LANG ANDREW, MAY KENDALL

# THAT VERY MAB

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# May Kendall, Andrew Lang 'That Very Mab'

## CHAPTER I. – UNDER TWO FLAGS

*'You send out teachers of religion to undermine and ruin the people.' – Black Flag Proclamation to the French, 1883.*

The moonlight, in wave on wave of silver, flooded all the Sacred Island. Far away and faint ran the line of the crests of Samoa, like the hills of heaven in the old ballad, or a scene in the Italian opera. Then came a voice from the Calling Place, and the smooth sea thrilled, and all the fishes leaped, and the Sacred Isle itself was moved, and shuddered to its inmost heart. Again and again came the voice, and now it rose and fell in the cadences of a magical song (or *Karakia*, if we *must* have local colour), and the words were not of this world. Then, behold, the smooth seas began to break and plash round the foremost cape of the Holy Island, and to close again behind, like water before the keel and behind the stern of a running ship, so they plashed, and broke, and fell. Next the surface was stirred far off with the gambolling and sporting of innumerable fishes; the dolphin was tumbling in the van; the flying fish hovered and shone and sank; and clearer, always, and yet more clear came the words of the song from Samoa. Clearer and louder, moment by moment, rose the voice of Queen Mab, where she stood on the Calling Place of the Gods, and chanted to the Islands, and to the sea, and the dwellers in the sea. It was not that she left her stand, nor came nearer, but the Sacred Island itself was steering straight, like a magical barque, drawn by the wonderful song, to the mystic shore of Samoa. Now Queen Mab, where she stood among her court, with the strange brown fairies of the Southern Ocean, could behold the Sacred Island, with all its fairy crew. Beautiful things they seemed, as the sailing isle drew nearer, beautiful and naked, and brave with purple pan-danus flowers, and with red and yellow necklets of the scented seed of the pandanus. At last Queen Mab, the fairy in the fluttering wings of green, clapped her hands, and, with a little soft shock, the Sacred Island ran in and struck on the haunted beach of Samoa. What was Queen Mab doing here, so far away from England? England she had left long ago; when the Puritans arose the Fairies vanished. When 'Tom came home from labour and Cis from milking rose,' there was now no more sound of tabor, nor 'merrily went their toes.' Tom went to the Public House or the Preaching House, and Cis – Cis waited till Tom should come home and kick her into a jelly (his toes going merrily enough at that work), or tell her she was, spiritually, in a parlous case. So the Fairy Queen and all her court had long since fled from England, and long ago made a home in the undiscovered isles of the South. Now they all met and mingled in the throng of the Polynesian fairy folk, and, rushing down into the waters, they revelled all night on the silvery sand, in the windless dancing places of the deep. Tanê and Tawhiti came, the Gods of the tides and the shores, and all the fairies sang to them:

'Tawhiti, on the sacred beach<br>
The purple pandanus is thine!<br>
How soft the breakers come and go,<br>
How bright the fragrant berries blow,<br>
The fern-tree scents the shining reach,<br>
And Tanê dances down the brine!'

Such is the poetry of the Polynesian fairies. It is addicted to frequent repetitions of the same obvious remark, and it does not contain a Criticism of Life, so we do not give any more of it. But,

such as it was, it seemed to afford great pleasure to the dancers, probably because every one of them could compose any amount of it himself, at will, and every dancer was 'his own poet,' than which nothing can be more salubrious and delightful.

Thus the dance and the revel swang and swayed through the silver halls till the green lights began to glow with gold and scarlet and crimson, burning into dawn. Then came a sudden noise, like thunder, crashing and roaring through the silence of the sea. Queen Mab clapped her hands, and, in one moment, the Sacred Isle had flitted back to its place, and the music stopped, and the dancers vanished.

Then, as the island swiftly receded, came a monstrous wave, and no wonder, which raised the surface of the sea to a level with the topmost cliff of the Calling Place. Queen Mab, who had flown to a pine-tree there, saw the salt water fall back down the steeps like a cataract, and heard a voice say, 'The blooming reef has bolted.' Another voice remarked something about 'submarine volcanic action.' These words came from a level with her head, where the Queen saw, stranded in a huge tree, a boat with a funnel that poured forth smoke, and with wheels that still rapidly and automatically revolved in mid air. In fact, a missionary steamer had been raised by the mighty tidal wave to the level of the cliff. Then the sailors climbed into the trees, talking freely, in a speech which Queen Mab knew for English, but not at all the English she had been accustomed to hear. Also the sailors had among them men with full, sleek, shining faces, wearing tall hats and long coats, and carrying little books whose edges flashed in the sun. And Queen Mab did not like the look of them. Then she heard the sailors and the men in black coats making straight for the very pine-tree in which she was sitting. So she fled into a myrtle-bush, and behold, the sailors chopped every branch of the pine clean away, and changed the beautiful tree into a bare pole. Then they brought out ropes, and a great piece of thin cloth, white with red and blue cross marks on it, and they tugged it up, and it floated from the top of the tree. Then the people from the ship gathered round it, and sang songs, whereof one repeated,

> 'Rule Britannia!'
> and the other contained the words,
> 'Every prospect pleases, And only Man is vile.'

Soon some specimens of vile Man, some of the human beings of Samoa, came round, beautiful women dressed in feathers and leaves, carrying flowers and fruit, which they offered to the men in black coats and white neckties. But the men in black coats held up their hands in horror, and shut their eyes, while some of them ran to the boat and brought bonnets, and boots, and cotton gowns, and pocket-handkerchiefs, and gave them to the women. And the women, putting them on anyhow, walked about as proud as peacocks; while the men in black coats explained that, unless they wore these things, and did and refrained from many matters, they would all be punished dreadfully after they were dead. Now, while the women were crying at such glad tidings, came another awful crash and shock, which indeed, like the previous noise that had frightened the dancers, was produced by a ship's gun. And another cloud of black smoke floated round the point, and another set of sailors got out and cut the branches off a tree, and ran up a flag which was black and red and yellow. Then those sailors (who had men with red beards and spectacles among them) cried *Hock!* and sang the *Wacht am Rhein*. Thereupon the sailors of the first steamer, with a horrid yell, rushed on the tree under the new flag, and were cutting it down, when some of the singers of the *Wacht am Rhein* pointed a curious little machine that way and began to turn a handle. Thereon the most dreadful cracking sounds arose, cracking and crashing; fire flew, and some of the first set of sailors fell down and writhed on the sand, while the rest fled to their boat. Several of the native women also fell down bleeding and dying in their new cotton gowns and their bonnets, for they had been dancing about while the sailors were hacking at the tree with the black and red and yellow flag.

Seeing all this, Queen Mab also saw that Samoa was no longer a place for her. She did not understand what was happening, nor know that a peaceful English annexation had been disturbed by a

violent German annexation, for which the English afterwards apologised. Queen Mab also conceived a prejudice against missionaries, which, perhaps, was justified by her experience. For, in the matter of missionaries, she was unlucky. The specimens she had observed were of the wrong kind. She might have met missionaries as learned as Mr. Codrington, as manly as Livingstone, as brave and pure as Bishop Pattison> who was a martyr indeed, and gave his life for the heathen people. Yes, Queen Mab was unlucky in her missionaries.

# CHAPTER II. – DISILLUSIONS

*'The time is come,' the walrus said,*
*'To talk of many things.'*

*'Alice in Wonderland.'*

It was on April 1, the green young year's beginning, that Mab arrived in England. She had hired a seagull – no, the seagull offered his services for nothing; I was forgetting that it was not an English, but a Polynesian seagull – to take her across. She did not altogether admire the missionaries, as we have seen, in their proceedings, the fact being that she had grown used to Polynesians in the course of the centuries she had spent among them, and the missionaries were such a remarkable contrast to the Polynesians. But their advent was certainly a source of mental improvement to her, for fairies as we know, understand things almost by instinct, and Queen Mab, one evening, chanced to overhear a good deal of the missionaries' conversation. She learned, for instance, the precise meanings, and the bearings on modern theology and metaphysics, of such words as kathenotheism, hagiography, transubstantiation, eschatology, Positivist, *noumenony begriffy vorstellung, Paulisimus, wissenschaft*, and others, quite new to her, and of great benefit in general conversation.

With this additional knowledge she started on the voyage, leaving her faithful subjects to take care of the island and themselves, till she came back to tell them whether their return to England would ever be practicable. She landed in Great Britain, then, on April 1, and the seagull went across to the Faroe Islands and waited there till the time which she had appointed for him to come and carry her back to Polynesia.

Queen Mab found England a good deal altered. There were still fairy circles in the grass; but they were attributed, not to fairy dances, but to unscientific farming and the absence of artificial phosphates. The country did not smell of April and May, but of brick-kilns and the manufacture of chemicals. The rivers, which she had left bright and clear, were all black and poisonous. Water for drinking purposes was therefore supplied by convoys from the Apollinaris and other foreign wells, and it was thought that, if a war broke out, the natives of England would die of thirst. This was not the only disenchantment of Queen Mab. She found that in Europe she was an anachronism. She did not know, at first, what the word meant, but the sense of it gradually dawned upon her. Now there is always something uncomfortable about being an anachronism; but still people may become accustomed to it, and even take a kind of a pride in it, if they are only anachronisms on the right side – so far in the van of the bulk of humanity, for instance, that the bulk of humanity considers them not wholly in their right minds. There must surely be a sense of superiority in knowing oneself a century or two in front of one's fellow-creatures that counterbalances the sense of solitude. Queen Mab had no such consolation. She was an anachronism hundreds of years on the wrong side; in fact, a relic of Paganism.

Of course she was acquainted with the language of all the beasts and birds and insects, and she counted on their befriending her, however much men had changed. Her brief experience of modern sailors and missionaries, whether English or German, had indeed convinced her that men were, even now, far from perfection. But it was a crushing blow to find that all the beasts were traitors, and all the insects.

If it had not been for the loyal birds she would have gone back to Polynesia at once; but they flocked faithfully to her standard, led by the Owl, the wisest of all feathered things, who had lived too long, and had too much good feeling to ignore fairies, though he was, perhaps, just a little of a prig. The insects, however, who, considering the size of their brains, one might have thought would

believe in fairies and in the supernatural in general, if anybody did, behaved disgracefully, and the ant was the worst all. She started by saying that *her* brain was larger in proportion than the brain of any other insect. Perhaps Queen Mab was not aware that Sir John Lubbock had devoted a volume to the faculties and accomplishments of ants, together with some minor details relating to bees and wasps, of which these insects magnified the importance. Under *these* circumstances, it was impossible for her to countenance a mere vulgar superstition, like faith in fairies. She begged leave to refer Queen Mab to various works in the International Scientific Series for a complete explanation of her motives, and mentioned, casually, that she also held credentials from Mr. Romanes. Then, explaining that her character with the sluggard was at stake, she hurried away. Evidently she did not care to be seen talking to a fairy. It may be mentioned here, however, that Queen Mab's faith in entomological nature was considerably shaken by the fact that when no one was looking at her the ant always folded up her work and went to sleep – though, if surprised in a siesta, she explained that she had only just succumbed to complete exhaustion, and lamented that mind, though infinitely superior to, was not yet independent of matter.

The bees hummed much to the same tune. The Queen Bee recommended our foreigner to read a work on 'Bees and Wasps,' with a few minor details relating to Ants, by Sir John Lubbock, in the International Scientific Series. She was not, indeed quite so timid about her reputation as the ant, and even volunteered to give her visitor an account of the formation of hexagonal cells by Natural Selection, culled from the pages of the 'Origin of Species'; but she observed that, though her brain might be smaller in proportion than the brains of some inferior insects, it was of finer quality, what there was of it, and that fairies were merely an outgrowth of the anthropomorphic tendency which had been noticed by distinguished writers as persisting even in the present day. Then she departed, humming gaily, to the tune of a popular hymn in the 'Ancient and Modern' collection:

'And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower?

But the whole sad history of Queen Mab's failures to enlist sympathy and protection it would be vain to tell. The fishes, all that were left of them, took her part; but they lived in the water, and she had never had very much to do with them. In the birds she found her true allies. They were not attached to the higher civilisation. The higher civilisation, so far, had treated them inconsiderately, at sparrow clubs. The Owl talked a good deal about the low moral tone of the human race in this respect, and was pessimistic about it, failing to perceive that higher types of organisms always like to signify their superiority over lower ones by shooting them, or otherwise making their lives a burden. The Owl, however, was a very talented bird, and one felt that even his fallacies were a mark of attainments beyond those common to his race. He had read and thought a great deal, and could tell Queen Mab about almost anything she asked him. This was pleasant, and she sat with him on a very high oak in Epping Forest, above a pond, and made observations. It was lovely weather, just the weather for sitting on the uppermost branches of a great oak, and she began to feel like herself again. She had forgotten to put her invisible cloak on; but as she was only half a foot high, and dressed in green, no one saw her up there. Having reached the Forest at night, she had met as yet with few British subjects; but the Owl explained that she would see hundreds of them before the day was over, coming to admire Nature.

'The English people,' he observed, 'are great worshippers of Nature, and write many guide-books about her, some on large paper at ten guineas the volume. I have sometimes fancied, indeed,' he added, doubtfully,' that it was their own capacity for admiring Nature that they admired, but that were a churlish thought. For, do they not run innumerable excursion trains for the purpose of bowing at her shrine? Epping Forest must be one of Nature's favourite haunts, from the numbers of people who come here to worship her, especially on Bank Holidays. Those are her high festivals, when her adorers troop down, and build booths and whirligigs and circuses in her honour, and gamble, and

ride donkeys, and shy sticks at cocoanuts before her. Also they partake of sandwiches and many other appropriate offerings at the shrine, and pour libations of bottled ale, and nectar, and zoedone, and brandy, and soda-water, and ginger-beer. They *always* leave the corks about, and confectionery paper bags, for the next people to gaze upon who come to worship Nature: you may see them now, if you look down. I have often thought those corks, and cigar-ends, and such tokens that the British public always leaves behind it, must be symbolical of something – offerings to Nature, you know, an invariable part of the rite, and typical – well, the question is, of what are they typical?' mused the Owl, getting beyond his depth, as he had a way of doing.

'However,' he resumed, 'it is certain that their devotion is strong, and they offer to Nature the sacrifices dearest to their own hearts, and probably dearest, therefore, to the heart of Nature. They cut their names all over her shrine, which is, I have no doubt, a welcome attention; but they do not look at her any more than they can help, for they stay where the beer is, and they are very warm, and flirt.'

'What is "flirt"?'

'A recreation,' said the Owl decorously; 'a pastime.'

'And does *nobody* believe in fairies?' sighed Queen Mab.

'No, or at least hardly anyone. A few of the children, perhaps, and a very, very few grown-up people – persons who believe in Faith-healing and Esoteric Buddhism, and Thought-reading, and Arbitration, and Phonetic Spelling, can believe in anything, except what their mothers taught them on their knees. All of these are *in* just now.'

'What do you mean by "in"?'

'In fashion; and what is fashionable is to be believed in. Why, you might be the fashion again,' said the Owl excitedly. 'Why not? and then people would believe in *you*. What a game it all is, to be sure! But the fashions of this kind don't last,' the bird added; 'they get snuffed out by the scientific men.'

'Tell me exactly who the scientific men are,' said the fairy. 'I have heard so much about them since I came.'

'They are the men.' sighed the Owl, 'who go about with microscopes, that is, instruments for looking into things as they are not meant to be looked at and seeing them as they were never intended to be seen. They have put everything under their microscopes, except stars and First Causes; but they had to take telescopes to the stars, because they were so far off; and First Causes they examined by stethoscopes, which each philosopher applied to his own breast. But, as all the breasts are different, they now call First Causes no business of theirs. They make most things their business, though. They have had a good deal of trouble with the poets, because the poets liked to put themselves and their critics under their own microscopes, and they objected to the microscopes of the scientific men. You know what poets are?'

'Yes, indeed,' said Queen Mab, feeling at home on the subject. 'I have forgotten a good many things, I daresay, with living in Polynesia, but not about the poets. I remember Shakespeare very well, and Herrick is at my court in the Pacific.'

'Ah, he was a great man, Shakespeare, almost too large for a microscope!' said the Owl reflectively. They have put him under a good many since he died, however, especially German lenses. But we were talking about the philosophers – another name for the scientific men – the men who don't know everything.'

'I should have thought they did,' said Queen Mab.

'No,' said the Owl. 'It is the theologians who know everything, or at least they used to do so. But lately it has become such a mark of mental inferiority to know everything, that they are always casting it in each other's teeth. It has grown into a war-cry with both parties: "You think you know everything," and it is hard for a bird to find out how it all began and what it is all about. I believe it sprang originally out of the old microscope difficulty. The philosophers wanted to put theology under the microscope, and the theologians excommunicated microscopes, and said theology ought never to

be looked at except with the Eye of Faith. Now the philosophers are borrowing an eye of Faith from the theologians, and adding it on to their own microscope like another lens, and they have detected a kind of Absolute, a sort of a Something, the Higher Pantheism. I could never tell you all about it, and I don't even know whether they have really put theology under the microscope, or only theologians.'

'And the people worship St. George still?' asked Queen Mab, who, being only a fairy, and owning no soul, had private theories of belief, based merely on observation of popular customs.

'Oh yes, St. George and the Dragon. They have them both together on the beads of their rosaries – the yellow things they count, and pray with, or pay with.' said the Owl rather vaguely.

'St. George *and the Dragon!* Why, St. George killed the Dragon.'

'Ah! the Dragon was not really killed.' said the Owl coolly. 'It was only syncope, and he kept quiet for a time, and grew seven other heads worse than the first. Some say St George worships the Dragon now, himself; but people always are saying unpleasant things, and probably it isn't true. At all events, the English worship St George and the Dragon till they don't seem to know which is which.'

'What, has St George grown like the Dragon then?' cried Queen Mab distractedly, wringing her hands.

'Oh no,' replied the Owl, with some condescending pity for the foreigner's ignorance. 'But the Dragon has grown vastly like St. George.'

'Is that all they worship?' said Queen Mab.

'Oh no, there are plenty of other patent religions. A hundred religions and only one sauce – melted butter, as the Frenchman said, but the sauce has outlived many of the patent religions.'

'I don't understand how religions are patent.' remarked her inquisitive Majesty.

'We call it a patent religion.' said the Owl, 'when it has only been recently invented, and is so insufficiently advertised, that it is only to be found in a very few houses indeed, and is not a commodity in general request. The Patentees then call themselves a Church, and devote their energies to advertising the new "Cult," as they generally style it. For example, you have Esoteric Buddhism, so named because it is not Buddhism, nor Esoteric. It is imported by an American company with a manufactory in Thibet, and has had some success among fashionable people.'

'What do the Esoteric Buddhists worship?'

'Teacups and cigarettes, standing where they ought not.' replied the owl; 'but I believe these things are purely symbolical, and that *au fond* the Priestess of Esoteric Buddhism herself adores the Dragon.'

'That is enough about *that.* Are there no patent religions warranted free from Dragon worship?'

'Well.' said the Owl dubiously, 'there are the Altruists. '*They* worship humanity. As a rule, you may have noticed that adorers think the object of adoration better than themselves, – an unexpected instance in most cases, of the modesty of their species. But the Altruists worship Humanity.'

'And they don't think Humanity better than themselves?'

'Far from it. Their leading idea is that they are the cream of Humanity. Their principal industry is to scold and lecture Humanity. Whatever Humanity may be doing – making war or making peace, or making love to its Deceased Wife's Sister – the Altruists cry out, "Don't do that." And they preach sermons to Humanity, always beginning, "We think;" and they publish their remarks in high-class periodicals, and they invariably show that everyone, and especially Mr. Herbert Spencer, is in the wrong, and nobody pays the slightest attention to them. In their way the Altruists do to others as they would have others do to them, To my mind, while they pretend that Humanity is what they worship, they really want to be worshipped by Humanity.'

'Are there many of this sect?' asked Mab.

'There were twenty-seven of them.' said the Owl, 'but they quarrelled about canonising the Emperor Tiberius, and now there are only thirteen and a half.'

'Where do you get the fraction?' said Mab.

'That is a mystery.' said the Owl. 'Every religion should have its mystery, and the Altruists possess only this example; it is a cheap one, but they are not a luxurious sect.'

'Well.' said Mab mournfully at last, 'I must go back to Samoa; there is too much mystery here for me. But who is that?'

She broke off suddenly, for a new and mysterious object had just entered the glade, and was advancing towards the pool.

'Hush!' said the Owl. 'Do take care. It is a scientific man – a philosopher.'

It was a tall, thin personage, with spectacles and a knapsack, and what reminded Queen Mab of a small green landing-net, but was really intended to catch butterflies. He came up to the pond, and she imagined he was going to fish; but no, he only unfastened his knapsack and took some small phials and a tin box out of it Then, bending down to the edge of the water, he began to skim its surface cautiously with a ladle and empty the contents into one of his phials. Suddenly a look of delight came into his face, and he uttered a cry – 'Stephanoceros!'

Queen Mab thought it was an incantation, and, trembling with fear, she relaxed her hold of the bough and fell. Not into the pond! She had wings, of course, and half petrified with horror though she was, she yet fluttered away from that stagnant water. But alas, in the very effort to escape, she had caught the eye of the Professor; he sprang up – pond, animalcule all forgotten in the chase of this extraordinary butterfly. The fairy's courage failed her: her presence of mind vanished, and the wild gyrations of the owl, who, too late, realised the peril of his companion, only increased her confusion. In another moment she was a prisoner under the butterfly-net.

Beaming with delight, the philosopher turned her carefully into the tin box, shut the lid and hastened home, too much enraptured with his prize even to pause to secure the valuable Stephanoceros.

But Queen Mab had fainted, as even fairies must do at such a terrible crisis; and perhaps it was as well that she had, for the professor forbore to administer chloroform, under the impression that his lovely captive had completely succumbed. He put her, therefore, straight into a tall glass bottle, and began to survey her carefully, walking round and round. Truly, he had never seen such a remarkable butterfly.

# CHAPTER III. – THE ORIGIN OF RELIGION

*'Rough draughts of Man's Beginning God!'*

*Swinburne.*

When Queen Mab recovered consciousness she heard the sound of violent voices in the room before she opened her eyes, which she did half hoping to find herself the victim of some terrible delusion. But the sight of the professor, standing not a yard away, brought a fatal conviction to her heart. It was too true. Was there ever a more undesirable position for a fairy, accustomed to perfect freedom, and nourished by honey and nectar, than to be closely confined in a tall bottle, with smooth hard slippery walls that she could not pierce, and nothing to live upon but a glass-stopper! It was absurd; but it was also terrible. How fervently she wished, now, that the missionaries had never come to Polynesia.

But the professor was not alone, two of his acquaintances were there – a divine veering towards the modern school, and a poet – the ordinary poet of satire and Mr. Besant's novels, with an eye-glass, who held that the whole duty of poets at least was to transfer the meanderings of the inner life, or as much of them as were in any degree capable of transmission, to immortal foolscap..Unfortunately, as he observed with a mixture of pride and regret, the workings of his soul were generally so ethereal as to baffle expression and comprehension; and, he was wont to say, mixing up metaphors at a great rate, that he could only stand, like the High Priest of the Delphic oracle, before the gates of his inner life, to note down such fragmentary utterances as 'foamed up from the depths of that divine chaos.' for the benefit of inquiring minds with a preference for the oracular. He added that cosmos was a condition of grovelling minds, and that while the thoughts, faculties, and emotions of an ordinary member of society might fitly be summed up in the epithet 'microcosm.' his own nature could be appropriately described only by that of 'microchaos.' In which opinion the professor always fully coincided.

With the two had entered the professor's little boy, a motherless child of eight, who walked straight up to the bottle.

No sooner did the child's eyes light on the vessel than a curious thing occurred. He fell down on his knees, bowed his head, and held up his hands.

'Great Heavens!' cried the professor, forgetting himself, 'what do I behold! My child is praying (a thing he never was taught to do), and praying to a green butterfly! Hush! hush!' the professor went on, turning to his friends. 'This is terrible, but most important. The child has never been allowed to hear anything about the supernatural – his poor mother died when he was in the cradle – and I have scrupulously shielded him from all dangerous conversation. There is not a prayer-book in the house, the maids are picked Agnostics, from advanced families, and I am quite certain that my boy has never even heard of the existence of a bogie.'

The poet whistled: the divine took up his hat, and, with a pained look, was leaving the room.

'Stop, stop!' cried the professor, 'he is doing something odd.'

The child had taken out of his pocket certain small black stones of a peculiar shape. So absorbed was he that he never noticed the presence of the men.

He kissed the stones and arranged them in a curious pattern on the floor, still kneeling, and keeping his eye on Mab in her bottle. At last he placed one strangely shaped pebble in the centre, and then began to speak in a low, trembling voice, and in a kind of cadence:

'Oh! you that I have tried to see,
Oh! you that I have heard in the night,

Oh! you that live in the sky and the water;
Now I see you, now you have come:
Now you will tell me where you live,
And what things are, and who made them.
Oh Dala, these stones are yours;
These are the goona stones I find,
And play with when I think of you.
Oh Dala, be my friend, and never leave me
Alone in the dark night.'

'As I live, it's a religious service, the worship of a green butterfly!' said the professor. At his voice the child turned round, and seeing the men, looked very much ashamed of himself.

'Come here, my dear old man.' said the professor to the child, who came on being called.

'What were you doing? – who taught you to say all those funny things?'

The little fellow looked frightened.

'I didn't remember you were here.' he said; 'they are things I say when I play by myself.'

'And who is Dala?'

The boy was blushing painfully.

'Oh, I didn't mean you to hear, it's just a game of mine. I play at there being somebody I can't see, who knows what I am doing; a friend.'

'And nobody taught you, not Jane or Harriet?'

Now Harriet and Jane were the maids.

'You never saw anybody play at that kind of game before?'

'No,' said the child, 'nobody ever.' 'Then,' cried the professor, in a loud and blissful voice, 'we have at last discovered the origin of religion. It isn't Ghosts. It isn't the Infinite. It is worshipping butterflies, with a service of fetich stones. The boy has returned to it by an act of unconscious inherited memory, derived from Palaeolithic Man, who must, therefore, have been the native of a temperate climate, where there were green lepidoptera. Oh, my friends, what a thing is inherited memory! In each of us there slumber all the impressions of all our predecessors, up to the earliest Ascidian. See how the domesticated dog,' cried the professor, forgetting that he was not lecturing in Albemarle Street, 'see how the domesticated dog, by inherited memory, turns round on the hearthrug before he curls up to sleep! He is unconsciously remembering the long grasses in which his wild ancestors dwelt. Also observe this boy, who has retained an unconscious recollection of the earliest creed of prehistoric man. Behold him instinctively, and I may say automatically, cherishing fetich stones (instead of marbles, like other boys) and adoring that green insect in the glass bottle! Oh Science,' he added rapturously, 'what will Mr. Max Müller say now? The Infinite! Bosh, it's a butterfly!'

'It is my own Dala, come to play with me,' said the boy.

'It is a fairy,' exclaimed the poet, examining Mab through his eyeglass. This he said, not that he believed in fairies any more than publishers believed in him, but partly because it was a pose he affected, partly to 'draw' the professor.

The professor replied that fairies were unscientific, and even unthinkable, and the divine declared that they were too heterodox even for the advanced state of modern theology, and had been condemned by several councils, which is true. And the professor ran through all the animal kingdoms and sub-kingdoms very fast, and proved quite conclusively, in a perfect cataract of polysyllables, that fairies didn't belong to any of them. While the professor was recovering breath, the divine observed, in a somewhat aggrieved tone, that he for his part found men and women enough for him, and too much sometimes. He also wished to know whether, if his talented but misguided friend required something ethereal, angels were not sufficient, without his having recourse to Pagan mythology; and

whether he considered Pagan mythology suitable to the pressing needs of modern society, with a large surplus female population, and to the adjustment of the claims of reason and religion.

The poet replied, 'Oh, don't bother me with your theological conundrums. I give it up. See here, I am going to write a sonnet to this creature, whatever it is. Fair denizen – !'

'Of a glass bottle!' interrupted the professor somewhat rudely, and the divine laughed.

'No. Of deathless ether, doomed.'

'And that reminds me,' said the professor, turning hastily, 'I must examine it under the microscope carefully, while the light lasts.'

'Oh father!' cried the child, 'don't touch it, it is alive!'

'Nonsense!' said the professor, 'it is as dead as a door-nail. Just reach me that lens.'

He raised the glass stopper unsuspiciously, then turned to adjust his instrument And even as he turned his captive fled.

'There!' cried the boy.

Like a flash of sunshine, Queen Mab darted upwards and floated through the open window. They saw her hover outside a moment, then she was gone – back into her deathless ether.

'I told you so!' exclaimed the poet, startled by this incident into a momentary conviction of the truth of his own theory.

# CHAPTER IV. – THE POET AND THE PALÆONTO-THEOLOGIST

*'Puis nous fut dit que chose estrange ne leur sembloit estre deux contradictoires Vrayes en mode, en figure, et en temps.' Pantagruel, v. xxii.*

Moved by an uncontrollable impulse, they all three rushed out into the garden; and far beyond them, in the sunlight, they did indeed catch one parting gleam of gauzy wings, as the fairy vanished. When the professor led the way into the room again, and, rather crestfallen, looked at the tall empty bottle and the stopper, which in his hurry he had thrown down upon the floor.

'She is gone!' sobbed the child. 'My beautiful Dala. I shall never see her again.'

He was right; the professor and the theologian, between them, had scared Queen Mab away pretty successfully. She would certainly never revisit that part of the city if she could help it. The divine looked uncomfortable. In spite of himself he had recognised something strange and unusual in the appearance of this last capture of his friend's butterfly-net, and almost unconsciously he began to ponder on the old theory that the Evil One might occasionally disguise himself as an angel of light. The poet, meanwhile, was more voluble.

'Your soul is sordid!' he said indignantly to the professor. 'You have no eyes for the Immaterial, the intangibly Ideal, that lies behind the shadowy and deceptive veil that we call Matter.'

'My soul,' said the professor with equal indignation, 'that is, if I have got one, is as good as yours.'

'No, it isn't,' said the poet; 'I am all soul, or nearly all. You are nothing but a mass of Higher Protoplasm.'

'No one need wish to be anything better. I should like to know,' cried the professor angrily, 'where we should all be without Protoplasm.'

'My friends,' said the theologian, still rather confused, 'this heat is both irreverent and irrational. Protoplasm is invaluable, but is it not also transient? The flight of that butterfly may well remind us – '

'Stop!' interrupted the philosopher. '*Was* it a butterfly? Now I come to think of it, I hardly know whether to refer it to the lepidoptera or not. At all events, it is a striking example of the manner in which natural and sexual selection, continued through a series of epochs, can evolve the most brilliant and graceful combinations of tint and plumage, by simple survival of the favourable variations.'

'It is indeed,' suggested the theologian, 'a remarkable proof of the intelligent construction of the universe, and of the argument from design, that this insect should have been framed with such exquisite perfection of form and colour to delight the eyes of the theologian.'

'Not at all,' said the professor irritably. 'It was to delight the eyes of butterflies of the opposite sex. It is no more an argument from design than I am!'

'Do stop that!' said the poet. 'How can a fellow write a sonnet with you two for ever sparring away at your musty scholasticisms? Haven't we heard enough about Paley and Darwin? You have frightened away the fairy between you, and that is plenty of mischief for one day.

'Fair denizen of deathless ether, doomed For one brief hour to languish and repine.

Entombed? That will do, but I'm afraid there are not many more rhymes to "doomed." "Loomed," "boomed," "exhumed," "well-groomed." My thoughts won't flow, hang it all!'

'You *are* an argument for design,' said the theologian, taking no notice of the poet, 'though you won't admit it. Why won't you take up with my scientific religion? – a religion, you know, that can be expressed with equal facility by emotional or by mathematical terms. It is as easy, when you once understand it, as the first proposition in Euclid. You have two points, Faith and Reason, and you draw

a straight line between them. Then you must describe an equilateral triangle – I mean a scientific religion, on the straight line, F R – between Faith and Reason.'

'Oh!' said the professor. 'How do you do it?'

'First,' said the theologian hopefully, 'taking F as your centre, F R as your radius, describe the circle of Theology. Then, taking R as your centre, F R as your radius, describe the circle of Logic. These two circles will intersect at Science, indicated in the proposition by the point S. Join together S F, and then join S R, and you will have the equilateral triangle of a scientific religion on the line F R S.'

'Prove it,' said the professor grimly.

'Science and Faith,' replied the theologian readily, 'equal Faith and Reason, because they are both radii of the same circle, Man being the Radius of the Infinite. Theology – '

'Stop!' ejaculated the professor in the utmost indignation. 'What do you mean by it? I never in my life listened to such unmitigated nonsense. Who gave you leave to talk of a scientific religion as an equilateral triangle? If it is a triangle at all, which there is not the remotest reason to suppose – but I cannot argue with you? You might as well call it a dodecahedron, or the cube root of minus nothing.'

'Oh, very well,' said the theologian with exasperating coolness. 'I thought it possible that even your blind prejudice might not refuse to listen to a simple mathematical demonstration of the possibility of a true scientific religion, but I find that I was mistaken. I am not annoyed – not at all. I prefer to look with lenity upon this outburst of passion, which might, I admit, have roused the anger of a theologian of the old school. But, believe me, I personally feel towards you no enmity – only the profoundest compassion.'

Inarticulate sound from the professor.

'I find in you,' continued the theologian with benevolence, 'much to tolerate, much even to admire. I regret that, formerly, some of my predecessors may have been led, by your aggressive and turbulent spirit, to form unnecessarily harsh judgments of your character, and put unnecessarily tight thumbscrews on your thumbs; but as for me, I desire to win you by sympathy and affection and physico-theological afternoon parties, not to coerce you by vituperation. Your eye of Reason, as I have often observed, is already sufficiently developed; supplement it with the eye of Faith, and you will be quite complete. It will then only remain for you to learn which objects it is necessary to view with which eye, and carefully to close the other. This takes a little practice (which must not be attempted in Society), but I am sure that a person of your attainments will easily master the difficulty. We will then joyfully receive you into our ranks. No sacrifice on your part will be required; you will retain the old distinction of F.R.S., of which you have always been justly proud; but we shall take the liberty of conferring upon you the additional privilege of the honorary title of D.D.'

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