sons of Brahma, even the ten Rishis, and these are: Daksha, Pulastya, Agni, Washishta, Brigu, Atri, Maritshi, Narada, Pulagen, Kratū. Each of them—all of them—truly an awful *gooroo*! And one day when one of these was lecturing on the attributes of God, his own father, Bhusanda, ventured to differ with him in opinion, yea even to contradict him. Whereupon the Rishi, in a rage at such stupendous impudence, condemned him in his next life to become a crow; which he did, but took it all so cheerfully, and continued to say so many good things, that the Rishi, to soften the sentence, taught him to call the name of *Rama*. [Whom the Romi or Gypsies worship, and from whom they take their name, the crow being among the Brahmins the symbol of the sun, who is the mother of the Romany.]

Now when Rama was born, the Crow flew unto him, and accompanied him in all his childhood; and as the god performed his great deeds, Bhusanda, every morning, on the top of the Blue Mountain, narrated them to all the birds assembled, who spread them over all the world. And so in due time it was written that he should become a man again, named Dschim Crow, and turn up some day or other at the court of the city of Chotahazripoora in company with a great and marvellous sage named F——.

Here the manuscript ended abruptly, and it seemed

to one or two experts present that these last lines were in a somewhat different ink from the rest, and looked like a later addition. But these profitably held their peace. And as it was a tremendous feather in the caps of the assembled Brahmins to have discovered the long lost Crow, they made the most of him.

Whereupon the Crow fell into a trance, which lasted many hours. And when he recovered, he narrated how Rama had appeared unto him in a vision, and assured him that every one of the Brahmins there present was destined to become a number-one god in the next generation, and to keep on rising for nine hundred and ninety-four million *Kalpacs*, and then attain Nirvana; also that the whole party, including himself, while here on earth, would be deemed incapable of committing any sin or crime. He had indeed received, as a first instalment of plenary indulgence, a special dispensation and injunction to drink *aràk* toddy in honour of Rama, to be supplied to him by the Sacred College. Whereupon he was invested with the yellow thread, and declared to be a saint.

It was midnight, and Flaxius and Dschim Crow sat on either side of a pearl-inlaid table, on seats set with gems, and between them was the Holy Bottle with gold cups.

‘*Well!*’ observed Flaxius, ‘of all the in-fer-nal, lying, cold-frozen, brazen, impudent, cheeky hum-bugs whom I ever encountered on earth, thou, my son, dost take the cake! But yesterday a Pariah, and to-day directing all the Brahmins as their chief!’

‘*Que veux-tu, mon vieux?*’ replied the Holy Crow, who in his new capacity of divine of course divined all the languages of the future :

‘Surely ’tis not by modesty
That gods attain to what they be :
For face, and cheek, since time began,
Were aye the noblest part of man,
And he who hath but impudence
To all things hath sublime pretence.

For the very essence of the most orthodox religion is that man is to be saved by faith alone, good works being only manifestations of faith ; and of all faith ever roasted or toasted, stewed or brewed in the kitchen of theology, there is none like a holy faith in one’s own self, pious auto-reliance, devout assurance, divine audacity, and sanctified looking-down on everybody, which latter is the true secret of all ecclesiastical supremacy and influence, as we saints well know.

‘And note you, that this full faith and belief in oneself is neither egoism nor egotism, but only religion *directed inward*, devotion which has gone to the heart instead of striking outward into Pharisaical displays of modesty, wherewith the world is more deluded and gulled than by all the good honest boldness ever obtruded on it. For he who believes in his lucky star brings to the battle of life nine-tenths of victory. Therefore, O illustrious patron, I pray you believe that this which you call Cheek in me is indeed no vanity or idle desire to be admired by the world, for which I verily do not care three straws, esteeming its praise or blame as all stuff and taradiddle :

‘Trumpery, trash, rubbish and hum,
Fatras, frippery, bubble and scum,

Leather-prunella, drugs and chaff,
 Refuse, sweepings, sediment, raff,
 Trifling, paltry, petty or small ;
 Frivolous stuff worth nothing at all,
 Hardly anything, no great shakes ;
Peu de chose and as farthing stakes,
 Gimcracks, whim-whams, gammon and sells,
 Fiddlestick, fudge and bagatelles,
 Paltry, pitiful two-penny flams,
 Fribbling, beggarly, pitiful crams ;
 Not worth mentioning, nor a rush,
 Stuff and nonsense, humbug and tush !

‘ For verily at *that*, and nothing more, do I esteem vanity and the notice of the world or personal notoriety, or puffs, while, to my taste, all applause, homage, hero-worship, clapping, hosannahs, glorification and acclamation, raw or cooked, save so far that there is *Fun* in it all, may go to the devil and shake itself! But he who is what you may call self-superstitious, or guided in all things, as he thinks, by a *dæmon* or star, or fairy, or fate, or strange omens, by occult desires, and coincidences, always becomes strangely self-confident, and yet not *vain* or egoistic, because he feels as if he were a wheelbarrow trundled by his god—

‘ Or a top spun by a boy,
 Or clay in the potter’s hands,
 Or dough being kneaded,
 Or a horse in harness,
 Or paper under the pen,
 Or a maid taken by force,
 Or potatoes being mashed,
 Or type being set,
 Or a garment being shaped,
 Or a rocket set fire to,
 Or a fiddle being played,
 Or an arrow shot from a bow,
 Or a cake being mixed,
 Or a twine in cat’s-cradle,
 Or a sermon being preached,
 Or a puppet being played,

Or a pig driven to market,
Or a football in a game,
Or a top being spun,
Or a boat being steered,

or anything or anybody under external direction. Now the egoist believes himself to be, and the vain man is sure that he is, the actor and the thing acted on, all in one, but the blind believer in self is only confident that he is well-directed. *Eccomi!*'

'A subtle distinction,' said Flaxius, 'and not without truth.'

'Moreover, and this should be noted,' resumed the Holy Crow, 'he who is by God's grace even a little of a Humourist is above all men most likely to be misunderstood in this matter. For verily, I swear by this Holy Bottle, that when *I* took no notice of the Gūrū, for which Shiva wished to send me to hell, 'twas not from vanity of great wisdom, (as those lying old devils the Brahmins declared), but just to see what sort of a rum face he would cut; and when I disputed with the son of Brahma as to the divine attributes of his father, I hope I may be split, salted and dried in hell like a fish, if it was that I pretended to know more about the Governor than he did, devil a bit! Nay, it was only that the fiend of Fun inspired me to a stupendous, palpable absurdity, which, rightly understood, was an act of the deepest reverence. But the Rishi was a fool, even as the Brahmins and old Vish himself were also, and Shiv into the bargain.'

'I believe thee, O Crow,' replied Flaxius, 'and it is true that the dull world often attributes to self-conceit that which is truly an artistic or humorously inspired conception. Many a creator and artist

have I seen carried away by pride or faith in his inspiration, who had, God wot! little pride in himself. But, O Dschim Crow, he had, as thou ever hast, the sublime enjoyment of the joke, or idea, albeit gods and men missed the point!

‘Amen,’ quoth the Crow. ‘Let us drink!’

‘And now,’ quoth Flaxius, ‘that the sun shines, thou wilt, I suppose, begin to make hay, or lay up money for the rainy days.’

‘By the Wheel of Heaven, not I!’ exclaimed the Crow. ‘He that saves up money keeps it from circulating, which is a great crime, yea, a robbery of the widow and the orphan. Albeit, should such a chance occur of saving up money at another man’s expense, as once befell me, I will not say that I will utterly reject it. One ought to have cash in hand for holy charities and small treats.’

‘I pray thee, tell me the tale,’ answered Flaxius.

‘That will I,’ exclaimed the Crow, after a drink. ‘Once upon a time, when Bramadatta was reigning in Benares in Kasi, it befell that I was born, and when I grew up I had a small place under the treasurer, Bunder Shroff Kash.

‘One day I bewailed that I was poor, and the treasurer, overhearing me, told it to the king at his elbow; and the king, calling me, said:

“Excellent young man, it is very easy to get rich. Remember that *a penny saved is a penny earned*. Now to encourage, I will give thee an order on the treasury, commanding that when thou shalt have saved a penny it shall be doubled.”

“May your glory endure for ever, O Life of the World!” I replied; “but while you are about it, make it *pence*.”

‘ He did so, and the order was written. But the king forgot to limit the payment! He thought I would only draw once, or a penny at a time, but I knew a trick worth two of that. I went with my penny and drew another.

‘ The next day I came and said, “I have saved twopence, pray pay the equivalent.” The next day I brought fourpence, and the next eight; and so it went on, till ere long the treasurer begged for credit. Now I paid the treasurer a handsome percentage to keep quiet—and he quieted. But at last the thing got beyond all bounds, and the treasurer one day informed the king that he was bankrupt, and owed more than the whole kingdom was worth, and all the world with it. For the sum due me was: *Lakhs of Rupees* 972,687,265,390,221.

‘ Then the king got into a fine rage, and would fain have had me put to death. But the treasurer said, “Your majesty, it would be better to compromise with such a brilliant financier, and employ him to collect the taxes”; which was done.

‘ When this lesson was ended, the Supreme Deity, the All-Knowing One himself, repeated this stanza :

“ With humblest start on a trifling capital
A shrewd and able man will rise to wealth,
E’en as his breath can nurse a tiny flame.”

‘ And there are many tables and fables in which something like this is to be found, or will be, as, for instance, *The Jātakas from the Pali*, edited by Professor E. B. Cowell, who will in a future age be known as a great, good, wise, illustrious, and learned Sanskritist, and in the Parables of *Buddhagoshā and Dhammapady* (or the Accused Irishman), and the

Divyāvadāna, and the *Kathā Sārit Sāgara*. But mine, note ye, is the Original Jacobs, and the first true prototype, model, pattern, precedent, protoplast, mould, ensample, matrix, and paradigm of them all. All the rest of them being mere re-echoes, shadows, reflexes, apographs, and adumbrations of mine. *Selah!*'

'And how long dost thou expect to remain here in clover, O Incarnation of Bhusanda, and favourite of Rama?' inquired Flaxius.

'I hope to run the machine of the Sacred College,' replied the Crow, critically eyeing his liquor, 'till a spring breaks, or a screw comes loose—or, what is quite as likely, till I find the affair is slow and the fun giving out—when I will start as a *yoghi* on a pilgrimage, or a Banjari or Nāt—*jeckno covva miri hai*——'

'Tis all one to me,
Where on earth I be ;
So I only pass the time in jollity,
Where the girls abound,
And good drink is found,
And a changing round of life I ever see.
With a tol-diddle,
And a rol-diddle,
And a tol-de-rol-de-rol-de diddle dee !

'All-so, *camarado, buona sera!* Meet me again in life when life seems dull!'

'*Haec fabula docet*,' wrote Flaxius, 'that in this life we should not be too much guided by appearances. For, firstly, the Tale of Sakhara and Arjun as it occurs in the *Asiatic Journal* of 1829, whence it was transferred by Grimm to his work on *Women's Names derived from Plants*, might seem to many to

have been the original source, whereas it is only a mutilated and abridged version, as appears from the fact that I, who had so much to do with the plot, am not mentioned in it, nor does Dschim Crow once occur in the story. Neither are there in it those beautiful specimens of Indian poetry in the original Romany, or Romanyana, dialect (allied to Sanskrit) which prove the fidelity of my text.

‘ Secondly, that the king did not surmise that there was any “working of the oracle,” as regarded the shooting of the three arrows, or that the will of the gods is sometimes managed even by such characters as the Crow. For it was the Crow, indeed, who pulled all the wires, wrote the lady’s letter, and told all the needful lies on this occasion.

‘ Thirdly, that it came not to the surface, neither did it appear to man, that Dschim Crow, who was an expert penman, added that little postscript to the old manuscript.

‘ Fourthly, that it is most probable that the vast majority of my readers will fondly believe that I am the author of the old MS. *History of Bhusanda*, whereas it is really given in the *Ramayana*, and extracted therefrom by Nork in his *Symbolisches-mythologisches Real-Wörterbuch*, vol. i. p. 259.

‘ Fifthly, that Brahma, Siva, Vishnu and Co., including all the saints, were utterly mistaken in the true character of the Crow [even as a reviewer sometimes is at the present day when he adventures into literature]. Now, this showing how the Hindoo Trinity made a fool of itself firstly, by putting Pantagruelism into a Crow, and then expecting to ever get it out, is, I am sure, one of those subtle sarcasms of the Pariah literature, which worked its

way into the regular Scriptures, somewhat in the same way as the erotic, or erratic, melodrama of the Song of Solomon was insinuated (probably by some Hebrew joker) into the Old Testament.

‘Sixthly, that as there are substances, which to the vulgar sense seem to be one and the same, yet which chemistry shows are radically different elements, so there are natures like that of the Crow, which do not care twopence for applause, or what the world thinks of them, and yet are called *egoistic* when their inspiration consists in yielding to influences which, had they guided them, might indeed have caused them to be called vain.

‘Seventhly, that the Crow, being incorrigible and incurable, will continue to manifest himself as a poor devil, and be considered as “a comic fella, doncher know,” and as nothing but a swell jester—until gods and saints get more sense.’

THE WONDERFUL STORY OF MISS JESABELLE ROCKHARD

WITH A SERIOUS VINDICATION OF HER
PROTOTYPES

OR FLAXIUS IN ENGLAND

‘And thus outspoke ye Oracle :
A very truth to thee I tell :
If thou canst a woman finde,
With such an earth-subduing minde
And with soule so stern and deepe,
That she can a secret keepe.
Then know of verie truth that she
A great Enchauntresse soon will be,
A queen in soothe or faery.’

IT was five o'clock tea at Lady Puddlebrooke's—a somewhat famous weekly rendezvous, which many called 'The Meet,' because there assembled on the occasion so many gallant hunters of gossip, and harriers of character, who were soon let slip in full cry of the *chronique scandaleuse* of the day. The which chronicle, be it remarked, by the way, is by far the most wonderful flying leaf, as such journals were once called, which was ever compiled, since every soul implicitly believes that there is in it the name of Everybody else, and that all which is said of others in it is true, while their own names are never there—or, if there, invariably attached to falsehoods, and out of place.

Now, while all the good Christians, philanthropists, nobly honest agnostics, angelic virgins who had been presented, dignified and ferocious matrons, clergymen, positivists, and other seekers after truth, were—as a nasty, cynical journalist who was present, remarked—‘ravens and batteners on their garbage,’ which meant repeating what they had read in the society papers, or preparing what would soon appear in them, Flaxius had withdrawn to a quiet corner and an easy sofa, where he was joined by Miss Jesabelle Rockhard, a lady of whom all her friends said: ‘It certainly cannot be denied that she is good-looking’; others limiting this praise to ‘*distinguée*,’ while some reduced it to ‘striking,’ which she certainly was, being a hard hitter in conversation, and not above fibbing when it came to a scratch. That she was ‘highly intelligent’ and an *esprit fort*, gifted with the unscrupulousness which she herself graced with the name of Will, was manifested at a glance, and impressively set forth by the first utterance of her voice to any reader of the human heart.

She was between afternoon and twilight as regarded age, and of very limited means; facts which she stated with the utmost candour to everybody. Nor was she devoid of a certain intuition or clairvoyance as regarded ability in others, as she had creditably shown by divining that Flaxius was a character. She determined that she would draw him out to the last hair, and completely ascertain all there was in him. In forming this resolution she had, as the Americans express it, unconsciously, ‘taken out a mighty big contract,’ which was the further impeded by the fact that the party of the

other part knew exactly how much stock she held, and what was her capital, while she—poor little soul—knew nothing at all as to the resources of the adversary.

But she came up to the assault gallantly. There was something in her very smile with its pinch in the lips, and in the ring of her keen voice, which seemed to say: 'I'm arch and airy, with the gay, sarcastic tone of society; you must accept all my stings with a delighted air—and you'll be in bad form if you don't. Beware! beware!'

'Ah, Mr. Flaxius, just as one would expect—withdrawn from the gossiping, frivolous crowd. You set up to be intellectual, I believe.'

There are certain very common and very silly speeches of this kind current, which tease sensible people, because they are hard to answer. So true is it that a fool can roll a stone into a well which fifty wise men cannot get out. But Flaxius replied with divine suavity:

'If being out of the swim is a sign of setting up to be intellectual, then, I suppose, as you are here, that you also advance the same claim, and would fain remind me of it.' Here the smile was beautifully genial, as if to say: "'Tis all my fun.'

'Confound his cheeky impudence!' thought Miss Jesabelle. And she promptly countered.

'So you *do* set up to be intellectual, then? Oh, you needn't deny it—you've admitted it.'

'True,' exclaimed Flaxius, 'and I have heard from other people the same of you. And yet I am not sure,' he added, in so dreamy, meditative a manner, that he seemed to be thinking of anything except

Miss Rockhard, 'that 'tis not better to be able to set oneself up independently—though ever so little—than to have to rely on others to do it for us!'

And looking at Miss Jesabelle with a smile that was child-like and bland, he added :

'Ask me some more of those hard questions, please!'

'I really believe,' answered the lady with some acerbity ('Aha!' thought Flaxius, 'the first blood drawn!')—'that you must have belonged to the Disagreeable Club, whose members make a practice of irritating and retorting, like cabmen.'

'Ah!' exclaimed Flaxius, 'if I had not, I should have been indeed ill-qualified for conversation with an advanced young lady of the *fin de siècle*. How often she reminds me of a Spanish fairy-tale. May I tell it?' he asked, like a little boy.

'Oh, certainly, if it amuses you,' replied the young lady in a tone half-contemptuously vexed, yet half interested in this extraordinary stranger.

'Once upon a time,' said Flaxius, 'there were three brothers, and the two elder were a pair of awful blackguards.'

'Truly, it begins beautifully!' remarked Miss Rockhard scornfully.

'Doesn't it?' quoth Flaxius gleefully. 'And it's nothing to what's a-coming. Well, there was a king of the country, and he had a beautiful daughter—at least she was *distinguée*, or what you might call *stunning*, for she was awful at being disagreeable, and could shut up any man in chaff, or worse—not to draw it too fine. And if anybody dared to answer her—oh, then she became angry!'

'Now the king, finding that his daughter kept his court all the time in an uproar, issued a proclamation, saying that whoever could beat the princess in abuse should have her to wife, and welcome. Then the two elder brothers rejoiced, each being sure that he would win the prize. But the younger, who was a sort of Saint Johnny, with no great gift of the gab, went and sat sorrowfully in the woods, weeping to think he had no chance to win the princess, and wishing he had passed his boyhood in playing chuck-farthing, and hanging about the docks with other little guttersnipes, and had not wasted it in going to school and church and penny-readings.

'And while he sat there weeping, and eating a great slice of water-melon, mingling his tears with the seeds, there came by an Irish fairy of his acquaintance.

"'An' what is it yees wape-in an' bodderin' about, *alanna*?" she asked kindly.

'Then the youth told her his trouble, and how he would like to win the princess, but wanted that *copia verborum*, or elegant "fluency of sass," as it is called in America, which was necessary to secure it.

"'Och, *monoma diaoul!* and tear and agers!" exclaimed the fairy, "sure, if it's nothin' but blaygairdin' is naded, it's mesilf that'll tache ye how to bate thim all intoirely. Pattherin' an' cantin' is it! and me here that blissed the great Daniel O'Connell in his cradle, an' gave him the illigant spache that shut up all the sass in Parliamint.

' "Great O'Connell, the Libherather,
An' salvathor of Oireland's oisle!

"'Whoop! *Fa-na-ballah*, and Erin-go-braugh!" cried the fairy as she danced in a ring, brandishing

her broom. "And now, ye divil, sit down till I give yees a lisson in polite litherature."

'I forbear for certain reasons to give you the conversation which occurred between the princess and the two brothers, in which they were utterly silenced. Then, turning to the youngest, she exclaimed scornfully:

"And I suppose you, with your white egg-fruit face of an idiotic scallawag, set up for being intellectual—intellectual enough to smash *me*—that is, if you know what the word means, you Number Three Mackerel with the head gone!"

"It is just like your ante-penultimate superfluitancy to mundivagate anent my candicancy,' replied the youth indignantly. 'Thou tramontarian tomboy-trollope and trull-cat, thou quadruplicate quean, mopsy minx, and metaphrastic harridame—reintegrated in thy deligration even to conquassentiality—thou mere projectile of an eolipile—nay, I go so far as to call thee a true ultimatum of the fourth effusion—dug up by a divarication of conduplicated metatarsity—thou art all this as thy conscience deterrates . . . yea and thou art moreover addicted to *lipothymy* and all such enormities and vices!"

'Thereupon the princess gave it to him back, with all that there is in Grose's *Slang Dictionary*, and Romany to boot—which was pretty bad; but when he retorted with a passage from Browning's *Sordello*, she gave it up, and fell into a fit of rage, foaming at the mouth. And having recovered, she married him, and they lived like the devil ever after.'

Now Flaxius had the gift of voice, and with it that of the story-teller, to the degree of well-nigh transcending language itself; for one could read the full

meaning of every word in his intonation, and eyes and gestures ; these latter were never extravagant, but strangely significant, as they well might be, since he knew as only the priests of old knew the wonderful Sign Language which men have found of late years on every Etruscan vase—much of which is still found even among the peasant-children of Italy. And as a small group of guests had gathered round to hear the legend, there were roars of final laughter, in which Miss Jesabelle herself joined with a goodwill, for she had begun to realise that there was a lion in this man, and as the story had been told for *her*, she shrewdly made the very best of it.

‘You tell a fairy-tale so well,’ she said to Flaxius, when they were again together, and no one near, ‘as to make one regret that there are no more fairies or magic, or rather that such fancies never were.’

‘And if there were,’ replied the sage, ‘you and the world would still necessarily remain in ignorance of them.’

‘Permit me,’ replied Miss Rockhard, ‘to differ with you. I *presume*,’ she added, with a slightly sarcastic expression, ‘that I am *quite* as likely as you are to be acquainted, or possibly familiar, with all that has been investigated by science—the London Library and British Museum being open to all—and I can assure you that despite Madame Blavatsky and Mr. Sinnett and Colonel Olcott—very nice men they are—not the slightest scientific proof of the existence of fairies or magic has ever been detected.’

‘Very true,’ rejoined Flaxius imperturbably. ‘I did not say that they existed. I only assert that, from the very nature of things, if they do, they *must* be concealed from man as he now is. The more

indubitable proof of such occult matters would bring about a premature confusion in humanity which would have disastrous results.'

'I presume *not*, in certain minds at least,' said Miss Rockhard, with an expression which denoted that she considered herself to be one of this favoured few. 'How can you explain however,' she added, 'that few, if any, know the mysteries?'

'Simply because there are so few people living who can keep a secret or hold their tongues. The one great or tremendous task of the ancient priesthoods, as of the modern Jesuits, was not to get great ideas, but to train men to keep quiet, and not to tell tales out of school.'

'There again you are *quite* wrong,' remarked the lady. 'If mere firm reticence would attract revelation, *I*, certainly, would be among the favoured. On that subject you need not speak further, for it simply does not admit discussion. I have kept,' she added, 'in my time a secret of vast importance, on which the fate of a great family depended, for many months, till it all blew over.'

'And then,' reflected Flaxius, 'came the great blow-up in consequence of her blowing, or letting it out. I remember it all. Truly she deserves a lesson for all this. Do you know,' he added amiably, 'I think, Miss Rockhard, that this matter may possibly be tested. There is an ugly little old story about certain nuns who wanted a Pope to make female confessors, and he promised to do so if they would keep a box unopened for a day. They all swore on their salvation to do so; but the Pope was hardly out of the convent before they all ran to the box and lifted the lid,

when out flew a bird, which vanished through the window.'

'If you think that a silly and slanderous old tale, which is only disgraceful to one who tells it, is an *argument*,' said the lady, 'I have no more to say.'

'But I have this to suggest,' replied Flaxius. 'I have heard—for I do not assert it—that there is even now in London a person who is endowed with such strangely supernatural gifts that she may be ranked with the witches or fairies.'

'At a guinea a visit, I presume,' remarked Miss Rockhard with her sarcastic smile more fully developed than ever. '*Merci*, my means do not permit of such expensive researches into occult philosophy.'

'Ah, that is the most remarkable part of it all,' replied Flaxius. 'She takes nothing; nay, she invariably makes very valuable gifts; but on the strictest conditions of secrecy—and she is to the last degree exacting in this respect—as also that those whom she favours shall be gifted with superior intellects—not led by mere curiosity.'

'And you expect me to believe this?'

'Certainly not. I never said a word as to belief. I only say that *I* believe you will incur no kind of risk or cost if you seek her.'

'And you will obtain access for me to your witch?'

'She is not *my* witch, and I have no desire whatever to send you to her. I only say that if you will promise on your honour to observe sacred secrecy even as to knowing of her existence, I will give you her address.'

'Very well, I swear!'

‘She lives in Devonshire Street, near Regent’s Park. There is her card. But I give you every warning. What you seek will require great truth, secrecy, and self-command. And remember’—here the face of Flaxius assumed an expression which Miss Rockhard had not seen before, and under which she for an instant quailed, it was so marvellously strange and dignified, as if he had forgotten himself into grandeur—‘remember that if you succeed, I shall expect no thanks, and if you fail, yours alone is the responsibility.’

‘Oh, I accept it,’ replied Miss Rockhard, recovering her flippancy. ‘Thanks awfully. I accept the *entire* responsibility. What fun!’

And so with all her grace and vanity she swept away.

At four o’clock on the following afternoon—or ‘morning,’ as it is called by those who probably look for midnight at fourteen o’clock—Miss Rockhard found herself in Devonshire Street, seeking the dwelling of the witch-fairy. And it was very naturally with an intensely sarcastic smile that she finally discovered on a door a small silver plate bearing the words:

MISS ALBAN, DRESSMAKER.

‘I might have expected it would be some humbug of the kind!’ thought the fair Jesabelle. ‘I wonder

whether the fairy drops her h's. But let us enter all the same into this Egyptian Hall and take a miracle or two.'

She rang, and was admitted by a very pretty maid to a hall which was somewhat singularly, but most artistically, decorated with antique objects, the real meaning of which was, however, hardly apparent; and was then conducted up a broad old staircase to a large *salon*, in which the visitor detected a most extraordinary and original taste, as regards furniture, without the least obtrusive sign of expenditure or cost. There was not a thing in the room which looked as if it had been the 'gem' of a bric-a-brac shop, or worthy a place in the great Rothschild pawnbroker collection of Frankfort, or bought at a Demiduffer sale, and many of the antiques would not have been valued at twopence by the Jew; but even Miss Rockhard, albeit her archæology was of the slenderest, save on Chippendale, lace, Japaneseries, Chineseries, crockeries, glass, Sèvres, and rococery in general, or trash in particular, could not help admitting that there was a hidden depth of knowledge and artistic taste in what she saw, which had nothing in common with bargains, fashion or the shop.

Suddenly looking up, Miss Rockhard saw before her a lady who, though beautiful, was not to be lightly described as 'a beauty,' considering the usual vulgar associations with the word. There was a depth of expression and moral truth, allied to strength of character, in her face which would have shamed into oblivion the charm of a Helen, who was (according to Flaxius) only a professional beauty of the popular kind after all. 'And such,'

adds Flaxius, 'I have invariably found all fashionable belles of the season ("whom every one is talking about") to be.'

'I am Miss Alban,' said the lady to the visitor, 'and I shall be pleased to aid you in the object of your call. You desire indubitable proof of the existence of supernatural or magical influences or beings, and I can supply it.'

'You are, ahem! I believe, a—dressmaker,' said Miss Rockhard, with considerable sarcasm. For she felt with every word and glance that Miss Alban was immeasurably her superior in exactly that in which she would have liked to be great herself: or in calm self-possession, penetration, and the terrible art of influencing others, and being invulnerable. Therefore it was with something like suppressed exasperation, wrapped up in a smile, that she exclaimed: 'A dressmaker!'

'I appear to every one,' replied Miss Alban, looking the other clearly in the eyes, 'as the ideal ministrant of what they most desire in life. What *you* prize above everything is simply to appear well before everybody, be it in good looks or clothes as regards the body, and accomplishments and setting people down and "besting" them as regards the mind, which all amounts to mere show or dress, and therefore I appear to you as a *modiste*.'

'I confess,' declared Miss Rockhard, who had always, with all her failings, a substratum of frank courage as regarded her poverty and unavoidable defects, being therein no snob, 'that as I have only one decent evening-dress in the world, and am getting to the end of my twenties, or to a time when dress becomes more needful, and as I live for

society, I *do* regard externals with love and envy. But as for the proof of enchantment——'

'I promise,' replied Miss Alban, 'to fully and perfectly convince and satisfy you before you leave this room, that there is such a thing as magic, by which I mean simply to show you something absolutely inexplicable by *your* knowledge of science.'

'I ask no more than *that* as regards your sorcery,' said Miss Rockhard with a complacent smile.

'While as to dress, I promise that you shall be at no expense, and for life, the best dressed woman in London, or even in New York or Paris. But on one condition.'

'I know—absolute secrecy. That for me is a mere trifle.'

'It is no "mere trifle," as you will find, but, especially for you, a terribly difficult and onerous task. For know that the secrecy must be without speck or flaw. You are not to say that you have *heard* of fairy dressmakers or jest with people who ask you whence you had your garments, in such a way as to cause surmises as to the truth; and if you fail you must not say, "*I thought* this or that," as people of weak minds always do. There is to be no allowance for thought, or prevarication, or independence, or misfortune or excuses. If you can persevere in merely keeping a secret to your own advantage, I promise you that dress shall not be the limit of my favours, and you shall lead a long and happy and highly-honoured life. But if you fail, that is, if by the *least* inadvertency, or even accident, you betray the secret, you will incur a terrible disgrace; and a suffering and humiliated life. Consider well, and do not let your vanity lead you to ruin.'

‘I think,’ said Miss Rockhard, with the same old contemptuous smile, ‘that we may proceed to the proof. As I happen to know my own mind a little better than you probably do, I am better aware of my capacity for secrecy. I accept your conditions.’

‘The proof is very easy,’ replied Miss Alban, taking from a drawer in a cabinet what seemed to be a large walnut. ‘Did you ever hear of the famous wardrobe walnuts of the witch tree of Benevento? Legend says that a prince once filled a palace with the splendid garments in cloth of gold, ermine, velvet and pearls, which he drew from this one nut.¹ Now, are you ready?’

‘Certainly,’ replied the visitor.

‘And should I perform this miracle, you will, unconditionally once and for all accept it on your honour as a proof of magic power? If not, we will try something else.’

‘No,’ answered Jesabelle, who was thinking more of being beautifully attired than of all the miracles or oaths ever heard of. ‘The dress will be proof enough in all conscience.’

As she spoke, her outer garment fell off, and she stepped out of it, while Miss Alban, opening the walnut, drew from it what seemed at first to be a mere cobweb, which she shook and shook out into greater fulness, till she placed it on Miss Jesabelle who, to do her justice, had really a fine little figure, just made to be very well dressed, with the one drawback of large feet and hands.

‘Now tell me,’ said the dressmaker, ‘what colour or material or style would you prefer?’

¹ Vide *Etruscan-Roman Remains*, by Charles Godfrey Leland: London, Fisher Unwin.

‘Nothing extravagant as regards expense,’ replied Miss Rockhard, ‘no cloth of gold or pearl-embroideries or anything to make people wonder where the money came from, when all the world knows how poor I am. Grey silk will do ; but as elegant, original, and beautiful in fit and fold as a robe can be.’

‘*C'est fait,*’ said Miss Alban. ‘Rise and look into yonder glass!’

Then Miss Rockhard looked and could hardly believe her own eyes, such a vision of beauty was before her. For, as has been already intimated, she was really very ‘good-looking,’ with a fine figure, both being of the kind which are incredibly improved by tasteful dress, so that she came out (like fireworks) in a grand ball, or at a fête, when fortune favoured her.

But never before, under the most benign influence of a grand cheque from her benevolent aunt, had she bloomed out like this. It was more than a fit, more than modelling to the form, more than artistic folds after any painting, for there was in the fluent grace and easy elegance of that skirt and bust an æsthetic apocalypse. ‘Which is,’ pencils Flaxius, ‘a big word for a man, but not too much, under the circumstances, for a woman.’

Even the fairy smiled, being feminine, at the success, and said :

‘There is still a trifle or two wanting.’ She took from the drawer a wisp of straw, a coarse cord, or circle of clothes-line, and a simply *horrid* brooch of brass and glass, or of agate, which seemed, from afar off, to have been bought in a common toy shop in the Burlington Arcade, or under the cliff in Brighton,

for threepence. She fastened the wisp of straw round the wrist of Jesabelle, and lo! it became a massy bracelet of gold in old Etruscan style, which would have maddened Castellani, and sent a whole ball-room into convulsions of envy. The brooch turned to a brilliant bouquet of diamonds, while the rope, with eccentric, yet pretty, taste, remained exactly as it was, but in pure gold, and, being tied in a bow-knot with folding ends, formed a very original and elegant head-dress.

The world hears a great deal about the tact of women, but there is a great deal to be said on the subject—for and against. For while she believed she had the keenest insight into everything, Miss Rockhard, like all of her class and kind, had no more tact than an oyster, or a hedge-hog, when it behoved her to suppress her needless pleonasm, sarcasms, and little spasms of 'pure cussedness.' And over and above all this, petty scepticism had so worked into all her being that as soon as she had got over the first flush of admiration at her dress, the old devil whispered in her ear not to show too much astonishment or gratitude, 'which means,' he said, 'that she has been too much for you.' Therefore, with exquisite good taste and characteristic refinement, she said:

'Well, it's an awfully clever bit of hanky-panky, I must say. I wonder how on earth you do it!'

The fairy looked at her gravely, and replied:

'You said seriously, before I showed you this marvel, that if I could effect it you would accept it once and for all as a proof of my power, and your first words are an utter denial of it. You are neither

spontaneously grateful at heart, nor graceful nor polite in words. Society and petty persiflage and small sneering and flippant sarcasm have killed in you every noble quality. But I will give you another proof which will defy doubt. Observe! Though your figure is good you have undeniably immense hands, and your shoes, as you are aware, really look like badly built gondolas. It is a great pity and it cuts you to the very soul. Now, if I reduce these extremities of yours to something like smallness and harmony with the rest, will you believe?’

What the reader may very well believe is that this speech was as gall, worm-wood, coloquintida, nux-vomica, rue, quassia, extract of aloes, acetic acid, verjuice, vitriol, and strychnine to the palate of Miss Rockhard, but the end thereof made her forget all these amaritudes, and she gasped out :

‘Yes.’

‘And I am to hear nothing more about “hanky-panky,” or “how it is done”?’

‘No.’

‘Then be it done!’ The fairy bade her be seated and took one of her hands in her own, and began to sing a spell in a tongue which sounded softly but strangely :

‘Tāni-rani, sove a lay !
 Chovihani chivs apré !
 Tiri waster, tiri piri,
 Boro dukkerin mi-deary !
 Me bitchava lende sã,
 Tinkni-bitti, vel ajã !

Little lady, go to sleep !
 Witch lays spell upon thee deep !

On thy hands and on thy feet,
 Let the charm be strong and fleet !
 So I order one and all
 To become both neat and small !'

So Miss Rockhard did indeed go to sleep, and on awaking found herself in her own home, lying on the sofa in her own room.

'She would have thought it all a dream,
 Save that round her form
 Was still the dress of the fairy queen,
 Which fitted her "like a charm";
 And her hands and feet were extremely neat,
 And become intensely small;
 "'Tis well, 'tis well," said Jesabelle,
 "For now I shall beat them all."

It was not long before Miss Jesabelle Rockhard found that the fairy was right in declaring that it was not such an easy matter to keep a secret when its results are brilliantly paraded before society. Therefore the successful alchemists of the olden time were said to live so plainly, and to go in disguise, dodging about the world, as did Thomas Vaughan, to escape observation. And as even they found it a fearful task, it may be supposed that Miss Rockhard, who had a ten times harder secret to keep than theirs, with not one-tenth part of their sense or experience to keep it on, began to wonder anon whether she had not spoken over-hastily when she commended her own powers of discretion as a subject not open to discussion.

'The female sex,' writes Flaxius in his great Analysis, 'differs from the male mostly in this, that it never takes naturally or instinctively to rum or tobacco, neither does it ever feel conscience or remorse. Fear of discovery it does indeed experience, and very sincere regret or sorrow at in-

curing punishment, but whether any one woman since Eve ever *regretted* anything on principle, or *per se*, is as yet among the unfound-outs.

‘Wherein I discover,’ he observes, ‘a great and wise provision of nature. For when we consider what a vast quantity there is of confused conscience and misplaced remorse in man, we cannot be too thankful that woman is *not* afflicted with the same calamity; it being very evident that if she were, humanity must needs take a fresh start on new principles. Therefore do I opine,’ he adds, ‘that “Things,” as Germans call the evolution of humanity, are going on best as they are, although I did have a tin of spoiled caviare brought to me this morning for breakfast.’

As regards the dress and jewellery of Miss Rockhard, it was a complete—or, as the French say, an insane—success. Her friends and the public admired it with an envy which, as she often perceived, amounted to agony; and there were peeresses who suffered the tortures of the damned, and with them millionairesses who panted like harts for the water-brook, with desire to learn the secret of those transcendental toilets; which was all like nectar and ambrosia to her small soul. And as she had the thin good sense and cautious taste to rarely use expensive fabrics, and was very chary with diamonds and the like; and being clever, soon acquired a stock of evasive phrases and satirical retorts for the most direct questions, she might have long escaped detection.

The first error which she committed was the very common one for all her kind, of ingratitude. For as regarded Flaxius, the very fact of her success

irritated her, when she reflected that he had entirely established all his assertions, and completely got the better of her—after all her assumption of superior intelligence—and as she recalled him, every time she donned a dress, with renewed vexation, the feeling grew in time to tormenting hatred, there being no vindictiveness like that for benefits received. Nor was she any better disposed towards the fairy, since every time she was teased by questioners she said to herself: ‘Pest take the creature! why couldn’t she just as well have given me the clothes without any condition. ’Tis ever the way with these mysterious snobs, they always do everything by halves in a petty way, so as to render gratitude impossible. I believe that vulgar teasing is a part of their low nature.’

Now when the moral obligation to keep a secret is gone, and the buttresses are, so to speak, knocked away, it generally requires but a little push to overthrow the whole building. And this push came ere long from an unexpected quarter.

Miss Jesabelle Rockhard was born, and lived, in undeniably good society, but had never had more than very scanty sniffs of ‘the purer atmosphere of *Dukedom*.’ As the melancholy Jacques, with refined wit, remarks, even the word is ‘a spell to call fools together,’ albeit printers have spoiled his spelling. Now it befell that a duchess of twenty-four carats, a dame of irrepressible power, stronger at every point than poor Miss Jesabelle, and one whose *flamberg* or six-feet two-handed sword was not to be lightly turned by the latter’s fencing foil—fenced she never so wisely—had set her whole soul on learning the secret of the exquisite toilets. Hitherto Miss

Rockhard had only gentler breezes to resist, but now there was a cyclone brewing, before which, had she been wise, she would have fled unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

The duchess soon learned—indeed 'twas common talk—that the now famous Miss Rockhard guarded with great care the secret of her dresses. She made adroit, special, long-continued inquiry—who would not be detective for a duchess?—and the more she was confirmed in the report, the more obstinately was she determined to penetrate the mystery.

'O thou poor Jesabelle,' writes Flaxius, 'whom I did greatly love with all thy faults—since devil a one was there of them thine own—all being drawn from good society—how gladly would I have averted from thee the fate which I saw gathering over thy graceful head; how gladly would I have clucked unto thee, as the cock clucketh unto the hen to come to him when he has found a grain, albeit he often swallows it ere she gets there!—or done anything in reason, to *paratonnerre* away the crash and flash in the dark gathering cloud—it could not be! All that we *could* do was to await the explosion, pick up the pieces, glue them together as well as possible and so, *en avant!*

'It is written in the Babylonian chronicle of the great Rabbi Ganef Ben Nofgur, that "even as a monkey will, in doing mischief, manifest as much mind as would make him the equal of man, so a woman, to find out a secret which is none of her business, will show the genius of seven devils. For ten measures of intermeddling were sent down by Aschmodai upon earth, and the daughters of Israel got nine of them."'

From which ye may understand that the duchess, finding that the treasure was deeply buried, and craftily enchanted, took great precaution and pains to disinter it. Firstly, she was merely affable to Miss Rockhard in the winsome way which shows that any one has taken a special, an *unconscious* liking—which is a particular form of humbug treated more fully by Patrick Mac Iavel in his Treatise on the Art of Blarneying. She set on to Jesabelle an artless niece who Jesabelle thought was a fool, and who ended by fooling her—Miss Rockhard—completely. Then the duchess began a series of fondlings, pettings, little intimacies, and careful confidences, invitations to dinner and the opera—sending her carriage freely for her on all occasions. In a word, she wound round the victim such an insidious mesh of obligations that at last she judged that the roast was done to a turn, and ready to be served, carved and eaten.

So one night at a reception at the ducal palace, to which Jesabelle had come in consequence of most ingenious and urgent desire—in the utmost magnificence which she dared—her jewellery on this occasion being rather seriously splendid and dangerous—the hostess struck her *coup* by displaying the most passionate admiration of her guest's attire. Then with great adroitness she led the conversation to the fondness she had for Jesabelle, which subtly trained towards the obligations and kindnesses, which had by this time run up to an alarming sum. And then, suddenly recurring to the dress, she said :

‘ If you are, indeed, as you say, deeply grateful to me for anything, and are sincere as I am in

friendship, my dear, then acquit it all by a mere trifle, and tell me truly, without any equivocation, the secret of your marvellous dresses. . . .’

Miss Rockhard would very much have preferred seeing an insane anarchist flourishing a bomb, and a carving-knife come dancing into her drawing-room, to this simple question from her dearest friend. And the agitation of her features showed it—almost fearfully. The duchess was delighted. ‘Now for an adroit *coup*,’ she thought, ‘and I have it.’

‘I dare say, my dear,’ she added with sweet persuasion, ‘that there is really no great mystery in it after all. You girls are so fond of making up romances. Perhaps I can even aid you with it, if perfect secrecy, experience, and love can aid. But it will not be confiding a secret, you know, for we two are one, and ’twill be as if you told it to yourself.’

When one feels a secret like an intolerable burden, or a pack of coals on one’s back—heavy as sin, and burning as remorse—the bearer catches at any excuse for betraying it. Nor was Jesabelle a little piqued by the artful hint: ‘I dare say there is really no great mystery in it after all.’ And, perhaps, the duchess, with her vast knowledge of life and invincible *prestige*, *could* solve the mystery, so that no harm or loss could come of it; and driven to the wall as she was, and at her wits’ end, for a rupture with her Grace meant social ruin, she actually caught at the last straw—‘it will not be telling a secret, since we are one’—as if it had been a rope thrown by a life-buoyant philanthropist.

‘You will not say,’ remarked the duchess, somewhat sarcastically, ‘that it is a fairy-gift.’

At that word, Jesabelle in despair and anger

exclaimed—'twas as if the very devil spoke for her and used her tongue :

' It *is* a fairy gift !'

The duchess uttered an appalled scream ; there was a chorus of ' Ha's—ho's—oh dear me's !' through all the gamut heard from those around—*Tableau !*

' What is the matter ?' cried Jesabelle terrified.

' *Look in the glass !*' cried the duchess, pointing to a twenty-foot mirror opposite.

Miss Rockhard looked, and saw an awful sight. It was herself, arrayed in nothing but her undergarments, with a wisp of straw on her wrist, a piece of clothes-line rope about her head, and on her bosom a great threepenny brass and glass brooch. And amid her surroundings this costume looked ten times worse than it had done in Devonshire Street.

' A lunatic ! a mad woman ! Wonder how she got in ! Hope she won't attack us ! Wonder if she's got a pistol ? We shall all be killed ! Run for the police !' was heard on all sides. Miss Rockhard fainted. Some mysterious friend—she knew not who—stepped forward, wrapped her in a cloak, and conveyed her in a carriage to her home. Yet heavily as the blow fell on her, it struck the duchess at once almost as severely. For after all her pains, and after driving poor Jesabelle to the wall, and to insanity, all that she had got was, ' It is a fairy-gift,' at which even a child would laugh. She might well have exclaimed, ' I have brought my pig to a fine market, to be sure !' as the Princess Iona Mic Flanagan remarked, after she had driven a swine from Dublin to Cork, where it was eaten by a wolf ; the incident was sung in Tara's Psaltery, and

recorded in the *Leabhair Ruad*, or Red-Book of the Nine Masters, in *Shelta*.

When Jesabelle came to herself in the morning, a brief half-hour of deadly, sickening despair was succeeded by a good healthy reaction of rage at the duchess, the fairy, Flaxius, and all mankind. Even as the hero Hans Breitmann ungratefully wished that his teacher, Professor Schmitzerl, 'vas in hell' for teaching him how to ride on a bicycle, did Miss Rockhard wish that all those whose favours, gifts, and applause she had once so anxiously sought were all at the bottom of Inferno, and the devil dancing on them, because they had given her in fullest measure what she most ardently desired, yea, perjured herself to obtain!

I have here arrived, *O lector benevole*, thou *best* of readers, at what is to us, I trust, the most interesting point, that is to say the crisis in this eventful history. It happened once during the American War that after the Confederates had been defeated in a battle, certain gallant Southern 'chivs' or chivalric officers, attempted to account for the failure: one attributing it to a sudden rise in the river, and another to a division not coming up in time; till at last one startled them all by asking, 'If they didn't think the Yankees had something to do with it?'

Even so, after making out that everybody had been against her, and shown themselves a pack of contemptible wretches, did it occur to Miss Rockhard that she Herself had counted for something in the game, and had something to Do with It. And being now, as it were, thrown into solitude, and having a fine, vigorous mind, and being withdrawn

from the society which had so fearfully warped it ; she began, so to speak, to straighten out again morally, and recuperate. She felt no remorse at all, but she began to study that which had made her err : a society, with its ideals of the most adroit slander ; knowledge of all that is none of our business, ostentation, wealth, rank, and birth, though ever so evilly sustained, or disgraced or dishonoured ; the adroitness of shallow sarcasm and silly flippancy ; and the real meaning of vogue and fashion ; and finally the awkward, blundering manner in which even these wretched fancies were carried out by nine-tenths of their devotees, real and accomplished men and women of the world,—the true article being a great rarity even in Belgravia.

Her self-examination was long and searching, sparing herself no pang, being as pitiless to the Me as to the Them. Having no other on whom to exercise her sarcasms, she turned them all on her own follies—not raving in despair, and calling herself a fool, but, as she indeed always did, finding out what was in the object thus illuminated and shown up. And it did her an immense amount of good. She had an awful crust of old dead shells, and a fearful lot of foul sea-weed to scrape away from the ship, ere it would sail well ; but she *did* it !

For to do Jesabelle Rockhard justice, she had pluck and bottom, grit and endurance, and was not the kind of girl to throw up the game of life because she had lost a fairy wardrobe, or even the favour of a duchess ; and not being French, but right valiant English of good fighting stock, she resolved to show fight, and put a good face on a bad game.

All at once it occurred to her that the long and

earnest reflection which she had given to herself and to society had developed the serious and sustained analysis of character which forms the real power of the novelist, and that which elevates him above the story-teller. She was seated at Brighton in the shingle on a fine day at noon, under an umbrella, when it came into her mind that as a novelist she could enter on a new life. It was like a great revelation, for with her clear, vigorous, well-informed mind, she grasped all the possibilities of such a career, and its tremendous power.

Once in history, when women came a-cropper in any earthly way, they went into a convent; now they go into a publisher's—that is to say, they write or re-write a novel.

All geniuses are white-washed.

A woman of genius may pawn her reputation when an obscurity dare not look over the fence.

Make yourself a celebrity, and society will do the rest.

Nine-tenths of notoriety consists not of what people know, but what they say about anybody.

If you have sinned, there are two ways to be forgiven. Either repent your evil deeds or describe those of others.

The most certain way to make two thousand a year by writing novels is to tell all your friends in confidence that you earn one thousand.

Understandest thou this—or what?

A gypsy woman of her acquaintance from whom she bought bouquets, and whose shrewd observations had often amused her, came up and gave her what is called in tramp slang a *lyover*, in Romany a *ruzhia*, and in English a flower.

‘Tell me, Amalthea Cooper,’ she inquired, ‘what do you understand by society? Give me a sixpence worth of information!’

‘When any kind of a lot of people gets together anyhow,’ replied Amalthea, after a grave pause, ‘it’s a mob. When there’s a-many that generally assembles, such as three or four *tans* or families, it’s what we calls in our language the *Sweti*, or our world. But when they are of the same kind of folk, and are invited to a drop of tea or beer, or to have something and a talk—and one, may be, plays a tune on a fiddle—why, that’s society.’

‘And what do they talk about?’ inquired Jesabelle.

‘Well,’ answered the gypsy with a smile, ‘mostly about how one has been sent to *staripen*, or prison, for stealin’—and what a fool he was to let himself be took—and how other folks has run off with one another wives, and the like um-moralities, and how some larrups their *romis*, or *morts*, which is wives and missuses, and all such little *rakapen* or gossip—and that’s what I calls society.’

‘*C’est tout comme chez nous*,’ remarked Miss Rockhard. ‘Here is your sixpence, Amalthea. Decidedly I will take to novelling.’

It was a magnificent success, as great as the toilets had been, and to Miss Jesabelle in her new mind infinitely more gratifying. She didn’t deserve it, good people may say, but somehow Jesabelle *did* write brilliant books, and rose to the top of the wave. Even the incident of the evening at the duchess’s was now narrated as an eccentricity of

genius, and when it was mentioned men in the clubs said: 'Ah, my dear fellow, excuse me, you haven't got the right rendering of that story.' Finally it settled into two versions: one of the sporting world, which found its way into the *Blue 'Un*, that 'Jes' had done it for a wager, which was in a way true; and the other more humane legend, that it was at the request of the duchess, who had begged her to sing the 'Lunatic Bar-Maid' in character.

And her novels were stinging, I warrant you. As she became amiable personally she grew savage in literature. She gave it to society and fashion *à la aquafortis*; and as society did not see itself but only its friends in her scathing speeches, it was perfectly delighted. She did not touch lightly and gently and pityingly, as I have done, on its poor little imperfections; she ripped them up as with a scalper in the hands of a Red Indian, or a familiar tormentor of the Inquisition at a five o'clock tea. I never could learn that it did any good, for even the victims felt pride at being shown up in good company as worthy of note; but her books sold, and she was famous.

'Heaven help their souls, they'd rather be'
et cetera.

It was more than a year after the events here narrated had taken place, and Miss Rockhard had greatly improved on her celebrity by a 'stunning second,' or another novel, that she found herself again at Brighton, seated as before under a white umbrella. She was reading proofs, which is of itself a bliss to a young writer, as strong minds as hers love to speak of '*my* publisher,' and this was mingled

with a mild, vague impression of children digging with wooden spades, negro minstrels, ballad-singers, flower-girls, bathing-machines, the flow of a thousand voices, the broad-spreading, blue ocean, and ships far off and out at sea, with the sun upon their sails.

When lifting her eyes they encountered the gaze of another pair, which for an instant half prolonged her dreamy mood in dim conjecture, till she recognised in the other the somewhat remarkable character who had, indirectly, had such a wondrous influence on her fate. It was indeed the Great and Wise Flaxius, *in propria persona*, who had taken unto himself a pennyworth of chair at a little distance, which distance he promptly proceeded to diminish when he perceived that the lady had not forgotten him.

‘It is a long time since we first met,’ said Miss Rockhard. ‘Nearly two years.’

‘Nearly two thousand years,’ replied Flaxius in a strangely solemn voice, *wie Glocketon und Orgelklang*. ‘Yes, quite two thousand, though learned critics of the *Kethubim* differ as to the date, and Jochanan and Ben Hillel think—but never mind! ’Tis so.’

‘And who was I then?’ inquired Miss Rockhard, entering, as she thought, into the spirit of one of Flaxius’s strange jests.

‘Truly a *femme incomprise*, and one who died, in fact, misunderstood, just as you might have done had you made your exit some two years ago, since at that time you did not really understand yourself.’

‘I think,’ replied the dear young lady, ‘that is strictly true of the whole silly sisterhood.’ She said it with a deep blush, though not a blusher in a general way, for she recalled the last interview, much

in sorrow, not at all in wrath. 'But who was I, two millennia gone by?'

'The wife of King Ahab of the Jews, the very much distinguished Jezebel.'

Truly this was a shake for Miss Rockhard, and the blush came up as a flush somewhat heightened; yet she said with a smile:

'I regret that you only remember me as the greatest iniquity of the Old Testament. I am curious to know if you admired me very much in that character?'

'Not in that character, but in your true one, which, I declare sincerely and without paradox, has been most cruelly misrepresented.'

'As it is a personal matter,' rejoined Miss Rockhard, 'I need not say that I am all expectancy and attention.'

'Very well. Who is it that describes Jezebel for us? A personal enemy of extreme bitterness, and one of a race approving death and murder in any form, when any one of the *Goyim*, or Gentiles, is concerned.'

'I never thought of that,' said Jesabelle reflectively. 'And religious antipathy must have been stronger among the Hebrews than in any other race, for they were strong-minded.'

'Yes,' replied Flaxius, 'it is too generally lost sight of in Church histories that those who make the best martyrs are also best martyring others. But to return to Jezebel. The first and chief crime with which she is charged is remaining steadfast to that polytheistic Syrian religion in which she was brought up, and to which she was in duty bound to be attached, since her father was King of Zidon,

and in a sense its head. The King of the Jews married her, and was fascinated by the charms of that splendid and sensual system which seemed so attractive, compared to the grim, Hebrew, ascetic monotheism, which gave no joyousness to this life, neither did it promise a future as did the Syrian, so that it came to pass that the greatest and wisest men among the Hebrews often adopted it, and it more than once happened that nearly all Israel went over to it.

‘Now bear in mind, my friend,’ said Flaxius with a smile, ‘that in reading the Book of Kings we generally go as in a torrent of headlong agreement with the writer, who assumes, as a matter of course, that everybody who is not a Hebrew monotheist, and an implicit believer in all that the prophets are *said to have said*, and all that is told about them, is utterly wicked beyond all sinners, and deserving death.’

‘That is true,’ assented Miss Rockhard.

‘The prophet whom Jezebel threatened in a rage because he had put to death the priests of her own religion, who were probably her intimate friends and relations, is Elijah—Elia—who with the masculine termination appears in Greek as Helios, the sun, who, like the latter, goes up to, or over, the heaven in a chariot of fire, after performing the preliminary Moses-miracle of dividing the water of a stream. I think that we may set aside Jezebel’s sins as regarded this very mythical character as dubiously inconsiderable. And when we reflect that the Hebrews slew one hundred thousand Syrians in one day, as we read in the twenty-ninth verse of the twentieth chapter of Kings, simply for differences

of religious opinion, the whole war being stimulated by prophets and priests, the slaughter of a few prophets ascribed to Jezebel may well pass as an incident of war. These great bands of one hundred and fifty prophets seem to have been identical with the roaming *Darweesh* of the Arabs, whose business it is to stir up war. We are accustomed to feel awe at the prophets, because they usually appear singly in their majesty, like God, but these bands of one hundred and fifty, all prophesying *en masse*, rather detract from the dignity of the profession.

‘ Now, as regards Naboth’s vineyard, it was unquestionably a wicked deed. Ahab had offered Naboth, the Jezreelite, a *better* vineyard for his own, or its worth in money, and Ahab was the king. The refusal was a bitter blow before all the world; so bitter that the king became ill, and seemed to be dying, because he had been, as he conceived, insulted,

‘ Now there is no proof that Jezebel cared two-pence for the vineyard, but she was passionately fond of her family and husband. She had been born and brought up to familiarity with excess of bloodshed for trifles; she had seen all the priests whom she revered, and *one hundred thousand* of her own people killed for adhering to their own religion, and as she preferred the life of Ahab to that of Naboth, and being an unquestionably clever and vigorous woman, she easily contrived to have the latter put out of the way. One *evil deed* does not excuse another, but it is worth observing that pious King David was guilty of a very similar, but far viler and more nefarious transaction, as regarded Uriah’s wife, for which *he* was indeed only vicariously

punished, while Jezebel was made to suffer not only by loss of husband and son, but most cruelly *in person*.

‘Now we come to the end of the tragedy. Jehu, after having murdered Jehoram in a cowardly and treacherous manner, returned to Jerusalem. And here the narrator by a most ingenious little touch of art has contrived to say something of Jezebel which has done more to make her appear infamous by her biographer than every thing else accusative—if indeed he meant it—which may be doubtful. It is the simple statement that, “When Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she *painted her face* and tired her head, and looked out at a window.” From which has come the popular saying of “painted Jezebels,” suggesting vile women covered with rouge.’

‘And even rouge is not quite a sin; if it be, God help Belgravia!’ remarked Miss Rockhard.

‘And yet she was not even rouged,’ added Flaxius, for the Hebrew original says, “put her eyes in painting,” which means that she drew lines with *Kohl* or antimony powder under her eyelashes, as was the usual custom with *all* women, good or bad, all over the East, where it is common to this day. It amounted to no more than putting on a bonnet or drawing on a pair of gloves. As for “tiring her head,”’ added Flaxius solemnly, and almost sadly, ‘when I think how Isaiah and Jeremiah must have tired the heads and hearts of all Israel with their lamentations, I can pass over Jezebel’s work. It was her own business.

‘And when the brutal and cowardly assassin Jehu entered, she addressed him as only an injured wife

and mother and a woman of marvellous wit and deep feeling could have done, with the cleverest, keenest, and most succinct sarcasm or reproach ever uttered. It was simply, "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" Few at the present day realise how stinging this question was. To an extremely superstitious and brutal man like Jehu, fearful of omens, and uneasy as to the crimes of regicide, it was maddening. But the woman never existed who wouldn't have said it, if she could have thought of it.'

'I am sure that *I* should, under the circumstances,' replied the young lady, 'though I knew that all the vengeance in the hand of man was to follow.'

'So she was thrown out of the window, and Jehu killed her, stamping the bruised woman under his own feet in his frenzied rage, so that, as it is written, "some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses," showing how high it must have jetted up, and how savagely she was trampled on by the infuriated Jew.

'Even the eating of Jezebel by dogs is told in such a manner as to convey an impression of infamy and guilt on her part. But if Jehu, or any other Jew or Gentile, or anything eatable, were thrown to the dogs in Jerusalem to-day, they would soon finish it. When the soul is gone, it matters little how the poor shell of humanity is treated. But I find something very degrading and disgraceful in the manner in which the writer dwells upon and exults in the fact that the 'carcase' of Jezebel was insulted, and that dogs ate her flesh. It would have been more creditable to Elijah, and to all concerned, if they had given her burial as became a king's

daughter. For she was queenly, and showed no fear in her last moment, and when she knew that death was at hand, she calmly made her toilet, as a lady would, to appear well, like Queen Catherine, to the last, and greeted her foe with a richly deserved reproof, and not with prayers for mercy. Yes, she died like one of royal race.'

'Mr. Flaxius,' said Miss Jesabelle, 'do you know that if I should ever come into court, as defendant, in anything from pitch and toss up to murder, anarchy, or high treason, I should like to have you for my counsel. I believe that you would make me out an angel, even to my own conviction.'

'The usual formula of polite society would be,' replied Flaxius, 'to say that I have always been convinced myself of the fact. But as I have not, and would be very much puzzled to know how to dispose of any such feathered anomaly, all I can say is that if you were no more guilty than I believe Jezebel to have been, I would accept the case with alacrity, and clear you, if there be such a thing as justice in the land.'

'Since you have defended Jezebel so well,' replied the lady, 'perhaps you could say a word for Herodias. I always understood that the *Advocatus diaboli* was the prosecuting attorney, but in this case he appears for the defence.'

'Herodias,' said the sage, 'was a bird of a very different colour, but, like all the rest, she was a *femme incomprise*. And to begin with, the original of the name, who is to this very day recognised among the older witches in Italy as their queen, jointly with Diana, was of remote Oriental origin, or the same as Lilith of the Jews. She was

eminently the fair demon of fascination who was "simply killing," and you must bear it in mind that something of all this devilry was in the mind of the good Christians who wrote about the lady of the New Testament who danced Herod off his head and the head off Saint John. And the original Herodias was as certainly the goddess of dancing, which was a serious and terrible means of bewitchment in the olden time.¹

'In regard to the transaction described in the later Scripture, it is marvellous that no writer has ever treated it from a modern-society, Christian, five-o'clock-tea, practical point of view. Suppose a lady—an intelligent, accomplished widow who has had a pleasant life as wife of the governor of Pary-obberree, or Cathay. The governor dies, his brother succeeds to the appointment, and marries the widow, as was strictly commanded in the Old Testament; from which book sundry moderns derive the command that a man is not to marry his wife's sister.'

'Consistency, thou art a jewel!' interpolated Miss Rockhard.

'Well he marries the widow, or, it may be, the fraternal divorced wife. Then uprises a clergyman of a new sect, with what were considered eccentric new views, who has tremendous influence among the people, and informs the governor that his marriage is illegal. And *then*, fancy the feelings of Herodias! On one hand divorce and perhaps death or poverty, with a charming daughter just coming

¹ Here the chronicler of Flaxius would fain get in a little *réclame*, by mentioning that Herodias and Diana have a small book to themselves in *Aradia or the Gospel of the Witches*, by Charles Godfrey Leland. London: D. Nutt.

out ; on the other a prophet of the wildest description. And it was considered to be such a remarkably natural, trifling, and commonplace thing in those days to put anybody to death who was in your way, if you had the power to do it ; just as good John Calvin did with Servetus when the latter got in *his* way, or as some millions of heretics were disposed of, mostly with antecedent torture, by “meek, merciful, all-Christlike Mother Church.” And so Herodias did what the grand majority of worldly-minded, High or Low Church, Christian matrons and mammas would do to-day, under the same circumstances—if they could—and put Saint John out of the way.

‘This is the legend of Herodias.’

There was a long silence, when Flaxius said :

‘Now tell me, if under the same conditions of secrecy as before, and with all your recent experience and newly acquired wisdom, would you accept the marvellous wardrobe of the fairy Alban once more, for if you will take it you shall have it, forthwith?’

Miss Rockhard had for months reflected on and studied this very question to its very lees. But she took a minute—two minutes—to her reply, and when she spoke it was with emotion close to tears, but with firm voice :

‘Oh, I thank you from my very heart, for I feel deeply that this offer *now* is a thousand times kinder than was the first. But I have had my lesson, and I hope I do not need another—when I *do*, you will, I hope,’—here she looked up with a sad, sweet smile.

(‘She is immensely prettier than she used to be,’ thought Flaxius.)

‘You will I hope not spare me. But as for the wardrobe, it is best where it is—in fairy hands. Nor would I know anything more of magic or *occulta* or mysteries, for I have learned what few know, that no human nature, unless perhaps it be gifted as few are, and has had years of training, can keep, or is fit to know, such secrets. It will be time to attend to them when we shall have exhausted science.’

‘Yes,’ replied Flaxius, ‘when you exhaust science a little more, you will indeed find that magic is beginning in earnest.’

‘And so,’ added Jesabelle with a smile, as they rose to depart—I dare say it was in the direction of Mutton’s, to lunch—‘we learn from past trials and bitter storms how in future to keep under shelter, and seek only the sunny way.’

“For all experience is an arch where through
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever as we roam.”

Haec fabula docet. ‘Ye morale of whych lytil historie,’ pens Flaxius as usual on the galley, ‘is that we should, firstly, not believe the worst of anybody, be it derived from their own manner, and demeanour, or from oral or written report, and above all have patience with them, and try to help them to a better state. For, verily, this Miss Rockhard was a hard nut to crack, and enough to daunt the devil, or any decent man as I first met her, and a hard time I had with her, yet did she

come out 'all right as a trivet,' a *trivet* being, as ye know, dearly beloved, a *tripod*, and the reference 'all right' to the infallible accuracy of the Delphic oracle, which is, however, a fact not generally known. For of all things a three-legged stool stands most securely.

As for the manner in which any evil report may be cruelly and undeservedly attached to a name, there is still a word to be said for belle Jezebel of Hebrew history. When I of late defended her character, I was rebuffed with the remark that there was in the Book of Kings a distinct assertion that she was a—ahem!—social evil—and a witch: this being the speech of Jehu, Kings II. 9, v. 22.

Now be it observed that the expression here employed is to be found over and over again in the Old Testament, and in almost every instance is used not to signify any adultery or individual immorality, but to discredit the Syrian religion. It was a very nasty and unmanly form of abuse which the Hebrew prophets, and Saint John, used far too freely, on *all* occasions, to characterise everything theological which displeased them; just as sailors and the like use 'bloody,' *et cetera*, very often with no meaning whatever, or as the gentlemen and ladies of Houndsditch cry out *noffgur* and *ben-noffgur*, and so forth, far too freely to all offenders. This speech of Jehu's was, it is true, used not in the Pickwickian sense, but most certainly in the theological, which is the next thing to it. For the first impulse of the *odium theologicum* is, to be 'nasty.'

Now a good tough nature like Jesabelle's, when really honest, is all the better and cleaner for a

good mangling. As was beautifully expressed by the ancients as follows—



that is, three V's, meaning *Virtus virtute virescit*, Virtue flourishes by virtue, signifying that like the chamomile it grows the more for being trampled on. To the present day this sign is often to be seen on the walls of Florence, scratched in chalk or charcoal, and prefixed to the names of popular favourites. It is generally believed to be a monogram of *Evviva!*

HOW FLAXIUS SAT AS JUDGE WITH A JURY OF TWELVE DEVILS

‘Sono demoni chi rappresentano il popolaccio del inferno, mentre che i diavoli ne sono i principi e i gran signori.’

‘There are demons who represent the populace of hell, while the devils are its nobility and great gentlemen; and some of these have left a name, such as it is, in books on strange subjects.—*Del Diavolo, a Treatise*, 1870.

THE Sun had drowned himself in the sea, and his widow, the Sky, after dissipating the evening gold which he had left, was contracting a second marriage with Night, who brought her as settlement the silver moon and the whole heavenly sack of stars, when Flaxius wandered along alone by the wild, wailing waves, seeing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and hearing the sweet-salt, vapoury ocean breeze. So he went on—it was a lonely coast—till he encountered a shepherd established in a hut of stones and turf; a tenement so small as to bear to its inhabitant the relation a shell bears to a tortoise.

‘Is there any place hereabout,’ asked Flaxius, ‘where I could lodge for the night?’

‘None for near a five mile,’ answered the herd, removing the slender pipe of clay from his lips; ‘leastwise none where yer could get *hin*. That is, ’cept the Devil’s Den, a hold ouse, further on, and

there,' he added emphatically, 'I reckon yer'd only be too glad to get *hout.*'

'Why?' inquired Flaxius.

'Cos it's ruined—wuss than Jane Shoree hever wus by the royal *rep-ro-bate,*' replied the herd, who appeared to have some tincture of letters.

'Is it roofed?'

'Roofed and water-proofed,' was the reply. "'Taint *there* that the affliction commences. I mean ruined in reppertation and char-ac-ter. It's mellincolly and hin bad sperits—leastways bad sperits is in hit—an' always were—since the smugglers left hof usin' hof hit. Hits 'osts his ghosts.'

Flaxius gave the man a deeply pensive look, and a small silver coin. The herd replied with a six-pence-ive smile of gratitude. 'Sir,' he exclaimed, "'you are a good Lot," as the lady said to her 'usband before she turned to a piller hof salt.'

'How can I be a lot, being but one?' inquired Flaxius.

'Hi call a cove good com-peny when a penny come to me from 'im,' replied the shepherd. 'You stand six hof 'em. You're more'n a cove, you're a whole covey hof birds, a multitood o' virtues, a 'arf dozener.'

The sage went on from pile to pile of pebbles, or earth, marked with whitewash to serve the coast-guards as guides in darkness, till he beheld before him the shelter which he sought. It was a dilapidated stone house of the Jacobean time and style; not unpicturesque, gracefully draped with ivy, and as it stood in the light of a full moon on a rising rocky platform, with a sea-view circling round, there was in it something which irresistibly recalled scenes

in theatres and novels, smugglers, witches, Guy Mannering, and Anne the uncanny of Geierstein.

But what gave it specially this appearance to Flaxius was the gleam from within of a light, which he knew at once was lit by no mortal match and fed by no earthly oil or fuel. It rose and fell, quivering and thrilling like a Northern light, sometimes causing the building to appear as if in flame, and then shrinking to an arrowy ray, or a mere needle, changing to many hues in which, however, a sulphur blue ever predominated. And with its changes there rang in time and measure, high or low, unearthly laughter, strange shouts or ululations, sinking to stranger humming or buzzing, and passing to a dreamy melody in softened shade, all at once broken up by a startling blare and flare and wild vociferation in strange tongues.

It required little reflection for the Magian to conjecture the nature of the company from whom such sounds proceeded, nor was he astonished, after opening the door, entering the hall, and uttering the wizard greeting, which proclaimed his nature, to see the sight which met his eyes.

Round about a great block of sandstone, which served for a table, and on which stood two open cases of gin, several loose bottles, a ten-gallon demijohn of whisky, a raisin box full of Perique, or *favori du diable* tobacco, and an ancient, much-thumbed manuscript bound in sheet-iron, sat lolling and sprawling in all the extravagance of unconventional ease, on divans or seats, also of stone, twelve demons, or spirits of that kind whose mission it is in life to busy themselves especially with all that is mischievous, reckless, stirring, wild, eccentric, or subversive. That is

to say, they are always occupied with what they call 'whooping it up'; aiding and encouraging youth to paint towns red, inspiring Celtic politics, whether French or Irish, organising riots, editing society newspapers, evoking up divorces, anarchising, and filling police courts with cases. They were all smoking and drinking, and seemed to be earnestly occupied with some extremely interesting subject of debate; the intensity or moderation of which was manifested in the *crescendo*, or *diminuendo*, of a flame rising from a great terra-cotta vase, and by the tones of their voices.

'Hallo, old Flax, is that you?' cried the only one of this precious company with whom the Sage had ever before made acquaintance. This was Slang—not by any means the worst of them, since his mission merely was to corrupt language, and invent all kinds of new, grotesque forms of speech. '*Mozeltoff!* luck to you, old cove, *sās tute a kairin tiro kokero?*' he continued in the tongue generally spoken among devils and goblins, 'how have you been doing since they let you out?'

'*Kūshti adosta*, well enough,' replied Flaxius in the same tone and tongue, for there never was man on earth who could so adapt himself gracefully to the most varied society or 'all shorts and editions' of life. 'May I venture to ask for what purpose you gentlemen are here assembled?'

'*Lel a swägler an' a cutter a mül-tatto-pani*, take a pipe and a drop of brandy before we get to *biz*,' exclaimed Slang, dusting a seat obsequiously as he spoke; and indeed it was quite evident, despite their swaggering impudence and their feet on the tables, that the whole party of demons were deeply sensible of

the honour of entertaining such a distinguished guest. Flaxius accepted the refreshment, and sat down.

‘What you behold,’ said Moloch, the *diavolo* of Pessimism, ‘is a sad spectacle and a melancholy instance of diabolical deterioration, showing how even natures which have received every blessing of hell and all infernal advantages from the devil himself can become depraved to mere *inertia*. We are now a jury here assembled to try one of our number for his reputation. You, sir, though happily exempted from all such mutations, are aware that the limit of moral existence is one thousand years for a member of our order, unless he by progressive energy or genius advances himself, in which case he receives a renewal of his social lease. Now there is one of our number known as *Sneak*, who during all his snivelling millennium has never got beyond where he begun—or vulgarity and idle folly—including carrying and retailing petty gossip, teaching foolish old club-men and ladies how to twaddle about divorces and marriages, elopements, and relationships, gleaning trash and mean slander from low servants, and sticking *just there*. Such an existence, we hold, is too contemptible for even the meanest devil in Inferno; hence this jury, to decide whether the creature shall exist among us any longer; and as our judge has failed to put in an appearance we respectfully request your Wisdom to take his place as referee.’

‘I consent with pleasure,’ said Flaxius. ‘Produce the culprit!’

A truculent-looking demon named Dobble, whose department was quarrelling, the prize-ring, rencounters, and rows, here arose, went to a corner, put a box

under his arm, brought it to the table, opened it, and took from it a form pressed flat like a pair of trousers in a trunk. This he unfolded—blew it up like a bladder by means of the stem of his clay-pipe—and gave it a drink of whisky, when lo! the form assumed some semblance of, if not humanity, at least demonity. It was a wretched-looking phantom, something in it recalling a battered Punch or tattered Ally Sloper, a Paul Pry, a thing without a conscience or moral sense, yet not without prying inquisitiveness or petty cunning—a poor *simulacrum* of a popular, paltry jest. It sat up and grinned, and leered, without a trace of fear, as if—all its function finished—it had nothing else to do but to die game, as vulgar, second-hand tradition enjoined its kind to do.

‘I appear here,’ said Moloch, not without dignity, ‘as *advocatus diaboli*, or public prosecutor. The entire life and actions of this sneak, whom I will not honour with the name of devil, or even imp, are so well known to all here present as to render a formal indictment a work of supererogation. Yet that all due formalities may be properly fulfilled, I ask the accused if he demands that any accusation be made?’

To which the culprit replied by casting up his head, and saying, in a tone which would have elicited roars of applause in a music hall:

‘*Ya-ap!* Who’re you? Shut up!’

‘An indictment is therefore needless. Let me here remark, gentlemen,’ said Moloch, with great impressiveness, ‘that though we may all be demons, and even the humblest of our order, our mission is *not*, as is vulgarly supposed, to do evil. It is simply agitation and action.’

‘To keep things a-bilin’, interposed Slang.

‘Quite true. The honourable gentleman who has just interrupted me is, for example, often accused of mere vulgarity, but unjustly. He may be a rude poet, but he invents new similes and vigorous racy words which are often wanting. I myself—in many ways—by introducing Pessimism to society, and by raising the question as to whether life is worth living, caused a discussion which rendered me worthy of receiving a renewal of my lease of life. The pugnacity of my colleague Dobbie has its silver lining—it provokes resistance, argument, and conclusion. We may all be a rough lot with a hard bark, but there is *wood* in us. But the accused is all rotten bark and no bite, and *hollow*. Vulgarity, twaddle, gossip, and small-talk are all one and the same thing; and the mind devoted to them alone stagnates and putrefies. The spirit of it dies very slowly, gentlemen; but if nothing better can be said of this *fin de siècle*, it must be at least admitted that this century has witnessed no advance in vulgarity and the pettiness which kills for everything. Gentlemen, I await your verdict?’

‘GUILTY, in large capitals,’ cried Slang, who seemed to be foreman. ‘We’re all agreed like a rope of inyons.’

‘Prisoner,’ exclaimed Flaxius, ‘have you anything to say why sentence of non-renewal of existence should not be passed on you.’

‘Oh, a’nt I just?’ screamed Sneak in a Punch tone. ‘Call *me* vulgar do yer, yer vaggabones—me that moves in the highest circles among the biggest suckers! Listen to *this*!’ And with that, he drew from his pocket a fashionable weekly newspaper,

well known on every stand, and proceeded to read from it such a mass of drivelling silliness relating to the pettiest acts or tastes of the upper classes, including that of royalty itself, and all that constituted what *it* regarded as 'Society,' that even Flaxius was fain to drink another glass of brandy, and light a cigar to enable him to sustain the infliction. At last it came to an end.

'There!' exclaimed Sneak triumphantly. 'That's what Erbamala, the great *noveliste*, and I call human nature. The best art is the depicting that—it pays best—and I'm the spirit who inspires it all. There I rest my defence.'

'The defence,' said Flaxius, 'has aggravated the offence.'

'Well, my time is not out, and you'll find that I shall drag on awhile longer.'

'True,' observed Flaxius, 'but observe that there *was* a time when you had a place, such as it was, among those who are here present. Now it is lost; even the demons of the present day disown you. Therefore I pronounce you dead *de facto*, for those for whom you now live among mortals have no intellects. Begone!'

The foreman opened a window, and the living dead whisked out of it, like a great carrion blue-bottle with a buzz.

'Did the deceased leave any property on which to administer?' asked Boodle, the modern incarnation of Mammon.

'Yes, he left ME,' piped a small voice. And a sharp little imp, two inches in height, sprang on the table. 'I'm *Puttuli*.'

'Immortalised by Musæus,' said Moloch. 'You

were used to go about to people's pockets and report what you found therein to your master.'

'Yes, but I can do more than that,' replied Puttuli. 'I can observe and report anything.'

'Well, none of us want you,' cried Slang, 'you little, sneaking, spying villain. So be off with you by the first boat—quicker than immediately, if not sooner.'

'Nay,' said Flaxius, 'he may be useful if properly employed. With your permission, gentlemen, I will take him.'

And as there was no dissenting voice, the wise Flaxius departed with Puttuli in his pocket. And he soon found that he had indeed a pocket-companion, and voluble—if not valuable—*vade-mecum*, for the diminutive imp was what a distinguished American writer calls an 'amoosin' little cuss,' and 'especially good at beguiling off the odd corners of the weary hours.'

'*Haec fabula docet,*' wrote Flaxius, 'or its moral is—not what too many satirists so sadly wail—that Sneak actually represents the spirit of this bottom of the century, but its very dregs, which are, however, stirred up too much by the spoons of small writers into what would be, but for them, a clear, exhilarating beverage. The very devils, whose agitation in a certain way leads ever to something that is good, find their work hindered by this imp of pettiness. Prosperity and peace, or its stagnation, engender the birth of such mosquitoes. A roaring torrent of even dirty water is better, for it will wash itself clean ere long, but a standing pool only creates vile insects and malaria.'

FLAXIUS AND THE BOOKSELLER

““L’amour des livres est plus utile que vous ne croyez,” dit le capitaine, “car je trouve dans mes études un calme qui vous manque. Vous ne soupçonnez pas tout ce qu’une manie a de précieux, docteur ! Elle occupe comme une passion, et n’a aucun de ses tourments. Croyez-moi, puisque la vie n’est après tout qu’une voiture mal suspendue qui nous conduit à la mort, les sages sont ceux qui baissent les stores, sans songer au but ni aux cahots.””

Souvenirs d’un Bas Breton, par Émile Souvestre.

‘Few are the men who know what lives do hide,
Or dream what demons lurk, or fairies flit,
In places which to them seem dull and tame,
Even as a drop of water to the eye
Appears to it like naught ; but take to it a glass,
And lo it is a sea with monsters filled,
Devouring, making love, or raging wild—
Full many a heart is like that water drop.’

THE day had been grim and ill-tempered—flitting fitfully through all the phases of bad weather—promising at times, like a deceitful child, to be good, when it would clear a little into curling mists, through which there came a doubtful ray of light—when straight anon there fell a dismal fog, then wild rain, maddened by the roaring of the wind—for ’tis terrible mourning when any one cries aloud and weeps at the same time—*laut aufweinend*—as the Germans say.

Oh, I warrant you that the rusty weather-cocks, as they whirled round and round, and screamed as if crowing to the *Wilde Jäger*, in the old town of Nuremberg, and the wind low-waving like the deep

baying of his hounds made a fine witches'-chorus that night—yea, the very gutters in their unwonted joy at becoming bounding brooks sang gurgling songs as they hurried along to leap into the Pegnitz . . .

'Tis a *Sauwetter*—yea, a *Hundeswetter*—a swine and dog weather,' exclaimed the little old man to Flaxius, as the latter refuged himself just long enough to turn his umbrella, which had been reversed into a great goblet by a sudden squall, under an arch. This arch was over the projecting doorway of a shop; 'twas immensely massive from the old, bold time, and I warrant you that Albert Dürer and Willibald Pirckheimer and Hans Sachs and all of 'em had passed under it often.

'I could make better weather,' added the old man, 'with only a rusty tea-kettle and a pint of ——'

Flaxius looked up. There was a little, half-obliterated sign over the ancient door, which had once proclaimed to the world that here was a *Buchhandlung* or book-shop, but like an ancient warrior, with stress of time and battling with the elements, it had forgotten most of its letters.

'You sell books?' replied Flaxius.

'How do you know *that*?' asked the little man, with a quick, suspicious glance, as if a secret which he wished to keep hidden had been revealed.

'And you have for sale a fine copy of the *Emblemata* of Iselburg in old German rhyme, published in Nuremberg in Fifteen Hundred and Seventeen . . . and a superbly bound exemplar of the *Altdeutsche Wälder* of Grimm.'

'Not for sale—not for sale—oh, no!' exclaimed the little old man eagerly. 'They belong to my private library.'

'Also the *Mascarades Monastiques* of Rabelli,' pursued Flaxius pitilessly.

'Tis sold,' cried the Bookseller, as if alarmed.

'It isn't; but never mind, I don't want to buy them, yet I would like to see your collection.'

'*A—ch, so!*' responded the ancient, visibly relieved. '*Komm herein, du lieber Gast, wenn du nichts im Beutel hast.*

“Enter as a welcome guest,
If thou really nothing hast,
If thou'rt poor then sit thee down
If thou'st money, get thee gone!”

And with this invitation, he led the way into a marvellous old German interior, which looked as if it had been painted by some artist who was, as I once heard a French artist say, 'mad on the Middle Age and earlier time.' For it was heavily arched, and looked like the crypt of a cathedral, or the *Stube* of the Giant Tavern in the Hof-Gasse of Innsbruck, which is, indeed, lovely to behold, and far away finer than the Auerbach Keller of Leipzig. All around were books: books of tarnished gold in old ivory-parchment bindings; books in tremendous plank covers of old oak, knobbed with bronze or iron, like castle doors; books in marvellous cut-vellum, with rich Gothic grotesques, and silver clasps of extravagant richness; books on shelves and heaped up in piles like rubbish; everywhere books—and *such* books! 'Twas a vision, a dream, an endless promise of a bibliomaniac's paradise!

And there the two sat for hours turning over the black letter of the olden time, like two wizards evoking the spirits of the dead, which, indeed, the scholar always does when he reads reverently in such

books, which were made, and once studied, by the departed. For it is in his thoughts that the writer lives in after ages, and he is ever with us as we read.

The dealer was enchanted also with his guest, hearing the wondrous words and ponderous stories, strange, which were uttered in calm, solemn tone; and a rapt shuddering stole over him as they turned some old and legend-leaved book, mysterious to behold, while he learned priceless secrets enhancing the value even of what he most esteemed.

Flaxius took up an old work—*Das Schachzabelspiel* of Jacob Manuel of 1536.

‘There seems to be something in the binding,’ he said. ‘Perhaps some old paper. May I examine it?’

He bent back with care the thin parchment, and drew out a manuscript of perhaps twenty leaves, which had been put in to stiffen the binding, as waste-paper.

‘This is indeed a find,’ he solemnly remarked. ‘A great discovery.’

‘What is it?’

‘A manuscript play as yet unknown, by Hans Sachs, entitled *Die Weisse Rabe* or, *The White Raven*, with the motto from the *Renner* of Trimberg:

“Selten wir gesehen haben
Swarze Swanen und weisse Raben.

Seldom have we ever seen
Black swans or ravens white I ween.”

It bears the signature of the author: *Hans Sachs*.’

‘Blessed be the storm which drove thee to my gate; blessed be this day and hour, and the mother who bore thee, and all and everything dear unto thee!’ cried the Bookseller. ‘Lo, it has been the

dream of my life to find that play—I have seen it in visions, I have prayed for it; I would have given a finger, an eye, yea, my choicest book to even behold it.'

'And now it is thine,' replied Flaxius gently. 'And indeed it was—*de facto*—thine own discovery, since thou didst lead me here, and it was in thy possession.'

The old man clasped the manuscript to his heart, and kissed it reverently; there was silence, save for the pattering of the rain, and anon a thunder peal, which seemed like a joyous *salvo* fired off in honour of the event. The Bookseller rose with tottering steps.

'I will return anon,' he said.

He came back, bearing two ancient bottles covered with dust and cobwebs, and two tall, magnificent old glass goblets.

'There is no better wine, and none so old in Nuremberg,' he exclaimed. 'I would not have offered it to the emperor; but, verily, we will carouse therewith—*vinum bonum et suave lætificat*.'

'*Gurgle, gluck, gluck!*' sang the Wine as it came forth again into the world after a century of slumber.

'Hearest thou?' cried the old man. '*Gluck, gluck!* They are words of good omen. This day I have had good luck.'

And he drank solemnly—*feierlich*—to his guest.

'The wine,' said Flaxius, as he touched his glass to his host's—it was like the ringing of cow-bells heard afar on a mountain side in the Tyrol—'is like a butterfly long imprisoned as a chrysalis under earth, which now comes forth to shine in light for a brief space—the butterfly gladdens the child, and wine gladdens man.'

‘And poetry like that gladdens everybody,’ cried the host; ‘albeit I confess that I love it best when it is printed in a rare old book.’

‘What is this?’ said Flaxius, taking up a little manuscript.

‘Truly a quaint thing, a fourteenth-century transcript, or translation of a far older work of earliest German times, the *Vision of Baldemar*, now lost. It is unique. I pray you accept it as a gift.’

Flaxius would have declined the offer, but the old man, who had inquired the name of his visitor, took a pen and wrote therein in a very ancient, but distinct, hand, which seemed to be uniform and contemporary with the writing of the manuscript itself:

To the Most Learned and Very Honourable
DOMINO FLAXIO

*This Work is presented with humblest Regards as a trifling
Testimonial of inexpressible Gratitude from his
Most Devoted Servant*

BUCHERWURM SCHMOKER.

‘Hast mir geschaffen großes Glück;
Doch wenig geb’ ich Dir zurück:
Giebst Du mir Was,
Schenk’ ich Dir Das.’

‘Great pleasure hast thou made for me
But little I return thee.
Thou giv’st a lot,
I but a jot.’

‘What a thing,’ thought Flaxius, ‘it is for man in this life to set his mind on something, and when so setting to make a dead set, cooking all his victuals, as the gypsies say, “*adré yeck Kekavi*,” in one pot.

For they hold by tradition—the Romany cook-book being as yet unpublished—that when all conceivable food is thus boiled it acquires, like Mississippi punch, an additional agreeable flavour with every new ingredient, eggs, carrots, ham, butter, chickens, bread, turnips, honey, hedgehogs, snails, oatcake, rice, herrings, a sucking-pig, mutton-chops, raisins, bacon, cold plum-pudding, cabbage and anything else edible being welcomed to the *mixtum-compositum*; which is declared to be so palatable that the author of *Rookwood* assures us that when Dick Turpin the highwayman first tasted it he actually shed tears of delight.

‘So hath it been with the venerable Bucherwurm Schmoker who hath cast into the one passion of antique literature all the emotions and feelings, hopes and affections of life. I have heard that among the Five Thousand Commandments which were appended by the devil and Society to those of Moses—the which I do propose some day to publish—there is one which says, “Put not all thy eggs into one basket.” But there is great pleasure in breaking commandments, especially when one desires, like the French lady, to make with them an *omelette aux confitures*; and there is also great delight in concentrating our feelings, as the devil observed when he saw that the mystics united the excess of piety with that of earthly pleasure. “*Cela suffit*”—quotha.

‘This venerable Schmoker seems to me like the thorn-bush of the poet, of which it would be hard to say how it could ever have been young, it looks so old and grey, like rock or stone all overgrown with lichens to the very top, or thoughts of some

primeval time which fain would give it all the grime which they have gathered up. Yet underneath this aged thorn there is a lovely hill of moss, wherein are exquisite curling lines and scarlet-orange-tawny-sable-ivory flowers, which, seen with a glass, do to perfection resemble the enlacements and tracery and fancied flowers of an illuminated manuscript; and therein and therefore do the fairies love to dwell and sit love-making of a moon-lit night.

‘And if I think thereon I needs must laugh, remembering that all the world thinks that such an erudite old Dryasdust leads the most arid, infestive, humdrum, prosy life, given to old and long-forgotten things, buried in the rust of antiquity, palætiology, archæology, which all, like the Dismal Grove in Tieck’s wondrous tale, do but conceal a sunny elfin-land of quaint caprice and merry, wanton joy. As every antiquary and folk-lorist who is anything better than a mechanical maker of tables, and a clipper and collector of variants, well knows.

Serious, indeed! Now, an’ I had time, good people, I would tackle Calvin, Knox, and Chalmers, and Young of the *Night Thoughts*, and show you what Mephistopheli, what humbugs, what subtle deceivers of self or others, and what mad humorists they all were, and in what Hampton Court mazes they led their followers. For, meaning it or not, it came to that; and ye who cannot perceive it, think that the partition six feet high, over which ye cannot peep, is the top of heaven’s wall. Yea, I repeat: For, meaning it or not, it comes to that!

‘*Vale, Corcule!* Good-night, old Parable, for there is in thee a deeper meaning than men divine. Sleep

well, O mirror of ten thousand books, whom I have made happy by adding unto them "one volume more!" as Dibdin sweetly sang.'

When Flaxius opened the door, it was a bright, full-moon-lit night; clear and fresh, and gently breezy, gauzy cloudlets flitting now and then before the stars, like transparent veils blowing away or waving before the eyes of Eastern girls. So he went to his dwelling, and the night being young, sat down to read the little book, which ran as follows:

BALDEMAR'S TROUME

THE VISION OF BALDEMAR

As in slumber once I lay
 In a wood one summer day,
 All beneath an oaken tree,
 With green leaf-curtain, fair to see;
 Flowers peeped upward from below
 To the sun as he did go,
 And the drops fresh from the showers
 Looked lovingly upon the flowers,
 Like bright eyes as clear as glass,
 Or diamonds glittering in the grass;
 And all around from many a bloom
 There came a pleasant, fresh perfume,
 While in the forest all day long,
 Dame Nightingale did tell her song.¹

By me ran a spring full clear,
 And it sounded to my ear,
 With its steady murmuring,
 Like children who a lesson sing,
 Or as one who reads alone
 To himself in single tone;
 While the wind in harmony
 Rustled sweet in every tree.
 Flies and bees the measure kept
 All in chorus—so I slept.

¹ 'Vor dem Walde was sîn ganc,
 Dâ diu naktegele sanc.'

Walther von der Vogelweide.

Now whether I from sleep awoke
 To life again beneath the oak,
 Or whether I did deeper sink,
 In dreams, I know not what to think,
 Yet this I know that I was there,
 Where I had been, but in the air ;
 And all around there was a change,
 Unto another life and strange,
 As if one should sleep in spring
 When all is green and burgeoning ;
 Then wake in autumn to behold
 The trees all clad in red and gold ;
 For other sounds I seemed to hear,
 Other scents were in the air,
 Elfin light shone all around,
 And new herbage on the ground,
 There full silently had come,
 As strangers move into a home.

There I sat but had not known,
 It was on the Wildè Stone¹
 That I had fallen into sleep,
 Since there the elves their watches keep,
 And he who sitteth there an hour
 For all that week is in their power.
 But this secret well I knew,
 And now lived to find it true,
 That the man who passes well
 Into the spirit of the spell,
 Meets with nothing to alarm,
 Nor will come to any harm ;
 Many marvels he may learn,
 Many wondrous things discern,
 If he sleep an hour alone
 In faith upon the Wildè Stone.

As in silence still I sat,
 Marvelling in amaze thereat,
 I soon heard a sudden sound,
 As of a footstep on the ground,
 And looking up, there in the wood,
 A vision fair before me stood :

¹ ' Der arme Grêgôrius,
 Nü beleip er alsus ;
 Uf dem Wilden Steine,
 Aller gnâden eine.'

Hartmann von der Aue. 1320. Gregorius.

When all at once the forest rang,
 In chorus all the birds sang,
 And wondrous flowers in bright array,
 Came shooting to the light of day,¹
 And in all her beauty's sheen
 Before me stood the fairy queen.

Thus she spoke : ' O minstrel dear !
 Long have I longed to see thee here !
 For it is in our destiny
 That if not placed in poetry,
 Although we live in lordly state,
 With wealth and power and titles great,
 We'll pass unto oblivion's shame
 Unless some poet notes our name.
 There is more life in one small song
 Than in a century 'mid the throng,
 With all their work, and war and strife ;
 Song only is eternal life.
 'Mid all great deeds—too great to last—
 Men seek the poems of the past,
 And one sweet lay, as all may see,
 May make an Immortality.
 It may full long forgotten lie,
 Yea sleep for many a century,
 Hidden away in darkling nook,
 Yet be revived in many a book :
 For though states fade and tongues may die,
 There is no death for poetry,
 Since unto it we well may say :
 " A thousand years are as a day,"
 'Tis God's own voice which, when it spoke,
 In poetry the silence broke :
 To inspiration doth belong,
 And it alone, the power of song.

Even we who are of fairy kind
 Are least of all unto it blind,
 Since all the life which we receive,
 Legends or lays unto us give.
 For all of our appointed time
 Is measured by the poet's rhyme,

¹ ' Bluomen springent,
 Vogellên singent,
 Wünneclîchen schal.'

Unless we're sung we soon are not,
 And even our name would be forgot :
 Therefore to me, O Baldemere !
 Thou art indeed of men most dear.
 Long I have lived in hope to be
 But mentioned in thy minstrelsy :
 Even in one line be't low or high,
 For then I know I ne'er can die.'

All had grown silent as she spoke,
 No sound the forest stillness woke :
 The nightingales had ceased to sing,
 The brook had stopped its murmuring,
 A sudden peace had come to pass
 Over the wrangling flowers and grass,¹
 For well I noted all had been
 Listening with joy unto their queen,
 With some sweet hope that they might be
 Included in the poetry :
 And this I did with love recall,
 That fairy life is in them all.

Her voice again the silence broke,
 And wavering with the sunshine spoke :
 As it came flickering through the leaves :
 As broideress her pattern weaves,
 Singing meanwhile a melody
 With her design in harmony,
 And thus she said : 'O come with me
 And thou a wondrous sight shalt see
 Fit for a song, my Baldemere,
 If thou canst read its meaning clear,
 For we must go.' I naught could say,
 So followed as she showed the way.

Right wild and rugged was the road,
 Through passes strange, which long we trode :
 Great rocks above us darkly hung,
 While peaks like towers o'er them sprung,
 And grim and griesly was the way,
 Scaping so oft the light of day,
 We did not seem to climb a steep
 But rather down in earth to creep,
 Wherein we heard and time again

¹ ' Alsô stritents úf dem Anger
 Bluomen un de Klë.'

Leutold von Seven. (Maienwunder.)

The sough of winds, the rush of rain,
 Then wended from a passage cold
 Into a forest grey and old
 Where every tree seemed all alone,
 For they had changed long since to stone ;
 Every leaf and twig was there,
 As if they had been carven fair,
 And all y-wrought in imagery
 As men do work in ivory,
 Making for brides their caskets rare :
 Anon we came unto a stair ;
 Each step whereof was wondrous broad,
 And strangely high. It was with awe
 I asked its meaning, and was told,
 'Twas made by giant hands of old.
 Yet up we went, nor did we stop,
 Till we had gained the mountain top,
 Where in the twilight golden brown
 Upon a bench we sate adown.

Long it was ere I could speak,
 For both my soul and tongue were weak
 With all the wonderful surprise
 At what was spread before my eyes ;
 For never yet in dream or scroll
 Came such a picture to my soul,
 Nor yet in visions told of eld,
 Compared to what I there beheld.

Straight from our feet like any wall,
 An awful precipice did fall,
 Ne'er had I thought of one so steep
 It seemed ten thousand fathoms deep,
 While down below a valleyed bay
 Spread beyond vision far away,
 And the wild waters of that sea
 Showed all that in eternity,
 Since earth hath been or Time began,
 Was ever seen by living man.
 Rising from darkness into light,
 Then fading into sheen more bright,
 A life which was a sparkling spring,
 And then anon evanishing,
 For there were forms of women fair,
 Like ivory—then lost in air,
 Or buried in the billow-caves,
 As goblins vanish into graves,
 Strong warriors with stretching arms
 Pursuing still those wondrous forms,

Or revelling as at glorious feasts :
 With all were mingled fearful beasts,
 Up-leaping, roaring, rioting,
 Withal full many an idle thing,
 As minstrels carolling their lays,
 And forms of long-forgotten days,
 And dwarfs who dwell in mossy stone,
 And spectres flitting all alone,
 And dead men floating in their shrouds,
 With dragons breathing fiery clouds,
 Blinding all round with ruddy light,
 And then in darkness lost to sight :
 There too were castles, halls, and bowers,
 With wondrous battlements and towers,
 Beyond them others rising high,
 And others still unto the sky,
 With gardens broad and forests fair,
 Yet ever fading into air,
 And fields with fountains interlaid,
 Where troops of merry children played,
 With gentle deer and snow-white lambs,
 And nuns a-singing even-psalms ;
 Fading anon with all the rest,
 Like sun-set clouds into the West :
 On earth there is no thing I ween
 Which in that sea could not be seen,
 All that is common, all that's rare,
 All that is humble or is fair
 With every known or unknown thing,
 Coming to life and vanishing,
 All blending, tending into one,
 As vapours fade before the sun :
 Chasing, embracing, or anon
 In deadly strife, and then agone :
 Therein I felt all that can be
 In Life to all Eternity.

Long at that wondrous sea I gazed,
 As one half pleased but more amazed,
 Till step by step upon my soul
 There came the feeling of the whole,
 And then a strange and boundless awe
 As I conceivéd what I saw,
 Until the thought which seized me there
 Became too terrible to bear,
 For what surpasses poetry,
 I ween is far too much for me :

Life hath its limits, and this strife
 Is far too great for mortal life :
 A shudder seemed in me to rise,
 And, over-borne, I closed my eyes
 When a soft whisper in my ear
 Said, 'Tis enough, O Baldemere !'
 And as the fairy to me spoke,
 I started at the word and woke.

I lay upon the Wildè-Stone,
 All in the forest and alone,
 Deep-thinking on the things I'd seen,
 And then I sang, 'O Fairy Queen !
 Thou shalt in deed recorded be
 By Baldemere in poetry :
 God grant that this my humble lay,
 May live in truth for many a day.
 Would I could give it grace divine !
 Not for my honour, but for thine !'

'*Haec fabula docet*,' wrote the master, ' firstly, that there is no earthly immortality like that of Song. Now it is to be noted that in their day and time men give little real heed to any save a very few of the greatest living poets, treating minor bards with a neglect which history clearly shows is most undeserved. For the *vitality* of even fourth-class poetry is marvellous. It is recovered and reprinted centuries after it has been forgotten by all. What scholar is there who when raking over piles of fifteenth-century, theological, legal, and even historical rubbish, which will only sell for waste-paper, has not been charmed at finding in it—O happy man!—a book of ballads, or even of poetry of *any* kind? 'Tis little thought upon, this life of song. There's not one poet of the present day, however small his art and weak his lay, who hath not better chance to live for aye, and speak at times to some congenial soul than any other fancied famous man.

‘ There is many a small being—ay, more than any dream—who will live like a fly in amber, merely because he has known, conversed with, and thereby identified himself with some poet, so small that even the fly did not know that the other had ever rhymed at all. It is little to the credit of any civilised country that it can excessively honour and envy and glorify an Upper Ten, or Twenty Thousand in Great Britain, or a Four Hundred in America, and not include in the number more than a dozen poets. If people cared more for poetry they would enlarge the number, for there are in very truth some hundreds cruelly ignored—all sneering critics to the contrary.

He is an evil being, to me, who would belittle, crush, or condemn almost any poetry whatever. For even in the very mediocre, where there has been inspiration and love, there is a gleam as of something divine, which I must needs reverence. Truly, indeed, the muse may have been only a very small fairy, elf, or goblin, or even a witch, but it has a spark of the supernatural or occult; treat it tenderly therefore, as something born with mystic powers!

And there is also a lesson in the Bookseller himself, which, rightly read and widely understood, would do good in the world. There are thousands of people who would fain travel into foreign lands and see strange people, when there are all around them in life men far more marvellous than Turks or Indians, or beings well-nigh as queer as goblins. They go about silently like shadows in a kind of twilight of society, living in a fourth dimension, enjoying senses all unknown to us, hearing sounds which never reach our ears, lit by a light which

never cheered our eyes. Such are the collectors and readers, like this old man, who steep their very hearts of hearts in the feelings of the past, and give to every thought that chiaroscuro of the romance of age which is the final beauty of art. It is one of the sarcasms of truth that such a Dryasdust, who has become among fools the very type and symbol of common-place dulness, is in reality all the time in a fairyland too fine for the Philistine with his great horny eyes to even perceive; for he in a black-letter book feels with exquisite sympathy all that romance which was in all life in an earlier age, feels it directly and *in itself*, while another only gets a coarse burlesque or imitation of it from novels, plays, and Lord-Mayor-Shows of poems.

There are very few in this world who feel or even understand in reality this spirit in which the Bookseller has his being, more's the pity!—for it brings a great deal of happiness to the possessor. Hand in hand with it, like a twin, goes the fairy of Collecting. This spirit too is far misunderstood. He who, having got together more money than he can spend, ridicules the collector of postage-stamps or buttons is like the lunatic in Hogarth's picture, laughing at his like. They are all, one or the other, inspired by what the gambler-scholar Pascasius Justus called the *insatiabilis habendi libido, similis ventriculi magnæ voracitatis*, the insatiable desire of possession, which is like a gnawing, ceaseless hunger, the which, as he adds, may do no harm if it be properly supplied with good food. The delight of the collector is in renewing certain pleasant feelings which he experienced before, which some think is nine-tenths of the pleasure of love, or of intoxication, or any-

thing else; and that in very truth man is *man* because he has more memory and passion than any other animal, and more ganglion. Nay, there have been rakes and Don Juans who found their chief pleasure, not in pleasure, but in accumulating conquests, that is, by collecting, by adding to the list which some pitiful Leporello bears.

Now, as Collecting is a human-animal instinct (as is shown by the raven, magpie, and other creatures), and love and religion and art were nothing more in their beginnings, it may be that as we improve, it too may be developed to a holy thing or a great institution; for in it lies the secret of history and of folk-lore and of preservation of relics; which will be clear to ye all when ye read my great work on the science of collecting in all its branches.

FLAXIUS IN THE FUTURE

‘What I was is passèd by,
What I am away doth fly,
What I shall be none do see,
Yet in that my beauties be.’—*Old Epitaph.*

I KNOW not to what land or region strange the immortal Magian betook himself, after this century had reached its end and tumbled over Time’s great precipice. All that I know is this, that it was in some realm within the realm of shadowed sense, where he forgot the stars, the moon, and sun ; where he forgot the blue above the trees ; where he forgot the dells where water runs ; where he forgot the chilly autumn breeze ; where he forgot there had been newspapers or stocks or pigeon-shoots at Hurlingham, or wondrous things at the Aquarium, or Piccadilly or the Savile Club—yea, all of earth and what there is of life—most useful, beautiful, æsthetical—all this had vanished like the lightest dream.

Now whether he had dipped a while in Dîs, to talk with Pluto, whom he much admired, or sailed to some celestial violet star, to exercise strange senses here unknown, expanding in the fourth di-men-si-on, this is certain, that it was about the time when the Twentieth century had attained its majority of two thousand, Flaxius found himself again on earth,

suddenly dropped from some supernal height or upward shot from the great world below.

. . . Seated on a very comfortable bench under the lee of the Great Wall of China in a remote corner of Manchuria, he was not there a minute ere he realised that remarkable, not to say radical, changes had swept over the face of the whole world since his evanishment.

For he observed, firstly, that the Great Wall, which he had last seen in a most dilapidated, eroded, crumbled, and top-worn state of oxidation and moss-grown rustiness, was now, so far as he could behold—and it wound like a serpent up and down rolling hills, and over tremendous rocks for half a century of miles, till it vanished in an invisible, grey thread—completely restored as if by contract, all its ancient towers being likewise correctly renewed, as if by some Chinese Gilbert Scott. At its base, at the rate of about one to the acre, were bungalows of graceful construction, but all without chimneys,¹ rising from tufted groves and gardened plains, in whose architecture the old Chinese style seemed curiously mingled with other influences. A very striking feature indeed was that of many colossal towers, about a mile one from the other; every one, as Flaxius estimated, being about one thousand feet in height.

Hearing a rustling sound hard by, he, looking up, perceived a man alighting from what he at once understood was a flying-machine. It had come unseen and noiselessly as an owl, whence, as Flaxius

¹ Since this chapter was written I have observed that a great prophet, W. W. Astor, the author of *Looking Backwards*, noticed this same want of chimneys in the future.

divined, it had proceeded with incredible speed. The new-comer, who seemed to be about thirty years of age, was a man of attractive countenance, manly, and evidently intelligent, altogether the right sort of man for the right sort to meet. He was clad in a graceful, but extremely practical garb of some material new even to the Sage. As for nationality, he was certainly European, and probably English, but his first greeting to the Immortal was in a singular jargon, which appeared to be based upon the Pidgin, once dear to Flaxius in bygone years.

'*Come sta*, my flin? What one-piecey man you be? My no savvy you—*no hè te jamas visto*—never look-see you before one-time, allo my life-o!'

'I understand you,' replied Flaxius; 'but I also speak English.'

'Oh, of course,' replied the stranger with a genial smile, 'only a fellow gets so into the habit of pidgining; it comes from flying about——'

'Naturally,' observed Flaxius.

The stranger darted at him a quick glance, and then looked about anxiously, as if fearful that some one had overheard them, observing in a hurried, low tone:

'I say, don't do that again. Joking's against the law, you know.'

'I did not know it,' replied Flaxius. 'But why are you so much astonished at not knowing me?'

'Because,' replied the stranger, 'I cannot recall ever meeting anybody in all my life whom I had not seen before. You know how it is nowadays, when everybody goes flying about, and all the world is acquainted. And as you are evidently a superior sort of person, I am indeed *utterly* amazed at not

knowing you, because I would have sworn that from China to Peru there was not one gentleman with whom I was not, I may say, intimate.'

'But you must count your acquaintances by *millions*,' replied Flaxius.

'Certainly,' answered the stranger gravely. 'I know nine hundred and eighty-four million, seven hundred and fifty-eight thousand, four hundred and twenty-eight men and women by face and name. Since the new system of accretive memorising has come in, and the whole world has got mixed up, and keeps mixing, everybody knows everybody.'

'And does everybody now know everything?' inquired Flaxius, as nearly astonished as he had ever been during the whole course of his long and well-spent life.

'Well, among all the whiter people of age, I think it may be fairly asserted that every grown-up person knows all that man has ever known. Of course, only the most advanced scientists and deducers are really well acquainted with the knowledge of the future. But who, in the name of the *Prima Materia*, are you, who put such incomprehensibly odd questions?'

'I have been,' replied Flaxius, 'out of the world for a century, and am utterly ignorant of all that has taken place during that time.'

The stranger did not seem to doubt the assertion, nor to be much astonished, as he merely remarked:

'I have heard there were a few of the very far advanced who could do that, and you look like one of them. And I suppose, of course, they keep it a secret. So if you wish it, I will say nothing to anybody. Now to know what has been doing since you

left, is a long story. Do you know where to lodge to-night?’

‘No,’ replied Flaxius, ‘unless it be *à la belle étoile*.’

‘We can sleep in any of these bungalows,’ replied the stranger. ‘I have *coupons* entitling us to rooms and food, and medical attendance, and social attentions, anywhere in the world.’

‘I have plenty of gold money,’ observed Flaxius.

‘*Money!*’ exclaimed the stranger, as if astonished. ‘Well, certainly, money can be exchanged for coupons, and coins are rising rapidly in value for collections and museums. But coupons, issued in all cities, pass current all the world over at par. But let us get to our quarters and I will tell you the rest!’

He invited Flaxius to enter the machine, in which there was room for two, and a trunk, with some comfortable wrappings. Then as he turned a handle they shot off, upward and onward like the wind. As they flew, they overtook two other *aerevolantes* like their own, when Flaxius’s friend, exclaiming, ‘Good fellows, good luck!’ ignited several small coloured squibs or minute rockets—it had by this time grown dark—which were responded to by a single red spark from each.

‘I invited them to meet an interesting stranger whom I have just discovered,’ remarked the stranger with a laugh. ‘My name is Oakford,’ he added, ‘and it is Pidgined into Oakforto. *Yours?*—Flaxius. That will become Flasio or Flaso. Ah! here we are!’

He stopped at a large and somewhat singular, though pretty house, before which sat in a garden at tables several well-dressed ladies and gentlemen, of a somewhat Eurasian appearance. An elderly

woman examined the coupons which Oakford presented.

‘Take double,’ he remarked. ‘I want extra food. This is a distinguished man of science.’

Hearing this, the landlady and all the rest present rose and bowed low to Flaxius. But with all their politeness it was evident that they were utterly amazed, which Oakford explained by saying :

‘They have all travelled so much that they never saw a stranger before in all their lives.’

‘Now, for a paradox I call that a good one,’ reflected Flaxius. ‘That at least remains in the world.’

‘May I mention the fact that you have been absent from the world for a century?’ inquired Oakford of the Sage. ‘These are all gentlemen and ladies—that is, well-educated and of strict principles.’

‘Certainly,’ replied Flaxius.

‘This, my dear friends,’ then resumed Oakford, ‘is a scientist and philosopher of the very highest rank, since he has been absent from the world for more than a century. As you are all aware, only one among many millions ever achieves such extraordinary power, and from it you can draw your own conclusions.’

The party, which had been augmented by the arrival of two additional gentlemen with ladies, all gazed at Flaxius with an expression of such sympathetic intelligence as he had rarely met among mortals in the earlier time, and then, approaching him very reverently, bowed and worshipped, each addressing him a short prayer, after which the sage, perceiving that a benediction was hoped for, gave it with impressive feeling, to their very great satisfaction.

‘You must understand,’ explained Oakford, ‘that the religion which now prevails is, that the Creative Force manifests itself in the ascending series of ideals, and most perfectly in Man; therefore we worship him in one another, but chiefly in the advanced scientist, since it is to the power in him that we are chiefly indebted for inventions, and all that does us any good.’

‘Ah!’ exclaimed Flaxius, ‘you have somewhat changed religion as it was a century ago. Then, men chiefly worshipped, firstly, themselves, and, secondly, Politicians, who, instead of doing any good to anybody, made all the devil’s own mischief they could in every way, and were all the more admired for it.’

‘You speak of the Devil,’ remarked Oakford. ‘It must have been curious to live in the world when people believed in such a being, and thought they saw his influence manifest in all things.’

‘H’m!’ quoth the sage. ‘If you have succeeded in getting the devil entirely out of everything, and removed all traces of his existence, I will say this for you, that you have more than realised my greatest expectations and fondest hopes.’

‘Nay, we have only got rid of the initial D; but that is the first step. By scientifically supplying natural wants and discouraging the development of needless ones, we have very much extinguished the worst forms of selfishness.’

‘Ah, that initial D!’ said Flaxius. ‘The Dee ——!’

“‘There was a jolly miller
Lived by the river Dee,
Who sang, As I care for nobody,
Then nobody cares for me!’”

'I grant that *evil* still remains in many a form,' resumed Oakford; 'but science and philanthropy have combined to a degree which would once have been deemed incredible (being supplied with all the power which mankind could contribute, to investigate and extinguish it). The vast interest which all mankind took a century ago in the idle squabbling of windy politicians, that is in mere factional, silly quarrels about nothing, or human cock-fighting in oratory, has been supplanted, owing to the ascendancy of the man of science, by a general and serious interest in what really concerns our earthly welfare. Perhaps we have *not* accomplished so much as you may have anticipated, but to this we have really come: increased liberalism has so far diminished prejudices, that the world has pretty well agreed as to what it really wants, first of all.'

'A tremendous progress,' interpolated Flaxius. 'It is nine-tenths of the battle won. To know what we want is almost equivalent to having all we need.'

'Well, let us toilette and then refresh!' said Oakford. 'Here is your room. If you want anything, press the button, and speak.'

'And then the servant will come to receive orders?'

'No; for you must first form in your own mind an image, by volitional pseudophia—that is depicting by will—and this image is, with your voice, conveyed to the chambermaid. Thus you want two silk towels, you close your eyes, form their image, and order. The maid touches the button, closes her eyes, beholds two silk towels, and brings them. Some men of science—in fact, I can do it myself, to a certain extent—make the towels for themselves at once out of the atmosphere, by a peculiar mental,

physiological process, but the less expert prefer the maid.'

'H'm!' quoth Flaxius, as a very lady-like, pretty damsel appeared. 'I should think, indeed, that with many travellers the volitional physiological effort would be chiefly exerted in that direction.'

'The position of servant in a house specially frequented by men of science,' pursued Oakford, 'is regarded as a great honour, and only conferred on highly-educated and deserving persons. This young lady,' he continued, 'is the only daughter of the celebrated Kien-Long-na, who first converted rose-leaves into butterflies, he being, indeed, a leader among the mighty minds who broke away the barrier between organic or inorganic creative chemistry, and proved that living creatures could be made in the laboratory. It is even said that he has actually succeeded in making a human child, but as regards that, his daughter, here, can give you better information.'

This was said with the utmost gravity, and the lady chambermaid responded quite as seriously, but with interest.

'Yes; it is true, he has established the fact beyond all question that it *can* be done, by sub-etherising protoplasm, even in the fourth grade, but I must admit that the specimens of work which he has thus far produced are not remarkably creditable to his skill, nor very attractive.'

'Now, if I had heard that a century ago,' mused Flaxius, 'I should have taken the liberty to deny it, but I suppose that science has even extinguished Frenchmen by this time. By Nemesis! I would like to know what this chambermaid thinks when she turns over—if she ever does—specimens of

what constituted nine-tenths of the reading of young ladies at the end of the last century ; or what she thinks, if she indeed stoops to think, of those who revelled in it, or supplied it ! Holy Science ! thou hast indeed taken a great deal of fun out of life, but thou hast outbalanced the loss with abundant, honest decency !’

‘I must explain to you, also,’ said Oakford, ‘though you doubtless surmise it, that such positions are in request, because it is only in a comparatively few great families, or establishments, that servants are kept at all, since scientific appliances now enable people to do everything for themselves. Waiting has become a refined and elegant accomplishment, which can only be properly filled by ladies of superior education. In fact, it is very mortifying to a girl to have it said of her that she is always seen as a guest, and never as a waiter. It enables a young lady to see society and the world, and become more intimately acquainted with people of intellect.’

The supper, or evening refreshment, did not surprise Flaxius as a novelty, because it was precisely the same as that which he had enjoyed during his visit to the God of Ancient Days, and on other transcendental occasions. It consisted simply of a cake to each guest with a bottle of what—for want of a better term—I may call wine. Both, however, were the very perfection of food and drink.

Turning to the assembled company, Oakford said :

‘I propose, my friends, to give to our distinguished guest some account of what changes have taken place in the world as regards food, since he last

honoured this planet by residing in it, and will be pleased if you would kindly aid me in so doing. To begin with, I think I may broadly state that chemistry, as the word was understood, completed its first stage, or that of Analysis, about a hundred years ago, and then began to attempt Synthesis, or the combination of the elements.'

'It was at the same time,' remarked the waiting-maid, 'that the elements were reduced to one.'

'Quite right. One of the first results of Synthesis was to make not only metals but all kinds of substances, including every variety of food. For a long time men persisted—as many of the less educated still do—in liking only imitations of what they had preferred in earlier ages, such as meat and fish, or certain vegetables and fruits. I myself have several times eaten mutton-chops, and once a roasted chicken, and, I think, I once ate a pea.'

'History repeats itself,' mused Flaxius.

'But in a very short time good palatable food was produced so cheaply, and in such immense quantities, that finally every human being was supplied for nothing with a daily ration; it being now the fundamental law that all who are born are entitled to food, lodging, clothes, and facilities for mental improvement and recreation.'

'Did not this have the effect of creating a vast mass of idlers?' inquired Flaxius.

'My dear Master,' remarked one of those present, 'you will probably have conjectured that during the past century history has been made more rapidly, and the world has passed through more important changes than it had during all its earlier period of warfare and theology, with incoherent,

spasmodic, or despairing struggles. We have had terrible trials, and as yet are only beginning to realise what we have still to do. In fact I often think that we have thus far done almost next to nothing, with all our science, and that the one great glory of this our century is that we have reduced a chaos to something like order, and have produced a mere beginning from which those who are to succeed us may proceed with something like union and mutual intelligence.'

There was a general murmur of approbation at these words, when Oakford again spoke :

'There was much idleness and more discontent than ever, more complaining over dainty food, than there ever had been during famines wherein thousands died of starvation ; the reason being that those who were the most intelligent and industrious could still earn more than others and feed better. But man is really after all a working animal, and as the grosser and more intolerable kinds of labour were relieved by mechanical invention, and agriculture and raising animals gave way to artificial food, and education and culture advanced, great changes and improvements came about. And though, as I truly said, we are far from being out of all these social troubles, we think we see our way out, and have in the main succeeded in conquering those horrible pests of poverty, dirt, disease and social discontent, which once raged so terribly when you were formerly in the world. Even at the end of the Nineteenth century, when there was such a sad period of pessimism and doubt and despair, and such warring elements of labour and capital and religion and politics, men had done great and good work, it

would seem as if by mere instinct to do good. Ay, it brought forth Evolution.

‘And Evolution, which had been conceived and born, as one may say, by the *Natur-philosophie* of Germany, was warmed to new life or re-born in England by the genius of Darwin, Wallace and their supporters. From the beginning, it in turn developed science, and science, technical art. One of the first great inventions which followed the era of synthesis in chemistry was this production of artificial food in vast quantities at a very cheap rate. When attention was drawn to this, chemists soon found out how to vary its texture or substance.’

‘That is to say,’ remarked one present, ‘that it was made like meat or bread or vegetables to suit association of tastes. After a time this association greatly diminished; but it was discarded with great difficulty. People are so conservative as regards food and taste, and so convinced that what *they* are not accustomed to is unnatural and vile, that it rose to the magnitude of a great national, or rather world, question. But after a while the artificial food became so palpably superior to the natural, both as to taste and uniform wholesomeness, that the former had to give way. Now the poorest man has by legal right a daily ration of food, such as a king would have relished in the old time.

‘Then came another invention, which was simple enough, yet which had great results. It was the production of cloth fabrics of all kinds, in incredible quantity, very rapidly and at a very trifling cost.’

‘That sounds to me,’ replied Flaxius, ‘like what Tennyson called “a fairy tale of science.” There was a story in the olden time in Florence that a

brownie or household goblin once served in a family, where he did all the work—swept the rooms, cooked the dinner and played with the children—for nothing.’

‘That I suppose,’ remarked the waiting-maid, illustrates the earlier or theistic stage of society, and a Divine Providence.’

‘Ahem!’ coughed Flaxius. ‘Well, the goblin was greatly loved by the eldest boy, Marco, who, observing that his elfin friend had only a red cap and a tattered and very scanty shirt for apparel, had made and gave to him a full suit of red velvet. Whereupon the goblin declared that as he was now a fine gentleman, and had dreed his weird or served his time out, he would work no more.’

‘I see,’ quoth the chambermaid. ‘That was the Church after it had attained to violet robes and gold croziers with jewelled mitres, and ceased to be useful.’

‘*Um!* Well, the goblin ere departing gave Marco a stick, assuring him that whenever he would say to it, “Stick, turn, *risvolge!*” or “Unroll!” it would unroll cloth, velvet, lace, or any stuff, to any extent. And by means of it, Marco fulfilled a government contract, and supplied all the clothing for the Papal army in less than a quarter of an hour, besides dressing up all his friends in purple and fine linen, *ad infinitum.*’

There was a laugh at this, and Oakford said :

‘That story would not astonish any child of this generation, for we can really roll out cloth with as great rapidity. What is to me utterly incomprehensible, is that people who knew enough to make even such simple toys as steam-engines and telephones, did not begin long before by making

cheap cloth. In fact I am astonished that the man who had the wit to make that tale had not the sense to learn from it how it could be done. Why, the very roller suggests the whole. For even then men knew how to make paper by the mile, and also felt, and the step from these to fibrous and cloth-like stuffs was extremely simple. However it really required the great discovery of making *fibrine*, which followed immediately after that of the nature, identity and relative conditions of inorganic and organic substance. After that, people spun all kinds of fibre out of anything. Now clothing, like food, is supplied from the government manufactory gratis to everybody; the result having been to destroy the vanity of dress or ostentation of mere clothing, for now that gold and diamonds are cheap, and everything can be made, we have very different ambitions.

‘Perhaps the greatest factor in producing our present state of society has been *Aerostation* by flying-machines. The first were so rudely constructed that it is said that every other man who used one lost his life by it. This proved to be such an extraordinary attraction to Americans that they all went in like lunatics for flying. They flew races, and fought duels in the air, and roamed all over the earth in machines, in which no man now living would dare to go a rod. We have specimens of them in our museums, and I have seen bold aeronauts stand before them almost mute with horror. Even so Columbus ventured over the Atlantic in a crazy little craft. Ah, Master Flaxius, you must have seen awful deeds in your time, and marvellously bold men who had no fear of death or suffering.

‘Yet pray observe, friend,’ he continued, ‘that we do not travel so much to behold scenery or man as men did of old. For now, he who sits in his study can see all things on earth and hear all distant sounds by telegraph; in which art we are making every day new discoveries, even to dispensing with wires, and seeing all the world while we sit still.’

‘I can hardly believe,’ remarked a lady present, ‘that there ever were people who dared to travel night and day in steamboats, much more in locomotive-trains. My blood almost curdles when I think of such reckless, fiendish courage! But, I dare say,’ she added after a pause, ‘it was only the madly-brave, like the Berserkers of an early age, who really did such things out of bravado. Master,’ she suddenly exclaimed, ‘did you ever *see* a locomotive?’

‘Truly,’ exclaimed Flaxius, ‘I travelled in my time during nearly a century many thousands of miles in such trains, with ladies as gentle as yourself, to say nothing of innumerable maids and children, but none of us ever imagined that we were doing anything remarkably brave. But I believe,’ he added, ‘that any of my companions would have been terrified at the idea of flying through the air like sky-rockets as you do.’

‘Ah!’ exclaimed the waiting-maid, ‘but *that* is a very different thing.’

‘Ah, h’m!’ mused Flaxius. ‘Women with all their science still retain certain traces of their primeval savage logic—or nature.’

‘After the first stages,’ resumed Oakford, ‘when the flying-machine was very much improved, and made very cheap, it was at first terribly abused.

Thieves pounced down like hawks on property, and with the vehicle to carry two or three, an era of abduction and elopements with women began. Then there was organised a grand World Detective Flying Association, which pursued thieves into the very depths of Greenland, or Thibet, or anywhere else ; the result being that in the end the dangerous classes were almost extirpated. For when they became dangerous to everybody, instead of to a few, there was a general war on them.'

'And the abductions and elopements?' inquired the Sage.

'Well, Society found itself obliged to compromise a little on *that* question, which I must freely admit is in rather a dubious condition even at the present day. While the rights of persons and things to immunity from attack are more strictly observed than ever, it has in due proportion been discovered that conventional and sentimental rights or wrongs disappear with great rapidity among cosmopolites, and that the emancipated woman claims the same privileges as man. Still, on the whole, from all that I have learned in books, we get on far more peaceably and pleasantly than you did in the days of duels and divorce-courts, and all that. When people have nothing to do but fly away like birds in order to part, divorce becomes too easy, and so they end by pairing like birds. Those who have a turn for a kind of domestic life and families—and they are in a great majority—follow it ; and those who have not, do pretty much as they like, and are left alone unnoticed. Society gladly takes care of all the foundlings—very good care indeed—and it is a fact that while there was

at first a very great increase in the number of such children they are now diminishing very rapidly.'

'About ten per cent. per annum,' remarked a lady.

'And last year nine and four-sevenths diminution,' added the waiting-girl.

'As you have observed,' said Oakford, 'the flying-machine has led to an universal lingua-franca or pidgin English; and this has induced perhaps millions to speak good English. The old nations are breaking up and diminishing so rapidly that millions really belong nowhere. If a man is too warm any day anywhere he mounts his *flyer*, and can in most cases be, in an hour, on a mountain or by the sea, or *vice versa*. Whatever his calling is, he can find employment enough to pay his bill in any city. There is no mountain so high, no valley so deep, that you will not find some house of entertainment or shelter there. War is unknown, armies and navies have vanished before cosmopolitanism; the Frenchman has found to his amazement that he is not precisely the leader, type, and ideal of all culture, intellect, and intelligence on earth; the American no longer passes most of his time in informing every one how much grander, more beautiful, and in every way superior, everything is in Amùraca or Amáraca to everything everywhere else—in fact, he has ceased to talk about himself and his country altogether, because everybody has been there. In like manner, the English, the German officers and nobility, the Spanish, the provincial gentry of Italy, the niggers of Barbadoes and Sierra Leone, the Jews, and Irish have all slowly abandoned the opinion that they are God's special

favourites and the *fine fleur* of creation, put into this world solely to convince everybody else how degraded they are in comparison with themselves. There is no use in nations annexing other countries—nobody cares where he belongs; the only binding laws are those of society, or mutual agreement, and as the latter grow in force, those of nations and creeds and circles vanish. Even the home does not exist for millions.

“And now our dream of science is to pass
In mental vision over all the world,
Seeing and knowing all, for we have found
New senses in mankind which still reveal
New qualities, conditions, and ideas,
And myriad beings who inhabit space,
Whom men of old divined in feverish dreams.
And as we are, there is no spot on earth
Unknown unto its humblest habitant,
While lenses quite perfected now reveal
The smallest secrets of the starry world;
And yet we deem that we have little won,
But in bold hope keep ever pushing on.”

‘You will probably be very much struck,’ remarked another of the company, ‘with two very general facts as you come to see the world as it is. Firstly, the great improvement which has resulted from advanced hygiene, sanitary laws, and physical culture. Even a century ago men had begun to discover that cleanliness meant life and health, and that at the end of the reign of Queen Victoria the average of life was more than one-third greater than it had been a century before. Now, the death-rate in the most unhealthy parts of Europe is only three in a thousand, and there is great complaint as to that.’

‘It is to be noted,’ added Oakford, ‘that it was

not till about 1920 that the great question arose as to whether politics, or action on public questions, should be a mere matter of faction, like Guelf against Ghibelline, Red *versus* Green, Big Endian *contra* Little Endian, in which people sacrificed everything to see their public men take the place of the ancient prize-fighters and quarrel. People began to weary of Grand Old Gladiators, controversialists, co-rivals, and champions of all kinds, and said it was time that measures took the place of men. In fine, the principle became a party with the motto, "A plague o' both your houses," and the end was the substitution of questions of practical utility for "politics," diplomacy, foreign quarrels, and court-intrigues.

'When this principle was once adopted, it became a burning question, and was acted on with great energy. When people awoke to the fact that they had really been fooling themselves more than they had been fooled by their leaders, and that they themselves were really the government, if they did but know it, men of science and of action, yes, men of great, vigorous, and practical minds, nurtured in evolution and true principles of history and sociology, sprung up like a race of giants and extinguished the talking politicians and mere scholars. It was perhaps the turning-point in History itself, and to us it ranks even above the Reformation in Germany and the Emancipation in America, for it was the substitution of the practical human interests of all for the idle power and ostentation of a few.

'Then it was that the accumulations of capital made by a few, or by syndicates and trusts, were transferred to governments for the use of the

people, so that it seemed providential that they had acted as they did.

‘It is wonderful that at the end of the nineteenth century when these and a hundred other causes had clearly begun to work, so few foresaw to what they would lead. Men did not note that the immense accumulation of capital and rapidly increasing ease of making money would inevitably transfer it all to government and revolutionise society. “It will not come in *our* time,” was the cry. They did not realise, either, the great law that population diminishes and improves in proportion to culture, and least of all did they comprehend the unity and tendency of all this with improved sanitary reforms, education, transit by air, and free food and clothing, with less hard work, or gross labour. Indeed, until these advances had been made, they could not be co-ordinated, yet it is in that that the very life of society and progress lies.

‘Among the first great public measures which took the place of mere words, such as Conservative and Liberal or Republican and Democratic, was that of health and cleanliness, which at once led to gentler humanity and abhorrence of cruelty, both as regarded men and animals. Men became at first intolerant as regarded seeing others suffer from poverty, and finally detested pain in every form. I dare say that you can recall much which would now seem incredible to the greatest brute now living.’

‘Truly, I can,’ replied Flaxius. ‘There was a very good sort of man named Alexis of Piedmont, who wrote a book of quaint odds and ends of amusement, in which he gave a recipe how a goose

could be roasted alive. It was very ingenious indeed, but cruel to the last degree of torture, and it ended with these words, "Then take it from the fire and serve it up, and though roasted it will still be living, and will cry out loud while it is being carved, which is a very merry thing to behold." It was republished in many books for generations after. And in fact there was a great deal of amusement at the very end of the nineteenth century, much patronised by the very *élite* of society which was very little worse than this. Bulls were literally tortured to death in Paris in imitation of Spanish sport, gentlemen were present at prize fights, ladies at pigeon shooting; and, perhaps, no day passed in which some magistrate did not let some wretch guilty of horrible and infamous cruelty to children or women escape with ten shillings' fine, or a few days' imprisonment. Even a man guilty of cruelties, very far surpassing anything ever told of Red Indians or inquisitors, or torturers of the Middle Ages—I say this advisedly—cruelties wickeder than a thousand murders, was after public trial only sentenced to ten years' imprisonment! And the general manner in which such things were treated was to smile complacently and say, "Ah, yes, but a little roughness and knocking about makes us manly." Under the same impression there survived in society, among the most refined people, a vast amount of covert satire, innuendo, vexation by assuming superiority, sneers—in short, the vileness of building self up on the abasement of others, as one may see in half the humorous pictures setting forth the coarse fun of the time. Torture by the *peine forte et dure* was not abolished by law in England till

the year 1823 or thereabout. Yet all this did not make people braver or more manly. It crushed and frightened the weak, or the majority; it developed bullying, and it drove the would-be dignified into reserve, *hauteur* and coldness, which was all in fact only a masque for mean cowardice and vanity. Yet there were with all this certain curious antitheses, not without great beauty, which I apprehend you have now quite lost. There was, in the cruellest ages, the Madonna-like saintly meekness and innocence, yea, purity, which I apprehend has now taken very different form—or vanished. There was a romance and personal character in it all, which, I suppose, is now unknown to you.'

'It is true that we have lost immensely since we have been guided solely by science and common-sense and utility,' remarked an elderly man who had not before spoken. 'We have lost much of domestic life or home-feeling, and as I infer from what I heard from old people in my youth, and extensive study of ancient books, we have no longer the sweet and genial ideals or inspirations of art and faith, poetry and humour, which once fired the world. They have all sunk to the level of very inferior races and children, who, indeed, are rapidly growing ashamed of them. But then we have gained what compensates for it all a thousand-fold. We are no longer sentimental or despairing or pessimistic, nor is the poison of soft sorrow in our every cup, and in every kiss. In fact, if a man of a hundred years ago were among us now he would probably decide that we do not know what love is; and to judge from the poems and novels of the olden time, I should say that it is decidedly lucky that we do not; for

such a mass of misery, philandering, caprices, quarrels, tears, and agonies, as men anciently went through with, according to their romances, before they could accomplish the extremely simple and prosaic end of marriage—or similar union—passes all comprehension, suggesting a mixture of hell and lunacy. Add to this, that, with all their “beautiful poetry” and genial humour, every biography of the time shows us lives steeped in a deep consciousness of woe and suffering, with so little mitigation of it, according to their own deepest convictions, that one must needs see very plainly that they paid a fearful price for all their delightful, domestic affections and devoted loves of one fond heart, for their home circles and piety and fine art of all sorts. Yes, an awful price, not worth the whistle. We at least do not wail and howl, and sing and pray. When anything is wrong with us we go to the doctor, and if he says we are all right, we get on the flying-machine, and skim over the seas, and mountains. When we are not busied with science, or practical matters, we are engaged in taking our recreation, and between the two we have really no time for sentiment of any kind.’

‘I observe,’ replied Flaxius, ‘that you are rapidly losing, or have entirely lost, home-ties, domestic feelings, the warm attachment to a native land, or patriotism, devotion to a church or religion, with all the ancient form or spirit of art and poetry—in fact nearly all that once was supposed to form all that a man ought to live for, including the ideal of self or character. But with it you have lost their terrible sorrows; and you have gained stupendously more than you have lost in a grand philanthropy which

the men of the past regarded as mere moonshine, or Utopian. Everything in its time. Every man is your friend now—no one your enemy—quarrelling is bad form, for it is unscientific. I see in you the beginning of an entirely new race of beings. You are neither happy nor unhappy, as those words were once understood—in short you would have been utterly incomprehensible to everybody a hundred years ago. But they would in the end have feared you like giants, and vanished before you as the Red Indian is crushed morally by the white man. Therefore you are great, and I, a man of the ages, tremble to think what awful, what stupendous, power you are destined to attain. You will master every law of nature, and conquer death and the grave, space and time. What were the greatest glories of art and the highest flights of poetry or genius are already beginning to appear to you as frivolous and rococo, because they were founded on false or vanished unrealities, while you are pressing forward into such a realisation of the real in all its immensity as it never entered into the heart of man to conceive. Ye are already dreaming of doing—nay, ye have in part done—what Homer of old would not have dared attribute to the gods. Ye take unto yourselves wings, and are in the earliest rosy dawn, even in the depths of ocean ye are there. Ye spin forth gold or pearl or diamond from the air, as ye will, when ye will, or will soon do so. It is as easy now to create and combine atoms as to breathe; to build a towered castle is easier and cheaper than it was to construct a cottage of yore. And it is all but the beginning of the beginnings of the very rudiments compared to what is to come. You will read with

perfected lenses the minutest secrets of all the stars, discover new senses, and through them new orders of existence not now perceptible to man. And with every new discovery will come ten more daring dreams of others, far, far beyond it, and they will also be realised. In such illimitable achievements man must pass so far beyond all old conceptions of every kind that all will shrivel up and vanish. Terribly grand wilt thou be, O Humanity of the future!’

There was a pause, when the eldest one again spoke.

‘Thou hast understood us. Humanity has hitherto been in its boyhood, pleased with its pretty toys and fancies, indulging in passion or despair at every trifle. Now it is advancing to eternal manhood, and growing serious, which means more truly happy. It is leaving the paternal home, and all petty ties and beliefs, and going out into the world to do and dare. In the past lay the fabled, infinite power of the gods; in the future lies the illimitable might of man. What man has *never* done, man can do, is the motto of the future.’

Then the waiting-maid spoke more gaily :

‘But to prove to our guest that art has not as yet quite left the world, and that we still retain some trace of old-fashioned entertainment, I propose that Master Oakford, who is an expert in hypnotising, give us all a pleasant drama, with magnificent scenery and dresses, so that we may all have something cheerful in our memories before we retire to rest.’

This proposal met with general approbation, and Master Oakford explained it to Flaxius as follows :

‘You must know that we now have spectacles, theatrical entertainments, operas, and exhibitions of the most varied description, for all the world, at no expense whatever. In every family there is some one who is the special hypnotiser, and in larger assemblies masters on a greater scale. These masters—of whom I am one—store their memories with all that can conduce to entertainment. Then we keep by us, or, indeed, generally find in every house, an infinite amount of music, songs, speeches, or dialogues, such as were once recorded on tinfoil, but which are now kept imperishable on a new and better material.

‘When the performance begins, I hypnotise all present; impressing it on their minds that they are about to see a certain *spectacle*, and that they are to vividly behold certain scenery or persons. By this method, and the aid of phonographs and monologue, I give them a very perfect entertainment. Pray note two things: one is, that I *will* them to vividly remember all that they have seen, when they awake; secondly, that the art of understanding, and of enjoying such plays, is very much improved with practice.’

‘Much of this,’ remarked Flaxius, ‘was known to the Egyptian Chaldæan and Etruscan priests of yore, and it perished with them, or lingered in broken fragments among witches and sorcerers. I know so much of it that you need not hypnotise me, who am, indeed, master of the art, but I will most gladly enter into sympathetic perception with both the actor and the audience.’

Those present sat in a semi-circle, and by unanimous request, Oakford was requested to give Shake-

speare's play of *Macbeth*. It was only necessary for Flaxius to take the hand of one of the auditors in his own—it chanced to be that of the pretty waiting-maid—to close his eyes, and bring his perception into mutual sympathy with hers, which is a peculiarly delicate, cerebral, voltaic, volitional, vital act, and the condition for enjoying the play was complete. Then the pretty waiting-maid—who, as has been already intimated, was also a distinguished chemico-physiobiologiste—retired within her inner consciousness, but with one hand—so to speak—on the door of that department of her memory which was labelled *Macbeth* (Shakespeare, English), ready to let out the imprisoned images. That is, she went into hypnotic sleep, to see the things which eye could not behold.

All present were apparently insensible. Soon Flaxius heard the softest, strangest sound, which rose to a grand peal of exquisite music; and then, trembling, sunk and quivered into a strange, half-fearful, half-fantastic, witch melody, like a forest through which flitted at intervals—ever and anon inaudible or lost—a wild, yet exquisite waltz—a butterfly in a thunder-cloud. Meanwhile, there was perceptible all around a gradually developing, rising, and spreading scenery of barren moors, with encircling rocks and mountains, vast trees waving in the wailing wind—a torrent. And with it all there was an indescribable, mental, general impression, apart from what was seen or heard, as of another mighty wind, or spiritual opium, disposing the beholder unto *fascination*.

‘I have beheld many a magnificent *mise en scène*,’ reflected Flaxius, ‘but never anything like this. It

would have been an art-wonder of the world a century ago, and it is only a mere family-charade and a game of puss-in-the-corner or proverb, for people now. They have mastered art beyond our wildest dreams—only to despise it!’

Then the play went on, improving at every pace, as Oakford became inspired, rising in grandeur and beauty, impressiveness, and the subtle sorcery of more than mere skill. The music became a marvellous opera of accompaniment in no excess, yet mighty in effect, while the scenery was that of nature in her grandest or most enchanting moods. Best of all was the acting, in which the auditor seemed unto himself to be the one who spoke—and so it rolled on to an end. With a final finely accentuated, biological-cardiac pressure of the hand—such as in earlier ages would have ignorantly described as a fond squeeze—the pretty waiting-maid awoke.

‘You are a great artist,’ said Flaxius to Oakford.

‘So, so. I am far from being first or even great. Nor is it considered any great accomplishment among educated people nowadays to give such games in such style. It is only our child’s play, O Master, just as the performances of Thespian sank in later ages to the level of the mob, though they had improved in quality. And you now understand, that while we understand and practise art a hundred times better than our ancestors did, we do not esteem it at one hundredth the part of its ancient value.’

‘I understand,’ said Flaxius.

‘Go to Rome or Greece,’ pursued Oakford, ‘and you will see the Colosseum, and Forum and Parthenon, and all the most celebrated buildings of antiquity restored in all their beauty, but even the

school-children now regard them as mere curiosities, illustrations of a barbarous past—pretty enough in their small, naïve way—but mere savage trifles compared to the works of science; why, we could now do in a week all that Egypt built or unbuilt in six thousand years. And we have the fullest, deepest secret of their art, too—the very spirit of its spirit—and don't think so very much of it either. Ah! you nineteenth century men wrote an awful lot of rubbish, which they called Criticism. After it died out, art began again—travelling a long way after science, it is true—but ages in advance of where it had gone before. All of the Ruskins and Taines of the last century look to us like ants toiling over lumps of sugar, which they believed were mountains. Very industrious ants they were, and good judges of white sugar, too; but not of real Alps or Himalayas of eternal snow.'

'Truly,' observed Flaxius, 'there were a few even in their own time who began to suspect that human genius was not quite exhausted in the Renaissance, and also that there was better nutriment for man than the confectionery of pictures, or the iced-cake of a Milan Cathedral. All very fine, very fine indeed for weddings and Christmas-trees, *tempi passati*. Well, as nature is an artist, I suspect that art after all has only begun afresh, on a grander scale than ever.'

'*Haec fabula docet*,' wrote Flaxius, as usual on the proof, 'that all mankind are pretty generally mistaken in believing that certain habits, prejudices, customs, usages, modes, and ideas, in or according to which they and their fathers grew up, are eternal

and innate laws of human nature never to be removed. For all things may be taken out of us, even conceit, by the cork-screw of time or the air-pump of science ; and it is the most marvellous manifestation of the age that none foresee what a tremendous pop and what a stupendous out-flowing of the champagne of genius there will be when the stopple shall be drawn from the final end or mouth of this century bottle !

“It will not come in my time,” said a young *savant* to me in the last generation when I told him that ere long cities would be lit by gas. “’Tis all very fine, and perhaps possible, but we shall not live to see it.” And within five years after, the city wherein he spake was illuminated as I had predicted. Friends, the child is born unto whom, ere death, naught which I have here written will seem strange, for he will have seen the better part, or enough to make a proof, with his own eyes. Ye may more safely say that a piece of wax can *never* be moulded into a certain form than declare what man or society will never be ; but what is most wondrous of all in that which I predict, is that the spirit of the change is coming *soon*—even as a French Revolution comes so suddenly upon those in power, and who are the most learned in the signs of the times, that they have not time to move their office furniture. For the salts are all in solution, the liquid will hold no more, and ere long a voice or a book will precipitate the vast and brilliant crystals by sound or shock.

‘For that is to be for which Jesus Christ most ardently longed, and which is the one great theme of the New Testament, that a time will come when

patriotism, the tenderest ties of home, the form and letter of formalised religion, the great distinctions between poverty and wealth, yea every harsher, oppressive, conventional law which is *per se* useless shall disappear in a grand cosmopolitan altruism, at the very name of which time-serving, petty fools now jibe and titter, even as they sneered in ancient Rome at the new Christianity, which is now coming again in the dazzling, all-glorious, white cloud of science. Let them laugh that will, and exalt their old idols, crying that there is this and that which man will never do. "*Upharsin* is writ on the wall."

'Woe unto the false prophets who give tips for races, be they on horses or politicians or religion—'tis all one—for both the horse and the demagogue are doomed to pass away.

'Woe unto those who live in the trash and rot and folly of gossip and fashion, for their memory will stink in the ages to come.

'Woe unto the Jew and the Yankee, the Greek and Parsee, the Englishman and Dutchman, the great former of trusts and syndicates, yea, the promoter and swindler, be he who he may, for in the great future history of iniquity his name will not be forgotten.

'Woe unto you who shall struggle in the last hour to maintain your cracked and decayed old creeds and worn-out fads, screaming that "they all agree perfectly with science, which was sent to support and prove them."

'Yea, woe to the old Jerusalem which stoned the prophets, for there shall not be left one stone upon another of all her ancient temples, gambling-dens,

policy-offices, stock-exchanges, lupanars or society-newspapers, in human form or literal.

‘Woe unto Jerusalem; and, finally, woe unto myself! For I, too, with all my small writing will be whirled away with the rest, down the back entry of Time into the gutter of semi-forgetfulness, to be carried away into the River of Oblivion. And rightly too; for how would any of us of the present day seem among the glorious ones who are to come? Verily, as a great divine once said of sinners or dissenters in heaven, we should “look like pigs in a parlour.” Therefore let us all go in peace—and be thankful that there will be far better than we are to succeed us!

‘But, “if not impossible it is only possible, at least it will not come in our time,” cries all the world, when science foretells these reforms of the future. Here I am reminded of what was once written by Paul Féval, a muddled romanticist, who, however, in his dunghill of rubbish had at times a pearl, and he said, when speaking of steam as applied to boats and railway trains:

“It took many years before that learned and illustrious body, the Admiralty—*la marine de l'état*—took into consideration that force which repelled the wind, and laughed at the strength of currents. It is true that at the same time the Academy professed the opinion that a velocity of ten leagues an hour on a railroad would stifle respiration in a man and kill all who would risk it. Yet it would be foolish to blame our marine or our academics for this—for *le monde est ainsi fait*—such is the world. Every progress afflicts some interest or irritates some vanity.

“Ancient wisdom said, ‘If you doubt, consider carefully.’ Modern wisdom cries, ‘If you do not understand, then *hinder!*’ Can we ever enumerate the men and ideas put to death in the name of the idiotic phantom whom sages call IMPROBABILITY?

“Horace said that the man must have had a heart triply clad with bronze who first on a frail plank dared all the terrors of a raging stream. It is admirably true. Add to it that the sages of his time would have abused that man with all their might.

“And yet in every age those men so wise still cast themselves in vain before the path on which humanity was bound to pass, for spite their spite humanity marched on. Improbability, grotesque scarecrow as it was, recoiled with its fogs before the light. Miracles, once declared impossible, are now seen undisturbed in every street. It was only forty years ago, and now you may find men living on their ‘shares’ whose hands once tried to stop the march of steam. . . . And if another marvel should arise they would laugh at and abuse it, crying, *Cela ne se peut pas*, it is impossible. . . . To say now that anything is impossible, a man should have not only a heart shielded by triple bronze, but the tenfold skin of a jackass.”

‘And we should consider all this when any one now dreams of the future, for the true age of ease has only just begun. Certain chemical discoveries made of late years have drawn from all intelligent men of science the opinion that we are advancing very rapidly indeed to a cheap, wholesale production of all scents and flavours in perfection. This means very cheap food of every taste to suit, or the enjoy-

ment of all delicacies—mere imagination or association being set aside. Herein—all consequences being considered—is something stupendous, since enjoyment of taste in food is one of the greatest factors in life, and a great stimulant to industry. When this shall be somewhat relieved, industry will be more at leisure and liberty to devote itself to higher things. “It may be that the Chinaman of the future will run the machines which the Aryan will invent.”

THE EVANISHMENT OF FLAXIUS

' She came in her beauty bright as day,
To where in his sleep her true knight lay.
She held in her small and light-bright hand
A plaything, a brilliant moon-gold band ;
She wound it about his hair and her own,
Still singing the while, " We two are one."
All round them the world lay poor and dim,
Aloft in her glory she rose with him.
They stood in a garden fair and bright,
The angels do call it " Land of Light."'

Aslauga's Knight, by La Motte Fouqué.

WHEN time had worn away long centuries, and a sweet spirit, more subdued and soft, had breathed a deeper love and gentleness into the heart of man, as culture grew, and ruder errors had been cast aside among traditions of the suffering ages, Flaxius sat alone before the rocky palace, far away in the remotest recesses of the Northern Apennines. It was a blest and fairy-hallowed spot, where, in the stillness of the golden eve, amid the rustling leaves and dewy grass, he heard the solo or the chorus sweet of airy voices locked in unison, faint, far-off, near, deep, solemn, gay or sweet, as if serenading the rising stars, as they came one by one to the windows of heaven.

But it nowise disturbed his reverie, for he was reviewing, as he had seldom done, all his life. He had a stupendous memory, and an all-embracing

perception, with an immense power of concentration of mental force, such as will some day be taught in schools, when men shall be wise enough to examine and seek into truths set before them, instead of manifesting their petty vanity by ridicule. As with the spirit of a recent dream, while all its forms still freshly haunt the soul, the great life-pageant swept before his eyes : dark forms, forgotten for long centuries to man, nor seen in art nor sketched in song, a living stream of shadows strange and fair, and images of great world-ruling men, and sages who had made deep laws of life, and sent their power like an endless thrill, beyond them—far—into eternity !

‘It was to be, yet it is wonderful,’ thought the Sage, ‘and, perhaps, to me the more in wonder sweet, since these fair forms that in long order glide, still growing fairer as the world goes on, were dimly and yet long ago foreseen. True, inductive prophecy began with science ; evolution first taught man how to evolve by a deeper logic than had e’er been known to schoolmen, or the mere psychologist, what *was* to come. None the less wonderful to one who sees how a blind force with time has worked itself into a wondrous thinking Deity !’

‘And the Deity, Flaxius?’ said a sweet voice, in which there was the echo of a smile.

The Fairy Albinia was beside him.

‘And the Deity? How dost thou behold it?’

‘What it will be is far beyond my view. I know it was—not even what it is. God grows with all that God may greater be, and awful is the mighty law of growth. I *know not* why it is that all *must* grow, because it is a law unto itself, and slow, indeed, our growth is unto it.’

‘But in what form dost thou behold it now?’

‘I see it now in man and in what science shows—how man will see it in the time to come is now full surely all unknown to man.’

‘And how didst thou discover God in man?’

‘Even as Plato saw it in the ideal, which is the very soul and counterpart of the most real science. May I speak?’

‘Yes, speak; I feel my soul now speaks in thine.’

‘All nature types,’ said Flaxius, ‘in ideals. None ever yet beheld a perfect rose, yet seeing many roses, we infer what a true rose may be. So in all things, for nature never took a single form, be it beautiful or base, which had not an ideal never won. And of all things, there never was a form which in itself united the ideals as we behold them in the higher Man.

‘For, indeed, in the rose or in all flowers, or in aught else, there is no colour so beautiful as the living hue of a fair human being. Apart from sentiment of love, the artist knows that that is the hardest of all hues to win. And again, as regards form, no animal or plant, or aught that lives, combines such perfect outline, strength and grace, converging ever into an ideal. No wonder that many have committed the error of looking to art more than to nature, when we reflect how the artist feels this marvellous truth.’

‘And, therefore, it was well in its time, Flaxius, that men worshipped art, since it made them work unconsciously to a great end.’

‘Yes, it was well and glorious *in its time*,’ replied Flaxius. ‘Now it is rising to a higher aim. But to resume. There is no sound so sweet, no power of

modulation in all conceivable variety as is found in the human voice, for it can breathe all passions, fears, and every phase of thought. I say even thought, though men class music with emotion only. But to a higher sense all utterance is music given in a million forms. Yes, man is the ideal of all ideals combined, and ever tends to unite them in himself, even by the common law which forms them all.'

'This, then, my Flaxius,' the Fairy said, 'forms a new law, that man shall gradually draw towards man as he perceives this truth. What is religion?'

'Religion,' replied Flaxius, 'is the sense of a higher Power on which we must rely, even as the child looks to the parent, who is its ideal of all protection and authority. To this is added *wont* or habit fixed, which runs to second nature; therefore man forms his tradition, and adheres to it long after he has learned that other men are greater than the parents; and this is the history of every creed on earth.'

'And so the form still takes the place of truth, yet still a form is indispensable.'

'Yes, it must be, because in forms we live,' said Flaxius slowly. 'A wondrous truth which leads to constant war. Strange is the history of the ancient forms which one by one the world has cast aside. Therefore the Egyptians typified the Holy Ghost, or the all-pervading Spirit of Life, as a serpent which annually casts its skin, and is renewed in brighter hues.'

'And man must have a form to worship or incarnate the Power which he adores.'

'Ay, and it is to that which I would come. The Hebrews worshipped God in a fixed law, sternly

expressed, a law immutable, and this they had incarnate in a Book. This was their form from which they jealously excluded every trace of human shape. Because 'twas written that no living man could ever see the real form of God, they worshipped God's great voice; that is to say, the echo of it as expressed in law. Therefore when prophets spoke no more on earth they still retained a kind of fairy faith that the *Bath Kol* or echo of the Voice was heard at times in a consecrated arch—I think 'twas in the Temple. Now 'tis still. It was all the conception of Hebrew nature incarnate in an ideal man whom they called Jehovah.

'Then came the Greeks who personified nature in all her forms, and represented every passion or feeling as a deity. They saw God in statues, and felt religion in art ideals. Something they lost in vigorous, early strength, but gained a thousand-fold in thought and grace. They made a progress toward ideal man.'

'And out of all a new religion grew,' replied the Fairy in her sweetest voice, 'which was as far beyond the Greek ideal as that had been beyond the Hebrew law.'

'Yes,' answered Flaxius in earnest tone, 'and could the real spirit of Christianity, as Christ meant it, have been combined with Greek art and perception of natural beauty—as the poor young Emperor Julian desired—have been realised, the world might have seen a wonderful religion. But 'twas all for the best, as now I truly see. As fast as islands raised their sunny peaks above the blue sea, and grew green and beautiful, there came the barbarians in multitudes to settle on them—in early times the

Hun and Visigoth, in later days the negro and Chinese—struggling on, struggling ever, sweeping on; and yet true culture gained upon it all.’

‘And thou see’st also, Flaxius,’ said the Fairy, ‘that had the Julian religion triumphed, man might have lived so long in sweet content of art and love and pure humility, and all the softness of his gentleness, that vigour might have died and strength been gone. Progress needs strife.’

‘Ay, and more than that,’ added Flaxius. ‘Those barbarian struggles gave the strength to man which was needed to create science, which in due time raised up a higher art, and then revived the Christian dream of love in altruism fed with greater force. It all led to nobler ideals.’

‘And religion?’

‘Religion from awe and fear became love mingled with reverence—reverence before the mighty Mystery of Power hidden in Man himself. After the Greek worship of statues came the picture-worship of the Renaissance, and then another age of confusion, and the warring of new elements and the death of the old art.

‘Now the ideal is in Man himself; and the world, instead of books or statues or pictures, cultivates humanity, and sees Divinity in itself in a new ideal. This is the most advanced exponent of the Mystery of Power. Even of old, when any man loved, he began by making the utmost of the loved one, or the pair did so mutually; it is touching to read in every fond romance, and every poem of the ancient times, in myriads of novels and letters, how they all began with the *elements* of true worship. Each hoped to find in the other something which would

ennoble, transfigure them to another or a higher life ; and they were in the right, and in all cases it *might* have been, had they known how to persevere in it ; but outer influences were too strong, while their perception of the truth was weak.

‘What is the power of the vast Unknown which circles through all space and gives us life, or how it lives in us or what it is—a spirit or a force which gives itself unto itself, a consciousness in us—is a great mystery beyond our ken. But this we have learned after long centuries, that he who *wills* can win so much of it by ever striving unto pure ideals, and pressing steadfastly unto the great, that he can win himself tremendous power, aided therein by love and mutual will.’

‘Now art thou coming to the highest truth.’

‘Ay, such a truth as hath no counterpart : for if two people love in very truth, seeing in one another the highest ideal of the will or the possible power of becoming what they will, and each strives in all things to be perfect to the other—then will they worship God in very truth. For if thou canst maintain in me high self-respect and I in thee, we make a wondrous power in ourselves, which well maintained may rise to miracle. For this I do believe in very truth, that love alone can make our souls divine, and when we do believe in very truth, that we are the ideal form of God or holy pictures of the highest power, or living laws or Bibles, and if we do carry out the laws therein expressed, it is in us to win such wondrous might as magic claimed in ages long gone by. For this we need no other higher aid than mutual love and *will*, which well maintained will raise us ever to a nobler life.

All men who *love* live in a fairy-land, and all who *will* may aye remain in it, if they will make their love the law of life, believing truly that they are divine, or growing in divinity and hope.

‘And they who believe in very truth and faith, that each is holy—that the Almighty Power, though but a spark, dwells in them, and that it may grow into a flame, and hold to this as they perhaps have held to some old creed or tattered form which never held a truth—will know what ’tis to be divine.

‘Yet now and then we all have transient views when standing by the rushing flood of life, that there is in it *force* and light unknown; “those eddying balls of foam, those arrowy gleams, that o’er the pavement of the surging streams welter and flash” are glimpses of the truth which, understood, might give new life to thee.

‘I do not say that this can only be between a man and a woman when they love, because if we believe that all mankind do form the arch-ideals of the world—that is by more or less as they are formed—then I can see how step by step all men will become links in this true golden chain—the *aurea catena* of which of yore Pythagoras once dreamed, the chain which binds the highest with the lowest all in one.

‘So have I loved thee, O my golden one, since the old days of the Etruscan age, so shall I love thee through eternity; while different, we were yet ever one in truth, and ever nearing as the time went on.

‘And now my heart is filled with earth, and I have seen it to its glorious heritage and know ’twill soon be heaven; therefore I, my mission ended and my task complete, will join thee in thy life and

never part. I know that heaven is in love and thee.'

And as he said this word the Fairy smiled and wound her arms about him, and a light as of a rainbow of the brightest hues, blended with music, quaint and wildly sweet—the spirit of the dream of olden time—came over them and hid them from my sight; but when it vanished both of them were gone, and Flaxius was seen on earth no more.

'But what of God?' asked the Fairy as they sat in Elf Elysium amid shadows of perfumed foliage, by dancing rivulets, where all was like the best and most beautiful on earth, rising to higher and more glorious form. For thou hast shown how by love and finding ideals in one another, we can refine and exalt our nature; yet that is not religion.'

'I will tell thee what I believed on earth,' answered the Sage, 'and I think I shall not change my faith, though I rise far beyond this life of beauty.'

'When men believed in spirit and matter, as separate, all was confusion and void; and the wisest went unwittingly wandering about from error to error like lost souls, seeking in eternal darkness one mocking *ignis fatuus* after the other. Then after years of study I perceived that all must be matter alone, visible to my senses it is true, but also refined in infinite forms beyond all human, sensual or sensitive perception. For all that poets and supernaturalists have ever imagined spirit to be, is outdone in fineness by what science is boldly suggesting and proving.'

'As there are in nature extraordinary or extravagant

exaggerations of the powers of the senses, as is seen in vultures, which can perceive a small object a hundred miles away, so there are as likely other senses not known to man, other dimensions which he cannot understand, and forms of matter which he cannot perceive by "sense." This is no idle conjecture. Every new experiment in a laboratory, every discovery, makes it more probable. A few years ago, or within sixty years, man seemed to be in blind ignorance, comparing what he then knew with what he has learned. This is even more evident from the revelations of hitherto unknown forces, the fact that light is not *per se*, but the impression made on us. Therefore there may be worlds unseen in infinite number and series, and existences or intelligences of incalculable or infinite power. There may be a God, whose existence has a reason for being, according to Materialism, but none whatever in a spiritual *a priori* faith, founded on and supported only by mere tradition.

'But what does man know in full or in truth? If we take the simplest problem in nature—the sprouting of a bean. All the wisdom of all time cannot explain why it is that it grows up a bean-vine through the ages, ever renewing itself. To suppose that there are *infinite* millions of concentrated vines or germs in every bean is absurd, or, if true, it only increases the marvel. Therefore, an idea or subject once formed must be the coalescence of certain forms of matter with certain laws, according to which certain material is attracted or thrown off for ever, like being drawn to like. But oh, how infinitely beyond human knowledge or perception is the fulness of this least of natural problems!

‘And there are millions of creations, deeper and deeper, all calling forth in every phase admiration for the infinite ingenuity and adaptation which are revealed in every creation. Observe the ant, which by instinct alone, as we call it, can execute tasks and problems in architecture a thousand times more difficult than any which man has ever achieved. What it all means is this : that beyond and out of *our* small mental system, with its distinctions between understanding and reason and self-consciousness and “I am”—which is all much more mechanical and akin to atavism and mere instinct than we imagine—there is a stupendous power of creation, with an infinite amount of what *we* gladly call thought or mind, when *we* develop a similar ingenuity. And, in fact, it is amusing, that men who consider that a very little discovery of the laws of nature is the greatest proof of their having intellect, should doubt that intellect, of a kind unknown to us, is the creator of it all.

‘Now what exists in the realms unknown to sense no one can say, but that there are intelligences who exert ingenuity and power in creation is palpable enough, as the bean proves ; therefore a series of beings and gods, or a God, is an inevitable deduction.

‘It is also proved by science, that the human *will* can be so *incredibly* developed by a certain training and discipline, within the reach of all, and very easy, that we may control our tempers, our desires, or increase our determination, to a miraculous extent.¹ This, too, is all a result of modern physical science, or “mere materialism,” and it has done more to

¹ Vide *Have you a Strong Will, etc.*, by Charles Godfrey Leland. London : Philip Wellby.

establish pure morality and a well-based belief in God than all that psychology ever imagined. For like the rational faith in God, it is a direct result of evolution.

‘The result of the two deductions is, that directing the developed will towards God with all our heart, or towards love, in sincerity and zeal, we arrive at all true religion and possible happiness. For the pure will, independent and free, and marvellous in power, must co-exist with *Altruism*, which is the kernel of Christianity. Love God and man. For to be *free*, we must co-ordinate with moral law, and what this is, we learn by the experience of life, every man according to his measure and allowance. We should all do well enough, if we all did as well as we could, never minding the quibbles of would-be law-givers.

‘All magic, and what man regards as spiritual or transcendental learning and theosophy and soul-wisdom, is embraced in perfect belief in and reliance on God, and action of our developed will. All that mystics and theosophists have written amounts to no more than this: *Believe in God and in thine own will, aided by God.*

“God helps those who help themselves” is a great truth to be ever borne in mind; nay, so true, that nearly all prayer is mere idle ceremony, and of small avail, however fervent it may be, if there be no *will* exerted, no energetic effort to be and do good by those who are capable of effort. For the Creator Himself is ever working by Evolution. Who shall say that even Omnipotence, like Thor, does not do battle with, ere it conquer, the stupendous Jötuns or barbarous giants of brute forces in nature, or the

“downward-borne elements of God,” as Hermes Trismegistus called them.

‘As Creation is the will of God realised in action, so the will of man vigorously exerted is responded to by the divine Demiurgus. Therefore prayer should be will, and will, prayer, which may be fully apparent in time, though, perhaps, not at first.

‘What is most to be considered, above all earthly interests and desires, or human wants or ideas, is the illimitable, stupendous, and glorious power and nature of God. Here Evolution has lifted man far above all that the most inspired prophets or bards of Judæa or Egypt or India ever conceived. For they were limited to what was apparent to the senses, and, indeed, to this world, as the only one. But to him who actually understands that there are twenty million suns with solar systems, and so on for ever, and that it is probable, as Paracelsus so strangely guessed, that there are races and worlds to us invisible and intangible, living as it were through, and in, this life, the Creator must be more than He ever was, even to Moses.

‘Now the more the stupendous, original, creative power of God is felt, the more capable do we become of realising—that is, rising to and drawing near unto Him. By so doing shall we understand that all was made in and by and for Him, as the only one, and not for us. Before this awful and glorious truth all other considerations should vanish, for His Will should be all—He is the Master and the Lord for ever.

‘All who believe this, will desire to do good work for its own sake, and create that which shall in the future be developed into greater good, rather than

seek for pay or reward, which latter may be left to God or unseen divine agents, who know better than we do what we need, and who *do* aid the true servitors of God.

‘The true servitor is the one who *lives* in the infinite power, goodness, and glory of God, who exerts his own will and strength or effort to the utmost to do, and to be, good, and whose devotion consists not so much in mere praying or begging for alms, instead of trying to earn wages, as of recognition of His Omnipotence

‘Yes, if it be God’s will that I should pass away into nothingness, then would I prefer it to the most blissful immortality without His desire, for what am I before Him, save His creation from nothing, born to obey? And so far from thinking that such want of a future releases man from moral obligations, I hold that such a faith is the highest stimulus to do our best while we live, and avoid all sin.

‘Therefore, O man, trouble not thyself, as to a future, so that thou lovest and obeyest God, and treatest man as another self, and livest thy utmost mental life in will and prayer. For unto him whose prayer is will and will is prayer, all may be granted.

‘And remember that there is nothing taught more explicitly in the New Testament, than that man should commune *directly* with God without aid or intervention, chiefly by worship, and by using his will in every way to that end.

‘In very truth—*Vicisti, Galilæe!* Thou hast conquered, O Christ!’

BREITMANN'S LAST BALLAD

THERE was once an American hodge-podge, comic melodrama of a kind now passed away—in which there was heard from time to time 'one warning trumpet blown' behind the scenes, for no assignable reason 'save to heighten the effect.' This it invariably did, and especially after the curtain had fallen, when the clarion notes were heard as an *Encore*. Even so has it been with Breitmann in this book, and so at the end doth he sound Farewell as follows speaking from his very heart as to the war :

BREITMANN ON THE BOERS

Dot I war born a Deutscher is fery blain to see,
Yet dere are dings in vitch I tont fall in mit Germany,
Bein' rader too cosmopolite—and hafe peen all along—
To dink a man should always go pro patria—right or wrong.

Usque ad aras an honest man may tramp,
But if folk would take him funder he hat petter shoot de camp ;
Und I shtops right off my warblin'—of dot you may pe sure,
If asked to sing in chorus mit any kind of Boer.

Somedimes, when in queer circles, dis ding is fery true,
I hafe found mineself compulsioned to heurler avec les lous ;
Dot is to howlen mid de wolfs, but nefer yet, py jigs !
Did I get to such abasement as to grüntsel mid de pigs !

You may read in der Zoölogie, or Natur Historie,
Dot pigs are de most tyronical of all de peasts dot pe,
For dey drives or stinks all oders away from where dey feed,
Und dis is vot de Boers tried in Africa, indeed !

Und ash dey are most tyronical when'er dey get a chance,
 So Fate is most ironical in endin' deir romance,
 For dey've gone from pad to worser, and are endin' de debates
 Mit all de world, in sympathie—excep' de 'Nited States.

Und, exceptin' yet again in dot, all dose who had been booted,
 Or sent away from Europe—id est, been 'persecuted,'
 Und who, as is but natural, did von and all agree,
 To persecute de nigger, wherefer he might pe !

Ash dere were books were printed two hundred years a-back,
 Of de horrors and de torments inflicted on der Black,
 By de Boers in far Sout' Africa, among de slaves dey got,
 De Bushmen und de Kaffirs, likewise der Hottentot.

Now he who will beat a nigger, as I often heard dem say,
 Will torment a white man, if he dare, when von comed in his
 way ;
 So de Boers in Sout' Africa in monner most forbidst,
 Ottempted to compose oopon de English in deir midst.

Und dere dey all slopp't ofer, forgettin' dey might catch
 A chap mit bigger boots and soles, when in a kickin' match.
 Yet dey kept der game agoin' like der fery teufels at play,
 Und efen in a gorner some are kickin' yet to-day.

So de Boern getten from Germans uncommon sympathie,
 Likewise from efery Frencher and de whole of Italy ;
 Pecause dey are 'few in numper,' and likewise 'fery prave,'
 Which mit dem excuses eferything, howefer a man behave !

Now if your house vas burgled, I'll bet upon my life,
 If der burgular should shoot your son, likewise pesides your
 wife,
 Dough he fought like der fery teufel, you hardly would fergive
 Der feller for all his pravery, and hope dot he might live !

But de cent in de molasses barrel, or de secret hid away
 Is dis—dot de Germans wantet for demselves Sout' Africa ;
 Dey hat hopes dot a dime was comin' when ofer all de land
 Dere wouldt rise a schmell of sauer kraut to der Medit'ranean.

Yoost as Fra Benevento, in his elegie sublime,
 Did hope der schmell of incense wouldt rise in efery clime,
 From blesset Roman Churches, so de Deutschers von and all
 Did dink dis blesset nonsense wouldt certainly pefal !

As for de liddle Fräntshmen, it is as plain as sin,
 Dey wanted Jean Boule out of Egypt, likewise demselfs darein';
 Dough vot dey 'd do if dey got dere is not fery blain to see :
 Dot is to judge by deir sookcess in any colonie.

Keep up dy heart, O England ; maintain dy glorious pluck !
 Der von who bears most poundin' is der von who gets de luck !
 For it is of ancient story und splendid as de stars :
 It is efer de freest people who endure de bitterest wars !

Keep up dy heart, O Britain, despite de envious jeers
 Of German, French or Dago, of suffering and tears ;
 Whatefer fools have said to thee of errors in the past,
 Thou art Gott's best civiliser, and wilt conquer at the last !

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