

QUIDA

WISDOM, WIT,
AND PATHOS
OF QUIDA

Ouida

Wisdom, Wit, and Pathos of Ouida

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Ouida

Wisdom, Wit, and Pathos of Ouida / Selected from the Works of Ouida

ARIADNE

One grows to love the Roman fountains as sea-born men the sea. Go where you will there is the water; whether it foams by Trevi, where the green moss grows in it like ocean weed about the feet of the ocean god, or whether it rushes reddened by the evening light, from the mouth of an old lion that once saw Cleopatra; whether it leaps high in air, trying to reach the gold cross on St. Peter's or pours its triple cascade over the Pauline granite; whether it spouts out of a great barrel in a wall in old Trastevere, or throws up into the air a gossamer as fine as Arachne's web in a green garden way where the lizards run, or in a crowded corner where the fruit-sellers sit against the wall;—in all its shapes one grows to love the water that fills Rome with an unchanging melody all through the year.

And indeed I do believe all things and all traditions. History is like that old stag that Charles of France found out hunting in the woods once, with the bronze collar round its neck on which was written, "Cæsar mihi hoc donavit." How one's fancy loves to linger about that old stag, and what a crowd of mighty shades come thronging at the very thought of him! How wonderful it is to think of—that quiet grey beast leading his lovely life under the shadows of the woods, with his hinds and their fawns about him, whilst Cæsar after Cæsar fell and generation on generation passed away and perished! But the sciolist taps you on the arm. "Deer average fifty years of life; it was some mere court trick of course—how easy to have such a collar made!" Well, what have we gained? The stag was better than the sciolist.

Life costs but little on these sunny, silent shores; four walls of loose stones, a roof of furze and brambles, a fare of fish and fruit and millet-bread, a fire of driftwood easily gathered—and all is told. For a feast pluck the violet cactus; for a holiday push the old red boat to sea, and set the brown sail square against the sun—nothing can be cheaper, perhaps few things can be better.

To feel the western breezes blow over that sapphire sea, laden with the fragrance of a score of blossoming isles. To lie under the hollow rocks, where centuries before the fisher folk put up that painted tablet to the dear Madonna, for all poor shipwrecked souls. To climb the high hills through the tangle of myrtle and tamarisk, and the tufted rosemary, with the kids bleating above upon some unseen height. To watch the soft night close in, and the warning lights shine out over shoals and sunken rocks, and the moon hang low and golden in the blue dusk at the end there under the arch of the boughs. To spend long hours in the cool, fresh, break of day, drifting with the tide, and leaping with bare free limbs into the waves, and lying outstretched upon them, glancing down to the depths below, where silvery fish are gliding and coral branches are growing, and pink shells are floating like rose-leaves, five fathoms low and more. Oh! a good life, and none better, abroad in the winds and weather, as Nature meant that every living thing should be, only, alas, the devil put it into the mind of man to build cities! A good life for the soul and the body: and from it this sea-born Joy came to seek the Ghetto!

With a visible and physical ill one can deal; one can thrust a knife into a man at need, one can give a woman money for bread or masses, one can run for medicine or a priest. But for a creature with a face like Ariadnê's, who had believed in the old gods and found them fables, who had sought for the old altars and found them ruins, who had dreamed of Imperial Rome and found the Ghetto—for such a sorrow as this, what could one do?

Some said I might have been a learned man, had I taken more pains. But I think it was only their kindness. I have that twist in my brain, which is the curse of my countrymen—a sort of devilish quickness at doing well, that prevents us ever doing best; just the same sort of thing that makes our goatherds rhyme perfect sonnets, and keeps them dunces before the alphabet.

If our beloved Leopardi, instead of bemoaning his fate in his despair and sickening of his narrow home, had tried to see how many fair strange things there lay at his house door, had tried to care for the troubles of the men that hung the nets on the trees, and the innocent woes of the girl that carried the grass to the cow, and the obscure martyrdom of maternity and widowhood that the old woman had gone through who sat spinning on the top of the stairs, he would have found that his little borgo that he hated so for its dulness had all the comedies and tragedies of life lying under the sound of its tolling bells. He would not have been less sorrowful, for the greater the soul the sadder it is for the unutterable waste, the unending pain of life. But he would never have been dull: he would never have despised, and despising missed, the stories and the poems that were round him in the millet fields and the olive orchards. There is only one lamp which we can carry in our hand, and which will burn through the darkest night, and make the light of a home for us in a desert place: it is sympathy with everything that breathes.

Into other lands I wandered, then, and sought full half the world. When one wants but little, and has a useful tongue, and knows how to be merry with the young folk, and sorrowful with the old, and can take the fair weather with the foul, and wear one's philosophy like an easy boot, treading with it on no man's toe, and no dog's tail; why, if one be of this sort, I say, one is, in a great manner, independent of fortune; and the very little that one needs one can usually obtain. Many years I strayed about, seeing many cities and many minds, like Odysseus; being no saint, but, at the same time, being no thief and no liar.

Art was dear to me. Wandering through many lands, I had come to know the charm of quiet cloisters; the delight of a strange, rare volume; the interest of a quaint bit of pottery; the unutterable loveliness of some perfect painter's vision, making a glory in some dusky, world-forgotten church: and so my life was full of gladness here in Rome, where the ass's hoof ringing on a stone may show you that Vitruvius was right, where you had doubted him; or the sun shining down upon a cabbage garden, or a coppersmith's shreds of metal, may gleam on a signet ring of the Flavian women, or a broken vase that may have served vile Tullia for drink.

Art is, after nature, the only consolation that one has at all for living.

I have been all my life blown on by all sorts of weather, and I know there is nothing so good as the sun and the wind for driving ill-nature and selfishness out of one.

Anything in the open air is always well; it is because men now-a-days shut themselves up so much in rooms and pen themselves in stifling styes, where never the wind comes or the clouds are looked at, that puling discontent and plague-struck envy are the note of all modern politics and philosophies. The open air breeds Leonidas, the factory room Felix Pyat.

I lit my pipe. A pipe is a pocket philosopher, a truer one than Socrates. For it never asks questions. Socrates must have been very tiresome when one thinks of it.

I have had some skill in managing the minds of crowds; it is a mere knack, like any other; it belongs to no particular character or culture. Arnold of Brescia had it, and so had Masaniello. Lamartine had it, and so had Jack Cade.

It is of use to have a reputation for queerness; it gains one many solitary moments of peace.

Ersilia was a good soul, and full of kindness; but charity is a flower not naturally of earthly growth, and it needs manuring with a promise of profit.

The soul of the poet is like a mirror of an astrologer: it bears the reflection of the past and of the future, and can show the secrets of men and gods; but all the same it is dimmed by the breath of those who stand by and gaze into it.

"You are not unhappy now?" I said to her in farewell.

She looked at me with a smile.

"You have given me hope; and I am in Rome, and I am young."

She was right. Rome may be only a ruin, and Hope but another name for deception and disappointment; but Youth is supreme happiness in itself, because all possibilities lie in it, and nothing in it is as yet irrevocable.

There never was an Æneas; there never was a Numa; well, what the better are we? We only lose the Trojan ship gliding into Tiber's mouth, when the woodland thickets that bloomed by Ostia were reddening with the first warmth of the day's sun; we only lose the Sabine lover going by the Sacred Way at night, and sweet Egeria weeping in the woods of Nemi; and are—by their loss—how much the poorer!

Perhaps all these things never were.

The little stone of truth, rolling through the many ages of the world, has gathered and grown grey with the thick mosses of romance and superstition. But tradition must always have that little stone of truth as its kernel; and perhaps he who rejects all, is likelier to be wrong than even foolish folk like myself who love to believe all, and who tread the new paths, thinking ever of the ancient stories.

There can be hardly any life more lovely upon earth than that of a young student of art in Rome. With the morning, to rise to the sound of countless bells and of innumerable streams, and see the silver lines of the snow new fallen on the mountains against the deep rose of the dawn, and the shadows of the night steal away softly from off the city, releasing, one by one, dome and spire, and cupola and roof, till all the wide white wonder of the place discloses itself under the broad brightness of full day; to go down into the dark cool streets, with the pigeons fluttering in the fountains, and the sounds of the morning chants coming from many a church door and convent window, and little scholars and singing children going by with white clothes on, or scarlet robes, as though walking forth from the canvas of Botticelli or Garofalo; to eat frugally, sitting close by some shop of flowers and birds, and watching all the while the humours and the pageants of the streets by quaint corners, rich with sculptures of the Renaissance, and spanned by arches of architects that builded for Agrippa, under grated windows with arms of Frangipanni or Colonna, and pillars that Apollodorus raised; to go into the great courts of palaces, murmurous with the fall of water, and fresh with green leaves and golden fruit, that rob the colossal statues of their gloom and gauntness, and thence into the vast chambers where the greatest dreams that men have ever had, are written on panel and on canvas, and the immensity and the silence of them all are beautiful and eloquent with dead men's legacies to the living, where the Hours and the Seasons frolic beside the Maries at the Sepulchre, and Adonis bares his lovely limbs, in nowise ashamed because S. Jerome and S. Mark are there; to study and muse, and wonder and be still, and be full of the peace which passes all understanding, because the earth is lovely as Adonis is, and life is yet unspent; to come out of the sacred light, half golden, and half dusky, and full of many blended colours, where the marbles and the pictures live, sole dwellers in the deserted dwellings of princes; to come out where the oranges are all aglow in the sunshine, and the red camellias are pushing against the hoary head of the old stone Hermes, and to go down the width of the mighty steps into the gay piazza, alive with bells tolling, and crowds laughing, and drums abeat, and the flutter of carnival banners in the wind; and to get away from it all with a full heart, and ascend to see the sun set from the terrace of the Medici, or the Pamfili, or the Borghese woods, and watch the flame-like clouds stream homewards behind S. Peter's, and the pines of Monte Mario grow black against the west, till the pale green of evening spreads itself above them, and the stars arise; and then, with a prayer—be your faith what it will—a prayer to the Unknown God, to go down again through the violet-scented air and the dreamful twilight, and so, with unspeakable thankfulness, simply because you live, and this is Rome—so homeward.

The strong instinctive veracity in her weighed the measure of her days, and gave them their right name. She was content, her life was full of the sweetness and strength of the arts, and of the

peace of noble occupation and endeavour. But some true instinct in her taught her that this is peace, but is not more than peace. Happiness comes but from the beating of one heart upon another.

There was a high wall near, covered with peach-trees, and topped with wistaria and valerian, and the handsome wild caperplant; and against the wall stood rows of tall golden sunflowers late in their blooming; the sun they seldom could see for the wall, and it was pathetic always to me, as the day wore on, to watch the poor stately amber heads turn straining to greet their god, and only meeting the stones and the cobwebs, and the peach-leaves of their inexorable barrier.

They were so like us!—straining after the light, and only finding bricks and gossamer and wasps'-nests! But the sunflowers never made mistakes as we do: they never took the broken edge of a glass bottle or the glimmer of a stable lanthorn for the glory of Helios, and comforted themselves with it—as we can do.

Dear, where we love much we always forgive, because we ourselves are nothing, and what we love is all.

There is something in the silence of an empty room that sometimes has a terrible eloquence: it is like the look of coming death in the eyes of a dumb animal; it begs words and makes them needless.

When you have said to yourself that you will kill any one, the world only seems to hold yourself and him, and God—who will see the justice done.

What is it that love does to a woman?—without it she only sleeps; with it, alone, she lives.

A great love is an absolute isolation, and an absolute absorption. Nothing lives or moves or breathes, save one life: for one life alone the sun rises and sets, the seasons revolve, the clouds bear rain, and the stars ride on high; the multitudes around cease to exist, or seem but ghostly shades; of all the sounds of earth there is but one voice audible; all past ages have been but the herald of one soul; all eternity can be but its heritage alone.

Is Nature kind or cruel? Who can tell?

The cyclone comes, or the earthquake; the great wave rises and swallows the cities and the villages, and goes back whence it came; the earth yawns, and devours the pretty towns and the sleeping children, the gardens where the lovers were sitting, and the churches where women prayed, and then the morass dries up and the gulf unites again. Men build afresh, and the grass grows, and the trees, and all the flowering seasons come back as of old. But the dead are dead: nothing changes that!

As it is with the earth, so it is with our life; our own poor, short, little life, that is all we can really call our own.

Calamities shatter, and despair engulfs it; and yet after a time the chasm seems to close; the storm wave seems to roll back; the leaves and the grass return; and we make new dwellings. That is, the daily ways of living are resumed, and the common tricks of our speech and act are as they used to be before disaster came upon us. Then wise people say, he or she has "got over it." Alas, alas! the drowned children will not come back to us; the love that was struck down, the prayer that was silenced, the altar that was ruined, the garden that was ravished, they are all gone for ever,—for ever, for ever! Yet we live; because grief does not always kill, and often does not speak.

I crept through the myrtles downward, away from the house where the statue lay shattered. The earliest of the nightingales of the year was beginning her lay in some leafy covert hard by, but never would he hear music in their piping again; never, never: any more than I should hear the song of the Faun in the fountain.

For the song that we hear with our ears is only the song that is sung in our hearts.

And his heart, I knew, would be for ever empty and silent, like a temple that has been burned with fire, and left standing, pitiful and terrible, in mockery of a lost religion, and of a forsaken god.

Men and women, losing the thing they love, lose much, but the artist loses far more; for him are slaughtered all the children of his dreams, and from him are driven all the fair companions of his solitude.

Love art alone, forsaking all other loves, and she will make you happy, with a happiness that shall defy the seasons and the sorrows of time, the pains of the vulgar and the changes of fortune, and be with you day and night, a light that is never dim. But mingle with it any human love—and art will look for ever at you with the eyes of Christ when he looked at the faithless follower as the cock crew.

And, indeed, there are always the poor: the vast throngs born century after century, only to know the pangs of life and of death, and nothing more. Methinks that human life is, after all, but like a human body, with a fair and smiling face, but all the limbs ulcered and cramped and racked with pain. No surgery of statecraft has ever known how to keep the fair head erect, yet give the trunk and the limbs health.

For in a great love there is a self-sustaining strength by which it lives, deprived of everything, as there are plants that live upon our barren ruins burned by the sun, and parched and shelterless, yet ever lifting green leaves to the light.

And indeed after all there is nothing more cruel than the impotence of genius to hold and keep those commonest joys and mere natural affections which dullards and worse than dullards rejoice in at their pleasure; the common human things, whose loss makes the great possessions of its imperial powers all valueless and vain as harps unstrung, or as lutes that are broken.

"This world of our own immediate day is weak and weary, because it is no longer young; yet it possesses one noble attribute—it has an acute and almost universal sympathy, which does indeed often degenerate into a false and illogical sentiment, yet serves to redeem an age of egotism. We have escaped both the gem-like hardness of the Pagan, and the narrowing selfishness of the Christian and the Israelite. We are sick for the woe of creation, and we wonder why such woe is ours, and why it is entailed on the innocent dumb beasts, that perish in millions for us, unpitied, day and night. Rome had no altar to Pity: it is the one God that we own. When that pity in us for all things is perfected, perhaps we shall have reached a religion of sympathy that will be purer than any religion the world has yet seen, and more productive. 'Save my country!' cried the Pagan to his deities. 'Save my soul!' cries the Christian at his altars. We, who are without a god, murmur to the great unknown forces of Nature: 'Let me save others some little portion of this pain entailed on all simple and guileless things, that are forced to live, without any fault of their own at their birth, or any will of their own in their begetting.'"

How should we have great Art in our day? We have no faith. Belief of some sort is the lifeblood of Art. When Athene and Zeus ceased to excite any veneration in the minds of men, sculpture and architecture both lost their greatness. When the Madonna and her son lost that mystery and divinity, which for the simple minds of the early painters they possessed, the soul went out of canvas and of wood. When we carve a Venus now, she is but a light woman; when we paint a Jesus now, it is but a little suckling, or a sorrowful prisoner. We want a great inspiration. We ought to find it in the things that are really beautiful, but we are not sure enough, perhaps, what is so. What does dominate us is a passion for nature; for the sea, for the sky, for the mountain, for the forest, for the evening storm, for the break of day. Perhaps when we are thoroughly steeped in this we shall reach greatness once more. But the artificiality of all modern life is against it; so is its cynicism. Sadness and sarcasm make a great Lucretius as a great Juvenal, and scorn makes a strong Aristophanes; but they do not make a Praxiteles and an Apelles; they do not even make a Raffaele, or a Flaxman.

Art, if it be anything, is the perpetual uplifting of what is beautiful in the sight of the multitudes—the perpetual adoration of that loveliness, material and moral, which men in the haste and the greed of their lives are everlastingly forgetting: unless it be that it is empty and useless as a child's reed-pipe when the reed is snapped and the child's breath spent. Genius is obligation.

"No woman, I think, ever loved you as this woman does, whom you have left as I would not leave a dog," said Maryx, and something of his old ardent eloquence returned to him, and his voice rose and rang clearer as the courage in him consummated the self-sacrifice that he had set himself for her sake. "Have you ever thought what you have done? When you have killed Art in an artist, you have done the cruellest murder that earth can behold. Other and weaker natures than hers might

forget, but she never. Her fame will be short-lived as that rose, for she sees but your face, and the world will tire of that, but she will not. She can dream no more. She can only remember. Do you know what that is to the artist?—it is to be blind and to weary the world; the world that has no more pity than you have! You think her consoled because her genius has not left her: are you a poet and yet do not know that genius is only a power to suffer more and to remember longer?—nothing else. You say to yourself that she will have fame, that will beguile her as the god came to Ariadnê; perhaps; but across that fame, let it become what it may, there will settle for ever the shadow of the world's dishonour; it will be for ever poisoned, and cursed, and embittered by the scorn of fools, and the reproach of women, since by you they have been given their lashes of nettles, and by you have been given their by-word to hoot. She will walk in the light of triumph, you say, and therefore you have not hurt her; do you not see that the fiercer that light may beat on her, the sharper will the eyes of the world search out the brand with which you have burned her. For when do men forgive force in the woman? and when do women ever forgive the woman's greatness? and when does every cur fail to snarl at the life that is higher than its fellows? It is by the very genius in her that you have had such power to wound, such power to blight and to destroy. By so long as her name shall be spoken, so long will the wrong you have done her cling round it, to make it meet for reproach. A mere woman dies, and her woe and her shame die with her, and the earth covers her and them; but such shelter is denied for ever to the woman who has genius and fame; long after she is dead she will lie out on common soil, naked and unhoucelled, for all the winds to blow on her and all the carrion birds to tear."

"No, no. That is accursed! To touch Art without a right to touch it, merely as a means to find bread—you are too honest to think of such a thing. Unless Art be adored for its own sake and purely, it must be left alone. Philip of Macedon had every free man's child taught Art! I would have every boy and girl taught its sacredness; so, we might in time get back some accuracy of taste in the public, some conscientiousness of production in the artist. If artistic creation be not a joy, an imperious necessity, an instinct of all the forces of the mind, let the boy go and plough, and the girl go and spin."

Maybe you turn your back on happiness. I have heard that wise people often do that. They look up so at the sun and the stars, that they set their foot on the lark that would have sung to them and woke them brightly in the morning—and kill it.

Landscape painting is the only original form of painting that modern times can boast. It has not exhausted itself yet; it is capable of infinite development. Ruysdael, Rembrandt, and the rest, did great scenes, it is true, but it has been left to our painters to put soul into the sunshine of a cornfield, and suggest a whole life of labour in a dull evening sky hanging over a brown ploughed upland, with the horses going tired homewards, and one grey figure trudging after them, to the hut on the edge of the moor. Of course the modern fancy of making nature answer to all human moods, like an Eölian harp, is morbid and exaggerated, but it has a beauty in it, and a certain truth. Our tenderer souls take refuge in the country now, as they used to do in the cloister.

I think if people oftener saw the break of day they would vow oftener to keep that dawning day holy, and would not so often let its fair hours drift away with nothing done that were not best left undone.

We are the sons of our Time: it is not for us to slay our mother. Let us cover her dishonour if we see it, lest we should provoke the Erinyes.

How one loves Canova the man, and how one execrates Canova the artist! Surely never was a great repute achieved by so false a talent and so perfect a character. One would think he had been born and bred in Versailles instead of Treviso. He is called a naturalist! Look at his Graces! He is always Coysevax and Coustou at heart. Never purely classic, never frankly modern. Louis XIV. would have loved him better than Bernini.

If Alexander had believed himself a bubble of gas instead of the son of a god, he would not have changed the face of the world. Negation cannot be the parent of heroism, though it will produce

an indifference that counterfeits it not ill, since Petronius died quite as serenely as ever did the martyrs of the Church.

Genius cannot escape the taint of its time more than a child the influence of its begetting. Augustus could have Horace and Ovid; he could never have had Homer and Milton.

I do not think with you. Talent takes the mark of its generation; genius stamps its time with its own impression. Virgil had the sentiment of an united Italy.

Tell her that past she thinks so great was only very like the Serapis which men worshipped so many ages in Theophilis, and which, when the soldiers struck it down at last, proved itself only a hollow Colossus with a colony of rats in its head that scampered right and left.

Falconet struck the death-note of the plastic arts when he said, "Our marbles have *almost* colour." That is just where we err. We are incessantly striving to make Sculpture at once a romance-writer and a painter, and of course she loses all dignity and does but seem the jay in borrowed plumes of sable. Conceits are altogether out of keeping with marble. They suit a cabinet painting or a piece of china. Bernini was the first to show the disease when he veiled the head of his Nile to indicate that the source was unknown.

Whosoever has any sort of fame has lighted a beacon that is always shining upon him, and can never more return into the cool twilight of privacy even when most he wishes. It is of these retributions—some call them compensations—of which life is full.

Men have forgotten the virile Pyrrhic dance, and have become incapable of the grace of the Ionian; their only dance is a Danse Macabre, and they are always hand in hand with a skeleton.

By night Rome is still a city for the gods; the shadows veil its wounds, the lustre silvers all its stones; its silence is haunted as no other silence is; if you have faith, there where the dark gloss of the laurel brushes the marble as in Agrippa's time, you will see the Immortals passing by chained with dead leaves and weeping.

A great love is an absolute isolation and an absolute absorption. Nothing lives or moves or breathes save one life; for one life alone the sun rises and sets, the seasons revolve, the clouds bear rain, and the stars ride on high; the multitudes around cease to exist, or seem but ghostly shades; of all the sounds of earth there is but one voice audible; all past ages have been but the herald of one soul; all eternity can be but its heritage alone.

Perhaps she was right: for a few hours of joy one owes the debt of years, and should give a pardon wide and deep as the deep sea.

This Love which she had made in his likeness, the tyrant and compeller of the world, was to her as the angel which brings perfect dreams and lets the tired sleeper visit heaven.

"And when the ship sails away without you?" I said brutally, and laughing still, because the mention of the schooner had broken the bonds of the silence that had held me against my will half paralysed, and I seemed to be again upon the Tyrrhene shore, seeing the white sail fade against the sky.

"And when that ship sails without you? The day will come. It always comes. You are my Ariadnê; yet you forget Naxos! Oh, the day will come! you will kiss the feet of your idol then, and they will not stay; they will go away, away, away, and they will not tarry for your prayers or your tears—ay, it is always so. Two love, and one tires. And you know nothing of that; you who would have love immortal."

And I laughed again, for it seemed to me so horrible, and I was half mad.

No doubt it would have been kinder had I struck my knife down into her breast with her words unspoken.

All shade of colour forsook her face; only the soft azure of the veins remained, and changed to an ashen grey. She shook with a sudden shiver from head to foot as the name she hated, the name of Ariadnê, fell upon her ear. The icebolt had fallen in her paradise. A scared and terrible fear dilated her eyes, that opened wide in the amaze of some suddenly stricken creature.

"And when he leaves you?" I said, with cruel iteration. "Do you remember what you told me once of the woman by the marshes by the sea, who had nothing left by which to remember love save wounds that never healed? That is all his love will leave you by-and-by."

"Ah, never!"

She spoke rather to herself than me. The terror was fading out of her eyes, the blood returning to her face; she was in the sweet bewildered trance of that blind faith which goes wherever it is led, and never asks the end nor dreads the fate. Her love was deathless: how could she know that his was mortal?

"You are cruel," she said, with her mouth quivering, but the old, soft, grand courage in her eyes. "We are together for ever; he has said so. But even if—if—I only remembered him by wounds, what would that change in me? He would *have* loved me. If he would wish to wound me, so he should. I am his own as the dogs are. Think!—he looked at me, and all the world grew beautiful; he touched me, and I was happy—I, who never had been happy in my life. You look at me strangely; you speak harshly. Why? I used to think, surely you would be glad—"

I gripped my knife and cursed him in my soul.

How could one say to her the thing that he had made her in man's and woman's sight?

"I thought you would be glad," she said, wistfully, "and I would have told you long ago—myself. I do not know why you should look so. Perhaps you are angered because I seemed ungrateful to you and Maryx. Perhaps I was so. I have no thought—only of him. What he wished, that I did. Even Rome itself was for me nothing, and the gods—there is only one for me; and he is with me always. And I think the serpents and the apes are gone for ever from the tree, and he only hears the nightingales—now. He tells me so often. Very often. Do you remember I used to dream of greatness for myself—ah, what does it matter! I want nothing now. When he looks at me—the gods themselves could give me nothing more."

And the sweet tranquil radiance came back into her eyes, and her thoughts wandered into the memories of this perfect passion which possessed her, and she forgot that I was there.

My throat was choking; my eyes felt blind; my tongue clove to my mouth. I, who knew what that end would be as surely as I knew the day then shining would sink into the earth, I was dumb, like a brute beast—I, who had gone to take his life.

Before this love which knew nothing of the laws of mankind, how poor and trite and trivial looked those laws! What could I dare to say to her of shame? Ah! if it had only been for any other's sake! But he,—perhaps he did not lie to her; perhaps he did only hear the nightingales with her beside him; but how soon their song would pall upon his ear, how soon would he sigh for the poisonous kiss of the serpents! I knew! I knew!

I stood heart-broken in the warm light that was falling through the casement and streaming towards her face. What could I say to her? Men harder and sterner and surer in every way of their own judgment than I was of mine no doubt would have shaken her with harsh hands from that dream in which she had wandered to her own destruction.

No doubt a sterner moralist than I would have had no pity, and would have hurled on her all the weight of those bitter truths of which she was so ignorant; would have shown her that pit of earthly scorn upon whose brink she stood; would have torn down all that perfect, credulous faith of hers, which could have no longer life nor any more lasting root than the flowering creeper born of a summer's sun, and gorgeous as the sunset's hues, and clinging about a ruin-mantling decay. Oh yes, no doubt. But I am only weak, and of little wisdom, and never certain that the laws and ways of the world are just, and never capable of long giving pain to any harmless creature, least of all to her.

She seemed to rouse herself with effort to remember I was there, and turned on me her eyes that were suffused and dreamful with happiness, like a young child's with sleep.

"I must have seemed so thankless to you: you were so very good to me," she said, with that serious sweetness of her rare smile that I had used to watch for, as an old dog watches for his young

owner's—an old dog that is used to be forgotten, but does not himself forget, though he is old. "I must have seemed so thankless; but he bade me be silent, and I have no law but him. After that night when we walked in Nero's fields, and I went home and learned he loved me;—do you not see I forgot that there was any one in all the world except himself and me? It must always be so—at least, so I think. Oh, how true that poem was! Do you remember how he read it that night after Mozart amongst the roses by the fire? What use was endless life and all the lore of the spirits and seers to Sospitra? I was like Sospitra, till he came; always thinking of the stars and the heavens in the desert all alone, and always wishing for life eternal, when it is only life *together* that is worth a wish or a prayer. But why do you look at me so? Perhaps you do not understand. Perhaps I am selfish."

This was all that it seemed to her—that I did not understand. Could she see the tears of blood that welled up in my eyes? Could she see the blank despair that blinded my sight? Could she see the frozen hand that I felt clutching at my heart and benumbing it? I did not understand; that was all that it seemed to her.

She was my Ariadnê, born again to suffer the same fate. I saw the future: she could not. I knew that he would leave her as surely as the night succeeds the day. I knew that his passion—if passion, indeed, it were, and not only the mere common vanity of subjugation and possession—would pall on him and fade out little by little, as the stars fade out of the grey morning skies. I knew, but I had not the courage to tell her.

Men were faithful only to the faithless. But what could she know of this?

"Thinking of the stars and of the heavens in the desert all alone! Yes!" I cried; and the bonds of my silence were unloosed, and the words rushed from my lips like a torrent from between the hills.

"Yes; and never to see the stars any more, and to lose for ever the peace of the desert—that, you think, is gain! Oh, my dear! what can I say to you? What can I say? You will not believe if I tell you. I shall seem a liar and a prophet of false woe. I shall curse when I would bless. What can I say to you? Athene watched over you. You were of those who dwell alone, but whom the gods are with. You had the clue and the sword, and they are nothing to you; you lose them both at his word, at the mere breath of his lips, and know no god but his idle law, that shifts as the winds of the sea. And you count that gain? Oh, just Heaven! Oh, my dear, my heart is broken; how can I tell you? One man loved you who was great and good, to whom you were a sacred thing, who would have lifted you up in heaven, and never have touched too roughly a single hair of your head; and you saw him no more than the very earth that you trod; he was less to you than the marbles he wrought in; and he suffers: and what do you care? You have had the greatest wrong that a woman can have, and you think it the greatest good, the sweetest gift! He has torn your whole life down as a cruel hand tears a rose in the morning light, and you rejoice! For what do you know? He will kill your soul, and still you will kiss his hand. Some women are so. When he leaves you, what will you do? For you there will only be death. The weak are consoled, but the strong never. What will you do? What will you do? You are like a child that culls flowers at the edge of a snake's breeding-pit. He waked you—yes!—to send you in a deeper sleep, blind and dumb to everything but his will. Nay, nay! that is not your fault. Love does not come at will; and of goodness it is not born, nor of gratitude, nor of any right or reason on the earth. Only that you should have had no thought of us—no thought at all—only of him by whom your ruin comes; that seems hard! Ay, it is hard. You stood just so in my dream, and you hesitated between the flower of passion and the flower of death. Ah, well might Love laugh. They grow on the same bough; Love knows that. Oh, my dear, my dear, I come too late! Look! he has done worse than murder, for that only kills the body; but he has killed the soul in you. He will crush out all that came to you from heaven; all your mind and your hopes and your dreams, and all the mystery in you, that we poor half-dumb fools call genius, and that made the common daylight above you full of all beautiful shapes and visions that our duller eyes could not see as you went. He has done worse than murder, and I came to take his life. Ay, I would slay him now as I would strangle the snake in my path. And even for this I come too late. I cannot do you even this poor last service.

To strike him dead would only be to strike you too. I come too late! Take my knife, lest I should see him—take it. Till he leaves you I will wait."

I drew the fine, thin blade across my knee and broke it in two pieces, and threw the two halves at her feet.

Then I turned without looking once at her, and went away.

I do not know how the day waned and passed; the skies seemed red with fire, and the canals with blood. I do not know how I found my road over the marble floors and out into the air. I only remember that I felt my way feebly with my hands, as though the golden sunlight were all darkness, and that I groped my way down the steps and out under an angle of the masonry, staring stupidly upon the gliding waters.

I do not know whether a minute had gone by or many hours, when some shivering sense of sound made me look up at the casement above, a high, vast casement fretted with dusky gold and many colours, and all kinds of sculptured stone. The sun was making a glory as of jewels on its painted panes. Some of them were open; I could see within the chamber Hilarion's fair and delicate head, and his face drooped with a soft smile. I could see her, with all her loveliness, melting, as it were, into his embrace, and see her mouth meet his.

If I had not broken the steel!—

I rose from the stones and cursed them, and departed from the place as the moon rose.

He was silent; the moonlight poured down between us white and wide; there lay a little dead bird on the stones, I remember, a redbreast, stiff and cold. The people traffic in such things here, in the square of Agrippa; it had fallen, doubtless, off some market stall.

Poor little robin! All the innocent sweet woodland singing-life of it was over, over in agony, and not a soul in all the wide earth was the better for its pain; not even the huckster who had missed making his copper coin by it. Woe is me; the sorrow of the world is great.

I pointed to it where it lay, poor little soft huddled heap of bright feathers; there is no sadder sight than a dead bird, for what lovelier life can there be than a bird's life, free in the sun and the rain, in the blossom and foliage?

"Make the little cold throat sing at sunrise," I said to him. "When you can do that, then think to undo what you have done."

"She will forget:—"

"You know she never will forget. There is your crime."

"She will have her art—"

"Will the dead bird sing?"

Here, if anywhere in the "divine city of the Vatican"—for in truth a city and divine it is, and well has it been called so—here, if anywhere, will wake the soul of the artist; here, where the very pavement bears the story of Odysseus, and each passage-way is a Via Sacra, and every stone is old with years whose tale is told by hundreds or by thousands, and the wounded Adonis can be adored beside the tempted Christ of Sistine, and the serious beauty of the Erythean Sibyl lives beside the laughing grace of ivy-crowned Thalia, and the Jupiter Maximus frowns on the mortals made of earth's dust, and the Jehovah who has called forth woman meets the first smile of Eve. A Divine City indeed, holding in its innumerable chambers and its courts of granite and of porphyry all that man has ever dreamed of, in his hope and in his terror, of the Unknown God.

The days of joyous, foolish mumming came—the carnival mumming that as a boy I had loved so well, and that, ever since I had come and stitched under my Apollo and Crispin, I had never been loth to meddle and mix in, going mad with my lit taper, like the rest, and my whistle of the Befana, and all the salt and sport of a war of wits such as old Rome has always heard in midwinter since the seven nights of the Saturnalia.

Dear Lord! to think that twice a thousand years ago and more, along these banks of Tiber, and down in the Velabrum and up the Sacred Way, men and women and children were leaping, and

dancing, and shouting, and electing their festal king, and exchanging their new-year gifts of wax candles and little clay figures: and that now-a-days we are doing just the same thing in the same season, in the same places, only with all the real faunic joyfulness gone out of it with the old slain Saturn, and a great deal of empty and luxurious show come in instead! It makes one sad, mankind looks such a fool.

Better be Heine's fool on the seashore, who asks the winds their "wherefore" and their "whence." You remember Heine's poem—that one in the "North Sea" series, that speaks of the man by the shore, and asks what is Man, and what shall become of him, and who lives on high in the stars? and tells how the waves keep on murmuring and the winds rising, the clouds scudding before the breeze, and the planets shining so cold and so far, and how on the shore a fool waits for an answer, and waits in vain. It is a terrible poem, and terrible because it is true.

Every one of us stands on the brink of the endless sea that is Time and is Death; and all the blind, beautiful, mute, majestic forces of creation move around us and yet tell us nothing.

It is wonderful that, with this awful mystery always about us, we can go on on our little lives as cheerfully as we do; that on the edge of that mystical shore we yet can think so much about the crab in the lobster-pot, the eel in the sand, the sail in the distance, the child's face at home.

Well, no doubt it is heaven's mercy that we can do so; it saves from madness such thinking souls as are amongst us.

"My dear, of love there is very little in the world. There are many things that take its likeness: fierce unstable passions and poor egotisms of all sorts, vanities too, and many other follies—Apatê and Philotês in a thousand masquerading characters that gain great Love discredit. The loves of men, and women too, my dear, are hardly better very often than Minos' love for Skylla; you remember how he threw her down from the stern of his vessel when he had made the use of her he wished, and she had cut the curls of Nisias. A great love does not of necessity imply a great intelligence, but it must spring out of a great nature, that is certain; and where the heart has spent itself in much base petty commerce, it has no deep treasury of gold on which to draw; it is bankrupt from its very over-trading. A noble passion is very rare; believe me; as rare as any other very noble thing."

"Do you call him a poet because he has the trick of a sonorous cadence and of words that fall with the measure of music, so that youths and maidens recite them for the vain charm of their mere empty sound? It is a lie—it is a blasphemy. A poet! A poet suffers for the meanest thing that lives; the feeblest creature dead in the dust is pain to him; his joy and his sorrow alike outweigh tenfold the joys and the sorrows of men; he looks on the world as Christ looked on Jerusalem, and weeps; he loves, and all heaven and all hell are in his love; he is faithful unto death, because fidelity alone can give to love the grandeur and the promise of eternity; he is like the martyrs of the church who lay upon the wheel with their limbs racked, yet held the roses of Paradise in their hands and heard the angels in the air. That is a poet; that is what Dante was, and Shelley and Milton and Petrarca. But this man? this singer of the senses, whose sole lament is that the appetites of the body are too soon exhausted; this languid and curious analysist who rends the soul aside with merciless cruelty, and puts away the quivering nerves with cold indifference, once he has seen their secrets?—this a poet? Then so was Nero harping! Accursed be the book and all the polished vileness that his verses ever palmed off on men by their mere tricks of sound. This a poet! As soon are the swine that rout the garbage, the lions of the Apocalypse by the throne of God!"

The glad water sparkles and ripples everywhere; above the broad porphyry basins butterflies of every colour flutter, and swallows fly; lovers and children swing balls of flowers, made as only our Romans know how to make them; the wide lawns under the deep-shadowed avenues are full of blossoms; the air is full of fragrance; the palms rise against a cloudless sky; the nights are lustrous; in the cool of the great galleries the statues seem to smile: so spring had been to me always; but now the season was without joy, and the scent of the flowers on the wind hurt me as it smote my nostrils.

For a great darkness seemed always between me and the sun, and I wondered that the birds could sing, and the children run amongst the blossoms—the world being so vile.

Women hope that the dead love may revive; but men know that of all dead things none are so past recall as a dead passion.

The courtesan may scourge it with a whip of nettles back into life; but the innocent woman may wet it for ever with her tears, she will find no resurrection.

Art is an angel of God, but when Love has entered the soul, the angel unfolds its plumes and takes flight, and the wind of its wings withers as it passes. He whom it has left misses the angel at his ear, but he is alone for ever. Sometimes it will seem to him then that it had been no angel ever, but a fiend that lied, making him waste his years in a barren toil, and his nights in a joyless passion; for there are two things beside which all Art is but a mockery and a curse: they are a child that is dying and a love that is lost.

Love art alone, forsaking all other loves, and she will make you happy, with a happiness that shall defy the seasons and the sorrows of time, the pains of the vulgar and the changes of fortune, and be with you day and night, a light that is never dim. But mingle with it any human love—and art will look for ever at you with the eyes of Christ when he looked at the faithless follower as the cock crew.

The little garden of the Rospigliosi seems to have all mediæval Rome shut in it, as you go up the winding stairs with all their lichens and water-plants and broken marbles, into the garden itself, with its smooth emerald turf and spreading magnolias, and broad fish-ponds, and orange and citron trees, and the frescoed building at the end where Guido's Aurora floats in unchanging youth, and the buoyant Hours run before the sun.

Myself I own I care not very much for that Aurora; she is no incarnation of the morning, and though she floats wonderfully and does truly seem to move, yet is she in nowise ethereal nor suggestive of the dawn either of day or life. When he painted her, he must have been in love with some lusty taverner's buxom wife busked in her holiday attire.

But whatever one may think of the famed Aurora, of the loveliness of her quiet garden home, safe in the shelter of the stately palace walls, there can be no question; the little place is beautiful, and sitting in its solitude with the brown magnolia fruit falling on the grass, and the blackbirds pecking between the primroses, all the courtly and superb pageant of the dead ages will come trooping by you, and you will fancy that the boy Metastasio is reciting strophes under yonder Spanish chestnut-tree, and cardinals, and nobles, and gracious ladies, and pretty pages are all listening, leaning against the stone rail of the central water.

For this is the especial charm and sorcery of Rome, that, sitting idly in her beautiful garden-ways, you can turn over a score of centuries and summon all their pomp and pain before you, as easily as little children can turn over the pages of a coloured picture-book until their eyes are dazzled.

CHANDOS

It is so easy for the preacher, when he has entered the days of darkness, to tell us to find no flavour in the golden fruit, no music in the song of the charmer, no spell in eyes that look love, no delirium in the soft dreams of the lotus—so easy when these things are dead and barren for himself, to say they are forbidden! But men must be far more or far less than mortal ere they can blind their eyes, and dull their senses, and forswear their nature, and obey the dreariness of the commandment; and there is little need to force the sackcloth and the serge upon us. The roses wither long before the wassail is over, and there is no magic that will make them bloom again, for there is none that renews us—youth. The Helots had their one short, joyous festival in their long year of labour; life may leave us ours. It will be surely to us, long before its close, a harder tyrant and a more remorseless taskmaster than ever was the Lacedemonian to his bond-slaves,—bidding us make bricks without straw, breaking the bowed back, and leaving us as our sole chance of freedom the hour when we shall turn our faces to the wall—and die.

Society, that smooth and sparkling sea, is excessively difficult to navigate; its surf looks no more than champagne foam, but a thousand quicksands and shoals lie beneath: there are breakers ahead for more than half the dainty pleasure-boats that skim their hour upon it; and the foundered lie by millions, forgotten, five fathoms deep below. The only safe ballast upon it is gold dust; and if stress of weather come on you, it will swallow you without remorse. Trevenna had none of this ballast; he had come out to sea in as ticklish a cockle-shell as might be; he might go down any moment, and he carried no commission, being a sort of nameless, unchartered rover: yet float he did, securely.

Corals, pink and delicate, rivet continents together; ivy tendrils, that a child may break, bold Norman walls with bonds of iron; a little ring, a toy of gold, a jeweller's bagatelle, forges chains heavier than the galley-slave's: so a woman's look may fetter a lifetime.

He had passed through life having escaped singularly all the shadows that lie on it for most men; and he had, far more than most, what may be termed the faculty for happiness—a gift, in any temperament, whose wisdom and whose beauty the world too little recognises.

A temperament that is *never* earnest is at times well-nigh as wearisome as a temperament that is never gay; there comes a time when, if you can never touch to any depth, the ceaseless froth and brightness of the surface will create a certain sense of impatience, a certain sense of want.

A straw misplaced will make us enemies; a millstone of benefits hung about his neck may fail to anchor down by us a single friend. We may lavish what we will—kindly thought, loyal service, untiring aid, and generous deed—and they are all but as oil to the burning, as fuel to the flame, when spent upon those who are jealous of us.

Truth is a rough, honest, helter-skelter terrier, that none like to see brought into their drawing-rooms, throwing over all their dainty little ornaments, upsetting their choicest Dresden, that nobody guessed was cracked till it fell with the mended side uppermost, and keeping every one in incessant tremor lest the next snap should be at their braids or their boots, of which neither the varnish nor the luxuriance will stand rough usage.

When will men learn to know that the power of genius, and the human shell in which it chances to be harboured, are as distinct as is the diamond from the quartz-bed in which they find it?

Had he embraced dishonour, and accepted the rescue that a lie would have lent him, this misery in its greatest share had never been upon him. He would have come hither with riches about him, and the loveliness he had worshipped would have been his own beyond the touch of any rival's hand. Choosing to cleave to the old creeds of his race, and passing, without a backward glance, into the paths of honour and of justice, it was thus with him now. Verily, virtue must be her own reward, as in the Socratic creed; for she will bring no other dower than peace of conscience in her gift to

whosoever weds her. "I have loved justice, and fled from iniquity; wherefore here I die in exile," said Hildebrand upon his death-bed. They will be the closing words of most lives that have followed truth.

There are liberties sweeter than love; there are goals higher than happiness.

Some memory of them stirred in him there, with the noiseless flow of the lingering water at his feet, and above the quiet of the stars; the thoughts of his youth came back to him, and his heart ached with their longing.

Out of the salt depths of their calamity men had gathered the heroisms of their future; out of the desert of their exile they had learned the power to return as conquerors. The greater things within him awakened from their lethargy; the innate strength so long untried, so long lulled to dreamy indolence and rest, uncoiled from its prostration; the force that would resist and, it might be, survive, slowly came upon him, with the taunts of his foe. It was possible that there was that still in him which might be grander and truer to the ambitions of his imaginative childhood under adversity, than in the voluptuous sweetness of his rich and careless life. It was possible, if—if he could once meet the fate he shuddered from, once look at the bitterness of the life that waited for him, and enter on its desolate and arid waste without going back to the closed gates of his forfeited paradise to stretch his limbs within their shadow once more ere he died.

There is more courage needed oftentimes to accept the onward flow of existence, bitter as the waters of Marah, black and narrow as the channel of Jordan, than there is ever needed to bow down the neck to the sweep of the death-angel's sword.

He accepted the desolation of his life, for the sake of all beyond life, greater than life, which looked down on him from the silence of the night.

It was sunset in Venice,—that supreme moment when the magical flush of light transfigures all, and wanderers whose eyes have long ached with the greyness and the glare of northward cities gaze and think themselves in heaven. The still waters of the lagunes, the marbles and the porphyry and the jasper of the mighty palaces, the soft grey of the ruins all covered with clinging green and the glowing blossoms of creepers, the hidden antique nooks where some woman's head leaned out of an arched casement, like a dream of the Dandolo time when the Adriatic swarmed with the returning galleys laden with Byzantine spoil, the dim, mystic, majestic walls that towered above the gliding surface of the eternal water, once alive with flowers, and music, and the gleam of golden tresses, and the laughter of careless revellers in the Venice of Goldoni, in the Venice of the Past;—everywhere the sunset glowed with the marvel of its colour, with the wonder of its warmth.

Then a moment, and it was gone. Night fell with the hushed shadowy stillness that belongs to Venice alone; and in the place of the riot and luxuriance of colour there was the tremulous darkness of the young night, with the beat of an oar on the water, the scent of unclosing carnation-buds, the white gleam of moonlight, and the odour of lilies-of-the-valley blossoming in the dark archway of some mosaic-lined window.

The ruin that had stripped him of all else taught him to fathom the depths of his own attainments. He had in him the gifts of a Goethe; but it was only under adversity that these reached their stature and bore their fruit.

The words were true. The bread of bitterness is the food on which men grow to their fullest stature; the waters of bitterness are the debatable ford through which they reach the shores of wisdom; the ashes boldly grasped and eaten without faltering are the price that must be paid for the golden fruit of knowledge. The swimmer cannot tell his strength till he has gone through the wild force of opposing waves; the great man cannot tell the might of his hand and the power of his resistance till he has wrestled with the angel of adversity, and held it close till it has blessed him.

The artist was true to his genius; he knew it a greater gift than happiness; and as his hands wandered by instinct over the familiar notes, the power of his kingdom came to him, the passion of his mistress was on him, and the grandeur of the melody swelled out to mingle with the night, divine as consolation, supreme as victory.

The man who puts chains on another's limbs is only one shade worse than he who puts fetters on another's free thoughts and on another's free conscience.

One fetter of tradition loosened, one web of superstition broken, one ray of light let in on darkness, one principle of liberty secured, are worth the living for, he mused. Fame!—it is the flower of a day, that dies when the next sun rises. But to do something, however little, to free men from their chains, to aid something, however faintly, the rights of reason and of truth, to be unvanquished through all and against all, these may bring one nearer the pure ambitions of youth.

Happiness dies as age comes to us; it sets for ever, with the suns of early years: yet perhaps we may keep a higher thing beside which it holds but a brief loyalty, if to ourselves we can rest true, if for the liberty of the world we can do anything.

Do not believe that happiness makes us selfish; it is a treason to the sweetest gift of life. It is when it has deserted us that it grows hard to keep all the better things in us from dying in the blight.

"Coleridge cried, 'O God, how glorious it is to live!' Renan asks, 'O God, when will it be worth while to live?' In nature we echo the poet; in the world we echo the thinker."

"Yet you are greater than you were then," he said, slowly. "I know it,—I who am but a wine-cup rioter and love nothing but my summer-day fooling. You are greater; but the harvest you sow will only be reaped over your grave."

"I should be content could I believe it would be reaped then."

"Be content then. You may be so."

"God knows! Do you not think Marsy and Delisle de Sales and Linguet believed, as they suffered in their dungeons for mere truth of speech, that the remembrance of future generations would solace them? Bichât gave himself to premature death for science' sake; does the world once in a year speak his name? Yet how near those men are to us, to be forgotten! A century, and history will scarce chronicle them."

"Then why give the wealth of your intellect to men?"

"Are there not higher things than present reward and the mere talk of tongues? The *monstrari digito* were scarce a lofty goal. We may love Truth and strive to serve her, disregarding what she brings us. Those who need a bribe from her are not her true believers."

Philippe d'Orvâle tossed his silvery hair from his eyes,—eyes of such sunny lustre still.

"Ay! And those who held that sublime code of yours, that cleaving to truth for truth's sake, where are they? How have they fared in every climate and in every age? Stoned, crucified, burned, fettered, broken on the vast black granite mass of the blind multitude's brutality, of the priesthood's curse and craft!"

"True! Yet if through us, ever so slightly, the bondage of the creeds' traditions be loosened from the lives they stifle, and those multitudes—so weary, so feverish, so much more to be pitied than condemned—become less blind, less brute, the sacrifice is not in vain."

"In your sense, no. But the world reels back again into darkness as soon as a hand has lifted it for a while into light. Men hold themselves purified, civilised; a year of war,—and lust and bloodthirst rage untamed in all their barbarism; a taste of slaughter,—and they are wolves again! There was truth in the old feudal saying, 'Oignez vilain, il vous poindra; poignez vilain, il vous oindra.' Beat the multitudes you talk of with a despot's sword, and they will lick your feet; touch them with a Christ-like pity, and they will nail you to the cross."

There was terrible truth in the words: this man of princely blood, who disdained all sceptres and wanted nothing of the world, could look through and through it with his bold sunlit eyes, and see its rottenness to the core.

Chandos sighed as he heard.

"You are right,—only too right. Yet even while they crouch to the tyrant's sabre, how bitterly they need release! even while they crucify their teachers and their saviours, how little they know what they do! They may forsake themselves; but they should not be forsaken."

Philippe d'Orvâle looked on him with a light soft as woman's tears in his eyes, and dashed his hand down on the alabaster.

"Chandos, you live twenty centuries too late. You would have been crowned in Athens, and throned in Asia. But here, as a saving grace, they will call you—'mad!'"

"Well, if they do? The title has its honours. It was hooted against Solon and Socrates."

"I would do all in the world to please *you*, monseigneur," he answered, sadly; "but I cannot change my nature. The little aziola loves the shade, and shrinks from noise and glare and all the ways of men; I am like it. You cannot make the aziola a bird for sunlight; you cannot make me as others are."

Chandos looked down on him with an almost tender compassion. To him, whose years were so rich in every pleasure and every delight that men can enjoy, the loneliness and pain of Lulli's life, divorced from all the living world, made it a marvel profoundly melancholy, profoundly formed to claim the utmost gentleness and sympathy.

"I would not have you as others are, Lulli," he said, softly. "If in all the selfishness and pleasures of our world there were not some here and there to give their lives to high thoughts and to unselfish things, as you give yours, we should soon, I fear, forget that such existed. But for such recluse's devotion to an art as yours, the classics would have perished; without the cloister-penmen, the laws of science would never have broken the bondage of tradition."

Lulli looked up eagerly; then his head drooped again with the inexpressible weariness of that vain longing which "toils to reach the stars."

"Ah, what is the best that I reach?—the breath of the wind which passes, and sighs, and is heard no more."

"How crabbed a scroll!" he went on, throwing himself down a moment on the thyme and grass. "The characters must baffle even you; the years that have yellowed the vellum have altered the fashion. Whose is it?"

"An old Elizabethan musician's," answered Lulli, as he looked up. "Yes; the years take all,—our youth, our work, our life, even our graves."

Something in his Provençal cadence gave a rhythm to his simplest speech: the words fell sadly on his listener's ear, though on the sensuous luxuriance of his own existence no shadow ever rested, no skeleton ever crouched.

"Yes: the years take all," he said, with a certain sadness on him. "How many unperfected resolves, unachieved careers, unaccomplished ambitions, immatured discoveries, perish under the rapidity of time, as unripe fruits fall before their season! Bichât died at thirty-one:—if he had lived, his name would now have outshone Aristotle's."

"We live too little time to do anything even for the art we give our life to," murmured Lulli. "When we die, our work dies with us: our better self must perish with our bodies; the first change of fashion will sweep it into oblivion."

"Yet something may last of it," suggested Chandos, while his hand wandered among the blue bells of the curling hyacinths. "Because few save scholars read the '*Defensio Populi*' now, the work it did for free thought cannot die. None the less does the cathedral enrich Cologne because the name of the man who begot its beauty has passed unrecorded. None the less is the world aided by the effort of every true and daring mind because the thinker himself has been crushed down in the rush of unthinking crowds."

"No, if *it* could live!" murmured Lulli, softly, with a musing pain in the broken words. "But look! the scroll was as dear to its writer as his score to Beethoven,—the child of his love, cradled in his thoughts night and day, cherished as never mother cherished her first-born, beloved as wife or mistress, son or daughter, never were. Perhaps he denied himself much to give his time more to his labour; and when he died, lonely and in want, because he had pursued that for which men called him a dreamer, his latest thought was of the work which never could speak to others as it spoke to him, which he must die and leave, in anguish that none ever felt to sever from a human thing. Yet

what remains of his love and his toil? It is gone, as a laugh or a sob dies off the ear, leaving no echo behind. His name signed here tells nothing to the men for whom he laboured, adds nothing to the art for which he lived. As it is with him, so will it be with me."

His voice, that had risen in sudden and untutored eloquence, sank suddenly into the sadness and the weariness of the man whose highest joy is but relief from pain; and in it was a keener pang still,—the grief of one who strives for what incessantly escapes him.

"Wait," said Chandos, gently. "Are we sure that nothing lives of the music you mourn? It may live on the lips of the people, in those Old-World songs whose cause we cannot trace, yet which come sweet and fresh transmitted to every generation. How often we hear some nameless melody echo down a country-side! the singers cannot tell you whence it came; they only know their mothers sang it by their cradles, and they will sing it by their children's. But in the past the song had its birth in genius."

Guido Lulli bent his head.

"True: such an immortality were all-sufficient: we could well afford to have our names forgotten—"

"Let that fellow alone, Cos," laughed Chandos, to avert the stormy element which seemed to threaten the serenity of his breakfast-party. "Trevenna will beat us all with his tongue, if we tempt him to try conclusions. He should be a Chancellor of the Exchequer or a Cheap John; I am not quite clear which as yet."

"Identically the same things!" cried Trevenna. "The only difference is the scale they are on; one talks from the bench, and the other from the benches; one cheapens tins, and the other cheapens taxes; one has a salve for an incurable disease, and the other a salve for the national debt; one rounds his periods to put off a watch that won't go, and the other to cover a deficit that won't close; but they radically drive the same trade, and both are successful if the spavined mare trots out looking sound, and the people pay up. 'Look what I save you,' cry Cheap John and Chancellor; and while they shout their economics, they pocket their shillings. Ah, if I were sure I could bamboozle a village, I should know I was qualified to make up a Budget."

"Most impudent of men! When will you learn the first lesson of society, and decently and discreetly *apprendre à vous effacer*?"

"*A m'effacer*? The advice Lady Harriet Vandeleur gave Cecil. Very good for mediocre people, I dare say; but it wouldn't suit *me*. There are some people, you know, that won't iron down for the hardest rollers. *M'effacer*? No! I'd rather any day be an ill-bred originality than a well-bred nonentity."

"Then you succeed perfectly in being what you wish! Don't you know, monsieur, that to set yourself against conventionalities is like talking too loud?—an impertinence and an under-breeding that society resents by exclusion."

"Yes, I know it. But a duke may bawl, and nobody shuts out *him*; a prince might hop on one leg, and everybody would begin to hop too. Now, what the ducal lungs and the princely legs might do with impunity, I declare I've a right to do, if I like."

"*Bécasse*! no one can declare his rights till he can do much more, and—purchase them. Have a million, and we may perhaps give you a little license to be unlike other persons: without the million it is an ill-bred *gaucherie*."

"Ah, I know! Only a nobleman may be original; a poor penniless wretch upon town must be humbly and insignificantly commonplace. What a pity for the success of the aristocratic monopolists that nature puts clever fellows and fools just in the reverse order! But then nature's a shocking socialist."

"And so are you."

Trevenna laughed.

"Hush, madame. Pray don't destroy me with such a whisper."

Talent wears well; genius wears itself out; talent drives a brougham in fact, genius a sun-chariot in fancy; talent keeps to earth and fattens there, genius soars to the empyrean, to get picked by every

kite that flies; talent is the part and the venison, genius the seltzer and soufflé of life. The man who has talent sails successfully on the top of the wave; the man with genius beats himself to pieces, fifty to one, on the first rock he meets.

One innocent may be wrongly suspected until he is made the thing that the libel called him.

Men shut out happiness from their schemes for the world's happiness. They might as well try to bring flowers to bloom without the sun.

The most dastardly sin on earth is the desertion of the fallen.

Let the world abandon you, but to yourself be true.

The bread of bitterness is the food on which men grow to their fullest stature.

Youth without faith is a day without sun.

I detest posterity—every king hates his heir.

Scandals are like dandelion seeds; they are arrow-headed and stick when they fall, and bring forth and multiply fourfold.

The puff perfect is the puff personal—adroitly masked.

I wear the Bonnet Rouge discreetly weighed down with a fine tassel of British prudence.

He was a master of the great art of banter. It is a marvellous force; it kills sanctity, unveils sophistry, travesties wisdom, cuts through the finest shield, and turns the noblest impulses to hopeless ridicule.

Immortality is dull work—a hideous statue that gets black as soot in no time; funeral sermons that make you out a vial of revelations and discuss the probabilities of your being in the realms of Satan; a bust that slants you off at the shoulders and sticks you up on a bracket; a tombstone for the canes of the curious to poke at; an occasional attention in the way of withered immortelles or biographical Billingsgate, and a partial preservation shared in common with mummies, auks' eggs, snakes in bottles, and deformities in spirits of wine:—that's posthumous fame. I must say I don't see much fun in it.

It were hard not to be wrong in philosophies when the body starves on a pinch of oatmeal. It is the law of necessity, the balance of economy; human fuel must be used up that the machine of the world may spin on; but it is not, perhaps, marvellous that the living fuel is sometimes unreconciled to that symmetrical rule of waste and repair, of consumer and consumed.

It is many centuries since Caius Gracchus called the mercantile classes to aid the people against the patricians, and found too late that they were deadlier oppressors than all the optimates; but the error still goes on, and the moneymakers churn it into gold, as they churned it then into the Asiatic revenues and the senatorial amulets.

The love of a people is the most sublime crown that can rest on the brow of any man, but the love of a mob is a mongrel that fawns and slavers one moment, to rend and tear the next.

FOLLE-FARINE

In this old-world district, amidst the pastures and corn-lands of Normandy, superstition had taken a hold which the passage of centuries and the advent of revolution had done very little to lessen. Few of the people could read, and fewer still could write. They knew nothing but what their priests and politicians told them to believe. They went to their beds with the poultry, and rose as the cock crew: they went to mass, as their ducks to the osier and weed ponds; and to the conscription as their lambs to the slaughter. They understood that there was a world beyond them, but they remembered it only as the best market for their fruit, their fowls, their lace, their skins. Their brains were as dim as were their oil-lit streets at night; though their lives were content and mirthful, and for the most part pious. They went out into the summer meadows chanting aves, in seasons of drought to pray for rain on their parching orchards, in the same credulity with which they groped through the winter-fog bearing torches, and chanting dirges to gain a blessing at seed-time on their bleak, black fallows.

The beauty and the faith of the old mediæval life were with them still; and with its beauty and its faith were its bigotry and cruelty likewise.

They led simple and contented lives; for the most part honest, and amongst themselves cheerful and kindly: preserving much grace of colour, of costume, of idiosyncrasy, because apart from the hueless communism and characterless monotony of modern cities.

But they believed in sorcery and in devilry: they were brutal to their beasts, and could be as brutal to their foes: they were steeped in legend and tradition from their cradles; and all the darkest superstitions of dead ages still found home and treasury in their hearts and at their hearths.

They had always been a religious people in this birth country of the Flamma race: the strong poetic reverence of their forefathers, which had symbolised itself in the carving of every lintel, corbel or buttress in their streets, and the fashion of every spire on which a weather-vane could gleam against the sun, was still in their blood; the poetry had departed, but the bigotry remained.

"The earth and the air are good," she thought, as she lay there watching the dark leaves sway in the foam and the wind, and the bright-bosomed birds float from blossom to blossom. For there was latent in her, all untaught, that old pantheistic instinct of the divine age, when the world was young, to behold a sentient consciousness in every leaf unfolded to the light; to see a soul in every created thing the day shines on; to feel the presence of an eternal life in every breeze that moves, in every grass that grows; in every flame that lifts itself to heaven; in every bell that vibrates on the air; in every moth that soars to reach the stars.

Pantheism is the religion of the poet; and nature had made her a poet, though man as yet had but made of her an outcast, a slave, and a beast of burden.

"The earth and the air are good," she thought, watching the sun-rays pierce the purple hearts of a passion-flower, the shadows move across the deep brown water, the radiant butterfly alight upon a lily, the scarlet-throated birds dart in and out through the yellow feathery blossoms of the limes.

When a man clings to life for life's sake, because it is fair and sweet, and good in the sight and the senses, there may be weakness in his shudder at its threatening loss. But when a man is loth to lose life although it be hard, and joyless, and barren of all delights, because this life gives him power to accomplish things greater than he, which yet without him must perish, there is the strength in him, as there is the agony of Prometheus.

With him it must die also: that deep dim greatness within him, which moves him, despite himself; that nameless unspeakable force which compels him to create and to achieve; that vision by which he beholds worlds beyond him not seen by his fellows.

Weary of life he may be; of life material, and full of subtlety; of passion, of pleasure, of pain; of the kisses that burn, of the laugh that rings hollow, of the honey that so soon turns to gall, of the sickly fatigues, and the tired, cloyed hunger, that are the portion of men upon earth. Weary of these

he may be; but still if the gods have breathed on him, and made him mad with the madness that men have called genius, there will be that in him greater than himself, which he knows,—and cannot know without some fierce wrench and pang,—will be numbed and made impotent, and drift away, lost for evermore, into that eternal night, which is all that men behold of death.

The grass of the Holy River gathers perfume from the marvellous suns, and the moonless nights, and the gorgeous bloom of the east, from the aromatic breath of the leopard, and the perfume of the fallen pomegranate, and the sacred oil that floats in the lamps, and the caress of the girl-bather's feet, and the myrrh-dropping unguents that glide from the maiden's bare limbs in the moonlight,—the grass holds and feeds on them all. But not till the grass has been torn from the roots, and been crushed, and been bruised and destroyed, can the full odours exhale of all it has tasted and treasured.

Even thus the imagination of man may be great, but it can never be at its greatest until one serpent, with merciless fangs, has bitten it through and through, and impregnated it with passion and with poison,—that one deathless serpent which is memory.

And, indeed, to those who are alive to the nameless, universal, Eternal Soul which breathes in all the grasses of the fields, and beams in the eyes of all creatures of earth and air, and throbs in the living light of palpitating stars, and thrills through the young sap of forest trees, and stirs in the strange loves of wind-borne plants, and hums in every song of the bee, and burns in every quiver of the flame, and peoples with sentient myriads every drop of dew that gathers on a hare-bell, every bead of water that ripples in a brook—to them the mortal life of man can seem but little, save at once the fiercest and the feeblest thing that does exist; at once the most cruel and the most impotent; tyrants of direst destruction, and bondsmen of lowest captivity.

The earth has always most charm, and least pain, to the poet or the artist when men are hidden away under their roofs. Then they do not break its calm with either their mirth or their brutality; then the vile and revolting coarseness of their works, that blot it with so much deformity, is softened and obscured in the purple breaths of shadow, and the dim tender gleam of stars.

When the world was in its youth, it had leisure to treasure its recollections; even to pause and look back; to see what flower of a fair thought, what fruit of a noble art, it might have overlooked or left down-trodden. But now it is so old, and is so tired; it is purblind, and heavy of foot; it does not notice what it destroys; it desires rest and can find none; nothing can matter greatly to it; its dead are so many that it cannot count them; and being thus worn and dulled with age, and suffocated under the weight of its innumerable memories, it is very slow to be moved, and swift—terribly swift—to forget.

Why should it not be?

It has known the best, it has known the worst that ever can befall it.

And the prayer that to the heart of man seems so freshly born from his own desire, what is it on the weary ear of the world, save the same old, old cry which it has heard through all the ages, empty as the sound of the wind, and for ever—for ever—unanswered?

For there is nothing so cruel in life as a Faith;—the Faith, whatever its name may be, that draws a man on all his years through on one narrow path, by one tremulous light, and then at the last, with a laugh—drowns him.

I think I see!—the great God walked by the edge of the river, and he mused on a gift to give man, on a joy that should be a joy on the earth for ever; and he passed by the lily white as snow, by the thyme that fed the bees, by the gold heart in the arum flower, by the orange flame of the tall sandrush, by all the great water-blossoms which the sun kissed and the swallows loved, and he came to the one little reed pierced with the snake's-tongues, and all alone amidst millions. Then he took it up, and cut it to the root, and killed it; killed it as a reed—but breathed into it a song audible and beautiful to all the ears of men. Was that death to the reed?—or life? Would a thousand summers of life by the waterside have been worth that one thrill of song when a god first spoke through it?

It is odd that you should live in a palace, and he should want for bread; but then he can create things, and you can only buy them. So it is even, perhaps.

A word that needs compelling is broken by the heart before the lips give it. It is to plant a tree without a root to put faith in a man that needs a bond.

"You are glad since you sing!" said the old man to her as she passed him again on her homeward way and paused again beside him.

"The birds in cages sing," she answered him, "but think you they are glad?"

"Are they not?"

She sat down a moment beside him, on the bank which was soft with moss, and odorous with wild flowers curling up the stems of the poplars and straying over into the corn beyond.

"Are they? Look. Yesterday I passed a cottage, it is on the Great South Road; far away from here. The house was empty; the people no doubt were gone to labour in the fields; there was a wicker cage hanging to the wall, and in the cage there was a blackbird. The sun beat on his head; his square of sod was a dry clod of bare earth; the heat had dried every drop of water in his pan; and yet the bird was singing. Singing how? In torment, beating his breast against the bars till the blood started, crying to the skies to have mercy on him and to let the rain fall. His song was shrill; it had a scream in it; still he sang. Do you say the merle was glad?"

"What did you do?" asked the old man, still breaking his stones with a monotonous rise and fall of his hammer.

"I took the cage down and opened the door."

"And he?"

"He shot up in the air first, then dropped down amidst the grasses, where a little brook which the drought had not dried was still running; and he bathed and drank, and bathed again, seeming mad with the joy of the water. When I lost him from sight he was swaying among the leaves on a bough over the river; but then he was silent."

"And what do you mean by that?"

Her eyes clouded; she was mute. She vaguely knew the meaning it bore to herself, but it was beyond her to express it. All things of nature had voices and parables for her, because her fancy was vivid, and her mind was still too dark, and too profoundly ignorant, for her to be able to shape her thoughts into metaphor or deduction. The bird had spoken to her; by his silence as by his song; but what he had uttered she could not well utter again. Save indeed that song was not gladness, and neither was silence pain.

"The future?" she said at last, "that means something that one has not, and that is to come—is it so?" "Something that one never has, and that never comes," muttered the old man, wearily cracking the flints in two; "something that one possesses in one's sleep, and that is farther off each time that one awakes; and yet a thing that one sees always, sees even when one lies a dying they say—for men are fools."

In one of the most fertile and most fair districts of northern France there was a little Norman town, very, very old, and beautiful exceedingly by reason of its ancient streets, its high peaked roofs, its marvellous galleries and carvings, its exquisite greys and browns, its silence and its colour, and its rich still life.

Its centre was a great cathedral, noble as York or Chartres; a cathedral, whose spire shot to the clouds, and whose innumerable towers and pinnacles were all pierced to the day, so that the blue sky shone and the birds of the air flew all through them. A slow brown river, broad enough for market boats and for corn barges, stole through the place to the sea, lapping as it went the wooden piles of the houses, and reflecting the quaint shapes of the carvings, the hues of the signs and the draperies, the dark spaces of the dormer windows, the bright heads of some casement-cluster of carnations, the laughing face of a girl leaning out to smile on her lover.

All around it lay the deep grass unshaven, the leagues on leagues of fruitful orchards, the low blue hills tenderly interlacing one another, the fields of colza, where the white head-dress of the women-workers flashed in the sun like a silvery pigeon's wing. To the west there were the deep green

woods, and the wide plains golden with gorse of Arthur's and of Merlin's lands; and beyond, to the northward, was the dim stretch of the ocean breaking on a yellow shore, whither the river ran, and whither led straight shady roads, hidden with linden and with poplar trees, and marked ever and anon by a wayside wooden Christ, or by a little murmuring well crowned with a crucifix.

A beautiful, old, shadowy, ancient place: picturesque everywhere; often silent, with a sweet sad silence that was chiefly broken by the sound of bells or the chaunting of choristers. A place of the Middle Ages still. With lanterns swinging on cords from house to house as the only light; with wondrous scroll-works and quaint signs at the doors of all its traders; with monks' cowls and golden croziers and white-robed acolytes in its streets; with the subtle smoke of incense coming out from the cathedral door to mingle with the odours of the fruits and flowers in the market-place; with great flat-bottomed boats drifting down the river under the leaning eaves of its dwellings; and with the galleries of its opposing houses touching so nearly that a girl leaning in one could stretch a Provence rose or toss an Easter egg across to her neighbour in the other.

Doubtless there were often squalor, poverty, dust, filth, and uncomeliness within these old and beautiful homes. Doubtless often the dwellers therein were housed like cattle and slept like pigs, and looked but once out to the woods and waters of the landscapes round for one hundred times that they looked at their hidden silver in an old delf jug, or at their tawdry coloured prints of St. Victorian or St. Scævola.

But yet much of the beauty and the nobility of the old, simple, restful, rich-hued life of the past still abode there, and remained with them. In the straight, lithe form of their maidens, untrammelled by modern garb, and moving with the free majestic grace of forest does. In the vast, dim, sculptured chambers, where the grandam span by the wood fire, and the little children played in the shadows, and the lovers whispered in the embrasured window. In the broad market-place, where the mules cropped the clover, and the tawny awnings caught the sunlight, and the white caps of the girls framed faces fitted for the pencils of missal painters, and the flush of colour from mellow wall-fruits and grape-clusters glanced amidst the shelter of deepest, freshest green. In the perpetual presence of their cathedral, which, through sun and storm, through frost and summer, through noon and midnight, stood there amidst them, and watched the galled oxen tread their painful way, and the scourged mules droop their humble heads, and the helpless, harmless flocks go forth to the slaughter, and the old weary lives of the men and women pass through hunger and cold to the grave, and the sun and the moon rise and set, and the flowers and the children blossom and fade, and the endless years come and go, bringing peace, bringing war; bringing harvest, bringing famine; bringing life, bringing death; and, beholding these, still said to the multitude in its terrible irony, "Lo! your God is Love."

This little town lay far from the great Paris highway and all greatly frequented tracks. It was but a short distance from the coast, but near no harbour of greater extent than such as some small fishing village had made in the rocks for the trawlers. Few strangers ever came to it, except some wandering painters or antiquaries. It sent its apples and eggs, its poultry and honey, its colza and corn to the use of the great cities; but it was rarely that any of its own people went thither.

Now and then some one of the oval-faced, blue-eyed, lithe-limbed maidens of its little homely households would sigh and flush and grow restless, and murmur of Paris; and would steal out in the break of a warm grey morning whilst only the birds were still waking; and would patter away in her wooden shoes over the broad, white, southern road, with a stick over her shoulder, and a bundle of all her worldly goods upon the stick. And she would look back often, often, as she went; and when all was lost in the blue haze of distance save the lofty spire which she still saw through her tears, she would say in her heart, with her lips parched and trembling, "I will come back again. I will come back again."

But none such ever did come back.

They came back no more than did the white sweet sheaves of the lilies which the women gathered and sent to be bought and sold in the city—to gleam one faint summer night in a gilded balcony, and to be flung out the next morning, withered and dead.

One amongst the few who had thus gone whither the lilies went, and of whom the people would still talk as their mules paced homewards through the lanes at twilight, had been Reine Flamma, the daughter of the miller of Yprés.

"There are only two trades in a city," said the actors to her, with a smile as bitter as her own, "only two trades—to buy souls and to sell them. What business have you here, who do neither the one nor the other?"

There was music still in this trampled reed of the river, into which the gods had once bidden the stray winds and the wandering waters breathe their melody; but there, in the press, the buyers and sellers only saw in it a frail thing of the sand and the stream, only made to be woven for barter, or bind together the sheaves of the roses of pleasure.

Art was to him as mother, brethren, mistress, offspring, religion—all that other men hold dear. He had none of these, he desired none of them; and his genius sufficed to him in their stead.

It was an intense and reckless egotism, made alike cruel and sublime by its intensity and purity, like the egotism of a mother in her child. To it, as the mother to her child, he would have sacrificed every living creature; but to it also, like her, he would have sacrificed his very existence as unhesitatingly. But it was an egotism which, though merciless in its tyranny, was as pure as snow in its impersonality; it was untainted by any grain of avarice, of vanity, of selfish desire; it was independent of all sympathy; it was simply and intensely the passion for immortality:—that sublime selfishness, that superb madness, of all great minds.

Art had taken him for its own, as Demeter, in the days of her desolation, took the child Demophoon to nurture him as her own on the food of gods, and to plunge him through the flames of a fire that would give him immortal life. As the pusillanimous and sordid fears of the mortal mother lost to the child for evermore the possession of Olympian joys and of perpetual youth, so did the craven and earthly cares of bodily needs hold the artist back from the radiance of the life of the soul, and drag him from the purifying fires. Yet he had not been utterly discouraged; he strove against the Metanira of circumstance; he did his best to struggle free from the mortal bonds that bound him; and, as the child Demophoon mourned for the great goddess that had nurtured him, refusing to be comforted, so did he turn from the base consolations of the senses and the appetites, and beheld ever before his sight the ineffable majesty of that Mater Dolorosa who once and for ever had anointed him as her own.

Men did not believe in him; what he wrought saddened and terrified them; they turned aside to those who fed them on simpler and on sweeter food.

His works were great, but they were such as the public mind deems impious. They unveiled human corruption too nakedly, and they shadowed forth visions too exalted, and satires too unsparring, for them to be acceptable to the multitude. They were compounded of an idealism clear and cold as crystal, and of a reality cruel and voluptuous as love. They were penetrated with an acrid satire and an intense despair: the world caring only for a honied falsehood and a gilded gloss in every art, would have none of them.

"See you—what he lacks is only the sinew that gold gives. What he has done is great. The world rightly seeing must fear it; and fear is the highest homage the world ever gives. But he is penniless; and he has many foes; and jealousy can with so much ease thrust aside the greatness which it fears into obscurity, when that greatness is marred by the failures and the feebleness of poverty. Genius scorns the power of gold: it is wrong; gold is the war-scythe on its chariot, which mows down the millions of its foes and gives free passage to the sun-couriers with which it leaves those heavenly fields of light for the gross battle-fields of earth."

It is true that the great artist is as a fallen god who remembers a time when worlds arose at his breath, and at his bidding the barren lands blossomed into fruitfulness; the sorcery of the thyrsus is still his, though weakened.

The powers of lost dominions haunt his memory; the remembered glory of an eternal sun is in his eyes, and makes the light of common day seem darkness; the heart sickness of a long exile weighs on him; incessantly he labours to overtake the mirage of a loveliness which fades as he pursues it. In the poetic creation by which the bondage of his material life is redeemed, he finds at once ecstasy and disgust, because he feels at once his strength and weakness. For him all things of earth and air, and sea and cloud, have beauty; and to his ear all voices of the forest land and water world are audible.

He is as a god, since he can call into palpable shape dreams born of impalpable thought; as a god, since he has known the truth divested of lies, and has stood face to face with it, and been not afraid; a god thus. But a cripple inasmuch as his hand can never fashion the shapes that his vision beholds; an alien because he has lost what he never will find upon earth; a beast, since ever and again his passions will drag him to wallow in the filth of sensual indulgence; a slave, since oftentimes the divinity that is in him breaks and bends under the devilry that also is in him, and he obeys the instincts of vileness, and when he would fain bless the nations he curses them.

"I do not know," she said, wearily afresh. "Marcellin says that every God is deaf. He must be deaf—or very cruel. Look; everything lives in pain; and yet no God pities and makes an end of the earth. I would—if I were He. Look—at dawn, the other day, I was out in the wood. I came upon a little rabbit in a trap; a little, pretty, soft black-and-white thing, quite young. It was screaming in its horrible misery; it had been screaming all night. Its thighs were broken in the iron teeth; the trap held it tight; it could not escape, it could only scream—scream—scream. All in vain. When I had set it free it was mangled as if a wolf had gnawed it; the iron teeth had bitten through the fur, and the flesh, and the bone; it had lost so much blood, and it was in so much pain, that it could not live. I laid it down in the bracken, and put water to its mouth, and did what I could; but it was of no use. It had been too much hurt. It died as the sun rose; a little, harmless, shy, happy thing, you know, that never killed any creature, and only asked to nibble a leaf or two, or sleep in a little round hole, and run about merry and free. How can one care for a God since He lets these things be?"

Arslàn smiled as he heard.

"Child,—men care for a god only as a god means a good to them. Men are heirs of heaven, they say; and, in right of their heritage, they make life hell to every living thing that dares dispute the world with them. You do not understand that,—tut! You are not human then. If you were human, you would begrudge a blade of grass to a rabbit, and arrogate to yourself a lease of immortality."

"Of a winter night," she said, slowly, "I have heard old Pitchou read aloud to Flamma, and she reads of their God, the one they hang everywhere on the crosses here; and the story ran that the populace scourged and nailed to death the one whom they knew afterwards, when too late, to have been the great man that they looked for, and that, being bidden to make their choice of one to save, they chose to ransom and honour a thief: one called Barabbas. Is it true?—if the world's choice were wrong once, why not twice?"

Arslàn smiled; the smile she knew so well, and which had no more warmth than the ice floes of his native seas.

"Why not twice? Why not a thousand times? A thief has the world's sympathies always. It is always the Barabbas—the trickster in talent, the forger of stolen wisdom, the bravo of political crime, the huckster of plundered thoughts, the charlatan of false art, whom the vox populi elects and sets free, and sends on his way rejoicing. 'Will ye have Christ or Barabbas?' Every generation is asked the same question, and every generation gives the same answer; and scourges the divinity out of its midst, and finds its idol in brute force and low greed."

She only dimly comprehended, not well knowing why her words had thus roused him. She pondered awhile, then her face cleared.

"But the end?" she asked. "The dead God is the God of all these people round us now, and they have built great places in His honour, and they bow when they pass His likeness in the highway or the market-place. But with Barabbas—what was the end? It seems that they loathe and despise him?"

Arslàn laughed a little.

"His end? In Syria may be the vultures picked his bones, where they lay whitening on the plains—those times were primitive, the world was young. But in our day Barabbas lives and dies in honour, and has a tomb that stares all men in the face, setting forth his virtues, so that all who run may read. In our day Barabbas—the Barabbas of money-greeds and delicate cunning, and the theft which has risen to science, and the assassination that kills souls and not bodies, and the crime that deals moral death and not material death—our Barabbas, who is crowned Fraud in the place of mailed Force, lives always in purple and fine linen, and ends in the odours of sanctity with the prayers of priests over his corpse."

He spoke with a certain fierce passion that rose in him whenever he thought of that world which had rejected him, and had accepted so many others, weaker in brain and nerve, but stronger in one sense, because more dishonest; and as he spoke he went straight to a wall on his right, where a great sea of grey paper was stretched, untouched and ready to his hand.

She would have spoken, but he made a motion to silence.

"Hush! be quiet," he said to her, almost harshly, "I have thought of something."

And he took the charcoal and swept rapidly with it over the dull blank surface till the vacancy glowed with life. A thought had kindled in him; a vision had arisen before him.

The scene around him vanished utterly from his sight. The grey stone walls, the square windows through which the fading sun-rays fell; the level pastures and sullen streams, and paled skies without, all faded away as though they had existed only in a dream.

All the empty space about him became peopled with many human shapes that for him had breath and being, though no other eye could have beheld them. The old Syrian world of eighteen hundred years before arose and glowed before him. The things of his own life died away, and in their stead he saw the fierce flame of eastern suns, the gleaming range of marble palaces, the purple flush of pomegranate flowers, the deep colour of oriental robes, the soft silver of hills olive crested, the tumult of a city at high festival. And he could not rest until all he thus saw in his vision he had rendered as far as his hand could render it; and what he drew was this.

A great thirsty, heated, seething crowd; a crowd that had manhood and womanhood, age and infancy, youths and maidens within its ranks; a crowd in whose faces every animal lust and every human passion were let loose; a crowd on which a noon sun without shadow streamed; a sun which parched and festered and engendered all corruption in the land on which it looked. This crowd was in a city, a city on whose flat roofs the myrtle and the cistus bloomed; above whose walls the plumes of olives waved; upon whose distant slopes the darkling cedar groves rose straight against the sky, and on whose lofty temple plates of gold glistened against the shining heavens. This crowd had scourges, and stones, and goads in their hands; and in their midst they led one clothed in white, whose head was thorn-crowned, and whose eyes were filled with a god's pity and a man's reproach; and him they stoned, and lashed, and hooted.

And triumphant in the throng, whose choice he was, seated aloft upon men's shoulders, with a purple robe thrown on his shoulders, there sat a brawny, grinning, bloated, jibbering thing, with curled lips and savage eyes, and satyr's leer: the creature of greed, of lust, of obscenity, of brutality, of avarice, of desire. This thing the people followed, rejoicing exceedingly, content in the guide whom they had chosen, victorious in the fiend for whom they spurned a deity; crying, with wide open throats and brazen lungs,—"Barabbas!"

There was not a form in all this close-packed throng which had not a terrible irony in it, which was not in itself a symbol of some appetite or of some vice, for which women and men abjure the godhead in them.

A gorged drunkard lay asleep with his amphora broken beneath him, the stream of the purple wine lapped eagerly by ragged children. A money-changer had left the receipt of custom, eager to watch and shout, and a thief clutched both hands full of the forsaken coins and fled.

A miser had dropped a bag of gold, and stopped to catch at all the rolling pieces, regardless in his greed how the crowd trampled and trod on him. A mother chid and struck her little brown curly child, because he stretched his arms and turned his face towards the thorn-crowned captive.

A priest of the temple, with a blood-stained knife thrust in his girdle, dragged beside him, by the throat, a little tender lamb doomed for the sacrifice.

A dancing woman with jewels in her ears, and half naked to the waist, sounding the brazen cymbals above her head, drew a score of youths after her in Barabbas' train.

On one of the flat roof tops, reclining on purple and fine linen, looking down on the street below from the thick foliage of her citron boughs and her red Syrian roses, was an Egyptian wanton; and leaning beside her, tossing golden apples in her bosom, was a young centurion of the Roman guard, languid and laughing, with his fair chest bare to the heat, and his armour flung in a pile beside him.

And thus, in like manner, every figure bore its parable; and above all was the hard, hot, cruel, cloudless sky of blue, without one faintest mist to break its horrible serenity, whilst high in the azure ether and against the sun, an eagle and a vulture fought, locked close, and tearing at each other's breasts.

Six nights this conception occupied him. His days were not his own, he spent them in a rough mechanical labour which his strength executed while his mind was far away from it; but the nights were all his, and at the end of the sixth night the thing arose, perfect as far as his hand could perfect it; begotten by a chance and ignorant word as have been many of the greatest works the world has seen;—oaks sprung from the acorn that a careless child has let fall.

When he had finished it his arm dropped to his side, he stood motionless; the red glow of the dawn lighting the depths of his sleepless eyes.

It was a level green silent country which was round her, with little loveliness and little colour; but as she went she laughed incessantly in the delirious gladness of her liberty.

She tossed her head back to watch the flight of a single swallow; she caught a handful of green leaves and buried her face in them. She listened in a very agony of memory to the rippling moisture of a little brook. She followed with her eyes the sweeping vapours of the rain-clouds, and when a west wind rose and blew a cluster of loose apple blossoms between her eyes—she could no longer bear the passionate pain of all the long-lost sweetness, but flinging herself downward, sobbed with the ecstasy of an exile's memories.

The hell in which she had dwelt had denied them to her for so long.

"Ah God!" she thought, "I know now—one cannot be utterly wretched whilst one has still the air and the light and the winds of the sky."

And she arose, calmer, and went on her way; wondering, even in that hour, why men and women trod the daily measures of their lives with their eyes downward and their ears choked with the dust; hearkening so little to the sound of the breeze in the grasses, looking so little to the passage of the clouds against the sun.

The ground ascended as it stretched seaward, but on it there were only wide dull fields of colza or of grass lying, sickly and burning, under the fire of the late afternoon sun.

The slope was too gradual to break their monotony.

Above them was the cloudless weary blue; below them was the faint parched green; other colour there was none; one little dusky panting bird flew by pursued by a kite; that was the only change.

She asked him no questions; she walked mutely and patiently by his side; she hated the dull heat, the colourless waste, the hard scorch of the air, the dreary changelessness of the scene. But she did not say so. He had chosen to come to them.

A league onward the fields were merged into a heath, uncultivated and covered with short prickly furze; on the brown earth between the stunted bushes a few goats were cropping the burnt-up grasses. Here the slope grew sharper, and the earth seemed to rise up between the sky and them, steep and barren as a house-roof.

Once he asked her—

"Are you tired?"

She shook her head.

Her feet ached, and her heart throbbed; her limbs were heavy like lead in the heat and the toil. But she did not tell him so. She would have dropped dead from exhaustion rather than have confessed to him any weakness.

He took the denial as it was given, and pressed onward up the ascent.

The sun was slanting towards the west; the skies seemed like brass; the air was sharp, yet scorching; the dull brown earth still rose up before them like a wall; they climbed it slowly and painfully, their hands and their teeth filled with its dust, which drifted in a cloud before them. He bade her close her eyes, and she obeyed him. He stretched his arm out and drew her after him up the ascent, which was slippery from drought and prickly from the stunted growth of furze.

On the summit he stood still and released her.

"Now look."

She opened her eyes with the startled, half-questioning stare of one led out from utter darkness into a full and sudden light.

Then, with a great cry, she sank down on the rock, trembling, weeping, laughing, stretching out her arms to the new glory that met her sight, dumb with its grandeur, delirious with its delight.

For what she saw was the sea.

Before her dazzled sight all its beauty stretched, the blueness of the waters meeting the blueness of the skies; radiant with all the marvels of its countless hues; softly stirred by a low wind that sighed across it; bathed in a glow of gold that streamed on it from the westward; rolling from north to south in slow, sonorous measure, filling the silent air with the ceaseless melody of its wondrous voice.

The lustre of the sunset beamed upon it; the cool fresh smell of its waters shot like new life through all the scorch and stupor of the day; its white foam curled and broke on the brown curving rocks and wooded inlets of the shores; innumerable birds, that gleamed like silver, floated or flew above its surface; all was still, still as death, save only for the endless movement of those white swift wings and the murmur of the waves, in which all meaner and harsher sounds of earth seemed lost and hushed to slumber and to silence.

The sea alone reigned, as it reigned in the young years of the earth when men were not; as, may be, it will be its turn to reign again in the years to come, when men and all their works shall have passed away and be no more seen nor any more remembered.

Arslan watched her in silence.

He was glad that it should awe and move her thus. The sea was the only thing for which he cared, or which had any power over him. In the northern winters of his youth he had known the ocean, in one wild night's work, undo all that men had done to check and rule it, and burst through all the barriers that they had raised against it, and throw down the stones of the altar and quench the fires of the hearth, and sweep through the fold and the byre, and flood the cradle of the child and the grave of the grandsire.

He had seen its storms wash away at one blow the corn harvests of years, and gather in the sheep from the hills, and take the life of the shepherd with the life of the flock. He had seen it claim lovers locked in each other's arms, and toss the fair curls of the first-born as it tossed the riband weeds of its deeps. And he had felt small pity; it had rather given him a certain sense of rejoicing and triumph to see the water laugh to scorn those who were so wise in their own conceit, and bind beneath its chains those who held themselves masters over all beasts of the field and birds of the air.

Other men dreaded the sea and cursed it; but he in his way loved it almost with passion, and could he have chosen the manner of his death would have desired that it should be by the sea and through the sea; a death cold and serene and dreamily voluptuous: a death on which no woman should look and in which no man should have share.

He watched her now for some time without speaking. When the first paroxysm of her emotion had exhausted itself, she stood motionless, her figure like a statue of bronze against the sun, her head sunk upon her breast, her arms outstretched as though beseeching that wondrous brightness which she saw to take her to itself and make her one with it. Her whole attitude expressed an unutterable worship. She was like one who for the first time hears of God.

"What is it you feel?" he asked her suddenly. He knew without asking; but he had made it his custom to dissect all her joys and sufferings with little heed whether he thus added to either.

At the sound of his voice she started, and a shiver shook her as she answered him slowly, without withdrawing her gaze from the waters.

"It has been there always—always—so near me?"

"Before the land, the sea was."

"And I never knew!"—

Her head drooped on her breast; great tears rolled silently down her cheeks; her arms fell to her sides; she shivered again and sighed. She knew all that she had lost—this is the greatest grief that life holds.

"You never knew," he made answer. "There was only a sand-hill between you and all this glory; but the sand-hill was enough. Many people never climb theirs all their lives long."

The words and their meaning escaped her.

She had for once no remembrance of him, nor any other sense save of this surpassing wonder that had thus burst on her—this miracle that had been near her for so long, yet of which she had never in all her visions dreamed.

She was quite silent; sunk there on her knees, motionless, and gazing straight, with eyes unblenching, at the light.

There was no sound near them, nor was there anything in sight except where above against the deepest azure of the sky two curlews were circling around each other, and in the distance a single ship was gliding, with sails silvered by the sun. All signs of human life lay far behind; severed from them by those steep scorched slopes swept only by the plovers and the bees. And all the while she looked slow tears gathered in her eyes and fell, and the loud hard beating of her heart was audible in the hushed stillness of the upper air.

He waited awhile: then he spoke to her.

"Since it pains you, come away."

A great sob shuddered through her.

"Give me that pain," she muttered, "sooner than any joy. Pain? pain?—it is life, heaven—liberty!"

For suddenly those words which she had heard spoken around her, and which had been to her like the mutterings of the deaf and the dumb, became real to her with thousand meanings.

The seagulls were lost in the heights of the air; the ship sailed on into the light till the last gleam of its canvas vanished; the sun sank westward lower and lower till it glowed in a globe of flame upon the edge of the water: she never moved; standing there on the summit of the cliff, with her head drooped upon her breast, her form thrown out dark and motionless against the gold of the western sky, on her face still that look of one who worships with intense honour and passionate faith an unknown God.

The sun sank entirely, leaving only a trail of flame across the heavens; the waters grew grey and purple in the shadows; one boat, black against the crimson reflections of the west, swept on swiftly with the in-rushing tide; the wind rose and blew long curls of seaweed on the rocks; the shores of the bay were dimmed in a heavy mist, through which the lights of the little hamlets dimly glowed, and the distant voices of fishermen calling to each other as they drew in their deep-sea nets came faint and weirdlike.

What she wanted was to live. Live as the great moor bird did that she had seen float one day over these pale, pure, blue skies, with its mighty wings outstretched in the calm grey weather; which came none knew whence, and which went none knew whither; which poised silent and stirless against the clouds; then called with a sweet wild love-note to its mate, and waited for him as he sailed in from the misty shadows where the sea lay; and with him rose yet higher and higher in the air; and passed westward, cleaving the fields of light, and so vanished;—a queen of the wind, a daughter of the sun; a creature of freedom, of victory, of tireless movement, and of boundless space, a thing of heaven and of liberty.

In the springtime of the year three gods watched by the river.

The golden flowers of the willows blew in the low winds; the waters came and went; the moon rose full and cold over a silvery stream; the reeds sighed in the silence.

Two winters had drifted by and one hot drowsy summer since their creator had forsaken them, and all the white still shapes upon the walls already had been slain by the cold breath of Time. The green weeds waved in the empty casements; the chance-sown seeds of thistles and of bell-flowers were taking leaf between the square stones of the paven places; on the deserted threshold lichens and brambles climbed together; the filmy ooze of a rank vegetation stole over the loveliness of Persephone and devoured one by one the divine offspring of Zeus; about the feet of the bound sun king in Phere and over the calm serene mockery of Hermes' smile the grey nets of the spiders' webs had been woven to and fro, across and across, with the lacing of a million threads, as Fate weaves round the limbs and covers the eyes of mortals as they stumble blindly from their birthplace to their grave. All things, the damp and the dust, the frost and the scorch, the newts and the rats, the fret of the flooded waters, and the stealing sure inroad of the mosses that everywhere grew from the dews and the fogs, had taken and eaten, in hunger or sport, or had touched, and thieved from, then left, gangrened and ruined.

The three gods alone remained; who being the sons of eternal night, are unharmed, unaltered, by any passage of the years of earth. The only gods who never bend beneath the yoke of years; but unblenchingly behold the nations wither as uncounted leaves, and the lands and the seas change their places, and the cities and the empires pass away as a tale that is told; and the deities that are worshipped in the temples alter in name and attributes and cultus, at the wanton will of the age which begot them.

In the still, cold, moonlit air their shadows stood together. Hand in hand; looking outward through the white night-mists. Other gods perished with the faith of each age as it changed; other gods lived by the breath of men's lips, the tears of prayer, the smoke of sacrifice. But they,—their empire was the universe.

In every young soul that leaps into the light of life rejoicing blindly, Oneiros has dominion; and he alone. In every creature that breathes, from the conqueror resting on a field of blood to the nest bird cradled in its bed of leaves, Hypnos holds a sovereignty which nothing mortal can long resist and live. And Thanatos,—to him belongs every created thing, past, present, and to come; beneath his feet all generations lie; and in the hollow of his hand he holds the worlds; though the earth be tenantless, and the heavens sunless, and the planets shrivel in their courses, and the universe be shrouded in an endless night, yet through the eternal desolation Thanatos still will reign, and through the eternal darkness, through the immeasurable solitudes, he alone will wander, and he still behold his work.

Deathless as themselves their shadows stood; and the worm and the lizard and the newt left them alone and dared not wind about their calm clear brows, and dared not steal to touch the roses at their lips, knowing that ere the birth of the worlds these were, and when the worlds shall have perished these still will reign on:—the slow, sure, soundless, changeless ministers of an eternal rest, of an eternal oblivion.

A late light strayed in from the grey skies, pale as the primrose flowers that grew amongst the reeds upon the shore; and found its way to them, trembling; and shone in the far-seeing depths of their unfathomable eyes.

The eyes which spake and said:

"Sleep, dreams, and death:—we are the only gods that answer prayer."

Night had come; a dark night of earliest spring. The wild day had sobbed itself to sleep after a restless life with fitful breath of storm and many sighs of shuddering breezes.

The sun had sunk, leaving long tracks of blood-red light across one-half the heavens.

There was a sharp crisp coldness as of lingering frost in the gloom and the dulness. Heavy clouds, as yet unbroken, hung over the cathedral and the clustering roofs around it in dark and starless splendour.

Over the great still plains which stretched eastward and southward, black with the furrows of the scarce-budded corn, the wind blew hard; blowing the river and the many streamlets spreading from it into foam; driving the wintry leaves which still strewed the earth thickly, hither and thither in legions; breaking boughs that had weathered the winter hurricanes, and scattering the tender blossoms of the snowdrops and the earliest crocuses in all the little moss-grown garden ways.

The smell of wet grass, of the wood-born violets, of trees whose new life was waking in their veins, of damp earths turned freshly upwards by the plough, were all blown together by the riotous breezes.

Now and then a light gleamed through the gloom where a little peasant boy lighted home with a torch some old priest on his mule, or a boat went down the waters with a lamp hung at its prow. For it grew dark early, and people used to the river read a threat of a flood on its face.

A dim glow from the west, which was still tinged with the fire of the sunset, fell through a great square window set in a stone building, and striking across the sicklier rays of an oil lamp reached the opposing wall within.

It was a wall of grey stone, dead and lustreless like the wall of a prison-house, over whose surface a spider as colourless as itself dragged slowly its crooked hairy limbs loaded with the moisture of the place, which was an old tower, of which the country folk told strange tales, where it stood among the rushes on the left bank of the stream.

A man watched the spider as it went.

It crept on its heavy way across the faint crimson reflection from the glow of the sunken sun.

It was fat, well-nourished, lazy, content; its home of dusky silver hung on high, where its pleasure lay in weaving, clinging, hoarding, breeding. It lived in the dark; it had neither pity nor regret; it troubled itself neither for the death it dealt to nourish itself, nor for the light without, into which it never wandered; it spun and throve and multiplied.

It was an emblem of the man who is wise in his generation; of the man whom Cato the elder deemed divine; of the Majority and the Mediocrity who rule over the earth and enjoy its fruits.

This man knew that it was wise; that those who were like to it were wise also: wise with the holy wisdom which is honoured of other men.

He had been unwise—always; and therefore he stood watching the sun die, with hunger in his soul, with famine in his body.

For many months he had been half famished, as were the wolves in his own northern mountains in the winter solstice. For seven days he had only been able to crush a crust of hard black bread between his teeth. For twenty hours he had not done even so much as this. The trencher on his tressel was empty; and he had not wherewithal to re-fill it.

He might have found some to fill it for him no doubt. He lived amidst the poor, and the poor to the poor are good, though they are bad and bitter to the rich. But he did not open either his lips or his hand. He consumed his heart in silence; and his vitals preyed in anguish on themselves without his yielding to their torments.

He was a madman; and Cato, who measured the godliness of man by what they gained, would have held him accursed;—the madness that starves and is silent for an idea is an insanity, scouted by the world and the gods. For it is an insanity unfruitful; except to the future. And for the future who cares,—save these madmen themselves?

He watched the spider as it went.

It could not speak to him as its fellow once spoke in the old Scottish story. To hear as that captive heard, the hearer must have hope, and a kingdom,—if only in dreams.

This man had no hope; he had a kingdom indeed, but it was not of earth; and, in an hour of sheer cruel bodily pain, earth alone has dominion and power and worth.

The spider crawled across the grey wall; across the glow from the vanished sun; across a coil of a dead passion-vine, that strayed loose through the floor; across the classic shapes of a great cartoon drawn in chalks upon the dull rugged surface of stone.

Nothing arrested it; nothing retarded it, as nothing hastened it. It moved slowly on; fat, lustreless, indolent, hueless; reached at length its den, and there squatted aloft, loving the darkness; its young swarming around, its prey held in its forceps, its nets cast about.

Through the open casement there came on the rising wind of the storm, in the light of the last lingering sunbeam, a beautiful night-moth, begotten by some cruel hot-house heat in the bosom of some frail exiled tropical flower.

It swam in on trembling pinions, and alighted on the golden head of a gathered crocus that lay dying on the stones—a moth that should have been born to no world save that of the summer world of a Midsummer Night's Dream.

A shape of Ariel and Oberon; slender, silver, purple, roseate, lustrous-eyed, and gossamer-winged.

A creature of woodland waters, and blossoming forests; of the yellow chalices of kingcups and the white breasts of river lilies, of moonbeams that strayed through a summer world of shadows, and dew-drops that glistened in the deep folded hearts of roses. A creature to brush the dreaming eyes of a poet, to nestle on the bosom of a young girl sleeping: to float earthwards on a falling star, to slumber on a lotus leaf.

A creature that amidst the still soft hush of woods and waters still tells, to those who listen, of the world when the world was young.

The moth flew on, and poised on the fading crocus leaves, which spread out their pale gold on the level of the grey floor.

It was weary, and its delicate wings drooped; it was storm-tossed, wind-beaten, drenched with mist and frozen with the cold; it belonged to the moon, to the dew, to the lilies, to the forget-me-nots, and to the night; and it found that the hard grip of winter had seized it whilst yet it had thought that the stars and the summer were with it. It lived before its time,—and it was like the human soul, which being born in the darkness of the world dares to dream of light, and, wandering in vain search of a sun that will never rise, falls and perishes in wretchedness.

It was beautiful exceedingly, with the brilliant tropical beauty of a life that is short-lived. It rested a moment on the stem of the pale flower, then with its radiant eyes fastened on the point of light which the lamp thrust upward, it flew on high; and, spreading out its transparent wings and floating to the flame, kissed it, quivered once, and died.

There fell among the dust and cinder of the lamp a little heap of shrunken, fire-scorched, blackened ashes.

The wind whirled them upward from their rest, and drove them forth into the night to mingle with the storm-scourged grasses, the pale dead violets, the withered snow-flowers, with all things frost-touched and forgotten.

The spider sat aloft, sucking the juices from the fettered flies, teaching its spawn to prey and feed; content in squalor and in plenitude; in sensual sloth, and in the increase of its body and its hoard.

He watched them both: the success of the spider, the death of the moth; trite as a fable; ever repeated as the tides of the sea; the two symbols of humanity; of the life which fattens on greed and gain, and the life which perishes of divine desire.

There were no rare birds, no birds of moor and mountain, in that cultivated and populous district; but to her all the little home-bred things of pasture and orchard were full of poetry and of character.

The robins, with that pretty air of boldness with which they veil their real shyness and timidity; the strong and saucy sparrows, powerful by the strength of all mediocrities and majorities; all the dainty families of finches in their gay apparellings; the plain brown bird that filled the night with music; the gorgeous oriole ruffling in gold, the gilded princeling of them all; the little blue warblers, the violets of the air; the kingfishers who had hovered so long over the forget-me-nots upon the rivers that they had caught the colours of the flowers on their wings; the bright blackcaps green as the leaves, with their yellow waistcoats and velvet hoods, the innocent freebooters of the woodland liberties: all these were her friends and lovers, various as any human crowds of court or city.

She loved them; they and the fourfooted beasts were the sole things that did not flee from her; and the woeful and mad slaughter of them by the peasants was to her a grief passionate in its despair. She did not reason on what she felt; but to her a bird slain was a trust betrayed, an innocence defiled, a creature of heaven struck to earth.

Suddenly on the silence of the garden there was a little shrill sound of pain; the birds flew high in air, screaming and startled; the leaves of a bough of ivy shook as with a struggle.

She rose and looked; a line of twine was trembling against the foliage; in its noosed end the throat of the mavis had been caught; it hung trembling and clutching at the air convulsively with its little drawn-up feet. It had flown into the trap as it had ended its joyous song and soared up to join its brethren.

There were a score of such traps set in the miller's garden.

She unloosed the cord from about its tiny neck, set it free, and laid it down upon the ivy. The succour came too late; the little gentle body was already without breath; the feet had ceased to beat the air; the small soft head had drooped feebly on one side; the lifeless eyes had started from their sockets; the throat was without song for evermore.

"The earth would be good but for men," she thought, as she stood with the little dead bird in her hand.

Its mate, which was poised on a rose bough, flew straight to it, and curled round and round about the small slain body, and piteously bewailed its fate, and mourned, refusing to be comforted, agitating the air with trembling wings, and giving out vain cries of grief.

Vain; for the little joyous life was gone; the life that asked only of God and Man a home in the green leaves; a drop of dew from the cup of a rose; a bough to swing on in the sunlight; a summer day to celebrate in song.

All the winter through, it had borne cold and hunger and pain without lament; it had saved the soil from destroying larvæ, and purified the trees from all foul germs; it had built its little home unaided, and had fed its nestlings without alms; it had given its sweet song lavishly to the winds, to the blossoms, to the empty air, to the deaf ears of men; and now it lay dead in its innocence; trapped and slain because a human greed begrudged it a berry worth the thousandth part of a copper coin.

Out from the porch of the mill-house Claudis Flamma came, with a knife in his hand and a basket, to cut lilies for one of the choristers of the cathedral, since the morrow would be the religious feast of the Visitation of Mary.

He saw the dead thrush in her hand, and chuckled to himself as he went by.

"The tenth bird trapped since sunrise," he said, thinking how shrewd and how sure in their make were these traps of twine that he set in the grass and the leaves.

She said nothing; but the darkness of disgust swept over her face, as he came in sight in the distance.

She knelt down and scraped a hole in the earth; and laid moss in it, and put the mavis softly on its green and fragrant bier, and covered it with handfuls of fallen rose leaves, and with a sprig or two of thyme.

Around her head the widowed thrush flew ceaselessly, uttering sad cries;—who now should wander with him through the sunlight?—who now should rove with him above the blossoming fields?—who now should sit with him beneath the boughs hearing the sweet rain fall between the leaves?—who now should wake with him whilst yet the world was dark, to feel the dawn break ere the east were red, and sing a welcome to the unborn day?

And, indeed, to those who are alive to the nameless, universal, eternal soul which breathes in all the grasses of the fields, and beams in the eyes of all creatures of earth and air, and throbs in the living light of palpitating stars, and thrills through the young sap of forest trees, and stirs in the strange loves of wind-borne plants, and hums in every song of the bee, and burns in every quiver of the flame, and peoples with sentient myriads every drop of dew that gathers on a harebell, every bead of water that ripples in a brook—to these the mortal life of man can seem but little, save at once the fiercest and the feeblest thing that does exist; at once the most cruel and the most impotent; tyrant of direst destruction and bondsman of lowest captivity.

Hence, pity entered very little into his thoughts at any time; the perpetual torture of life did indeed perplex him, as it perplexes every thinking creature, with wonder at the universal bitterness that taints all creation, at the universal death whereby all forms of life are nurtured, at the universal anguish of all existence which daily and nightly assails the unknown God in piteous protest at the inexorable laws of inexplicable miseries and mysteries. But because such suffering was thus universal, therefore he almost ceased to feel pity for it; of the two he pitied the beasts far more than the human kind:—the horse staggering beneath the lash in all the feebleness of hunger, lameness, and old age; the ox bleeding from the goad on the hard furrows, or stumbling through the hooting crowd, blind, footsore, and shivering, to its last home in the slaughter-house; the dog, yielding up its noble life inch by inch under the tortures of the knife, loyally licking the hand of the vivisector while he drove his probe through its quivering nerves; the unutterable hell in which all these gentle, kindly, and long-suffering creatures dwelt for the pleasure or the vanity, the avarice or the brutality of men,—these he pitied perpetually, with a tenderness for them that was the softest thing in all his nature.

"There lived once in the East, a great king; he dwelt far away, amongst the fragrant fields of roses, and in the light of suns that never set.

"He was young, he was beloved, he was fair of face and form; and the people, as they hewed stone, or brought water, said amongst themselves, 'Verily, this man is as a god; he goes where he lists, and he lies still or rises up as he pleases; and all fruits of all lands are culled for him; and his nights are nights of gladness, and his days, when they dawn, are all his to sleep through or spend as he wills.' But the people were wrong. For this king was weary of his life.

"His buckler was sown with gems, but his heart beneath it was sore. For he had been long bitterly harassed by foes who descended on him as wolves from the hills in their hunger, and he had been long plagued with heavy wars and with bad rice harvests, and with many troubles to his nation that kept it very poor, and forbade him to finish the building of new marble palaces, and the making of fresh gardens of delight, on which his heart was set. So he, being weary of a barren land and of an empty treasury, with all his might prayed to the gods that all he touched might turn to gold, even as he had heard had happened to some magician long before in other ages. And the gods gave him the thing he craved; and his treasury overflowed. No king had ever been so rich, as this king now became in the short space of a single summer-day.

"But it was bought with a price.

"When he stretched out his hand to gather the rose that blossomed in his path, a golden flower scentless and stiff was all he grasped. When he called to him the carrier-dove that sped with a scroll of love words across the mountains, the bird sank on his breast a carven piece of metal. When he was

athirst and shouted to his cupbearer for drink, the red wine ran a stream of molten gold. When he would fain have eaten, the pulse and the pomegranate grew alike to gold between his teeth. And lo! at eventide, when he sought the silent chambers of his harem, saying, 'Here at least shall I find rest,' and bent his steps to the couch whereon his best-beloved slave was sleeping, a statue of gold was all he drew into his eager arms, and cold shut lips of sculptured gold were all that met his own.

"That night the great king slew himself, unable any more to bear this agony; since all around him was desolation, even though all around him was wealth.

"Now the world is too like that king, and in its greed of gold it will barter its life away.

"Look you,—this thing is certain—I say that the world will perish, even as that king perished, slain as he was slain, by the curse of its own fulfilled desire.

"The future of the world is written. For God has granted their prayer to men. He has made them rich, and their riches shall kill them.

"When all green places have been destroyed in the builder's lust of gain:—when all the lands are but mountains of brick, and piles of wood and iron:—when there is no moisture anywhere; and no rain ever falls:—when the sky is a vault of smoke; and all the rivers reek with poison:—when forest and stream, and moor and meadow, and all the old green wayside beauty are things vanished and forgotten:—when every gentle timid thing of brake and bush, of air and water, has been killed because it robbed them of a berry or a fruit:—when the earth is one vast city, whose young children behold neither the green of the field nor the blue of the sky, and hear no song but the hiss of the steam, and know no music but the roar of the furnace:—when the old sweet silence of the country-side, and the old sweet sounds of waking birds, and the old sweet fall of summer showers, and the grace of a hedgerow bough, and the glow of the purple heather, and the note of the cuckoo and cushat, and the freedom of waste and of woodland, are all things dead, and remembered of no man:—then the world, like the Eastern king, will perish miserably of famine and of drought, with gold in its stiffened hands, and gold in its withered lips, and gold everywhere:—gold that the people can neither eat nor drink, gold that cares nothing for them, but mocks them horribly:—gold for which their fathers sold peace and health, and holiness and liberty:—gold that is one vast grave."

The earth is crowded full with clay gods and false prophets, and fresh legions for ever arriving to carry on the old strife for supremacy; and if a man pass unknown all the time that his voice is audible, and his hand visible, through the sound and smoke of the battle, he will dream in vain of any remembrance when the gates of the grave shall have closed on him and shut him for ever from sight.

When the world was in its youth, it had leisure to treasure its recollections; even to pause and look back, and to see what flower of a fair thought, what fruit of a noble art it might have overlooked or left down-trodden.

But now it is so old, and is so tired; it is purblind and heavy of foot; it does not notice what it destroys; it desires rest, and can find none; nothing can matter greatly to it; its dead are so many that it cannot count them; and being thus worn and dulled with age, and suffocated under the weight of its innumerable memories, it is very slow to be moved, and swift—terribly swift—to forget.

Why should it not be?

It has known the best, it has known the worst, that ever can befall it.

And the prayer that to the heart of a man seems so freshly born from his own desire, what is it on the weary ear of the world, save the same old old cry which it has heard through all the ages, empty as the sound of the wind, and for ever—for ever—unanswered?

There is no more terrible woe upon earth than the woe of the stricken brain, which remembers the days of its strength, the living light of its reason, the sunrise of its proud intelligence, and knows that these have passed away like a tale that is told; like a year that is spent; like an arrow that is shot to the stars, and flies aloft, and falls in a swamp; like a fruit that is too well loved of the sun, and so, over-soon ripe, is dropped from the tree and forgot on the grasses, dead to all joys of the dawn and

the noon and the summer, but still alive to the sting of the wasp, to the fret of the aphis, to the burn of the drought, to the theft of the parasite.

She only dimly understood, and yet she was smitten with awe and reverence at that endless grief which had no taint of cowardice upon it, but was pure as the patriot's despair, impersonal as the prophet's agony.

For the first time the intellect in her consciously awoke. For the first time she heard a human mind find voice even in its stupor and its wretchedness to cry aloud, in reproach to its unknown Creator:

"I am *yours*! Shall I perish with the body? Why have you ever bade me desire the light and seek it, if for ever you must thrust me into the darkness of negation? Shall I be Nothing?—like the muscle that rots, like the bones that crumble, like the flesh that turns to ashes, and blows in a film on the winds? Shall I die so? I?—the mind of a man, the breath of a god?"

He could not bear to die without leaving behind his life some work the world would cherish.

Call it folly, call it madness, it is both: the ivory Zeus that was to give its sculptor immortality, lives but in tradition; the bronze Athene, that was to guard the Piræus in eternal liberty, has long been levelled with the dust; yet with every age the artist still gives life for fame, still cries, "Let my body perish, but make my soul immortal!"

The spider had drawn his dusty trail across them; the rat had squatted at their feet; the darkness of night had enshrouded and defaced them; yet with the morning they arose, stainless, noble, undefiled.

Amongst them there was one colossal form, on which the sun poured with its full radiance.

This was the form of a captive grinding at a millstone; the majestic, symmetrical, supple form of a man who was also a god.

In his naked limbs there was a supreme power; in his glance there was a divine command; his head was lifted as though no yoke could ever lie on that proud neck; his foot seemed to spurn the earth as though no mortal tie had ever bound him to the sod that human steps bestrode: yet at the corn-mill he laboured, grinding wheat like the patient blinded oxen that toiled beside him.

For it was the great Apollo in Pheræ.

The hand which awoke the music of the spheres had been blood-stained with murder; the beauty which had the light and lustre of the sun had been darkened with passion and with crime; the will which no other on earth or in heaven could withstand had been bent under the chastisement of Zeus.

He whose glance had made the black and barren slopes of Delos to laugh with fruitfulness and gladness—he whose prophetic sight beheld all things past, present, and to come, the fate of all unborn races, the doom of all unspent ages—he, the Far-Striking King, laboured here beneath the curse of crime, greatest of all the gods, and yet a slave.

In all the hills and vales of Greece his Io pæan sounded still.

Upon his holy mountains there still arose the smoke of fires of sacrifice.

With dance and song the Delian maidens still hailed the divinity of Lêtô's son.

The waves of the pure Ionian air still rang for ever with the name of Delphinios.

At Pytho and at Clarus, in Lycia and in Phokis, his oracles still breathed forth upon their fiat terror or hope into the lives of men; and still in all the virgin forests of the world the wild beasts honoured him wheresoever they wandered, and the lion and the boar came at his bidding from the deserts to bend their free necks and their wills of fire meekly to bear his yoke in Thessaly.

Yet he laboured here at the corn-mill of Admetus; and watching him at his bondage there stood the slender, slight, wing-footed Hermes, with a slow, mocking smile upon his knavish lips, and a jeering scorn in his keen eyes, even as though he cried:

"O brother, who would be greater than I! For what hast thou bartered to me the golden rod of thy wealth and thy dominion over the flocks and the herds? For seven chords strung on a shell—for a melody not even thine own! For a lyre outshone by my syrinx hast thou sold all thine empire

to me. Will human ears give heed to thy song now thy sceptre has passed to my hands? Immortal music only is left thee, and the vision foreseeing the future. O god! O hero! O fool! what shall these profit thee now?"

Thus to the artist by whom they had been begotten the dim white shapes of the deities spoke. Thus he saw them, thus he heard, whilst the pale and watery sunlight lit up the form of the toiler in Pheræ.

For even as it was with the divinity of Delos, so is it likewise with the genius of a man, which, being born of a god, yet is bound as a slave to the grindstone. Since even as Hermes mocked the Lord of the Unerring Bow, so is genius mocked of the world, when it has bartered the herds, and the grain, and the rod that metes wealth, for the seven chords that no ear, dully mortal, can hear.

And as he looked upon this symbol of his life, the captivity and the calamity, the strength and the slavery of his existence overcame him; and for the first hour since he had been born of a woman Arslàn buried his face in his hands and wept.

He could bend great thoughts to take the shapes that he chose, as the chained god in Pheræ bound the strong kings of the desert and forest to carry his yoke; yet, like the god, he likewise stood fettered to the mill to grind for bread.

One evening, a little later, he met her in the fields on the same spot where Marcellin first had seen her as a child amongst the scarlet blaze of the poppies.

The lands were all yellow with saffron and emerald with the young corn; she balanced on her head a great brass jar; the red girdle glowed about her waist as she moved: the wind stirred the folds of her garments; her feet were buried in the shining grass; clouds tawny and purple were behind her; she looked like some Moorish phantom seen in a dream under a sky of Spain.

He paused and gazed at her with eyes half content, half cold.

She was of a beauty so uncommon, so strange, and all that was his for his art:—a great artist, whether in words, in melody, or in colour, is always cruel, or at the least seems so, for all things that live under the sun are to him created only to minister to his one inexorable passion.

Art is so vast, and human life is so little. It is to him only supremely just that the insect of an hour should be sacrificed to the infinite and eternal truth which must endure until the heavens themselves shall wither as a scroll that is held in a flame. It might have seemed to Arslàn base to turn her ignorance, and submission to his will, for the gratification of his amorous passions; but to make these serve the art to which he had himself abandoned every earthly good was in his sight justified, as the death agonies of the youth whom they decked with roses and slew in sacrifice to the sun, were in the sight of the Mexican nation.

The youth whom the Mexicans slew, on the high hill of the city, with his face to the west, was always the choicest and the noblest of all the opening flower of their manhood: for it was his fate to be called to enter into the realms of eternal light, and to dwell face to face with the unbearable brightness without whose rays the universe would have perished frozen in perpetual night. So the artist, who is true to his art, regards every human sacrifice that he renders up to it; how can he feel pity for a thing which perishes to feed a flame that he deems the life of the world?

The steel that he draws out from the severed heart of his victim he is ready to plunge into his own vitals: no other religion can vaunt as much of its priests.

"What are you thinking of to-night?" he asked her where she came through the fields by the course of a little flower-sown brook, fringed with tall bulrushes and waving willow-stems.

She lifted her eyelids with a dreamy and wistful regard.

"I was thinking—I wonder what the reed felt that you told me of—the one reed that a god chose from all its millions by the waterside and cut down to make into a flute."

"Ah?—you see there are no reeds that make music now-a-days; the reeds are only good to be woven into kreels for the fruits and the fish of the market."

"That is not the fault of the reeds?"

"Not that I know; it is the fault of men, most likely, who find the chink of coin in barter sweeter music than the song of the syrinx. But what do you think the reed felt then?—pain to be so sharply severed from its fellows?"

"No—or the god would not have chosen it."

"What then?"

A troubled sigh parted her lips; these old fables were fairest truths to her, and gave a grace to every humblest thing that the sun shone on, or the waters begat from their foam, or the winds blew with their breath into the little life of a day.

"I was trying to think. But I cannot be sure. These reeds have forgotten. They have lost their soul. They want nothing but to feed among the sand and the mud, and grow in millions together, and shelter the toads and the newts,—there is not a note of music in them all—except when the wind rises and makes them sigh, and then they remember that long, long-ago the breath of a great god was in them."

Arslàn looked at her where she stood; her eyes resting on the reeds, and the brook at her feet; the crimson heat of the evening all about her, on the brazen amphora, on the red girdle on her loins, on the thoughtful parted lips, on the proud bent brows above which a golden butterfly floated as above the brows of Psyche.

He smiled; the smile that was so cold to her.

"Look: away over the fields, there comes a peasant with a sickle; he comes to mow down the reeds to make a bed for his cattle. If he heard you, he would think you mad."

"They have thought me many things worse. What matter?"

"Nothing at all;—that I know. But you seem to envy that reed—so long ago—that was chosen?"

"Who would not?"

"Are you so sure? The life of the reed was always pleasant;—dancing there in the light, playing with the shadows, blowing in the winds; with the cool waters all about it all day long, and the yellow daffodils and the blue bell-flowers for its brethren."

"Nay;—how do you know?"

Her voice was low, and thrilled with a curious eager pain.

"How do you know?" she murmured. "Rather,—it was born in the sands, amongst the stones, of the chance winds, of the stray germs,—no one asking, no one heeding, brought by a sunbeam, spat out by a toad—no one caring where it dropped. Rather,—it grew there by the river, and such millions of reeds grew with it, that neither waters nor winds could care for a thing so common and worthless, but the very snakes twisting in and out despised it, and thrust the arrows of their tongues through it in scorn. And then—I think I see!—the great god walked by the edge of the river, and he mused on a gift to give man, on a joy that should be a joy on the earth for ever; and he passed by the lily white as snow, by the thyme that fed the bees, by the gold heart in the arum flower, by the orange flame of the tall sandrush, by all the great water-blossoms which the sun kissed, and the swallows loved, and he came to the one little reed pierced with the snakes' tongues, and all alone amidst millions. Then he took it up, and cut it to the root, and killed it;—killed it as a reed,—but breathed into it a song audible and beautiful to all the ears of men. Was that death to the reed?—or life? Would a thousand summers of life by the waterside have been worth that one thrill of song when a god first spoke through it?"

Her face lightened with a radiance to which the passion of her words was pale and poor; the vibrations of her voice grew sonorous and changing as the sounds of music itself; her eyes beamed through unshed tears as planets through the rain.

Of all the forms with which he had peopled its loneliness, these had the most profound influence on her in their fair, passionless, majestic beauty, in which it seemed to her that the man who had forgotten them had repeated his own likeness. For they were all alike, yet unlike; of the same form and feature, yet different even in their strong resemblance, like elder and younger brethren who hold a close companionship. For Hypnos was still but a boy with his blue-veined eyelids closed, and his

mouth rosy and parted like that of a slumbering child, and above his golden head a star rose in the purple night. Oneiros standing next was a youth whose eyes smiled as though they beheld visions that were welcome to him; in his hand, amongst the white roses, he held a black wand of sorcery, and around his bended head there hovered a dim silvery nimbus. Thanatos alone was a man fully grown; and on his calm and colourless face there were blended an unutterable sadness, and an unspeakable peace; his eyes were fathomless, far-reaching, heavy laden with thought, as though they had seen at once the heights of heaven and the depths of hell; and he, having thus seen, and knowing all things, had learned that there was but one good possible in all the universe,—that one gift which his touch gave, and which men in their blindness shuddered from and cursed. And above him and around him there was a great darkness.

So the gods stood, and so they spoke, even to her; they seemed to her as brethren, masters, friends—these three immortals who looked down on her in their mute majesty.

They are the gods of the poor, of the wretched, of the outcast, of the proscribed,—they are the gods who respect not persons nor palaces,—who stay with the exile and flee from the king,—who leave the tyrant of a world to writhe in torment, and call a smile beautiful as the morning on the face of a beggar child,—who turn from the purple beds where wealth and lust and brutal power lie, and fill with purest visions the darkest hours of the loneliest nights, for genius and youth,—they are the gods of consolation and of compensation,—the gods of the exile, of the orphan, of the outcast, of the poet, of the prophet, of all whose bodies ache with the infinite pangs of famine, and whose hearts ache with the infinite woes of the world, of all who hunger with the body or the soul.

It became mid-April. It was market-day for all the country lying round that wondrous cathedral-spire, which shot into the air far-reaching and ethereal, like some fountain whose column of water had been arrested aloft and changed to ice.

The old quiet town was busy, with a rich sunshine shed upon it, in which the first yellow butterflies of the year had begun to dance.

It was high noon, and the highest tide of the market.

Flower-girls, fruit-girls, egg-sellers, poultry-hucksters, crowds of women, old and young, had jolted in on their docile asses, throned on their sheepskin saddles; and now, chattering and chaffing, drove fast their trade. On the steps of the cathedral boys with birds'-nests, knife-grinders making their little wheels fly, cobblers hammering, with boards across their knees, travelling pedlars with knapsacks full of toys and mirrors, and holy images, and strings of beads, sat side by side in amicable competition.

Here and there a priest passed, with his black robe and broad hat, like a dusky mushroom amongst a bed of many-hued gillyflowers. Here and there a soldier, all colour and glitter, showed like a gaudy red tulip in bloom amidst tufts of thyme.

The old wrinkled leathern awnings of the market-stalls glowed like copper in the brightness of noon. The red tiles of the houses edging the great square were gilded with yellow houseleeks. The little children ran hither and thither with big bunches of primroses or sheaves of blue wood-hyacinths, singing. The red and blue serges of the young girls' bodices were like the gay hues of the anemones in their baskets. The brown faces of the old dames under the white roofing of their headgear were like the russet faces of the home-kept apples which they had garnered through all the winter.

Everywhere in the shade of the flapping leather, and the darkness of the wooden porches, there were the tender blossoms of the field and forest, of the hedge and garden. The azure of the hyacinths, the pale saffron of the primroses, the cool hues of the meadow daffodils, the ruby eyes of the cultured jonquils, gleamed amongst wet rushes, grey herbs, and freshly budded leafage. Plovers' eggs nestled in moss-lined baskets; sheaves of velvet-coated wallflowers poured fragrance on the air; great plumes of lilac nodded on the wind, and amber feathers of laburnum waved above the homelier masses of mint and marjoram, and sage and chervil.

IDALIA

Whatever fate rose for them with the dawn, this night at least was theirs: there is no love like that which lives victorious even beneath the shadow of death: there is no joy like that which finds its paradise even amid the cruelty of pain, the fierce long struggle of despair.

Never is the voluptuous glory of the sun so deep, so rich, as when its last excess of light burns above the purple edge of the tempest-cloud that soars upward to cover and devour it.

"And we reign still!"

She turned, as she spoke, towards the western waters, where the sea-line of the Ægean lay, while in her eyes came the look of a royal pride and of a deathless love.

"Greece cannot die. No matter what the land be now, Greece—*our* Greece—must live for ever. Her language lives; the children of Europe learn it, even if they halt it in imperfect numbers. The greater the scholar, the humbler he still bends to learn the words of wisdom from her school. The poet comes to her for all his fairest myths, his noblest mysteries, his greatest masters. The sculptor looks at the broken fragments of her statues, and throws aside his calliope in despair before those matchless wrecks. From her soldiers learn how to die, and nations how to conquer and to keep their liberties. No deed of heroism is done but, to crown it, it is named parallel to hers. They write of love, and who forgets the Lesbian? They dream of freedom, and to reach it they remember Salamis. They talk of progress, and while they talk they sigh for all that they have lost in Academus. They seek truth, and while they seek, wearily long, as little children, to hear the golden speech of Socrates, that slave, and fisherman, and sailor, and stonemason, and date-seller were all once free to hear in her Agora. But for the light that shone from Greece in the breaking of the Renaissance, Europe would have perished in its Gothic darkness. They call her dead: she can never die while her life, her soul, her genius breathe fire into the new nations, and give their youth all of greatness and of grace that they can claim. Greece dead! She reigns in every poem written, in every art pursued, in every beauty treasured, in every liberty won, in every god-like life and godlike death, in your fresh lands, which, but for her, would be barbarian now."

Where she stood, with her eyes turned westward to the far-off snows of Cithæron and Mount Ida, and the shores which the bronze spear of Pallas Athene once guarded through the night and day, the dark light in her eyes deepened, and the flush of a superb pride was on her brow—it seemed Aspasia who lived again, and who remembered Pericles.

The chant of the Imaum rang up from the shore, deep and sonorous, calling on the Faithful to prayer, an hour before midnight. She listened dreamily to the echoes that seemed to linger among the dark foliage.

"I like those national calls to prayer," she said, as she leaned over the parapet, while the fire-flies glittered among the mass of leaves as the diamond sprays glistened in her hair. "The Ave Maria, the Vespers, the Imaum's chant, the salutation of the dawn or of the night, the hymn before sleep, or before the sun;—you have none of those in your chill islands? You have only weary rituals, and stuccoed churches, where the 'Pharisees for a pretence make long prayers!' As if *that* was not the best—the only—temple!"

She glanced upward at the star-studded sky, and on her face was that graver and gentler look which had come there when she sang.

"I have held it so many a time," he answered her, lying awake at night among the long grass of the Andes, or under the palms of the desert. It was a strange delusion to build shrines to the honour of God while there are still his own—the forests and the mountains.

"It was a fair heritage to lose through a feeble vanity—that beautiful Constantinople!" she said musingly. "The East and the West—what an empire! More than Alexander ever grasped at—what might not have been done with it? Asian faith and Oriental sublimity, with Roman power and Gothic

force; if there had been a hand strong enough to weld all these together, what a world there might have been!"

"But to have done that would have been to attain the Impossible," he answered her. "Oil and flame, old and new, living and dying, tradition and scepticism, iconoclast and idolater, you cannot unite and harmonise these antagonisms?"

She gave a sign of dissent.

"The prophet or the hero unites all antagonisms, because he binds them all to his own genius. The Byzantine empire had none such; the nearest was Julian, but he believed less in himself than in the gods; the nearest after him was Belisarius—the fool of a courtesan, and he was but a good soldier; he was no teacher, no liberator, no leader for the nations. John Vatices came too late. A man must be his own convert before he can convert others. Zoroaster, Christ, Mahommed, Cromwell, Napoleon, believed intensely in their own missions; hence their influence on the peoples. How can we tell what Byzantium might have become under one mighty hand? It was torn in pieces among courtesans, and parasites, and Christian fanatics, and Houmousians and Houmoiousians! I have the blood of the Commeni in me. I think of it with shame when I remember what they might have been."

"You come from the Roman Emperors?"

"The Roman Emperors?" she repeated. "When the name was a travesty, an ignominy, a reproach! When Barbarians thronged the Forum, and the representative of Galilee fishermen claimed power in the Capitol? Yes; I descend, they say, from the Commeni; but I am far prouder that, on the other hand, I come from pure Athenians. I belong to two buried worlds. But the stone throne of the Areopagus was greater than the gold one of Manuel."

"That animal life is to be envied perhaps," she said.

"Their pride is centred in a silver hairpin; their conscience is committed to a priest; their credulity is contented with tradition; their days are all the same, from the rising of one sun to another; they do not love, they do not hate; they are like the ass that they drive, follow one patient routine, and only take care for their food. Perhaps they are to be envied!"

"You would not lose 'those thoughts that wander through eternity,' to gain in exchange the peace from ignorance of the peasant or the dullard?"

She turned her face to him, with its most beautiful smile on her lips and in her eyes.

"No, I would not: you are right. Better to know the secrets of the gods, even though with pain, than to lead the dull, brute life, though painless. It is only in our dark hours that we would sell our souls for a dreamless ease."

"Dark hours! *You* should not know them. Ah, if you would but trust me with some confidence! if there were but some way in which I could serve you!"

Her eyes met his with gratitude, even while she gave him a gesture of silence. She thought how little could the bold, straight stroke of this man's frank chivalry cut through the innumerable and intricate chains that entangled her own life. The knightly Excalibur could do nothing to sever the filmy but insoluble meshes of secret intrigues.

"It is a saint's-day: I had forgotten it," she said to turn his words from herself, while the bell of the campanile still swung through the air. "I am a pagan, you see: I do not fancy that you care much for creeds yourself."

"Creeds? I wish there were no such word. It has only been a rallying-cry for war, an excuse for the bigot to burn his neighbour."

"No. Long ago, under the Andes, Nezahualcoytl held the same faith that Socrates had vainly taught in the Agora; and Zengis Khan knew the truth of theism like Plato; yet the world has never generally learnt it. It is the religion of nature—of reason. But the faith is too simple and too sublime for the multitude. The mass of minds needs a religion of mythics, legend, symbolism, and fear. What is impalpable escapes it; and it must give an outward and visible shape to its belief, as it gives in its

art a human form to its deity. Come, since we agree in our creed, I will take you to my temple—a temple not made by hands."

"I never had a fair field!"—it may be sometimes a coward's apology; but it is many a time the epitome of a great, cramped, tortured, wasted life, which strove like a caged eagle to get free, and never could beat down the bars of the den that circumstances and prejudice had forged. The world sees the few who do reach freedom, and, watching their bold upright flight, says rashly, "will can work all things." But they who perish by the thousand, the fettered eagles who never see the sun; who pant in darkness, and wear their breasts bare beating on the iron that will never yield; who know their strength, yet cannot break their prison; who feel their wings, yet never can soar up to meet the sweet wild western winds of liberty; who lie at last beaten, and hopeless, and blind, with only strength enough to long for death to come and quench all sense and thought in its annihilation,—who thinks of them—who counts them?

The earliest dawn had broken eastward, where the mountains stretched—the dawn of a southern summer, that almost touches the sunset of the past night—but under the dense shadows of the old woods that had sheltered the mystic rites of Gnostics and echoed with the Latin hymns to Pan, no light wandered. There was only a dim silvery haze that seemed to float over the whiteness of the tall-stemmed arum lilies and the foam-bells of the water that here and there glimmered under the rank vegetation, where it had broken from its hidden channels up to air and space. Not a sound disturbed the intense stillness; that the night waned and the world wakened, brought no change to the solitudes that men had forgotten, and only memories of dead-deserted gods still haunted in the places of their lost temples, whose columns were now the sea-pines' stems, and on whose fallen altars and whose shattered sculptures the lizard made her shelter and the wind-sown grasses seeded and took root. Of the once graceful marble beauty and the incense-steeped stones of sacrifice nothing remained but moss-grown shapeless fragments, buried beneath a pall of leaves by twice a thousand autumns. Yet the ancient sanctity still rested on the nameless, pathless woods; the breath of an earlier time, of a younger season of the earth, seemed to lie yet upon the untroubled forest ways; the whisper of the unseen waters had a dream-like, unreal cadence; in the deep shade, in the warm fragrance and the heavy gloom, there was a voluptuous yet mournful charm—the world seemed so far, the stars shone so near; there were the sweetness of rest and the oblivion of passion.

Death is not ours to deal. And were it ours, should we give him the nameless mystic mercy which all men live to crave—give it as the chastisement of crime? Death! It is rest to the aged, it is oblivion to the atheist, it is immortality to the poet! It is a vast, dim, exhaustless pity to all the world. And would you summon it as your hardest cruelty to sin?

They were silent; she stirred their souls—she had not bound their passions.

"A traitor merits death," they muttered.

"Merits it! Not so. The martyr, the liberator, the seeker of truth, may deserve its peace; how has the traitor won them? You deem yourselves just; your justice errs. If you would give him justice, make him live. Live to know fear lest every wind among the leaves may whisper of his secret; live to feel the look of a young child's eyes a shame to him; live to envy every peasant whose bread has not been bought with tainted coin; live to hear ever in his path the stealing step of haunting retribution; live to see his brethren pass by him as a thing accursed; live to listen in his age to white-haired men, who once had been his comrades, tell to the youth about them the unforgotten story of his shame. Make him live thus if you would have justice."

They answered nothing; a shudder ran through them as they heard.

"And—if you have as I—a deliverance that forbids you even so much harshness, still let him live, and bury his transgression in your hearts. Say to him as I say, 'Your sin was great, go forth and sin no more.'"

"One is not an assassin!"

"Since when have you discovered that?"

The flush grew darker on Count Conrad's forehead; he moved restlessly under the irony, and drank down a draught of red fiery Roussillon without tasting it more than if it had been water. Then he laughed; the same careless musical laughter with which he had made the requiem over a violet—a laugh which belonged at once to the most careless and the most evil side of his character.

"Since sophism came in, which was with Monsieur Cain, when he asked, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' It was ingenious that reply; creditable to a beginner, without social advantages. 'An assassin!' Take the word boldly by the beard, and look at it. What is there objectionable?"

"Nothing—except to the assassinated."

"It has had an apotheosis ever since the world began," pursued Phaulcon, unheeding, in his bright vivacity. "Who are celebrated in Scripture? Judith, Samuel, David, Moses, Joab. Who is a patriot? Brutus. Who is an immortal? Harmodius and Aristogiton. Who is a philosopher? Cicero, while he murmurs '*Vixerunt!*' after slaying Lentulus. Who is a hero? Marius, who nails the senators' heads to the rostræ. Who is a martyr? Charles, who murders Strafford. What is religion? Christianity, that has burnt and slain millions. Who is a priest? Calvin, who destroys Servetus; or Pole, who kills Latimer, which you like. Who is a saint? George of Cappadocia, who slaughters right and left. Who is a ruler? Sulla, who slays Ofella. Who is a queen? Christina, who stabs Monaldeschi; Catherine, who strangles Peter; Isabella, who slays Moors and Jews by the thousand. Murderers all! Assassination has always been deified; and before it is objected to, the world must change its creeds, its celebrities, and its chronicles. 'Monsieur, you are an assassin,' says an impolite world. 'Messieurs,' says the polite logician, 'I found my warrant in your Bible, and my precedent in your Brutus. What you deify in Aristogiton and Jael you mustn't damn in Ankarström and me.' Voilà! What could the world say?"

"That you would outwit Belial with words, and beguile Beelzebub out of his kingdom with sophistry."

A VILLAGE COMMUNE

Power is sweet, and when you are a little clerk you love its sweetness quite as much as if you were an emperor, and maybe you love it a good deal more.

He saw no reason why he should not become a deputy, and even a minister before he died, and indeed there was no reason whatever. He was only a clerk at fifty pounds a year; but he had a soul above all scruples, and a heart as hard as a millstone.

He was only a clerk indeed, at a slender salary, and ate his friends' tomatoes publicly in the little back room of the caffè; but he had the soul of a statesman. When a donkey kicks, beat it; when it dies, skin it; so only will it profit you; that was his opinion, and the public was the donkey of Messer Nellemane.

Pippo and Viola feared everything, yet knew not what they feared; it is a ghostly burden of dread, that which the honest poor carry with them all through their toiling hungry days, the vague oppressive dread of this law which is always acting the spy on them, always dogging their steps, always emptying their pockets. The poor can understand criminal law, and its justice and its necessity easily enough, and respect its severities; but they cannot understand the petty tyrannies of civil law; and it wears their lives out, and breaks their spirits. When it does not break their spirits it curdles their blood and they become socialists, nihilists, internationalists, anything that will promise them riddance of their spectre and give them vengeance. We in Italy are all of us afraid of socialism, we who have anything to lose; and yet we let the syndics, and their secretaries, conciliators, and chancellors sow it broadcast in dragon's teeth of petty injustices and petty cruelties, that soon or late will spring up armed men, hydra-headed and torch in hand!

The law should be a majesty, solemn, awful, unerring: just, as man hopes that God is just; and from its throne it should stretch out a mighty hand to seize and grasp the guilty, and the guilty only. But when the law is only a petty, meddlesome, cruel, greedy spy, mingling in every household act and peering in at every window pane, then the poor who are guiltless would be justified if they spat in its face, and called it by its right name, a foul extortion.

The Italian tongue chatters like a magpie's; if they did not let the steam off thus they would be less easily ruled than they are; but no great talker ever did any great thing yet, in this world.

A retentive memory is of great use to a man, no doubt; but the talent of oblivion is on the whole more useful.

Sarta Rosalia is in a lovely pastoral country; the country that seems to thrill with Theocritus' singing, as it throbs with the little tamborine of the cicala; a country running over with beautiful greenery, and with climbing creepers hanging everywhere, from the vine on the maples to the china-rose hedges, and with the deep-blue shadows, and the sun-flushed whiteness of the distant mountains lending to it in the golden distance that solemnity and ethereal charm which, without mountains somewhere within sight, no country ever has. But since the advent of "freedom" it is scarred and wounded; great scar-patches stretch here and there where woods have been felled by the avarice illumined in the souls of landowners; hundreds and thousands of bare poles stand stark and stiff against the river light which have been glorious pyramids of leaf shedding welcome shadows on the river path; and many a bold round hill like the *ballons* of the Vosges, once rich of grass as they, now shorn of wood, and even of undergrowth, lift a bare stony front to the lovely sunlight, and never more will root of tree, or seed of flower or of fern, find bed there.

Such is Progress.

For the first time his *liberi pensieri* were distasteful to him and unsatisfactory; for atheism makes a curse a mere rattle of dry peas in a fool's bladder, as it makes a blessing a mere flutter of a breath. Messer Nellemane for the first time felt that the old religion has its advantages over agnosticism; it gave you a hell for your rivals and your enemies!

He had never heard of Virgil and of Theocritus—but it hurt him to have these sylvan pictures spoiled; these pictures which are the same as those they saw and sang; the threshing barns with the piles of golden grain, and the flails flying to merry voices; the young horses trampling the wheat loose from its husk with bounding limbs and tossing manes; the great arched doorways, with the maidens sitting in a circle breaking the maize from its withered leaves, and telling old-world stories, and singing sweet *fiorellini* all the while; the hanging fields broken up in hill and vale with the dun-coloured oxen pushing their patient way through labyrinths of vine boughs, and clouds of silvery olive leaf: the bright laborious day, with the sun-rays turning the sickle to a semi-circlet of silver, as the mice ran, and the crickets shouted, and the larks soared on high: the merry supper when the day was done, with the thrill and thrum of the mandolini, and the glisten of the unhoused fire-flies, whose sanctuary had been broken when the bearded barley and the amber corn fell prone: all these things rose to his memory: they had made his youth and manhood glad and full of colour; they were here still for his sons a little while, but when his sons should be all grown men, then those things would have ceased to be, and even their very memory would have perished, most likely, while the smoke of the accursed engines would have sullied the pure blue sky, and the stench of their foul vapours would have poisoned the golden air.

He roused himself and said wearily to Pippo,

"There is a tale I have heard somewhere of a man who sold his birthright for gold, and when the gold was in his hands, then it changed to withered leaves and brown moss: I was thinking, eh? that the world is much like that man!"

When all your politics and policies are summed up in the one intention to do well for yourself, great simplicity is given to your theories, if not to your practice.

The ministerialists ... made florid and beautiful speeches full of sesquipedalian phrases in which they spoke about the place of Italy among the great powers, the dangers of jealousy and invasion from other nations, the magnificence of the future, the blessings of education, the delights of liberty, the wickedness of the opposition, the sovereign rights of the people; and said it all so magnificently and so bewilderingly that the people never remembered till it was too late that they had said nothing about opposing the cow-tax—or indeed any taxes at all, but listened and gaped, and shouted, and clapped; and being told that they could sit at a European Congress to decide the fate of Epirus, were for the moment oblivious that they had bad bread, dear wine, scant meat, an army of conscripts, and a bureaucracy that devoured them as maggots a cheese. What is political eloquence for, if not to make the people forget such things as these?

To sell your grapes to foreigners and have none at all at home is a spirited commerce, and fine free trade; that the poor souls around are all poisoned with cheap chemicals in the absence of wine, is only an evidence of all that science can do.

It is the noblest natures that tyranny drives to frenzy.

The bureaucratic mind, all the world over, believes the squeak of the official penny whistle to be as the trump of archangels and the voice of Sinai. That all the people do not fall down prostrate at the squeak is, to this order of mind, the one unmentionable sin.

It is not true that no Italian ever tells the truth, as commentators on the country say, but it is sadly true that when one does he suffers for it.

A day in prison to a free-born son of the soil, used to work with the broad bright sky alone above his head, is more agony than a year of it is to a cramped city-worker used only to the twilight of a machine-room or a workshop, only to an air full of smuts and smoke, and the stench of acids, and the dust of filed steel or sifted coal. The sufferings of the two cannot be compared, and one among many of the injustices the law, all over the world, commits, is that it never takes into consideration what a man's past has been. There are those to whom a prison is as hell; there are those to whom it is something better than the life they led.

She was an old woman, and had been bred up in the old faiths; faiths that were not clear indeed to her nor ever reasoned on, but yet gave her consolation, and a great, if a vague hope. Now that we tell the poor there is no such hope, that when they have worked and starved long enough, then they will perish altogether, like bits of candle that have burnt themselves out, that they are mere machines made of carbon and hydrogen, which, when they have had due friction, will then crumble back into the dust; now that we tell them all this, and call this the spread of education, will they be as patient?

Take hope from the heart of man, and you make him a beast of prey.

One of the cruellest sins of any state, in giving petty and tyrannous authority into petty and tyrannous hands, is that it thus brings into hatred and disgust the true and high authority of moral law.

In these modern times of cowardice, when great ministers dare not say the thing they think, and high magistrates stoop to execute decrees they abhor, it is scarcely to be hoped for that moral courage will be a plant of very sturdy growth in the souls of carpenters, and coopers, and bakers, and plumbers, and day-labourers, who toil for scarce a shilling a day.

He had been wronged, and a great wrong is to the nature as a cancer is to the body; there is no health.

A just chastisement may benefit a man, though it seldom does, but an unjust one changes all his blood to gall.

In these days, Christian Europe decides that not only the poor man lying by the wayside, but also the Samaritan who helps him, are sinners against political economy, and its law forbids what its religion orders: people must settle the contradiction as they deem best; they generally are content to settle it by buttoning up their pockets, and passing by, on the other side.

In this lovely land that brims over with flowers like a cup over-filled, where the sun is as a magician for ever changing with a wand of gold all common things to paradise; where every wind shakes out the fragrance of a world of fruit and flower commingled; where, for so little, the lute sounds and the song arises; here, misery looks more sad than it does in sadder climes, where it is like a home-born thing, and not an alien tyrant as it is here.

You cannot cage a field bird when it is old; it dies for want of flight, of air, of change, of freedom. No use will be the stored grain of your cages; better for the bird a berry here and there, and peace of gentle death at last amidst the golden gorse or blush of hawthorn buds.

"What is England?"

"It is a place where the poor souls have no wine of their own, I think; and they make cannons and cheese. You see their people over here now and then. They carry red Bibles, and they go about with their mouths open to catch flies, and they run into all the little old dusty places; you must have seen them."

"And why do we want to have anything to do with them?"

"They will come in ships and fire at us, if we are not bigger and stronger than they. We must build iron houses that float, and go on the sea and meet them."

PUCK

"Animalism," forsooth!—a more unfair word don't exist. When we animals never drink only just enough to satisfy thirst, never eat except when we have genuine appetites, never indulge in any sort of debauch, and never strain excess till we sink into the slough of satiety, shall "animalism" be a word to designate all that men and women dare to do? "Animalism!" You ought to blush for such a libel on our innocent and reasonable lives when you regard your own! You men who scorch your throats with alcohols, and kill your lives with absinthe; and squander your gold in the Kursaal, and the Ccele, and the Arlington; and have thirty services at your dinner betwixt soup and the "chasse;" and cannot spend a summer afternoon in comfort unless you be drinking deep the intoxication of hazard in your debts and your bets on the Heath or the Downs, at Hurlingham or at Tattersalls' Rooms. You women, who sell your souls for bits of stones dug from the bowels of the earth; who stake your honour for a length of lace two centuries old; who replace the bloom your passions have banished with the red of poisoned pigments; who wreath your aching heads with purchased tresses torn from prisons, and madhouses, and coffins; who spend your lives in one incessant struggle, first the rivalry of vanity and then the rivalry of ambition; who deck out greed, and selfishness, and worship of station or gold, as "love," and then wonder that your hapless dupes, seizing the idol that you offer them as worthy of their worship, fling it from them with a curse, finding it dumb, and deaf, and merciless, a thing of wood and stone.

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