

**In the shadow of the pyramids : the last days of Ismail Khédive,
1879 : a novel / by Richard Henry Savage**

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In the Shadow of the Pyramids



Richard Henry Savage



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In the Shadow of the Pyramids

In the Shadow of the Pyramids

The Last Days of Ismail Khédive.

1879

A Novel

By

Richard Henry Savage

Author of "Checked Through," "Lost Countess Falka,"
"A Modern Corsair," "For Her Life," etc.



Chicago and New York :
Rand, McNally & Co., Publishers
M D C C C X C V I I I .

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE PYRAMIDS.

BOOK I—MONEY TALKS!

CHAPTER I.

A FINANCIAL EXPERT'S LOVE DILEMMA.

The very laziest and handsomest member of the Traveler's Club of London seemed to be wrapped in a comfortable day dream, as he lay stretched out in a leather-padded smoking chair and idly contemplated the tide of humanity pouring along Pall Mall.

There was a gathering frown upon the face of the Honorable Charles Grosvenor, when his automatic manufacture of perfect smoke rings was interrupted by the presence of a club page, a walking arsenal of buttons!

"Immediate answer requested, Sir!" said the lad, as he tendered a dainty note, lying discreetly on the silver salver with its superscription turned down!

"Charley" Grosvenor's languid curiosity gave way to an exclamation of decided annoyance, as he twisted himself around, and overturned a light table whereupon the Harvey's Club soda flask, dainty carafe of cognac, and a carelessly tossed aside letter made an object lesson in the vertical motion of falling bodies.

It was half past five by the clock, and a dreary enough January afternoon of the year of our Lord eighteen seventy-nine.

While the stewards hastily readjusted the "wreck of matter," Lord Wrexham's eldest son and heir perused the unwelcome letter which had put a period to his brown

study. "By Jove! Milly seems to trace me out as the wary beater finds the doomed tiger in his jungle! I will haunt the Alpine, the 'Varsity,' or Brooks' after this! Dear child! She would never dare, I hope, to send to Brooks' for her missing brother!"

With a good-humored smile he dashed off these words: "Will be on hand, surely,—" and then he scrawled the family address in St. George's, Hanover Square.

"There you are, Buttons!" he sighed, as he solaced himself with the replenished "personal supplies" and comfortably curled up, watched the grave-faced club steward carefully drying out the forgotten letter at the glowing sea-coal fire.

Charley Grosvenor had dutifully yielded to an urgent appeal of the Honorable Millicent Grosvenor, as expressed in a three-page letter, and couched in the imperative language of a petted young sister. The bronzed-faced giant laughed tenderly as he noted the repetition of single, double and treble underscoring!

Thirty-eight lightly-borne years found the veteran sportsman and globe trotter still as free of all entangling alliances as when he left Cambridge at twenty-two, a laureled athlete, warm of heart, mighty in thews and sinews and lightly laden with cares!

A profound respect for that veteran English diplomat, Lord Wrexham, his distinguished father, now absent upon the affairs of the Kaisar-I-Hind;—a lingering memory painted heart-worship of his dear dead mother; and, a chivalrous tenderness for the stately young lady of Wrexham Hall comprised all his slender family affiliations.

The two fair-haired lads, Cyril and Sidney, at Eton, were only known to him as grateful recipients of the titanic tips, with which he always bribed them to leave him absolutely "uninterviewed," on his brief home visits! And, entrenched in his clubs he defied the "young person" in all her bewitching forms.

"By Jove! I'm in a regular hole!" exclaimed Grosvenor, as he folded his sister's letter up, and glanced at his watch. "I wonder if Milly really has any need of me! Poor old Ken! I had forgotten his urgent appeal! I

must now leave him a note to wait for me here, at the club! He is quivering in all the tender agonies of the anxious lover! A financial expert's love dilemma! It's a shame! To spend his life in toil among the heaped-up millions of the British Investor; and to have to wear himself out, a mere drudge, in the service of the long-eared Midases of our latter day! If he only had a lucky wind-fall—some odd bit of 'tin' dropping in—there might be a chance;—but, he's sadly out of line, poor fellow—in his most romantic lovemaking! Seems that true love and financial imprudence are cradle mates!"

Charley Grosvenor accepted the returned letter from the waiting steward and ran it over with increased curiosity!

"This is serious, I fear," he growled, as he thrust the letter of his chum into his breast-pocket and, ordering a four-wheeler, sped away to answer his sister's appeal and report at dinner, "for instructions."

An evident connection between the two letters appealing for his help, told him of the threatened detection of a most rashly-devised love episode which was the result of an accidental meeting in the fair summer time by the Swiss lakes.

"I am afraid it's no go!" sighed the young noble.

As the carriage rolled along, Grosvenor clearly saw "the little cloud no bigger than a man's hand," which was destined to break out in the blackest storm.

"Here is this cold-hearted old Moneybags,—secretly following up Kenneth Gryffyth and dodging in and out for a week, in close conference with Benjamin and Son! I can see the old boy's dodge! He will surely find out all about Grif's vacation of last summer! It would have been better if poor Ken had been far away either inspecting Peruvian nitrate beds,—experting American Railway accounts,—untangling mountainous Turkish indebtedness, or else mooning over the deficits in the Chinese customs! Yes! The sharp old banker has at last discovered our secret! He will now straightways pack Miss Kathleen Lawrie off to some gloomy Highland stronghold, or else mount a double guard here in the West End! The game is up, at last!"

While he paused to bring a peace offering of choicest flowers to his sweet sister Milly, he revolved the pleading distress of her urgent letter.

"Kathleen has been with me all the afternoon, and she is left absolutely helpless without our secret aid! Her father has been closely interrogating her about Kenneth for several days. Of course,—she denied all knowledge of him, and,—she implores our help! How much he knows, we cannot even guess!"

"Yes! That's the old sly boots' game!" mused the angered shining light of the Alpine and Travelers' clubs.

"He has, of course, marked down poor Ken's every movement of the last year! He is working at the algebra of Love backwards—and—we will all of us soon be in no end of a hole! I wonder if the Baroness would help?"

And then, even in his perplexity, handsome Charley Grosvenor laughed at his own stupidity, for Ethel Harcourt, the one time English beauty, now Madame la Baronne de Saint-Nazaire, was the inflexible propriety dragon of Lord Wrexham's splendid home. She had taken away to her brilliant French marriage a very just idea of the market value of her own charms, birth and breeding.

Her roseleaf existence was left unruffled even by the "chute de l'Empire," and the death of her gallant husband who charged at Gravellotte only to meet his death in honor.

Now, installed as duenna of the Wrexham household, she passed a delightfully unconcerned existence in comparing herself with the rest of the world, greatly to the disadvantage of the other dwellers on this mundane sphere!

"Stony-hearted Dresden doll!" laughed Charley Grosvenor. "She is only the conservator of a peerless social form, and the guardian of a matchless complexion! C'est son métier! Voilà tout! No help there!"

And, so, he descended gloomily at the imposing gates of Lord Wrexham's town house, only to be smothered in the embraces of his sweet sister Milly, an apparition of smiling lips and tearful lashes, whose cry of delight,

rapturous welcome and the partial destruction of the guinea boquet were all simultaneous charming occurrences.

"You dear old Charley! You are all I have to depend on, now!" she entreated, as she gently dragged him away to her own particular den. "We have just half an hour left before dinner! I must tell you all! Aunt Ethel must never know! She is a very gorgon of propriety! And, you will help Kathleen,—for my sake,—won't you?"

The beautiful girl's soft eyes were pleading to him now!

. "We will see, little woman!" kindly answered the overwhelmed visitor.

"I fear there has been some untoward happening! Kenneth himself is in despair, and,—he will await me tonight, at the Club! You and I, Miss Milly," he laughed, "have two very unhappy people on our hands!"

When they were safe in My Lady's Bower, the eighteen-year-old Machiavelli skillfully bribed her protecting brother with her loving tribute of unaccustomed Egyptian cigarettes of the very choicest flavor, and, while cosily seated near, a waiting Hebe, she related all the woes of her "other soul,"—that incomparable beauty of the liquid Irish-gray eyes.

This "other soul" was Miss Kathleen Lawrie, the only child and sole heiress of James Lawrie, Esq., of Belgrave Square, London, of Portrush Lodge, Bangor, Ireland—and, the Priory, Stirling, Scotland,—the Lawrie,—of Lawrie's Impregnable Bank!

Lord Wrexham's heir listened, in an amused silence, to the caustic strictures of his beloved sister upon the flinty-hearted money-grubber, known all over the world of finance as the Millionaire James Lawrie, of Lawrie's Bank—and a Director in many vast financial enterprises of a gloomy and conservative solidity.

"There, now, Milly, darling!" philosophically counselled the brother. "Resign yourself to facts! Of course, it would be very delightful if James Lawrie, Esq., were to be gathered to his fathers,—but, before Kenneth Gryffyth and Kathleen Lawrie may hope to wed,—I fear that we

must all beware of many pitfalls in the way of these lovers!

"Just tell me, little one, exactly what has happened, for poor Ken is apparently in the clutches of the old moss-trooper."

"I only fear that Lawrie will now use his potent influence, and chase the poor boy out of England!"

He smothered the exclamation "Beast!" and lent an ear to the agitated girl's story.

"It seems so strange," began sweet Milly, "that in all the years of their London life, Kathleen's father has ignored the very existence of his favorite cousin's only son.

"Now, Kathleen has just left me! Her father, for several days, has suddenly turned inquisitor, and has been most untiring in questioning her as to any personal knowledge of Kenneth Gryffyth's character,—standing,—his haunts,—his tastes,—his social occupations and all that a society girl might hear of a man not altogether unknown!

"There must have been some old family bitterness! For, Kenneth is a man of mark, even now!"

"It is very strange!" murmured Charley, as he lit a fresh "burnt offering!"

"Of course," resumed Miss Milly, "Marjorie Lawrie's beauty and graces are, even yet, remembered by her one-time friends! Kathleen easily divined from these old friends' veiled hints that James Lawrie may have long hidden a secret heart-wound.

"It is many long years, since the favorite cousin married that brilliant collegian, Gryffyth Gryffyth, and buried her beauty in a modest rectory, hidden in the purple Welsh mountains! But, to all appearances, James Lawrie is as yet ignorant of our summer wanderings at Chillon, and all the happy days of our strangely met Alpine quartette!

"But," sighed Milly, "Kathleen now fears that the eagle-eyed old banker has at last found out our quadruple secret, and—that he will soon send her away to the uttermost ends of the earth! For, I fancy myself,—that James

Lawrie does not care to ever see the son of the man whose superb talents won the day against the red gold which Lawrie has made his idol!"

While the eager girl unfolded, with "bashful maiden art," the growing terrors of Kathleen Lawrie's soft bosom, her puzzled brother tugged away at his mustache in a growing perplexity!

"We must stand stoutly to our guns, little woman," he smilingly said, stroking the golden hair which he so loved to see rippling over that white brow.

"Don't you see if the old boy was sure of his game, he would simply act,—and,—say nothing! Wait till I find out the burden of poor Ken's misery, and then, I'll come to you to-morrow. It may not be so bad, after all! Then we will make the plan of the strongest offensive and defensive alliance.

"Now,—let us go down to dinner, and,—remember to beware of the Baroness! She is like unto the bear filled with honey,—sweetness and strength!"

"And, so, you'll help my darling Kathleen?" demanded the enthusiastic Milly, when she had concluded a further disclosure, necessitating the second sounding of the silver dinner-gong.

"To the very steps of the altar, little one! For your sake!" laughed the Honorable Charles, as he primly prepared to gently guy the stately Baroness, wrapped up in the clinging mantle of her own self-love!

They were, however, a suave and decorous trio at the splendid table over which the sad-eyed butler hovered with all due solemnity,—and at which the shaven servitors waited, duly sobered by the substantial splendors of the Wrexham ménage.

Madame la Baronne exhibited her usual august deportment; only a shade less impressive even than her grand manners of the Tuilleries, for, as usual, "Lucullus supped with Lucullus."

The brother and sister were admirable foils as they sat bravely under the sapphire glare of the Baroness' unfaded eyes.

The Honorable Charles Grosvenor had acquired the healthy brown neck aureole and nut-brown arms which



he boasted, on the placid waters of Granta, in the days when he was stroke oar of his 'varsity eight.

The Essex arena never turned out a brighter exponent of the 'mens sana in corpore sano' than Charley Grosvenor. The mingled blood of Saxon and Norman pulsed in his veins, and his gray-blue eyes, fair hair and towering stature were clearly the Saxon legacy.

His varying humors, his gentle self-surrender to pleasures, and all the latent romance of his nature came down from those versatile Norman ancestors who had bravely chanted songs of love and lays of romances under the glare of the red watch-fires of Hastings.

Charley Grosvenor's forefathers had smoothly paved the way for him, and golden spoons were his cradle gifts! For, power, place and high fortune seemed to cling to the Wrexhams as the mistletoe lingers in the spreading branches of the English oak!

No man of his time at Trinity had left a more genial memory upon the banks of the Cam, and a fund of reminiscent anecdote still blazoned his prowess with glove and foil, with spur and oar! A genial son of Anak, he was still remembered and beloved as a good-natured and lazy Lancelot of his 'varsity fellows.

"Whom he smote, he overthrew," and, when his fitful fever of over-exertion had subsided, he allowed the other contestants "to press on for the mark," then himself subsiding into the easy contentment of "bitter beer" and his cherished pipe!

It was an easy-going world of high life which gladly welcomed the young noble.

It was generally admitted that Grosvenor could speak,—twang the college lyre,—turn off a Greek ode,—or untangle a knotty problem with any one of his fellows, but—after some splendid tours de force,—he always allowed the bread and place winners to go on and pass him! For a Wrexham needed no career, and the golden spoons were always at hand! "Embaras\$ de luxe!"

Singularly reticent, quietly observant, loyal and good-natured, he left Trinity, however, with an easily won degree, and then went in for a whole lot of things.

To see the world,—to explore "deserts wild and antres

vast,"—to "shoot things" in four continents, and, to become a charming cosmopolitan—was Charley Grosvenor's self-appointed task! He duly drank the light froth of the cup of pleasure, and, yet, never forgot that the day would come when he would sign himself "Wrexham."

In all his plowing of the "Seven Seas," in his continental wander-jahre,—in the long globe-trotting years, he had insensibly accumulated a vast fund of worldly wisdom, for he had the faculty of extracting the knowledge of others by mere propinquity.

A right proper cavalier,—a superb man at arms,—he would have made, and the glittering-eyed Frederick the Great, would have conspired to place him in the front rank of his model Regiment of Grenadiers!

Easily biding his time, he knew that the mantle of Elijah would descend upon Elisha, in time, and, he vaguely put off the consideration of what would befall when he became Lord Wrexham. There was always time left to open the world's oyster!

There was an unconscious preparation in these world-wanderings for his career as an Englishman of rank and note and foreign intercourse had polished off into a rounded symmetry his insular coldness.

Laurels rested not on handsome Charley Grosvenor's shapely head, but, the Cambridge bronze had deepened into the inburned red of the explorer,—the desert-rider and the Indian shekarry.

His name stood high on the roll of honor of the Alpine and Travelers' clubs,—and, from palace and country house, foyer and coulisse, to cosy club and "my lady's chamber,"—Charley Grosvenor preserved the open sense of youth, birth, good looks and fortune!

As he gently parried the Baroness' pointed queries with regard to a little hiatus in his social career which she had discovered, he fondly gazed upon the innocent perfections of his petted sister Milly, leaving the baffled Baroness secretly raging!

That young lady was a gentle and unspoiled Maud, serene and stately, with wondering liquid blue eyes, a complexion of blended alabaster and rose, and of that golden hair which has been the poet's theme for unending

ages! The unruffled current of Millicent Grosvenor's days had glided by as "rivers that water the woodlands,—darkened with shadows of earth,—yet,—reflecting an image of heaven!"

It was the pride of Madame la Baronne Saint-Nazaire that in replacing the late Lady Ermyntrude Wrexham, as the social guardian of her child, she had modeled Milly Grosvenor's manners upon her own!

She hoped that she had imparted to her that serenely unconscious self-possession which would carry the stately young girl fearlessly out into the incandescent light shining from the British Throne!

The formal drill of *Vanity Fair*'s most golden circle had, however, left the Honorable Millicent Grosvenor's unspoiled heart as sweetly attuned to Nature's harmonies as any wind-swept forest harp! All unheeded fell these golden grains of worldly advice upon the heart of the young girl whose bright promise was still throbbing in her unruffled breast, and shining in her tender eyes!

When Ethel Harcourt sagely observed, "We must obliterate all the real feelings, my darling! Society demands only a perfect repose,—the due ceremonies, and the unprejudiced intelligence of a Metternich or a Tallyrand," the gentle girl copied her brother's wisdom, and smiled sweetly,—saying nothing!

And, the Baroness fancied that the seeds of wisdom had fallen upon fertile ground!

On this particular evening, Charley Grosvenor disarmed Madame la Baronne by all the courtly grace of a "Steenie" Buckingham! When the feast had slowly passed in review, with graceful murmurs as to an impending trip to Algeria, Illyria, Bulgaria or some other, as yet, "un-Cookified" corner of the earth, the handsome giant "cut out" his pretty sister from under the guns of the watchful Baroness.

A little graceful flattery left the Baroness all smiles and blushes, for she was still a woman at heart!

"Of course, Milly darling! I'll stand by Kathleen and Kenneth. Do you now bid her just know nothing, say nothing, do nothing! I'll be off to the club now and see poor old Ken! You and I are both free agents! Just

let us all say nothing! Not a word to the Baroness—and then, the old banker will be left powerless to break our set of fours. We must not be trapped separately. I'll come to you in the early morning! Do you ask Kathleen Lawrie here to luncheon, and, I'll be on hand with all the last news! We will have a little star chamber council in your own boudoir, to-morrow! Voilà tout!"

With which cheery advice, he lightly set out toward the Travelers' Club, for the hour of ten was now not far off!

For once in his life, Charley Grosvenor realized all the advantages of golden and silver spoons in man's social career! As he lit his segar, he ruminated over the situation, to the accompaniment of the wheels of the cab!

Secure in vested wealth; lifted up by the laws of caste, he suddenly realized the deep gulf separating Kenneth Gryffyth,—Financial Expert, from the only heiress of that Leviathan of the financial world, James Lawrie, Esq., —a man of many millions!

"Poor old Ken! It's only the absence of 'tin,'—that's all!" mused Grosvenor; "for, as to blood,—the advantage is rather with Ken,—by long odds!"

"Rank there is not,—with either side,—but, now-a-days," he sighed, "the rank is but the guinea stamp! As to blood—there were proud Gryffyths, harping,—reigning,—and fighting,—when the bold Tristan and the hapless Iseult lived and loved! That their line of blue Welsh blood runs back to the ante-deluge epoch, I'm told,—and—certainly, the Lawries were recently only 'breckless Highlanders,' with a strong yearning toward other people's stray cattle! They are only reformed border harriers!"

"Now!" he joyously exclaimed, "their descendant takes only financial scalps, and this canny anglicized Scot fights within the law and grabs the lucre of the dumb ox like British Investor! I would like to do the old moss trooper a shrewd turn! Kenneth and Kathleen shall have their day, if the house of Wrexham can aid!"

"Why not? Ken's a very fine fellow! He was the star of Trinity in my time—and,—faint heart never won fair lady! There's the old bitterness, though,"—mused hand-

some Charley. “The sins of the fathers!” Gryffyth Gryffyth won the bright-eyed prize, the lovely Marjorie, and—the aspiring Welsh blood comes back again to battle with the cool old Scottish millionaire for another prize. It will be a tough struggle, I fear! Kenneth has the ‘odds o’ the weaker side!’”

He recalled his own early schoolboy days, when Kenneth Gryffyth and himself drank in, most unwillingly, the polyglot tide of lore and language, at Lausanne! They had slowly acquired French, German and Italian together there, under the patient regime of the thrifty Swiss school masters determined to attract British families of the higher class!

Charley had not forgotten the still beautiful widow of the Welsh clergyman who now slept in the little God’s acre at Montreux! “Those were dear and pleasant days,” he sighed. “Dear old days,—after all!”

There was still a bond of tender union between the young men who had loved but one mother, for Charley Grosvenor himself was motherless when his first ideal of womanly beauty was sweet Marjorie Gryffyth.

And the old days now came back upon him with a freshened charm as he drove along, eager to battle for her son, with that cautious old octopus James Lawrie, Esq. He had always loved his bright junior!

“I hope the old duffer will not succeed in displacing Ken at Benjamin’s. It would be too cruel a revenge!” mused Charley,—as he recalled the grave words of his friend’s letter, telling of frequent and ominous conferences of the Scottish millionaire with the heads of the heaviest firm of Exchange sellers in the London world.

“What can it all mean?” mused Charley. “Well! I’ll soon find out now!” he cried, as he leaped out of his carriage at the Travelers.’

The Honorable Charles Grosvenor had also an especially tender spot in his heart for that most radiant young beauty, Kathleen Lawrie, and he sighed as he thought of the tears veiling those wonderful Irish-gray eyes which had gazed on the Matterhorn and the peerless Jungfrau so often, in his delighted company,—during the stolen

days of the summer which had brought Kenneth, his friend, to the feet of the young goddess.

"What chance has that poor girl against this surface-varnished old Rob Roy?" growled Charley.

"There is no doubt the old fox has dug up some damning proofs, 'stronger than Holy Writ'! Now,—for Kenneth's tale of woe! What can he do to protect her? Nothing, I fear!"

And the handsome young giant gloomily sought the private room to which he had bidden the anxious lover to be ushered.

A glance at his friend caused Charley Grosvenor to stand there, cigar in mouth, rooted in astonishment!

For Kenneth Gryffyth's face was radiant with an unmistakably joyous excitement! There was the ring of exultation in Gryffyth's suppressed whoop of welcome!

"By Jove!" muttered Charley, "the poor beggar's losing his wits! Must have in Sir James Simpson! Bromides,—and,—all that sort of thing!"

And, then, "more in sorrow than in anger," he dropped into a seat, and lugubriously demanded: "Well! old fellow! What's the worst of it, now? Out with it!"

His muscular superiority caused him to ignore the Englishman's first resort—the poker! Was he closeted with a genial lunatic?

For Kenneth Gryffyth laughed a ringing peal of diabolic significance. Here was no sighing lover!

"Here you are, old chap! Presto! Change! Just read that! It was handed to me, just before I left the Benjamin's stronghold, by a withered old 'duhine wassail' of James Lawrie, Esq.! And, by the piper that played before Moses,—I am, as your Yankee friends would say,—'up a tree'!"

Gryffyth was whistling gayly like an escaped schoolboy!

With dilated eyes, Lord Wrexham's hair deliberately scanned the few lines of a ceremonial note, addressed in a stiffly formal hand, to "Kenneth Gryffyth, Esq."

"By Heavens!" faltered Grosvenor, "I must change the address on the Bromide bottle! The old moss trooper

himself has succumbed to the ‘auri sacra fames!’” And then, Bret Harte’s line recurred to him:

“Do I sleep,—do I dream?” as he read the letter.

He joined his visitor in a grimly-echoing burst of sardonic laughter!

“Beware of the Greeks bearing gifts, Ken!” he slowly said, as he handed back the letter. “You should get a good bit of brass for that thing down at Madame Tussaud’s as a curiosity. Come! Read me the riddle! I won’t tell you my budget of news ‘till you have cut this gordian knot!”

“I’m in the dark, Charley! I give it up,—as the Christy minstrels say!” rejoined the Financial Expert.

“Listen! Here I have been dodging this old Scythian for a week, and Goldschmid (our junior partner), has kindly warned me that James Lawrie, of that ilk,—his Anglo-Scottish Magnificence,—has been looking up my life-long record for a couple of weeks! He has even used ‘Private Inquiry’ methods!

“The Bond and Assurance Company notified me that the most energetic inquiries were being pushed as to all my antecedents and habits! I got this from an old chum, high in their councils! He has also been corresponding with the Registry at Cambridge.”

The young nobleman’s face grew solemn as Gryffyth read:

“No. 12 Belgrave Square.

“London, January 15, 1879.

“Mr. James Lawrie presents his compliments and requests the pleasure of your company at dinner to-morrow at seven. Mr. Kenneth Gryffyth will confer a favor by calling at six p. m. for a preliminary conference, upon a business matter, of the utmost importance. Please answer by bearer.

“For Kenneth Gryffyth, Esq.

(of Benjamin and Sons).”

Not a word would Charley Grosvenor answer until he saw the spirit bottles, cigars and soda flasks arrayed before his guest.

"Ken, my boy!" he slowly said, after a deliberate assuaging of a sudden feverish thirst,—"I am glad that Burkling has gone out of fashion! The locality you are bidden to is respectable, and,—you need not take an Adams revolver! I can lend you an assegai,—however! You know that all Scotchmen are coldly implacable! Your letter really alarmed me, and, I hastened away to answer Milly's appealing missive.

"There's Miss Kathleen, herself, has been on the rack, for several days, with her sly father seeking to entangle her into damaging admissions of some knowledge of you!

"What is the old Kraken like? I have never seen him! Do you know him?"

Kenneth Gryffyth folded up the letter.

"It's like rubbing Aladdin's lamp! This strange happening! I have never spoken to my most distant kinsman, James Lawrie! I have seen his erect figure—his steel-blue eyes—his frosty face—his snowy, sparse beard, and his broad red brow a hundred times! Beyond a watch ribbon and a plain eye-glass, he bears no sign of wealth!

"A human fox,—a silent prowler,—a man whose commercial world is his fetich, and one who is respected, feared, distantly admired, but, unloved by all but those of a Draconian justice!

"The strong insetting tide which sweeps all fish to his nets moves under the strict logic of events! The old banker casts up the past, scans the present, and really seems to divine the future! A silent, implacable, unforgiving man,—sternly motionless and one always economic of time, speech and money!

"I know absolutely nothing of him, save that he is nearly seventy, and, that he remained single until after my father's death.

"I know that my mother never met him, after that,—but,"—the ardent speaker paused, and then dropped his eyes.

"She received but one letter from him at Lausanne, he visited her there, and, they never met in life again!" concluded Kenneth,—turning away.

"Ah! There is something more than mere curiosity or

an old revenge in all this, Ken!" earnestly said Grosvenor.

"You will, perhaps, find that Banker Lawrie knows nothing whatever of our summer and its blossomed friendships! There are many strange corners in human nature!"

"Impossible!" cried Kenneth.

"Nonsense! my boy!" coolly said Grosvenor. "It is always the unexpected which happens,—as the sprightly Gaul puts it! I will, however, warn Kathleen through Milly, to be sweetly unconscious of your existence! You can go on and tell me all your views! But, I'll be bound that you don't see Miss Kathleen's thrilling beauty gracing that same dinner board!

"The old banker destines you to play the pawn in some one of his great money games. If he could do without you,—he would surely not send for you! Pardon me, if I refer to the letter to your father's widow! He would not call you into his later life if he could avoid it!

"Your face must always call up the man who once robbed him of his early love! James Lawrie neither has forgotten nor forgiven! The threads of Fate are tangled! He will break nothing of the past to you!

"There will be some one else at that dinner, whose simple presence will explain why you are asked there! So, armed at all points, you must accept! Go,—my boy, consider the ant, and—be wise!"

"It is beyond belief!" agnostically remarked Kenneth.

"You may be sure it is some outer business current that has swept you within his reach!" stolidly said Grosvenor. "He can not get at something which he covets without using you to lengthen his arm! That's it!

"It's not love—it's lucre,—that causes James Lawrie to bid you to share his 'huggis' and 'Glenhvat!' So do not go there, 'harping on his daughter!' Again, I say, consider the ant—and—be like her,—mum,—and, like her, wise! Prepare for a surprise!"

As Kenneth Gryffyth paced the room while listening to Charley Grosvenor's account of his sister Milly's hopes and fears, and the timid Kathleen Lawrie's mental unrest,

he was the very type of an impatient and impassioned lover!

Graceful and energetic, his dark flashing eyes proved his Welsh vivacity, while the overhanging brow warranted those predictions which had left him proudly rated in the Cambridge Calendar as the Senior wrangler of his year!

Eight years the junior of his boyish protector, the pride of the Travelers' Club,—Kenneth Gryffyth at thirty,—was already renowned in the financial circles of Europe, for a marvelous grasp of financial details.

His distinguished abilities had been early noted by that great firm of Benjamin and Son, whose tidal gold ebbed and flowed over the whole world, civilized and uncivilized!

A superbly thoughtful essay upon the principles of Insurance and the Earning Power of Money had caused the mighty bankers to bribe him away from a tempting "Senior Fellowship" of Trinity on his taking his degree.

In his voyages over the world as expert, investigator, or actuary, he had frequently renewed the boyish friendship begun on the shores of Lake Leman when little "Taffy" looked up to the chivalric scion of the Wrexhams, already regarding Taffy's mother as a modern *Madonna della Seggiola*.

The quaint romance of the Welsh blood in his veins made Kenneth a fitting descendant of him who "could draw spirits from the vasty deep." A lonely youth, the early loss of his brilliant father, and the later bereavement of the adored mother's death, left Kenneth Gryffyth sadly alone in the world!

Around the debonair and knightly Charley Grosvenor clung the fondest memories of a boyhood, hallowed by the old Lausanne days and by the brief association at Trinity, on Grosvenor's frequent visits!

So, the one golden social gate open to young Gryffyth was the portal of Wrexham Hall, and Kenneth eagerly awaited the moment when his boyish hero would arise like "*le Noir Faineant*," and deal sturdy blows around him in the press of stranger knights.

The social arts and mental graces which had distinguished his Welsh father had descended to the talented

son, and Kenneth still cherished, with his mother's bridal picture, the father's gold medal, the first fruits of Gryffyth Gryffyth's classical attainments, and the records of his Fellowship gladly given up for Love's Young Dream.

There was, too, the slender album of refined Greek and Latin prose and verse, with the thin volume of recorded sermons,—good seed dropped upon the precipitous slopes of the empurpled Welsh hills!

It had been a splendid promise, too soon cut short by Death—that young scholar's life!—and his son was the inheritor of his unsapped talents!

All the latent poetry of the lonely young Kenneth's soul had leaped into a sudden bloom and youthful blossom under the sweet inspiration of Kathleen Lawrie's eyes, and for the few weeks of that golden summer, for the tender tie which knitted the secret lovers' heart to heart!

Kenneth could lift his eyes to the insouciant Charley, and gratefully exclaim: "This, too, I owe to thee, Giasfar!"

"See here! Ken, my boy!" cheerfully cried Grosvenor. "Stop musing upon your mistress' eyebrow, and tell me, what word sent you to the old mosstrooper?"

Gryffyth paused, and simply said, "Of course, I wrote, at once, that I would come!"

"That was sensible!" energetically cried Charley. "I'll wager you a pony to a shilling, that you see no women-kind whatever, and that this gilded old Jephtha will never even mention his daughter! I happen to know from Milly, that the consort of your host is booked for a long leave of absence, at Portrush Lodge, where the faded lady can see the yeasty surges of the Irish Sea breaking upon the rugged Copeland Isles."

"You will only be called upon to show your social nerve! For, it's guineas to pence, that Kathleen herself will not be '*en évidence*.' There is some great game afoot!"

Kenneth shook his head mournfully. "There is some hidden trap, I fear! This old man is of the unforgetting kind!"

"Can't you get a private tip as to the situation from the Benjamins?" anxiously demanded Grosvenor.

"Ah! Charley, you don't know the unapproachable hauteur of the heads of the great house! It is their invariable rule to give me their absolute business confidence in every great trust committed to my hands! The heads, you know, are linked together by family ties, and an alien faith!

"No man when once trusted by the Benjamins ever has dared to breathe a word to another employé of the house! The tradition of them using the heaviest stock brokers of Berlin, Frankfort, Paris, Amsterdam, London, and New York for years to alternately bull and bear the same stock, at the same time,—shows how their secret inner policy is known only to the inner cabal of blended blood and gold! It is a 'close corporation'!"

"Why! the confidences of Courts,—Empires,—Republics,—old families,—bloated parvenus,—great corporations, and even the Turk,—Chinese,—Russ, and Jew, are held as inviolate there as if whispered to the Ten,—through the Lion's mouth!"

"Even though I am always paid for thirteen months in the year,—although my salary has been doubled and doubled again, with neither hint or demand,—I have never been accorded a single social salutation or an unnecessary word, and I would not dare to hazard a single question!"

"The final mandate which I have always received is, 'See our Mr. ——, for instructions!' I am only a mathematical machine in their custody,—and,—it is their contention that I shall, like the brook,—'go on forever,'—but, not, 'chatter, chatter as I go'!"

"No! It would be useless! I am only a high-priced human machine to them!"

"You say that James Lawrie has been haunting the head office for some time?" queried Grosvenor. "Is their intimacy one of old standing?"

Kenneth shook his head. "No! In fact,—the repetition of his infrequent visits caused a chum to post me! As a rule, Lawrie is always mowing away at a different patch of the financial meadows! He goes in only

for great loans! They go in for enormous exchange operations! Quick movements,—large amounts,—extensive control of exchange, and,—small but sure profits! All the great outside operations that I examine for them have rather drifted into their hands.

"Others originate,—and then, entangle or wreck vast enterprises! With their vast capital,—boundless credit and world-wide connection, they step in and rebuild the Temple of Mammon again on safer lines!"

Charley Grosvenor threw away his cheroot! "I see the whole thing! Some huge deal has brought these two great firms into the same line! Lawrie proposes to find out what manner of man you may be! He may even beg or borrow you from your cool-headed employers! As a Financial Expert,—you only serve the Golden Calf, as a High Priest of Mathematics! Lawrie knows that you are young,—unmarried,—active, and, know the wide world!

"Mark me! If he ignores all reference to your distant connection, then,—be sure that it is a pure matter of business! He must at last take the initiative! I will guard Milly and Kathleen, and duly warn them. I breakfast with Milly to-morrow! Let me know here, by noon,—if there is any news! I will send my sister to Miss Kathleen!

"After the dinner, I can have Milly bid Kathleen over to Hanover Square! We will get the 'Dragon Lady' out of the way,—and,—you can meet Kathleen just once,—at our house,—not more, remember! For, Ethel Harcourt is a curious Fatima!"

"And if Kathleen should be at the dinner?" eagerly cried Kenneth.

"Then, mind your eye—and go through your introduction like a little man! Noblesse oblige!"—heartily said Grosvenor. "You must ignore each other!"

The friends gayly retraced all the romantic story of the last summer! While Mrs. Rose Nugent Lawrie was lingering far away in her Portrush villa, the sole heiress of the house had been intrusted to the social care of Madame la Baronne Saint-Nazaire!

The poor faded wife of the ambitious James Lawrie

had served her purpose when she had brought an immense fortune to the aspiring young Londonized Scottish financier! Belfast's linen mills,—shipyards, and local thrift furnished the capital, easily gained in marriage, which had placed James Lawrie upon a level with the Barings, and Coutt's and Child's Banks.

The austere counting-house solemnity of Lawrie's great double house in Belgrave Square chilled the spirited and romantic girl whose one ray of sunshine was Milly Grosvenor's charming face!

And, '*mirabile dictu*',—wayward Fate had brought the wanderers together by the sculptured shores of Lake Leman, on Kenneth Gryffyth's furlough!

It had been a crowning mercy that Madame la Baronne haughtily eschewed a near acquaintance with Kenneth Gryffyth! The same scorn for the brilliant and talented young member of the Alpine quartette, "who had something to do with business," excluded James Lawrie, Esq., from that lady's social recognition, for he was decidedly "in trade," as a financial promoter and money grubber, and, Ethel Harcourt shivered on the edge "of that dark tide of royal blood which flows 'twixt thee and me!"

But, under her icy sufferance, the Edelweiss of love thrived in those Alpine days, when serenely resting below, the unruffled chaperon could see the four aspiring young eaglets perched far above her, on the blue and misty mountains!

And, there, where sunshine and shadow chased each other, Kathleen Lawrie listened to her young knight singing those immortal strains which never die,—Love's rhapsody!

CHAPTER II.

UNCLE JAMES' STRANGE DINNER PARTY.—MUSTAPHA FEHMY PASHA'S INNINGS.

The streets of London were snowy, sloppy and cheerless on the evening when Kenneth Gryffyth carefully emerged from his carriage and reconnoitered the front

of banker Lawrie's great double house on Belgrave Square, his touch upon the door being synchronous with six p. m. The hour of Fate was sounding upon several sadly-booming bells.

The substantial family fortress was as gloomy in its exterior as the abandoned halls of Arabia Petrea, and its angled windows were as dark as the forbidding woods hiding Roderick Dhu's stern clansmen at Coilantogle Ford!

"Cheerful sort of mausoleum, this!" mused Kenneth, and then he braced up with the dying remark of the gallant and unfortunate Major John André—"It will be but a momentary pang!"

He was now full of the sage counsels of the Honorable Charles Grosvenor, who had "duly reported progress," and sent him off to his doom with the same unconcern with which an "uncompromising second" always sees his principal stand up to be shot!

Grosvenor's last remark, at parting, after a few "banal" compliments upon Gryffyth's "swagger" appearance, was in the nature of careful social hedging! "Something is sure to come of all this,—you know!"

"Oh! Certainly!" dryly replied Kenneth,—"but,—on what particular line of happening? Have you any clear idea?"

Whereat, Charley Grosvenor suddenly remembered that he was bidden to dine with a lovely Countess, then greatly in vogue, and so, he veiled his wisdom in a precipitate flight!

Though forearmed with the knowledge that two loving and graceful conspirators were watching secretly over his pathway, and, vastly reassured because Miss Kathleen Lawrie was now a guest of the Wrexhams in Hanover Square, the young Financial Expert trembled as the door was opened by an alert and foxy-looking retainer of the Lawrie clan!

In the first confusion of his extrication from his wraps, he had barely noted the staid magnificence of the great hall, and, invoking silently the beloved name which he dared not speak or breathe, he was shunted quickly into the huge double drawing-rooms where, in the splendid

radiance of clustered wax lights, James Lawrie pounced upon his guest!

"I am glad to note your punctuality! Be seated, sir!" said the grim old banker, in a stiffly autocratic manner.

Conscious that escape was now impossible, Kenneth Gryffyth gained a few stolen glimpses of the home of the Caledonian Midas, realizing that his host was keenly examining him from beneath bushy white eyebrows.

There was the reflex indication of a faint pressure of the banker's clammy hand, and the cold steel blue eyes were steadily regarding him as X—an unknown human quantity!

The double drawing-rooms were awe-inspiring in the chilliness of grandeur and the reluctant adornments of certain ghastly family portraits were varied by the gleaming hardness of bust and bronze. It was a gleaming hall of blazoned financial triumphs.

With a quick eye, Kenneth observed all the milestones of Lawrie's onward triumphal march in life in the various massive silver pitchers and costly urns—sundry "pieces of plate" appropriately inscribed, and, moreover, varied framed sets of "resolutions," properly engrossed and duly presented.

The young man's inclination "to bolt" was, however, restrained by that same timorous pride which makes the young recruit feverishly bold, in the presence of the enemy.

He cautiously eyed the money magnate who seemed to be "sparring with himself," for an opening, and mentally photographed the blue dress coat with gilt buttons of repellent brightness, the yellow nankeen waistcoat and trousers which might have graced that lackadaisical dandy Alfred d'Orsay!

A feeling of callous indifference soon came over him, such as desperation may lend to the shivering victim dragged out, benumbed by the morning cold upon the Place Roquette, to interview Ma'amselle Guillotine.

The dickey collar and neckhandkerchief à la Brummel, were, also, "points de mire," and, one wild, fleeting thought recalled certain lines in "Sally in Our Alley," to the discredit of parents.

From the judiciously regulated shadows of the rear drawing room, Kathleen Lawrie's wonderful melting gray Irish eyes seemed to shine down upon her secret admirer now!

The wary visitor drew a long breath of relief as James Lawrie, Esq., easily, and even gracefully, dropped into a general "shop" conversation upon the European money market.

There was not the faintest reference to his own personality, not a single remark proving any hostile suspicions of the tender undercurrent of love, and,—not even a veiled reference to his own family past, nor to the gifted scholar who lay "where a white stone flashes" in the far Welsh valley!

Not even a word of memory for the beautiful woman who slept in the God's acre at Montreux. And so, Kenneth breathed easier!

The easy counsels of the Honorable Charles Grosvenor now returned to the young financier, who merely guarded according to fencing rules, and, attempted no "riposte."

"Let the old boy have his way! The fox will finally come out of his hole, tail and all, if you only hold hard!"

And so, with a growing wonder in his eyes, Kenneth Gryffyth followed the old hawk, circling ever circling around his quarry, and as yet, not indicating when he would strike!

After half an hour, during which the young lover slowly regained his mental composure, he realized that Lawrie had taken him over nearly the whole range of his own singular financial experience. And, with a marvelous skill, there was not even a faint reference to their family connection, to the business in hand, or to the veiled purpose of the dinner.

It was in vain that the young man tried to avoid an occasional glance at the huge sentinel clock, and certain sounds, not altogether to be ignored, indicated the near approach of the hour of the feast to which he had been so strangely bidden.

The old banker seemed to have gathered a fund of nervous energy in his perfunctory cross-examination of his visitor, and he strode up and down, his faint Scottish

accent freely reappearing in the current of his flowing thoughts.

Suddenly, noting the tell-tale hands of the clock, James Lawrie turned, with a quiet, sly smile, as the visitor's eyes were fixed on the grand staircase.

"I think that you will do!" he said, with a calm disregard of any independent volition in his guest's mind.

"I must now tell you—for it's only fair—that I have had some careful private conferences with your firm!

"There is a matter of the very gravest moment, in which your house and mine may become silent partners, or, working associates rather," said the banker.

"I will soon have another guest here, and it is to meet him, to have you hear his views, personally expressed, that I have, as it were, borrowed you from Benjamin and Sons! They all speak in the very highest terms of your character and abilities!"

Kenneth Gryffyth bowed gravely.

"I have also made some suitable inquiry as to your personal habits, and, I know, moreover, that you are unfettered with family ties!"

The young man's eyes were steadily fixed upon the elder's with a semi-hostile challenge of right!

But, all unmoved, the old millionaire quietly continued. "You will please memorize the entire conversation of my other guest, and, if I may say so, let me lead him out.

"I premise that this matter is entirely confidential, and that it may be in the future greatly to your personal advantage! I will, myself, carry on all the business later with the heads of your firm. You are to mention this matter to no living soul!"

"It may even affect the tranquillity of Europe, and, also, vastly interest even the English government's most secret places! Have I your promise?"

The old man eyed him keenly.

Then the youthful Financial Expert calmly remarked, "I am not so sure that the time has come when you have a right to bind me to conceal the, as yet, unknown,—for hidden reasons!"

"Have you ever been in Egypt?" placidly continued old Lawrie, fixing the youth with his glittering eye!

Kenneth Gryffyth smiled as he answered, "No! But I passed three years in Turkey and Asia Minor, in connection with railway finances, iron mines and English insurance interests! I know the whole Moslem system thoroughly!"

"Grand! Grand! Better still!" delightedly cried James Lawrie. "Now, we'll fight under a flag of truce, in the first skirmish with the enemy! I will tell you all that I require of you, and before you leave here to-night."

"Our guest will leave first, and then, if you do not care to bind yourself, you are then free! I can give you very solid reasons for keeping a secret!" Kenneth waived his hand in a mute deprecation!

"Well! I like your prudence!" agreeably said the old banker.

"Your firm will recognize your very proper behavior later! These are things, however, that three men must hear, for one man's principal can not fully bind himself in writing! You are a fresh face in Egypt, and they tell me that you have a rare discretion."

At the same moment, the butler appeared between the folding doors with a solemn bow of announcement, and the gray old mountain cat on watch ushered into the drawing room a graceful stranger, crying in an aw-muffled voice:

"His Excellency Mustapha Fehmy Pasha!"

Kenneth Gryffyth smiled at his opportune release from an iron-clad promise of secrecy, in advance, and turned away just long enough to examine a splendid line engraving of John Law of Lauriston, while the handsome newcomer, with a delicate gesture, first touched his heart, and then carried his hand to his brow, in a graceful salutation.

The single-breasted, dark frock suit, the glittering star, the crimson fez crowning his chiselled features of Asiatic paleness indicated a "personage!" "Charley was right!" mused Kenneth, as his heart wandered away to where Kathleen Lawrie's beauty was making Milly Grosvenor's boudoir a human treasure house! "It is lucre, not love, that baits the old moss trooper's trap!"

And then, in the sudden hope that Kathleen's crimson

lips might seal his triumph at the end of the road, he decided to fight under the banner of Rob Roy Lawrie!

"I forgot to say," whispered Lawrie,—after Mustapha Fehmy Pasha had acknowledged the young man's presentation with a cool nod, "we will speak either German, French, or Italian. He speaks all three; they are also a part of my stock in trade, and I know that you are an expert in those tongues! I naturally fear my servants! But they are all unilingual! That is a blessed safeguard!"

"A sly enough old Rob Roy,—and a very accomplished moss trooper!" mused Kenneth, as he followed "the high contracting parties" to the splendid table now unveiled to his view!

"Paradise in transplanted Scotland! We are Sybarites!" murmured Kenneth, who realized that no woman would grace the feast.

The table was set but for three, and the young man slid into his seat with a sigh of relief from his love dilemma! If he had gained nothing, he had lost nothing!

He fancied that he even caught a cautionary wink from the hard-headed old capitalist, who was in some slender fashion his relation!

Kenneth quickly interpreted the old Scot's desire that he should remain an eager but apparently listless listener! The guest of honor never once turned his dull and haughty eyes toward the youth, but, red fez still on head, contemplated the superb array of plate gleaming around them upon table and sideboard.

The dining hall was as warmly gorgeous as the drawing rooms were coldly repellent. The noiseless service of the butler and three well-trained waiters was perfection, and Kenneth Gryffyth observed, with a smile, the incipient forest of wine glasses around each couvert.

"Who the dickens is Mustapha Fehmy Pasha, anyway!" mused the cool mathematician, after he had grouped the riches of the splendid dining hall into an equation with £10,000, as one quantity of the second member, increased by X, a variable unknown quantity of artistic and monetary value.

He had already adopted James Lawrie, Esq., into his

fragmentary family connection, as "My Uncle James, the great banker!" And now he marveled what manner of man the cool and frosty scion of Caledonia was! He was in the lion's den at last!

For there had been not a hint or reference to the past, to the family affiliation, and, thank Heaven, whatever secret road the keen-witted Lawrie was traveling on, he was evidently ignorant of the pranks of roguish Cupid in the al fresco love-making, carried on under the shadows of the Jura, in the sweet summer days where roses had faded all too soon!

The feast proceeded gravely, with a positive demonstration of the excellence of Lawrie's larder, the skill of his chef, and the raffine bouquet of his wines!

The gorgeous display of plate astonished young Gryfyth, who was insensibly led to observe how "modern art" manages and avoids the exquisite workmanship of the early silversmiths and the graceful and vivid art of the "Cinque cento!" "Truly," mused Kenneth, "the comfort of the many is the death-knell of handicraft!

"Sheffield and Elkington have chased away the shade of great Cellini, and the gods and graces seem to shun the tell-tale smoke of the factory chimney!" He noted the grave courtesy of Lawrie, and the watchful, voluptuous enjoyment of the Mussulman à la mode!

A mere pawn at the table, he watched the watchful duel of wits between the two elder men, and curiously observed that if the wine of Shiraz was forbidden to Fehmy Pasha, the Chateau Yquem, Amontillado, Clos Vougeot and Veuve Cliquot, did not seem to be under the ban of Mohammed! They were only bright embryos in the day of the stern husband of Ayesha!

The conversation drifted along upon topics of social, political, continental and monetary interest, and Kenneth soon observed that the wily Moslem aristocrat was an excellent knife and fork!

He refrained from a direct study of the guest of honor, but caught the confession that His Excellency himself maintained an establishment in Portland Square!

"I wonder if he is also allowed a harem in London," mused Kenneth, watching his old host's cautious play!

"My rôle is that of social witness, a mere dummy," he reflected. "Old Lawrie must unfold the game later!"

And so, he munched and munched, and drifted silently along on the friendly tide!

He had a fair opportunity to study the thin-chested, narrow-shouldered man of forty whose muddy olive complexion now showed out pale and ghastly under the crimson tarboche!

"Not a sturdy Turk! Probably a half-breed!" mused Kenneth, noting the marks of Arab blood!

The thin nose,—the straggling dark beard,—the pitiless lips, and the slender, hooked hands, loaded with diamond rings, told of a mongrel mixture of the two Mohammedan strains, Arab and Turkish! .

There were early crow's feet telling the story of Frankish pleasures, the cold suspicious dark eyes, wearily lidded, betrayed all the enervation of the seraglio, and the supercilious sneer of the lips bespoke ingrafted French dissipations!

Completely ignoring the younger man, Mustapha Fehmy's references to the Belshazzar fêtes of the opening of the Suez Canal in sixty-nine, his reminiscence of the mock glories of the Tuilleries under Louis Napoleon, and the bewitching Eugenie, as well as his casually dropped remark "I was educated in France, but have been for years a resident of England!" betrayed the Turkish court spy or the Egyptian minion.

"What in the world can bring this faded Franco-Egyptian voluptuary into the clutches of my Uncle James?" vainly reflected Kenneth, as the service of the superb feast was, at last, concluded!

"Lawrie does not look like a man who would 'take over' a harem in full blast, or issue bonds upon a bevy of attractive Circassians, lovely Georgians, or lively Ghawazees as security! But, I'll warrant that it's a matter o' money! For both Turk and Egyptian like to borrow the good golden treasures of the Giaour dog!"

He had, himself, indulged in some hasty personal explorations into "Uncle James'" financial biography! In all the banker's long career he had been always "shy" of all the Ottoman and Khediveal transactions.

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It was easy for a man who had lived in Turkey and Armenia to recognize the Pasha as cool, crafty, insincere, and his cold Moslem scorn of the Christian dog was only thinly overlaid by a French veneer of politeness as unsubstantial as Palais Royal gilding!

"It's money,—either money owed,—or money to be owed!" mused Kenneth, as he followed Uncle James to a richly decorated smoking chamber, when the coffee, segars and liqueurs were in order!

Lawrie bestowed an approving wink upon young Gryffyth, who had calmly and politely answered a few casual references to him, deftly interjected by the cat-like Uncle James!

The Pasha had not even deigned to lift his eyes and glance at the young interloper! He was an aristocrat *jusqu' au bout des ongles!*

With a nod, James Lawrie dismissed his servants when the three men were seated in a room, whose trophied arms, splendid shawls and "barbaric spoil of Ormuz and either Ind," suggested Wardour Street!

"I wonder if Kathleen's graceful fingers have helped to make up this artistic *mise en scène!*" thought the lover, as he began to perceive that James Lawrie was following the example of the British Government's crafty display once arranged to "impress the Shah!" The Moslem is caught by glitter!

The coffee à la Turque, the choice parade of tobaccos from priceless Trabucos, to veritable cigarettes de Cairo, awaited them, and Fehmy Pasha seemingly enjoyed his Curacao while Gryffyth noted the star of the Medjidie of the First Class! "He is something of an Egyptian lion after all!" decided the Financial Expert, as James Lawrie, with a courteous formality, remarked, "We are ready now, Your Excellency, to be honored with your confidence!"

And, then, for the first time, Mustapha Fehmy Pasha deigned to notice the silent young mathematician whom he had carelessly passed over as a mere household attaché, a private secretary or famulus.

"It is a matter of the greatest moment!" slowly said

the Pasha, removing his jeweled black amber cigarette holder from his thin, bloodless lips. "This young man."

There was a world of scorn in the wave of the jeweled trinket! He eyed the interloper with hostility!

"Represents the entire capital which would be used in the whole enormous transaction, and, when acting with me, represents it also with full power!" impressively remarked James Lawrie, as he gazed steadily at the Pasha!

It was a credit to Kenneth Gryffyth's nerve that he leisurely clipped the stem of a Trabuco, as Mustapha Fehmy shrugged his shoulders in genuine Gallic dismay.

"I thought I was to confer, personally, with the great financier, David Hart!" said the Pasha, sinking back into the Turkish cushions with an ill disguised uneasiness.

Kenneth recognized the name of a mighty Member of Parliament who had achieved a world-famous success in reforming the finances of an Empire, a vast domain to which the land which William the Norman conquered, is a mere hunting park! He began to see gigantic visions looming out of the smoke, and their Titanic proportions were as of the Genii who had escaped from the bottle! It was now Uncle James who was rubbing Aladdin's lamp, and—Kenneth Gryffyth sat silent under fire,—never heeding the contemptuous scorn of Fehmy Pasha's eyes.

Across the fragrant smoke wreaths now veiling them the young lover's eyes could see glimpses of a strange, romantic future, and at the end of a long path, which his fancy dared not follow, he thrilled at the glances of those Irish gray eyes,—burning yet tender! What mattered the scorn of the leaden-eyed Pasha if the way only led on to Kathleen's side.

The young man turned his glances to old James Lawrie, who sat there as stern and cool as Cameron of Fassifern when the bayonets of the reeling foemen crossed at Quatre Bras!

There was something in the gleam of the old banker's eyes which told Kenneth that greatness was now being thrust upon him!

And he assumed the awed watchfulness of Macbeth when listening to the counsels of the three weird sisters on the blasted heath!

"A wholesale and retail dealer in surprises is my inscrutable Uncle James!" decided the mathematician. "And a sturdy, grave old fellow, too!"

"You are well aware, Your Excellency," coldly said Lawrie, "that the object of our meeting was to enable you to produce the direct personal authorization of your royal master for this secret preliminary conference, and his own further request, under his own sign manual and seal, for a confidential agent of the most absolute powers to be sent out to him in Egypt under the safeguard of his own royal word!"

"If you can produce that we will confer,—and I will then bring my other associate, David Hart, here to meet you later. Without that, no conference! No conference, no money!"

"And to prove the absolute unity of action of our party, if you will call upon David Hart, he will only refer you back to me, to begin all anew, and, even then, you will always find this young man here at my side! The responsibility of delay, of failure, now rests with you! David Hart you will only see when you have explained all to us!"

While the Pasha communed with himself in a stubborn irresolution, Kenneth Gryffyth remembered that the banker had merely mumbled an unintelligible name in his own perfunctory presentation! "So, I am really a dark horse!" he smiled, and then paid great attention to his regalia.

"I might have had the direct orders of David Hart to disclose my whole commission before this interview!" coldly objected the Pasha, still eying Kenneth Gryffyth with an ill-concealed annoyance. It was the jealousy of slightly senior years.

"Very well, Your Excellency," remarked the millionaire, icily, "Your master will have sent on to him the telegraphed declination of David Hart to-morrow, as well as that of all the great interests represented by me,—and also that of the vast capital controlled by my young colleague here! It may only serve to precipitate his personal ruin!"

"It certainly will insure your own immediate recall to

answer why you have disobeyed his most explicit instructions!"

When Lawrie ceased speaking there was a slight shudder which convulsed the Pasha's frame!

"That breaks his nerve," mused Kenneth! "Does he fear the bow-string or the horrors of the wild Soudan! Abyssinian spear,—the Khartoum executioner, the White Nile fever, or the deadly thread worms."

"I will now hold you responsible if any indiscretion is later charged against me!" faltered Mustapha Pasha, drawing from his bosom a gold and crimson velvet case, from which he extracted a document which he kissed with an abject reverence!

"The sign manual of His Highness Ismail Pasha!" said Fehmy, rising and tendering the document to the unmoved banker. "Ismail Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt!"

"This remains in my hands as a guarantee for our side of this negotiation?" demanded Lawrie, as he carefully read the few lines and calmly handed the paper to Kenneth Gryffyth!

The words of the reluctant Pasha had carried the young man away, in fancy, to that Texas of the old world, modern Egypt, then rotting under the feeble sway of the romantic, vicious and insincere Ismail I., the fifth Khedive! The first hereditary ruler of modern Egypt.

"David Hart and myself will give you a joint receipt for this precious document to-morrow!" gravely remarked the banker.

"And our accredited agent will leave for Cairo within a week! The great man whom you wish to meet will be here to-morrow evening with myself to meet you here, but only provided that you now unfold the whole tenor of your secret instructions.

"So, to-morrow evening you can telegraph back in cipher the departure of our accredited agent to His Highness!"

"Shall I meet him?" eagerly demanded the Egyptian, with a lapse into Giaour curiosity. His voice trembled in its anxiety.

"To what purpose?" coldly answered Lawrie! "We three principals are here. Hart and myself will carry on

all the needful negotiations with you! My colleague will act secretly in the manipulation of the capital! You are aware that the sudden official interference of the French and English Governments would end your last hopes of success, and at once terminate our mission, as well as bring about an alarming change in Egyptian affairs! There are a thousand spying eyes on the watch!

Though twelve years of experience in handling vast monetary interests had steeled Kenneth Gryffyth to affairs of magnitude, he felt a new fascination in regarding the few lines of direct authorization signed "Ismail," and sealed, in ink, with the personal Arabic signet of the successor of Sesostris.

The signer was the heir of Cambyses, of Alexander and Antony, of Cleopatra, and her lover d' occasion Caesar, of the great Napoleon, and the lion-hearted Mehemet Ali, whose red star rose in the East, being cradled in the same year with the great Corsican and his conqueror, Wellington,—the fated 1769.

It was a direct, personally written authorization to Mustapha Fehmy Pasha to treat with James Lawrie and David Hart and their associates.

The brief French sentences pledged the ruler's faith to the personal protection of a confidential envoy with whom he would treat in person, and who was directed to report to the Italian Consul General in Alexandria, where a confidential officer would meet him and conduct him to the City of the Pyramids—Masr el Kahirah—"the victorious capital!" The Viceroy's own personal invitation and guarantee!

A slender strip of parchment with Arabic characters was sealed with a silken string to the letter of the luxurious descendant of Ibrahim, the lion of Syria, great Mehemet's illustrious adopted son!

"This token will bring your agent to my personal presence, and an absolute secrecy is enjoined! The Italian Consul General will have his orders, through my own confidential representative." Such was a brief foot note.

With a becoming gravity, Kenneth Gryffyth surrendered the pledge of a Viceroy's faith! He now began to see all the nature of the intrigue which was being handled

by the bony fingers of the unshaken Scottish millionaire!

That pleasant prospect to a Scotsman, "the road to London" had led the aspiring James Lawrie's father on to financial eminence, through the "safety game" which he had played in a long and busy life! The son had carried up the financial pyramid with the fortune of the Belfast heiress, and he now held the financial future of a wrecked Sardanapalus in his hands! For, Egypt was in pawn for debt!

"Was it gold which was to pay, or gold yet to be borrowed, which actuated Ismail Pasha's dangerous secret invitation?" Kenneth reflected upon the usual oriental apathy as to payment, and mentally decided that the great modern spendthrift longed for more gold! The sad cry, a general wail, "Mafees filoos!" echoes always in Egypt from the mud huts of the degraded fellahin to the dreamy palaces of Boulak! A perpetually "hard up" land of lawless luxury, of old mysteries and of cosmopolitan deviltry.

"Shall I speak?" said Mustapha Fehmy Pasha, drawing forth a tablet covered with closely packed Arabic characters.

"The hour grows late! We are here to act in your princely master's behalf!" said Lawrie, and then a lightning glance of intelligence put Kenneth's brain upon its keenest *qui vive*! The story of that tablet was to be engraved upon the tablets of his heart! And the young man soon recognized the unyielding pressure of the master mind upon the ambitionless minion of Ismail!

In a passionless voice the Egyptian dignitary began, speaking with slowly constrained accents!

"The vast engagements of Said Pasha to the Canal Company, and the growing influence of 'le grand François—de Lesseps,' brought my own august master (whom Allah preservel) into the closest relations with Napoleon III. The cannon of Sedan were as fatal to the hopes of Ismail Pasha, Khedive, as the defeat at Acre was in 1799 to Napoleon, when Phillippeaux, his boyish enemy, his one *bête noir*, at Brienne, aided Sir Sidney Smith to change the fate of Egypt! There was even then the iron hand of England!" Fehmy Pasha sighed.

"The seizure of the Khedive's secretly constructed fleet

of ironclads in sixty-nine, by the Sultan, brought Ibrahim Pasha's grandson to the feet of haughty England again. It was the iron hand of England impelling the Sultan to curb his secretly conspiring vassal.

"Hereditary Pasha of Egypt and Khedive in 1866, Ismail Pasha I. finds himself in 1879 forbidden to maintain any foreign legations or even to conclude a treaty! It is England's iron hand again, moving her poor, voiceless puppet, the Sultan!

"When the army of two hundred thousand quickly raised and drilled under the counsels of the twenty-five American officers in sixty-nine will have been cut down to eighteen thousand, the conquests of Sir Samuel Baker, Gordon Pasha, and bold Ibrahim will be lost forever to Egypt! It is our ruin!

"I have told you in the negotiations of the past month that after giving to the world its greatest artificial waterway, Ismail Pasha, after expending five hundred millions of money wrung from the fellahin, and three hundred millions of debt in the sixteen years of his reign, in the cause of modern civilization, finds himself now drifting helplessly into bondage under the guns of the British fleet!

"France legally despoiled him first in the Canal scheme, your Disraeli then forced the hundred and seventy-seven thousand shares of the Suez Canal out of his hands in return for a poor twenty millions sterling. Even that went to the creditors, and now, haughty England coldly watches the agony of her destined prey! Occasion only waits upon opportunity!" Kenneth Gryffyth was amazed at the hopeless tone of the Pasha.

"England with her irresistible fleet," calmly continued Fehmy Pasha, "will use Cyprus as a strong place of arms! She will go on and baffle France, and easily defy and deceive the other powers, and so 'improve' Ismail I. out of Egypt, unless—" he hesitated.

"Unless what?" drily queried the attentive old banker, who was seemingly as passionless as a porphyry bust of Cato.

"Unless David Hart and yourself with the great capital arrayed behind you can offer to unify the debt of Egypt, release my princely master from the grip of the

Rothschilds, who were Disraeli's tool in getting the control of the canal, lower the annual interest, and so save the Khedive's private estates, and his personal sovereignty! It is a mighty task!" sighed Mustapha Pasha.

"When the princely master gave me the governorship of his son, Mohammed Pasha, now at St. Cyr, and His Highness Faoud Pasha, now honoring my roof at Portland Square, he gave over his third son, Prince Hussein, to the influence of the German Court! There is only Prince Tewfik and Prince Hassan left in Egypt to aid the lonely Ismail Khedive in controlling the secret duel to the death of Nubar Pasha and the artful Cherif Pasha!"

"Can the bitter warfare of these two men not be stopped?" interjected Lawrie, who now gazed fixedly at Kenneth Gryffyth.

"Alas!" sighed Fehmy Pasha. "Nubar Pasha is an Armenian Christian—a mock reformer—the puppet of the Earl of Beaconsfield, who calls him 'a statesman!' To him Egypt owes the presence of Sir Samuel Baker,—Gordon Pasha,—the Mixed Tribunals,—the placing of the public finances under European control since seventy-six, and the network of useless railroads and telegraph lines which will aid England in her final march to make a union at the equator between British columns advancing from the west coast, the Cape of Good Hope and through the Soudan!"

"In twenty-five years, Khartoum will only be a Cook's Tourist Headquarters! The 'Gordon Hotels,' the London Times and British lobster backs will be the only local features!"

"It may be so!" mused James Lawrie, "the onward march of the Anglo-Saxon civilization, the hardy merchant, the devoted missionary."

"Spare me any of that Exeter Hall inspiration!" bitterly rejoined Mustapha Fehmy Pasha, "we know the fate of all the tributary princes of India! I am agnostic enough to believe that the desire to get ivory,—gold dust, and ostrich feathers, in return for Manchester prints and pot-metal Birmingham trading muskets leads your compatriots up the Nile, rather than the peaceful counsels of your Bible!"

"You would have been satisfied with an opera bouffe empire of Egypt à la Français, however, if the stern Moltke had not crushed Louis Napoleon's rotten throne!" coldly said Lawrie.

The Egyptian noble frankly answered, "Yes! For Napoleon III. would have catered to our pleasure-loving and voluptuous nature! Remember! the Sphinx has the breasts of a woman! The French would have left us at least a ginger-bread autonomy! But, your iron English hand never lets go its prey!"

"Speke, Livingstone, Burton, Grant, Samuel Baker, nay, even Gordon Pasha, are all either the instruments or unconscious tools of England!

"In all this 'slow crawling nigh' of the British lion, Nubar Pasha (though able) has been the Warwick of Ismail Khedive. And so the fellahin, or native Egyptian party, has always followed Sadik Pasha, the 'Mefettish,' or Finance Minister, who himself born under the Koobash, has raised himself to wed a son to Ismail's own daughter!

"He with Sadik Pasha, and the great Cherif Pasha, fight for Egypt aided by his able relative, General Ratib Pasha! These two rivals, the heads of the Egyptian and Turkish wings of our home dissensions, have long fought Nubar, with England behind him, and Monsieur Crapaud, dancing gaily to the boatswain's pipes of your fleet!

"Nelson's cannon at Aboukir frightened the Gallic cock forever from our shores! Now, alas!" cried the Pasha, "two years ago, the great Sadik, the Mefettish, went out of life, in a bloody and mysterious eclipse! It only leaves Cherif, the son-in-law of Suleman Pasha (Colonel Sèves, the renegade) as the Khedive's last personal friend!"

"And Cherif's vast fortunes may soon follow the mysterious disappearance of the Mefettish!" gloomily said Lawrie!

"The Khedive is an unlucky friend! Toussoun Pasha (Said's heir) was murdered!—Halim (his uncle),—Mustapha (his brother), were also pillaged and banished! Their own vast estates went into the maintenance of forty palaces, nine hundred harem beauties and five thousand personal attendants! The Mefettish was most brutally

murdered, and the Khedive was his guilty heir! And now even if Cherif has overthrown Nubar Pasha twice, only to be again ousted,—what will be his future doom?"

"Sir!" said Mustapha Fehmy Pasha, rising with a cold dignity, "I am here to transact business for my princely master! The man who for years has kept me in splendor here, as his secretly accredited agent! The sovereign who has given two of his princely sons to my care! I have alone fought off Roscius and Company (your great interest compounders)! I have delayed the game of Beaconsfield and the Rothschilds in their proposed 'post mortem' examination of Egypt!"

"Cherif Pasha is the Khedive's last hope now! He alone can rally the Italian, Austrian and Russian governments behind the Khedive to delay that ruin which the crafty Nubar Pasha has abetted!"

Lawrie silently bowed, and the Pasha resumed.

"Send out your agent at once! Cherif Pasha will work loyally with him. Nubar's present tottering ministry once overthrown, and putting Cherif at the head of the government, if you can readjust the loans, and relieve the present desperate financial strain Ismail may die a Khedive, and—England be content to only foreclose her mortgage—after his demise!" Fehmy Pasha groaned!

"I dare not criticize him! I am only here to act as his confidential servant! I have conferred generally with you, for a month! When I receive David Hart's receipt, coupled with your own, for the confidential papers which I deliver to you finally to-morrow night, I am silent forever, unless I receive my master's new directions! Nubar and Cherif are boldly playing for each other's heads! The fellahin are starving,—the taxes are all farmed out.

"The Khedive is in the hands of the hungry Jews and base adventurers! All payments are from six months to two years in default, and—the throne totters! Will you help?"

"I will on one condition!" gravely replied James Lawrie. "If your princely sovereign keeps good faith—if he opens all the secrets of his personal and official accounts to us—if he is true to his sealed engagements,—then and only then he may yet be saved.

"Smooth as he is, your bearded ruler whose bonhomie is that of Henry of Navarre, has left a bloodier record than Richard the Hunchback!"

The Pasha's eyes gleamed in a flash of hatred! "The Khedive will promise anything, and Henry of Navarre said 'Paris was well worth a mass.' Will Ismail keep his word?" There was a grave silence.

Lawrie coldly continued, "Cherif has followed up as a cruel gleaner after Ismail's bloody flail! I am told that the Khedive has secreted a huge private hoard of between thirty and sixty millions of pounds somewhere in continental Europe! That Cherif Pasha, too, has followed his prince's example! That old Tiberius' splendid Pompeian vices may all be re-enacted by the secret partners in a royal retreat near Naples!

"Now, if the Khedive would only throw these hoards into the balance,—Egypt might be surely saved!" The face of Fehmy Pasha was convulsed, as he muttered:

"And all this, and your future delicate questionings must be answered, sir, by His Highness' own lips! Cherif Pasha will meet and protect your agent! Only the Consuls General of France and England must know nothing! My own head would fall if I answered any of your queries! I will come to-morrow night, here, but only to meet David Hart, and I shall telegraph to my master, in cipher, then, that I have fulfilled my mission!"

With a graceful salute of the hand touching in succession his heart and brow to Lawrie and a mere glance of contemptuous civility at Kenneth Gryffyth, the angered Pasha led the way to the drawing room!

At a warning glance from Lawrie the astounded youth resumed his seat! He could hear a few last whispered exchanges between the icy host and his semi-hostile guest, and then, the great outer doors clanged!

There was soon heard the clatter of wheels and Kenneth Gryffyth reflected that for all the Pasha's apparent unconcern he had carefully mentally studied the young financier in stealthily suspicions. He was now in the ring and it looked as if he was to be a "stayer."

With an affectation of careless ease, Gryffyth lighted a second Trabuco! "My Uncle James plays a game for

high stakes!" he mused, and was lost in a study of the magnificent decorations when Lawrie silently entered.

"Now, sir!" briskly remarked the millionaire, as he motioned to Kenneth to seat himself. "I have given you my entire confidence! I now ask yours! You can easily divine that this financing on the whole Egyptian public and private debt can not be arranged without the tacit consent of our government and the co-operation of all the main holders of outstanding loans.

"How I can obtain that, is my business! To ascertain whether the proposed rearrangement is possible is your business! For you are to receive and demand the Khedive's fullest confidence, and will have Cherif's private aid! For the crafty Pasha would gladly save his hoardings, serve his master, whom he has pushed into all extravagances, and ruin his deadly foe—Nubar!

"Now, you shall have carte blanche! Benjamin and Son will loan you to me for six months!" he smiled. Kenneth bowed in silence.

"As for recompense, than can wait till you return! I represent two hundred millions of this imperilled capital! Your great house—and—many others are behind me! David Hart's future action depends on your report. Parliament is not sitting!

"There are ways to reach the government and relieve it of an embarrassment which may be diplomatic, military and financial! On your report as Financial Expert our proposed syndicate will act!

"We have watched this situation for years! We know your record from the first day of your coming to Benjamin. As to be the cook of the Emperor of Russia is the most honored and dangerous place in the profession of the chef, so, to expert the private records of the Khedive is to gain the Cordon Bleu of modern finance! We will support you, guide you, instruct you, and reward you.

"But one question remains! Will you take the risks? Have you anyone to leave behind you, unprovided? Can you be watchful, brave, cool, prudent and self-denying? Proof against wine, women, flattery, bribery and all cajolment? Can you laugh at haunting dangers?"

Then Kenneth Gryffyth was sure that he saw the gleam

of those melting Irish gray eyes, love lit, and beaming down upon him!

"You must guide me! And take me upon trust, Mr. Lawrie!" soberly said Gryffyth. "I will try to play the man! And—right here—I will promise you I will not betray you! If I have the ability,—you shall have the service!" The old banker was keenly studying the young lover's face!

"Here's my hand!" he said. "You must never see Mustapha Fehmy Pasha's face again till the game is played out. We watch his every movement now. So to the Benjamin's to-morrow and report as usual! Close up all your private affairs to-morrow! They will give you five hundred pounds in cash, and a draft for the same to your new name. At four, I will be there to meet you, with a passport and a Cook's circular letter of credit for five hundred more!"

"I will bring you a cipher! You are then to take the midnight train to Geneva to-morrow night, when I have received this document of the Khedive's! From Geneva you must go down the Rhone, grande vitesse, to Marseilles, and await me there at the Grand Hotel Louvre et la Paix!"

"Take not an article with your name on it! Not even a piece of jewelry! I'll fit you out at Marseilles! We have a hundred agents at work! You are not to make any acquaintance with a doubtful man or woman till you land at Alexandria! There you will be met! Your stay in Egypt will be six months, at most!"

"Close all your private affairs by four o'clock, and arrange it so that you go direct to the Cannon Street Hotel and await me there, after I have polished off Mustapha! Are you afraid to go?"

"No, sir! I'm your man!" stoutly said Kenneth Gryffyth! The old man smiled faintly. "You'll have full instructions at Marseilles for me! Now,—Good-night!"

And, the old banker handed him a handful of the Trabucos and murmured, "Sharp time,—four! Remember!"

In ten minutes, Kenneth Gryffyth was back at the Travelers' Club.

His face was slightly pale, as he said to the eager

Charley Grosvenor, who was anxious-faced for once in his life—"I am going away,—just where to, I can not tell you! But, I must see Kathleen, to-morrow, and,—for the last time! I can come to your house, between eleven and three! I will have to work half the night to close up my affairs! Can you arrange it?"

The lover's voice trembled in its eagerness! "I leave London to-morrow night, for six months!"

"You are a strange chap!" quietly said Charley Grosvenor. "I think I shall take a little jaunt myself!" He rang for the steward and then quietly remarked, "I have begged my one faithful woman friend, the Countess of St. André, to lure away Her August Watchfulness, la Baronne, to a luncheon to-morrow, and the pretty Countess will call at eleven, '*in propria personæ*', and so, surely bear off our blue-eyed ogre! And, Miss Kathleen Lawrie will be there to meet you. Anything further, good my Lord?"

"Yes!" resolutely said Kenneth, still mentally tipsy with rubbing the Aladdin's lamp! "You are to be in the Paris train at the Cannon Street Station at midnight to-morrow night, and go as far as Calais with me! You must help me about my letters!"

"Oh! I'll run over and take a peep at the theaters of gay Lutetia!" laughed the Honorable Charles! "As to the Scotch Shylock, he astonished you, did he not?"

"He certainly did!" rejoined Kenneth Gryffyth, "and, he is yet in the dark, as to our summer, and I propose to win his daughter's hand now in a fair fight! Now, good-night!" said the resolute lover, laughingly disdaining the stirrup cup!

"Held by the Enemy!" mused Grosvenor. "Our young friend will later make love, from the inside of the old moss trooper's castle! All's fair in love and war!"

But it was hardly fair that Kenneth Gryffyth was followed to his rooms, by a man who had dropped out of Mustapha Pasha's carriage, when that worthy left the Lawrie mansion, and two hours before Kenneth slept a handsome foreigner with decorated lapel was speeding down to Calais on the London-bound train.

He hugely enjoyed his regal Egyptian cigarette, as he

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pored over a brief dispatch addressed to the Count de Santa Marina! It was brief and imperative! And it read—

"Come instantly!"

The last reflection of Mustapha Pasha ere he slept was, "I think the Count will keep my young friend in sight!"

CHAPTER III.

MIDAS TO THE RESCUE.—AT MARSEILLES.

There was a quiet half hour of introspection before the young representative of British gold began to lay out his personal programme for the morrow.

Seated before a cheerful fire in his cozy parlors, he asked himself if he had a right to deceive, even for Love's sweet sake, the man who had so unostentatiously given him the opportunity to win the blue riband of his profession!

He had only stopped for a single moment to exchange a word with his hostess, pretty Mrs. Ada Wilton, who was making captives among her little gathered literary set in the drawing rooms.

"Off for a six months' tour!" he gaily said. "Please ask George to come up to my rooms, when he comes in from the office!"

"Whither away now?" queried his hostess. "The States?—Brazil?—Japan?—or, perhaps, Siberia?"

"Ah! not as bad as all that, little lady!" he rejoined! "It's on a blind trail though,—and—brings me a good pull of stiff, hard work! I leave the house at nine, and —so, must be busy at my packing!"

"I shall have the honor of making your breakfast hour a bit cheerful!" she laughed. "I'll send the Chief up to you!" And, she tripped away for her "lord and master!"

It had been a very favoring gale which wafted Kenneth Gryffyth into the little family mess of George Wilton, the Night Editor of that great London journal, the "Icicle."

A cheery college acquaintance, married to a charming woman, the daughter of a great Cambridge Don, the journalist was fondly termed "the Chief," by those who knew him as first among the press of younger knights of the pen.

Kenneth Gryffyth's lair comprised the whole third floor, and, a bachelor free lance, he was able to grasp traveling rug, mackintosh, and portmanteau at any time, and sally out, at the call of his gilded clients, conscious that a warm welcome awaited him on his return, and that the "gas was properly turned off," in his sanctum.

Gazing around at his rooms, decked out with all the spoils of his many trips, he filled his pipe and murmured, "There's one good thing! I fly light, and—will have no social mummery to annoy me over there!"

He was already quite au courant with Egyptian finance, and, the evening's discussion had enlightened him, intuitively, as to Lawrie's real object.

"I suppose that he wishes to bring in the Khedive's whole estate, if possible—even his vast hidden treasures, and then find a sure way to cut down, lop off and regulate the enormous drain of this moslem modern Belshazzar's pleasures and princely whims!"

He had heard many dark whispers of the infamous means taken to swell Ismail's modest patrimonial estate of three hundred thousand acres, to nearly a third of all the land of Goshen, the sugar, cotton and other plantations of the whole Nile country! Artificially raised taxes, condemnation, sly buying in, and covert official fraud, had vastly enriched the sly Khedive, and aggrandized the artful Cherif and his greedy clique.

The doom of those born near the throne,—the plunder of the dead Mefettish,—the stories of grim death always waiting for the expatriated, at the First Cataract, and the roll of missing dignitaries "who went up the Nile,"—all this, had excited the young man's imagination.

"Not a cheerful prospect!" he murmured.

"Bah!" he cried, knocking out the ashes of his pipe. "I am consigned to the Khedive, personally! Cherif would, at most, only lie, and hoodwink me! The British fleet at Alexandria is a stern safeguard!"—And then re-

turned to him the verdict of a friend, "For moral business,—low intrigues,—dangerous connivance,—and dishonesty from the throne to the donkey boy,—for all practical and possible villainy,—Egypt is the modern world's Sodom and Gomorrah!"

"A nice lot!" he mused. He thought again of Mustaphia Fehmy Pasha's cruel jaded face.

"There is a possible enemy!" he reflected. "If I remained here a week, I would dig up all the details of his secret legation on Portland Square, where the crafty Oriental has his will! But in all this—mum's the word! I am simply muzzled! And,—even old Lawrie dares not to give me the final tips, till I am ready to take the Alexandria steamer!"

He had already settled in his mind that he would only tell the cheery George Wilton, that he was ordered over to the continent, for six months! His mail would be sent on from Benjamin and Sons! There was only—Kathleen now, to think of!

After much cogitation, he decided that he must, in honor, cut off all future secret meetings until his employment was over. "I shall see my darling once only, tomorrow! I dare not write to her! There is only one bright soul who can be our confidant! Sweet Milly Grosvenor! My letters can be sent to her, under cover! She can give them to Kathleen, and I can trust the house to send hers on to me!"

There was no risk in the latter plan, for the honor of Benjamin and Sons was unsullied!

"And what shall I tell her?" He was left without any lights to guide!

At last, it flashed over him, that James Lawrie had deliberately ignored all references to his birth and the feeble family relationship.

"He evidently knows my whole past! He chooses me as a mere professional instrument! There is no social side of this great scheme to place the giant intellect of David Hart in control of Ismail's finances!"

The young man knew now that, catching at a last straw, the Khedive had offered to this great financier a personal salary equal to that of a Governor General of

India, and also, all his own not already delegated powers of financial control, if the pressing burden of debt would be lifted, floated, unified, and the ruinous interests abated! It was the very last hope of a despairing monarch!

And, the wily Cherif would now perhaps throw down his lifelong adversary Nubar, save his own ill-gotten gains, and flourish on, in safety, under the protection of the huge secret financial alliance! It would serve England's foreign policy, secure the investor, save the Khedive, and,—vastly advance Cherif's fortunes!

Kenneth Gryffyth now wondered if the man whose life had been a blank since his own mother had refused the millionaire's last offer of marriage, would work him good or ill?

"Who knows?" he vainly mused, and he was fondly dreaming of Kathleen Lawrie, when George Wilton roused him from pondering whether he would admit to the heiress that he was going out in her father's employ!

He was astonished at the vastness of the secret scheme to rearrange, by the private control of capital, the whole future of Egypt, and to control the fate of the overland route to India!

While he debated as to the details of his prudent course, a throbbing unrest at his heart told him, "Mine she is, my right of her love and faith, and,—mine, she shall remain!"—It was Nature's resistless voice!

"Well! Old Man of Equations and Formulae!" cried Wilton, "Tell me of your coming jaunt! You can trust to me, you know, even if you fear that dear chatterbox Ada!"

"It's a very important mission, George!" said Gryffyth, "and, it will be either the making or marring of my entire career! I will be away for six months, and, moreover, I shall not be able to write to you often, for obvious reasons. But, the house will be in daily telegraphic communication with me! Letters without place address, perhaps even date, will reach you from me through them, and, all that you send to them will safely reach me!"

"Ask them no questions, for they will not reply! But, they do know that you and Charley Grosvenor are my ex-

ecutors, in case that anything should happen, and you two both know where my will is deposited. There is also a sealed letter of my last wishes addressed to you jointly, in the care of the house!"

"Well! Boy! The light will always shine in the window for you!" said Wilton, after he had exchanged a few cordial greetings.

"I'll be down at the Cannon Street Hotel to say good-bye to you, and, the press shall guard the secret of your unlimited absence! Of course, you know, we are both of us at your service! Write or telegraph!"

"Thanks!" cried Kenneth Gryffyth. "Don't fear for my safety! I have England's great Third Estate behind me. For, Crown and Lords may take precedence, in ceremony,—but Britain's middle classes with their money,—merchant fleet,—press,—and untrammeled House of Commons; with their factors and commercial agencies spread over the whole world,—are an irresistible army with banners! The very Pretorian Guard of the Golden Empire of the Twentieth Century!"

"I am only a skirmisher on the picket line of the great army serving under the banner of Plutus, and—I am also a citizen of the world—by virtue of the protection of the yellow-minted British sovereign! Gold is the universal king!"

"We are happy in knowing you, first in your chosen profession," cordially said George Wilton. "Only we wish to know your personal safety provided for! Of course, I can understand the prudence of your great house and its allies. You must be silent! I understand! For, you always play for high stakes!"

"George!" said Kenneth Gryffyth, wearily, "The trust is so great, so undeserved, that it almost turns my head! Figures with men behind them, can become as irresistible as Genghis Khan's hordes! And they can sweep away dynasties, thrones, and even change the arterial currents of human vital movement!" His host left him to the last labors of his packing.

He walked up to a great wall map and gazed there upon the English possessions of the world!

"Fifteen times the area of Great Britain is practically

under our merchants' money rule in Asia alone. And, David Hart had swayed the financial destinies there for years, of Clive's swordwon, blood-bought empire!

"Twenty-five times that area in North America practically governing itself! The realm of the British merchant!

"Twenty times that same home insular area is ruled by the laws of commerce in Australasia,—and, even now, in Africa, we have a shadowy claim to twenty times the area of the Four Kingdoms!"

He turned away from the map after a glance at the narrow strip separating the boundary of British Central Africa from the Victoria Nyanza lake.

"The Nile, from the equator to thirty degrees of north latitude, is the greatest waterway of dark Africa! If we can hold that and the Niger,—we now have the river Orange, and we will control the upper Zambesi,—and, soon will have our fair share of the Congo River trade, in the Congo Free State,—if the signs fail not, the Pasha was right!

"British trade interests will dominate and control our African foreign policy, with the help of our wary diplomats and our brave army and navy! There is a grim game of giants opening, now, there—out in the Dark Continent!

"And, the serried columns of British golden sovereigns will follow on, behind my mathematics, and—the twinkling bayonets be wearily borne toward the dark Sudan! And, so the trade winds hold our fortunes in fee!"

He realized that this cold-pulsed Scottish financier Lawrie might be the Wellington of a great financial struggle,—that David Hart might be its Emperor of Russia, dominating the Financial Allies, and the firm of Benjamin and Son and their hidden associates the vast army destined to figure at Ismail Pasha's financial Waterloo!

"It is a silent struggle of financial giants, with governments behind them, all waiting, with bated breath, for the verdict of the financial kings!"

Suddenly, he realized the importance of his future maneuvering behind the arras, around the theatic Khe-

divial throne! "If they trust all this to me,—it will be a gigantic trust, a labor to tax both heart and brain!"

He remembered James Lawrie's injunction to "fly light," and his proposed kit was as simple as that of "Thomas Atkins," of Her Majesty's Guards!

When he slept, his last waking thoughts were of the one brief glimpse of Paradise, the two hours vouchsafed by the goddess Fortune to him, wherein to arrange for an offensive and defensive alliance with Kathleen Lawrie, against her wary father's perspicuity.

"His daughter and his ducats!" laughed Kenneth. "Just now, I am on his blind side! He is ignorant of the loving pact sealed under Alpine heights, where the dreamy blue of the skies is reflected in the sapphire lakes!

"Thank Heavens! Madame la Baronne de Saint-Nazaire has always ignored the very social existence of James Lawrie! Madame Rose Nugent Lawrie's gentle hypochondria of illness precludes all visits! Kathleen is absolutely unwatched in her association with the Grosvenors, and, Charley and his sister Milly are a safe covered way to reach Kathleen's heart.

"But, to-morrow's meeting is the last until I have either succeeded or failed!"

And, then, he slept, uneasily dreaming of the beautiful gaze of Fortune wagered upon his outwitting "Uncle James Lawrie" as to the course of true love.

He dreamed strange dreams that night, strange fevered dreams of parched deserts,—of dreamy seraglios and the broad, sunlit, palm-fringed Nile!—There was a mournful refrain in his mind of solemn olden words which he had read when a boy at his mother's knee!

"It shall be the basest of the kingdoms,—neither shall it exalt itself any more,—among the nations,—and, there shall be no more a prince of the house of Egypt!" The words of the wondrous prophecies which baffle all sages of our later days!

All the night, while Kenneth Gryffyth slept in peace, uneasy footsteps haunted the silent street before the Wilton's home,—stealthy eyes regarded the entrance to which the young man had been followed; and, Mustapha

Fehmy Pasha smiled as he closed his eyes that same night.

"That fellow is surely to be the spy of the millionaire's club who are now devouring Egypt! My own men will not lose him from sight! And, to-morrow, Ernesto Strilogo, the newly blossomed Count di Santa Marina, will secretly follow him on to Egypt!

"This Scotsman has lied to me,—I will spy upon him and his friends! The Khedive will reward me! If he does not,—then,—Cherif will! For—the liberal Cherif Pasha always pays! And,—I am safe here, and," he chuckled, "sure to be well paid as long as I keep out of Egypt!" And, so he fell asleep, muttering that word dear to the Egyptian heart, "Boukra!"—To-morrow!

It was all in vain that the graceful Mrs. Ada Wilton essayed all the womanly arts to gently entrap Kenneth Gryffyth into those confidences so dear to the heart of Eve's daughters! The cozy British breakfast-table was the scene of her dissimulated defeat.

For, when the young lover sped away, cityward, she only knew that, in due time, the Chief would tell her all.

Whereat, with a pretty pout, and a murmured "God bless you, Kenneth!" she sent forth the Knight of the Calculus, on his undiscovered mission.

It certainly was "light-marching order" for Gryffyth, who had prudently directed his man "Soames" to convoy the slender luggage to the Cannon Street Hotel, take a room, and to await him there.

And, thus it was, that good fortune favored the young man now dogged by Fehmy Pasha's spies, for the "double relief" was an old trick of Ismail's secret London agent.

Under the convenient mask of "Personal Governor to His Highness Prince Faoud," a careless coffee-hued schoolboy—Mustapha Fehmy Pasha's slender fingers had worked the web of many a dark profitable intrigue, of more or less moral turpitude.

He was, in more senses than one, a personal representative of Ismail Khedive's silent, smooth and bloody craft,—a minister to his shameless pleasures,—and the agent of his artful trickery.

With a laughing reminiscence of his boyish games of

hare and hounds, Kenneth Gryffyth stole out of the rear entrance of Benjamin and Sons' huge financial fortress in Threadneedle Street.

His heart was beating wildly, for a half-hour's conference had been vouchsafed him with the "head of the house," and he had received the moneys spoken of by James Lawrie. He knew, also, that, in some strange secret alliance, he now personally represented nearly the whole mercantile British holdings of Egyptian debt.

And—the head of the great house had said words to him which brought a crimson glow of pride to his cheeks.

"Perhaps they only want, after all, to be in at the death!" mused the startled young financier, who now knew that he would have an exclusive peep behind the curtains of the tottering throne of Egypt.

"Never mind! I'll do my duty!" he pledged himself. "Now, for Kathleen!" He was swiftly whirled away from the guarded rear entrance of the Bank, and, in a closed carriage.

The driver winked at the young man's hasty orders, and, the artful plan laid to prevent "Uncle James Lawrie" from learning of his sweet child's clandestine meeting, left Fehmy Pasha's spies idly cooling their heels before the bank of Benjamin and Sons.

And thus, it fell out that when the Count di Santa Marina dashed, travel stained, into the Pasha's home, that he received certain orders of life and death importance, upon the report that Kenneth Gryffyth was still in conference at the bank with the unknown masters of Egypt's possible destinies.

The Pasha was both wide awake and resentful, for, in three months, he had not been able to trace out the lines which had seemingly gathered up all the available private, moneyed influence of the London market into James Lawrie's bony fingers.

"On your life be it, if you lose him from sight!" growled the Pasha. "Here is abundant money!" He tossed the handsome Italian adventurer a note case. "Use the cipher. Telegraph to me for more money if you need it! Follow this fellow into Cherif's very presence! Then, —you are free of the quest! He will reward you! Trap

this spy in every way! Search his luggage! Open his letters! Steal his telegrams! But, only to gain his secrets! His life is to be held sacred! You and your gang must hold your hands off!

"But, once in Egypt, if Cherif says,"—he made the motion of slitting a throat,—“then, you are to obey him, and, —forget the fact! Remember! Strilogo! We expect good service! I pay you, once—Cherif doubts it—and, —remember, no treachery! You will be watched—and, —you know what Egypt is!"

"Now, get away! You know how to report to me!"

The Pasha leaned back in his cushions in the Portland Square den—and sneered, as the imitation nobleman drove away to take up his station.

"There goes the oiliest scoundrel in Europe!" mused Fehmy, as he lit a Stamboul cigarette in disgust. Italian cabin boy,—shoe black,—donkey boy,—valet de place,—gambler,—interpreter,—consular cavasse,—chevalier d'industrie,—court spy,—jackal of the Consulates General,—pander and —————, and, now, by a purchased title, now, "Il Signore Conte di Santa Marina!"

"Some day, a Greek knife,—an eunuch's scimitar,—or the strangler's fingers, may save the hangman a few yards of rope!

"But, how able, how suave, how adroit! 'Che va piano,—va sano—va lontaño!' "—laughed the Pasha, as he prepared to visit a certain magnificent apartment in his sober fronted palace, where several young ladies "late of the Alhambra," were now awaiting a quiet voyage to the perfumed garden of the Boulak Palace.

For, the wily Pasha was not averse to acting as a modern Fadladeen—and, to being the "Holder of the Girdle of Beautiful Forms!" He was a "Universal Provider" for his august employer!

Ernesto Strilogo was gaily humming a Neapolitan love song, as he loyally puffed his frugal "Cavour," on his way to his station near Benjamin and Sons.

"This young fellow should be an easy mark!" he mused. "Wine, women, and cards! Fatal and agreeable trinity of human failing! The secret envoy is young,—and,—therefore,—not wise! A lass—a glass and a

lucky pass with the cards, any of these may pave the way for me,—and—après, he goes the way of the ‘green-horn’ in Egypt! To be plucked à la mode! Strange, that Fehmy Pasha did not pick up his name! Bah!

“But this old Shylock may have given me any one at random! It’s as easy to lie here on the banks of the Thames, as by the Nile! And, our own watchers already know the face! Once I get him in range, then,—my man is safe!”

The prosperous looking Italian’s face shone with the easy bonhomie of good living and the pride of life. A mustache and imperial à la Louis Napoleon,—dark, ardent, glowing eyes, a shapely head, well set upon powerful shoulders, with the bull neck of a sturdy swordsman, and fine well turned limbs,—Ernesto Strilogo, at forty, was as stout looking a cavalier as Cæsar Borgia, who cleft the bull’s skull at the Piazza di Spagna in the old days of poison,—the lovers’ lute, and the bravo’s stiletto. But, the bejewelled Conte di Santa Marina had taken on smooth arts and easy ways to pluck the pigeon, in the prosperous years since he began his energetic career with racing, a bare-legged young beggar, after the carriage of the English at Naples, and bawling, “Date mi un baiocco, por il amor di Dio!”

He was quite a personage now, and so, he conveniently forgot many episodes wherein Strilogo’s stiletto had figured as an “argumentum ad hominem!”

For, he was a titled gentleman now! The lapel rosette of the order of St.—Something or Other, had been the reward of the private services which he had rendered to a depravé Italian noble of rank, sojourning in Egypt. And, blossoming boldly out as the Count di Santa Marina,—the escroc and blackguard gaily murmured, “Nous sommes tous égaux, ici,—en Egypte!” The land without patriotism, where the blush of shame never brands a craven’s cheek! The home of polisson and woman vampire!

“Double pay and nothing to do! Safe under Cherif’s wing! It’s a fat job!” mused Strilogo! He knew the artful buoyancy with which Cherif Pasha had heretofore breasted all the Egyptian storms! For, was not the sly

Circassian the heir of Suleiman Pasha's influence and estates, through his wife, the daughter of the renegade staff officer of Marshal Ney! Colonel Sèvè had hoarded his millions, with true French thrift, though he wore the turban as Suleiman Pasha.

The confidante of the Khedive's secret as to his European hoards,—minister of his infamous pleasures,—linked to dark Ratib Pasha, the responsible head of the army, by a family marriage,—to be at Cherif's side was the safest place in Egypt.

"He will go on forever!" laughed Strilogo! "Nothing falls on Cherif,—and,—he will even outlast Ismail the First, the enfant gâté of Fortune!"

All unconscious that the trap was already set for him at Benjamin's Bank, Kenneth Gryffyth was ushered into the splendors of the Wrexham's town house in Hanover Square. The impassive giant who guarded the entrance silently conducted the lover to the presence of the honorable Charles Grosvenor.

"Ah! My boy! Ready for the road, I see!" he cheerily cried. Whereat, pangs darted through the young visitor's anxious heart. He was now the epitome of the "every day young man," for he had dressed up to the orders of the stern James Lawrie!

"It is a deceived father's vengeance, this rig!" faltered Gryffyth. "Tell me,—the Baroness,—"

"Has been duly deported by the sweetest of contemporary Countesses! And, I'm all ready, also, for my little run! I'll be on the Dover train, sure enough, and the guard will be tipped to put you in my already engaged carriage! Now, I will "hold the fort," here, for a couple of hours! You are to spend just fifteen minutes at luncheon, with me, and, now, they are waiting above for you! Remember, my boy! Make all your plans for the whole campaign to-day—for—there would be no end of a row about bad faith and all that, if the blue-eyed ogre—or, your old moss trooper should suspect!"

With an affected carelessness, Grosvenor led the way and then left the young lover standing upon the threshold of Millicent's boudoir. There was the wild thrilling

melody of the lark in the soaring voice which broke off with a cry of delight, ending in a choking sob!

Seated at the window, Milly Grosvenor kindly ignored the tender spectacle as bravely beautiful as the parting of Raoul and Valentine!

"My father!" gasped Kathleen Lawrie!

"Knows absolutely nothing—darling—and he has just entrusted me with a nameless mission of vast future importance!" tenderly said Kenneth as he led her to a seat.

"Ah! Now, I understand!" murmured the heiress. "He goes with you! For, he telegraphed last night to my mother to return at once! He goes over to the continent alone for a fortnight! And so, you are to be his companion?"

"It is all blind to me as yet, dearest," gently replied Kenneth, "and all that I can tell you now, is that I shall be absent for six months. There is a trust of ultimate honor which none dares to betray, and, till I am done, we have only to be silent, watchful, and true to each other! If I return safely, I will have surely won his life-long gratitude, should I succeed!"

And then, leading her aside, he murmured the words now thronging to his lips, of love's tenderest legacies of hope and cheer!

Kathleen Lawrie's exquisite face was turned toward him, the melting gray eyes were veiled with trembling tear-laden lashes. Her slender figure was molded in all the grace of Diana's nymphs and the brown hair nobly crowned her beautiful and graceful head.

There was all the dignity of the stern old north country ancestors in her resolute bearing. The Nevins, Carrs, Blackwoods, and Nugents were the givers of the strength of spirit which underlay her mother's unusual beauty.

In the flush of her life's spring-time, now blossoming into its early summer, the lonely girl had silently expanded into an absolute mental freedom in the almost unbroken hush of the great banker's home.

Her mind to her a kingdom, she had eagerly caught up the enthusiasm of art, travel, music and letters, and the whole world revolved around her in her "voyages au

tour le monde," effected in James Lawrie's vast gloomy library.

And now, her fond heart was thrilled with all the deep devotion of first love as she listened to her knight of the nameless quest!

In all the years of their slowly cementing friendship, Kathleen Lawrie had gently dominated the gentle Milly Grosvenor, and,—now,—in the hour of trying separation,—the young noblewoman was as true to her friend as one of the "Queen's four Maries."

In an eager conclave of Love, Milly Grosvenor sat as arbiter, while Kathleen Lawrie related to them every detail of her father's past queries, and his instructions of the morning.

And, Kenneth Gryffyth had answered a hundred questions before the Honorable Charles lent his wisdom to a final plan of campaign.

"There's but one safe course to follow," said the star of the Travelers' Club, addressing Kenneth.

"Send all my letters to the Travelers' Club, London! Your correspondence for Her Highness," he smiled, "properly addressed, must come under cover to Milly, here! There can then be no danger! Milly will be the Postmistress of Love!"

"And ours, what shall we do with them?" merrily asked that lovely Postmistress, Milly Grosvenor, of the young savant who was about going "to no place in particular," for a long six months.

"Let them be all sent in sealed linen envelopes addressed to me, 'care of Benjamin and Son, Threadneedle Street,'" gravely said Kenneth.

"For the first time in his life, the head of my house asked me to-day, if he could do me a personal favor! And,—I have his word of honor that all my letters will be forwarded in bank pacquets, under his own private seal! He will be the medium of conveying any bad news to you," slowly said Kenneth.

"The good, I will convey myself, by returning. I have told him that Wilton and Grosvenor would be my legal representatives—in case of any accident!"

It seemed so cold and cruel this brief halt upon the

edge of a six months' desert in her life, to Kathleen Lawrence.

"We were all so happy,—last summer, Kenneth!" she murmured, when the two hours had treacherously stolen by.

For, now all but the last farewells were spoken!

Good natured Charley Grosvenor was "on picket" below to "head off" the all-knowing Baroness should she glide back into the fold. This parting was no "sweet sorrow!"

Sister Milly had given the lovers a brief ten minutes of last heart communion, and on Kenneth Gryffyth's bosom was now resting a picture with a tress of that same silken brown hair which he worshiped, framing the one beloved face on earth for him!

"This comes from my mother," cried Kenneth, as he placed on the girl's trembling finger an antique Indian diamond, "and, now, darling, we must keep our love in noble truth, as I will my trust in simple faith! We have each our own duty, to your father! Death will come to me, before I betray my trust! It is yet a mystery why he sought me out to be his agent!"

"And," cried the resolute Kathleen, "Death to me before I forget my love! Go now! Be true to your trust; for my sake—and we will both wait for the strange fate that seems to bring us together!"

"Let us be true to my father's faith in you! When you return, in honor,—then, I am yours, Kenneth, and,—there's my hand upon it!" The blood of her spirited north country ancestors was flaming in her cheeks!

A warning sound echoed below!

It was a cautioning signal from the lovely guardian which foretold the sudden return of the Baroness de Saint-Nazaire.

"I will take her away, while you escape—Kenneth!" breathlessly whispered Milly, as the excited lover kissed her hands, in hasty gratitude.

"Good-bye! I'll watch over Kathleen for your sake!" she murmured, in a voice sweet as the falling dews of Gulistan!

There were mists on Kenneth Gryffyth's eyes as he

caught Kathleen, the rosy nymph of Diana, to his heart in a last crushing embrace!

"Adieu, darling! For life and eternity, I serve you, alone!" he whispered. And, then it was "ae fond kiss and then, we sever!"

It needed all Charley Grosvenor's bonhomie to rouse Kenneth as they sprang into the waiting brougham!

All was safe, in their hegira, and,—only Kenneth saw a sweet white wraith at the window for one moment,—the seeming ghost of the woman he adored!

With a commendable prudence, Gryffyth left his champion to his afternoon lounging, and drove away to his outfitters! A new trunk and portmanteau, with a handy Gladstone bag were dispatched to the Cannon Street Hotel, for the financier would not trust his old luggage, labeled with all the many tell-tale marks of the globe trotter!

"It seems that I am to be born again—" he gloomily reflected, thinking of the passport and new patronymic to be assumed at Marseilles.

He glanced at his letter of credit. There it was plainly written, "Malcolm Cranford!" It was really his nom de guerre.

"So, that's the flag I am to fight under!" he grimly smiled. "I can have the luggage duly marked at Marseilles when I get my passport!" And, he then leisurely drove down to the bank, for the hour of four was approaching.

Handsome Ernesto Strilogo was fuming in an Italian passion of unrest, and he was well wearied of his long vigil in the brougham with his gleaming eyes fixed upon the main entrance of Benjamin and Sons!

"You fools!" he had remarked finally to the expostulating spies. "Get around, one of you, and watch the rear entrance. If he goes in, let me know here! He may have dodged out there!"

At last, the remaining secret agent running up, grasped the Italian's arm! "That's the man! The handsome fellow in tweeds!" he cried, as Kenneth leisurely descended and lingered in giving his driver a tip.

The Count di Saint Marina was out of his carriage in an instant.

"Join your fellow behind the bank! If he slips out that way, both of you must follow on till he stops. One stays, the other is to come here on the run to me! If you find me gone when the bank closes, report back to the Pasha! If he comes out this way, I'll not lose him! My servant is on the box! There are two of us, here now! You two must follow him! Go to Vienna, if he don't stop! Telegraph the details of the road he takes to the Pasha! I'll follow him then instantly!"

There was a stern threat in Strilogo's eyes as he slipped adroitly into the main entrance of the bank! Kenneth Gryffyth sauntered in, with his eyes upon the great clock.

He did not fail to notice the watchful chief messenger, who touched his cap and whispered a greeting.

"Ah! Sharp on time!" mused the young expert, as the old servitor murmured, "You are wanted in the Head's room, sir!"

He passed on, never noticing the handsome foreign gentleman who might be either a world-famous tenor,—a traveling Don Juan, or an Italian noble, voyaging incognito, from his swelling port.

The confidential relation of the head messenger and his destined prey was not lost upon the alert Strilogo.

Sauntering carelessly up, he cordially addressed the unsuspecting old Briton. A casual remark led to the transference of a couple of half crowns.

"Bless your soul! No, sir! That's not our Mr. Benjamin Jr. That's Mr. Kenneth Gryffyth, one of our foreign representatives. He's busy now, in the office, with the Head! I can get you his home address."

And, bustling away, the old man soon hobbled back with a slip of paper.

"Thank you, sir!" he cried, as the "nobleman" murmured, "I'll call another day!" and then, he stepped slowly out, leaving the old gossip bowing and scraping.

Two long hours crawled slowly by, while Gryffyth gravely listened to the successive counsels of Mr. James Lawrie, and the august head of his house.

There were few details presented, but a shadow of com-

ing responsibility brought a new sternness to the lover's face.

"In leaving the success or failure of our plan in your hands," said the Head, "you must remember the vastness of the scheme! Mr. Lawrie will direct you entirely! It all depends on your establishing a personal influence over Ismail Pasha—and,—in absolutely concealing your real mission from the English and French official representatives! Not for an instant must you forget that you are merely Mr. Malcolm Cranford, studying future investments in sugar and cotton.

"You will have the Italian Consul General and the Austrian and Russian, as secret friends! They have all to lose in the failure of our scheme! Cherif Pasha will introduce you to the Khedive! Anyone can be seen around Cairo with Cherif. He knows everybody in Egypt from a flower girl to the Khedive's mother!

"But, trust him not a moment! He may open the door, but throttle your enterprise at the threshold or beyond! Only gain the Khedive's confidence and trust to nothing else! He must act, if he agrees in your verification of the plans, through Fehmy Pasha, here. Only a personal telegram from Ismail will bring David Hart over there—after you have probed, verified and approved the whole financial plan. The Italian Consul General will himself introduce you, in his own house, to Cherubini, who will work with you—and represent the three Consuls General, as you do us!"

"You may not save the Khedive,—but it rests on your reports—alone—whether we do or not. You are to tell us if it is practicable, we will then decide.

"And now, Mr. Malcolm Cranford,—your own personal career depends upon your absolute prudence and fidelity! You now belong to my friend Lawrie!" smilingly said the great banker, as he pressed the young man's hands.

"Book yourself for Paris, and have your luggage all ready at the station!" was Lawrie's brief order. "I will come to you the very moment I have closed up matters with Hart and the Pasha! Meet me in the main hall of the Cannon Street Hotel at eleven o'clock—if I do not come to you sooner! I will be there, surely by then!"

The coolness of Uncle James disconcerted the young man, who slowly wandered out and hailed a passing cabby.

Exhausted by all the varying emotions of the two days, he drove directly down to his hotel! His thoughts had fondly wandered away to the girl he left behind him!

And he thanked God that Kathleen Lawrie could meet her father's eyes with no fore-knowledge of her lover's quest! "I will earn her respect while I fight under his banner!" he decided.

When Soames sprang up to welcome his master at the Cannon Street Hotel, neither noticed the handsome foreign gentleman who seemed to have some little difficulty in making the gold-banded porters follow his wishes. His carriage had arrived by judicious arrangement almost at the same moment with Gryffyth's hansom.

Before Kenneth Gryffyth was enjoying the cosy dinner served in his room, the foreign gentleman had noted the labels "M. C., Paris, affixed to Gryffyth's luggage, and covertly listened to Soames' clatter as he secured the best accommodations for two!

"Ah!" smiled the Count di Santa Marina, "I wonder if there will be a pretty bird of passage?"

He enjoyed a very fair repast in the ordinary, and then sauntered pleasantly around the hotel until his own body servant returned with a fur pelisse and a portmanteau.

It was ten o'clock when James Lawrie descended from his stately family carriage, and was eagerly greeted by Mr. Kenneth Gryffyth, who had been nervously eying the clock for some time.

The Count di Santa Marina never knew what business the two men transacted in Room No. 24, to which his artful valet had followed the banker and his secret agent, but he did know that a great stalwart Englishman joined the young traveler in a first-class compartment, as the Dover train was made up, and that the servant, backed by the complacent guard, kept the politely smiling Count di Santa Marina out of that compartment!

After the boat left Dover, Kenneth Gryffyth gave himself up to Charley Grosvenor's friendly society in the steamer smoking room. His rôle was now a simple one!

To follow his route, without delay, and to await the final instructions in detail at Marseilles!

For James Lawrie had whispered at parting, "The Pasha came up square and game! He has delivered over the Khedive's letter! And he has no idea that you are on the way now! He expects us to send a man on in a few days! No one must know your mission!"

But the free masonry of friendship caused the watchful Charley Grosvenor on the steamer to say: "That good-looking foreigner seems to be all the while stealthily regarding us! Photograph him for future use!"

A wise counsel which was redoubled when the young men parted in Paris, for "the handsome stranger" saw Grosvenor's parting with Kenneth at the Geneva train!

But the honorable Charles, on his return to London, had delivered Kenneth's first love letter of the voyage to sweet Kathleen Lawrie,—long before Mr. Malcolm Cranford muttered, "Spy—sure enough, by Jove!" as the Count di Santa Marina slowly sauntered into the Hotel Louvre at Marseilles!

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER SEALED ORDERS.—A FRIEND AND MENTOR.—FOLLOWED!

"Mr. Malcolm Cranford's" name proudly ornamented the list of guests of the Grand Hotel Louvre at Marseilles in due prominence, by virtue of his aristocratic designation of "rentier." There were, however, a throng of cares annoying the young lover.

The excitement of playing his difficult part before stern James Lawrie had slowly faded away. He was now wearied out with the long race from Paris to Geneva, and the cautious doubling back to Marseilles by Lyons, Valence and Avignon.

He had been now nearly twenty-four hours in Marseilles, and had already dispatched two letters to Miss Kathleen Lawrie from the trysting place where he waited

for her father,—and one friendly note of reproach to Charley Grosvenor.

The love billet written on the Geneva train, and the one which the young noble took away from Paris were thrown in “for good measure!”

He had not dared to leave the superb hotel for those giddy pleasures which make the Department des Bouches du Rhone the gayest entourage of the Mediterranean.

Down through sweet Provence he had whirled along, thinking of two tender eyes as dear as those which gazed once on the sweet fountain of Vaucluse!

He eagerly awaited the arrival of the stern old banker, and he silently chafed at the delay of Cupid’s wings. Not a single word from Lawrie, not a sign from Charley Grosvenor, and nothing from that goddess Kathleen.

He dared not telegraph to her,—and he had only the official passport for “Malcolm Cranford,” the good five hundred pounds in notes, the Cook’s circular letter of credit for the same, and a draft of the great house of Benjamin for a like amount, to prove the whole occurrence aught but a fevered dream!

He had carefully marked all his modest kit of linen with the letters M. C., and a French artist had similarly decorated his luggage with the new initials! It was an amusement to examine every article and to see that every trace of his real identity had been effaced!

He was in a particularly savage mood when he saw the handsome Italian whom Charley Grosvenor had detested instinctively, engaged in a long interview with the obsequious mâtûre d’hôtel.

The young Englishman had at first been doubtful of Charley’s acumen, but though he had duly changed his own name,—and the stranger had reappeared in a stunning garb ready to ogle the fair Marseillaises on the Prado,—it was the same smiling face which they had both noted on the boat,—at the Gare St. Luzare in Paris, and Kenneth was forced to admit that he had seen it, too, at Geneva, when the last shrill warning cries arose, “En voiture—Messieurs!”

The spirited young fellow was tempted to march up at once and challenge the oily spy in true British style! He

restrained himself, with some difficulty, and, with a sober second thought, did not allow the imprudence of seeking for the disagreeable stranger's name, when the Count di Santa Marina, elegantly gloved, and got up, *en merveilleux*, drove away for a pleasure!

"There's no one here whom I can trust!" he growled. "Now, even if old Lawrie was here, with his secret ways and means, he might have this fellow spotted. But I'm left here all alone—and,—everyone seemingly has forgotten me!"

He was sullen and half minded to venture upon a risky telegram! He contented himself, however, with a careful arrangement of his luggage, and arranged some tell-tale journals and slips of paper in his portmanteaus, to indicate if they should be rummaged! He felt that he was marked down—"for private inspection!"

He was aware of the French propensity of making sly excursions into strangers' effects, and yet, his rage was unbounded when he found a bit of wax clogging the lock of his largest valise! "They have taken their wax impressions already!" he growled. "Some one is already on my trail!" He examined the long halls and found that there were double stairways at each end!

"I think I will see where this fellow rooms! When he returns I will time his ascent!" But he suddenly remembered James Lawrie's warning advice:

"We expect an infinite patience of you—and,—a prudence of the tireless ascetic!"

"After all," he muttered, "I have my only valuables on my person!"

Beyond the Baedeker's "Lower Egypt," his Murray's and Harper's Guide Books, and a couple of good maps of the Mediterranean and the Land of the Pharoahs, he was traveling empty handed!

Gryffyth had only kept his passport and his Cook's circular letter of credit in his pocketbook, for his notes and draft were sewed within his waistcoat linings!

And besides he was watchful—and well armed!

While he smoked a cheroot and carefully loaded the beautiful Adams revolver which Grosvenor had pressed on him, he was suddenly startled by a knock!

"Carriage waiting for you, sir, below! Important business at Freycinet Frères' office!" said the head porter, with a flourish of his gold-banded cap. "I will conduct you there myself!"

Without a word "Monsieur Malcolm Cranford" descended, after carefully locking up all his luggage!

They were about driving away down the Rue Paradis as the Italian returned, conveying a veiled lady.

"Ah! a Don Juan! as well as Vidocq!" muttered the Englishman, and then, only able to note that the lady was evidently young and of a graceful slender figure, he carelessly questioned the head servant.

"Ah! yes! Monsieur is an old patron of the Hotel Louvre,—the Conte di Santa Marina,—and a man of great influence in Egypt,—a great friend of the Viceroy, even! We have had the honor of sheltering His Highness Ismail Pasha, and Cherif Pacha—too! This Italian noble came here last in the train of the great Cherif Pasha—two years ago! He is rich—and a beau garçon! A deuce of a fellow, too, with the ladies! Diantre! He showers the napoleons around when he is in the mood! And—in fact, has the next rooms to Monsieur!"

Kenneth turned his tell-tale eyes to the passing beauties of the fair women of the Midi.

"So!" he murmured. "My neighbor! If I had him in range of the Adams I might find some wax under his shapely nails! I suppose that he is already en rapport with the servants! Free with his napoleons! It's an easy job then! Five francs is enough to gain him an unreserved entrance to my rooms!"

And, while he wondered at the summons to the counting house of the great firm of Freycinet Frères, the handsome Count was carefully studying a slip of paper, in the adjoining rooms to the temporary home of "Mr. Malcolm Cranford."

And two very expressive eyes, burning with Gallic fire, watched him as he underlined the slip.

"Aha! I have you now, my young friend Mr. Kenneth Gryffyth, Principal Foreign Expert for Benjamin and Son of Threadneedle Street, London!

"If I can only get at your instructions from this great

banker Lawrie, and the famous David Hart! If I can but find out who is behind them and the Benjamins, in this great scheme, Cherif Pasha will make my future!

"I can not fail, with this little witch Andrée to help me!" he mused, as he kissed his fair companion and whispered a word which brought the red blood surging to her cheeks. "If I can not succeed before we get to Aboukir Bay, Andrée shall trap him later in Cairo! Nothing resists her soft girlish charm, not even that hardened old scoundrel Cherif!"

"Quick now! Andrée!" he cried. "While I go and put my two men on duty below, ring for the maid, and we will begin our secret work! I have all the keys now! You must walk up and down on watch in the corridor! Hasten away!"

At that very particular moment, Mr. Malcolm Cranford was rubbing his eyes in amazement, for he had been conducted through the great Freycinet agency building, after seeing the head porter drive away toward the Hotel Louvre.

A courteous clerk had thrust a sealed packet of letters into his hand, and then gently pushed the wondering traveler into a closed carriage.

"Mr. Lawrie is waiting for you, sir, at the Restaurant out by the Chateau d'If! Your passage is already taken on the 'Sphinx,' now lying in the Bassin Napoleon! We will put you on board at midnight!"

"We send this same carriage! Leave all your traveling articles in your room! We will pay your hotel bill and remove all your luggage! Do not speak to a soul in Marseilles! You may be watched—even now!"

The light-footed horses sprang away, and the young man gazed in a dazed manner at the obscure streets through which he was whirled.

He drew aside the silken curtain just long enough to tear open his packet of letters and to note two from the unjustly reproached Kathleen, and one in Charley Grosvenor's honest hand.

He was out on the splendid road by the cliffs, before he remembered the last whisper of his guide.

"Mr. Lawrie telegraphed in cipher from St. Etienne to

us, and arrived only two hours ago! You will be taken to him!"

"I wonder if Freycinet Frères are my secret allies! Money knows no nationality in its greed! Perhaps the French bankers now regret the loss of the Khedive's canal shares! They may fight on our side—who knows!"

In his eagerness to meet Lawrie, he left the fair, proud Kathleen's words of endearment for future enjoyment! He feared to face her father with love's secrets shining in his honest eyes.

It was all tranquil, however, at No. 12 Belgrave Square! Madame Rose Nugent Lawrie had returned and the old banker had departed "on a trip of a few days!"

"But, there was no ominous cloud! James Lawrie had never made another reference to the son of the woman whom he had despairingly loved!" Charley Grosvenor's note told him this!

Already the famous restaurant was in sight, and the guilty Kenneth hid the two letters over his heart, with affection "prepense and aforethought!"

A single glance at Charley Grosvenor's second letter astounded him. It was as "brief as woman's love!"

"Don't blame me, old fellow, if I'm a bit uneasy about you!"

"I've had a little talk with Kathleen and Milly! I've put a man on to follow the old gentleman, so you break no faith with him! So, I shall know where you go,—and I'll turn up myself—about a week later! You can cut me, in public if you wish, but I think the going is a bit stiff for a man alone—and—I'm about to stand in and see fair play! Look out for yourself then, till I turn up! Remember, I've promised nothing to old moneybags,—and it's only a lark for me!"

"By the way, both the girls send their love! They are falling on each other's necks now, and—both have kissed me—for my 'self-devotion!' The old chap is off already, and I am to get telegrams three times a day from my man! Watch that same sneaking Italian! He would knife his father—if it paid him! He has a mean face! Send me no letters. Keep those for the girls! and—so,—it's *Au revoir!* Remember! All's fair in love and war!"

"Game fellow—Charley!" mused the young man as he yielded to the astonishment of this strange news. "It's to be a game of hide and seek, then!"

He had but one glimpse of the enchanting suburban scene! The blue gulf of Lyons below, the old *Nôtre Dame de la Garde*, the little rock where the Man in the Iron Mask lingered in despair, the two splendid harbors crowded with rich shipping, and fair Marseilles, queen of the Mediterranean, lying spread out there, heir to the glories of the Phœceans, the Greeks and the stern Romans who stormed Massilia under mighty Cæsar.

But his eyes lingered not on the splendid amphitheater, with its fringing hills now rich with vine and olive, and studded with the white summer homes of wealth!

He could see the ship lying there which was to bear him away to the mystic shores of Egypt, and—he reflected that the fierce swordsmen of the Crescent had carried devastation, even here, in the eighth century.

"It is cross against crescent now," he murmured—"only we fight to-day with money craft, and not with swords! These are the ignoble days of greed!"

Springing out at a private entrance sacred to anonymous beauty, Kenneth Gryffyth swiftly traversed a hall, and then entered a room where James Lawrie was calmly finishing a *dejeuner tres-soignée*!

"Sit down and eat, my boy!" said the old banker, with a hand-shake!

"We must both be out of Marseilles to-morrow! You are already watched. I know, and I've been dogged, too, all the way from London! I go away to-night, by Nice, Genoa, Mont Cenis and Basle to Metz, Ostend and Dover! We are closely watching Mustapha Fehmy Pasha, and I will now send you out, under sealed orders! At Alexandria your detailed instructions will be handed you, under my seal! I've brought you one to use! The Italian Consul General will get the packet from Freycinet Frères! Now, tell me of the incidents of your trip!"

The old man's eyes flashed blue glints of steely wrath, as the youth related all his varied rencontres with the Count di Santa Marina!

"It begins well!" growled Lawrie. "The same old

Egyptian craft and duplicity! Vilest of the vile! Well! We are safe, so far,—for Fehmy Pasha only knows Hart and myself! We have the Khedive's written invitation for you! You will have our full powers to him, and—no one knows the secrets of our banded monied civilian army save David Hart and myself!"

The cautious old millionaire never knew that a blundering head messenger, for a few odd half crowns, had betrayed the great house of Benjamin and Son to the watchful Santa Marina. The old story of a faithful fool!

When the banker's deliberate meal was finished, he said: "I will now give you, *vivâ voce*, my last orders, with the solemn injunction that your life may depend on your successfully concealing your momentous business from the French and English Consuls General!

"You may carry the possible fate of Egypt with you,—and—it rests with you alone, whether Ismail Pasha shall soon be a political exile, or else linger on the throne till a voluptuous life kills him! For figures will not lie—even if Khedives do! Your report seals his fate!"

"Why have you selected me for such a great trust?" flatly demanded Kenneth Gryffyth.

The old schemer quietly took a pinch of snuff, and deliberately answered:

"Because the going out of either of us two principals—Hart or myself—would probably bring on the instant deposition of the Khedive if we openly appeared at his court! We must help him, through you—or else not at all!"

Kenneth Gryffyth bowed in silence as Lawrie proceeded. "Mark me! We do not care a straw for the personality of Ismail Pasha Khedive! Our giant combination has a hundred agents! We know all the public policy of the English and French governments, and we represent that vast body of private capitalists who, when banded together, can say to Imperial Russia,—Mediæval Germany,—Reactionary France,—Unsettled Italy,—Dreamy Austria,—or Tattered Spain,—'You cannot go to war without our money!'

"You are the actuary of a thousand millions sterling of capital! You are to deal direct for us, with the Khedive

personally! We are aware that nothing will control the expressed will of the Commons of England, through their government,—and only sturdy Great Britain, with their nervous, reckless Yankee cousins, 'The States,' as we call them, have a Constitutional Assembly, that does not fear the power of capital, when the nation's sword leaps from the scabbard! We wish to use our capital in the interests of peace and justice!"

The old man's voice rang out in a challenge to the world in arms!

"We only anticipate the necessary action of England in trying to place the unprotected loans we represent, on a surer basis, and to have our good money come in later for equal, prompt and proper representation, when the infamously stained throne of Egypt totters to its fall!"

Fixing his glances steadily upon the young man, the old banker said: "We are loyal to the real purposes of England—but," he grimly smiled:

"Downing Street is not always communicative,—and we may help Her Majesty's Government out a bit in advance, and so jockey ourselves into a better position! We don't care a single rap for France, but you must ignore the official representatives of both countries. They act together!"

"Now," smilingly said Lawrie, "We have gone back on your record privately! You have had a singular experience! You are not a man of dissipations! You have rare abilities already recognized in the financial world—and, better than all,—you are not pre-occupied with love,—and have no family distractions! So, my boy, you see we have carefully watched your career for long months!"

The rebaptized "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" breathed a sigh of relief into his coffee cup.

"Thank Heavens!" his throbbing heart signalled. "The ducats have made him forget his daughter! I am safe—so far!"

"Now!" resumed Lawrie briskly. "We have set our watch on Fehmy Pasha! We found he was watching me, and following me to Benjamin's bank! I therefore visited in two days every financial institution of note in London, as a blind! You are being followed, too, it is clear! So,

it only rests with your own prudence to baffle all the spies!"

The old man handed a seal to Kenneth. "You will be approached in Cairo by an agent of mine who will deliver you a sealed letter of authority from me, to handle all your future dispatches and letters to me! Keep no copies! He will be near you day and night! It will be addressed to you under your real name, and be countersigned by the head of your own firm! Trust that one person implicitly! We have a dozen other agents in Cairo! You are to divulge your business to no one else but him. Send your dispatches in this cipher!"

The old man handed a book to Kenneth with the injunction.

"Conceal this on your person! In case of any trouble be sure to destroy it! The agent who carries my seal has another! You will receive my orders from him, in my own handwriting under seal, and here is a page of indifferent matter in my own peculiar script, as 'a test'!"

"As to the Italian, Russian and Austrian Consuls General?" anxiously queried Kenneth.

"They are to be your secret friends, but you discuss nothing with them,—divulge nothing, and only receive their open social protection.

"The Italian Consul at Alexandria will give you a man to take you direct to Cherif Pasha! Do just as that man directs on your journey. But he knows nothing of your business, and,—must know nothing! Cherif will have orders to present you privately to the Khedive! Cherif Pasha is to know nothing at all! We will pull the wires on these puppets in other ways!" coldly said Lawrie.

"And so my real business is with the Viceroy alone?" queried Kenneth.

The old man nodded emphatically.

"The whole transaction is to be between you and him! You are to get your sealed orders at Alexandria from the Consul,—meet your conductor, and—then,—your real business begins with Ismail Pasha direct! Your work is done when you take receipts for your letters and telegrams from our dispatch agent! Keep not a line, not even a scrap of paper with you. Converse with no one upon

this business! The court and political situation is really nothing to you! Only the financial resources of the Khedive,—as Khedive,—and the possible reform and improvement of all the income-producing property he controls! He is to lay all his financial secrets before us—as a child puts his finished task before the schoolmaster!"

"Does the private hoard and treasures of the Khedive come within my scope?" said the young man.

"I wish it did!" grimly replied Lawrie!

"We have fifty agents scouring Europe looking for the secret depositories, but sly old Cherif Pasha probably guards his own savings well, in concealing Ismail Pasha's treasure caves! Probably—in Italy, Austria and France, these ravished treasures are slyly laid up against the day of wrath! But you will only work on what the Khedive officially furnishes—the records of his permanent properties, the governmental resources—and—the condition of the floating overdue, and settled public and Khedivial debt, the crown obligations—so to speak!"

"Now, I have said enough! You will have the sealed orders to fully direct you! From the very moment you leave this town—till you report back to me in London, your success in life, nay—your very life itself,—depends upon your unsleeping vigilance,—your unceasing prudence! If you would go back,—now is the time!"

The old millionaire turned his blue search-light eyes upon the young man!

"Never!" cried Kenneth. "I have something to work for,—out there in the shadows of the Pyramids! Something dearer than life!"

"Remember! Distrust every man, woman and child!" urged Lawrie. "From donkey boy to the hypocritical Cherif, you are to move as automatically as a Babbage calculating machine! Man delights you not,—nor,—woman either!" Kenneth resolutely said, "My tongue has been tied for twelve years in the service of my employers!"

"That's just why we have trusted you—of all men in Europe!" dryly said Lawrie. "I know that you can keep a secret!"

"So do I!" guiltily thought Kenneth Gryffyth, as Kathleen Lawrie's picture seemed to burn his manly bosom, in

its place of warm concealment. It was a curious game of cross purposes, after all!

"Now, that you know your personal safety will be watched over by the three Consuls General who are trying to block the French and English governmental game—all that you have to do is to avoid any personal entanglement, quarrel or personal intrigue! The secret of your confidences with Ismail Pasha belongs to me alone! And, in this great veiled monied game of 'catch as catch can,' you can see, my boy, that you are only the mathematical autocrat! You are to have no more feeling than if you were checking up a bar maid's weekly accounts! Quantities only differ in notation,—that's all!"

"In finance there is no emotion when you play the grim game for gold, under the rules! I will direct the future operations of our clique of gold!"

"My associates have chosen me as a man of action! Remember, neither you nor I can make or unmake the Egyptian ruling conditions! We will work together! You will not know the whole game! It is not necessary that you should, in fact, it would be a very dangerous trust—one leading perhaps to a life's forfeit if it was possible to stop the great money machine by cutting out a single cog! No—'all are but parts of one stupendous whole,' as Pope justly said!"

"You are only to do your duty to my satisfaction!" grimly remarked Lawrie.

"If Ismail lies to you,—if he delays,—if he conceals the truth, then the fault is not with you! But, act sharply on your orders,—bring him to book at once, as soon as you can! And,—above all,—give us only facts,—facts,—facts! Your reports must have no presumptions or theories!"

"Scenery, sentiment, history, the glamour of the Nile is to weigh no more with you than if you were checking up the books of a candle factory in Houndsditch! We want cold calculations!"

"What sort of a man is the real Ismail?" firmly demanded Kenneth. "The man behind all the trappings of his rank!"

"Ah!" said Lawrie, glancing at his watch, and settling himself to a pinch of snuff.

"To the world he seems to be gallant,—liberal,—enlightened,—progressive, aspiring, generous, and the father of the waterway, the railroad system, the telegraph, the Haussmanized Cairo,—and,—in all things, a courteous Haroun al Raschid à la mode de Paris! That's the pictorial Ismail, the friend of DeLesseps, the pet of the gracious Ex-Empress Eugenie!

"And all that is a mere counterfeit presentment!" sternly said Lawrie.

"We know the heavy, overfed, bearded, middle-aged sensualist, as he is! Old,—crafty,—dissimulating,—volutuous,—insincere,—cowardly and vacillating! The blood of the Mefettish and Faoud (the nearer heir), is on his reddened hands!

"The scarred back of the fellah bleeds under his rhinoceros koorbash! He brought back from his life in France only polished vices to overlay his ignoble weaknesses! There's not a drop of royal, princely, or even noble blood in his muddy veins.

"Son of Ibrahim, the Lion of Syria, he is the grandson of the woman whom fierce old Mehemet Ali loved with a devotion never surpassed save by Peter's infatuation for Catherine, and Nelson's mad idolatry for 'Hygeia,'—Lady Hamilton, Romney's matchless model!

"The unknown peasant lover of Mehemet Ali's wife was the real father of Ibrahim, and when the fierce Albanian genius had made himself the first Viceroy of Egypt, the old tiger trusted the fatherless son of the beloved woman whose slightest wish was Mehemet's law to her dying day!

"Be it as she wills,—even if it has to go through fire and stone!" said the terrible old man who laughed at the dying agonies of the splendid Mamelukes, rolling in their blood beneath his feet, in the citadel!

"Faithful to her memory, Mehemet one day publicly married off by order all his lovely harem inmates to the officers of his court, as ticketed off by the old dame who ruled the superb Shoubrah paradise!

"When Ibrahim Pasha, his step-son, stormed that

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proud city of Acre which resisted even Cœur de Lion, and later, broke Napoleon Bonaparte's proud heart, Mehemet clasped the bleeding victor to his fatherly heart!

"Ibrahim, the lion of Syria, was the second Viceroy but for a few brief months, when they laid great Mehemet away in the splendid mosque beautified with the casings of the Pyramids, and the alabaster spoils of Solomon's temple!

"Abbas and Said, the third and fourth Viceroys—from eighteen forty-nine to eighteen sixty-three—were of the true lineal blood of the great Mehemet.

"But,—in sixty-three, Ismail (gaining over the whole army), reached the Viceregal throne later by arts as black as even Richard the Hunchback practiced! For Said's heir was robbed of the throne while his father was disporting in Europe!

"And now," energetically declaimed Lawrie, "mark the seeds of the death of Empire sowed under the bloody mantle of Ismail!

"The cunning French promoters had rolled up the most enormous claims on Egypt in view of Said's idiotically drawn Suez Canal franchises! 'Le grand français' De Lesseps plied all his arts, and Ismail has slowly drifted down the muddy stream of pleasure, being always pillaged by the 'Canal gang,' and rashly led on to push toward the Equator those railroads and telegraphs destined to be useful only, in time, to England! When he raised his great army in sixty-nine, and called the American officers over to drill them—he dreamed of boldly cutting loose from Turkey!

"Betrayed, however, at all points, he soon lost his independence of action; the iron-clad fleet built in France was seized by the Ottoman master, the vast profits in cotton and sugar ended when the long American civil war ceased, and the opera,—the new Cairo nearly beggared him.

"The 'modern progress' operations have left him pleading hopelessly at the mercy of France, which gains three-fifths of the Canal toll, and of England, which will (in time), make Ismail's land only a place of arms, for defending the Indian short route and dominating northern

Africa!—yet to be a battle ground between Russia and England.

"You may soon know the real Ismail whose toy-balloon empire was shivered by the cannons of Sedan, as a helpless debauchee,—dishonest, artful, vain, cowardly, and a plucked goose in the hands of governmental spoilers!"

"We men of private right may aid him later to readjust the basis of an honest debt settlement, but, if he lies to you,—if he dallies, or deceives, he will either end his days as a fugitive, or else be cajoled to the soft shame of a Turkish palace prison on the Bosporus!"

"And,—after him?" said Kenneth.

"Whatever England wills, or Russia will permit!" gravely said Lawrie.

"When the crafty Ismail sent Gordon Pasha out to the Soudan, he thought that he was throwing a tub to the English whale! He flattered the English national pride when he said, 'They say that I do not trust Englishmen! Do I mistrust Gordon? That is an honest man! But an administrator—not a diplomat!'

"Now, to-day, Zebehr Pasha,—the captive slave stealer and ivory robber of the Soudan, has more real influence with the lying Ismail than Charles George Gordon! There is a terrible storm brewing! The struggle between Nubar Pasha and Cherif has worn out the exhausted land! These two strong men alternately dominate the man who has the vices of all nations—and who is as uncertain as the drifting sands of the desert!"

"France is secretly driving her conquests into Central Africa from Algeria via Timbuctoo! Her Olivier Pain and similar adventurers are even now stirring up the fierce Soudanese against Ismail! The Italians are eating into Africa at Massowah, and most ominous of all, the crafty Russians are holding up Abyssinia with secret help and military aid!"

"When the feeble Ratib Pasha, in seventy-five, led fifteen thousand Egyptians to their awful butchery at Gura plain, the Abyssinian hordes were already possessed of every detail of the sheep-like plans of the Fellahin generals!"

"For the crafty Russian General Fadieff had watched

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the expedition from its winter assembly, and the Czar's emissaries aided the Abyssinians to train the captured guns!

"Let the veil of fifty years be lifted,—and while Russia's hordes battle on Egypt's soil with the English for the Suez canal,—the Abyssinians will sweep down the Nile in a resistless force to aid the crafty Muscovites! For the Soudanese rebels and the Abyssinian Russianized enemy are to have the Nile as far as the first cataract! The whole scheme is anti-English!"

"And who will finally have Egypt?" demanded Kenneth.

"Ah! My young friend! The Czar of Russia in nineteen hundred and ten may answer that! You simply go out to Egypt to mathematically demonstrate whether it will pay us to protect our already involved money loaned there, by lending many millions more and by sending David Hart out, to be a new Joseph set over Egypt,—or else, to let this coarse, lying and cowardly opera bouffe sovereign go the bloody way which he found for the Mefetish—or to exile like the uncle and brother whom he chased away!

"You will find him to be what I have said! Push him with all discreet force! Obey your sealed instructions! Deal only with him direct! And,—be true to us,—and,—then, your future is made!"

It was near sunset, and with a last hand-grasp, and a final warning whisper from the strange old general of Mammon, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" was whirled away, among the equipages of the gay Marseillaises, to reach his splendid hotel, through the darkening streets of the richest town in southern France!

It was on foot that he entered, for his driver had received his special orders from the sagacious Lawrie! They were all playing hare and hounds!

He was bidden not to leave his hotel, but to await the summons of the friends, at midnight!

Before he touched the raffiné dinner laid in readiness in his rooms, however, he sprang to the examination of the state of his luggage!

There was no doubt of a careful secret inspection by

his concealed enemies, for his tell-tale paper slips and carefully adjusted books were all intermixed in an evident confusion! There had been a sly rummaging!

"Ah! The French Friends of the Viceroy have done me the honor!" he muttered, as he hastily dispatched his dinner, and prudently avoided the wine bottles! There was before him now the "pleasing task" of sending an unreserved love dispatch to the daughter of the man who was glad his agent was "heart whole!"

"The whole of life is a more or less prudent or guilty dissimulation!" mused Kenneth Gryffyth, as he blushed to violate the "well-founded confidence" of James Lawrie, Esq. He was destined to prove that Love laughs at bankers, as well as locksmiths!

In despair of reaching his will-o'-the-wisp friend Charley Grosvenor,—the young lover sealed up a portentous dispatch addressed to his friend's graceful sister, the post-mistress of Love!

There were only the shuffling steps of servants in the wide halls, and now and then the gay tread of pleasure-seekers, and, with all the sense of personal helplessness upon him,—born of the cowardly visitation, the financial expert waited, gloomily puffing his pipe, till the great bell of St. Victor boomed out the midnight hour!

As a low tap at his door called him to instant action, he glanced at his luggage, now innocent of all compromising secrets!

Grasping his great coat, and stick, he slipped out, and descended the stairway, following the servant who whispered: "A gentleman to see you, sir!"

It was five minutes before the carriage could be dispatched by the noisy concierge, in the courtyard, and Kenneth Gryffyth never saw the veiled woman in waiting there, who darted into a fiacre drawn up at the side door!

But, as the young emissary stepped aboard the stout steamer "Sphinx," at the quay in the Bassin Napoleon, a half-hour later,—while the captain met him at the gang-plank, and conducted him to "Monsieur's cabins," a graceful woman glided on board, by the humble entrance of the second-class! The game was neatly "marked down!"

It was three o'clock before certain blue-blouse wearing porters deposited the portmanteaus and luggage of "Monsieur Malcolm Cranford" in his cabins, and by that time,—the agent of Freycinet Frères had personally deposited Kenneth's last letters in the Paris mail!

When the young man fell into an exhausted slumber, he recked not that Monsieur le Comte di Santa Marina was already snugly ensconced in a port state room near him!

But the money paid to the concierge for blocking the way of Kenneth's carriage had enabled the woman, warned by the well-bribed waiter, to follow him easily to the "Sphinx," and—so, when "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" came on deck to sniff the morning air, the "Sphinx" was cutting along gaily past the islands of Ratonneau, Pomegue, and the Chateau d' If was fading away in the blue!

But, he was "entertaining angels unawares!"

James Lawrie, Esq., cosily breakfasting at Nice, was about to step into the train for Mont Cenis, with all an Englishman's delight at the "homeward bound" signal, as the "Sphinx" cleared the harbor.

"Thank God! I have given them all the slip!" muttered "Mr. Malcolm Cranford,"—lighting a morning cheroot, and beginning to tread the decks of the "Sphinx" and to "size up" the motley crowd!

Just then,—his eyes noted the strange tableau of his oily Italian pursuer bowing politely to a pretty girl who was dabbling at a sketch of the vanishing Chateau d' If. With a start,—Kenneth recognized his unknown enemy! "I'll fix you out, yet!" he growled!

CHAPTER V.

PITFALLS FOR THE UNWARY!—BY POMPEY'S PIL-LARI!—A SURPRISE!

"Mr. Malcolm Cranford" keenly watched the handsome Italian promenading the steamer's deck in all the bravery of a befrogged surtout, with a rich collar of priceless sea

otter! There were very few of the passengers as yet astir, for the ground swell in the Gulf of Lyons claimed the usual tribute to Neptune! The debonair Count was bravely struggling with a Cavour of preternatural length and blackness, and exhibiting all his manly perfections to the few women promenaders!

"He rather overdoes the 'ignoring dodge!'" mused Kenneth, as he went below to assure himself that his belongings were not being rifled! He had already decided to limit his use of foreign tongues to a broken bit of French, after the fashion of "Stratford atte Bowe!"

The broad-faced, good-humored state room steward was stowing all of Gryffyth's things away in ship-shape when Kenneth entered!

"Bimeby—mistral come! Make all dance—Monsieur!" cheerfully proclaimed the attendant! "Always get a bit of storm between Corsica an' Malta!"

These cheerful prognostications were cut short by the visit of the *controleur*, a maritime Murat, of the most dandified Gallic attractions.

"Would M'sieu kindly officially enter his name upon the *Liste des Voyageurs de Premier Classe*?"

Kenneth "would,"—with easy politeness,—and he soon learned that some thirty first-class passengers were aboard the stout old "Sphinx," now lumbering along bravely out in deep water!

An assorted cargo of sugar and cotton machinery for the Viceroy and the Pashas, two hundred second-class passengers, and a selection of race horses for the gay Cairene and Alexandrine devotees of "*le Sport*" made up the vessel's burden.

Over a '*petit verre*' in the grand salon, M'sieu le *Controleur* proudly dilated upon his "swell" passenger list! His broken English well matched Kenneth's assumed fragmentary French!

"M'sieu est globe trottaire,—voyage pour le plaisir! The Engleesh ver mooth riches—all,—tous! Observez,—I shall tell,—ze passengaires!"

"Ah! Madame la Duchesse de Valeria,—great ladie—aussi sa charmante fille! Ze grand diva,—Ze Morelli—

artiste,—singaire—of ze world renown,—for ze Khédive's Gran' Opera! Quelle belle femme!

"Le Comte de Santa Marina,—Gentleman of the Chambre—de sou Altesse Ismail,—beau garçon,—'good fellow'—you say!"

"Ze artistes, ze tenore—ze impresario,—all with ze gran' Morelli."

Kenneth smiled and hazarded a query as to the identity of the young girl engaged in sketching Monte Cristo's rocky prison—the house of the still undiscovered wearer of the Iron Mask!

The purser smiled and plumed himself. "Mademoiselle Andrée Lafarge—Ecole des Beaux Arts. She have ze commission to paint ze temple,—ze Sphinx—ze ruines! Dans ma charge personnel,—une jeune personne charmante!"

With some art, Kenneth extended the information that Mademoiselle Lafarge had arrived in haste, at the very last moment! And,—that the Count de Santa Marina—(an old traveler), had comfortably arrived the night before with great sagacity.

"It could not have been this woman whom he gallanted!" muttered Kenneth, as he saw the shores of the "plaisant pays de France" rapidly receding. "The other one is probably now mourning her dinner companion!" He started as the purser significantly whispered, "Ze Capitaine shall see you! Follow me, Sare! No one must know of ze visite!"

Kenneth Gryffyth was mentally unsettled as he slipped along the dark passage-way to the captain's private cabin!

The rising wind was beginning to whistle shrilly in the wire rigging, and he was not yet equipped with his sea legs! His strange meeting with Lawrie,—the loving pursuit of Charley Grosvenor, the attempted rifling of his luggage,—the dogged pursuit of Santa Marina, all these bizarre happenings made him agnostic as to human nature.

But, he easily recognized the bluff, old Breton sailor in the stout Captain Lefacheux, who dismissed the "Contrôleur" with a friendly wave of his hand!

The bearded, burly, middle-aged sailor then arose and locked the door of his private cabin, and drew the red silken curtains veiling the dead lights of his den. With a proffer of his segar box, and a hearty invitation to "splice the main brace," he broke out into very fair English:

"I have sent for you here before the other passengers could notice this visit!" the sailor began.

"I am responsible for your life,—health, and comfort, by the special orders of the Direction of the 'Messageries Maritimes!' I know who you are,"—he smilingly said.

"And,—your own house, with your backer, the great banker Lawrie, are also heavy owners of our stock! So, —you see,—you are at home!"

And then, without noticing the young man's astonishment, he continued: "You had better seal up all your valuables and let me put them in my own private safe here! There are no keys issued to our state rooms!"

"Mr. Malcolm Cranford's" eyes grew larger as the sailor handed him an envelope which had been sealed with the signet which Lawrie had given to him the night before. Kenneth tore the missive open!

It was brief but pithy. On the millionaire's visiting card was written, "Trust to Captain Lefacheux as to your safety on the voyage! Leave all your valuables with him! Follow his advice!"

The words "James Lawrie" were clearly in the old banker's hand-writing! And then the mystified young emissary noted the words—"Destroy this at once."

"Now! Mr. Kenneth Gryffyth!" quietly said the sailor, "I have often carried a half million Turkish pounds over to Alexandria for your people, and,—with no one a whit the wiser! And,—many a fair consignment, too, for that *café chantant* prince, Ismail Khedive! Little confidential bits of living finery also for Cherif, and Sadik,—for Nubar,—and the other gay Pashas!"

"Human nature is always the same! You see, I am to guard you with my life! You must not come here again—unless I send for you by the 'Controleur'! It might be remarked! I have given you the second seat at my table,—as I am the only officer speaking your

tongue! I can so look over your comfort, and gradually show a little interest in you! Busy yourself with your guide books! Amuse yourself well!

"The Duchesse of Valeria and her charming child are at my right and left! She is grande dame!--and—very reserved!

"You must look out for Santa Marina, who is placed opposite you! He is a sly devil! Play no cards with him! He always wins,—and,—he is, also, a very good rapier! All the opera people on board are harmless;—of their easy-going kind, only,—beware of the Morelli! She is a man-eater! All the rest are but the ordinary lot of travelers and adventurers! There is not much character, east of Malta!—Remember that!"

Kenneth Gryffyth was blankly staring at his strange adviser over a very good cigar, and he dumbly sealed their friendship with a little toss of brandy!

"We will soon have a little bit of weather!" said the commander, as the boatswain's whistle sounded out shrilly over the rush of trampling feet! "I inspect cabins at two o'clock!" he hastily said! "Have your sealed pacquet all ready—and you can give it to me then! Leave nothing in your luggage to compromise your mission—whatever it is!"

"Lawrie holds all our people responsible for you, now. Be prudent,—and, remember,—'cards,—wine—women'—are the young man's fatal foes! I've told the purser and all the stewards to serve you like a prince!"

"Now,—go! There's a white squall coming up!"

"Be sure only to address me as 'Malcolm Cranford!'" said the excited lover. The Captain nodded as he grasped his speaking trumpet and hat.

"I am playing for a high stake! I will obey you!" continued Kenneth, "but, one last word! This young artist—Miss Lafarge? Is she a companion of the Count Santa Marina? I don't like that fellow's looks!"

He had reserved his private discoveries, remembering Polonius' sage counsel, "Give every man thine ear,—but, few, thy voice!"

The Captain paused at the door! "She's a very talented young girl,—going over to Egypt on a sort of *Prix de*

Rome trip—I believe, for some wealthy clients! Santa Marina never saw her before we sailed! She is in the purser's charge—and,—by the way,—she speaks English very nicely! I received her on board myself!

"If he has scraped an acquaintance already—it's by acting on his old motto, 'Donna é mobile!' The Count is a great woman-hunter,—and a lady-killer of some renown! But,—she is certainly harmless,—and,—all right!"

It was high time for "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" to leave Captain Lefacheux to his duties, for Gallic wails arose, polyglot howls of distress filled the air, and the deeply-laden "Sphinx" began to labor heavily in an ugly sea! It was a nasty little turn about!

Thirty-six hours later, Kenneth Gryffyth had only obtained a peep at Corsica, and a distant glimpse of Algiers as the steamer was buffeted around, with a fair indication of a six days' voyage being spun out to eight!

His papers being securely deposited, the hardy Englishman had almost the sole run of the ship, for, from Madame le Duchesse, and that graceful man-eater,—the Morelli,—down to the pallid tenors and the wildly-disgusted Count de Santa Marina,—the cabin passengers were all conspicuous by their absence!

"Monarch of all I survey!" laughed Gryffyth, at the table, set forth with its storm-racks!

"There is no danger,—here,—so—far, of any entangling alliances—thanks to Father Neptune!"

But,—a clear sky and bright sunshine brought at last a smooth sea—and the first-class passengers all timidly materialized—beginning with the Count di Santa Marina,—and ending with the suave Duchess de Valeria,—and the so far harmless but evidently fascinating Morelli, the star of fair Milano!

They were nearing Malta when Mademoiselle Lafarge's easel was made the center of public attention! The sketch of the Chateau d' If was duly hailed as "ravissante,"—"charmant," and,—even Madame la Duchesse deigned to pause and admire!

Under the Captain's polite introductions, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" had been admitted to the charmed circle

of the ladies—not even excepting—that lustrous-eyed star—the Morelli,—who looked so calmly trustful and,—even insouciant in her *négligée de voyage*!

The young financier recognized the adroitness of Captain Lefacheux's table diplomacy in placing the Count de Santa Marina next to the young daughter of the wary Duchess. With the frank Captain at her side, and her accomplished mother opposite, the slim, pretty girl of twelve was fenced off from the Count's attentions!

Standing on the deck in a short gray frock, her golden hair streaming out from under a coquettish cap, the timid-eyed girl moved with all the grace of a startled fawn! Her lustrous blue eyes, frank in all the bravery of innocent girlhood were averted from the Count whose ceremonial politeness to her mother smacked of the overdone manners of the Bon Marchè!

It was easy for Kenneth to divine that the Captain had given him a social brevet of high rank, for Madame la Duchesse chose to be frankly gracious to the young traveler! And,—famously did he get on with the pretty Mademoiselle Renée, whose stories of her Provencal home, and the histories of her dogs, pigeons and even her beautiful sorrel Limousin pony were timidly poured into Kenneth's willing ear!

The companion of the Duchess' daily deck measuring, Kenneth began soon to marvel at that great lady's wonderful knowledge of Egyptian society!

In the suspense of waiting for his sealed orders, he wondered over the social past of this splendid woman! Her svelte and exquisite figure, her dainty, springy step, the rich glow of her olive cheek, the melting tenderness of her wonderful brown eyes, and the ivory richness of her perfect neck and shoulders proclaimed the grande dame still in the early glow of mature womanhood, and, a marvel of beauty at thirty-five—the most dangerous age of woman's empire.

"The Duke?" Ah! Captain Lefacheux had merely laughed. "My dear boy! There are questions which should never be asked!" And so, Kenneth Gryffyth only knew that Madame Meré was daintily named "Marguer-

ite!"—but, he fell insensibly under the witchery of her perfect manner.

Together, they had soon visited all the remotest corners of the vessel, laughed at the bizarre passengers, listened at night to the volunteer concerts of the operatic voyagers, and inspected the drawings of Mademoiselle Lafarge, now quite the lionne of the voyage!

Gryffyth was now reassured as to his safety, and no one had as yet crept upon his intimacy! His documents were safe in the Captain's strong box, and the adroit Count di Santa Marina was busied in a languishing siege of the full-bosomed Morelli!

The musical flow of his "*lingua Toscana in bocca Romana*" was unceasing as the steady old "Sphinx" bored her way along toward Malta,—after three days' buffeting around the wind-swept waters off the shores of France!

Kenneth had mentally noted the Duchess' courteous ignoring of the all too-evident Gallic flirtations of the passengers, for every mile told off toward the Pharos seemed to loosen restraint until the deck was covered with groups quite "natural and Greek" in the lessened distances of a primary reserve!

The red fez,—mark of the Oriental "tenderfoot," began to appear! The gay guitar's thrumming mingled with the click of dominos, the shouts of Roba players, and, in the evening moonlight, intertwined waltzers gaily whirled over the broad decks of the "Sphinx."

With an amused smile, Kenneth noted the Count's pursuit of the fascinating "Morelli" of the serpent eyes! Even Madame la Duchesse deigned to murmur with an expressive glance, and a gentle pressure of her escort's arm: "Mon ami! Beware of that 'polichinelle'!"

"I have watched the rise of Monsieur Strilogo,—from valet de place,—interpreter, and laquais de Pasha,—into the efflorescent parvenu,—Count di Santa Marina! His nobility is like his jewelry,—false! You are young!" Madame smiled with the tender superiority of at least three or four years! "It pleases me to take an interest in you! My good Lefacheux has spoken——"

"You have been often in Egypt?" hazarded Kenneth.

"Ah! I have spent many winter seasons since I went

out a young woman with the Empress for the magnificent fêtes of the opening of the canal! I shall never forget the 16th of November, sixty-nine—for I mingled with my late husband in the whirl of those splendid gayeties which cost fifteen millions of livres sterling!" The great lady's voice was sad!

"And, so, I have drank of the magic waters of Nile,—and—the winter flight of the storks always brings me back! There is something so restful in the evening glow,—an air so balmy,—the witchery of seven dominations of dead nations,—and the undying romance on every hand from Aboukir Bay, where France's hopes were whelmed to the unravished silence of beautiful Philae!"

They walked on arm in arm! "Yes! I love Egypt,—the crowded quays of Alexandria,—the emerald reaches of the Delta, the palm-fringed landscapes, with the mournful camels plodding on in line, under the bright stars by the cool canals! I love the wild cosmopolitan huddle of the mongrel town where great Pompey died, where the world's gathered lore was given to the flames, where burning Cleopatra was drawn up into Caesar's waiting arms! There is such an infinite background to all the petty play of human passions, in Egypt!"

"Do you go much into the society of the Khedive's court, Madame?" respectfully queried Kenneth. The lady laughed in a ringing disdain!

"I live for myself! I have a few cherished friends,—notably,—the Russian Consul General, whose charming wife was a beloved school-mate at the *Sacré Cœur*—but, beyond a few of '*notre monde*', I ignore the crowded villainy of the Viceroy's forty palaces! To you,—it may be all new,—dazzling—gilded—and, with a glamour of its own!

"Mark me, 'Monsieur Malcolm Cranford,'" she said, in her pretty accent, "There is no such band of smooth hypocrites and thieves on earth as the men who cluster around the deadly and insincere Ismail! Broken officers,—cast-off nobles,—worn-out *roués*,—fugitive gamblers,—scheming agents,—lying spies and base panders! Now—there is one!" she said, indicating the smiling Count bending before the "Morelli."

"He is now ruminating whether the sly Cherif,—the cold Nubar,—the vicious Ratib, shall give her the first Harem dinner;—or,—whether 'His Lowness,'—Ismail, will open the tawdry splendors of Abdin Palace to the wayward song-bird! Remember my words!

"Distrust every man in the Cairene court! As for the women,—beyond the invalids, tourists and a few residents of station,—they are all Phrynes,—either reminiscent or expectant!"

"Rather a gloomy picture, Madame la Duchesse!" murmured Kenneth.

"But not overdrawn, Monsieur,"—replied the Duchesse. "I know the whole pinchbeck splendor of Ismail's reign,—the reign of the wolf,—the shark,—of the throned assassin! Duped,—tricked,—sold out in advance,—he now plays off Cherif against Nubar; and is false to both!"

"The shrieking fellah howls under the lash! Eight hundred lazy women loll in the two score palaces! There are beautiful wantons gathered from the Alhambra,—the Folles Bergeres,—the Viennese concert halls, the gypsy camps, the Italian coulisses, and the Georgian and Circassian valleys!

"Doubly, trebly bankrupt,—robbing his creditors,—pillaged by his corrupt officials,—the vain Ismail listens to the silver trumpets of Verdi's Aida, and dreams of reviving the great Egypt of the splendid Pharaohs, of re-enacting the glories of Alexander,—the iron tyranny of the lion-hearted Mehemet,—or holding the gates of Ormuz and of Ind with the frenzied grasp of a Napoleon! Fool,—and groveling Belshazzar! It is not to be!"

"Mr. Malcolm Cranford" gazed astonished at the beautiful Duchess—standing there, her eyes flashing,—her bosom heaving with emotion, and her voice thrilling him as a newly-inspired Madame Roland.

"I did not think that Madame la Duchesse cared for these serious things!" faltered Kenneth! The lovely woman grasped his arm.

"We shall speak later of these things—you and I,—in cloudless Egypt, by the sand-drifted Sphinx! Tenez—we must be friends,—you and I! My grandfather was

one of Napoleon's bravest officers and rode with the lean young Corsican in the battle of the Pyramids.

"*Je suis Imperialisté, jusqu' au bout des ongles!* Napoleon! France! The Empire! Gods! What have I not suffered! I have lived to see the fat-cheeked Prussian sentinel eating his sausages before the Dome des Invalides!"

"The Conqueror's ashes guarded by a beer-sodden peasant! My soldier husband fell fighting for France at Sedan! I leave the Paris embrûlée, to dream again of lost empires forever there,—in the land of forgotten dynasties, amid the graves of the lost arts! We must be friends, you and I!"

"I tell you—it is written that the eastern end of the Mediterranean is to be the hinge of the future scroll of the world's unwritten bloody history-to-be! It is written in the stars!"

"If there had been no siege of Acre,—our Napoleon would have conquered modern India! A later Alexander—he failed at Acre, and—a schoolboy feud fought itself out there! Fate, the English guns, Sydney Smith, the plague—and his old boyish enemy!" The Duchess' proud head was lifted in ineffable scorn!

"And this brute Belshazzar's father Ibrahim, took the same Acre by storm which defied Napoleon! Fate,—the strange decrees of Fate!"

The wind rose as she sternly said: "I hate the sea! For,—had there been no Nelson,—there would have been no battle of the Nile,—and, no Trafalgar to wither the laurels of Austerlitz! Nelson foiled Napoleon,—and,—you cold English let the only woman whom he loved,—starve! A hero's reward!!"

The gracious lady sighed. "So! You see! I find in the superb panorama of Cairo,—in the rose-flush dawn of the Mokattam hills,—in the spicy glories of Boulak,—or out on the Libyan sand—the new-told truth of olden times! Tout lasse,—tout casse,—tout passe!"

"I shun all the low intrigues of the Egyptian court! I fly from the taint of the wantons of Tantah fair,—the snake-like Ghawazees of the harems,—and, the pollution

of the Pasha's greasy smiles, to the sunset glow of Thebes, Luxor, Karnak and Denderah!

"I am drawn to the haunts of Osiris, of Sesostris, of Cambyses, to the rocky wall of the cataract where the stern Greek and mailed Roman paused, at Philae, awed by the unbanished shadow of the 'Mighty One who sleeps in Philae!'

"With my child and a few faithful attendants, I pass up to the cloudless glow of the skies, beyond whose southern rim be the lands of the fierce Soudanese,—the iron hills of the unconquered Abyssinians,—and dream there of the happy valley of Rasselas,—smiling over the mountains, far beyond all human care and strife!"

The young man gazed at her beautiful face! "There is always left love!" murmured Kenneth, now under the witchery of the great lady's enthusiasm.

"Love and I,—have said adieu,—for many a day!". sadly smiled Madame. "Listen! You shall be my cavalier on shore. And we will have a happy day among the chattering Maltese! I shall be glad to leave this band of saltimbanques for a single day—and,—I trust myself to you!"

Her voice was almost caressing. "I know not what takes you to Egypt! Come with me and tread where the wind-blown dust is that of kings and queens who reigned when the ancestors of Europe's crowned 'bourgeois' were woad painted savages huddling in dim caves, or herded brutes in gloomy forests!"

"Think of the rose-granite rocks of Syene that have turned back an Alexander—a Cæsar, a Napoleon! For, to mystic Egypt, the world's greatest heroes have been drawn as the moon draws the sea!"

"Pompey's ashes were scattered on its wind-blown shores, Alexander's body was buried in its sand-drifting deserts,—Kleber's blood stained its yellow sands,—and, when France stood off a whole world in arms,—our soldiers carved these lines at Philae!

"L'an 6 de la République le 13 Messidor, une armée Française commandée par Buonaparte, est descendue à Alexandrie. L'armée ayant mis, vingt jours après, les

Mamelukes en fuite, les à poursuivi au delà des cataractes, ou il est arrivée le 13 Ventose de l' au 7."

"And, in that same immortal band, my grandfather stood, sword in hand!

"To-day," the Duchess sternly said, "Gordon Pasha opens the way for English trade to the Equator, following Sir Samuel Baker's ivory-hunting tracks, and the English lion creeps nigher daily!"

"Italy and France are hoodwinked, and the bloated despot of Egypt sees the equatorial region wrenched from him, and waits now to be thrust out of Egypt—like a cook without a character!"

At the signal of laughing childish eyes, Madame la Duchesse fled away smiling, and Kenneth Gryffyth was left to muse upon what manner of stray goddess this might be!

It was late that night, when he sought repose! For Madame la Duchesse had gathered a circle of dilettantes around Mademoiselle Lafarge and the theme of ancient and modern Egypt brought the grande dame en évidence as a modern Corinne.

Gryffyth was drifting idly under the influence of the sinuous, high-born beauty, and a leaf of her guide-book told him of the dangers of her queenly ripened beauty!

"A newer Cleopatra,"—he murmured—"A serpent of old Nile, à la mode! True, Cleopatra was twenty-one when she enslaved Julius Cæsar and not twenty-four, when she had made her magnificent royal visit to Rome and given to him Cesaron! But, she was twenty-eight when she snared Antony and thirty-three, when she won him back from the cold Octavia! From thirty-three to thirty-nine,—she held the world's greatest general against all the warring beauties of an envious world! And,—this woman—who has done with love, is not over thirty-four!"

He was musing upon the mystery of the Duchess de Valeria when the bluff Captain tapped at his window!

"My dear boy!" he whispered. "Let me give you a prime cigar and,—a bit of good advice! Madame la Duchesse is a gracious friend—but—I've seen the haughtiest Pashas of Egypt at her feet! As for the pinch-

back Khedive Ismail he has fairly groveled before her! To you I say,—only this,—she is as far beyond us,—you and I,—as yonder star!"

And, then, he good-humoredly pushed Kenneth out, and grasped his sextant to draw the star down!

"Stahremberg shot a man about her—three years ago—and—a semi-royal Duke almost fatally wounded himself,—because—my lady smiled—and,—then,—changed her mind! You are not impressionable, you say, my boy! So much the better! Then, try the Morelli oisean qui vole! Bird of passage! And,—keep your secrets from all of them! For, women are—women!"

As the sailor stumped away, a danger signal flashed across Kenneth's tired brain! "Une femme incomprise?" What part of Egypt's game of hide and seek was given to this beautiful patrician being?

He had noted the sudden growing passion of Monsieur the Count di Santa Marina for an agreeable and most accommodating contralto, and so, shunning the fascination of the Duchess' murmuring voice, he was drawn from the Scylla of her arts dangerously near the charybdis of the eager-eyed Morelli!

"Here at last," laughed Kenneth, "is a woman who is no misanthropist!" For,—the diva was graciously pleased to bestow upon him a lingering pressure of the hand, and, a melting, cooing whisper "We must meet in Cairo! Sir Englishman! I find you *tres galant!*"

And, after the tired and happy passengers were all reembarked at Malta, where the lions of LaValette had been exhausted, from the Capuchin monks, in mummy,—to the proud glories of the Armory and the light gayeties of a shore breakfast, Count Santa Marina nudged the lovely Morelli as the Duchess' boat swept by, with the mother and daughter singing an old Venetian boat song! Kenneth Gryffyth was drifting and dreaming!

"Never mind! Ernesto!" whispered the dancing-eyed Morelli. "You must continue to make love to Aglae, and,—avoid me! I brought the Englishman a bit to term last night! Once that he comes to my rooms at Cairo,—I will bring him down! I never failed with a man yet!" she saucily said. "Remember, your promise!

A royal diamond bracelet! And, I've sworn to win him away from that wooden doll Duchess,—who is perhaps—one of us,—after all! Who knows?"

"I can't make her out," wrathfully said Santa Marina. "She may have a game of her own—but, a high one! She hates me,—for,—she knew me,—of old! There are three secret agents of Cherif on this boat,—and she may be the fourth! Who knows? Egypt is the land of lies! A loveless human desert!"

The Morelli laughed and drew a jeweled dagger from her coiled blue-black hair! "Mi amico!" she whispered.—"You are really mine! I told you to make love in dumb show to Aglae,—but,—I warn you as to your little white-faced artist!" "You knew her before you came on the Sphinx?"

Vainly the gay Lothario protested. "I will spoil her beauty with a slash of my knife!" she muttered. "You are mine, Ernesto! Don't you remember the day we each opened a vein and mingled our blood!"

The handsome Italian laughed. "Be reasonable, alma de mi vida! Cherif Pasha will give you a palace nest and shower jewels on you, if we can manage to trap this fellow! He is too cool for me! He must have blundered on to the scheme!"

"Leave him to me, Ernesto!" laughed the Morelli, as they sought the cabin for their *verre de champagne*!

And,—so, all unconscious of the plots and counterplots around him,—Kenneth Gryffyth saw Malta fade away behind him! His heart was beating wildly, for, though he was spell-bound in his day on shore by the Duchess' word pictures of Cairene interiors and tangled intrigue, his heart leaped up when the Captain handed him a telegram without heading or address. It bore the tell-tale signature "Charley," and its words were ominous.

"Follow you out in a week! Be careful,—very anxious,—watch all your surroundings.—Trust to no one!"

His eyes fell when he encountered the serene and stately splendor of Madame Marguerite's eyes!

For, drifting under the walls of Paradise, he could not doubt but that she was true! And, young as he was, Rose in Bloom's velvety glances thrilled him while the

far-off warning voice of his friend faded as they swept on into the superb glow of the eastern skies!

He was strangely over-confident—for Madame la Duchesse de Valeria had never made the faintest reference to his business or hazarded a query! And, from her relations—he knew them all now—these great Pashas—from the dead Mefettish, (darkly hurled out of the world), to the gay simpering Mustapha Fehmy Pasha,—whom la Duchesse merrily laughed at as “*le Turque à la mode*,” of Empress Eugenie’s butterfly train of gallants! “A mil-liner and a fan carrier!” she cried!

It was the night before their arrival in Alexandria when the stern Captain called Kenneth Gryffyth away to his cabin for a last warning!

There had been several tender passages with the “Morelli” which the young man ascribed to the fervor of the climate and the easy gallantry of her profession, but,—as to Madame la Duchesse,—nearer,—clearer,—finer,—more fair,—this one white star shone kindly down upon the man who had been swept away by the unsapped splendors of her mind and body! And—as yet, he had told her nothing!

“Now, my boy!” said Lefacheux, “You are going into action to-morrow, so to speak! There is danger for you,—in every moment after we cast anchor until I turn you over to your friends in good shape! Not a word—a single word—to any one from the shore,—unless spoken in my presence! Cool as you are,—you are half bewitched with the Duchess! Don’t try to deny it!”

And then, the face of Kathleen Lawrie rose up before the young man in a sweet witness of his endangered trust!

“Tell me what to do,—only tell me,—I’ll obey you!” he stoutly replied.

The golden stake for which he was playing seemed naught now to Kenneth, before the implied reproach of the appealing eyes of la reine Kathleen!

“Only be cool,—be wary!” said the veteran Captain. “Take a laughing adieu of all your new friends to-night! You will see them all soon again. Life has no prim rules in sunny Egypt—and,—rules are only made to break,—at least, *en voyage!*” lightly said the sailor.

"I've kept my eye on this fellow Santa Marina! He has watched you like a lynx! Avoid him, in future—and avoid all his friends! He is hand and glove with the most dangerous gang in Egypt.

"As for these light-minded women—you must fight your own fight! You are young and good looking! Now, in the morning, make your bundles early! I will take you on shore in my own boat! I deliver you over to the Italian Consul General—body—papers—baggage and all! Then,—I cable back to Freycinet Frères, and, your chief will at once know where you are!

"Don't hazard even a line or a single telegram till you meet your own dispatch agent in Cairo! On shore, speak to no one! When you get to Cairo,—you will have friends as well as enemies, around you! Tell no one of the passengers where you go,—or as to your hotel! They'll soon enough find you out! Now,—here's a box of my good cigars! Be off with you! I must go on the bridge!"

Kenneth Gryffyth descended to the grand saloon to acquit himself of the one social debt which he owed to the passengers!

For,—at a merry Twelfth-night revel,—he had been duly favored with the ring in the cake, and, now as king of the feast, he dispensed his graceful hospitalities to the gay throng! He finally escaped, for his last tryst with the serene-eyed Duchesse, after Mademoiselle Renée had unwillingly laid her pretty head upon her pillow! He had even politely exchanged cards with Monsieur le Count di Santa Marina, and bowed, in response to that gentleman's courteously expressed wish that they might meet again later, and be friends!

"I'm almost a Moslem now!" laughed Santa Marina. "and, as Cairo, is the apex of the Delta, we will surely meet at the cafés—on the Shoubrah,—at the opera, or on the Esbékieweh! Do you go up the Nile?"

"I will probably hasten on to India, and go around the world!" said the secretly resentful Englishman.

It was the sparkling-eyed diva Morelli who merrily attacked him, in the absence of the high-born Duchess!

"If you have a heart in your bosom, Monsieur le Roi,"

she smiled as they touched glasses, "I claim you at my début, and—I will receive my friends and intimes sans ceremonie, at the Grand Hotel Esbékieweh!"

The king of the feast was only human, and so, he returned the warm pressure of the merry Diva's hand! "Your slightest wish is a command! Madame!" he gaily rejoined! "Bravo! For an Englishman—you are *pas mal!*" said the Morelli, lightly blowing him an imaginary kiss!

In all this week of good-humored artful self defense, Kenneth had learned to admire the aplomb of Mademoiselle Lafarge! Her clear brown eyes, the pale cheek, a graceful gliding way of her own, and a perfect ease of manner had insensibly attracted him! They had roved over the whole dreamy world of art in mutual memories, and now, the young man in courteous terms, wished her every success in the Egyptian tour.

They were standing alone, while Santa Marina trolled out a Calabrian love song for the gay Morelli, her bosom heaving with memories of lost loves and happy days!

Suddenly, the pale-faced woman artist leaned toward him, her whisper was thrilling with an unmistakable meaning, as she murmured, "If you can escape from Madame la Duchesse, or that easy Lucrezia Borgia—the Morelli, you'll always find a friend at Shepheard's Hotel! Come! and,—see me—there!"

And then, Kenneth Gryffyth remembered that the artist was but twenty-four,—that she, too, had a woman's heart to pique! Her cheeks crimsoned as she glided away! She was truly a graceful figure!

The young man's pulses bounded with a sudden response to the girl's insidious attack! "Toujours, le charme de l'inconnue!" he murmured as he sought the upper deck! He was walking among the red hot ploughshares, blinded!

The wary Santa Marina smiled, as he saw the little bit of by-play. "Andrée has hooked him, at last! Elle est très fine! If the Morelli does not land him,—Andrée surely will! And, if she makes me rich,—then Cherif shall buy a picture of her!"

The sly adventurer plumed himself that neither of his

womanly snares had been discovered so far! "I wonder,—I wonder,—" he mused—"if la Duchesse incomprise, will lead that boy a witch dance up the Nile! Elle est trop forte pour moi! I wonder who is behind her!"

For, the acute scoundrel never doubted that Marguerite la Duchesse de Valeria had a purpose of her own, beyond an amourette de voyage, in seeking the winter Vanity Fair of Cairo!

He rallied the convives in the grand saloon, and the great silver moon was sloping to the west long before the Morelli had ceased her last bravura! It was "*temps de relache*," on board the "Sphinx!"

But, one little contretemps occurred,—it was when Santa Marina,—"by accident,"—strolled into Kenneth Gryffyth's double stateroom. To his surprise, there was a light, and the Captain's own body servant was busied there with Gryffyth's luggage! And—with instant wit, the sleek spy faltered out a half-t tipsy apology! "The fellow has friends, it seems!" he reflected, as he dispatched, after a murmured conference, the pale-face Andrée Lafarge to hover on the upper deck in the balmy air, and to trace out Madame la Duchesse and her generally admitted admirer!

All unsuspicous of the tumult in the young artist's bosom, Gryffyth watched her graceful gliding form moving along the deck, as he lingered bewitched at the side of the grande dame!

It had come suddenly upon him that the pale-faced girl possessed a beauty of supple form all her own, and her last words proved that under her restrained calm, all the passions of womanhood were flaming! "Fire under the snow!" he murmured! It was the last night! And, the lightly held veil of conventionality was loosely held! The masques were off—all around!

Madame la Duchesse was this night a royal Venus regardant!

From the rich lyrics of De Musset,—to bits of gilded French wit,—fragmentary song which thrilled his pulses like the breath of spring,—she had braided up her past life and wanderings, into a wreath of the golden present!

She had told Gryffyth of the storied panorama of the

Nile—of the mighty memories,—the dreamy shades,—the haunting royal shadows of Memphis,—Beni Hassan,—Servet, Girgeh and Edsou!—She had painted all the wild romance of the land of Inshallah! Mashallah! Bismillah!

The warm breeze blown off shore from the Libyan desert intoxicated him! He could see nothing but her splendid shining eyes! His sorceress painted the glories of mighty Thebes,—vast Karnak, lonely Luxor,—the awful shrine of Athor, the woman Creator at Denderah, and all the bold bravery of Nature's unconquered ramparts,—the Cataracts, with Osiris' unrivalled tomb at Philae.

Dreams of Assyrian,—Persian,—Greek,—Roman,—Georgian,—Circassian, Arab and Ottoman dominion were unrolled before him; and, all the wild glories of Napoleon's fantastic conquest,—the lurid days of Mehemet,—the death in life of Ismail,—led up to her prediction of the final battle of the Russians and English for the sea gates to India! The Abyssinian's last stand for the Valley of the Nile!

And, then changing her theme to the ignoble glories of Ismail's riotous life, she showed him as a crafty Belshazzar, an ignoble Sardanapalus! And,—the love labyrinth which led to the bower where the Khedive's sister crouched—a man-eating spider was sketched, too, in all the touches of a sure hand! It was the panorama of Egypt!

"Why do you tell me all this?" he murmured! "What would you of me?" the young man whispered! For, this was surely some woman wraith,—some wild priestess of Athor, the Mighty! Some breath of Cleopatra's fiery soul seemed to animate her heaving bosom! It was a wonderful recital!

"It is late, mon ami!" the great lady murmured. "I would not lose you altogether from my life! You are to be yet nearer to me than you now think! I can not let you go! Much is given to the woman who loves! More,—to the woman who hates! I know your mission! I will now that you shall come to me to-morrow at Pompey's Pillar,—at two! I shall be there, and,—you will come to

me! Your train for Cairo leaves to-morrow night! Two of my servants well armed,—will follow your carriage out to the Pillar! Trust to me! You are playing a game where Death stalks beside you and,—as yet, you know it not! Listen!" she whispered a few words in her would-be victim's ear!

"What are you,—woman,—goddess,—or devil?" he hoarsely murmured!

"I am what I am! A later child of the Nile,—an inheritor of secrets long buried in the tombs of the mighty! I hate England's game here! I would thwart it! To gain time,—and to see the iron game played aright! Your cause now, is mine! Tell me nothing but, I will tell you all! I know who your foes are on this ship! You will have others, and—I shall know of them too,—in the shadows of the Pyramids!

"I care not for your sealed orders, Monsieur!" she whispered! "I know them, also,—and,—I will tell you all that has happened to you in Alexandria when we meet!"

"And, you? Why do you play this desperate game?" he gasped.

The lady rose, her splendid figure swaying under the light of the yellow stars! She stayed him by a gesture! She was the prototype of the imperial Faustine!

"She loved the games men played with death—"

"Where death must win!"—musically murmured the beauty!

"There, you may kiss my hand! Follow me not!" she softly said. And, he was alone, when he caught the last echo of her voice. "Au revoir at Pompey's Pillar!"

"Are they all wantons, witches, spies or afrites?" he muttered as he cooled his burning brow! He wandered irresolutely to his state room and so, never saw the Italian adventurer crouched at the stern of the vessel, with the young woman whose snare had been so deftly set!

"Never mind! Andrée!" muttered Santa Marina, "I will have the Khedive send a party of Folly's queens up the Nile! Madame la Duchesse shall be separated from this young fool! 'Noblesse oblige!' And,—Cherif shall make your Cairene career for you. You will trap him yet!"

When Kenneth Gryffyth awoke, the "Sphinx" was lying quietly at anchor only a thousand yards off the mole of Alexandria!

There was the blue unruffled bay! The long mole with its modern Pharos,—the domed mosques and the tapering slender minarets! He sprang to the port hole! Discordant cries arose from a hundred clustering boats! A steam launch, its flag bearing the silver crescent and star on a red ground, was puffing away, filled with bedizened officers, brilliant in the red fez! At the stern, the Count di Santa Marina politely waved to him, an adieu!

Long yellow sands were stretched out there along the hillocks of the curving bay, and castellated fort, huge battery and the whole strand swarming with ant-like humanity was fringed with gayly colored feluccas, and sanean lateen fisher boats!

A circle of deep-sea vessels at anchor surrounded the "Sphinx," and three huge black war sea monsters bore the "meteor flag" of England, now lazily drooping in the calm! The warning words of the Captain returned to him! His evening with the Duchess had intoxicated his ardent soul!

He rubbed his eyes as the strange occurrences of the night came back! Santa Marina's politeness! The easy-going Morelli's saucy banter! The pale-faced artist's passionate appeal! The incredible sorcery of the splendid woman with eyes of light and soul of flame who had murmured to him, secrets which he dared not own! A wild eagerness to be off, and face the hinted dangers seized upon him! For, if there were dangers—he would face them—in the open.

He started at a sharp knock. "Captain's compliments! Goes on shore in half an hour, Sir!" said the steward, as he brought in the morning coffee tray!

In the fresh cool morning, he was soon once more his own prosaic self! Bestowing his revolver in its place, he now recalled his solemn duty!

Kathleen Lawrie's face was tenderly appealing to him, as he kissed her picture! "I'll break this witch's spell!" he muttered, "when once at Cairo! Charley Grosvenor—" He was soon summoned to depart, and—dropping a Na-

poleon into many an outstretched palm, he descended silently into the Captain's boat, at the call of a quarter-master.

In five minutes, his luggage was lowered into the bow, and leaving two hundred heads enviously bending over the steamer's rail, the boat sped away shorewards! When halfway between ship and landing, Lefacheux gravely presented a telegram.

Kenneth Gryffyth started as he read the words. "Leave Brindisi to-day. Will follow you! Beware of strangers. Will meet you at Cairo."

The signature "Charley" was like the breath of new-mown hay on an honest English meadow. "It was sent by our agent to me! Not a word, now!" whispered the Captain!

With a lordly air, the bluff seaman forged through a struggling crowd of donkey-boys, guides and hotel touts, and sharply pushed Kenneth Gryffyth into a waiting carriage, with two slender Syces, and a gorgeous Consular cavasse.

Ten minutes later, the stout seaman shook the Englishman's hand in Signor Dellepiane's drawing room! "There is your Mentor! I've done my duty! Here is your sealed packet!" said Lefacheux, as the Consul nervously eyed the new comer! Every drop of blood in Gryffyth's veins was tingling as the sailor whispered, "Mind your eye—now! Come back safe to me! And,—beware of all the women whom you met on the ship! They are all Venus priestesses, save the Duchess, who is—I know not what! And, as to her,—don't you try to find out! Trust to no one in Egypt, least of all—to yourself!"

The mariner hastened away, leaving the slim spectacled dark-bearded Italian Consul to still further mystify Mr. Malcolm Cranford, who duly presented his official passport!

"I will send and have this visad!" he fearfully said. "You are not to trust yourself alone on the streets here! The one who is to meet you arrives to-night on a special train at six o'clock! The train will leave at seven,—for Cairo, and, you will be there at eight to-morrow! I, myself, am to conduct you with a guard of attendants to the

train! You will receive the packet of sealed orders from me, on the cars! And, then,—your future is in your own hands!" Signor Dellepiane paused.

"I am at your disposition. Your safe arrival is already telegraphed! I dare not go out with you! If you wish, I will send you out on a tour of the city! Speak to no one! You can use my carriage all the day! My cavasse speaks excellent English! He will interpret for you! He will supply anything you wish! We dine at five,—and,—the ladies of my family will be glad to see you then! You are "Mr. Malcolm Cranford,"—a British tourist of rank! That is all! Remember! Do not betray yourself!"

It was two hours before Mr. Malcolm Cranford descended the staircase of the elegant four-story mansion of Signor Vittorio Dellepiane! He had been assigned a fair upper chamber, and a dainty breakfast was served in his room! The Consul's polite plea of official business did not altogether cover his timorous desire to avoid his dangerous visitor!

Kenneth had leisure to recall the stern-faced Lawrie, laughing Milly Grosvenor,—and his own home circle!

"By Jove! Kathleen's future is endangered as well!" he fretted. "They will think me a social traitor!" And, he doubly locked the gates of his heart in prudent fear, for the whole outlook was most unpromising.

"This Italian fellow does not seem even to know who will be my conductor!" he angrily exclaimed as he drove away "to do" the city of that great tragedy where a whole world was thrown away for love! The home of Hypatia,—a city once the proud compeer of Rome and Antioch!

It was only when he began to encounter the carriage loads of gay fellow passengers that he drove far out of town by the Mahmoudieh canal, and then breathlessly awaited his dangerous tryst with the one woman whom he feared now!

When he had at last dexterously avoided the resplendent Morelli and her cavalier Santa Marina, he sprang out at the base of the hill where Pompey's Pillar still rises, in its rose red perfection its hundred feet!

There was a graceful woman now waiting there beside

the giant shaft! A carriage was seen waiting under a fringe of palms!

"Come! Let me astonish you!" was the Duchess' greeting! "Take a turn in my carriage! For, we may be followed! I know all the roads!"

As they rolled along, the lady recounted to the astonished envoy of Mammon that which made him tremble! Kenneth listened in pale-faced wonder!

"Let me show you the power of the Lotus!" she laughingly said. "But, promise me, if I am right, that you will come to me, in Cairo! And let me help you—when your honor will allow you to divide your risks! You are to leave here for Cairo at seven,—on a special car! You will first receive your sealed orders from Signor Dellepiane—on the car—and—the man who is to be your conductor to the presence of the Khedive's agent, whose name you have not even yet heard, is Signor Arturo Cherubini,—and a man who is my very good friend!"

"Now,—be silent,—mark—and watch all my words come true! You are to be a part of my life here,—and,—you shall not lose your faith in woman,—through me! I ask you nothing! You may not know that Cleopatra brought fortune and victory to Antony in Syria, and on the Euphrates! The great Roman might have learned wisdom of the subtle queen! Let me, an innocent Cleopatra,—fight for you,—and, with you! I do not ask you to trust me now, but,—will you come to me in Cairo?"

The sun was throwing long shadows now from the palms, and the young man was speechless! Marguerite, Duchesse de Valeria threw her whole soul into a last appeal!

"Will you come to me! Will you trust to me! Are you blind and boyish yet! For your own sake? Take me on trust! Look in my face!" There was the light of a strange self-vindication in her eyes!

"I will trust you with my honor—as far as my self-sworn duty permits! Madame!"—he solemnly said, "I will come to you, in Cairo!"

Her hand trembled with delight in his brown palm. "Now, leave me, and drive at once home! There is your

carriage now following us!" she joyously cried. "Your future is safe,—if you trust to me all in all! At Cairo! I will send for you! Be brave! Be silent and loyal!"

Gryffyth's foot had no sooner touched the road than the Duchess was whirled away down an avenue of palms!

Three hours later, Kenneth Gryffyth started in sudden alarm, as Consul Dellepiane led him into the silk-curtained private car! "Here are your papers!" he briefly said! "Signor Arturo Cherubini! Your guide! My duty is done! Compare the seal!"

He had not glanced at the tall Italian stranger when his own London servitor "Soames," sprang forward. "I thought that I would surprise you, sir! Here I am,—ready for any duty!"

"How the dickens did you get here?" cried Kenneth. But Soames only laughed and placed his finger on his lip.

BOOK II—THE HAND-WRITING ON THE WALL.

CHAPTER VI.

CHERIF PASHA TAKES A HAND IN THE GAME.—HIS HIGHNESS THE KHEDIVE.—STYLISH NEIGHBORS.—LISCHEN THE FLOWER GIRL.—AT THE VIENNESE LADIES' CONCERT.

"Here is your private compartment! Mr. Cranford!" said the tall stranger. "Your man has some important news for you! I will pay my respects to you later!"

The car was already in motion, gliding out towards Fort Ramleh, before Kenneth Gryffyth could recall his wandering thoughts!

For, Soames had closed the door, and was busied in unbosoming some documents from the recesses of his shooting jacket, while Gryffyth reflected that the Consul Dellepiane had left him without a word of adieu and with an evident relief!

The abrupt vanishing of the mysterious Duchess greatly alarmed him! Had he seen her carriage turning into a Pasha's garden, as the Cavasse picked him up? "Was he already betrayed?" He dared not frame an answer in his mind!

Signor Dellepiane had been evidently frightened at his long absence, and the reception by the half-odalisque wife and the gazelle-eyed daughter had been evidently forced and coldly constrained!

To avoid a growing embarrassment,—he had stepped out on the balcony of the Consul's house to admire the glowing sunset and the superb sweep of Alexandria's sap-

phire bay. Then, the official, with a smothered cry of alarm had almost roughly drawn him inside!

"You risk my life and yours, Signore!" muttered the Consul! "Pray do not show your face even at my windows!"

And—then the half-bewitched emissary caught a glimpse of the swarthy face of the handsome Italian Count, as he gesticulated to a crowd of importuning peddlers from a carriage.

Yes! It was the audacious Morelli, too, who had blown him an imaginary kiss! And the dainty woman figure beside her strangely recalled that pale-faced human enigma Andrée Lafarge! Were they all on his track, now?

The superb oriental dinner had been almost a dumb show, for the Consul's wife was a silent beauty, and the lovely child only trifled with the ropes of pearls around her swan-like neck!

Though both spoke French and Italian charmingly, their soulless faces were as vacant as waxen dolls, and the two women soon vanished like unsubstantial visions.

In the Consul's cabinet, over cigars and liqueurs, the Italian had informed him that the agent from Cairo was as yet unknown to him, and would only show to him on arrival the secret credentials from the Consul General at Cairo on his arrival!

"I've had my private telegrams, Signore, and I am supposed to know nothing! I simply telegraph your departure in cipher—that's all!"

And,—the few murmured words exchanged at the station between the two Italians were unheard by the anxious Englishman! He was now both morose and thoroughly startled! It was but a half-hearted welcome!

Before he took the papers extended by the rosy-faced Soames, Kenneth repeated his question: "How did you get here?" The valet pointed to the adjoining compartment, "Hush!" he whispered, "that fellow speaks English very well, as you can see!"

And he cautiously drew his master into the farther compartment where the cool air from Lake Mareotis was

drawing through the open lattice work of the smoking den.

"I came on from Geneva, direct by Mont Cenis to Brindisi, as the lady told me, after I saw you off!" reluctantly confessed Soames, with a sheepish grin.

"It was Master Charles who made a Frenchman of me at Paris! I was bundled up third-class, and I piped you off easily at Geneva!

"Then, I telegraphed back to him at the Travelers' Club, and, a lady came to me at the telegraph office with Mr. Grosvenor's card! A rare out-and-outer, too! She bought me my ticket to Brindisi and tipped me ten pounds, and then, her man at Brindisi put me safely on the boat for Alexandria!

"Of course, you know Mr. Grosvenor will be along on the next Brindisi boat, and, I'm to be reinforced by his man in Cairo! I got his dispatch at the office! He's on the next boat! That'll make four of us Englishmen!"

"What office?" murmured Kenneth, as if in a dream.

"Why!" said Soames, "the 'Messageries Martimes' here—where the lady told me to report! And,—they sent me up here with a man who never left me till you drove up!"

"Do you know this lady? Have you seen her here?" sternly demanded Gryffyth. He eyed the man fiercely as he muttered, "She was veiled and I never even saw her face at Geneva! Of course, she's not here! I left her back there! But, she had a voice, sweet and soft and low, and her whole rig was Buckingham Palace style!"

Mr. Malcolm Cranford had torn open a note in Charley Grosvenor's familiar lazy scrawl.

"Don't blame Soames! I made him do it! Ask him no leading questions! We will both lose a friend if you do! One who is all-powerful! Will explain when we meet."

The signature "Charley" was at least a real comfort at last! The second document was a telegram unsigned, but Gryffyth could easily read Lawrie's stern reminder, as a warning of the stake at issue.

The words were few but pregnant.

"Arrived safely London. Do not mention your busi-

ness to man who conducts you to Cairo. Will know of all your movements. Trust only to my seal at Cairo."

"Have you spoken to the man, Soames?" demanded Gryffyth.

"No, sir!" answered the valet. "I was just turned over to him like a bale of goods! All he said to me was, 'Go in and wait for your master! He will be here soon!' But I got special orders from the lady not to lose you from sight night or day till Master Charles gets to Cairo!"

"Do you know who she is? Have you any idea?" almost roughly demanded Gryffyth, as he unlocked his Gladstone bag and thrust the still sealed packet of papers in it!

He hung the strap around Soames' wrist with a significant motion, and a gesture of suspicion!

There was no reply for a moment, and then Soames handed out a filmy bit of lace! "Here's a handkerchief that the lady dropped when she hastened away at Geneva!" babbled the valet. "It's rare lace, too,—and,—there's a coronet on it, too. I rather fancy!" he faltered, "that the Honorable Charles Grosvenor may have a lovely friend on his travels! And,—you know what them young nobs is, sir, begging your pardon! There's many a bit of love-makin' that's not down in the society journals! She had the figure and step of a queen—that's all I know, sir!"

"I'll keep this, Soames!" muttered Gryffyth, as he vainly scanned the dainty-broidered coronet, and the interlaced monogram! There was a rare faint perfume in the bit of lawn and lace—and, the young man thrust the token in his bosom.

"Cleopatra's handkerchief!" he mused, as he handed Soames his revolver. "You are to guard that bag with your life! Never lose it from sight even a moment!"

And then, he opened the door and joined the waiting conductor of this mysterious voyage.

"I hope you will find all right, Mr. Cranford!" said the young man. "There's all we need on the car! Fruit,—wine,—a neat luncheon,—and, a good bed for you! I'm to be responsible for you,"—he smilingly said—"till you meet my chief in your rooms at the Esbékieyeh Hotel!"

"Thanks! Mr. Arturo Cherubini!" carelessly answered Kenneth, trying a snap shot! "Let me compliment you on your English!"

"Oh! I was attached for five years to our Embassy in London!" uneasily said the graceful young fellow. "We are not to talk shop, by the way!" he meaningly said! "No one tells the truth in Egypt, anyway, and, one soon gets too lazy to lie, save to the ladies!"

"Let me tell you our itinerary! We make no stop at Kafriez-Zanjat! You can get a first peep at the Nile as we cross the railroad bridge! We change our engines at Tantah! I'll have hot coffee for you there, if you wish! Then, on through Benha el Asi, to Cairo. I will not sleep, for I have to sit up to telegraph your safe progress each way—at all these three places!"

Gryffyth frowned. "I am a person of some importance here, it seems!"

"Ah! Strange things happen in Egypt!" said the blasé young fellow, offering a diamond-studded cigarette case!

"You had better take a nap soon! I'll rouse you to see the Nile with its thousand mirrored stars! At Tantah, you can sleep,—for the patron saint is now in retirement,—the ladies only gather there in May! The saint is now en rétraite!" he said, with a vicious smile.

Long before the train had left the sandy spit of Lake Mareotis, to glide over the solid meadows of the Delta, Gryffyth was sleeping under the watchful eye of Soames! The half sneers of the young élégante annoyed him with an implied scorn of his secret mission, and the supercilious airs of the young attaché had been plentifully visited upon the embarrassed Consul Dellepiane!

"This fellow will not easily trap me,—at any rate!" vowed Gryffyth, as he called up the graceful face of the woman he loved!

He dared not try to rack his aching brows to divine the secret of Charley Grosvenor's strange double play! "I'll hold on to Soames, anyway,"—he growled—"An Englishman—and—honest!" and so,—he slept in peace—till he first gazed on the vast flood of the mystic Nile—in a drowsy wonder!

Signor Arturo Cherubini was apparently indifferent

when the awakened traveler announced his intention of enjoying the midnight freshness as far as Tantah! But, the slim Italian dandy noted that the valet had curled himself up for a nap, and he might have divined that there was a purpose in Soames' using Gryffyth's traveling-bag as a pillow!

There were lightning thoughts darting through the attache's busy brain! Crafty, cowardly plans! But he only smiled and stroked his mustache with jeweled fingers, as he decided that a drugged cup of coffee at Tantah might not do the business!

"There's two of them," he mused. "The other fellow might awake! And,—he may be a detective in disguise! To have an accident to both would be my ruin, and,—besides,—they would not eat or drink together!"

And so, he gaily chattered with his suspicious guest, answering a round of the usual tourist's questions with evident weariness! He did the honors of an impromptu little supper, and,—not without noting that the stranger touched nothing until he had sampled it first himself!

"Sharper than I thought!" mused Cherubini, sketching disdainfully the low mongrel life of the once splendid old Iskanderieh!

"A gang of low merchants, thieving Greeks, filthy Jews and trading rascals are the Alexandrines! A thousand years older than Cairo—its glory has departed! A mere landing place! When Mohammed unsheathed the sword of Islam in the year six hundred and ten, the City of Alexander, the splendid capital of the Ptolemies, had been already plundered by the Romans whose touch crumbled its splendid towers! Caracalla,—Aurelian, and Diocletian swept away all its treasures of art to enrich greedy Rome! Christian fanatics laved its streets with blood! Constanti-nople smothered it, as a growing rival, and Amrou, the sword of God, finished in Mohammed's name the ruin begun by those who slew in the name of the gentle Nazarene! Two hundred years after the whole world's stored-up learning had been given to the flames by the fierce Arabs,—the Turks stormed it, and only a fostering social corruption marks to-day the ruin of the most polite city in the world, at Christ's coming!"

"Only minor officials,—steamboat agents, and Levantine refuse linger there now! And,—their mixed families are all half-caste—the heated offscourings of the Levant! There's Dellepiane, who picked up a strolling dancing girl as a wife! At Cairo,—you will see all the real splendors of modern Egypt!"

With a growing dislike of his conductor, Gryffyth listened to the graphic sketches of the Pashas, the fair rulers of Cairene society, and the last babble of the Shoubrah! But, no answering gleam of the Englishman's stolid face rewarded the wily Italian!

And they had half reached Tantah before Cherubini finally queried: "Shall you be long in Cairo?"

"I have no plans whatever!" remarked the man who had been bored through and through! "I shall amuse myself, stay as long as it pleases me, and go on to India when I am tired of your Mouski,—your Shoubrah road,—your dancing girls, and the famed delights of the Esbekieyh Gardens at night!"

Cherubini smoked a dozen cigarettes over his coffee at Tantah,—but noted that the Englishman always allowed him to drink first! And, then, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" awoke his servitor, nodded to the disgruntled gossiping dandy, and laid his own head down upon the travelling-bag to sleep guarded by Soames, who moodily smoked his pipe, as he felt the butt of the Adams revolver, a cheering mainstay in his pocket!

"This fellow looks like the villain of a 'shilling shocker' story!" was Soames' verdict. "I wish to Heaven Mr. Grosvenor were here now! It's a queer go! Traveling like a high state prisoner!"

There were the gleams of yellow drifted desert sand across the glittering Nile, and long lines of fronded palms in the foreground when Gryffyth awoke! Splendid palaces gleamed out white and staring in the royal profusion of luxurious gardens,—a great emerald plain, cut up with broad canals spread out beyond the swelling flood,—and, to the south, a forest of slender minarets and rounded domes told of "the victorious city!"

And, the young man's heart thrilled, when beyond the superb plaisir island of Boulak, he first saw the three

huge Pyramids rising in mute majesty, out of the wind-blown sands of the Libyan desert!

"Ah! You already have them in range! I see!" laughingly said Cherubini, as he greeted the Englishman. "Forty centuries looking down,"—and, the dust of the Mamemukes blows off the battlefield where the Arab chivalry died!

"I shall soon conduct you to your rooms at the Grand Hotel de Esbékieyh. By the orders of my chief, you and I are not to speak to each other in public, should we casually meet again! I have already arranged about the carriages! Of course, we will meet at the Consulate General's, in private! But,—every one of note is watched unceasingly by spies here in Egypt! Flies,—spies,—and beggars,—are the curse of Egypt!"

"Mr. Malcolm Cranford" gravely bowed in silence, as the single car glided along!

The splendid panorama of the Shoubrah palaces, the Abbasieyh camps, the distant citadel on its frowning rock, was varied by the brown sails gleaming on the river like the spread-out wings of the fierce cormorant! The graceful lateen sails along the shore were folded closely under the slender dipping shadoofs! Beautiful haunts of Pasha and noble fringed the curving shores! It was the fairy scene of a fairy land!

Kenneth Gryffyth saw before him now all the glories of the vast city where the doves had nested in the victorious Caliph's tent! There was the great Mosque of Sultan Tayloon with its double galleried minaret of banded red and white sandstone! Sultan Hassan's stern old fortress mosque, with its double minarets, loomed up beyond.

The roadways were filled with asses hidden under double burdens of fragrant green clover! There was the sound of tinkling bells! Gleam of white turbans, the somber sheen of the women's dark robes, and the glaring white veils,—the yells of the donkey drivers,—the call of the running syce,—the screams of the hordes of street beggars,—all this told him of "Masr el Kahirah!" Cairo—the wicked city!

Turk, Arab, Copt, Jew, Armenian, Syrian, slashed-face

Nubian, gaudy soldiers, mongrel valets de place, and motley tourists crowded the low station as the private car ran on beyond a waiting train!

The vast plain stretched out covered with its flat-roofed, three-storied masonry houses with parti-colored fronts! There was the blended odor of orange, citron, palm and jasmine groves! Square towers, uplifted pointed domes, penciled minarets broke the sky-line, and the wild Arab music of a passing regiment rose in the shrill discordant bray of ear-piercing trumpets!

"Shall I see her again? Dare I trust to her, now?" mused Kenneth, as he saw the golden sunlight gleam on the mausoleum of Sultan Bergbok!

He grimly ordered Soames to "stand by" with the luggage, and then left the question of Madame la Duchesse de Valeria still undebated! For, under the watchful eyes of Signor Cherubini, he knew that he now was face to face with the problem of his life!

Signor Arturo Cherubini leaped lightly to the ground as the car stopped before a private waiting room.

A turbaned servant approached and aided Gryffyth to descend. "I am your man, Abdallah, sir!" he said, with many obeisances! "Please to come with me to your carriage! We will follow the other! I am to be your servant here! Abdallah the Dragoman! Khartoum to the delta, I know every inch of Egypt! All the languages, sir!" Noting Gryffyth's hesitation, the Dragoman harshly said: "Wagon waiting for your man and luggage, sir! Only ten minutes to the hotel!"

"Let my own man come with us!" said Gryffyth, as he stalked across a vestibule to the double carriage in waiting! And, with a knowing grin, Soames sprang in at his master's signal! Abdallah's gaudy moslem attire indicated a high rank in his glib profession, and he proudly dominated the driver, in pursuing Cherubini's already vanishing carriage!

"Mutually pleased,—Signor Cherubini!" growled Gryffyth, noting the unceremonious departure of the attaché!

The wild cries of the two forerunners cleared a pathway through streets thronged with patient nodding camels, laden with huge bales or stone blocks,—asses,—donkeys,

—mane-tossing gray Arab chargers,—vehicles of every class and swarming fellahs, clad in blue cotton!

“Bedlam broke loose!” laughed Gryffyth as several glass-fronted carriages swept along, guarded by clattering red hussars and with ferocious eunuchs seated on the boxes, rich in an ostentatious display of silver-sheathed curved scimitars! The gleaming silver veils with one dark, expressive eye peeping out the dark silken robes of gossamer told of the jealously-imprisoned harem beauties! The full-bosomed ladies of the seraglio!

“I am in Cairo! In Cairo,—at last!” sighed Gryffyth, as he recalled the gay Count di Santa Marina’s stories of the fierce inner cabals of the Harem! There was filth,—confusion,—barbaric splendor,—modern pomp,—sore-eyed beggary,—the splendid luxury of Pasha,—visiting gentry, and the children of fashion all crowding the superb Esbekieyeh Square, as the carriage drew up before the vast Grand Hotel, on the western face of the forty-acre garden, with its gleaming lakes, its glittering kiosks and all the witchery of a winter Paradise!

And, it seemed that half Paris, Berlin, Vienna and London was lolling there! A glimpse of the superb opera house,—a peep at the great rows of arcaded yellow stone Parisian edifices,—a glance at the front platforms of Shephard’s Hotel, with its lounging Englishmen, in pith hat and puggaree, and “Mr. Malcolm Cranford” gravely entered the superb hall of the Grand Hotel!

A bowing and scraping Maitrè d’ Hotel piloted him through a cosmopolitan throng scattered around the entrance! He evidently was “Monsieur le Bienvenu,” and an expected guest! A glance along the six hundred feet of the facade showed to him groups of excited tourists “raw to the wonders of Cairo!”

Pretty over-dressed Yankee girls chattered in their high-pitched voices, pale-faced invalids dozed over their “Galignani” or “The Indian Mail,” stretched out in wicker chairs! Effendis,—officers,—dragomen,—jeweled peddlers,—snake charmers,—jugglers,—palace lackeys,—liveried servants,—and busy waiters were all mixed up in a human olla podrida!

The dumpy German—the mouse-eyed Parisienne,—the

pale, proud Austrian,—the vivacious Russian, and the straight-backed, tall English women, fixed their varied glances in idle curiosity upon the “proper young man” who hastened up the broad stairway, leaving these polyglot daughters of Eve to their dissection of fresh arrivals! He was already an “object of interest”!

Conducted to a superb corner apartment, from whose rear windows all the glories of a Pasha’s garden could be examined at close range, Mr. Malcolm Cranford was left alone with his wondering servant, and the elegant Cherubini,—who advanced, cigarette in hand, with an easy smile!

“Let me now show you over your apartment!” he cordially said; “and then, my duty is done! Here is your anteroom! Clap your hands, and,—Abdallah instantly answers your call by day or night! The hotel servants will come at your ring! Your meals will be served in the private dining-room! The manager himself will wait on you! Here is the verandah for your promenading!”

“The Consul General, my master, will call personally upon you in an hour! I was requested by him to beg you not to leave your rooms till you had seen him!”

And then, with a low bow, the attaché disappeared murmuring, “We are strangers, remember, unless we meet in the Italian Consulate General!”

Before the much-relieved voyager had carefully examined his bedroom, and stationed Soames on watch at his door, he directed Abdallah to depart and bring the remaining luggage into the anteroom!

“I am to be interrupted by no one! Not even by you,—till I call!” cried Gryffyth as he nervously unlocked his bag and drew forth the package of sealed papers which contained his detailed instructions!

He bade Soames carefully examine the whole apartment, while he hastily accorded an interview to the steward who announced the serving of “*le déjeuner de Monsieur Cranford!*”

“Not a bad beginning!” smiled Gryffyth, recalling Cherubini’s easy banter of congratulation. “You are the guest of some one,—God knows who,—but,—the manager told me you were to be treated like a foreign ambas-

sador! You have the finest apartment in the hotel—and, happily,—no bills to pay! 'Carte blanche—for all!' was the manager's remark!"

The seals were broken at last! There was the mysterious password of James Lawrie's card and signet upon several envelopes, and the financial expert bent his brows down over his work, when Soames encountered an angrily uplifted face as his master snatched a card from his hand.

"What's this! Tell him I can't see him!" cried Gryffyth, throwing down on the table a little pasteboard modestly printed with the inscription:

LORENZO ZACHARIAS,

Foreign Exchange Broker.

"Tell him I want nothing of him!" Soames held out the other hand!

"He said to show you this, sir, if you wouldn't see him!"

And, then, Kenneth Gryffyth sprang up hastily as he gazed upon a card sealed with the imprint of James Lawrie's mysterious signet! "Bring him in, and lock the doors after you! You can leave us!" whispered Gryffyth!

"You are to sit down against that door, so there is no eavesdropping! I will tell you when to open it! Keep your eye on this crafty dragoman Abdallah!"

With a start of surprise, Gryffyth faced a slender, bright-eyed old man of sixty, whose flowing gray beard, bright eye, well-curved nose and bent shoulders indicated the Hebrew money-changer! There was the single-breasted dark coat and the commonplace fez of the "effendi," and, a green-lined white umbrella was the only wand of office borne by the humble agent of banded millions upon millions. "Money makes strange friendships," murmured the startled Briton, as he eyed his visitor.

"Are we alone, Mr. Gryffyth?" cautiously demanded the visitor, as he extended a sealed letter. "I must leave your rooms before the Italian Consul General arrives! I have had telegrams of your movements——"

"From Cherubini?" rashly demanded Kenneth!

"No!" smiled the money-broker. "From our own people, who have also been watching your every movement since your arrival! We are also watching the three Consuls General who are to work with you—just as closely as we will follow up the Khedive and Cherif,—and—the two banded enemies of our plan, the French and Italian Consuls General!"

"Oh! Come now!" laughed the agnostic young man! "What did I do at Alexandria yesterday in the afternoon?"

"Shall I tell you?" simply replied the calm-voiced Hebrew. "You had an appointment at Pompey's Pillar with a very charming lady, the Duchesse de Valeria,—and, if we had not taken secret steps to protect you, Santa Marina, and his nymphs who watched you on the balcony of the Consul's house might have followed your movements! But, we led him off on a false scent!"

"Do you know that lady?" gasped Kenneth!

"I am to tell you nothing! I only warn you! The Khedive knows now that you are here! Cherif, too, knows it! Santa Marina himself will be down here tomorrow morning—and,—you must now learn prudence! I am ordered to protect you from all but yourself! And,—when Mr. Grosvenor comes here, you will be safer! For, he will always remind you of one whom you should not forget—a young lady whose picture is in your bosom now!"

"You are the very devil, Zacharias!" said the lover, grasping both his hands! "Tell me one thing! Dare I trust to this dragoman Abdallah?"

"Yes! About your person,—only! For we have bought him out from the people who set him over you! But, not a paper must he ever see, not a single word of your business overhear!"

Gryffyth had nervously torn open James Lawrie's letter! "He says that you are to keep all my private papers for me! But how? Your coming here will be soon remarked!"

"Abdallah will smuggle me in every night here to his own room, in an easy disguise! I have also the entrée

of the Pasha's garden! I have been for thirty years in Cairo! All languages and costumes are the same to me! Read over all your papers to-day! Before you go to Madame la Duchesse to-night, seal the packet! I have a vault in my house, and, you shall have a private safe there! We will deposit them there, together! You can come at your will!"

"I shall see the Duchess?" faltered Gryffyth! "How do you know that?"

"I know a great many things!" smiled Zacharias, "and she will receive you in her apartments in this very hotel!"

"She is still at Alexandria!" stoutly answered Kenneth, gazing upon his strange guardian!

"I will come back to-night at nine,"—whispered Zacharias! "Now, I must escape the Italian! Do not leave the hotel till I see you to-night!"

In a few moments, the old man had glided silently away, leaving Gryffyth astounded at his visitor's location of Kathleen Lawrie's portrait in his bosom! It was a strange selection of his secret colleague in the coming fight!

And, he lifted his head in a strange agitation as the knock of Soames announced the arrival of another visitor!

"I'll be free to finish this, when he goes!" said Kenneth, concealing his papers in his bosom, as he advanced into his reception room to meet his one responsible official friend!

For, the card which he hastily glanced at, bore the name of Andrea Cariola, le Consul General, de S. M. le Roi d' Italie.

"I wonder if the old money-broker has escaped notice," was Gryffyth's first thought! "A queer, old, shabby Rothschild, this old wizard seems to be! And,—a veritable fly by night,—a kind of Jean Passepartout!"

The financial agent advanced to meet his visitor with all the dignity of a man who, in some strange way, now held the destinies of six millions of people in his hands!

And, he was to be the secret financial school-master of a sovereign, the successor of the Fatimate Caliphs, who,

bringing their ancestors' sacred bones from their abandoned Kairow, had in the old days ruled the hub of Egypt for ten generations at El Kahirah!

And the wise Hakem, the prophet king of the Druses, the courtly and glittering Saladin, the darling of Fortune who held Saint Louis in knightly captivity,—Selim, the first ferocious Mameluke king,—and, the mighty shade of grim Mehemet Ali,—all these, had strutted their brief day upon the wild, barbaric stage of Cairo, the queen of the Delta,—the mistress of the fan-like Father Nilus! The scene of many an infamous drama!

Chevalier Cariola, courtly, gray, sleek and cunning, proud of his red lapel rosette, his Victorio Emanuele mustache and his semi-military air, waved both his delicate hands in a refined welcome!

"At last! At last!" he said, with a turned glance at the encircling walls. "My work is done, my dear friend, when I have introduced you at my private drawing-room to the only people whom we can trust here! For, Baron Rhoten, the Russian,—and Count Gluyas, the Austrian, Consul General,—are with me in the league to guard your life and—secretly aid you!"

"Each of us has a different duty assigned by James Lawrie, and we all are fighting the sly Monsieur Lyon, the French chargé, and that cold inquisitor Colonel Bruce Granton, of your own domineering England! Here's the situation! The Khedive is on the point of despair!

"Any day may bring about a sudden crisis! Cherif daily schemes to overthrow Nubar Pasha's ministry! If you can not take effective measures at once to save the imperiled two hundred millions of our secret clients, and to bring David Hart over here, with the reserved backing of Lawrie, Benjamin and Son—and the vast money circle behind them—then,—all is lost! You must now get to work,—at once!

"I have retained this man Abdallah for you! Trust him in all except your business! I will send you a carriage and horses to be under Abdallah's orders day and night! The driver secretly watches him! The two Scyces watch the driver, and I—watch them all! Unless they buy Ab-

dallah back again, he is not dangerous—but—do not trust him a moment!

"In an hour you will receive a chest with all the documents and papers which we have prepared for you,—under Lawrie's orders! Abdallah will go with me. I will send you the keys sealed! Your private instructions, of course, you have received!"

"Now, to-morrow, Cherubini will come here for you and take you to Cherif Pasha, at two in the afternoon! He will present you to that prince of opera bouffe sovereigns, the first Hereditary Khedive, Ismail the Spendthrift, the princely Robert Macaire!"

"Not a word to Cherubini,—not a word to Cherif,—they will pass you on to the Khedive! And,—there,—you will need all the force and nerve that you possess! Impress and dominate him from the first! He is the Prince of Easy Liars!"

"Go right into the secret tangles of his papers and hidden schemes. He will sell his very soul to baffle England's official game! Twist the truth out of him,—show him ready money, with David Hart behind it,—and then, all the public disgrace of his expulsion from the dishonored throne may be avoided! It is all in your hand! Remember,—'Mr. Malcolm Cranford,' we three Consuls General are not your responsible advisers! We are only to back you up! To open our houses to you! To secretly guard you! It is your brain against Ismail's cunning, now!"

"On your report depends Lawrie's final decision as to whether David Hart shall engage to reform the financial situation here, with a thousand millions of sterling to back him!"

"And,—England?" excitedly queried Gryffyth—

"Will bring her public designs about more easily under Hart's regime, with added international security! For Baker Pasha,—Gordon, the meteoric,—the mixed Financial Commission,—all are England's puppets! David Hart would be her left-hand, held in reserve and the mighty fleet, is the right-hand with the banner of Thor! So, to your work! But,—hasten slowly!"

"Take a drive this afternoon and orient yourself! Ab-

dallah will show you Cairo in panorama! Beware of all social pretenders here! I will send Cherubini to bring you to my house at a confidential gathering to-morrow evening! You are supposed to be looking at sugar and cotton interests here, as a wealthy Englishman, representing anonymous possible investors, with your lips prudently sealed! My last and greatest caution! The Cairene hells of wine, woman and song,—the gambling dens and Ghawazee lairs, are the vilest haunts on earth! The Greek's dagger,—the escroc's thieving fingers—poison and violence, await all the unwary!"

"I know Constantinople well!" smiled Kenneth.

"Then, you are forearmed!" bowed Carioli! "Remember, to-morrow at two,—Cherif—the panther-footed Silenus of the Nile,—and,—to-morrow night, the review of your friends at my house! And,—not one of these is to know of your confidences to the other! We have all different rôles assigned to us in this little modern drama of 'Egypt's Downfall!' No one knows the whole game,—but Lawrie, and that man of granite firmness, David Hart, the great administrator!

"Beware of every man, woman and child in Egypt!" solemnly said the Chevalier as he took up his hat, stick and gloves!

"Tell me of the Duchess de Valeria,"—said Gryffyth, as he followed the departing visitor to the door.

"I have the honor to bid you good afternoon!" said Carioli, with a peculiar smile! It was his third rebuff in the same inquiry!

And, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" had finished his sumptuous breakfast before Abdallah headed four staggering porters who brought in a huge chest, depositing it in Gryffyth's room, of which Soames had already deftly sounded the floor and walls!

But,—the young man never lifted his head from the study of the papers drawn from his bosom!

His heart was now beating wildly at the study of the chess-board whereon royal figures were to be moved, and a throne and Egypt's future was the stake!

The dark tableau of Ismail's impending ruin was all unveiled before him! The clamoring creditors were a



band of financial giants! The "Société Générale,"—the Credit Lyonnais,—the Banque de Pays Bas,—the Banque de Paris,—the Banque de France,—these were named in terms of scores of millions of francs,—and, the claims of Goschen and Co., of London,—for loans extended, doubled, trebled, compounded, and all the aggregated expenses of stemming Ismail's wholesale ruin hung over Egypt like a vast dark waterspout, ready to break in a moment!

Mustapha Fehmy Pasha's career of years as a secret agent was easily explained! Pushing the ball to and fro over the channel, his enormous commissions explained the luxurious harem palace in Portman Square.

There were papers from the greatest solicitors in London;—there were lists of the entire sources of Egyptian revenue,—and schedule of the Khedive's enormous holdings.

There was, too, David Hart's own private estimates,—there were detailed instructions as to the examination of the public works, the Barrage of the Nile, the Treasury records:—and, in fact, the congested poisoned heart of Egypt's corrupted body politic lay all unveiled before him!

To effect a truce with the great continental and English creditors,—to induce Ismail to turn in his whole personal holdings,—to induce Cherif Pasha, on a private guarantee,—to throw his one-sixth of Egypt's choicest lands into the great mass of securities,—and, to pacify the French and English Governments, with a vast English and Foreign Syndicate,—the dream of David Hart was as fantastic as Warren Hastings' clever Indian system, or John Law's Bubble which dazzled all Europe, drowning prosperity at last in its precipitated deluge!

With a sinking heart Mr. Malcolm Cranford sealed up the documents and murmured, "I see no way to Kathleen Lawrie's hand in an attack by any mere rearrangement, upon these fatal figures! The serried black battalions are all on the wrong side of the ledger! Even David Hart's vast organizing powers can not turn a deficit into a surplus! And,—the mill will never grind with the water that is past!"

It was in this mood that he descended upon Abdallah's summons for his first view of the blended Sodom and Gomorrah of Egyptian baseness and foreign intrigue.

Followed by Soames, who bore in a dispatch bag, slung under his loose tweed coat, the sealed packet, a veritable Pandora gift, the secret agent was led out of a private side door in the farthest wing of the Hotel to a splendidly appointed covered carriage.

Two slender Syce runners with long wands in hand, darted away, crying "Reglik!—Shoumalek!" and, Kenneth Gryffyth leaned back avoiding the gathering throng always ready to pounce upon the traveler of note! The Khedive's Guards' band was merrily piping in the fragrant Esbekieyeh gardens, where polyglot crowds chased the bubble pleasure! The gray Arabians sprang away to the south, and Abdallah signaled his pompous orders to the driver.

There was a Pasha's equipage which rolled smartly along after the Englishman's turnout, and, upon the front seat, two women merrily peeped out, each dazzling with one wicked eye, from beneath the coquettish yashmak, upon as corrupt a world, as the world of their most truant thoughts!

A slender beauty, tall and lithe, and, one whose dark Arab domino could not conceal the voluptuous splendor of her venus victrix form!

A tall green-turbaned Persian leaned back half hidden in a corner of the carriage, while His Excellency Cherif Pasha, Prime Minister of Egypt, soon to be,—dallied with a jeweled hand, with which the molded venus was upholding her silvery veil!

"You are devilishly well made up, Strilogo!" laughed the burly bon vivant, whose crafty eyes spoke of the Armenian cleverness, while his easy French social polish, and the glittering star on his dark coat spoke of a great Pasha à la mode de Ismail!

"I'm sorry to lose these two angels"—he grinned—"but,—as they both sup with me, you may rob me of them for a time!"

"Follow him unceasingly! You, sweet Morelli, will

have Lischen the flower girl, at the Grand Hotel to aid you in watching this fellow.

"And Sir Horace Lingard, with that pretty comet 'Lady Lingard' will be his stylish neighbors! Sir Horace will work under Colonel Granton's orders, and,—he, too, has his cue! You are to ignore them, of course, for the supposed Lady Lingard will only need a star light night, and a verandah promenade to make her way!

"I leave it to you, Morelli, to bring this raw English boy into your circle! I propose to take a hand in the game myself now! And, Santa Marina, you and my sly young artist friend André here will garrison Shepheard's Hotel.

"I wish a daily report of every one who visits him, and, between us all, of every move that he makes! I can easily block his game with His Highness!" chuckled Cherif, "but, I will make that one of you rich who will get me the secret of who is behind his movements! His letters, his telegrams, his papers—those are the tell-tale evidences that I want! I am having every telegraph station in Cairo watched!

"For, if I can deal direct, with these principals whom he represents, after Ismail has been made to disgorge then, our party may name a Khedive to suit England and France. DeLesseps is already Panama crazy,—and, with him and that crack-brained knight of honesty—Gordon, once out of the way,—over goes Nubar's administration dragging down Ismail,—and then, a strong man may govern Egypt!"

They were speeding past a splendid garden, for Abdallah was leading Gryffyth up the river banks, to swing around by the tombs of the Caliphs,—the Mokattam hills,—the Citadel,—and, by a dash through the Mouski and its superb bazaars,—to thread the modernized city.

After a peep at the Shoubrah road he designed to show the visitor the external glories of the vast city with its buried gardens, tortuous streets, groups of swelling domes, latticed dim interiors and paralleled minarets!

"You are to follow him, Santa Marina, to every evening resort, and report to me twice a day—you know where!" he smiled. "And our fair friends will make it a labor of love to be there very often!"

At an imperious nod the pursuing carriage stopped, and Cherif Pasha disappeared at a guarded gateway where the sword-bearing eunuchs sprang to arms as he was lost in the witching tangles of a high-walled garden!

Two hours later, Kenneth Gryffyth was whirled down the Shoubrah road homeward under its overarched canopy of green, when the clatter of a company of hussars,—the cries of six lithe runners,—the splendor of a dozen mounted palace equerries, and a squad of splendid horsemen galloping in the rear, heralded the passing of a court carriage for whose six horses all the other equipages made instant way.

A heavy brown-bearded stoop-shouldered man, with round dark eyes, a low brow under the line of the red fez, and fat pudgy arms with bejeweled bare hands was dashing by in state, a diamond-jeweled scimitar flashing out blue white in the golden sun! Every hand was raised to the heart and brow in instant salute!

"His Highness the Khedive!" respectfully announced Abdallah as twenty glass-fronted carriages came trundling along after the ruler,—creaking under the weight of veiled loveliness all too full in bud. The guardian eunuchs grinned on the boxes, and a squad of jaded cavalry opened and closed the shameless procession of Ismail's "light flesh and corrupt blood!"

"Blow me if it ain't singular!" suddenly said Soames, who had been peering out of a carriage window in silence. "There's a carriage with that team of piebald horses that has crossed our lines twenty times! They drew out after us at the hotel, and,—they've been the whole round with us!"

"There seems to be two of them there harem queens in it, and,—a chap in a green turban! It's mighty strange!"

Kenneth Gryffyth started from his moody dreams in a sudden alarm, but, when Soames pointed out the vehicle, they were entangled in a swarm of carriages pressing down to Shepheard's and the Grand Hotel, and, once the anxious Englishman could almost see the faces of the inmates, but when he dismounted at the side door, the

equipage passed on into the Pasha's garden behind the Grand Hotel!

"It's the usual drive, I suppose," muttered Kenneth, as he descended!

A pretty fresh-faced German girl, with a basket of superb flowers timidly accosted him, as he entered the dim hallway! Her dreamy blue eyes, waving red gold hair, and plump neat figure spoke of the Vaterland,—a saucily low cut laced bodice and the rounded bare arms exposed all the tempting charms of youth and the beauté du diable!

"Buy of Lischen!" she laughed, "Mr. Englishman. It will bring you luck!"

Tossing the young Hebe a coin, Gryffyth allowed himself to be florally decorated, and affected not to hear her laughing challenge—"You must buy only of me! I am here,—in the Hotel,—every day!"

In the grand hallway, before his apartments, an incoming mountain of baggage, a maid and valet, with the clustered servants told of an arrival of some importance!

"I'm all safe on one side," growled Gryffyth! No neighbors, but the birds and trees! I must find out who these people are!"

And, the adroit Soames was not slow to report the arrival of Sir Horace Lingard and his suite! "Swell young fellow, comes here for the winter races and sport, and,—a stunning beauty, too, is Lady Lingard!"—They were truly stylish neighbors!

At the door of his apartment, a dark-skinned lad in a dingy European costume murmured a few words to the astonished Englishman. "My father has just received a telegram! Your friend will be here to-morrow sometime! Be prepared to meet him casually! The Brindisi steamer is in! He will be watched,—of course,—and, you must not go to him! But he will find you out! I am Jacob Zacharias."

Before Kenneth Gryffyth could reply, the lad had glided away! "Nice country, this!" muttered the traveler as he closely examined his rooms and threw himself down to rest! "To-morrow, thank God, I'll have Charley near at hand! There's one loyal heart,—at any rate!"

He began to see all the shifting quicksands of Cairene duplicity opening to engulf him!

As he sat, in solitary state, at his first dinner, he felt safe as to his début. "I seem to have lost the Count di Santa Marina, and the frankly galante singer, as well as the pale-faced ingenue. Thank Heavens, by to-morrow, I will have met the man who will bring me face to face with the sovereign here! And, then, figures and inspections, summations and conclusions,—neither Bacchus nor Venus has a place in my life!"

He could see the sturdy Soames, faithfully on guard in his sleeping apartment, and, there was no means of any thievish jugglery there! And, so, he dreamed on—in peace.

Abdallah, a grave master of the household ceremonies, moved through the corner apartments and his table was laid in the reception room!

"Once the papers are safe," he muttered, "I am proof against all but a sudden lunacy, and this is surely only a land of shifting shapes and dreams! How am I to work here, even if I can get at the Khedive's archives. This certainly is no safe place to examine them!" And, with the dessert came the determination to consult Zacharias!

After he had prepared a letter to the beloved woman whose hand was the secret prize of success, the eager financier betook himself to the papers of instruction!

The nightingales were singing in the Pasha's garden below, and the merry Strauss waltzes floated across the square from the splendid café of the Viennese Lady Orchestra, long before Kenneth Gryffyth had mentally grasped the record of unthrift, pillage, pandering and plunder!

The base juggling of the French Canal Company to load the half of the canal construction upon Said and his successors, with a meager return of only a tenth of the stock,—the huge expenditures for the forty palaces, the three thousand women of all degrees,—the vast sums swallowed up in entertaining foreign princes, in bankers' commissions, in the useless railroad paralleling the Nile, the abortive Equatorial campaigns, the drain of the opera—the horde of palace officials, the robberies of Pashas,

and Generals, the lost iron-clad fleet, the useless army extension—the robberies of furnishers, contractors and jewelers, private vice and public extravagance,—all was perfectly clear!

"Yes, I can see the gulf,—a bottomless pit, into which three hundred millions francs of cash,—and five hundred millions francs of debt, have been poured! I will leave import of these facts to Lawrie and Hart, I will only provide the figures, keep my counsel, exhaust the Khedive's confidence,—and—then—get out of this social fester as soon as I can!"

He started as Lorenzo Zacharias glided to his door!

"Have you the papers ready?" whispered the old money broker! "They are in my breast!" answered Kenneth. "Then, while I send Abdallah for the carriage, come out with me! The Duchess awaits you! Leave your man here, armed, to watch your bedroom and tell him not leave it for a moment!"

Gryffyth descended the stair after Abdallah had departed. "My boy is with him! He dare not spy on us now! Come! And,—be silent! Follow me! I have two armed attendants!"

A thousand lights glittered in the Esbékieyh garden! Merry-makers, tourists, women of all races, and the brazen valets de place thronged the broad avenues, but, turning into the shadows of the high garden wall beyond the Grand Hotel, Lorenzo Zacharias unlocked a little postern gate!

With a start, Kenneth saw two men following. "My guards! Trust to me!" whispered the old man, as he led the young Englishman into a splendid labyrinth of arching tropic trees!

Before them, gleamed out a fairy kiosk, a crystal fountain plashed before it, and, with graceful gliding steps, a silver-veiled woman approached the mystified traveler!

They were left alone,—and,—it was the thrilling voice of the Duchess, which made his pulses bound. "Au revoir, it was to be!" she gently said, "I am only the Spirit of the Night—and—now, you shall hear my wishes!

"When you meet Cherif to-morrow, he will try to entrap you into many admissions! Guard yourself! Only

the Khedive must talk to you—as to your real mission, and,—you are to demand of him instant action,—and the papers! Urge him to act at once,—for already Cherif schemes to overthrow Nubar's ministry and the whole fabric may topple over.—Be prudent at the Consul General soiree! I shall myself see you there!

"But, before that, I will show you, the Shoubrah drive! After you have seen Cherif, I will send a carriage back here for you, and, I will join you where none can entrap us!"

"Cherif Pasha secretly followed you all over Cairo yesterday,—and,—two artful women's wiles are waiting for you!"

"Now, go, and Zacharias will show you his own lair! It is in his house you must do your work!"

"But, how?" faltered Kenneth. "Trust to me! I know all, and—he—alone can guide you,—with my help! Already Lawrie knows that you are to meet Cherif to-morrow!" She held out her slender hand and, in the moonlight, its sparkling jewels gleamed like braided fire.

"Are you the real chief of the cabal whom I serve?" the wondering agent cried.

"I am the Spirit of the Nile, if you please!" laughed the Duchess. "There, you may kiss my hand and go,—but,—beware of two women who are near you! Obey Zacharias,—but, not a word of your secret business to any one but the Khedive and James Lawrie! If the Khedive plays you false, he is lost! If you are untrue to your trust,—you will never marry,—Kathleen Lawrie! Your friend comes here to-morrow night! Never seek to bring us together! If you do, you lose me forever,—as now! I will meet him in the gay world—in my own way!"

With a start forward, Kenneth Gryffyth sought to detain the graceful gliding phantom, but, Zacharias laid a hand on his arm!

"Come now!" he gravely said. "I can now safely conduct you to my house!" At the wicket gate, a closed carriage was standing, and in ten minutes, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" dismounted at the grand entrance of the Hotel! "Go to your rooms, you will find my son and Abdallah there! The two guards will be on the box! I go to make

ready! My son will bring you to me! Fear not!" The carriage rolled away, with the old money broker crouching out of sight!

There were fifty loungers lingering in the great vestibule! Laughing women were flirting and party making for gay night trips! The click of billiard balls,—the clink of glasses rang out in the great *café*, and, through an open door, Kenneth saw pretty Lischen, the flower girl, affixing a boutonniere in the coat lapel of the Count di Santa Marina, who was brave in his gala attire! The Italian suavely advanced, with both hands extended!

"Ah! My dear fellow! Already making little moonlight trips! You are surely falling into *les bonnes fortunes*! You must come and dine with me! I am at Shepheard's!"

But, Gryffyth only vaguely referred to his departure up the Nile, and as he hastened up the stair, he saw the Count's head bent over the pretty peasant, in an easy familiarity, and there was the gleam of gold in his hand! It was an embarrassing *recontre*!

Reaching his rooms, Gryffyth whispered his orders to Soames, and armed with a stout cudgel and his Adams revolver, followed the slender lad who was the representative of his mysterious superiors!

Abdallah led the way to the carriage and out into the garish light of the great square,—they whirled along in state!

Passing beyond the northern face of the row of modern business mansions, at a sign, Gryffyth dismounted before a little bazaar at the rear of the vast buildings!

There were several inner apartments and following the mute lad, the Englishman entered the last, and through a narrow door, was led into a splendid apartment in the very interior of the building, completely hidden by the shops facing to the front and rear! It was a hidden social fortification!

At a substantial *escritoire*, Lorenzo Zacharias himself was seated! The room was replete with every modern luxury! "Now, here—we are at home!" smiled the old money broker. "I have every facility for my many agencies here in this side of the square, and, my private

vaults are secreted below! Our hunted people," he simply said, "have become wise with dwelling in the courts of their enemies!"

He pointed to the seven-branched candlestick upon the table, ready for the lighting of the symbolic tapers!

"Here it is that you must come for your real work! There are a dozen entrances to my inner stronghold here! I shall leave it to my son Jacob to instruct you,—and,—soon all of my faith on this side of the square will know you,—and they will pass you in here!

"Now, Mr. Gryffyth, here is a final letter of instructions from Mr. Lawrie! You are only to verify my work of thirty years! I would not have them trust my own mathematical skill! You are the visible representative of the movement in which I myself control as many millions at stake as Lawrie, Benjamin and Son—or the expected relief of David Hart!

"You are to be our lever to act upon the Khedive, for me—he would at once try to deceive and outwit! Pressure from abroad—pressure from London—is the only thing to bring him to book! And, two heads are always better than one!"

When he had finished reading the document which unfolded Lorenzo Zacharias' enormous money power and made him a fully qualified coadjutor, Gryffyth said: "I will closely follow all your wishes!"

Opening a small safe, the Hebrew banker then remarked: "This is yours! Deposit all your documents here! There is but one key! I will daily open the combination, and,—you can use the key! In this way, we two alone, are in control of the papers!"

When the packet was deposited, the banker then led the way to a supper room where the lustrous-eyed son reverently waited upon the millionaire patriarch and his guest!

"You certainly do not avoid the appearance of wealth—here!" laughed Gryffyth, as he noted the richness of the furnishing.

"Ah!" sighed Zacharias. "The mean spoils of the Hebrew thirst! It would surprise you to know that I am a scholar, rather than a worshipper of the golden calf.

Jacob is all that is left of my family now! There is a strange gap in the world's arts and learning! All the lost lore is buried here in Egypt—and,—like the Duchesse de Valeria, I am groping on the threshold!

"And, mystified and tranced, my thirty years has run away here like a schoolboy's holiday! We know so little,—and there is so much to learn. We, the wisest, are mere children groping in the dark! Nay,—my young friend!" he said,—"Ask me nothing of that wonderful woman! I read the question of your eyes! Shall you trust her?

"That is your affair—not mine! Remember that I am only to aid you! I am to forward all your reports and send all your communications of your affairs with the Viceroy—but one man must know the whole secrets, and,—that man is James Lawrie! I will guard you!

"But,—you must work on your report alone! In this vast organization of capital,—but one man knows all—and—that cool man is James Lawrie! The threads are all knotted in his firm hand! I have my own secret duties! You now know yours! Your mathematical skill is to give the final verdict!"

"Tell me,—is she—" began Kenneth.

"I must tell you nothing! I can not break her spell! You are to decide! Has she mystified you? I have watched her for years! She is the Ariel of European courts! I can say no more! Now,—Jacob will conduct you back to your rooms! He will be your special attendant, for when Grosvenor arrives, you must use Soames as messenger to the Shepheard's Hotel and to watch Santa Marina and the others. Our enemies rely on the Italian's craft. Avoid him! Do not quarrel with him, and—above all, breathe not your secrets even in your sleep! I shall come to you to-morrow night—and, in good time! Go now! The hour is late! The Greek thugs are even now abroad!"

In ten minutes,—Kenneth Gryffyth was seated in his splendid apartment, and the sound of a woman's magnificent voice singing near by thrilled him! Stepping lightly out on the verandah, he paced along in the cool hush of the starry night till the exquisite music ceased!

He had pacified the excited Soames, and as he retraced his steps, the curtains of an open window parted.

"You will surely come to me,—for a little breakfast,—if I ask you—mon ami?" a soft voice whispered, and then, the gleaming eyes of the frolic Morelli met his own!

With a murmured acknowledgment—the surprised tourist returned the meaning pressure of a velvet hand—and, quickly regained his room! As he entered,—the sturdy Soames handed him a billet.

"One of them little niggers left this, sir, while you were out!" It was a twisted scrawl reading.

"Remember your promise made to me on the steamer! You are to come to me,—at Shepheard's!"

The signature "Andrée Lafarge," brought up the pale-faced girl's strange temptation. "Here are the two wily Delilahs of the Duchess!"

"She is a modern Sphinx. She knows all," muttered Kenneth as he resolutely locked the door, and then lay down to sleep with Soames on guard near by, on a camp bed.

Kenneth Gryffyth vainly tried to compose himself for sleep! The fragrant breath of the gardens where he had parted with the beautiful Spirit of the Night fanned his heated brow! He could hear the musical call of the muezzin afar hung in air above the wicked glittering city of lights, and the warning cry "Allah il Allah! Allah Akbar!" fell like the accents of an angel's voice!

The splendid interior of Lorenzo Zacharias' hidden home, where only a mean little shop with polyglot signs "Exchange Bought and Sold" was the outer symbol, amazed him! The simple dignity of the Hebrew impressed him! He was a central figure of power in the masked battalions of Plutus waiting to pounce upon the gilded fragments of Ismail's broken throne!

"I have it!" cried Kenneth starting up as the wild cries and flaring red torches flashing out announced the passing of some great Pasha's carriage! "The whole thing is only a veiled intrigue to get the vast private floating debt recognized before bold England reaches out the lion's paw, and France, a fattening Crapaud in the canal, mutely stands by.

"The Italian Consul General is the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, he works to save the vast bankers' advances marshaled under James Lawrie's generalship, and the Russian and Austrian aid him from jealousy!"

But he could not see where the policy of James Lawrie and David Hart could be tacked on to the secret plans of Her Majesty's Government! The spendthrift Viceroy, elevated on the car of Ruin, a crowned Bacchus, with a horde of wild-eyed Venus' priestesses around him, was being dragged along by panthers toward the gulf of Destruction! Grim shades now clustered around—demanding "the uttermost farthing!"

"The octopus Rothschilds,—the Barings, (mighty Krakens of the monied deep),—that huge Leviathan, Gosschen and Company,—the great firm of Raphael and Co.,—and the vast continental credit companies, all these, were waiting upon the Prodigal's Last Feast!

"The whole thing is simple!" mused Kenneth. "I am to furnish clear mathematical information to the secret chief of Mammon's army in London! The data furnished me by the Khedive will be made into official weapons! Some governmental recognition hastened!

"Then the whole money syndicate will intrigue with their respective governments! A new ministry, a Board of Review, a Higher Financial Commission,—and—once the liability established—presto! change!

"Down goes Ismail! The shrieking fellahs now taxed four millions of dollars yearly for Turkish tribute, and fifteen millions for debt interest, will have ten millions more yearly laid on them, and at last, the Khedive will be engineered out of Egypt, as he was out of the canal!"

While Gryffyth dreamed uneasy dreams wherein Santa Marina and Lischen beckoned him away from that queen of light loves, the Morelli, and the pale-faced French ingenue, the wild whirl of Cairene midnight life went on!

Out over the black Mokattam hills, the citadel frowned around Saladin's ruined banquet hall,—where Joseph's well still furnished the clear, cool, crystal water. The moonlight fell on the courtyard where the proud Mamelukes' blood still lingers in tell-tale strains! Around the tombs of the Caliphs, camels, horses and asses waited pa-

tiently for the dawn, while by the red fire's light the grave, story tellers charmed the bearded groups of caravan idlers.

The faint glare of upward-thrown lights hung over the crowded city of four hundred thousand! In covered bazaars and dim alleys, the ragged porters lay on the thresholds guarding the wooden locks! The song of birds andplash of fountains lulled the sloe-eyed Georgians to sleep in the garden-bowered harems.

Cairo's streets were even now filled with a world's wanderers, and the fiery-hearted women of the upper Nile, scanty-veiled Circassians, and the rejected adventureuses of Paris, Berlin, Naples and Vienna thronged the dance halls, gambling saloons, cafés and lurked at each dusky corner!

The wild revel of the Esbékiewyh Gardens went on, and in the Arab quarters, Ghawazee, Nautch girl and odalisque gathered the dissolute to their tented lairs! Gas light, music and mænad laughter lent a devilish splendor to the newer quarters, while crowds of revelers filled the great hotels!

Out on Boulak, and Geziret-Tirseh, down the Shoubrah and along the slumbering Nile,—the embowered palaces glimmered in the still hours in their beautiful outlines, their garden avenues filled with fierce-eyed swordsmen!

The mournful creak of the shadoof, the call of the boatmen upon the drifting feluccas, the faint mechanical echo of "Backsheesh," was punctuated with the snapping howls of the jackals wandering around the lonely majesty of the Pyramids! The silent Sphinx, under the gleaming stars gazed out toward the East, awaiting the rose flush of another dawn to light the ineffable villainy of Cairo!

Fresh and resolute with the morning's calm hours, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" availed himself of the careful escort of Soames in an hour's constitutional, and then proceeded to an examination of the contents of the chest of documents which had been so carefully forwarded to him! An hour's labor told him that all the general publications referring to modern Egypt had been carefully collected!

"These things are only intended to mask my real business!" mused the young financier; "for there is not a verified governmental paper or original revenue document among them!" And, so, making a list of them, he awaited the arrival of Signor Cherubini!

"They are only intended as bait for any spies who may perhaps visit my rooms!" was the young financier's decision as he scattered a few volumes around!

He wandered out alone later, and carefully explored the beautiful Esbekieyeh Garden, and narrowly examined the whole surrounding square! A casual peep into Shepheard's Hotel and a few hundred yards' walk into the Mouski bazaars amused him, and he was beginning to fall under the temptation of the offered spoil of the East, when a touch upon his arm recalled him. The slender form of Jacob Zacharias disappeared into an Arab coffee booth, as he lifted his head!

"Pray never go out alone again!" whispered the youth in a genuine alarm, as Gryffyth followed him in!

"I left my man to watch the rooms," apologetically said the careless Englishman.

"After to-night, I shall be your shadow!" said the young Hebrew, "and be installed in your room! We only wish you to meet the Khedive without Cherif Pasha seeing us, his enemies, near you! After that, you will only need to watch yourself in your interviews with the Khedive, as to your grave business! But, you might be killed before you are under his gage of honor, and have his word for your safety! Cherif will not dare to personally harm you,—after the Khedive really accepts your secret embassy! But, your friend is now on the way—and,—we will all now redouble our secret watch!"

In a sheepish fashion, Mr. Malcolm Cranford wandered back to the Grand Hotel! He did not escape Lischén's morning challenge to buy her wares, and was not astonished when Jacob Zacharias was installed as his secretary, before Signor Arturo Cherubini arrived to conduct the tourist into the presence of the great Pasha.

"I will find my own work," murmured young Zacharias. "I will not betray you by my presence. All the Cairenes think I am only a money-broker's clerk, for my

father conceals our relationship except at home! In this way, I know them all—and—none know me! I ostensibly live out of my father's house! I will watch here with your man; so, go in peace! I have a dozen secret friends near me, here!"

When Kenneth Gryffyth stepped into the official carriage of the Italian Consul General—fifty necks were craned on the verandah in an idle curiosity!

For the manager of the hotel, bareheaded himself, conducted his guest to the splendid equipage! "I hope that all is entirely to your satisfaction," he humbly ventured. "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" bowed with silent dignity.

"Half of Cairo is busy with your name, now!" sneeringly remarked the attaché. "Your splendid rooms, and your solitary grandeur attract public gossip! Beware of audacious feminine visits!"

"Do we go far?" coldly said Kenneth, with an affected unconcern, as they drove away along an avenue at the side of the vast hotel!

"Cherif's gardens stretch up to your very windows!" curtly answered the Italian! "But we need all the state that we can muster to cope with these fellows! By the way—you will see the best of Cairene diplomatic society at our reception to-night!"

To the amazement of Gryffyth, they were halting at the very embowered palace whose rear he could see from his own windows.

And, then a pang of sudden jealousy, a qualm of unknown fear possessed him! It was in these very gardens that he had met the Spirit of the Night.

"Did she come to me fresh from Cherif Pasha's arms?" he thought with an instant rage. "Is it a premonition of the downfall of Ismail and his familiar,—a scorned woman's revenge, or only the sly craft of a titled Bianca Cappello?"

But, the noble face which had fascinated him by Pompey's Pillar rose up to his memory again! "I must trust to her, whether I will or not, for,—she knows all!" And—in this wonder he was ushered along through superb halls,—past hordes of lackeys,—groups of guards, and squads of eunuchs, into a room where rich divans

lined the walls! Scores of mollahs, officials, effendis, grave Europeans and gilded officers thronged the great Cherif Pasha's anteroom!

At their appearance, a master of ceremonies moved forward. "His Excellency the Pasha awaits you even now—in his private room!" was the courteous accost of the official.

"I am to retire at once!" sneeringly said the attaché. "I suppose it is the old intrigue! Mafees filoos!" No money! Now, Andréa Carioli has vainly tried to get the capitalists in Italy to square the Khedive, and to help Cherif overthrow Nubar!

"But,—Italy herself is bankrupt! The French have started in accord with Nubar, to sell Egypt out to England—and the thrifty Germans will not risk a cent here! You English have all the money, and,—there's only one house in London that can finance the Khedive, if he yields to Cherif,—that is Raphael and Co., the great Russian loan-brokers!

"They and their friends can reach every loanable dollar in Europe—but, only, if the Khedive will play an honest game! Beware of offending the wily Cherif! He is the Bismarck of Egypt, and,—Nubar is only a cold, calculating Cavour!"

They were walking down a long hall and, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" realized that Cherubini was either trying to taunt him into an admission, or else to unsettle his nerve!

And so, he merely gravely bowed adieu when Cherubini had muttered, "The Princes Hassan,—Hussein, and even Tewfik,—are all only figure-heads! Trust to this strong man!"

It was a cheerfully-furnished European room, like the Salle de billiard of a French chateau where the keen-eyed Cherif Pasha received "Mr. Malcolm Cranford," with his jeweled cue in hand! After a service of coffee and cigarettes,—the wily attaché withdrew, remarking, "I will await you with the carriage!"

"Now, my young friend," remarked the dark-eyed, bearded Pasha, as he carelessly tossed away his cue, and taking a Havaria, dropped upon a divan. "Tell me, have

you brought your final instructions with you? I am accustomed to deal only with principals! Have you a secret letter to me from Lord Derby or anyone? Have you reported to your Consul General?"

The Duchess de Valeria seemed to be whispering in Kenneth Gryffyth's ear, as he calmly answered: "Pardon me, Your Excellency, I was ordered to report to you only to fix an hour to wait upon His Highness, personally! My instructions are most explicit!"

"From whom?" abruptly demanded Cherif, as he fiercely puffed his cigar. "I know that his Highness the Khedive sent an autograph letter of invitation to the most powerful money syndicate in the world! I will not present an unknown to His Highness! You must take things in Egypt as we are, and meet us half way! Do you wish me for a friend?"

The young financier arose and bowed gravely. "His Highness personally must interrogate me,—no other!"

"And, if I send you away to-day?" Cherif craftily remarked.

"Then, Your Excellency, I shall telegraph that fact home, leave Egypt, and,—the responsibility is then yours alone. You can explain later through His Highness! I shall say nothing!"

The Pasha rose and carelessly knocked the balls around for a few moments! "Come to my levée at the Ministry of the Interior, to-morrow, at two o'clock," he finally said. "Bring all your original powers with you and I will present you to His Highness at the Abdin Palace! It is his order that I am to bring this first meeting about in an apparently casual way!"

There was silence for a few moments, and then "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" remarked, slowly: "If you will send a Palace officer for me, with your own written request, and a sign manual order of His Highness to bring my documents with me, I will attend! Otherwise, Your Excellency, I will simply pay my respects to you, without the documents, and,—prepare to leave Egypt!"

The Pasha's eyes blazed in a sudden rage, but he paced the room for a few moments. "After His Highness has personally examined my credentials," continued the En-

glishman, "you may then see them upon his own order to that effect! Otherwise, they go back with me, unused, to the principals who have given me the most explicit orders! I am to deal with the Khedive, alone!"

"Be it so!" suavely replied Cherif, his dark cheeks glowing in a deeper crimson. "You Englishmen are dogged! Now, you'll find time hang heavily on your hands! I suggest as relaxation the opera,—the Shoubrah,—the ladies! You can not expect to turn Egypt over in a minute! We have dragged along here for many thousands of years quite easily!"

"If Your Excellency will dismiss me, I will then make ready to keep my appointment, but, only,—under the conditions proposed!"

With grave salutations, they parted, and then Cherif Pasha, throwing away his cue, growled: "These island traders rule the world with their money and their fleet! He is a cool devil—this one! It would not do to use open violence! Is there no other way!"

"The women! Strilogo! Perhaps, a caught-up quarrel! Some other fellow might be more malleable! This man has been frightened by some clumsy fool! I must not enrage him into a departure!"

And so—after a hasty visit to the Abdin Palace, the crafty Cherif sent an aide de camp to the Grand Hotel to deliver the desired personal order of the Khedive!

There was a quiet smile on the face of Lorenzo Zacharias when Kenneth Gryffyth returned later from a three hours' drive under the leafy arch of the Shoubrah, with the very handsomest woman who lurked under the yashmak there, in all the splendid throng of fashion! Kenneth had been gravely conducted by the morose Cherubini, and had left him baffled and raging at heart!

When the Duchess' empty carriage had paused a mile from the hotel, at a pretty garden on the Shoubrah road, a veiled woman entered the vehicle, at a signal from the slender lad upon the box with the coachman! Jacob Zacharias never knew of the merry war inside which ended in the defeat of the laughing veiled beauty!

"When you tell me how you rule Cherif's garden at

night, Madame," he firmly said, "I will perhaps tell you what he said,—but,—not till then!"

Before their return, Gryffyth had finished his tour of the environs of Cairo, and the merry masker had pointed out to him every notable spot! "Now," said the beauty, as she set Kenneth down a block from his hotel, "I will devote myself to others at the *fête* to-night! You and I are to be held publicly as only passing acquaintances! Remember!"

Lorenzo Zacharias carefully examined the sign manual of the Viceroy after Gryffyth made his report. "It is genuine!" he said, and then departed to arrange for the evening convoy of the tourist to the Italian Consul General's reception.

In his own carriage, escorted by a secret guard, Gryffyth returned later from a two hours' *soirée*, when the three Consuls General of the secret alliance were all surrounded by the ladies of their family.

It was a most dazzling reception, and yet, Signor Carioli alone was the assiduous cavalier of the beautiful Duchess de Valeria—resplendent in a magnificent evening robe. "I can understand it all," moodily said Gryffyth, as he rolled away, with a smouldering jealousy now fanned into flame. "It's Cariola!" He was insanely jealous, and, with no shade of reason!

But he opened, on his return, a little twisted paper she had given him! and struck a match to read it. "Be prepared for a pleasant meeting! Let him arrange it! I have given the orders!"

And, when the carriage stopped before the great *café* of the Viennese Ladies' Orchestra, instead of his hotel, Kenneth Gryffyth followed the silent lad Zacharias into the splendid room! He sat down at a table, and a laughing voice soon challenged him!

It was the dreamy-eyed Austrian witch who led the concert! "Pardon, moûtou qui rêve," she gaily said! "Come over and take a glass of wine with us!" She pressed his arm significantly, and then the tall golden-haired sylph in white led him to a table where a blonde giant sat with averted head!

"Don't make a row, old fellow!" cheerfully said Charley Grosvenor; "it's all right! Stephanie is an old Vienna friend of mine!"

CHAPTER VII.

DANGER SIGNALS.—A JOHN BULL A LA MODE AT SHEPHEARD'S HOTEL.—WITH THE KHEDIVE.—"HOW SOON CAN YOU ACT?"—"WHEN WILL I RECEIVE THE PAPERS?"—THE PRINCE'S PACT.

Kenneth Gryffyth grasped his stalwart friend's hand in silence, for he was forced to carefully examine the source of the familiar voice! The sweeping mustache had disappeared and the abundant curling locks were now cropped à la Français.

While a waiter, at a signal, served a bottle of "thirty franc" champagne, Kenneth amazedly noted the strange garb of la belle France,—a narrow-shouldered coat with long flowing skirts, the balloon trousers, and quaint varnished boots!

"You look as if you were bewitched, Charley!" muttered Kenneth. The white-robed girl musicians were now filing back to the grand stand, and even Stephanie shrugged her pretty shoulders, "Je m'en vais, Charles, mais j'y reviendrai aussitôt que possible!" she murmured.

"I'll return and take you home, Stephanie!" whispered Grosvenor! "We are observed here, Ken—" he sharply said—"The den is now filling up! Wander out by yonder door! I'll meet you there on the colonnade!" And so the two friends deftly mingled with the wandering crowd of the great café.

The swinging strains of "Wein, Weib, and Gesang" rose on the night air, as the tall Englishman led his chum across the place into the half shadows of the decolasee Esbekieyeh garden.

"We are not as safe here as there!" began Gryffyth. "Oh! I've my Barcelona steel rod cane,—a good knife, and a well-tried Yankee revolver!" laughed Grosvenor, as he threw down some small coins at the turnstile.

"Don't forget that I'm an old habitué of the land of Boukra and backsheesh. You are armed,—of course?"

"I have a trebly-tried blackthorn and my freshly-loaded Adams!" said Gryffyth, as Grosvenor sought out an arbor and then muttered a few words of lingua franca to a couple of veiled women! "They will soon chase the other cormorants away! I have promised them all the beer they could drink! By the way,—there were eleven hundred varieties of beer and malt drinks known in Cleopatra's time on the Nile—before the Arab debauched the world with his cursed invention of alcohol!"

"Where are you staying?" curtly demanded Kenneth. "Never mind the beery days of Cleopatra! This land swarms with her replicas,—both native and imported!"

"I'm at Shepheard's, of course," said Grosvenor. "And, I, now, shall make it my business to closely watch that Italian cur, Santa Marina,—who is registered there,—otherwise,—Ernesto Strilogo,—the ex-laquais-de place.

"I see Mademoiselle Andrée Lafarge—the coolest little Parisian ingénue, who ever fleeced a British milord,—ensconced there also! Now, my dear boy,—read over your letters from Milly and Kathleen. They are two rosebuds in bloom! Baronne de Saint-Nazaire is the star of the season, a resplendent peony! Wrexham is soon coming home for a visit! London is dull!

"By the way. I met George Wilton—and,—he asked me meaningly, if I would take letters on to you! He's a good sort,—and—so, I pouched them! Lawrie is soon to be knighted, and,—I am going to hover around you, now, 'as the star hangs over Innisfallen,' and all that!"

The men's hands met in the dark corner to which they had retreated! A load seemed to be lifting from the young lover's heart!

"Don't blame me, Ken!" said Grosvenor, with an assumed lightness. "I've taken no end of a fancy to see you win out. And,—so—I've followed you up,—and—made a French guy of myself! Now,—to show you what I do know! You were with Cherif Pasha this afternoon! You spent the evening with the Italian Consul General and—duly charmed certain Austrian, Russian and Italian ladies! You are bien lancé—now!"

"I'll, however, give you a tip! I know old Bruce Grantron, our Consul General here! Been up to Khartoum with him, shot 'rhinos,'—and all that! I ran in on him this afternoon! He brought up your name, 'Mr. Malcolm Cranford,' and then asked me if you were undermining British interests here! He may send for you! Ware cock! He's a tough old bird!"

Grosvenor lit a cheroot and said, "I shall just hang around Cairo, and haunt the billiard halls and esplanade of the Grand Hotel. I shall make a gay flaneur out of myself! I shall don the 'British tourist' later, and we can safely meet at the citadel,—the Caliph's tombs,—on the Nile,—at the Pyramids, or even in here, at night, and, at the Vienna Concert café! So, I shall develop who these fellows are now on your trail.

"But, we must not be too familiar publicly! I'll get a fellow to ask you to breakfast or dinner, now and then, at Shepheard's, and then, we can lounge in the café,—or out on the steps! Out on the Shoubrah, too, with its hundred cafés and haunts, we can always meet! But, in a safe privacy, no! It would betray us!"

"Now, we will just go into this little restaurant here! Read over your letters! I want you then to stroll back to the Vienna café! Take a table! Drink a couple of steins of beer! Smoke a cigar or two. I will, from a distance, note who circles around you! And,—I will follow you back to your hotel! It's a trap for gudgeons!"

"Let us go over now! Charley!" said Gryffyth. "My letters will keep! I have had an exciting day! I can't tell you all my environment, but, I do need a rest! It all seems like a shadow dance, the strange life around me! I want you to watch la Morelli, the soprano! She has been all too fond!"

Grosvenor laughed. "Don't fear! She is fond of anyone! A general leaning toward our sex! Smiled on you,—only pour varier la chose! I know well that golden-throated good-natured siren! The others are more dangerous! She is too frankly feminine, to be a man trap!"

As they walked along, pursued by all manner of night strollers, Kenneth reflected that Zacharias had already telegraphed his meeting with Cherif and the appointment

of the morrow with the Khedive! He tried a dozen times to frame a burning question—and,—still, his loyal heart revolted!

At last, he stopped and bluntly said, "Charley! Do you know the Duchesse de Valeria?"

"Why do you ask?" calmly replied the young nobleman. "Because, in some strange way, she has crossed my path here,—either to make or mar my future!" In his haste, he forgot Grosvenor's strange rejoinder.

"Get me presented to her—in some way!" musingly said Grosvenor. "Does she also go to Carioli's? I know them well.—The Madame is an old friend! If she goes there, I'll make Madame Carioli bid me to meet la belle Duchesse at dinner!"

"That's just the plan!" eagerly cried Kenneth, "for, she must be either brought nearer to me, or I must avoid her!"—They were already at the esplanade of the great café with its five hundred guests and the waltz music now swelled out and ceased with a crash.

"Look sharp! I want to catch Stephanie! Mind your eye, Ken! Don't be led into a quarrel with any of these Greeks, or café touts! The place always swarms with chevaliers d' industrie!"

"I wonder how much he knows! And—how he reads my pathway?" thought Gryffyth, as he dropped into a chair! While the waiter sped away with his order, the young man noted the beautiful Stephanie, her head leaning on her slender hand, and deep in earnest converse with Charley Grosvenor.

"Poor girl!" he sighed, as he marked the proud pale Austrian face,—the svelte figure,—the dark mournful eyes, and the mobile Viennese lips, parted in a too tender smile! "Wasted youth,—beauty in the mire of life,—an artistic soul,—and—ignobly forced to earn a ten francs commission on any roue's bid for her company over a bottle of Cliquot!"

There was no mistaking her earnestness now with Grosvenor, for her bosom rose and fell, and the slender hands were twisted in an appeal! There seemed to be a pleading for some matter of grave import!

Just then, Gryffyth saw the Count di Santa Marina,

standing in an open doorway, and gazing at Grosvenor with all the hatred of hell in his fierce haggard eyes!—Kenneth half started up, as the fair-haired beauty arose and wandered slowly away to her music stand. She sat alone there awaiting the return of her nymphs, with her violin in her lap, and the idle bow in her right hand!

But, Santa Marina urged himself forward to the rail and then, with an insolent gesture beckoned to Stephanie! All in vain,—the tall Viennese Diana looked over his head, at Charley Grosvenor, and never moved a muscle of her stony face!—The Italian's face was livid with rage.

It was a challenge to fate! And,—so, with a slight shiver,—Gryffyth arose and wandered out of the door! The swarthy Italian sauntered away into the gambling den adjoining the music room where the roulette ball always merrily spun!

"I'll drive my rapier through that big booby's heart,—if I get a chance!" raged Strilogo—as he backed the red to win with a round gentlemanly bet! "I must have a quarrel, however, to fight an Englishman of rank on! If he takes her out, to-night, he is a dead man!"

When Grosvenor met his anxious friend, he waited not for Kenneth's words, but said, "Did you notice that splendid woman who sat at the next table to you? She eyed you closely!"

"Yes!" carelessly said Kenneth. "Sir Harry Lingard,—and his wife, Lady Lingard! They are my stylish neighbors! They have the very next rooms to mine at the Grand!"

"Nonsense!" laughed Grosvenor. "The woman is simply the dashing Bessie Lightwood of the Savoy Music Hall, who disappeared with a handsome 'welsher,' a noted leg—a year ago. Sir Harry Lingard! There is no Sir Harry Lingard!" and then he paused—"Look out for them, Kenneth! Next to you! It means no good!—I'll follow it up!"

He signalled for a passing carriage. "I've had to change my plan! I'll take you home first—and—return here. That fellow Santa Marina has been already bullying poor Stephanie to decoy you! She told me all! He called her down while we were out! And,—to gain time, and

baffle him,—she leads him on to think there is an amourette between us two. Now, Ken, I know her of old!

"Poor Stephanie! If Valdor Zichy had not gone wrong on the Prater races four years ago, she might have been a Countess—and,—be perhaps saved a suicide's grave! But, I'm going to send the poor child back to Styria! She will help me to watch over you! She knows every turn of Cairene intrigue!"

"Beware of Santa Marina!" urged Kenneth. "He is a trick swordsman! Captain Lefacheux told me so!" "Then,—he knows!" gravely replied Grosvenor. "I will contain myself—for,—I shall treat Stephanie—en bon amie,—protect her,—and send her away out of the hell she has drifted into! Now, good night! Send Soames over to me in the morning—and—we will then make an appointment through him!"

When Kenneth sprang out at his Hotel, Charley Grosvenor drove away without dismounting,—and the bewildered Gryffyth hastened up to his rooms.

In the dark hall, he met Lorenzo Zacharias, who merely muttered, "Dispatch from Lawrie.—Your action as to Cherif approved! Bring all to bear on Khedive, for a full private statement and get all the papers needed! Report the next interview! Time is pressing!"

"My son will notify me of your return to-morrow! I will come! The English and French Consuls General are beginning to work against you! They already scent a hostile influence!"

The waiting Soames handed his master two letters of an evidently delicate nature without a word--and then squared himself for a talk.

"I've something very strange to tell you, Sir!" he mumbled, "and—you must not blame me! This gentleman next door waited till you went away, and he came in my way. He has quietly offered to pay me handsomely to get him a duplicate key to your door! He wants me, also, to give him some private reports—and,—he began his bribes with a hundred pound note! Here it is, Sir!"

Kenneth Gryffyth mused as his valet undressed him, "You must get over to Mr. Grosvenor at Shepheard's Hotel, after I've had my morning coffee! Tell him all!"

That's his department! He will guide you—and, I fancy he can checkmate Miss Bessie Lightwood!"

"As to the money, Sir!" the valet muttered, with a longing glance at the note! "Keep all the money you can get, Soames!" gravely said Gryffyth. "I'll help you to earn it easily!"

And then, placing his revolver by his reading stand, he bade Soames close the door while he addressed himself to the reading of Kathleen Lawrie's loving letters with a throbbing heart! For, the other missives were mere husks to him, and these, the kernels of golden grain!

His soul was centered upon the beautiful girl whose witchery was strong upon him, and yet, as he closed his eyes in sleep, his last murmured promise was, "I will ask the Duchess if she ever met Grosvenor,—It seems so strange,—so strange!"

After Stephanie had disappeared from the Viennese café, there were two men crouched behind a pillar who marked down the tall Englishman. "Know him!" growled Sir Harry Lingard. "I do—an out and outer swell! He is Lord Wrexham's eldest son and the heir. And,—a devilish shy bird he is, too! So,—he's sweet on la belle Stephanie! That's one on your nob,—my handsome friend! You can't make the running with him! He is rich as a London Jew—rolling in tin!"

A splendid woman who lingered in a Palace out on the Shoubrah that night, gazing out of her opened window, in the calm hush of the moonlight hour and wondered as of old—at the unpitying stars. The stars to which Wallenstein so madly prayed, to which Charles V. pleaded so long with vain appeal!

Madame la Duchesse de Valeria laid her burning brow upon the marble window lintel. "Whatever comes, he must not think me frail,—a mere coquette,—or a Camille! For, he read the simple truth upon my face! I can not have him think that I would betray,—and now, both his secret friends must work apart! And,—so,—Grosvenor shall meet me as a stranger! I must warn him, to-night, this very night!"

The Honorable Charles Grosvenor was the very pic-

ture of a rosy modern Hercules when Soames slipped into his morning exercising room at Shepheard's! Tub and dumb bells had brought a glow to the young giant's cheeks, and his coffee and rolls had been dispatched.

He listened, with gravity, to the valet's story! Then, selecting a cheroot, he pondered long in silence, gazing out on the great tree under which the lion-hearted Kléber died, his heart rifted with a knife directed from a distance by the unforgiving Corsican! "That jeer at the battle of Mount Tabor cost the bluff Alsatian his life!" mused the Englishman.—He blew away the smoke clouds and then gave his decision.

"Now, my lad! Just mind your eye, here, and I'll make a man of you," he leisurely said! "I'm going to set up a John Bull à la mode establishment here, at Shepheard's! I will watch over your master without frightening him! He needs all the cool head that he has to face his business! I want you to report to me here every morning at eight, and at midnight, unless we are out together, I'll get a half dozen decent people together.

"My own carriage I will have—and,—a good Nile boat! You, I, and Mr. Gryffyth can so have our safe meetings, while drifting on the river! I'll keep my boat at the Boulak Bridge head, and, once out on the water, we are perfectly safe. You can watch my boatman, and leave us the cabin! And I want you now to follow your master over to the Vienna Concert, to-night, at ten!

"Take a table near by and quietly pipe off those who linger around him! I shall be there! Do not speak to me! But, when I go out—he is to follow, and you can saunter along, twenty yards away! Note who follows us! And, I'll gladly match every hundred pound note that Sir Harry Lingard gives you! Who do they go around with?"

"Mostly with this Italian Count who hangs around these two leading hotels. That good-looking chap, 'Santa Marina!' I see him always flirting with old 'Stevie,' the head bar maid, or that peachy-looking little German flower girl, Lischen! But, the British Consul General has officially called on them! And, I noticed that he staid an

hour in their rooms, yesterday, while Sir Harry drove away with Santa Marina!"

"Good!" said Grosvenor. "Just watch them all, for your life—and,—Mr. Gryffyth can easily leave a lot of trash literature around, so that they may rummage a bit some day! To-night, I'll tell you the sort of a fill to give them! Now be off! Remember! I'll be a constant guard! Let me know at once of any new deviltry! The boat trip is the safest plan!"

"I think I can gently astonish Miss Bessie Lightwood, at the proper time!" laughed Grosvenor as he saw the valet disappear.

"This fellow Lingard, and the pretty woman with him, must have some special political use—some *raison d'être*, or else the Consul General would not stoop to notice them! Granton is a sly one!"—He started as the Hotel manager approached with a letter. "This came by a Nubian messenger—late last night, to be given you by my own hands, as early as possible!"

Grosvenor grasped the letter and said, "I have engaged a Dragoman, some servants, and a carriage. I wish to reserve all the rooms in this wing! My house steward will tell you about the service of the meals! I shall make some stay with you! I will have old Ali Italiani as factotum,—the same man I had here three seasons ago!" The delighted host bowed and vanished.

Dropping into an easy chair, Grosvenor then slowly broke the seal of the letter. There was a crest and monogram which might easily have told the secret of the stray lace handkerchief to Kenneth Gryffyth; and the perfume of the Pasha's garden near was not as subtle as the fragrance of the little sheet! He read it, with a trembling heart thrilled with delight!

"By Jove! I must live here, '*en grand seigneur*,' now! I can't make myself ridiculous in her eyes! And—moreover—this dodging around after Kenneth will bring me into queer company! And, so, Marguerite has reopened her Shoubrah villa, and, Renée is there too! There's but one way! To call at once on Madame Carioli, and to have her ostensibly introduce us! I can trust my life to Marguerite! The Carioli will know no better! And,

—now, Ken, poor fellow, must not have an unworthy thought of her!"

He sighed and dropped the letter.

"Of course, I must go to her, at breakfast! And, I can fall easily into the role of a mere winter dangler! I must be watchful in my ways,—for, she knows all the Cairene happenings! If Wrexham would only be reasonable! His agnosticism as to Continental women is a mania! Three long years! They may be drawn out even longer yet! If it were not for the little sister Milly, I'd——"

The young noble's mind wandered back to a summer day four years before, when a sudden squall had capsized a pleasure boat in Lake Leman, off Chillon Castle. He knew not the pretty child whom he saved from the chilling thin blue depths of Leman's waters, but, when upon the strand, he saw the mother's face bending in rapture over the rescued girl, he had instantly sworn, "The one woman of all God's world for me!"

There were affairs connected with their two great houses which had long held these would-be lovers tenderly apart.

Lord Wrexham's iron will had never bent, and even the brave Charley Grosvenor despaired of breaking it! He knew how truly he loved the woman whom as yet he dared not openly compromise before the world.

There, too, was her blossoming child, and,—his own unmarried sister! "At least, Milly's court presentation and marriage must be over, but then—" The hot-hearted young fellow's eyes flamed as he read the tender words.

For, the beautiful Duchess for the first time had unveiled all the hidden altar of her throbbing heart! Here by the banks of the Nile,—she had told him all the truth for the first time.

Her words seemed to him to be winged with flame!

He read them over while the breath of the Lotos land paradise fanned his brow! "I have not told you how I have suffered in these long months since we have been parted! My heart bids me summon you! You must come to me at once. And yet, while my heart cries Come! Come! my reason coolly says, No! we must wait! we

must trust to the future! And,—to the day of our deliverance from the trials of these.

"Life has no prospect for me but our final marriage! My heart beats with delight at the mere anticipation, as I know what rest and happiness I can find with your dear arms around me! You know and must feel my heart yearns for you and that the happiest moments of my life would be to feel myself within your loving embrace!"

"You are my dear one, and you dare not look to any one else but me!"

In this revelation of the woman's fiery heart glowing beneath a bosom of snow, the young noble consecrated himself to her forever! "I never knew that when I tried to hide my sufferings and longings, she was sharing them!"

"It is Heine's 'pine and palm!'" and so saying, the Honorable Charles Grosvenor proceeded to fitly array himself in all the splendors of Regent Street. "I think that I will carry the answer in *proprià personâ!*" he gayly decided, for that beloved woman's words had awakened in his heart a tide of love rising over all other feelings in his loyal heart!

"Lonely! God knows I have been lonely! And, now 'Loyal à la mort' is the motto!" He recalled her last whispered words, "Foi garde!—Honneur defend!—Loyal à la mort!"

And he wondered how much she knew of the momentous mission of his friend! "Perhaps more than I," he mused. "She has vast properties here!" Before he drove away, two hours later, to the villa rendezvous, the magic witchery of wealth was at work to instantly set up an establishment suited to Lord Wrexham's heir and successor in the title! He saw that he could not remain and veil his social identity. He must shine out as a social star by her side!

Kenneth Gryffyth was secluded in a three hours' study of the careful plan which had been formulated for his guidance, when Jacob Zacharias led his father into the one room of the apartment which was absolutely cut off from all possibilities of spy work.

"Here is the British Consul's carriage and cavasse with a special Dragoman waiting below and asking for you! Be warned! Be prepared! Let nothing interrupt your business with Cherif and His Highness to-day! One single lapse would be fatal! I will be here on your return! I fear that some great influence will be brought to bear to move you out of Egypt!"

And so, Kenneth Gryffyth was forewarned and ready to obey the summons of a letter almost imperatively ordering his instant presence at the British Agency and Consul General.

Secretly instructed by Lawrie, the young man was debonair in his carelessness when ushered into the presence of Colonel Bruce Granton, whose fifty-five years had not diminished an early sense of his own importance.

Entrenched behind a table covered with papers, the walls of his study bristling with maps,—the official abruptly said, "I have sent for you, Mr. Malcolm Cranford, to state that while your arrival here is as yet socially unknown to me, the state of your surroundings at the Grand Hotel indicates some secret personal mission of importance! I hope, Sir, that you have no designs here, which are inimical to the policy of Her Majesty's Government! Of course, I am held legally responsible for all the Englishmen here!"

Mr. Malcolm Cranford smiled submissively. "I shall repair any social neglect by duly leaving a card to-morrow, Sir! As I am a strictly private person, I would beg leave to ask the authority for my reported designs! I have waived a point to come to you!"

"I'm flatly told that you have letters from the Earl of Derby to parties here. Now, remember, Mr. Cranford, Nubar Pasha personally selected General Gordon in 1873 to command and develop the whole of the Soudan, Dar-four and the Equator.

"The Khedive himself has given Gordon special powers in his commission of February, 1877, as Sir Samuel Baker's successor! And Baker, and Gordon and Nubar are all, in a measure, only English agents of a vast policy. The Earl of Derby is a very great noble—but he is out

of responsible office now! I shall keep an official eye upon you, Sir— An eye upon you!

"You have already called upon Cherif Pasha! He is viciously scheming to overthrow Nubar and to block the policy of England and France! We two allies are now virtually the Canal owners! You must beware how you undo your country's work, here, Sir!"

"Allow me to remark!" calmly said Mr. Malcolm Cranford, "that I suggest a direct correspondence on your part with the Right Hon. Earl of Derby! I am only a properly authenticated British subject and confidentially representing responsible private parties!"

"I regret to have been the object of any senseless gossip, and really my residence here is a matter of no official moment! I decline to answer any further questions, Sir, unless some official juncture should give you the right!" The Consul General swelled visibly and darkly frowned.

"I will, I am afraid, be obliged to treat you with some coolness, Mr. Cranford," said the official, gravely wagging his head. "Now, I would have really liked to have asked you to luncheon!"

"If you will permit me, I will waive the luncheon," politely said Mr. Cranford, rising, "and as for the coolness,—that is as God wills! I must, as a responsible private employe, leave you to handle England's public interests, and I assure you that Nubar Pasha, Gordon and England are safe from my imaginary designs!"

"As for my residence here, I should not fail, if in any way annoyed, to communicate any intrusion upon my privacy to my principals, who would undoubtedly give me the usual and proper protection!"

"You have been seen at a confidential soirée of the Italian, Russian and Austrian Consuls General, and your personal movements are already a matter of gossip!" persisted the disgruntled Consul General. "I shall take great care to prevent that in the future!" gravely said Mr. Malcolm Cranford, as he took his leave, leaving the official fuming in discontent.

"A most mysterious young man!" growled the angry official, "and this fellow Lingard reports all sorts of mysterious visits to his rooms. I'll send for Grosvenor and

pump him—for, he—is sure to know if this fellow amounts to anything! His father is an able diplomat!"

And, before sunset, the Honorable Charles Grosvenor had easily calmed the excited Consul General's fears! "A sort of business fellow, they tell me that he is only looking up cotton and sugar investments for some private capitalists who would remain unknown!—Kind of fellow I never meet in London!" said Grosvenor,—"but, I do observe that this so-called Sir Henry Lingard of the swelling port, at the Grand Hotel, has galloped my music hall friend 'Bessie Lightwood' up to the state of 'Lady Lingard.' Do you know them?"

The face of Bruce Granton was a study when he said—"It's a kind of cheap Portuguese title, I believe! He only calls himself 'Sir Harry'! I can imagine that they are mere well-dressed wanderers!"

"And, I imagine that they are pretty cold-blooded adventurers!" mused Grosvenor, when he drove away, after hearing the baffled Granton decide after all, that he would ask "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" to luncheon, "if he called, socially!" For the astute old official had decided to keep his eye on "Cranford"—through the neck of a bottle! And, the smooth and friendly way seemed to be the easiest now!

The bright-eyed old Hebrew money-broker was vastly relieved when Kenneth Gryffyth recounted his morning adventure with the Consul General. "I will telegraph this to London—and—now, be wary in your visit to Cherif! I will have a carriage follow you, in your afternoon course, and find in what palace His Highness receives you!"

"And, henceforth you will be watched and guarded from moment to moment, now! Once in the presence of the Khedive, all the arts of the spy are ended! And,—remember, you must press him to action! Jacob has now organized your household here, so that we know all the happenings, save what Abdullah reports to Cherif Pasha! When the real business occurs, we will find a way to keep him always separated from you! Once pass the Khedive's door,—Cherif must know nothing!"

"If the Khedive dares to tell him, himself, the secrets

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which you are to transmit to London,—then,—there will soon be a vacant throne on the Nile! But, beware of the French and English Consuls General, their only way to remove you from the vicinity of the Viceroy would be to create some public slander, arrange some woman inveiglement, or effect some sudden personal quarrel!

"Granton will soon conclude that you have a money power behind you, stronger than his blue envelopes and red seals! He is a very able man!" When Zacharias had disappeared, Kenneth Gryffyth quietly examined the two billets which had been garnered up by the watchful Soames!

"I must consult Grosvenor!" he murmured, as he thrust them in his bosom! "He may be able to counterplot and so amuse himself with these fair intrigantes! He is a born squire of dames! I wonder what he will think of Madame la Duchesse de Valeria?

"To-day,—she will not be able to divine my movements!" He carefully arranged the letters of credence, upon which his mission depended.

"Now for the wily Cherif!" he murmured when the Egyptian staff officer reported at three o'clock to conduct him to the Ministry. He was descending the grand stairway, following the Arab officer, when he stepped aside, as Lady Lingard lightly ascended, her sparkling eyes met his, suddenly resting upon him, in a most provoking glance.

There were violets at My Lady's pretty neck, and, with a sudden start, he felt the gentle pressure of gloved fingers! She was gone striding onward, with the tread of a goddess, and, in his hand was a little bunch of the "susser veilchens." Here was a deft attack of another veiled enemy. There was none to oversee the imprudence.

With instinctive prudence, he thrust them in his breast! At the door, before a gaping crowd he stepped into a plain palace carriage,—and departed, the aid respectfully following in another.

He was amazed at the adroitness of "Miss Bessie Lightwood of the Savoy," and he grimly smiled as he un-twisted a little bit of paper! He read the pencilled words, "I must speak to you, alone! Be at the music stand of

the Esbékieyeh at nine to-night! He goes out to a dinner, and I can steal out! I have an Arab dress!"

"Only Grosvenor's wits can help me out here!" mused the envoy of Lawrie. "The old Scotchman was right. This may be a plan to involve me in a sudden quarrel, perhaps, even to assassinate me!"

He remembered Captain Lefacheux's story of how Santa Marina had killed a poor wounded invalid officer, four years before,—in a mock duel, while the victim was yet smarting under the lash of Abyssinian captivity.

And, a star of the Medjidieh was the reward of the assassin for wiping out in the blood of an innocent man, the disgrace of Prince Hassan and Ratib Pasha's cur-like cowardice on the battle plain of Gura!

"If I dared only to consult the Duchess and Grosvenor! I must try and bring them together," he murmured, as the carriage preceded by its yelling forerunners swept along through the wild medley of Cairene day life! He saw not the maze of beggar, odalisque, bizarre Greek, faded-looking tourists, or the bedizened natives! The cries of bazaar and Mouski fell all unheeded on his ear! He was now going to face the artful Belshazzar bankrupt of Abdin Palace!

And, while he studied how to bring his friend into the circle of the beautiful wandering Spirit of the Night, whose real haunt in Cairo he as yet knew not,—far away bowered in a beautiful villa on the Shoubrah, the lady and her lover, listened to the pretty child Renée's fingers tinkling over the keys in the music room! They had forgotten all the world while gazing in each other's glowing eyes.

The passing show of the superb four mile avenue was distantly visible through low-hanging fragrant boughs.

The gardens were a dream of Oriental splendor! Seated by his side, on a terrace under the parti-colored Venetian awnings, Marguerite, Duchess de Valeria, softly whispered to Lord Wrexham's heir of the golden future which was now painted in their wildly beating hearts!

"Tout vient, à qui sait attendre!" she whispered, with tenderly shining eyes, while Grosvenor found the splendid woman never so fair as in these words of promise.

The lingering farewell was spoken, and pretty Countess Renée had gone for her afternoon drive,—when Marguerite laid her commands upon her knight.

"Go now, and pay your respects to Madame Carioli! I will drive down in half an hour! We will all make the Shoubrah circuit together, and—there, 'tout Caire' will know that we are open friends—and—that she has brought us together.

"Remember,—you must be sure to restrain your tell-tale eyes, mon ami, when Madame Carioli asks us to dine!"

"And, here?" he whispered, with gleaming eyes lit up with all a lover's fire.

"*Bien autre chose!*" she murmured, as his strong arms clasped her to his breast! "I am yours,—" she smilingly said, through her happy tears, as she fled away! The knot of flowers had fallen from her bosom.

"Bring them back,—before they fade!" she cried from the head of the stair.

And the Honorable Charles Grosvenor dutifully departed to linger near Madame Carioli, at her splendid official residence, until the equipage of Madame la Duchesse announced a welcome visitor!

"Do not go!" said Madame Carioli, as the dissembler rose. "I wish to present you to the most charming of all women!"

"Save one!" chivalrously remarked Lord Wrexham's heir, raising the lady's hand to his lips! And—then sly Cupid laughed at this little bit of Love's strategy!

There were crowds of smooth faced Effendis pouring out of the Ministry when Kenneth Gryffyth stepped out of the carriage! Dozens of syces held the fretting Arab chargers of officers! Crowds of blear-eyed beggars,—squads of tinselled officers, their heavy scimitars swinging idly,—sherbet sellers,—donkey drivers,—jugglers,—wild-eyed fakirs, and swarms of frowzy children, thronged the great space before the open doors! Solemn old officials paced away mounted upon the superb clipped asses of the Syrian breed.

Pashas in carriages,—lean-faced business agents,—gross hulking narrow shouldered eunuchs,—and turbaned

mollahs, made up a motley assemblage! There were even a few bare-footed women slipping about the corridors; and, sundry saucy-eyed Ghawazees, with two or three bare bosomed robust Nubians, lurked about the trees in front.

In open carriages, all unguarded, a few beautiful Georgian and Circassian women, all too flimsily veiled, proved that "mafees filoos,"—"no money,"—was fast depopulating the less pretentious harems.

Following the officer, Gryffyth passed along through corridors, where groups of old scriveners could be seen, squatted bare legged and painfully tracing with slylus the interminable records of Ismail Pasha, on loose rice paper books, all unbound and tossed into huge piles in the corners of the dim rooms.

There were coffee bearers,—pipe cleaners,—cigarette makers, and lackeys.

In a vast audience room, surrounded with red cushioned divans, where squat Pashas still lingered, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" saw the alert-eyed Cherif Pasha, the center of an obsequious throng.

The portly fez wearer drew Kenneth aside to a curtained recess where a round writing table was covered with French "journals pour rire." It was a fitting place! The whole régime proved the reign of bombast and bagatelle!

Clapping his hands, the great Pasha signed for coffee and cigarettes, and drew out a black amber mouthpiece a foot long, crusted with splendid diamonds! He spoke nervously, but in the purest French.

For, the boulevard polish dignified Cherif's vices! The great man stretched out his hand, expectantly, and murmured,

"Let me, now, take charge of your letters of credence,—and—I will soon look them over! Then, my own carriage waits, and—we will be with His Highness, in half an hour! He has ordered that the initial meeting should seem to be purely accidental!"

Kenneth Gryffyth's silence was due to his leisurely enjoyment of the pasty liquid coffee, and the deliberate roll-

ing of a cigarette from the golden tray! At last, their eyes met!

Holding a sealed packet in his hand, the young financier said, "Your Excellency! In return for His Highness' personal invitation, which I have seen, I am bidden to hand to him personally these documents! Here they are! I am ready now to fulfill my trust! I am placed only at his disposal—and,—if he chooses to return them to me with the seal unbroken,—I shall take the next Brindisi steamer! Shall I await your pleasure or not? I can not give them up to your Excellency!"

Cherif moodily gazed at the young man, muttering an Arab curse so deep that even the Afrits must have learned of the Minister's haughty rage! "You simply invite your ruin by not confiding in me! The French and English Consuls General have already officially warned His Highness that you are a mere intriguer! Be guided by me! I alone can open the charmed circle for you here! Place,—wealth,—preferment,—the friendship of all the Pashas, who are the stay of Egypt!"

"I care not for any action of the officials you name! Your Excellency! My business is solely with His Highness, but,—my reward lies elsewhere!"

There was an ominous ring in the agent's steady accents. "You would not dare to break the seal of a document addressed to your princely master?"

"But, you certainly know its contents?" persisted Cherif.—"And, if I do? I owe my whole loyal services to the men whom I represent! I dare any one to force the seals of my heart! I fear none! The officials of France I can easily defy! Those of England are our public servants, and the power behind the throne is English mercantile honor.

"The English fleet follows the British subjects' interests! If you impede me now, you may regret it! As for threats by inference, I am no child! I should not be sent here, if I were not accustomed to deal with obstacles in my path!"

"Come on then!" gruffly said Cherif, "and, earn your own dismissal!" "Shall I tell His Highness that you have urged me to unfold my plans to you?" quietly said the

financier. The Pasha's eyes gleamed viciously, but, he held his peace.

In the courtyard, there was a scrambling of guards, as the Minister's magnificent equipage dashed away, on the broad road sweeping out to the Abbasieh Military schools.

Leaving the Shoubrah to the west,—and the frowning citadel to the south,—they sped along on the old Overland Mail Route! Gryffyth ran over the list of the palaces,—historic old Abdin,—the Shoubrah,—sanctified by Mehemet Ali's devoted love of a woman's memory,—the Ghizeh,—the Boulak,—the Koubbeh,—the Abdaney,—and,—beautiful Heluan!

There were the graves of squandered fortunes! The score more at faraway Alexandria,—Port Said, and Suez—the love retreats of the upper Nile,—and the mushroom creations for the Empress Eugenie,—all testified to the greed of French cormorants and the thirst of Italian parasites!

Low sandy hills, gravelly plains and the straggling outskirts of Cairo soon gave way to the broad plains and scattered barracks of the Abbasieh Military colleges! as they dashed along at headlong speed!

Thrown out on a staring plain, an ephemeral gleaming pile with discordant turrets, kiosks and domes, with a facade of five hundred feet, French windows and tawdry stucco ornament, gleamed before them under the rays of the afternoon sun!

Gryffyth had only time to catch a glimpse of the superb Nile Valley below, with the fairy islands backed by the ribboned green! The long lines of palm,—the scattered groves,—the silver blue Nile,—the great sharply drawn Pyramids; and the line of their fellows stretching away to far Sakkarah!

It was a fairy vision! Without a word, the warring companions descended, and the palace doors at once were opened wide, though not a sign of life was visible in the curtained windows!

A few court lackeys lingered in the vast halls, but, passing through several rooms, naught was visible, save gilding, cheap frescoes, huge mirrors and tawdry chande-

liers, with glaring parquet floors! At last, two armed attendants, halted them before a door! They were on the threshold, now!

Left alone a few moments, Gryffyth gazed out of the western windows and saw a single carriage crawling along the road to the entrance of the unkempt grounds of the seemingly deserted Palace of Abbasieh! He had learned of Ismail's frequent incognito suburban receptions of singers, wandering Peris, and stray social refuse!

"It has suited him to choose a stray lover's nook, for this conference!" mused the Englishman, and—then, as the door opened, he saw the burly ruler standing alone at a window, and looking down over the Nile valley where the lash ever resounds!

With a last glance of quiet malignity, Cherif Pasha retired, passing into an inner room, whose door he ostentatiously closed!

The young man stood mutely gazing at the good-humored, brown-bearded, middle-aged bon vivant! The star and broidered coat,—the inevitable fez,—the diamond-set crosses and medals on his breast alone marked the line between the subject of Abdul Aziz, and the liege-man, Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, the Empress of India!

"You are the agent sent to me, through Mustapha Fehmy Pasha?" said Ismail First,—as he accepted the sealed packet, which Kenneth Gryffyth had tendered with a low bow.

"Be seated, Sir!" carelessly remarked the ruler, as he broke the seals! A few moments of inspection evidently satisfied him! "Have you spoken to anyone here of the nature of your business?" The crafty eyes were narrowly scanning the Englishman's face.

The young man was standing respectfully before the wearer of Mehemet's vice regal coronet! "Not a single word, Your Highness!" he replied.

"You seem to be very young for such a great trust!" proceeded Ismail, whose easy French was that of the Parisian boulevard! He had thrust the papers into his bosom, and was leisurely surveying his visitor.

"Your Highness! I have been for twelve years, an expert investigator into matters of the most extended financial complication! Governmental,—insurance,—capitalistic,—home and foreign! I have handled scores of millions!—and—I have shown Your Highness the fullest powers."

"Tell me, briefly, what your orders call for?" said Ismail, wearily, as he clapped his hands! Coffee, cigars and the smoking tray were instantly brought in, by palace lackeys who vanished at a nod.

"I was requested to respectfully urge upon Your Highness to submit to me at once, all the original papers covering every detail of the revenue of Your Highness' Personal Estates,—the acreage of cotton and sugar plantations,—all the possible sources of unappropriated revenue, the future monetary resources of the Soudan,—Darfour, and Equatorial Egypt.

"And, finally to report all the elements of that vast Khedivial estate, which might be added to the insufficient Governmental revenue,—and so, afford the margin upon which David Hart,—the Benjamins,—James Lawrie,—and their home and foreign associates, would undertake to provide for the whole existing arrears!

"To build up an enormous credit to aid in financing the unsecured pressing Public Debt,—to arrange all of Your Highness' personal obligations, to extend and stimulate irrigation, to prepare a plan of personal economies and so enable David Hart to come here, backed by a thousand millions of credit to the administration of a vast syndicate which would call for the use of fifty millions of pounds. This is the outline of the great work.

"Such a plan, if the home and foreign capitalists (many of them creditors), would take it up—would be made acceptable to the French and English Governments, and,—only touch upon the betterment of Your Highness' individual estate!

"In other words,—we are to come to your financial rescue, if you give over to David Hart, as your Financial Administrator,—all that you have now left to give over! This, in no way, interferes with the Control so far

legally established, but,—it only extends a wise administration over what is to be developed!

“And,—on the sole condition that Your Highness makes this showing,—and so, enables me within three months, to forward all the figures and data—then David Hart will accept the tender of Your Highness in offering to him a place almost as responsible as the Governor General of India! It would be a wonderful trust for any living man!”

“It would tie my hands! I would have to perhaps give over the Equatorial conquests projected by me, and the great scheme under Gordon Pasha’s able management!” musingly said Ismail.

“But, economy calls for that in time!” earnestly said Gryffyth.

“On this point, I was ordered to respectfully state to you, that from 1873 to 1879, the hold of Your Highness upon the Equatorial region, has not been really strengthened!

“The defeat of Gura has convinced all the dwellers in Abyssinia,—Darfour, and the Soudan, that an Egyptian army is always to be easily overwhelmed!” The Khedive gazed in astonishment at the plain speaker! His voice had a hostile ring as he cried:

“Were you told to tell me this? I consider Gordon Pasha a great man,—and—an honest man! I have always trusted him!”

The Khedive eyed the speaker closely, and then,—Kenneth Gryffyth gravely said: “Ivory tribute,—a most precarious revenue,—and the infamous profit of the slave traffic are the only present sources of Soudanese revenue. And, you must remember that General Gordon has built up nothing of empire in his remarkable world-wide career, which certainly lacks continuity!

“Gordon’s power over others has never reached the simple art of governing himself!” said Gryffyth. “The English Government never gave him a great English command, however personally worthy and notable!

“In China,—his influence is even now but legendary! And yet the Futai,—Li Hung Chang, the butcher of the Wangs at Soochow, has been a successful Premier and

the leader of China! Generals Wolseley and Roberts may yet die peers of England, and Field Marshals, but, the brilliant Gordon has really built up nothing!

"And, no man has ever changed great practical problems by his own peculiar moral loftiness! Gordon may be either behind or beyond his age, but, with the only two really available elements of Soudan revenue,—slaves and ivory,—the crafty Zebehr Pasha would grind more out of the upper Nile,—than Gordon,—simply because—he is cruel, rapacious, and, dishonest!"

Kenneth Gryffyth paused in an evident fear of arousing the Khedive's personal resentment! "These are the secret views of the thousand millions of dollars in credit, which I represent here. I have been carefully told to say this! That if the Soudan is valuable,—it is to some other future interest than your Highness' dynasty! To the geographical idea,—of England, perhaps, but, not to Your Highness!"

"That means England's control,—of course!" bitterly said the startled Khedive! "I know where I was left pillaged! The canal! My future monument! Two hundred thousand pounds net revenue the first year! In ten years,—it will bring in between three and four millions of pounds!"

"Now, Sir! where is your magic art to 'pay my debts and find money?' Tell me all!" He gazed sternly at the young man!

"First, a practical abandonment of the Soudan,—second—a graded economy of the public affairs, and,—a careful revision of the sovereign's personal engagements!"

The frown which gathered on Ismail's face was now lowering black!

"That may mean either beggary, or political exile!" he gravely said! "The real secret lies in the development or irrigation,—the vastly extended culture of cotton and sugar,—and the use of the enormous idle estates which Your Highness now controls, nearly one-third of the arable land of Egypt!

"This sure and profitable cotton culture to-day giving a crop of one hundred and fifty millions of pound weight,

on four hundred thousand now cultivated acres, may easily be made, in ten years, six hundred millions of pounds on a million acres! I am bidden to examine closely the Barrage,—the canals,—the great estates, and,—as you have the idle land, and we have the idle money,—ten years of thrift would give you an Egyptian revenue of fifty millions of dollars, and an annual surplus of three or four millions!

"Sugar is not as good a crop to handle,—as the beet sugar crop of the world is now three to two! With rigid economy,—with the syndicate's sure aid, and Hart's wise system your eventual fortune and dynasty is safe! Cotton cultivation is your last hope!"

"And, what must I do for you?" queried Ismail in a sullen wonder at the simplicity of the plan.

"I beg for Your Highness' instant orders to have your secret cabinet lay all the documents needed before me, in such safe palace or place as you may select! Then, to allow me to make a month's inspection of lower Egypt and, to report, as soon as possible back to London.

"These are not my views! They are my orders, Your Highness! They are the views of the only great band of European capitalists not allied to your bitter enemies! I am bidden to warn you, Your Highness, that sinister events may occur at any moment.

"The defaulted loans aggravate the flood of your pressing private debts! There is a final debit of five hundred millions of francs to be arranged against Egypt—only two hundred millions of francs are now under control! We are the holders of the other!"

"These words, Your Highness, conclude my whole embassy and powers!"

"How soon could you act?" nervously demanded Ismail Pasha, as the fearful arraignment of figures appalled him! It was near Settling Day!

"How soon can you give me, without reserve—all the documents that I ask? I have prepared the lists and schedules of the secret papers, Your Highness! And—any delay—or dissimulation now would only mean the ruin of your last hopes of financial arrangement! This is the ultimatum of the men who would be glad to loan

fifty millions of pounds, if you keep faith and—act at once!"

"I will order a new Commission of my own!" energetically cried the Viceroy! "There is DeLesseps,—my great counsellor! And,—Gordon Pasha, too, though he builds up no empires,—he is an honest man—and the only Englishman whom I trust! One of my sons can serve,—Cherif Pasha, of course,—and—lastly, the Chief Finance Minister! You shall be at the secret sittings, and,—I will give imperative orders to prepare the needed documents to-morrow! I will telegraph to-day to General Gordon to come down at once! There will be five able members. In the mean time, you are my personal guest, and—I will start you out to be busy in the inspections, till the papers are ready!"

"First, the documents! Your Highness!" said Gryffyth imploringly as he retired at a signal, and never a word did he speak as the haughty Cherif Pasha drove him back to the city by the Shoubrah road!

There was now a bitter coldness and an open distrust between them! Kenneth Gryffyth had noted the face of Lorenzo Zacharias, peering out of a closed carriage which flashed by them as Cherif Pasha leisurely conducted his unwilling guest homeward! The sly old fox of a Pasha eyed his companion and waited, in vain, for Gryffyth to speak.

The young financier had observed the artful manner in which the money broker's carriage cut them off, and, it now advanced, and—now retreated in the dense throng of fashion pouring northwards to catch the evening sea breeze drawing down the Nile, under the beautiful natural arch of the Shoubrah groves.

"Blessed be Mehemet Ali, the tree planter!" ejaculated Cherif, as he bobbed his head in a continuous salute, and kept a jewelled hand busy moving from his heart to his forehead, in a most gracious acknowledgment of the signals of the "haute voleé of Cairo."

For, mightily did Cherif despote himself with the high-necked bottles and the low-necked dames! He enjoyed all the privileges of both Mussulman and Giaour, his rank made it obligatory that he should be "at the head

of the social procession!" And—the double privileges agreed well with his easy vices!

Gryffyth was pondering upon the half-sullen manner in which Ismail Pasha had received the golden secret of future thrift—the regulated interest charges,—a ten-fold acreage of cotton,—the lopping off of a useless army, a humbug court, and closing half of the crowded stews of the Khedivial harems! Practical financial administration,—the superb annual rejuvenation of the soil by the Nile,—a scientifically extended irrigation here, was the simple talisman needed to turn the Nile mud into gold!

There was a pang of pity in Gryffyth's heart for the cold-blooded stock jobbing robbery of Said and his official heirs! "The canal is to-day only a broadening gold mine! France and England have taken that! Ismail has only the memories of the fêtes,—'after the ball is over!' And, three hundred million francs of public and two hundred millions francs of private debt!

"Cutting down the principal to an honest half—and turning in his great fortune to legislate that—Ismail could begin life at forty-nine again, practically—free of all obligation save the fifty millions sterling, of really well-grounded public debt, and,—his private share of the canal would have been a sufficient sinking fund to extinguish that!"

Gryffyth wondered at the six years' sway of Gordon Pasha in the Soudan maintained on purely sentimental grounds!

"He will never impress these mongrel two millions up there, with his own high-minded honesty! He will not and can not descend to their level! They can not and never will rise to his! Some day, his light will be put out! and,—the Soudan—the land of the blacks,—will only be 'Darkest Africa' again!"

Gryffyth knew in his heart that an extended English occupation alone would bring Egypt up to a stable prosperity! He saw ruin its coming shadow cast before, in the ominous words of the ultimatum of the great capitalists, his master!

"The mock court, the masquerade of Gordon,—a glittering captive in his vast realm, even now only held by

a hair,—the daily Belshazzar life,—these things Ismail will not let go! This commission will only dawdle along and, the voice of England's cannon may any day summon him to step down and out! The first and last Hereditary Khedive is Ismail I!" mused Gryffyth.

"The next will be but England's puppet,—at most, and,—the Khedive himself, will only be left a curiosity among the wrecked sovereigns of Europe, or—else the bow-string on the Bosphorus, will avenge Said's guiltless heir,—and the murdered Mefettish! The secret hoard in Italy and France is the last rock!

"Perhaps, my acute principals only really want to get at that,—through me! I will furnish figures to them only! The play is on,—and the toils are set! Poor modern Belshazzar!" It was a pitiable juncture for a monarch!

And, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" started as a superb carriage swept by, while Cherif Pasha bowed in courtly tenderness! Was he dreaming?

There was the now resplendent Grosvenor seated opposite Madame Carioli, and the noble womanly face of Marguerite, Duchesse de Valeria shone out by the side of the graceful Italian lady. Fate had thus saved him the trouble of any scheming to bring these two together!

It had evidently been an arranged meeting for the Honorable Charles Grosvenor was once more "the glass of fashion and the mould of form!" He was busied with the beautiful Duchess, and he affected not to observe the great Cherif and his friend!

While Kenneth Gryffyth's nerves were still tingling at the sudden rencontre, and he remembered little Countess Renee's rosebud-face seated there beside the happy Grosvenor, Cherif Pasha coldly addressed his companion.—

"I presume that we shall not meet, 'Mr. Cranford,' till the Commission is duly called together! If you should come to your senses and decide to confide in me, you may finally do something,—for the English Juggernaut slowly rolled on by Sir Samuel Baker,—Gordon Pasha,—Nubar Pasha,—and the hidden men who work the wires from London!

"You may be effective in Europe, my young sir! Nous

avons changé tout cela, in Egypt! His Highness has to-day honored me with the confidence denied me by a London clerk! The Commission,—well—let us see!

"Gordon,—that lofty idealist;—De Lesseps,—the worn-out old schemer:—You, of course, can handle them —two votes good! So be it! And,—now as to the other three, Prince Hassan,—myself,—and,—the Finance Minister,—three solid Egyptian votes! I can block your game! I can always tie the votes—or else turn the scale! I will thus know all your game before you make it!"

"And—you shall either come to my terms, or I will throw down—your whole Commission, house of cards, and,—Nubar will be buried under it! Voilà tout!"

And then, with fiercely gleaming eyes, the old Pasha swept grandly out of the carriage when it stopped at the Grand Hotel!

"Have you no answer?" he whispered. "I shall not interrupt any confidences that His Highness may graciously please to make to you!" calmly said Kenneth Gryffyth.

"I am to be sent for to meet your sovereign alone, but, only for further discussion, and,—what he tells to you,—is your due as a trusted subject! What I tell you, in advance, will be—simply,—nothing!"

The Pasha glared and said: "It will take Gordon three weeks to come down from Khartoum! You may be sent out of Egypt before he arrives! You will later remember my words! Compliments to Nubar,—your secret master! My young friend! Breathe our balmy air,—learn our Egyptian ways! Come to see me at my palace! Over a bottle of Yquem, we may grow to be better friends!"

But,—the young man only gravely bowed and ascended the stair! The tempter had failed!

In half an hour, Lorenzo Zacharias returned to announce the departure of the first momentous telegraphic report! "If this Commission actually does its work,—if you really receive the promised documents,—then,—my thirty years' secret labor here will be crowned at last! You will have swiftly reached fortune—and—the lucky Ismail will have saved his throne!"

"And,—yet again,—Nubar and Cherif will fight to the death! If Ismail does not lie,—if he holds out against the

enormous pressure brought to bear on him, he will be saved! You are but one of a hundred of the most powerful secret agents! It will be a struggle of giants!"

"The Duchess"—began Kenneth! "You are only a romantic boy, at heart! Spare me,—" smiled Zacharias. "I will come at eleven and bring you and your English friend together at supper at my house! Jacob will escort him! I will come for you! And,—not a word of business! I am actually a secret agent of his father, Lord Wrexham! and I must not be embarrassed, before him!"

The old Hebrew money lender was gone before Kenneth dared frame a second question, for he knew, now, the wonderful nerve and sagacity of the veiled humble Jewish millionaire, "a spider in Kings' palaces!" "It seems like the baseless fabric of a dream!" he muttered as Soames handed him several letters.

The formal invitation to a luncheon with Bruce Grantron—the haughty British Consul General, made him smile, but, he soon fell into a brown study as he opened the invitation of Madame Carioli to meet "her charming friend, Madame la Duchesse de Valeria," at dinner on the evening of the morrow, and,—also—the Honorable Charles Grosvenor!

He was craftily careful after his dinner, when he debated the insidious invitation of Lady Lingard,—otherwise Miss Bessie Lightwood! "She's an English woman,—at any rate,—and,—probably, not in the stiletto line! I'll give her a first chance to betray me! And,—then—if she plays false,—I'm afraid of no woman!"

"Mr. Malcolm Cranford" had not altogether settled with his conscience when he strolled out at ten minutes of nine, bidding Soames to follow and not to lose him from sight! "Of course, if there's any bit of a row,—you always know what to do! I'm going over to the music stand in the gardens!"

A thousand people were wandering under the garish lights as Gryffyth sauntered up to the music stand! He was not attentive to the melting strains of "Dites-lui," but he nervously eyed the painted rabble and the crowding queer mob!

It was a rich cockney voice which made him start, as a

suspiciously graceful swing of an Arab dress soon brought the elastic Miss Lightwood to his side! She grasped his hand in an earnest warmth.

And, her voice rang out in all sincerity: "I'm free to tell you, Mr. Cranford, that I'm an English girl, and a jolly lot,—but,—do you look out for yourself! He gave me a rough bit of a going-over last night! I'm going to shake him! He's a bad lot, and—I'll try to get back to the dear old Savoy! They're just dying to 'ave me, you know!"

"Now, this Italian fellow, Santa Marina, and—Lingard," she sneered, "are going to try and put you in a regular hole! They're both of them very ugly fellows! I dropped easily on their little game! Believe me,—I only want to get square on them. You're a proper decent young fellow! They're in to just murder you! And,—now you know,—so, watch yourself,—night and day!" The woman's voice trembled and, great tears glittered on the eyelashes which peeped over the Arab veil!

Before Gryffyth dared question her, an arm good humoredly linked itself with the stately music hall singer's, and the handsome Grosvenor whispered, "Just drop in here with me a minute, Bessie,—and you,—my friend,—get instantly back to your room! I'll be over there in a half hour! Stephanie has been pretty well frightened, too! Hurry up! Kent! We are all of use safe—as yet!"

"Lord! Charley Grosvenor!" faltered Miss Bessie Lightwood as Soames energetically drew his startled master away! It was a strange harvest of repentance.

That night before the two friends sat down at the splendid table of Lorenzo Zacharias, Kenneth Gryffyth knew that the very future of Egypt depended on his forcing the original documents out of the unwilling hands of Ismail the Khedive!

"Demand the papers at once. Do not leave Cairo. Insist to the point of leaving Cairo. Our other agents at work. We support you. Be firm. Delay not a day. Report each evening!" These words proved that the thumb screws were being gently turned on Ismail's imprisoned hands! And, London was awake—and—at work.

For the first time in years, Bessie Lightwood that night

remembered a bit of a prayer as she regained her splendid rooms and hid herself in a downy nest.

The stars swept grandly on over Cairo in the quiet skies, and far away from the mad riot of the Esbékieyeh, a bearded despot slave looking out of his own palace window at Abdin—muttered: “I dare not give them the real papers!

“For,—Cherif Pasha knows all their contents. He might betray me even now, to save himself! And, Nubar, too, would trace out these hidden treasures! England and France might then take all! They might put Cherif on the throne—or send Nubar to confiscate my European millions!

“I must trust to Cherif to find a way out, and to buy my safety—and his security! The papers shall never be produced! I dare not!”

CHAPTER VIII.

**THE MIDNIGHT HOUR.—MORNING IN THE STUDIO.—
HE IS THE KHEDIVE'S GUEST!—SUMMONED TO
ABDIN PALACE.—THE COMMISSION PROCLAIMED.—
“YOU SHALL NEVER GET THE DOCUMENTS.”—A
FALSE DELIVERY.—AT THE PYRAMIDS!—A MISSING
COUNT.**

There were several important Pashas lingering around the banquet table of Cherif the discontented, until a late hour that night. There had been a secret council of a dozen of the leading chiefs of the Fellahin party and, curses loud and deep were vented upon the foreign truckler Nubar, the traitor, whose unwelcome shibboleth was “Economy and Reform!”

One gray bearded old Syrian moslem growled. “By the Beard of the Prophet! The Samuel Baker expedition,—the cursed telegraph to Khartoum,—the railway to Siout,—the Equatorial dream, the employment of General Gordon, all of this has been just a trick of Nu-

bar's to throw Egypt into English hands! All will fall into their hands and, we pay!"

"I see it!" growled another. "Gordon Pasha's world-renowned name was artfully used to loosen the pockets of English money lenders! He is truly an honest man,—and,—poor! His name is a strong one to conjure with! Nubar has been only laying out the money where it will do the English good, in due time, all below the first cataract! He smells a coming change,—and,—his English masters will surely protect him! Cyprus,—the canal purchase,—the Finance Control,—all these are a prelude to the downfall of Egypt! His Highness has been fed with borrowed money! When the trap is sprung, the Pashas of Egypt will be left powerless, impoverished, and —helpless!"

Already the coming Commission of Secret Examination of Proposed Revenues was being bruited over Cairo! For, the crafty Cherif had decided, if possible to disgrace Kenneth Gryffyth by the agents' pretended revelations!

At a corner of the table, Cherif was complacently murmuring with Sir Harry Lingard and Count di Santa Marina, when the midnight call of the muezzin rang out in the stillness of the night.

"I care not how he is forced out of Egypt—nor,—what happens to him! But, you must act at once! We must not be known in the thing! He is in some measure under strong English protection!

"So strong,—that he is dumb to their Consul General! It cost me a pretty penny to find that out! He will not talk! I would not dare to try and buy him! I believe he has made a secret pact with Nubar!

"Now, if he succeeds, I may be ruined! If he fails, his Highness may dismiss Nubar as a scape goat, and call on me. But, if I am in power, at the turn over,—I will be taken care of! The Prime Minister is always some one to placate! I can call on our party for a half million pounds to aid His Highness in his extremity! Ready money will turn the scale!

"So,—to work! Worry this fellow out of Egypt! It will disgrace Nubar,—and,—it may throw the game into

my hands! It must be private,—personal,—accidental, and scandalous! Nothing,—to touch us—our party!"

Sir Harry Lingard and Santa Marina gazed at each other!

"He's a cool devil! I can't quite make him out!" said Santa Marina! "Cards, wine and women he lets alone! I can't challenge a mere clerk to a duel! He will not visit me! I can't get at him! He does not trust himself out alone! I've tried him with the Morelli! He has not risen yet to the pretty bait!"

"But,—to put him out at once! If he were killed, we might be later followed up—from England! We must either disgrace him, trap him, or have him run out!"

"Or—at best, get him accidentally killed! If he would run around to the Ghawazee's tents,—to the dens of old Cairo,—or poke around Memphis, or Sakkarah, or even,—over at the Pyramids! I can do anything with the sheiks there."

Santa Marina drank a huge goblet of vino rosso, with an air of disgust!

"He has a lean young devil of a Secretary now," growled Lingard,—"who never leaves the room, when his bulldog body servant is not there! And,—even if Abdallah watches and reports to the Pasha, but,—he will take no risks! I've had the woman try to get into the rooms! It's no go!"

"And,—the servant knows nothing of the real business! I have tipped him already with a hundred-pound note! What will Cherif give for the job? Go and ask him!"

Sir Henry Lingard whistled in surprise, when Santa Marina stole back and whispered, "Twenty thousand pounds to finish him! Or, ten thousand, to get him frightened away, at once!"

"Is the money good and sure? Half and half,—you know!" anxiously demanded the broken-down Englishman. "I've soon got to drop my half-way secret service job, till it blows over!"

"And, Bruce Granton grumbles even now at what he pays me for gossip picked up from the Equerries and foreign contingent around the Viceroy! The whole thing won't last long—and,—I've also got to get rid of

this fool of a woman! It's the old story,—I'm tired of her,—and—she of me! I wish I had never run away with the jade!"

"Cherif will pay! His word is his bond!" said Santa Marina! "You are near to Cranford! Can't you draw him into a quarrel—or—trap him, or bully him?" said Santa Marina. "I've tried to get that chalk-faced Stephanie to draw him into her net—but,—she, too, is cursed unruly! She threatens to leave Cairo! The whole bubble will soon burst now!"

"See here! Santa Marina!" said Lingard. "Let us strike a bargain with Cherif, and so—make sure of our money! We ought to have a thousand pounds each to begin with! Get that! I'm going over to Shepheard's to-night! If you will send Lischen to see me there,—at Andrée Lafarge's rooms, I will begin the dance! You can stand by and be my second!"

"As you say,—you have met him socially,—and, you can not butcher him without a good reason! And—there's that sly Duchess de Valeria! No one knows where her power begins or ends! She does not know me! But, as an Englishman, I can pick an easy row with him!"

In ten minutes, the two scoundrels separated at the door of the Grand Hotel! There was a sealed order for a thousand pounds each bearing the seal of the Minister of the Interior. "Tell Lischen to hasten! I will post the other woman! Never mind my plan! It's a good one!" They saw the way to frighten off their enemy now!

Around Lorenzo Zacharias' table the two friends marveled at the old Hebrew's courtly hospitality, and yet marked the absence of any women members of his family!

Grosvenor was laughing still at discovering the airy Bessie Lightwood under the black silken gown and shining veil of Isis of an Arab damsel!

"A useful adjunct! Poor girl!" he mused. "A hundred pounds will send her back to Bow Bells, but,—she must stay and watch this fellow a bit!" He was musing upon how far he should warn Gryffyth!

"Shall I simply watch or warn him now? By Jove! I'll post the old Hebrew!" And, so, under the pretense of

admiring the rare pictures and superb antiquities, he imparted his fears to Zacharias!

He had, at last, told them the sad story of the loss of his wife and daughter in the last plague. "It is a fearful land to live in--here!" he sighed.

"He shall be the apple of my eye! I swear it by the Sacred Scrolls," said the affrighted money lender! "Do you know his mission?" Grosvenor gravely shook his head! "I only wish to protect him—for our school boy love—for the woman he would marry! My sister's one sister of the heart!"

"Do you know that he is the Khedive's own guest,—and—that his person is sacred!" continued Zacharias—fearful of his own voice. "I have not dared to warn him of all! If you know the Duchess de Valeria—she alone, can protect him from all Cherif's secret wiles! You must watch the riff raff of foreign bullies and villains here! Only a man can do that!"

"This town is builded up on the ashes of old Cairo, eight hundred years crumbled! Blood and intrigue have reigned since the Arab's first pitched their tents among the slain of Heraclius' enervated army!"

"No one dares to investigate any killings. There was young Castellamare,—of the Italian mission five years ago! The Viceroy's sister saw him at a splendid ball at the Abdin palace as she was gazing down from her veiled gallery! She threw him a rose from her breast.

"Day by day, the poor young noble watched the carriage upon the Shoubrah! There were always equerries,—guards,—eunuchs, and palace spies!"

"When the gay gallant told a friend a story of a mysterious happy midnight love quest, it soon reached those who have the eye and ear of the cheetah!"

"In a canal, flowing into the Nile, from the splendid gardens of the Princess Esmé, the headless trunk of a man was found floating! The dead man's hand still clasped a red rose! Followed from the soft glow of alabaster lamps to the cool shaded garden,—he was probably dispatched by an unknown hand—but,—no one dared to verify the facts! It was the Khedive's object lesson to his reckless sister!"

"I know his quest, and I shall redouble my vigilance! Do you invoke the Duchess' mighty influence! I dare not even hint at Cherif's power—or hatred! This young man goes soon up the Nile—then, down to the Barrage—and, all over the greater plantations and factories!

"There are many opportunities, for drowning, poison,—a dozen deaths by secret villainy! In twenty years, I have seen dozens of personages sent away to the Soudan, or up the Nile,—or far away to the interior! In many cases they have simply carried their own sentence of death! So,—watch and guard your friend, and I will try to save him! We must! Lawrie would ruin me, if I did not!"

"How long will he be detained here!" mused Grosvenor. "Not over three months," replied Zacharias. "The vast problem will soon decide itself, if he can not move Mahomet to the mountain,—the mountain will come to Mahomet! You can read my meaning!"

"Your noble father is an English ambassador,—and I have executed his secret behests here very often! Your father is an adept in this problem!"

"Can he not be removed to a safer place?" said Grosvenor.

"Ah! There speaks Ismail's crafty policy! He controls the Grand Hotel Esbékieyeh—and, his spies are like the sand of the sea shore! Cruel, cowardly, crafty and sly is Ismail! He is juggling now to set the two sets of warring powers against each other, divide the Pashas—play Nubar off against Cherif, and his slavish public adulation of Gordon is only because he thinks Gordon to be England's darling son! He will lie to all,—take secret money advances from every side,—and will delay—obstruct and scheme to save his stolen treasures! But, one man knows of that hidden hoard!

"Cherif Pasha is the veiled king of the situation! Why not! While Ismail robbed Said's son,—drove out his own uncle Halim,—pillaged his brother Mustapha,—murdered and plundered Sadik Bey, the Mefettish,—and has stolen one third of Egypt's lands,—Cherif alone has been allowed to safely fatten and flourish!"

"And Ratib,—his brother-in-law! These two have

aided to purvey the nine hundred women who fill the harems of Gezirèh, Shoubrah, Kasr-en-Nousa, and Abdin!

"And,—when the Grand Opera, and the vast palaces were built for the Empress Eugenie,—the Empress of Austria, and the Prince of Wales' visits,—the sovereign and his two minions themselves sold the contracts,—plundered the agents,—and have even privately manipulated the English loans in common!"

"No! Even in Egypt,—as the Khedive's guest, your friend is not safe,—if Cherif wills to work his ruin! But,—one influence he fears,—that wily devil,—and that is,—Madame la Duchesse de Valeria!"

"She dominates the Marquis de Lesseps—and,—even the Khedive trembles before the power that most superb woman wields! A star of womanhood which swims in skies far above the grovelling grandson of a nameless father,—for—you know, no drop of royal, noble,—or even gentle blood, flows in Ismail's veins! Ibrahim, the Lion of Syria, was the son of a wild Albanian mountaineer, the first love of Mehemet Ali's wife!"

"It would seem that this same throne has often gone a begging!" said Grosvenor. "Yes!" replied Zacharias. "And, it will go yet, where Alexander willed the world, where Mehemet found it vacant,—to the strongest! The man who will yet sit on this throne,—is the Admiral of your Mediterranean Fleet,—the Viceroy of the Empress of the Sea!"

As the friends drove home, past the Viennese Café Concert, Grosvenor lightly leaped out! "You've got Jacob and Soames here on the box! Go right over to your room! I want to see Stephanie and have her watch this precious pair of villains!"

"Come to me in the morning! I'll wait for you! For, we are to meet Madame de Valeria at dinner! I find her truly charming! You must placate Granton at the luncheon, Ken,—for, if these rascals try to annoy you,—a single word from Granton will turn Lingard down! I want you to ask it, not me,—for reasons! I have learned that from pretty Bessie Lightwood, who drops her h's,

which tells me that Lingard is not long to be near Granton!

"I do not wish him to think that I know Lingard to be of his secret service mouchards! The one-half the guests at the Grand are gudgeon tourists of *blanc bec innocence*! The other half,—are the most graceless set of villains and villainesses alive! It's Ismail's store house for all sorts of old cattle!"

"I will demolish Sir Harry Lingard,—but,—do you mind your eye, too. And,—no quarrel, mind you,—on any pretext!"

The Viennese girls were playing a wailing waltz as Gryffyth saw his tall friend stride into the great café, and he passed through the still crowded streets to his apartment!

"From the very moment I am closeted over my documents,—the instant the Commission is announced,"—he mused, "I have only to guard a jealous silence! There will be nothing to plot against me for! The public sessions of the Commission, the presence of Gordon Pasha, and the great De Lesseps—all this, will be a sure safeguard!"

He realized that the respectable foreign officials, the ministers, the great Pashas were all, at least, fairly interested in seeing the play of government move on!

"The documents! The documents! If I dared to talk to the Duchess!" he murmured as he fell asleep. And—never an idea of Grosvenor's tender and passionate love had crossed his mind, for two proud and loyal hearts divided the one secret which filled them both! There was the great ambassador to win over and placate!

Proud of the successful début of his first confidential relations with Ismail Pasha, Gryffyth sprang lightly to his feet when the birds in the garden of Cherif roused him! His day's itinerary was first, the luncheon with the mollified Bruce Granton,—and then, the dinner with Madame Carioli, and he reflected over the adroitness with which the Khedive had received him, as if by chance, in a deserted palace, for the court journal announced that His Highness had passed the day in inspecting the Military colleges at Abbasieh!

"Cherif dare not scheme to betray me now, and so, I will be silent," decided Gryffyth. "And, when Charles George Gordon arrives, there will be another man of stainless honor, upon whom I can rely!"

The resolution to insist upon a place of safety wherein to carry on his two months' investigations, soon occurred to him! "I will ask to be attached to Gordon's household!

"There I will be perfectly safe from all intrusion! But, first—to unearth the documents!"

He was wondering when his next audience with the Viceroy would take place, as he finished his breakfast! "If I dared to tell all to the Duchess,—she might arrange for an immediate private audience!" he mused, and—he determined to trust her, with an intimation of his desire! He well knew that the sealed packet which he had handed to the Khedive personally, contained a solemn injunction to deliver the scheduled returns and secret papers, at once, if the sovereign hoped to save his tottering throne! But, Cherif Pasha might delay this interminably!

He was strangely reticent about questioning Grosvenor as to the details of his affectionate espionage from the moment they had parted at Paris! "I wonder if he is also a part of the great syndicate behind me! Who knows! Lawrie admitted that none of the principal agents knew how much of the vast plan to capture Egypt's control quietly was to be entrusted to others! Is it only a scheme to quietly accumulate all the debt and force ourselves into Egypt?"

He decided upon a little object lesson! And, rising, he sought for the lace handkerchief which Soames had found at Geneva!

In a cheerful frame of mind, he departed for Shepherd's Hotel, but, was startled as he opened his door to find the pretty Lischen never more freshly captivating, challenging him with her fragrant wares! With a modest blush, she handed him a note, and pocketing her coins tripped away! She, too, seemed to be a messenger of Love!

On his way down the vestibule, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" read a daintily-expressed request of Mademoiselle

Lafarge that he would call at her studio and inspect her view of "Cairo and the Nile from the Citadel" before its shipment to France! "And, would Monsieur kindly call before ten o'clock?" It all seemed womanly enough—in its way!

"I'll take a look at it, and then go on into Grosvenor's rooms," thought the unsuspecting young financier as he slowly sauntered along towards Shepheard's. On the terrace, he passed Lischen, whose cheeks burned a deeper crimson as she affixed her roses to the Count Santa Marina's button-hole!

When Kenneth Gryffyth entered the studio of the singular young French girl, he was surprised at the evident agitation of the pretty young artist! There was the picture, however, ready, to be sure, and,—in a few moments,—Kenneth Gryffyth was busied in all the jargon of lights and shade!

He inwardly wondered at the rare skill of the young woman, while not a little astonished at her abrupt and singular invitation!

They were seated on a divan, after the amateur's inspection, and Miss Lafarge gayly rallied him about the coming début of the great diva Morelli. "I am, myself, soon, to see the secrets of the Harem, the Bairam and Ramadan feasts, the whole cabinet reservata of Cairo through her influence! I long to see the wonders of Boulak,—of Ghezireh,—of Shoubrah Palace,—of Kasr-el-Koura! The veiled splendors!"

"I am told that there are haughty, black Abyssinians and Nubian queens in the rose-bowered seraglios who are as fierce as Semiramis and as ardent as Cleopatra! And, Zebehr Pasha, too, is here, the great slave king of Khartoum,—the tyrant of Dongola and Kordofan! Nominally a prisoner, he is really a great power! His sway extends from the Gold Coast to Mozambique, and from Khartoum to Nyanza!"

"I know of the hidden slave marts here where the Georgians, Circassians, Nubians and all the splendid daughters of the sun, are sold for their weight in gold! Oh! For the insight into the wild, fierce, hidden life!"

"To paint the chained caravan of wild captives, men

bearing precious tusks of Zebehr's ivory—the fierce sons of Nature with the gold-dust rolled up in their matted hair,—the wild spearsmen of Tigre,—the fierce swordsmen of Gondar!"

Grasping both his hands, the excited woman gazed at him with feverish eyes! Her bosom rose and fell in an unwonted emotion!

"They tell me that you are a great hidden power here! That Gordon is to be recalled! That Zebehr, the millionaire slave-king, will be pardoned,—that the great Cherif is to be once more the Prime Minister, and, that a British army will soon force itself from Uganda to Khartoum—and, that the whole Nile will fall under the English queen's dominion! You are the secret guest of Cherif Pasha,—the Bismarck of Egypt to be! The Abyssinians are to aid you, and—Cherif is to be made the Viceroy of Upper Egypt, when he opens the way to British fleet and army! You hold my future in your hands!"

"Already, Ollivier Pain has reached the upper Nile! All Paris speaks of the daring French adventurer! I would be the Ollivier Pain of Art! You can do all! A single word from you to Cherif will lift the veil which hides the Mountains of the Moon! Let me send him this picture! Take me to him! I will be a pioneer of art, and, I will owe all to you!"

"You mistake, Mademoiselle!" coldly replied Kenneth Gryffyth, rising, for her voice rung out in hysterical excitement, and a noise in the next room indicated perhaps a concealed listener!

"I know not the great Pasha! I am here, simply as a private individual! I admire your art, but, I am powerless to aid you!"

As he turned to go, she clasped him in her arms, and her voice rang out in a shrill scream: "You shall not leave me so!" and then—the door was rudely opened and Sir Harry Lingard sprang upon the astonished Gryffyth!

"Brute! to bully and insult a woman!" he cried. "You shall answer to me for all your cowardly insults!" And, with Andrée Lafarge trembling in his arms and clinging to him, with convulsive sobs—the intruder glared at the

Englishman, who saw the jaws of the trap closing upon him!

There was the shuffling of feet, the clustering of frightened moslem domestics, and the sound of the opening and shutting of doors! Sir Harry Lingard had thrown the portal wide open! Gryffyth stood confounded and irresolute!

He was recalled to his senses as the Honorable Charles Grosvenor quietly entered and, locking the door, pocketed the key!

"What is the meaning of this little comedy of errors?" smilingly said the newcomer, as he unconcernedly lit a cigarette, with a sharp nod to Gryffyth commanding his silence! "Allow me to say, Miss Andrée Lafarge, that I am this gentleman's friend! He and I are to breakfast with the British Consul General, this very morning! I have just received a letter from London asking me to warn that official with regard to a fugitive welsher, a swindling bookmaker, who ran away with Miss Bessie Lightwood—a music hall star,"—Grosvenor laughed in Lingard's face!

With a fierce oath, "Sir Harry Lingard" sprang toward Grosvenor, who calmly pointed a pistol at the breast of the enraged man! His eyes were very resolute in their glare!

"Be careful! It might go off!" said the Honorable Charles, "and, I am always a pretty good snap shot!"

"Also,"—he placidly continued, "I well remember a certain young lady whom I met in Paris, some years ago, when I was a callow youngster! They called her 'L'Ingenue,'—and,—I must say, that time touches her lightly! Je m'y souviens toujours! I was young,—a fat pigeon,—and,—one easily plucked! Bon jour! Mademoiselle l'Ingenue!" he smilingly said.

"I demand that this man give me satisfaction for his brutal violence to an unprotected woman! I will follow him up! I will chase him out of Egypt!" blustered Sir Harry Lingard, turning sharply upon the silent Gryffyth.

"I have no quarrel with you, Mr. Grosvenor, but I demand his card!"

"He is the Khedive's guest!" politely remarked Gros-

venor. "His person is to be sacred here, and I shall notify the police at once if you dare to interfere with him! I shall then give my own card for you—to the police!" sternly said Grosvenor, "and I shall telegraph to Lord Wrexham to have the foreign office send instant orders to Bruce Granton to expel you from Egypt!"

"If you cross my path,—I shall shoot you down like a dog,—not like a gentleman!"

"But, if you send me your seconds,—I shall first find out if there is a 'Sir Harry Lingard' upon any club books in Europe,—and where the title of 'Sir Harry' was earned,—and,—how!"

"Both of you shall hear from me!" raged the exposed swindler, as Mademoiselle Andrée Lafarge sprang up, her eyes flashing, and snarled out: "Canaille! Sortez!"

"Touch him at your peril!" remarked Grosvenor, laughing. "As for me,—à votre disposition, after your record has been carefully reviewed by the police! I shall ask Bruce Granton to verify your passport! That will give you a whole morning's work!"

Taking Gryffyth by the arm, Charley Grosvenor led him into his own rooms! He strode up and down with a rising indignation, as the simple story of the shameful trap was told!

"Let us go at once to Granton!" remarked Grosvenor. "You have now made your last social call, alone, in Cairo! It was a neatly-turned trick!"

When they descended to their carriage, the sound of "déménagement" was already heard in "the studio," and, when Grosvenor watched his friend's last touches to his breakfast toilet, the rushing to and fro in Sir Harry Lingard's rooms indicated a "change of base!"

It is true that the Hotel Sphinx, a modest retreat in the depths of the Mouski, that night, received three guests whose modest appellations disguised the "swelling port" heretofore assumed by the artist and the "noble couple" at the superb hotels on the Square!

A motley band of French and Italian soubrettes welcomed the "stylish neighbors," whose retirement in the depths of the quaintly splendid old street was broken by frequent visits from the gleaming-eyed "Santa Marina,"

and a few incognito voyages of the laughing Morelli! The saltimbanques and tenors of Tuscan birth soon grew, also, familiar with the daily visits of the fresh-faced "Lischen," the flower-girl "par excellence" of Cairo!

There was a grave concern in "Mr. Malcolm Cranford's" eyes as an equerry of the Khedive saluted the two gentlemen upon the portico of the Grand Hotel. The financier drew his friend aside! "A private audience—at three—at the Abdin Palace! This is a royal command! I must give up Granton!"—he doubtfully said.

"Let me arrange it!" whispered the ready Grosvenor. "I will have Granton send you over there, in his official carriage! You will be safe,—while I can mark down this fellow Santa Marina, and arrange to privately see poor Bessie Lightfoot!"

"Stephanie, the brave one, will do all that she can for me! I will have her now send for that girl Lischen and frighten the whole truth out of her! And,—I will await you at Granton's on your return! This will give you the assured protection of our diplomatic agent! And,—no one here dares to trifle openly with an Englishman's life! The eighty-one ton guns down at Alexandria, would be knocking the old Ras el Tin fort into a cocked hat in twenty-four hours! Of course, you and I know the Black Watch will yet air their kilts on the Citadel Square! The thing's as plain as A, B, C!"

"The Nile from Nyanza to the sea must be English! It is the decree of fate! And, we are far more likely to fight Russia in Abyssinia than in the Pamirs!"

Gryffyth laughed. "Are you talking for Lord Wrexham? And—the F. O.? I believe that you, too, are becoming bewitched in Egypt! I've heard this prediction once before—to-day. Has the Duchess, that lovely creature of fire and air, entranced you! There is a witching woman! She looks as if she 'would catch another Antony' in her strong toils of grace!"

But, the Honorable Charles Grosvenor had already courteously dispatched the equerry of His Highness the Viceroy, with much interchange of perfunctory salutes, and the friends then drove away to Bruce Granton's luncheon!

"I'm going to square you with Granton!" mused Grosvenor, speaking as if to himself. "I do not wish to pry upon your secrets, but Granton shall know that Wrexham protects you! I will have the pater wire a few words to old Bruce before another twenty-four hours! Hello! What's this?" said Grosvenor, with a faint blush, as he closely examined the lace handkerchief which Kenneth Gryffyth handed him!

"How the deuce did you get Madame de Valeria's handkerchief?" he cried in surprise. With a strong effort, the young financier curbed the muscles of his tell-tale face! "I must have picked it up in your room! Or, you may have dropped it in mine!" said Kenneth!

"It may be! I am an awful careless fellow! Now, did she drop it in the carriage? At any rate—I'll return it! It's her monogram and crest sure enough, and the 'Peau d'Espagne,' too, by Jove!" said Charley. When they drove into Bruce Granton's splendid garden enclosure Kenneth Gryffyth had decided the one vexing question of his trust!

"I will ask her about Geneva. In some strange way she is mixed up with Lord Wrexham and, Charley may be a guardian angel who is softly hoodwinked! She was surely the veiled lady of the Geneva episode! Yes! I see it all! Charley telegraphed to Lord Wrexham, and bade Madame la Duchesse watch over me! It may be that a broader game than the greed of gold, is being played here, under the rose,—a game of blood, and of wrecked thrones,—and new empires!

"She shall decide whether I leave Cairo, to be dallied with three weeks, or, stand for the documents! It looks as if Cherif's game was now a closer one, than even Nubar's, and—the Viceroy is coldly playing the one off—against the other! He dares not leave Cherif and his party!"

The icy reserve of the British Consul General melted when the Honorable Charles Grosvenor had led him into a private room! Kenneth Gryffyth never knew what transpired in there, but he did hear Bruce Granton's energetic declamation between mouthfuls of curry and chutney.

"I shall have a private talk at once with my French colleague Achille Lyons, Mr. Cranford! Both, he and I, will publicly entertain you—and—at the next Khedivial reception—we will show our official regard for you! I shall, privately, take measures with my own people, and the Khedivial police also, to see that you are made sure of the 'freedom of the Nile!' I can, now, understand your very proper reticence!"

"There has been some strange undercurrent in your case, and, I have been most maliciously deceived! Lord Wrexham's friend is my friend! My carriage shall take you to Abdin, with my cavasse! Cairo is always full of strange roving characters,—who are a law unto themselves!"

"Granton,—you are right!" quietly remarked Grosvenor. "I thought that I saw Bessie Lightwood, the missing Savoy star, sweeping around the Esbekieyeh Hotel here with a sort of Portuguese ennobled good-looking British outcast! Fellows at the Club in London write me he is only a fugitive bookmaker and calls himself 'Sir Horace—'"

"Have some fish, my dear boy!" hastily remarked Granton, crimsoning. "Never mind the fly-away music hall girl! London can soon replace her!" And so,—the friendship of a distant Lord sealed Kenneth Gryffyth as of the "Libro d' Oro," with the energetic Granton who already fancied himself "Sir Bruce."

"Now! Remember! Old boy! Neither to the right nor left, turn thou not,—but,—come straight back here! No divas,—odalisques,—beautiful Zingaras,—mysterious Fatimas!"

"He'll be all right,—when Gordon comes down," heartily said Granton.

"They always give Gordon Pasha a special Palace in which he lives alone,—out in the Shoubrah! The left-hand one! I'll have Gordon domicile our friend—and,—there,—he can work and rest in peace!

"So, go now. You have England's flag over you—as long as my cavasse sits on your carriage box! There are really no secrets between us now," he smiled. "The Special Commission of Five was named to-day by Khedivial

decree,—and Cherif Pasha has trumpeted to the world that you are the Special Actuary of the Commission, and —to be the Khedive's own guest! Nothing is secret,—nothing is sacred, in Egypt!

"Our English common railway stokers fire their locomotives on the Nile with the mummies of dead Pharaohs,—the gaping tomb of Cheops stands vacant in the King's Chamber, and loyalty and secrecy is unknown in the Boukra country! Cleave to Gordon—and,—keep your mouth shut! Now, all Cairo will soon know you have had a special audience to-day with Ismail, and,—that you have dined with the beautiful Duchesse de Valeria!"

"That great lady is an innocent Lucrezia Borgia! Nothing withstands her! She is the Ariel of European courts!" "Do you know her, Grosvenor?" concluded Granton, turning to the peer's son.

"Only a slight acquaintance! I had the honor of a presentation by Madame Carioli!" carelessly replied the pride of the Traveler's Club, while Marguerite de Valeria's lace handkerchief was fondly clinging to his throbbing heart! "What fools these mortals be!" whispered Dan Cupid, in his lightsome role of Puck—"Life is only a game of Hoodman Blind, after all!"

The gravity of Kenneth Gryffyth's official approach to the Abdin Palace duly impressed the attendants of that worn old princely home of intrigue! "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" soberly returned Cherif Pasha's astonished salute as that wily Pasha noted the Consul General's carriage,—and the all compelling British cavasse, upon whose silver staff the English Lion ramped in bravery!

The Count di Santa Marina and Madame Morelli, never more lustrous-eyed, added their restrained astonishment to the upward social recognition of the most modest of the passengers of the artful Lefacheux!

"Diantre!" mused Santa Marina. "There's been a bungle made of the whole thing! Lingard has been disgraced before the eyes of Cairo by the Consul General's taking up this clerk! There's only one way! I must either make Stephanie bring him down, or—this one!" The acute Morelli saw her companion's horse-shoe curve shine out upon his wrinkled forehead!

"What are you thinking of, Ernesto?" she imperiously demanded! "Of a fellow whom I've got to kill, before Gordon Pasha gets here," he hoarsely whispered.

"A man whom Cherif wants put out of the way! It may send me out of Egypt, shorten your engagement, and break up our amourette d'hiver,—unless you can help me! I'm a sure rapier! I must have you aid me to trap him! I fear but one thing—" he turned and then pointed to the retreating carriage.

"That! The English Diplomatic Agent's protection! I only fear that!" The light-minded woman laughed uneasily! "You must snare him!" "I have tried and failed," cried the duelist. "Basta! His veins are filled with iced water! A mere trader's clerk!" "Get some of the Greek riff raff or these wandering Arab fanatics to kill him!"

"Don't expose yourself," she shiveringly said, as she clung to the handsome bravo!

"You've given me an excellent idea, you bella ragazza!" he smiled. "The fool shall run against a moslem fanatic! I know one—who will do the trick! It's only now left to choose the time and place!"

While Ernesto Strilogo moodily plotted,—the man whom he secretly doomed, was closeted with His Highness Ismail I.—the fifth Khedive, in a gorgeous inner room at Abdin! The ruler and his disagreeable inquisitor were soon engaged in a secretly veiled contest of wills, while Cherif Pasha, with ill-concealed sneers, received Count di Santa Marina's lame excuses, for Sir Harry Lingard's humiliating failure to bully Kenneth Gryffyth!

"It's that big fellow Grosvenor, Lord Wrexham's son and heir, who has played the peeping Tom, and spoiled the scene!" "You know your work," replied Cherif, turning away in disgust!

"Lure him away with false dispatches! Let some pretended idiot catch this fellow at the Doseh, or at some fantasia, out at the Pyramids or anywhere, in the crowded bazaars! In Said's time, it would only be a matter of ten guineas! You are a bungler! And—you must hasten!"

Santa Marina slunk away muttering: "The Pyramids! Yes! The Pyramids! Every English fool goes there

sooner or later, to scrawl his name under that of the Prince of Wales! There's the cue!"

His Highness Ismail Pasha had dropped all "courtoisie de ceremonie" and spoke anxiously and plainly to the now thoroughly forewarned financier.

"I have ordered Gordon's Shoubrah palace to be made ready for him! It will be a fortnight before the papers on your principal's schedules can be delivered to you! There are always obstacles! Our Moslems are a conservative and jealous people! You might, under Cherif Pasha's guidance visit Zagazig,—Abu Kébir,—Mansura,—Ismailia,—Shibin,—Damietta,—Mehalet,—Damanhoor, and Menouf.

"There is the Barrage, too—your instructions refer to that,—and,—you could be quickly run up to Minieh and Seviet! I will give you a special train! Cherif will guide you in all! He can send a deputy of the Finance ministry." The Khedive sighed wearily!

"In the meantime, I wish that you would dispatch to your principals, to place a half million sovereigns to my personal account with Mustapha Fehmy Pasha—in London! I can easily use the exchange through the Italian bankers here! The Commission will be a month, in beginning its work! I need some ready money now!"

"May it please Your Highness!" resolutely said "Mr. Malcolm Cranford," who saw the eel-like traitor beginning to try to worm out of his hands into Cherif Pasha's clutch. "I am expressly enjoined by my secret dispatches received, only last night, to refer Your Highness to James Lawrie, in London, through Mustapha Fehmy for all present monies!"

"The principals are prepared to advance any sum, however large, provided I have the scheduled documents, in my hands! And, I would not dare to leave Cairo, to embark upon the second branch of my inspection, without the assurance of Your Highness' good faith, in the delivery to me of the papers! The whole mission will fail, if there is any evasion! It has been a matter of plain discussion for months between Fehmy Pasha,—and James Lawrie.

"That world-wide administrator David Hart only

awaits my reply as to the papers! I dare not certify to a fact which does not exist! You know this is to search every corner of your personal and governmental monetary affairs! Once that Hart is here—he will advance you—up to two or three millions!"

Ismail Pasha walked up and down with bent head! "You have received nothing from London! You deceive me! Look! Here is a record of your every movement since you landed in Egypt! My agents report four times a day! My army of spies, now, is greater than my shorn military establishment! For, Turkey and England have annihilated both army and fleet! I have, however, a censorship of the wires,—and the mails,—at least partially so!" He smiled cunningly.

"You come to me with empty hands, and then,—ask the heart secrets of Egypt,—for nothing! How do I know that you are not merely an Agent de Bourse?"

And then, Kenneth Gryffyth gravely said: "If you doubt me, Your Highness, please telegraph your dismissal of me to Mustapha Fehmy at London, and then honor me with a sealed copy! As for my private telegrams,—I have means provided,—beyond even the control of Your Highness!"

"Yes! You were announced as coming in the Consular carriage! From Constantinople to Khartoum, from Aden to London! It's all the same,—England, always England. I suppose you use Granton's ciphers. And,—you will not leave Cairo on my invitation, and inspect first, then,—do your scrivener's work later! It would be the better way!"

"I consider it equivalent to my dismissal if you refuse me the secret papers!" firmly said Kenneth. "And, I most deeply regret to oppose Your Highness' wishes! I shall await Your Highness' orders at the Esbékieweh, but—I must instantly report the failure to furnish the documents, so that my own principals shall recall me if they wish to, and,—so not be dismissed by one, however august,—who is not my master!"

"When do you telegraph?" then morosely demanded the angry Ismail. The young man reflected. "I shall wait twenty-four hours to telegraph my request for a final

recall, but I shall certainly send a message before midnight announcing the reasons of to-day's delay!"

"And, so you have their orders to press on to an examination of the documents and a final conclusion?" irritably said the weakening Khedive! "Precisely so! I am to begin my work at once,—or to return with your official answer, sent through Fehmy Pasha!"

"You will hear from me before midnight! You are dismissed!" said the Khedive, as he clapped his hands for the Master of Ceremonies!

As Kenneth Gryffyth drove back to the Consulate General he began to see Cherif's slimy trail! "The Viceroy will drift, dally and deceive until he is pushed over the falls into the chasm of ruin! And—who will then rise up? Cherif?"

Far away he could see the silent Sphinx gazing out over the desert sands, and—as voiceless as of yore!

Gryffyth had noted the steady, watchful eyes of Lorenzo Zacharias as the old broker,—portfolio under his arm,—entered the Abdin Palace before him, and, on his return, he failed not to observe a carriage clinging to his own with two stout servitors upon the box! A warning from the old Hebrew forbade any public recognition! But, it was true that unceasing, and untiring, day and night, Lorenzo and his son now watched, in secret, every movement of the Ambassador of Gold!

Gryffyth found Granton and Grosvenor busied in jovial hobnobbing, and there was a friendly circle gathered around the bluff Consul General of England! Monsieur le Chevalier Achille Lyons, of France, the courtly and polished American—Lieutenant General Stone Pasha,—Brugsch Bey, the great antiquarian,—and others of the *crème de la crème* of the Anglo Franco party.

Grosvenor winked merrily as Kenneth Gryffyth noted the effect of Lord Wrexham's private telegram, which had opportunely arrived in his absence at the palace!

"You are now quite a personage!" muttered Grosvenor. "And you must go the rounds! Opera—fantasia, the Dervishes,—the Doseh, where the Sheik rides his steel-shod horse over the naked bodies of the pious,—the

opening of the Nile,—the labyrinths of Gezireh,—Kasr-en-Nousa,—and Shoubrah, and all the lines!"

"All I care to see is—the Pyramids!" wearily said Gryffyth! "I will either be at my secret work to-morrow—or on my way out of Egypt!" "Then I'll be your cicerone! I've done them fifty times!" said Grosvenor!

"See here! Ken,"—whispered the Honorable Charles, "the French and English Consuls General are going to give you a dinner! Accept! I know that the other three are your real friends, and,—that Carioli is the Dean of the Corps! There's to be a grand ball next week at the Abdin Palace!

"You will see 'tout Caire' there! It gives you a local prestige,—and—you can move around later impartially, and so, hide your real private leanings, in this way!"

With the joint Consular invitation for the dinner, the two young men swept up to the Esbekieyeh Hotel, in all the solemn prestige of England's reflected glory! It was true that Kenneth Gryffyth had leaped at once into a mysterious prominence! "*Toujours, le charme de l'inconnue!*"

And, the astute Jacob Zacharias smiled as he handed over a sheaf of cards, billets and perfumed letters to his adopted master!

While they were smoking their chebouques, awaiting the dressing hour, "*Mr. Malcolm Cranford*" leaped to his feet to welcome a General Equerry of the Viceroy.

"He is, then, nervous, at heart," mused the financier as he read the Khedive's note, sealed with the sovereign's personal seal! It told him that two officers daily would report with the documents, as soon as selected, and with a guard of four men, occupy an ante room while the precious originals were being handled! And, daily, they would be returned to the Khedive's private cabinet! A second reference to the half million pounds aroused all Kenneth's latent sagacity!

"I will see what I get,—before I loosen old Lawrie's purse strings! It may be wheat,—it may be only chaff! We will see!" But, before the young men joined the glittering circle at Madame Carioli's superb board, Lorenzo Zacharias had forwarded a cablegram to London,

and a secret packet, with the Khedive's urgent personal request for the half million advance!

"It's only backsheesh,—backsheesh on a large scale," mused Zacharias, in his private hidden sanctum! "I can see the coming day of doom! Between the squalid fellah,—the mongrel of no one clear strain of blood, and this mongrel on the throne, there's no real difference! For,—Egypt has groaned for ages under the rule of Hyksos,—Israelite,—Ethiopean,—Greek,—Persian,—Roman,—Arab,—Turk and Mameluke!

"Now, the koorbash of the Circassian or Turkish upstart Bey, cuts the blood from the raw bark! Hundreds are dragged away chained like slaves, from their villages to die as soldiers in the Soudan, thousands are mutely perishing like flies in the rotten exhalations of the Suez canal, or on the government ditches,—while the poor women are selling their mother's milk in cups, to pay taxes, while the babe starves,—such is Egypt—a land without courage,—hope,—honor or patriotism!

"And,—the half-starving fellah crouches, calm and serene!" Zacharias paused before a picture of the boyish Prince Tewfik! "They gave to him the Grand Cross of the Star of India, sent by the august hand of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales!

"The future choice lies between a revolution with Cherif, and that stern-eyed soldier Arabi;—or, else Tewfek, and Ismail's abduction! The day of fantasias like the Suez opening, with ten millions wasted,—the marriage of the three royal children,—fifteen millions more—and, a square mile of dazzling magnificence,—Ismail's own birthday, and his accession day—these splendors have all passed!

"The Empress Eugenie,—the Prince of Wales' state visit,—the coming of the Emperor of Austria, and Prince Arthur have cost a hundred millions! No! There is not gold enough in the world for Ismail!"

And, he then countersigned a draft lying on his desk, for three hundred and fifty thousand francs for one single order of millinery, for a harem, not even Khedivial!

"And, Ismail keeps up forty palaces, and, five harems!" sighed the money lender, as he folded away the draft!

"It is rolling the stone of Sisyphus to try and arrange his affairs! As, for Gryffyth,—Cherif will thwart him—or, else—they will try to kill him!

"And—that must not be—by the God of Jacob!" Lorenzo Zacharias smiled as he dispatched his secret telegrams and sent on the Khedive's letter as a check upon a royal Robert Macaire!

"Israel dwells safely here," he mused. "There is interest money to be had—and,—the fear of the English guns alone—protects us—as in Asia Minor, the Levant, and—even Turkey! Not even, the double-faced Ismail or the sly Cherif can break my line, which is Hebrew, at every handling from here to Benjamin and Son's Head Office! The Hebrew's only arts are peace!"

And, then, he thankfully lit his Sabbath candles, in the shadows of the Pyramids, where Israel's shoulder had been rubbed raw, under the lash!

From his housetop, where he enjoyed the evening calm, he could see the great mounds of Sakkarah, builded of bricks without straw in the old days where a generation of Jewish slaves perished to please a cruel sovereign's whim!

"Always the same,—the lash,—the sword, the tax gatherer for Egypt!" he gloomily decided, as he watched the Nile glow die out!

"The plowing and planting of every acre,—the cotton culture,—English stability,—force and justice, backed with English guns—alone will regenerate, but, the war of nations perhaps comes, when England openly avows her design to carve out a lane of English territory from the Mediterranean, to Mozambique! The whole of the Nile country and Nyanza land will yet be ruled by the British!"

Kenneth Gryffyth received new proofs of his social brevet of "Lion of the first class," when Baron Rhoten, Count Gluyas, and the gay circle of ladies congratulated him upon a personal invitation to the Khedive's Grand Ball at the wonderful Ghezireh Palace on the Nile.

Madame Carioli's feast was a splendid show of fair women and brave men! "I shall consider you my special property now," laughed the hostess. "Monsieur Cran-

ford, as my husband is dean of the Corps! It will be a fitting social entrée at the Court, for you, and, if you are later assigned to Gordon Pasha's care—on the Shoubrah, you will be a 'star of the first magnitude!'"

Seated at the right of his hostess, Kenneth Gryffyth tossed the light ball of gallantry to and fro, yet wondered at the murmured whispers of Lord Wrexham's heir, and the superbly serene and lovely Duchesse de Valeria!

He little recked that his own personal safety was really the anxious theme of a causerie which had brought a pang to many watching swains!

Lovely and distant, Marguerite de Valeria towered above the smaller divinities, simple, unconquered and lofty as the Junfrau! It was only when the last services of the feast had released them, that the financier could approach the radiant Spirit of the Night!

"I am now, en ménage, my friend," she whispered, "and the little Shoubrah villa is open to you! Renée waits to renew her childish camaraderie of the steamer. You must come to me now, sans facon!"

She had deftly drawn him into a safe retreat, and, he watched her curiously, as the handsome Grosvenor bent over Madame Carioli!

"There is nothing between them!" he inwardly murmured, and, led up carefully to his query!

"My friend, Mr. Grosvenor! I find him charming," the grande dame lightly said, as the low preludes of the Viennese waltz echoed through the room! "We have many common friends! *Tout le monde s'approche,—maintenant!*"

The Duchess watched him waltzing with Madame Carioli, and her face never quickened a beat! "He is a gallant, accomplished Englishman, 'qui sait bien—son Egypte!' You can do no better than to trust to him,—and,—to me!" she lightly said.

"Do you know Lord Wrexham?" gravely queried Kenneth, and—she at once, knew that upon her answer depended something of moment! For her woman wit was subtler than the anxious financier's mental processes!

"I could answer you that question, Mr. Kenneth Gryffyth," she whispered,—with a pleading look, "but, you

must remember, I am the modern Sphinx! Silence is my royal prerogative,—even, as a Spirit of the Night!"

Their eyes met, and, the startled man reflected that she had called him by his own name for the first time!

"It is Wrexham!" he mused. "And, if I ask you but one needful question, will you advise me? Remember Pompey's Pillar!" he said! She was leaning toward him! He saw her splendid bosom rise and fall! "I can read your mind, my friend! You need not betray James Lawrie or David Hart to me! I am watching over you! Why, you know not! It is always a woman's way to veil her real tenderness! And, all good women are always loving, cherishing, protecting some one! I know how far away you look for love! You will not misunderstand me! I am not accustomed to that! 'Rohan—*jè suis!*' I know both my power,—and,—my place!"

She whispered him, with glowing eyes. "You will never get the documents! Be not deceived! There are liars and liars! Ismail will lie and grovel, for the half million pounds! He will send you some old rubbish, to waste your time till Gordon comes! Cherif will then, obstruct—will delay, and will betray!"

"It has taken just three years to trace out all that schedule of hidden papers, linked together! Between Ismail the Khedive,—Cherif, the go-between,—and, your official opponents, France and England,—as the game is made,—they never will reach your hands!"

"The poor Mefettish, Sadik Pasha, had some of them,—Ismail himself another portion, and,—Cherif holds the rest! The Mefettish was darkly murdered! The Khedive was his guilty heir! Cherif gained most of the papers, and,—when Nubar Pasha, went into power, Cherif hid them!"

"He will never give them all up! To do so, would be to unveil the last secrets of Egypt's fearful breast,—to unveil the truth, to reveal the hideous waste of three hundred millions of francs in the filth of the harems!"

She paused as the gay dancers swung by in sight, and Grosvenor was there, his arms around Madame Carioli!

She was off her guard for a moment! "By Heavens, she loves him!" Kenneth's lightning conviction told him!

"It is not Lord Wrexham!" "The last reason is," she continued, "that your cool analysis, my friend—would show the gaps where the Khedive's vast private hoard, and Cherif's loot has been abstracted, from loans,—income,—sacred funds,—creditor's money, and, even unpaid claims! But, only these two distrustful friends know where these hoards are—Ismail Khedive dare not throw down his secret pillar, Cherif!

"Nubar is forced on him by England! Gordon Pasha is but a cloak to Ismail's double-handed swindling! And, Cherif—will either turn Nubar out,—or go down under the flood with Ismail, but—only to rise again! Do your duty to its full limit! Resist Cherif's wiles! Shun his bribes! Quarrel with him not—for—if you do,—you will never live to wed Kathleen Lawrie!"

Kenneth Gryffyth was standing pale and trembling at her side! He sank back at the wave of her fan! "You have told me nothing,—remember! Press on with your duties! Do not leave Cairo till Gordon Pasha comes! We,—your band of mysterious friends, will guard you! Gordon will send his faithful Soudan attaches with you, when you go away to inspect, and—then, your life will be safe! For,—as far as lower Egypt goes,—he is England!"

"Will he hold the Soudan?" queried Kenneth, speaking as if in a dream! "Ah! I can read men—but, not the stars!" was the Duchess' low reply! "Now, you are to come to my Shoubrah villa once a day! I will tell you how! You are to be prudent! You are to examine the alleged papers! The scheduled documents alone, with Ismail's seal and guarantee will justify private parties to attempt to stem the tide of ruin, with golden bulwarks!"

There was the "Invitation to the Valse" sounding out now, and, with all a secret lover's assumed carelessness, the Honorable Charles Grosvenor was approaching them! The lovely woman whispered her last counsels:

"Do your duty! Watch all of Ismail's false moves! Be firm! If the great plan fails, you are not to blame! And, if true to your trust, you will win Kathleen Lawrie—even if your iron persistence forces Ismail off the throne!"

"It means then," muttered the astounded Kenneth!

"That he is to show his hand to you, and, if he deceives you, or refuses to act,—then,—there will be another Khe-dive!" she whispered! Rooted to the spot, Gryffyth gazed at the two secret lovers as they swept away clasped in the waltz! "It is a gentle deceit,—but—they love each other! There may be a hidden tenderness as true as mine!" And, then the days at Lausanne came back in all their olden mystic spell!

"Lovers are always blind," mused Gryffyth, as he sought the ball room, but, he noted, as Stephanie swept her violin with witching bow, that there was a bright tear sparkling in her eye!

The poor child of Viennese diablerie, with a quivering heart saw the man whom she loved, with his arms around the woman whom he adored! For the white-clad girls' orchestra had been bidden for two hours, before the evening *café concert* opened.

Silent and disturbed at heart, Gryffyth reached his rooms, while the Honorable Charles Grosvenor sought the seclusion of Shepheard's with the star-like eyes of Marguerite de Valeria shining down into his veiled heart!

Four days later, Gryffyth knew all too well the truth of the Duchess' predictions! The sullen officials announced that Friday, Saturday and Sunday, were sacred to Mohammedan, Jew and Christian! That all the feast days were exempt and then pitiful comings and goings exhibited only a straggling mass of refuse papers, and reports, worn out already by public criticism!

And, the great London Syndicate, too, knew of Ismail's evasions,—and of his pitiful pleadings for the half million pounds, and Gryffyth noted Cherif Pasha's growing complaisant smile! He had visited the villa on the Shoubrah, too, and strangely noted that the Honorable Charles Grosvenor was evidently a guest of honor on other days!

But, little Countess Renée's ringing laugh always cheered him, as they wandered through her mother's hidden Paradise. The days were drifting rapidly away, but De Lesseps had at last arrived! The journals were crammed with the details of the New Financial Commiss-

sion, and Ismail Pasha, still lurked, spider-like, in his palaces!

Only the sagacious old Zacharias sustained Kenneth Gryffyth who had chased even in the splendid festivities of the Anglo-Franco dinner, at which his chum Charley Grosvenor studiously ignored the Duchess! "My son, eat not thy heart!" sagely counseled Zacharias. "There is your last London telegram, to hold you up! Your course is approved! I had to translate it from the Hebrew cipher.

"Remain till Gordon comes. Insist then, upon the documents. Do not leave Cairo! Further instructions are coming. Your course approved—Three months' stay contemplated." So, you can see, that your firm insistence, backed up by Gordon and De Lesseps, will either rivet Ismail upon his throne, or—overturn it! If he lies, and breaks his engagements through Fehmy Pasha,—it is at his own peril—and, you have prudently saved your principals' millions!"

The nature of his secret mission, at last, dawned upon "Mr. Malcolm Cranford." It was his task to force the double-dealing Ismail to show Egypt unveiled, or to throw the vast unsecured monied interests into the line of the Anglo-Franco policy!

And—then, serene in the idea that he was only the mute instrument of a vast sagacious syndicate, he reported daily and awaited the arrival of that blameless wizard Charles George Gordon—the wearer of the Yellow Robe!

Strange, unread character, England's blameless knight, and, for whom the grim Fates were even then, spinning the thread of life and the waiting shears were laid aside until Kismet should be fulfilled!

These waiting days were long, and, still, the documents came not!

And, as the two friends rolled over the causeway, toward Ghizeh, when Charles Grosvenor, under the artful suggestions of the secretly happy Duchess, escorted Kenneth to the Pyramids, there was nothing said between them of the daily conferences of the one, with his beautiful Egeria, or of the lingering hours in the soft Egyptian

winter starlight, when Grosvenor and Marguerite dreamed of their golden future in her Shoubrah bower!

The Duchess of Valeria was now both a bond and a barrier between the friends! Kenneth was delicate-hearted and he feared to wound his knightly guardian! "If there is anything to tell, she will speak,—at last—if he does not!" he decided!

Letters from London,—laughing Milly Grosvenor's half confidences,—Kathleen Lawrie's loving pleadings for secrets, which her Sphinx-like lover guarded, for fear of her subtle parent,—Lord Wrexham's uneasiness as to an inevitable anarchy in Egypt, and the by play of several ceremonious visits exchanged with the watchful Cherif Pasha, had filled up the long idle days! In another week, Gordon Pasha would be at hand!

Though Grosvenor never forced himself on Gryffyth's confidence,—he now daily conferred with Zacharias! There was no social sign of Sir Harry Lingard and his putative spouse, yet, Stephanie and Bessie Lightwood were now the closest friends!

The music hall singer, now afraid of some tragedy, had unbosomed herself to her pale-faced Austrian friend! "Wait but a little longer!" said Grosvenor, to the brave Viennese waif. "These fellows will surely turn up in some ugly trick! I may soon need your aid! Bessie can frighten that girl Lischen, and, we may trap the rascals!"

"Ah! Send me home, soon!" pleaded the Austrian girl. "Santa Marina will kill me,—if he ever finds out our friendship,—for he bears you a bitter ill will! He has helped to make away with a dozen men—already here! He is a cowardly social murderer—a hired sword—a trick fighter!"

"Never mind! Stephanie! The pitcher that goes to the well, may go once too often!" brightly answered Grosvenor, whose personal attention to his pistol practice and swordsmanship was daily redoubled! The Honorable Charles in time of peace prepared for war! He kept all his secret misgivings to himself, and Zacharias had promised to extend a mystic cordon around Kenneth Gryffyth!

"Officially, he is safe! We only need fear some low

treachery!" murmured the timid Hebrew, who was morally stern and fearless!

"That's just the one haunting fear! Some coup de Jarnac!" moodily said Grosvenor, who had a secret alliance with several Cairenes who thoroughly hated Santa Marina and watched him narrowly! The Count and the brilliant diva Morelli were now Cherif Pasha's daily guests!

"It is from Italian skies that the bolt will fall!" mused Grosvenor. And—so, he made ready!

And, Kenneth on his way to the Ghizeh ferry, brooded over the third interview with His Highness Ismail, in his private cabinet at Shoubrah Palace! He had been conducted in a state carriage, and there was no dissimulation in the Khedive's irritation, in their half-hour's evening interview.

There was the courtly varnish of Ismail's surface bonhomie, but he flatly quoted Fehmy Pasha in London. "Your stock jobbers over there decline to advance the half million sterling!" And, the ruler was fiery in his wrath!

"Until I receive the scheduled documents, Your Highness, the delay is upon your own shoulders! The papers sent to me, are a mere 'beggarly array of empty boxes!' And, I have so reported—it is my duty to avoid the cause of the non-payment! Let me once report that I have received the desired documents countersigned, with your seal, there will be a royal treasury at your command!"

"Go! I will see Cherif to-morrow!" said the King of shreds and patches!

And, with artful courtesy, Cherif Pasha had taken the resolute Englishman to drive with him, and, an afternoon at billiards with Ratib and Cherif, ended in Cherif throwing down his cue with a gentle smile!

"You see the three-ball game! No count without the three balls! They are Gordon, De Lesseps,—and myself! Confide in me, Monsieur Cranford! It gives you three votes on the Commission,—it gives His Highness his needed money,—it will give you anything you ask in Egypt—and,—you will have counted!

"Otherwise,—no game! For, I block you! Two votes on the Commission are nothing!"

"What would you have?" frankly demanded the Englishman! And then,—Cherif smiled and stretched his soft neck caressingly!

"Let me read your secret instructions! I will give you a hatful of diamonds!" he whispered. "You are a young man! No one will know! I will get you all the documents, and—you shall have five per cent of all the money that you can induce your principals to advance now to His Highness! I only want that,—and—the name of the man who is to administer—later, the finances of Egypt!"

For the first time in his life, Kenneth Gryffyth dropped into deceit of a questionable nature! "When Gordon comes, if you can bring him and De Lesseps in, I may listen to you," he said.

And then, Cherif burst into a ringing peal of laughter! "Gordon!" he cried, "In our Moslem creed, the fool, the lunatic and the deformed are sacred! He is a fool! He cut his own salary of ten thousand pounds a year down to two, when Nubar shuffled him on us to please your Beaconsfield! And, as he refuses all backsheesh,—he will not even steal when he gets a chance! No vices,—and, no harem! What a man! An inspired idiot—or, a brilliant lunatic! A poor man, too!"

"He is a hero!" cried Kenneth. "And,—a moral idiot!" cheerfully added Cherif—as he clapped his hands for champagne! "Leave all to me! I can work on Gordon, through his real attachment to the Khedive! De Lesseps is easily handled! A feather will flatter him! And,—he will refuse nothing to the Viceroy!"

"So,—if you will deal with me—" He leaned his head down,—as he whispered, "You and I can govern Egypt! Down goes Nubar! I will insist on your retention here. We vote up and recognize all your claims!—and,—Ismail is always like a child with a new plaything,—at the sight of ready money! Our work will be superposed on the present Finance Commission!"

"To show my power—the Khedive will soon tell you—" Trust to Cherif! I will make him do so, when you show me the papers you brought from London!"

It was this dazzling temptation which had nearly turned Kenneth Gryffyth's head! He had waited for the dawn, and sought Marguerite de Valeria—in her bower!

"I place my honor in your hands!" he said, and then he told her of the great temptation! "You have done well!" smiled the lovely Egeria. "Telegraph all this to London. Say that Cherif seeks private alliance and offers his vote with Gordon and De Lesseps! Claims Viceroy's sanction! Then, you will see what your orders are!"

He kissed her hands and had returned the next day to thank her! "I know you are a noble knight," she smiled. "Your answer was: 'We are fighting Cherif! He is our one enemy. Not a single concession to him! Silence, and press the Khedive! The papers—or—make him dismiss you! Wait for Gordon—then,—make one last demand!'"

It was the burden of the unequal conflict which weighed upon Gryffyth as their carriage rolled along over the air line avenue from Ghizeh to the Pyramids! While they lingered an hour where the sad-faced Sphinx dreams over its drifted sands, Gryffyth felt a touch upon his arms! It was the servant who rode upon the box! "Let me select your Arabs at the pyramid! I am sent by Zacharias! He knows them all! I will pick out two trusty men! Do not betray me to your friend! The Sheiks are jealous out there!"

At last, he stood by the huge structures of Cheops, Cephrenes and Mycerinus. He nodded when Grosvenor said, "I've no ambition to climb again! I'll guard our carriages and watch our retinue here!" And then, the amused young noble lit a cheroot and stretched himself lazily out in the carriage, as a crowd of fifty Bedouins clamored over his helpless friend! The yells of Back-sheesh were sounding in his ears, as Kenneth's unknown guardian selected two men to aid in the ascent!

And then, casting a glance at the eight hundred foot face,—with its steps rising up four hundred and fifty in the air,—Gryffyth strained his breast to the high, narrow steps! In seven minutes, he saw the wild Libyan sands to the west stretching out drear and yellow.

On the twenty-foot square of the summit, he crouched,

—while below him, the fan-like Delta spread its green velvet carpet to the north! The blue winding Nile gleamed between him and the great city with its rocky citadel shining out against the red Porphyry mountains! Dreamy islands,—Cairo's vast groves and gardens,—with the domes and minarets,—the cool lakes and scattered villages,—the mosques and temples, the Sphinx in its awful majesty,—and the roofless temples of unspeakable mystery,—all the panorama was grandly unveiled.

He saw Memphis, and Heliopolis lying in ruins,—and the line of the pyramids stretching to the south, the flitting sails and the waving palm groves! His mind floated back to the time of Joseph,—to the days of Moses, the Nile-found leader of men,—to the memories of Ares, Harpocrates and Hermes! There, below him,—Greek inscriptions half buried in the sand told of men who were learned in all the world's mysteries long before the infant Jesus had gazed out with wondering baby eyes upon the Nile.

And, from here Cæsar,—and Antony, and Napoleon, too, had looked upon the unveiled bosom of Mother Nature! The sun was sinking, and he closed his eyes, as he groped backward aided by his guides down the giant wall of stone! He had drank in all the sorrowful witchery of the silent Nile, in a never-to-be-forgotten mental picture!

A half hour later, he was being piloted back down the incline of the interior passage to the well, in the heart of the great pyramid! His secret guard was ever at his side! He had duly lain down in the King's sarcophagus, and reverently sat upon the coffer in the queen's chamber! Blinded, and gasping for breath, he paused at the entrance of the dark gallery leading to the well! Suddenly he started back in terror!

There was a dusky wild form which threw itself madly upon him, he felt a sharp pain in his right arm, a half-smothered cry escaped his lips, and—then he reeled back, as a sharp report rang out!

His hands were covered with his own blood! He felt a sharp pain in his arm! Bewildered and staggering from the violent grapple with the unseen foe, he was

dragged along to the entrance by the keen-witted guardian whose ready pistol had saved his life! His two Arabs were waiting at the mouth of the tunnel into the pyramid.

"Not a word,—for your life!" hoarsely cried the guardian in Italian! As they leaped to the ground after descending forty steps, Zacharias' secret agent threw out a handful of silver coins to the rabble.

The wild Bedouins frantically grappled each other, as the man who had saved his life—hastily bade Grosvenor drive like the wind toward Cairo!—And, then, Grosvenor woke up to resolute acting.

The next day,—all Cairo knew that a mad Santon had attacked an unknown English traveler at the pyramid, in the tunnel, and had been shot dead by an attendant Dragoman.

While Kenneth Gryffyth's slight wound was easily dressed, Grosvenor learned that the Count had been absent at Alexandria for several days!—"I fancy this is a bit of a lie!" mused the now alert Grosvenor! "It was a close call. Only Stephanie can find out the truth!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE DIVA'S STRATEGEM.—"NOT EVEN YOUR HEALTH!"—LISCHEN'S CONFESSION.

Kenneth Gryffyth was closeted in his apartments with Lorenzo Zacharias and his son while the enraged Grosvenor sought out Stephanie the beautiful Capellmeisterinn.

"I shall have Bruce Granton call all the Consuls General together!" growled Grosvenor! "Do you go and notify Madame la Duchesse of your safety! I will trace Santa Marina!" was Charley's last orders.

"And we meet at my house for a midnight conference!" said Zacharias the elder.

"Good!" replied Grosvenor. "But, let Soames escort Kenneth!"

"Certainly!" replied Lorenzo Zacharias—"and, the brave man who killed the Santon will not be far away either. He is a man of tried courage—and, I have used him to bring a million dollars worth of gold dust down from Khartoum! He will be both fox and lion, now!"

"I propose to put the soi disant Count di Santa Marina at once out of Egypt!" sternly said Grosvenor. "I will have Lord Wrexham personally telegraph to the Khedive! He knows him well! Ismail dares not brave him!"

The three men who lingered exchanged glances, as the excited Grosvenor disappeared. Kenneth now saw under the dainty kid gloves of Madame la Duchesse, the steel fingers of that great peer, Lord Wrexham!

"I can read the riddle!" whispered Jacob Zacharias. "I know that none but Abdallah knew where the carriage was going! No one entered or left the rooms here after your departure, and, I saw Abdallah stealing back out of Cherif Pasha's garden here, when you descended to the porte cochere! He knew three hours before of the expedition!"

"This Santon was no more mad than either Cherif or Santa Marina! Cherif himself was the murderous heart,—Santa Marina—the directing hand, and—the dead Santon was but the Italian's hired bravo! The Sheiks of the Bedouins at the Pyramid have been tampered with! In a hundred years, there has been no attack at the Pyramids, their loud bluster for backsheesh being the only evidence of their monopoly of aiding in the ascents!"

"Yes, and Santa Marina is in hiding in Cairo! Twice the snare has failed,—now,—look out for the third time!" gravely said old Lorenzo. "When Gordon Pasha comes, Abdallah shall be soon diverted to other duties! He can watch your little personal matters in Cairo, and,—we will watch him easily, there!"

"I will warrant that Charley Grosvenor noses our man out!" mused Kenneth. "This is the last of my outside trips—until I am safe under Gordon's wing! I fear my rash friend's impulsive bravery! And,—I will go armed to the teeth,—now!"

"It was a close call!" shuddered Gryffyth, as he thought

of Kathleen Lawrie's far-away eyes turned toward Egypt. "I will make short work of my mission when Gordon comes! The Documents—or, my dismissal! No juggling with assassins!"

Before Grosvenor had returned from the music girl's modest apartment, Marguerite de Valeria, with flashing eyes, had listened to Gryffyth's simple story.

"You are not wounded?" she gasped. "Only a skin scratch,—but,—if the fanatic's arm had struck again,—the Khedive's guest would have been dead in Cheop's royal tomb!"

"I shall personally visit Ismail Pasha to-morrow!" cried Marguerite, striding up and down! "He owes to me, obligations which he has acknowledged on his knees before the Empress Eugenie! As far as the crescent and star flag flies, your life shall be a sacred trust! He shall swear it to me,—and,—Cherif shall have a dark intimation that the Mefettish may have a comrade in the tomb! I know the fine hand that did this!

"Now, leave me, you are to be kept safe—for Wrexham's sake—for Grosvenor's sake—for England—for Egypt!

"This corrupt blind fool, Ismail—lies and palters on the verge of his ruin! But,—only fear will rule Cherif! I will reach his corrupt and wicked heart! Go now, my silent knight! Not a word to anyone! Your Spirit of the Night shall watch over you!"

The impassioned woman saw him go, and then, inditing a brief note, called the head of her household! "To the Abdin Palace! With this ring! And,—deliver this letter, only—to the Khedive in person! No other hand in Egypt but this. The Master of Ceremonies will guide you to him, even in the Harem's gates! Speed back,—then, for your life!"

There was a secret conclave of the excited Consuls General which awaited the return of the Honorable Charles Grosvenor, while Zacharias and Gryffyth waited in the old banker's secret rooms.

When the young noble had ceased speaking, it was determined that Bruce Granton, escorted by the Dean

of the Diplomatic Corps, should most strongly address the Viceroy!

And, next day, a cowering despot, who had already been shamed by the burning words of the invincible Duchess de Valeria, trembled when the burly Bruce Granton roundly denounced the outrage!

"Your Highness! I speak for all my colleagues! I know not,—I care not,—what private affairs of moment this young man transacts near your person! He is perhaps the ambassador of your pillaged creditors. I do not wish to know his private mission, but, every hair of his head shall be sacred. I swear it! And—you must look to it! It may be Cherif's trickery! The commander of the English fleet will not look beyond you!"

Ismail Pasha clung in terror to the coat sleeve of Chevalier Carioli. "By the beard of the Prophet,—I swear!"

"Spare me your protestations, Your Highness!" coldly said Carioli.

"Egypt is only a murder pen—and,—you know it! Consult your own safety now—and guard him as if he were Mahomet's sacred banner!"

The voice of civilization had spoken, and a hundred friendly spies now daily hovered around Kenneth Gryffyth's path—to save their master's plighted faith.

Carioli left these words ringing in Ismail Pasha's ears: "His departure means bankruptcy,—abdication,—deposition,—and — perhaps,—deportation to the Bosphorus! Three sworn friends here have brought him to you—to hold the one door open,—for your safety and honor! Can you now afford to stain your royal faith with murder,—at second hand!"

And, even the sly Viceroy trembled at Carioli's warning!

The usually impassive Grosvenor was troubled and anxious in his manner when he joined Gryffyth and the old Hebrew at their midnight supper.

The two men long waited for him to speak, and he guarded a meaning silence till young Zacharias left the room.

"I have my carriage and two men at the corner!" began the young noble. "This is a very grave affair! I

have cabled to Wrexham, and you will hear, at once, from him, Kenneth, as well as from London! I can only watch over you, in society! The most dangerous time is these last few days until Gordon Pasha arrives!

"As for Santa Marina, he is really in town, and in close hiding at the little Hotel Sphinx, down in the depths of the Mouski! Fear, alone, now ties lips that could tell me all! And,—I have set a friend to work upon that artful little minx, Lischen, the flower girl! She knows more than she should of the whole conspiracy! And,—only the most delicate handling will avail with her.

"A single threat,—and—she would be safely hidden in Cherif's harem! She has already served an early apprenticeship there,—and—lately she has been his outside "star" of spies, around the Esbékieyeh square! No one will roughly repulse a seemingly helpless girl, and,—the whole social parade of Cairo is around the Esbékieyeh Gardens,—Grand Opera,—the swell hotels,—the Financial row,—and Palaces and Ministries, bring all the gay world together!

"The west side is the 'Lady's Mile' of all women in the swim, here! It is the glittering booth,—par excellence of our degraded Vanity Fair!"

While Gryffyth dispatched his private letters to Kathleen Lawrie, the two dissimilar men conferred in a distant corner in low tones! "Zacharias," said Grosvenor, "Your wisdom and foresight has saved his life! You alone can guard him effectually! I have learned that which I dare not even tell you!"

"And I invoke your watchful fidelity! Should anything happen to me,—you must get him at once into Gordon's hands—and,—if there is any other attempt upon him, telegraph immediately to London, and have Gryffyth recalled! He shall not be murdered here like a dog! I will lay my life down first! Lord Wrexham knows all now!"

The old Hebrew clasped his trembling hands in a nervous affright!

"He is brave and stubborn as to his honor! He will not leave here till the Khedive has either kept or broken his faith! Ismail must now face the problem squarely!

Diplomatic lying and Cherif's tricks will not avail! But,—the young man may pay a fearful price for his stubbornness! I will do my best!"

"Did you see the Duchess, Kenneth?" queried Grosvenor, as they drove away in the hushed starlight! "Yes!" replied the young financier! "She bade me come to her, to-morrow, at eleven!"

"Very good!" murmured Grosvenor! "The Consuls General have acted vigorously. I will see her in the afternoon! You will be now the most talked of man below the cataracts! I shall arrange the party for the Grand Khedivial Ball! You must not leave the Carioli's circle for a moment! Beware of every stranger! And,—not even a half hour's wandering alone about Cairo! I know that Zacharias has cabled to London! I have thoroughly warned Wrexham! Did you notify Lawrie of the attack?"

"No! Charley!" said Kenneth, "I can not admit personal fear to be a failing! You know what I am struggling for! Shall I leave Lawrie just when the real critical issue comes up?"

"Somebody must be a brave man here,—for them,—and,—I don't disguise that the unknown is the hardest to fight! And, yet, I will not be driven out of Cairo! I've a bit of English pluck of my own, and I must not shame tough little Wales, or old Scotia!"

"Just what they want me to do,—I will not do,—and,—that is, to turn tail and throw up the sponge! That would be to confess my absolute cowardice! And, I will not be driven to bay, like a kenned cur. I will show myself openly to the people here!" The financier was sternly resolute.

"It's a good plan not to show any social timidity! All I ask is, that you will let me go out with you, socially! You must always have a friend at hand! Do you promise me?"

"I do, old boy!" said Kenneth. "If that satisfies you,—and I'll let you be the cicerone! Only no craning! I will not refuse to show up,—I don't care who I run against!"

With a beating heart Marguerite de Valeria awaited

her visitor in the splendid freshness of her witching gardens. The lady was robed in a stately visiting costume, and her equipage was in waiting at the doors of Villa Kléber.

When the Spirit of the Night led her silent knight to a cool bower, she waited not, but formulated a direct question:

"Have you anything to tell me from London? Any decisive orders? You need not speak! Only tell me by your eyes! Break no pledges! But,—I do strive to guard you,—and to cut the knot of this intrigue! I have heard some secrets!

"And,—Lord Wrexham's honor is a guarantee! You are to hold hard here until Gordon comes! He, De Lesseps and Cherif would make three controlling votes! You will be told soon to lay all before Gordon!

"When you have made your last appeal to the Khedive, for the documents,—if still then, the Viceroy's plausible tongue lies, then, you are to give over to Gordon the whole schedule. He will demand them himself of Cherif,—in the open Commission, in your presence! If they are not produced, *litera et scripta*, then, Gordon will make a private demand of Ismail Pasha—" the Duchess' eyes were flashing.

"He is the only man who can baffle Cherif's double dealing! If the Viceroy refuses, you are then free to go back to London, having brought on just the crisis desired!"

"And Gordon?" muttered Kenneth,—now seeing the light! "If Ismail lies to Gordon—then, he can send Zebehr Pasha—the slave dealer, back as ruler to the Sudan! Cherif and his wily partner Zebehr will recommence the shameful traffic in slaves for the cotton field,—and proud caged daughters of the Sun for the harems! The Ivory bought with human blood will be again their spoil!

"Terrorism will creep down again, to the First Cataract,—all Equatorial Egypt will be lost,—and,—before you reach London,—if Cherif overthrows Nubar,—it—either means a flight,—an abduction,—or a deposition!"

"In other words,—Ismail is to be his own official executioner!" said Gryffyth. "And—will my course be ap-

proved in London?" He was thinking of James Lawrie's beautiful daughter. The Duchess seemed to be all knowing, and, he had lost his last doubts of her sincerity.

"When you have made one more demand on Ismail for the papers, tell him frankly, that your first duty before the Commission will be to give Gordon the secret schedule,—and, that you will retire from Egypt,—the very moment that Charles George Gordon tells you the Khedive has lied over his seal!"

"And, dear monitor, shall I hear this as orders from London?" said the excited financier! Marguerite de Valeria smiled. "This is sent to me by Lord Wrexham! The pressure on Ismail Pasha is now tremendous! The other side are working for the 'status quo'!"

"Great forces, partly governmental, are ranging up behind Benjamin and Son,—David Hart—and your stern old chief, Lawrie! The Khedive must yield or break. These papers are in existence and must be produced! And,—who breaks—pays. It only rests to see if the three hundred millions of claims behind Lawrie shall be adjusted before,—or after—his fall!"

"Now, bear a swelling port! So, out into the gay world! We will all be bravely set off at the Ghezireh ball! Some social display impresses these people! I have seen the Khedive already,—this very morning!"

"I know Charles Gordon, too! I shall meet him,—before you do! I intend to leave on my new yacht 'Astarte,' and board his train at Helouan!"

"Wrexham, again!" thought Kenneth! "Why did they not entrust the whole negotiation to you?" he timidously asked.

"Because," she said laughingly, "I am no expert mathematician! I am only a woman! If Gordon can get the papers—your utmost science will be called into play! If not,—you can go home to London,—and—then, ask your reward and Kathleen's hand,—after Ismail has blindly hurled himself out of his throne!"

"And,—you?" tenderly demanded Kenneth.

"I know not my fate! Don't ask me! If I had been born a man—I should have died at Sedan! I now drift—

with Fate as my guide,—blindly,—and,—yet,—with all a woman's fond and loving heart!

"I have my child! All else—is clouds and mist! A shoreless sea,—no light to guide,—and,—alone,—all alone,—I drift!"

She threw him a spray of roses, and then, laughingly departed.

"I am only a Spirit of the Night!—Go, now,—and, see if I am a true Sibyl! To-night, you will receive your vital orders!"

As Kenneth Gryffyth drove away, he pondered upon her words! "What can keep her apart from Grosvenor! Are they drifting apart,—or—do they deceive me as fond lovers?" He knew the wonderful delicacy of Grosvenor's chivalry. "His father's confidante,—his love to be! His wife, perhaps when Grosvenor becomes the head of his house!"

He was easily aware of the direction in which Charley Grosvenor was drifting when he drove up to Shepheard's Hotel! For, the young noble was arrayed in unusual splendor, and evidently bent towards the bowers of Villa Kléber.

"See here, Ken!" cried the Honorable Charles, "Stephanie is a true-hearted girl! I'm to have Lischen's whole story to-night, on certain conditions! Now, we are both invited to a supper party to-night, in the diva Morelli's rooms! I would not have you go—but that I wish to watch Santa Marina! I have my own reasons! The principal court officials will be there!"

"Neither of us can go alone! We can not play the coward! I ask you but one thing,—do not touch a single drop of wine—there! For, some fellow might be put on to quarrel with you! Officially, you are now sacred! The Khedive has sworn it by Mahomet's first wife,—and by the bones of Mehemet Ali. Do not leave your Hotel till I return!"

The day was given up to the usual childish inanities of the Arab officers with their snail-like progress in producing document after document,—not on the schedule. The keen-eyed Jacob Zacharias gravely opened and docketed and folded the offered trash.

"It would be ten years,—before we reach any of the substantial information!" whispered the young interpreter. "These men are all only gravely playing a solemn farce!"

There was no solemn farce, however, in the shower of cards, invitations and social civilities now pressing upon the most talked of man in Cairo.

For, an immense hubbub was created by the barbaric obsequies of the slain Santon, and the thousand tongues of rumor were all busy with the Khedive's mysterious guest. The predestined leakage of Cairo's gossip had given the whole story of the united Consular remonstrances to the budget of daily gossip!

Soames, now thoroughly posted, enjoyed his duties of politely heading off Abdallah, the suave spy of Cherif, from any personal contact with his master, and two trusty body servants of the household of Lorenzo Zacharias now watchfully ministered to all Gryffyth's personal wants!

Soames was but a casual spy by day, watching Abdallah,—and,—an alert guard, at night, sleeping in his master's room! He was vigilant and sleepless!

The "noblesse oblige" of young manhood caused Grosvenor and Gryffyth to shine out as social stars in a prominent box at the Grand Opera, on the evening of the fair diva Morelli's grand supper! The glittering ring was never more grandly filled! Ismail Pasha, and his three elder royal princes all looked down from the state boxes, while from behind the lace curtains of the huge bird cage loge of the Harem ladies, the faint glimpses of lovely and animated forms could be seen.

The parquette was crowded with court officials and decorated officers in superb uniform, and all the foreign loveliness of winter Cairo, graced the four tiers of magnificently filled boxes! Diamonds,—plumes,—flowers,—flashing eyes,—and heaving bosoms greeted the mock agonies of the dying Violetta, while loving intrigues sprang into passionate life under the sensuous swing of the immortal music of Verdi.

When the gorgeous scene was at last played out, the children of fashion slowly scattered to romantic dreams

or the frenzied gayety of winter Cairo, in its "cabinets particuliers!"

Charley Grosvenor's quick eye had observed the dark beauty of the Count di Santa Marina, his habit de soir sprinkled with the Palais Royal assortment of obscure decorations which made him a walking wonder!

"I'll slip away for an act, and see Stephanie at the *café*," whispered Grosvenor, "for, the noble Count is safe! He is 'planté la'!" There was no mistaking Bessie Lightwood and the semi-eclipsed "Sir Horace Lingard!"

All eyes were turned upon the Englishman's box, when Cherif Pasha and his brother-in-law, Ratib Pasha, the hasty hero of the mad ride away from Gura's battlefield, honored Gryffyth with a visit.

It was the sensation of the evening! All the beautiful birds of Paradise, with waving fans, and nodding plumed heads swept the box with their glasses! For, now 'all Cairo' knew that the Great Commission would sit in Gordon's favorite little jewel palace between the Shoubrah and the Nile! And, the mysterious English hero, the blameless knight, was already on his way! There were a thousand speculations rife.

The dark impassive-faced young "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" was supposed to be a son of Baron Rothschild in disguise, or some fairy Prince of Finance, come to scatter "spot cash" over the arid wastes of Egypt's financial deserts!

But, all unmoved, sat the ostensible Cranford, while Equery and Bey, Colonel and General, court dangler and wary adventurers envied him his friendship with the two great Pashas!

In Bessie Lightwood's box, Santa Marina and Sir Horace Lingard openly exchanged their ferocious confidences. "He won't get away this time—" growled Santa Marina, "if the Morelli fails,—then,—the whole business must end at the Ghezireh Ball! Gordon arrives here,—next week,—and,—this fellow must not be alive,—when he comes! Even Ismail's double-faced truckling shall not save him! I want you there,—cool and sober,—to see me through that night!"

With a softly-waving fan, Bessie Lightwood's cheek

paled through her rouge as she gasped, "I must see Stephanie to-night,—but,—how can I slip away!"

The gods favored the music hall girl, for, as the curtain fell, Lingard carelessly said, "I'll send you down in the carriage! Santa Marina and I are going to the Morelli's supper! We will not come down to the Sphinx to-night!"

And, when the great house was deserted, the two scoundrels sauntered away over the gay gardens to await Madame Morelli,—the crowned diva,—Cairo's idol!

At the head of the Mouski, Bessie Lightwood left her carriage for an instant, and, five minutes later, Stephanie, the alert capelmeisterinn,—had called a lad to her side! "Find out the tall English gentleman, my friend, at Sheppard's, or with his friend at the Esbekieyeh, and,—give him this! Tell him that he must come back to me to-night!"

She then calmly resumed her violin, and the merry strains rang out, while her frenzied heart was racked,—for a life now in danger!

Grosvenor had returned, grave faced, and joined his friend, now the one mysterious comet of Cairene society! "Hurry up, old fellow! I've to see our guide Zacharias,—at once,—at your rooms!" And, then, he urged their coachman on through the departing throng! Twenty court carriages were busied in bearing away the veiled rosebuds of Ismail's pleasure haunts, and torches,—guards,—eunuchs,—attendants, and lackeys made up all the wild scene of a Cairene night festival.

And, through the hundreds of carriages, Grosvenor urged on his driver!

The friends were no sooner in Gryffyth's apartment, than Lorenzo Zacharias drew "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" into his dressing-room! "Read these,—instantly!" he cried. "Urgent orders from London! And,—every one of our whole coterie, here, has received directions to press the Khedive to at once produce the missing documents! There is almost a panic among the bankers!"

"The Harem's gates even are opening, now, and the fair-faced pirates of the seraglio, mingle with the nautch

girls and Ghawazees! The Court is becoming as loose as the Sheik Bedawy's infernal orgies of Tantah fair!

"The army is unpaid! The court officials murmur! The vice regal steamboats and yachts are without coal! And,—even the pastry cooks,—jewelers and the tradesmen, refuse the Palace and harem orders! Oh! For Gordon's arrival! If we do not get our claims in, ahead of the crash, my thirty years here are thrown away!"

Gryffyth looked up, curiously. "You don't expect your pay at once, Zacharias?"

"No! No! Only, an official recognition! You are to be the means of giving us a second mortgage rating,—and,—then,—when the paw of the British Lion falls we are safe!"

But, the man whom he addressed was only reading along astounded at the verification of Marguerite de Valeria's words!

"Beautiful witch! Spirit of the Night,—and prophetess!" he murmured.

"Where is Abdallah?" queried Grosvenor, dashing into the room, as he held a twisted bit of paper blazing in his hands! There was no answer.

"Come here, Zacharias!" cried the heir of Wrexham! "Bring your son! Ken! Don't leave that room till I come back to you!"

The old broker followed the excited Englishman. He had already set Soames to guard the main door of the apartment, for Madame la diva Morelli's polyglot admirers were already crowding into her superb rooms across the great vestibule! There was the clatter of the hurrying stewards already arranging the feast, in a great apartment opened 'en suite' with the Morelli's parlors.

"Can I depend on the wisdom of your son, Zacharias?" hastily cried Grosvenor.

"He is old beyond his years!" quietly answered the father. "And,—he has handled millions! Young as he is, he has been in Ras Mangala's camp with ten thousand Abyssinian spearmen around him! Trust him! I will answer for him with my life!"

"Then, take my pistol!" said Charley to the pale youth. "The moment that Abdallah returns, go instantly out

with him and get out the carriage! Here is a letter to the Duchess of Valeria, which demands an answer! She will keep you delayed three hours in her Villa Kléber! Perhaps—four!

"You are to wait there, with Abdallah, as your attendant! Do not let him leave your side a single moment! If he tries to leave,—tell him that you will blow his brains out! You will have England behind you,—if you do shoot him! But, he is to be caged there! When you get her reply—come here,—come to me—with him!"

The young Hebrew pocketed the pistol! At his father's approving nod, he bowed his head, and said, "I will do it!"

"Good!" cried Grosvenor. "Now! Take him away the very moment that he comes into his room!" Then, the Englishman said to old Zacharias, "Call up the four trusty men whom you have here with Gryffyth! Two of them you said were secretly introduced by you as the Hotel stewards who serve Gryffyth in his apartments!"

"Yes! Yes!" said the frightened old man! "But, what must I do with them? Tell me, first!" He lacked the quiet bravery of his son!

"You must introduce them into the Morelli's supper room, and,—one of them must never leave my chair, and the other, wait on Gryffyth! Our two lives depend on you, now! Can you do this?"

"Give me five minutes! The Head Steward of the Hotel has been my paid spy for ten years! He will arrange it!" The old man glided away.

And then, Grosvenor darted into his friend's room. "Stephanie is a true-hearted girl, poor madchen! Remember, your promise! You are not to touch a drop of wine to-night,—on your life! I'll give you your safe cue before we go in!"

He left Gryffyth reading an imploring letter from Kathleen Lawrie to fix the date of his return! His heart called on him to throw up his disagreeable task—but—his pride and false shame forbade such a course.

Crossing the apartment, Grosvenor dispatched Jacob Zacharias and the glib Abdallah on their hurried errand! As the young Hebrew passed him he whispered, "I left

a message with my father for you!" He made a significant motion toward his concealed revolver, and then led Abdallah down the side stairway!

No sooner had they gone, than Lorenzo Zacharias emerged from the room which the two messengers had quitted. "I am to tell you that Abdallah had just stolen out of la Morelli's dressing boudoir!" A gleam of triumph lit up Grosvenor's eyes.

"Of course, Jacob did not alarm him, but he was stationed on watch, and there in the Diva's room is where our Dragoman of Cherif's selection was lurking! The two men are already in here, detailed by the Hotel Steward for the supper service, and,—they now wait your instructions!" The old broker was trembling like a leaf.

"Listen! Zacharias!" gravely said the young Englishman. "You would save my life,—and Gryffyth's, for Lord Wrexham's sake?"

"On my soul, be it! Only—tell me how?" the trembling old man said.

Then, Grosvenor, bending down, whispered words in his ear which made the disguised millionaire money agent turn white with fear! "Now,—make no mistake in your orders!

"Remember,—both of us will be well armed! I will instruct Gryffyth, and if there is any foul play—you will hear of more than triple murder there! Cherif himself will be there, and,—by the Heaven above us, he dies if there is any bungling! He shall not live to laugh over our betrayal, I swear it!"

"I will look to it! For England's sake,—for your father,—for my son's life and future! I can trust these men, with my own life! They are of the African branches of our holy faith!"

"Then, you and Soames are to be guardians here! Our friends next door might try to pay a nocturnal visit! I will go in and warn Gryffyth! When your men are ready bring them in, and have them take a good look at us, and tell us they understand! They must serve us—alone—and—no others!"

Five minutes later, the two servants had looked upon the splendid young men, as they light-heartedly crossed

the vestibule to join Madame la diva Morelli!—Then, at a nod from the Head Steward, they joined the retinue who were to wait upon the fifty guests at the great singer's supper of triumph!

In her splendid boudoir, la Morelli was musing alone as her maid gave the last touches to a splendid white silk robe, with its superb parure of diamond stars, sent down that very night from the Khedivial box, by an equerry.

She had donned them, and smiled her obeisance to the Silenus who still sat on the tottering throne! In vain, had Santa Marina begged for a few moments before the supper.

The startled woman accepted the splendid bouquet de corsage of Russian violets, but murmured, "I must be alone! Leave me for a few moments' rest! I implore you,—leave me—Ernesto! To-night I must be more than myself! It is the turning point of my whole career!"

And the crafty Italian gazed greedily at the Khedive's gleaming crescents and stars, and left her in peace!

"It is her night of nights! With such a woman, I can surely hold both Ismail and Cherif,—through her! She is my treasure,—soon to be my queen of diamonds! There is a fortune waiting for us here—and,—then,—a villa—within sight of Capri! Yes! I must hold la Morelli—as my money spinner!"

The singer was robed and ready for the grand entree! Already the eager crowd of jealous gallants were listening for her footfall! She dismissed her maid, and then craftily locked the doors! Her diamond set, flacon of perfume, her fan, gloves, and a queen's handkerchief lay ready on the table!

She drew from her bosom a little silken purse and then poured out upon the table a glittering shower of magnificent diamonds. With nimble fingers, she counted them! "Yes!" she sighed. "There are forty! And,—they are five carat stones each! A two hundred thousand franc necklace! A queen's parure! Dare I do this thing? If I could only tell Santa Marina! Ah! The diamonds! He would claim them! He must not know! It was Abdallah's last mandate!

"For the Khedive himself has sworn that this man

shall be safe! And,—Cherif would work his vengeance in the dark! Ismail knows not! Santa Marina is blinded too! Dare I take the risk?

"Abdallah swears it will not work its dark spell until to-morrow! I have it! I will go out upon the moonlit Nile later, with a dozen of cavaliers! And, he will be out of my rooms—and—perhaps away from the hotel!

"And, there is always a welcome at Boulak Palace. Ali Bey Italiani has offered us a kiosk,—and—a welcome! Yes! I will go out after the feast!"

The woman shuddered as she drew on her gloves, and then slipped a pellet of colorless gum in her little gilded bonbonniere!

"To send him my glass,—to bid him propose my health! He will never know! It is the old Egyptian charm, the love potion of Death! The kiss of the dark angel Azrael in wine!

"For a fortune,—for Cherif's protection!" She shuddered!

"They would never dare to sacrifice me! It would betray them to the whole world.—And—Cherif, himself, stands behind me as a guarantee! No one will dare to suspect!"

At the call of her maid, she arose and went forth with the smile of a conquering queen! The grand doors opened, and a storm of cheers greeted her! "Evviva la diva Morelli! Evviva!"

There were Pashas, Generals and Beys,—English roués, gilded tourists, all the courtly foreign equerries of Ismail Pasha, and a score of gay continental nobles!

As bright foils around the table, were a dozen of the soft-throated singers, and, while Cherif Pasha slyly gloated upon the Morelli's beauty,—he whispered to the thin-faced Austrian queen of the dance, whose twinkling feet had danced to the golden tinkling of the harp, before vast audiences, where enchanted kings held their breath, and even emperors deigned to pause, and lift the eye-glass!

In the middle of the table and facing each other, the trembling queen of the feast saw that the handsome giant Grosvenor was chatting gayly with a beautiful contralto,

and, opposite him, pale-faced, but composed, was placed the dignified young stranger who was now the mystery of Cairo!

Kenneth Gryffyth had been artfully seated next to a little cherry blossom prima ballerina, and the Master of Ceremonies, Chevalier Armand Duchâtel, His Highness Ismail Pasha's favorite equerry, had slyly given Signora Cerito her private cue.

The exquisitely beautiful wife, whom Duchâtel had brought from France as the prize of a marriage d'occasion, had suddenly disappeared upon his appointment, as equerry, and—only himself and Cherif Pasha knew that the vivacious missing French beauty was now looking out of a window in Cherif's palace near them, on this very night—and,—sighing for a lost liberty which was denied her, behind the golden bars of her cage! Even, a golden captivity, means chains after all!

As the splendid feast progressed, the wine flowed in golden and rosy torrents! Cherif's dark gleaming eyes followed the two Englishmen, who were no whit less gay than those other convives who challenged Life and Love, with no skeleton at this feast of roses! Merry wit, snatches of song, and many a wandering hand-clasp,—many a stolen token,—all the light archery of Cupid made the golden moments fly. And, the loud chorus of laughter rang out.

The Honorable Charles Grosvenor gayly challenged the winsome contralto, and their wine glasses clinked merrily as the pretty singer found the stately Englishman "pas si bête!"

With adroit hands, the watchful servant behind Grosvenor filled the gay cups for the moonlight beauty and her blonde admirer. And, with a pretty pout of disdain, la belle Cerito challenged Kenneth Gryffyth to a glass of wine. He smiled, but whispered, "I am a Moslem!"

Across the table, the friends exchanged glances, with the two servants, who never for a moment had quitted their posts, behind the watchful strangers from perfide Albion! They were guarded at every instant of the feast!

It was when the fun was at its very highest wave, that

the swelling murmur rose. "A health! A health! Ev-viva la Diva!"

And then, with ringing cheers,—the queen of a winter night's revel was toasted by the flashing-eyed daughters of Venus—and Plutus and Bacchus' bodyguard! There were loud cries for an acknowledgment from the bewitching cantatrice!

Then, at a warning glance from Cherif Pasha,—the ivory-bosomed child of song arose. Bending her queenly head, she slowly flashed her impassioned eyes around the circle!

"The one to whom I send my own glass, shall respond! I will sing to you as a forfeit, after he has spoken for me, my thanks!"

Her voice trembled as with a pretty gesture of throwing kisses, right and left, she sent her cup bearer down the glittering line.

Excited murmurs rose as the bearer of the foaming glass of champagne passed the lordly Cherif,—the sly Ratib,—and every Don Juan of Ismail's court, and then, gravely presented the glass, whose crystal rim the Diva had kissed, to Kenneth Gryffyth! There was a hum of astonished jealousy!

All eyes were fixed upon the pale-faced stranger as he rose, and, carefully taking the cup of Love, gravely said, in a French which charmed them all with its purity:

"Napoleon himself learned to be a Moslem here,—in this lovely Lotus Land! I have sworn an oath also to be loyal to Mahomet! Not even your health, Loveliest of Divas!"

There was an angry chorus of whispers, which changed into muffled "Bravos," as Kenneth gracefully bowed.

"I send the cup to the friend of my own heart! To him who speaks the beautiful Tuscan! My heart is yours! You have conquered all our hearts! And, he, in the language of Love, will speak for the beautiful Goddess of Song, whom His Highness, to-night, has crowned with stars! And, you will thank me for the substitute! He will speak for me!"

There was a constrained silence until the cup-bearer had reached the Honorable Charles Grosvenor. He rose

and bowed to the startled woman, with a courtly gravity. All knew the power behind Lord Wrexham's son—and,—no one even dared to challenge his voice! Lifting the glass high before their eyes, he gayly drained it, while in her chair at the head of the glittering board, the Diva sat, her heart now frozen with a nameless terror!

She dared not lift her eyes to meet the burning glances of Cherif Pasha—but, she trembled, now, for her wretched life! It was a hideous mistake! Unconcerned before her,—sat Kenneth Gryffyth, while Grosvenor's manly voice rang out in an impassioned response which brought them all to their feet with a storm of cheers! While the "Bravos" rang out, he shouted:

"And, no one shall ever drink of this mystic glass again! Sacred to the eternal memory of the Queen of Song!" cried the young noble as he hurled it behind him upon the marble floor, its tinkling fragments ringing as they were crushed into a hundred fragments.

When Kenneth Gryffyth raised his eyes, the man who had served Grosvenor had disappeared! His function was over!

An hour later, when the handsome blonde giant Grosvenor pressed Madame Morelli's hand at parting, he felt that her trembling palm was cold as ice! The great Pasha had already withdrawn, and the gay contingent of Venus were dancing to the music called up by Stephanie's witchery.

"Stay!" she whispered, "I would speak to you!" But, Santa Marina's hand was firmly laid upon her arm! "This is our waltz!" he murmured fiercely, and, then, as Kenneth Gryffyth gravely bowed, the friends left the volcanic circle of Love's lightest intrigues!

Once safe within the sheltering doors of Gryffyth's apartment, Kenneth clasped his friend in his arms! "My God! Charley! What have you done?"

And, the weary old Zacharias pointed to a glass standing filled upon the table—as Grosvenor laughed, "I have only robbed the little contralto of her last glass of champagne! That's all! How did you like my speech! We are all safe! Safe—by a scratch,—too!"

And then, he cried, "Go to sleep, Ken! We have got

Cherif Pasha in a close corner now! I shall lie down here, till Abdallah returns!"

"I thought that the wine was poisoned!" blankly said the unwilling Gryffyth, as Grosvenor ordered Soames to attend his master!

"I have an objection to swallowing poisoned wine,—and so I sent it in, to Zacharias here, who will preserve and analyze it!"—As he pushed his unwilling friend into his room, Grosvenor lightly said, "Give those two good fellows fifty guineas each for me, to-morrow morning. They did a very neat lightning change act!"

And, Lorenzo Zacharias had already disappeared to his snugly hidden home, with the precious evidence of the Morelli's dark faith, kept at the risk of her life, when the grumbling Abdallah returned with young Zacharias!

Their bootless mission of waiting for a dummy letter was over at last! "Good!" said the nobleman, "Take me over to my hotel. Keep the carriage there a moment, while I send the letter!" And—then—dispatching the murderous spy, Grosvenor bade Soames and Jacob Zacharias watch as if in a lion's den! "I'll take Ken over to Shepheard's to-morrow morning, as my guest, till Gordon comes, and then he shall only come down here under guard, and meet these daily mummeries of the tender of worthless papers!"

Striding lightly away, he sought Shepheard's Hotel, and, seated in the terrace—smoked at a cheroot till Abdallah vanished with the carriage.

Then, throwing on a top coat and grasping his stick, he mingled with the thinned crowds of the square. "I must meet Stephanie, at her home-coming,—now—for Lischen's confession!"

It had been a night of nights for Ia Morelli, who hid her ashen face in the silken pillows of her couch!

"My God! What will become of me?" she cried. "I dare not tell Santa Marina! And,—Cherif will perhaps kill me!"

Kenneth Gryffyth was astounded when he received a note at his awakening telling him that Grosvenor would be away for three days! The stern injunction to remain under the absolute guard of Zacharias, and to see no one,

—not even the Duchess de Valeria,—alarmed him! But, Grosvenor was working wonders in his own way!

There was a chorus of outcries in Cairo upon the next evening when the fair face of Stephanie, the witching violinist, was missed from her white-robed musical army's head!

The raging old Greek scoundrel who presided over the Café and roulette hell, growled “Gone! Gone off with that English fellow! By Heavens! Santa Marina shall kill him, if he dares to return!” And, there was wailing in the Hotel Sphinx, for Bessie Lightwood had mysteriously vanished, also! Even her gala wardrobe and the jewels purchased for “joint account” were gone,—and with them, the loose change of Sir Horace Lingard’s last hundred-pound note!

The stranded bookmaker was cursing both loudly and deeply, when Santa Marina dashed up in a carriage! “Here’s the very deuce to pay!” he cried—“Abdallah tells me that Lischen, the flower girl, has also cleared out with Grosvenor!”

Then, Lingard raised his wolfish eyes! “Telegraph down to Alexandria—and you will find that Grōsvenor has sent both these women out of the country! We have been neatly tricked—and,—by two men whom we took for callow fools!” But, Santa Marina lingered not! “I’ll see Cherif Pasha!” he cried. “We will be kicked out of Egypt! There’s but one last resort! Only,—Death will help us now!”

But, all in vain, did the Count seek Cherif Pasha! He was not to be reached! Even Abdallah feared to tell Santa Marina that the Pasha was closeted with the defeated and despairing Morelli!

There was no victorious diva visible at the opera that night! A hasty substitution had annoyed and disgusted an eager multitude! For, the idol of all hearts was now pleading on her knees before Cherif Pasha in her boudoir!

“Get up,—you lying baggage!” he roared! “You have dishonestly tricked me out of my diamonds! Your engagement here shall be cancelled in disgrace! You shall leave Egypt penniless! The fool has escaped us,—and,—the other fellow is safe,—too, and at Alexandria! He

has just run off with the tall Austrian girl,—the Stephanie! You are a blundering fool!"

Then, in a desperate mood the frightened woman cried, "Send me Santa Marina! I swear that the man shall die! Leave it to me, now! I will gage my head!"

"See to it!" growled Cherif, "or, you will never leave Egypt!"

In the darkness of the night, the enraged bravo listened to her sobbing confession!

"You are a great fool! Morelli! But, if you serve me, I will turn this to a victory! Cherif shall soon be in our power! Swear that you are mine! Give me half the diamonds! I will kill that fool myself!"

And—he departed with all the oath and half the hardly-won jewels!

The spider began now to weave his bloody web for the last trick!

CHAPTER X.

BELSHAZZAR'S BALL AT THE GHEZIREH PALACE.—AN INSULTED DUCHESS!—“THAT MAKES YOU A GENTLEMAN!” — STEPHANIE'S WARNING. — THE COUNT'S FALSE STROKE!—GROSVENOR GOES IN TO WIN!—“THIS SEALS US FOR LIFE!”

Kenneth Gryffyth eagerly awaited the return of Grosvenor! For, he now had that on his mind, which roused all his stubborn Welsh courage! His nights were now passed with a doubled private guard in his rooms, and the anxious Zacharias was busied with the sending and receiving of an accumulating fund of dispatches and telegrams!

There, too, was the daily public society parade upon the Shoubrah road, and Abdallah's gloomy eyes were fixed in wonder upon the calm-faced Briton! For, in all his varied experience, he had never yet known the crafty Cherif to fail to carry a point. "Boukra,—Boukra! It will come!" he muttered!

And, sly as the dragoman was, he began to note that

he was never left alone for a moment! "Did the big Giaour get the dose, by mistake? If this fellow is caught later—then, both birds are bagged! But, they suspect me!"

And, he sighed "Taib Kétir!" "Very,—very good!"

It seemed to Kenneth Gryffyth that he was lost in, a strange human maze! Left alone, he sighed to return, in honor, to England! For, the lonely Kathleen Lawrie's pleadings now wrung his heart!

In some strange way, she had gained a vague idea of the duel of Egyptian intrigue, and all the dangers of the star-lit Nile! Kenneth chafed bitterly as he was forced to pass Madame de Valeria's carriage with only a salute to the beautiful embodied "Spirit," and the little rosebud Countess Renée. The Duchess only smiled and bowed, with her finger on her lip!

But, the kindly glance of her tender eyes told him of her daily watch!

There were grave incidents, too, in these three days! A secret call to the vast official Shoubrah Palace of the Viceroy! There had been the gravest remonstrances on his part at the open breach of faith! And, the actuary, at last, showed to the Viceroy his growing disbelief in all the hollow promises.

Ismail Pasha was dogged, stubborn, defiant, and yet, smooth as was his wont! "Fehmy Pasha telegraphs me that Lawrie and Hart absolutely refuse to pay over the half million sterling!" he complained. "Cairo is in commotion,—the finance circles sharply press me! Your coming was to provide me money! I am harassed on all sides! Cherif Pasha tells me that you are receiving the papers as rapidly as they can be sorted out,—in the secret archives!"

Gryffyth gazed resolutely into the eyes of the ruler of Egypt! They were seated in a superb chamber of a palace which represented fifteen millions! He was no longer awed by the glitter of the jewelled star on the breast of the princely dissembler! The ruler of Egypt was showing up very weak and human, and,—no prince at heart!

"Cherif Pasha knows that not a single one of the im-

portant documents has reached me! Your Highness' seal of verification has not been placed upon even one paper! Your royal promise made under seal has either been left unfulfilled,—or else broken!"

The Khedive's eyes darkly flashed in anger! "I have given the orders," he sternly said!

"Then—Your Highness!" gravely said Kenneth Gryffyth, "Cherif Pasha is the real Khedive of Egypt! Your orders are not obeyed. He has boasted to me, that you would never produce them,—unless I made secret terms with him! I will now wait till Gordon Pasha comes! Then, I will make my demand, through him! Cherif Pasha dares not to brave Gordon! And, I know that! Your Highness must listen to Gordon!"

"He promises me money—on easier terms!" doubtfully said Ismail rising. "We never yet have laid bare our private secrets at a mere order of haughty London money lenders!" The Khedive was trembling with rage.

And then, Kenneth Gryffyth said: "Your Highness! I have done! If Cherif lies,—he shall lie, direct to Gordon! If you choose to support Cherif, I will leave for London, instantly! I am reporting daily that my real business here seems to be only to foment a quarrel with Cherif! And—so, I will soon withdraw from your land! If Cherif Pasha can so easily furnish you the money, why do you not let him deal direct with my principals! Fehmy Pasha knows them! You do not need me, it seems!" There was an awkward silence! Ismail was cornered at last!

"If I did," musingly concluded Ismail, "it would only bring the French and English governments down upon me! They may want my throne! I can not draw back—if I give my real power over to Cherif!"

"For Cherif,—perhaps would betray you!" continued Kenneth Gryffyth. "Your Highness knows now that a million sterling is not a fortnight's supply for your governmental shortages! Not three months' supply for your private purse! But, if you give me all these documents, I will then engage to have Fehmy Pasha put two and a half millions sterling at once to your personal credit, on your mere receipt as a first obligation upon your pri-

vate estate—both in Europe and Egypt, and, we will meet the government's deficit, too!"

The Khedive turned like a wounded lion! "What know you of my private estate—in Europe?" he growled!

"Nothing! Your Highness!" firmly said Gryffyth. "I am only the Actuary of the great syndicate of your unsecured creditors! But,—my principals have access to every channel of secret service in Europe! They are the only men—in the world—who can now hold off the five great hostile governments,—arrange your arrears, equalize, increase, and grade your revenues, and at once, give you ready money—and, so—a final release from financial torture!"

"Ask Cherif if he can do all that? He may have some private relations with my principals! Who knows?"

"Let him make the bargain for you—if he can!"

Ismail Pasha turned pale with baffled rage! "Come to the Ghezireh Ball! I will call Cherif to me to-day! I wish to avoid any useless public dissensions between Gordon and Cherif!"

And so the envoy of Mammon again gained ground, as he said: "Cherif must face Gordon with an explicit answer, yes or no! as to the promised papers! Gordon will let no man lie to him, or palter with his honor! And, he is irresistible, when he forces the question of good faith! I will attend the Ball at your request, Your Highness, but only under the sacred protection of your roof! There have been some discreditable attempts made on me! I will neither be insulted, nor sacrificed!"

"I will punish them to the utmost!" hastily cried the Khedive, wincing.

"Your Highness might be too late!" bitterly said Kenneth.

"I will come there only under the sacred seal of your personal guarantee! And,—of the Law of Nations! I do not fear for myself—" the young man proudly said. "I fear for you! England is an ugly foe! You have now Gordon to satisfy,—and—not me! I have been patient, and, I demand action by you—or—an honorable dismissal!"

"Gordon is the one honest Englishman I know—not a diplomat—but—a great administrator!" murmured Ismail, in an agony of irresolution.

"And yet, even now, Cherif schemes to recall Gordon Pasha, and to make Zebehr the slave dealer's king—Governor of Khartoum!"

"Who told you that?" blankly demanded Ismail! "The same person who has warned me that I never will see the documents in your agreed-on schedule, and I will beg Gordon Pasha to tell you the name,—when I leave Egypt!" resolutely replied Gryffyth as he bowed deeply and retired, leaving the trickster alone and trembling! "I have now washed my hands of the whole responsibility!" was his last word.

"Cherif dealing secretly with them!" growled Ismail. "He may go the way that—" But, the Khedive paused, for the specter of the murdered Mefettish Sadyk Pasha now rose up before him—a grisly shade! "It was about these same documents that the blood feud began, between Cherif and Sadik!" gloomily sighed the Khedive, as he admitted the Italian master of decorators for the great ball!

And, "tout Caire," knew in a few hours that "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" had been closeted at the Shoubrah Palace again with the Khedive Ismail! For, Kenneth Gryffyth now decided "to die in the open," with every claim to the protection of the Union Jack! "He shall disgrace his word, his flag, his country and humanity, if he connives at his own dishoner!"

The young financier was now armed in all his outgoings, and his stern eye was ready to use the "lex talionis" at will! The Welsh blood was up—and—fighting loyally under the Union Jack!

It was late that night when Lorenzo Zacharias at last brought the positive approval of the great London syndicate! "Wait for Gordon's success or failure," were the magic words. "Then—if the documents are withheld, on our approval, break all off,—and—come home to London! Zacharias will continue your work! Carioli will arrange for your safe departure! He has our orders!"

"As to the wine in the glass which the servant juggled

away?" said Gryffyth. "Are you ready to report?" "Only waiting for Grosvenor!" was the reply. "One half is sealed up,—waiting future events!"

The winter gayety had redoubled its fever in the approaching Grand Ball at the Ghezireh! The Opera was crowded! The Bairam, Ramadan and Doseh feasts, and the royal anniversaries were being provided for!

It was in the dusk of the third evening when Gryffyth, returning to his rooms, suddenly encountered the witching Morelli as she glided out of her boudoir! Her maid was in attendance! It was the hour for her early departure for the Grand Opera's princely dressing rooms!

Their eyes met! The woman staggered as if in a sudden pain, and, with a smothered scream fell back into her attendant's arms! Gryffyth stood a moment irresolute, and darted back into his rooms! The doomed man was before her in the flesh—and—her womanish heart failed her!

That night, another voice rang out in the vaulted golden dome, and Madame Serena Bonifacio scored a triumphant success over her one hated rival—the Morelli! It was the diva's Waterloo!

It was eleven o'clock when Soames aroused his master at his studies in the deep seclusion of the trebly guarded inner apartment! "There's some one of these foreign things here!

"Bless me if I can tell, if man or woman!" bluntly cried the sturdy cockney! But, he was ready for any treachery.

With a single spring, Kenneth entered the room, where a deeply-shrouded woman stood! She silently motioned for the servant to depart! And then, Kenneth Gryffyth led the stranger into his own room!

Throwing off her veil, with a sudden motion, Gryffyth saw the Italian maid who had been the Morelli's attendant on the voyage! "Tell me,—is he really dead? The other! The handsome young prince?" Kenneth smiled bitterly.

"No! But why do you ask,—my poor girl?" For the frightened Italian was on her knees, before him! She seized his hand and dragged him down to her!

"Leave Egypt! There is death lurking here for you both! Go not to this Ghezireh Ball! I dare tell you no more! They would kill me!" And then, with a wild start she essayed the door! Gryffyth held out his hand, with a score of Turkish guineas! "Ah! No! Santa Maria! There is blood on the gold! Not a single baiocco! Lasciate me!"

The frightened maid sped on past Soames like a gliding specter of the night!

And then the stern frown of a brave man hunted to bay settled down over Kenneth Gryffyth's face! He longed for the morning, and Grosvenor! And, strange shapes that night haunted his uneasy dreams!

It was a superbly balmy day which brought back the Honorable Charles Grosvenor to Cairo! When Soames brought his master's coffee,—he whispered: "Abdallah's been flying in and out of his room since daylight!

"Over there," and he indicated Cherif's dreamy gardens with a jerk of his thumb! "Compliments of Mr. Grosvenor and you're to come right over to Shepheard's and, breakfast with him! He's brought Captain Elwood, of the Governor's staff at Malta,—down to attend the Grand Ball!"

It seemed like the fresh breezes drawing through an English hay meadow to know the hearty young noble again at his side, and Gryffyth rejoiced in the plenitude of youth and the high courage of love as he joined his two friends upon the terrace at Shepheard's! Elwood was a dashing staff soldier, and the curled darling of the vivacious ladies of La Valette!

When he was duly dispatched on a tour of the city in Grosvenor's carriage, with Soames and the knowing Abdallah as guard and cicerone, Grosvenor hastened with Gryffyth to Lorenzo Zacharias' secret stronghold behind the little shops of the Grand Arcade.

"Tell me, first, of all your Cairene happenings!" said Grosvenor. "Our whole party will dine with the Duchess de Valeria! She has no more devoted admirer than Captain Arthur Elwood, Royal Staff Corps! The commander at Malta gave the Duchess a magnificent fête on her last visit, and the Army and Navy came near a col-

lision about her charms. That brave and gallant tar 'Sir Hercules Home Ardleigh, G. C. B., himself, begged the Duchesse to go on to the Quirinal at Rome, for she caused 'a local deviation of the compass'!"

His tender eyes told a different story—and Kenneth knew that the Honorable Charles had already kept his tryst at the Villa Kléber!

Grosvenor was grave-faced during Kenneth's recital! "We will be but a single official party at the Ball,—and—so, we will head them off! I have my eye on our sneaking friend Santa Marina! It's after all, only Cherif Pasha whom we fight!"

"The hand is the hand of Esau—but the voice is the voice of Jacob! I'll paralyze that crafty schemer! He is in the toils!"

"All I beg is that you will not, in any way separate yourself from our party, Ken, and,—above all,—do not exchange a word with Santa Marina! Leave that gentleman,—to me! Now, Zacharias,—your report!"

"The wine was poisoned!" solemnly said the old Hebrew. "And with the most subtle of all the old Egyptian poisons! A secret handed down from the dark dominion of the temple priests who ruled in their secluded island palaces in the days of the seven castes! Only at Tantah,—among the infamous devotees of Sheik Bedawy can it be had,—and,—for an enormous bribe!"

"It has been used on the Bosphorus, in many of the deadly hidden tragedies of Seraglio Point! I have saved one half under seal! The other is changed with the tasteless transparent gum carrying the deadly poison!"

"In from twelve to twenty-four hours,—the speechless victim dies insensible, and, with no trace left behind of the 'deep damnation of his taking off!' In my thirty years' residence, I have never handled it before, but—it's work has aided the very deadliest Egyptian conspiracy! Only one high in power could obtain it!"

"Listen!" cried Grosvenor, breaking in suddenly! "The three women are half way to Trieste, by this time! Bessie Lightwood goes to Lord Wrexham's post, to secretly await the future orders which she may get from him!"

"Stephanie will hide away for a year in the Tyrol! I have made her comfortable! Lischen will be her maid, until Stephanie takes up again her magic violin, as a darling of the music-loving Viennese! These two wait at Trieste, for my telegrams to the British Consul, who will report to Lord Wrexham! Here is Lischen's story!

"Cherif wanted to send Abdallah down to Tantah, but, the old spy feared the consequences of detection.

"Coward at heart, Abdallah urged that his absence would be noted! He fears the Duchess! He knows her power! He looks also to the future! And,—his excuse that he was now surrounded by Cairene spies in your employ, was sufficient to make them all afraid!

"But,—Abdallah sent an Arab dragoman down to Tantah with Lischen! There one of the Sheik Badawy's detestable heirs delivered to her six pellets of the poison, in a sealed crystal vial,—and the dragoman paid over the gold which he carried!

"This agreeable night-episode over, they returned, and then, the dragoman left the train at the Shoubrah station! Lischen was taken by Abdallah over the next day to the Pasha's garden, where, in a secluded kiosk, she handed over the crystal vial!

"Abdallah had satisfied himself from the dragoman of the execution of Lischen's trust, and he boasted to her later, that one of the globules had been satisfactorily tried upon a poor insane devil here in the jail hospital! Its work was perfect!

"Lischen received a hundred guineas and the intimation that she would disappear for ever, if she ever dared to speak of her trip to Tantah. It was only Abdallah's rage that drove Lischen to a refuge with Stephanie! She already knew Cherif's devilish arts, for the poor peasant-born wretch was only cast out of his harem, to be a secret moucharde! Her pretty childish face and pleasant girlish ways have saved her life! She was a useful decoy!

"I went out to sea on the 'Tegethoff' from the mole at Alexandria, and, later came back on the tug! It was when we were five miles from shore that Lischen took



courage and told Stephanie all,—and, then confessed to me!

"She gave privately to her a last confidence in telling me that Cherif had sent the Morelli a superb bribe of unset diamonds to the value of ten thousand pounds!

"And,—Abdallah himself has threatened the Morelli that if she does not now either restore the diamonds, to Cherif,—divide the plunder with him—or complete her work, that she is to be Cherif's victim—but, in what dreadful way, he did not care to announce!"

"You are the life, now, aimed at! Kenneth!" said Grosvenor! "I must tell you so—to protect you!"

"And,—the future?" said both the listening men in a breath! "Absolute silence as to the disappearance of the three women! It appears that Santa Marina knew nothing whatever of Cherif's scheme—" continued Grosvenor. "He had flattered the Morelli with the promise of the Viceroy's favor,—the success of her engagement,—the open entree of the four great Khedivial harems,—invitations to all the Palace balls, and,—a voyage to the cataract upon his own superb steam yacht 'Isis'!"

"When the gay world goes out to the Baths of Helnan, la diva Morelli was to be the queen Anonyma of Cherif's beautiful villa there by the Nile, under the guns of old Fort Turra!

"In all this,—you can see—that Cherif aimed to be free of Santa Marina's future black-mailing arts,—to rob him of the fascinating diva, and,—to sweep away—the only obstacle now between him and the overthrow of the hated Nubar Pasha!

"When Cherif has squeezed that lemon Count di Santa Marina, the Italian will disappear! He has never trusted himself upon the Nile, and Lischen admitted to me that the conniving Santa Marina had been her lover! He has kept a record of all Cherif's arts, and transmitted them to a confederate in Italy! Santa Marina was often invited by Cherif to go up the Nile, upon the 'Isis,' but, Abdallah's brother Hassan, confidentially told the crafty Italian of several 'accidental disappearances' from that splendid pleasure craft!

"The Mefettish was lured up the Nile and murdered!

The case of Cherif and the Italian, is that of the hunted fugitive who shoots his own dog, to avoid betraying his trail! And,—Lischen believes that Cherif and the Viceroy have used Santa Marina in the transfer of their great hoards to Italy! They would like to see him silenced, as soon as it can be safely done!"

Lorenzo Zacharias nodded his head! "It may be true! The sudden rise of Ernesto Strilogo, to be the Count di Santa Marina! His great knowledge of Italy! He was once a *laquais de place* and courier! He scoured over all Italy purveying beauty and talent for the harems and private theater companies! What is Cherif's real game now? Gentlemen! We are on the eve of the crash of Belshazzar's house!"

The Honorable Charles Grosvenor said slowly: "Wrexham has given me his private, (not diplomatic), view!

"Cherif wishes to cling to Ismail to the last! To overthrow Nubar's ministry,—but, to be in at the death. To be the Viceroy's only confidant,—to be left as a legacy to the new Khedive,—to be forced into the position wherein England and France must both look to him, recognize his estates of as yet only shadowy titles, gloze over his past peculations—and, leave his private hoard alone! He plays only a bold safety game—now!"

"And,—the documents?" cried both men! "Ah!" said Grosvenor. "If these papers, the temporary possession of which cost the life of Sadik Pasha,—the great Fellahin leader, the Mefettish, who rose from fellah to be the blood relative of his own sovereign by marriage—if these priceless papers are useful to Cherif,—after Ismail Khedive's fall, they will surely appear,—when he gets his price!"

"If they are damning—they will be destroyed,—but,—only at the last moment!" Lorenzo Zacharias raised his bowed head!

"You may be right! But, if he has them all, why does he not make profitable terms now, with our vast syndicate?" said the old banker.

"Because he has already hidden some,—and—he is scheming to get possession of the rest. Then, he would

be invincible. I know the subtlety of these Egyptian princes!" smiled Grosvenor. "They are not kept here in Cairo, these same documents—but, in some safe, faraway, out-of-the-way place! Neither Ismail nor Cherif dare to trust each other fully! Nubar has gone on keeping the machine in motion, borrowing and spreading the growing French and English mortgages!

"Cherif has manipulated the public funds and so, has supplied Ismail ready personal monies! He dares not reveal his misuses of borrowed public funds,—and, even Ismail dares not avow the source of the hidden treasure which each has laid away in Europe! Nubar Pasha is honest as regards these giant peculations!

"But the Khedive and Cherif fear him! Nubar can not get at the financial truths! That's why you are here, Kenneth, to force it out, or, else to be the means of bawling the stubborn Ismail out!"

"And Cherif?" the listeners cried. "Will sell out his secrets at the last, but, only after Nubar's overthrow, and then, either destroy or give up the papers as pays him best! He will work on the Khedive's guilty fears, and soon get them all into his control—on the plea of safety! I see his game,—a masterly one,—and—a waiting game!"

"And who told you these inner facts,—surely not Lischen, that pretty wanton?" quickly replied Kenneth!

"It was the Duchess who first—" and, then, suddenly Grosvenor paused, with a crimsoned face,—

"We hold Cherif now in our hands!" resolutely said Grosvenor. "After the ball, when we have news that the three women are in safety, we will fasten this attempted crime upon the Morelli! She shall be soon forced out of Egypt!

"She will denounce Cherif as soon as she is safe in Italy! And,—then, we have a fearful leverage upon him! We can either bully or disgrace, or else punish him, by an open complaint to all the Consuls General! The Powers will chase him from the Nile!"

"There is the Count di Santa Marina always in the way?" moodily said Kenneth Gryffyth!

"Yes!" cried Grosvenor. "Cherif's last tool! His only one,—now! For,—Lingard is an openly disgraced swin-

dler! Santa Marina has only one trick left to take! His last card to play! When he is disposed of,—both Cherif and our side, have lost their bitterest and most dangerous foe,—and,—your game becomes a clear one!

"With Gordon and De Lesseps to put down Cherif, in the Commission, or to make him force Ismail to give up all the documents, we are the masters. Then, your accounting really fixes the responsibility for the final payment of the vast shortages! Cherif and the Khedive must surrender either their private hoard—or—give up the vast tracts of land which they unlawfully now claim—one-third of lower Egypt's arable land, a capital of a hundred millions sterling! That will pay all the honestly deferred debts, the others you can scale down!"

Kenneth Gryffyth began to see where the great Syndicate would get the assets to finally recoup themselves!

And,—to see that Lord Wrexham—Grosvenor, the old broker, and the fascinating Duchess all knew the all higher cards of the game, in which he was only an inexorable mathematical revisor! A holder of the scales of Justice, to be!

"And,—how shall we play the game?" slowly said Kenneth.

"As Santa Marina leads out! He is Cherif's last trump card! The King of Spades!" "I will watch him!" grimly said Grosvenor.

That night, at the dinner of the Duchess of Valeria, the Honorable Charles Grosvenor shone out as the gayest trifler around a table where the bright-eyed ladies would permit no other topic, than the Grand Ball at the Ghezireh!

Only the Duchess whispered, at parting, to her silent Knight Gryffyth.

"Gordon is now at Siout! He comes down by a Khedivial steamer to avoid the spies on the trains! And,—I shall meet him at Helouan! Trust in me! You have been a gallant knight! I see the star of success rising to crown your work!"

Captain Arthur Elwood, Royal Staff Corps, with a due consciousness of a previous mortgage upon Madame la Duchesse,—laid court to the charming Madame Carioli

as one of her attendant cavaliers at the Ghezireh balls! "I decorate you with my colors, now! And—attach you to my suite!" laughed the spirited Italiennel Grosvenor was the easy prize winner.

And—they all made merry while, la belle Morelli and the Count di Santa Marina were busied with their joint appearance, at that great function of the gilded Cairenes!

Santa Marina was deftly patching up his broken webs, and he smiled, as he gazed gloatingly upon the diva's lovely face! "I think I will divorce her forever—from Cherif,—and,—so, be the lord of them both!" he muttered!

And, he sat, over his wine, looking tenderly into her bright eyes—and, then, told his fortune a dozen times with a cherished pack of cards which had never once failed him before. "I shall win,—by one point!" he smiled, and then, his heart leaped up in a fool's pride!

"The sword's point—my strong suit!"

It was a fairy scene of bewildering magnificence when the great Ghezireh Palace gleamed out through the vast gardens showing every line of the palace pictured in living light!

Four hundred acres of a labyrinthine Paradise by the Gheziret Rôda were thronged with an army of five thousand guests, guards and attendants! They lit lamps which outburned Canopus, and the music of a dozen concealed bands floated dreamily through the leafy loveliness! Before the grounds, the broad Nile flowed,—with the white stars mirrored there in its mystic bosom, the silver moon leaving a band of dazzling light, through which the drifting Nile boats swept transfigured for a single moment, to drift away, their lateen sails spread out like the wings of dark birds of night!

The cry of the toiling boatman came softened to the shore, and even the brown fellah at his creaking shadoof wondered if good Haroun al Raschid had come again! It was a fairy festival!

Boulak and Gheziret Tirsch lay dreaming hard by on the cool waters, while a cloud of graceful folded sails lined the shores where the slim Arab maids, in dark blue gowns, chanted their mournful songs, and then filed

away, each bearing on her head, a jar of the blessed water of Father Nilus!

Darting steam launches, stately yachts and slim Nile steamers gleamed with light as they threw up the diamond drops from their dripping paddles!

The half dozen carriages of Madame Carioli's official party drove around for an hour in the endless arched roadways of the enchanting garden! The song of the nightingale thrilled them as they threaded glittering lakes,—past fairy kiosks,—fragrant lawns and glades where the whispering lovers already lingered! There was the breath of the palm and magnolia in the musky groves, the Venetian lamps showed all the delicate tracery of tamarind and almond, orange and lemon! The delicate fronded acacia, the spice groves of Ind, the frankincense, and rare exotics breathed out their sighing souls under theplash of cool fountains!

The dreamy lotus, the slender papyrus, the bamboo, and even the tigers' dense jungle home were there! As the victorias, laden with laughing gallants and lovely women swept along, the deep roar of the lion, the scream of the cheetah, the trumpeting of elephants and the voice of Equatorial Africa's strange and uncouth animals, broke the stillness of the night!

"Roses by the calm Bendemeer!" laughed Captain Arthur Elwood, as he broke a branch and pressed the hand of the bewitching Italienné! Kenneth Gryffyth sat moodily in their carriage,—while Madame la Duchesse de Valeria was escorted by the Consul General, and that graceful giant, Grosvenor! There were a half dozen carriages in the Italian Consul General's official party, for "tout Caire" was bidden to Belshazzar's Ball! The great show function of the season was on!

"It may be his last!" gloomily mused Gryffyth, who was all unwilling to mingle in the kaleidoscopic splendor of the Ghezireh reception! He had been busied with Zacharias, and his daily duties! A strange fit had seized upon Grosvenor who had for three days been in the constant companionship of that gay militaire Arthur Elwood!

"Ask me nothing! Ken!" lightly laughed Grosvenor.

"Only promise me that you will not leave the side of Madame Carioli or the Duchess! I am going to keep my wits about me! And,—I've Elwood to act as cavalier des dames! Simply watch the Khedive! He may wish to speak to you! If you meet Santa Marina, or la Morelli, —then you must only gracefully ignore them! Prudence! Prudence!"

"Gordon comes in three days,—and,—before a week,—you will know whether you will stay to open the Pandora box for Ismail,—or—report back to London! I shall be near you every moment,—never fear!"

"The ladies, too, are your fairy body guard! Remember, speak not a word to a soul,—save to our party! All eyes are upon you now!"

There were words of caution, words of cheer from Lorenzo Zacharias lingering, too, in his ear! "Beware of Cherif Pasha! He may try to suddenly embarrass you in public. No one ever spoke to the Viceroy as plainly as you have done,—and,—Cherif neither forgets nor forgives! Be on your guard!"

They drove along, a splendid procession, the guests of Ismail Pasha, led by the Chevalier Carioli! He had received a special message from Ismail Pasha to present Mr. Malcolm Cranford, in person.

They passed the enclosure where a score of Indian elephants mingled with two score of the intractable African tuskers, were teaching their wild Equatorial brothers, by passive example, to bear the burdens and to toil for the tyrant man!

But, the elephants from the Mountains of the Moon were as intractable as the fierce slave dealers' king, Zebahr Pasha, now a splendid captive guest of the great ball, and as rebellious at heart as the unconquered dusky harem women from Abyssinia, whose fierce coquetry and wild passions, no man had ever mastered!

Carioli's brow was grave, as they descended at the splendid marble steps! "Will Ismail yield? Will he keep faith for once? Who knows? Fear may have made him decide to be true to his sealed word of honor!" For, Gryffyth longed to leave Egypt—in peace and honor now! A nameless foreboding had seized upon him!



Through splendidly attired lacquais de palais,—past rows of gorgeous guards—they entered the changing living pictures of a thousand different costumes! Music softly breathed—and gold and crystal, bronze and silver gleamed in the vast saloons,—where superb frescoes tempted the eyes from the ceiling,—where precious mosaics gleamed under foot!

Parisian art—and, Oriental splendors met in the gorgeous paintings,—the priceless eastern hangings of shawls, silks and satins! Gorgeous arms gleamed on the walls, and grave Persian, gallant Greek, swarthy Turk, proud Circassian, the wandering beauty and bravery of a dozen lands, thronged the vast saloons and corridors!

It was the whole parade of the Shoubrah,—the crowd at the Pera Bridge,—the polyglot throngs of the Bazaars,—only én grand tenue,—and they were all—guests of Belshazzar! Pachas and Beys, Bimbashis and Effendis, Mollahs and Dervishes, tourists, adventurers, and daring foreign beauties, all were mingled in a splendid confusion!

Laughter, nods and smiles, murmured greetings, mingled perfumes and the thrill of thousand high-beating hearts, made up a queer spell of fantastic stimulation!

Without, in the vast courtyard and gardens, carriages, horses, donkeys and asses brought relays of guests! Boats, dahabiehs and steamers were busy bringing guests!

Long lines of light marked the avenues to the city, the great highway to the Pyramids, and the approaches to the other palaces! It was Cairo in its greatest fête before the Ramadan! A witching scene of dazzling magnificence by the mystic river!

Kenneth Gryffyth gazed in wonder, as their party marshalled through double lines of police in gala dress, swept forward to the glittering ring where Ismail Pasha, the Fifth Khedive, stood surrounded by a magnificent court! The Chevalier Duchâtel, the Grand Equerry—led them up, and, when Gryffyth with Madame Carioli had made his obeisance, the Viceroy beckoned the Consul General to his side!

"I have directed Cherif Pasha to at once prepare all

the documents for your friend, before the coming of Gordon! Tell him so,—and,—that I then expect his immediate report to London!"

Carioli's triumph was flattering to his soul! "The Marquis di Carioli,—if this thing goes on well!" he murmured! But as they passed on into the great dining rooms,—Gryffyth, who heard the portentous message, in a whisper, caught a glimpse of a menacing quartette!

The insolent beauty of la Morelli, shone out there under the Khedive's diamond stars,—Santa Marina was whispering to Duchâtel,—and Sir Harry Lingard pulled his long blonde mustache, and put up his eye-glass insolently as Marguerite de Valeria swept by on Grosvenor's arm!

They were a royal couple, the serenely beautiful lady and her chivalric lover! The crowd parted in mute homage before them and enthusiastic murmurs followed them! It was a new-born Venus de Melos who grandly strode by the side of a latter-day Apollo!

Already a long train of guests was pressing to the superb banquet served in equal richness during the whole night! There, the richest Parisian dainties awaited all with never-ceasing cupbearers offering Burgundy, Yquem,—Champagne à discretion, and every cordial, ice and sherbet of Tortoni's art!

The balconies, and the open windows were crowded with parties of lingering lovers, and every shade of color gleamed on the pleasure-loving faces of the women of a dozen nations.

The men in the uniform and decoration of every clime gazed upon the haughty Circassian, the fair Georgian, and dark beauties whose bronzed bosoms rose and fell under priceless jewels! It recalled the glories of mediæval Egypt.

And, it was two hours later, under the gleam of the crystal lamps where the air was heavy with the odors of jasmine, rose and magnolia drifting in at the opened windows under the full moon that the party was gayly rallied for the homeward path! Belshazzar's ball was a witchery of modern profusion!

Kenneth Gryffyth had never left for a moment the

official party, and he met the grave inquiring glances of the Honorable Charles Grosvenor with the telegraphed signal,—“all’s well!”

There was no sign of the dangers which Grosvenor watched and the wise Zacharias feared! That great social star Cherif Pasha had made his formal round of the ladies of the party, and—lingered, in a courteous dialogue with the Duchess for a long five minutes!

His smile and salute were even paternal, as he beamed upon Kenneth Gryffyth, “I am sure that you will change your mind—and, stay with us here! Au revoir with Gordon!”

It was a caressing flattery—and—a graceful salutation.

It was time for the last Lanciers, and the happy Fates had given Madame la Duchesse to Gryffyth as a partner! Madame Carioli had formally opened the ball with the Khedive as the dean of the Diplomatic ladies, and Captain Arthur Elwood had claimed her kindness for her only other appearance on the floor!

There was an arresting movement in the passing stream of jewelled robes, decorated diplomats, gauzy veils and fleecy laces, as Marguerite de Valeria, faced her charming friend under Kenneth’s escort! And, Grosvenor gladly led out the charming Countess Gessi of Milan,—then, the Consul General of Italy slowly approached with that vivacious Russian patrician Madame la Baronne Rhoten!

Carioli put up his monocle, in amazement, as the Chevalier Duchâtel, by a deft flank movement, boldly placed Count Ernesto di Santa Marina and the insolently beautiful Morelli, in the vacant side of the forming square!

Gryffyth seemed to hear the music afar, miles away, as Grosvenor’s stern face turned marble pale, where he stood with his head bent forward like a runner at the Olympian games!

Kenneth felt Madame de Valeria’s gloved fingers lightly tremble on his arm as she turned proudly away seeking a seat!

The insult was palpable! And, while the angry Carioli stared in amazement—that mocking prima donna Morelli only shrugged her beautiful shoulders and

laughed impudently in the face of Gryffyth's beautiful partner!

There was a sneering voice which broke upon his ear, as the Count di Santa Marina grasped his wrist!

"Ah! Now, I have you—at last! You declined to drink this lady's health, at her own table, at her own feast! And, now, you take your gay 'companion de voyage' away!"

Gryffyth's hand was half raised! He checked himself! For, there was a voice ringing as cold as steel in his ears:

"Take Madame la Duchesse to her carriage, at once!" commanded Grosvenor. "I insist! Nay! It is my right, Marguerite!" he whispered! "Carioli!" murmured Grosvenor to the Consul General: "Take the whole party directly home! Elwood and myself will remain here!" And—the Englishman's will prevailed!

There were shrugs and mocking smiles as the three couples reached their party! The outraged Carioli summoned the exquisite Cherubini and his other attaches and his dragomen, cavasses and, attendants forced the way to the carriages as the party left the grand portal!

Marguerite de Valeria turned her stately head, with a gasping sob, as Grosvenor, springing to the carriage, raised her hand and kissed it! He murmured: "Adieu! Marguerite! Take Gryffyth at once to your house! I will come there! He is not to leave you an instant!"

As Captain Arthur Elwood bowed, and the carriage darted forward, Kenneth Gryffyth heard a gasping cry and the tears glittered like diamonds upon her lashes in the moonlight!

Grosvenor had hoarsely whispered to Gryffyth: "I will make all the needed arrangements for you,—pistols,—at daylight! I will come to you at the Villa Kléber! Do not go back to the Hotel,—on your life!" And, now, Gryffyth began to feel the cold bitter rage of the man who burned to see his deadly enemy fall prone before him!

The Baroness Rhoten had silently taken Madame de Valeria's hand, and the party drove out swiftly through the still-arriving merrymakers, under the stars! There was an ominous silence among them!

It was a gloomy and silent ride to Villa Kléber! But

one halt was made! When Consul General Carioli turned into his own villa garden.

"I shall see the Khedive, in person!" he murmured to Gryffyth, as he pressed his hand significantly! "This action of Ducliatel's was an outrage!"

But, they had left behind them, a man now maddened beyond all bounds!

"Come on, Elwood!" said Grosvenor, as he watched Marguerite's carriage roll away!

And he turned backward to the ball room! Elwood caught sight of his face, in the flooding light of the grand entrance!

"Hold on, old fellow! Do nothing rash!" he cried, in a sudden alarm! "I'm all right!" muttered Grosvenor, in a voice which made his friend start!

Striding along as lightly as a panther, Grosvenor threaded the crowd to where the victorious Ernesto di Santa Marina was standing as the center of an admiring group in an ante room!

The circle parted as the agile Englishman bounded upon the sneering Italian!

Smiting him a stinging blow in the face with his open hand, he growled,

"That makes you a gentleman! Come on, you cur!"

The face of Santa Marina was livid as he reeled, and then, passed a handkerchief over the bruise. "I'll have your heart's blood for that, to-night!"

Captain Elwood laid his hand on his friend's arm. "Come away with me—Grosvenor!" he quietly said, and led the excited athlete to a seat! For Grosvenor's rage thrilled every fiber of his frame! He knew that the coarse tongues of the crowd were already dealing with the fair fame of the woman whom he loved—and the scum of the palacé bravos were gathered together! And, they laughed at the Englishman going away to his death. Santa Marina's foe was still not the man whose death he sought!

In a few moments, Sir Horace Lingard approached Elwood, who stood awaiting him, a resolute and manly figure in Her Majesty's naval uniform! Their whispers were not of long duration!

"They propose the upper ball room of the Esbékieweh Hotel. Time,—to-night,—and,—weapons—swords!" he said, with an anxious look!

"Very good!" quietly said Grosvenor. "Let them bring their own surgeon! We can get Doctor Seymour, at the Shepheard's! I told Cherubini to come back there at once! He's a wonderful swordsman, and a good adviser!"

Out through the mazes of the great pageant the two opponents and their friends forced their way, and in an hour they had reached the slumbering square! On the terrace at Shepheard's, the placid Cherubini was already pacing, nursing his papyrus!

"Does he suspect anything?" briefly demanded Grosvenor.

"No! Mon ami! He only thinks that it will be to-morrow,—at daybreak,—and—all planned for himself! Come along now! Let me give you a few points on Count Ernesto! Captain Elwood, you must rouse up the Doctor!"

In the fifteen minutes spent in Grosvenor's room, the cool-nerved Cherubini became alarmed at Grosvenor's sinister quietness! His principal used exactly ten minutes of that time in writing two letters which he sealed with his ring!

"Now, give these to Seymour,—and,—I'm ready!" quietly remarked Grosvenor, rising.

"Do you know that Santa Marina is a very dangerous sword?" gravely urged Cherubini. "I have fenced with him! Let me—"

"Come on, Cherubini! Let us get it over!" answered Grosvenor shortly, as he opened the door at Doctor Seymour's knock! The three men went out into the hushed stillness of that hour before dawn which calls on all men for their utmost courage, when confronted by any sudden danger!

The great Esbékieweh Hotel was now dark save for a few twinkling lights in the upper ball room on the fourth story.

And, they passed on, by the silent gardens where no merry voice of Ghawazee rang out! The vast buildings around the square were just detaching themselves from

the deeper gloom of the gardens, and the three men silently climbed the stairways, entering the great hall where a group of three already awaited them.

On a table lay a bundle of naked swords, and a half dozen wall lamps threw a clear glow over the vacant dancing floor!

Seymour and Grosvenor seated themselves upon the wall divan, while Elwood and Cherubini narrowly examined the swords and then they separately came to address their principal!

"Don't forget! Testa Ferrata was his teacher! You know his style!" murmured Cherubini as he escorted Sir Harry Lingard to examine Grosvenor's body! Elwood had gravely performed the same office for the Count di Santa Marina, who smiled in easy confidence!

And, then, with the toss of a coin for place and choice of swords,—the seconds brought their men up, facing each other! There was a thrilling silence!

"One word!" remarked Captain Elwood to Sir Horace Lingard, "I am armed! If there's any foul play here —your man dies on the spot!" And then, with a grave bow, Duchâtel gave the signal for the attack!

In another moment, the hissing swords were engaged and the two agile forms darted around, casting strange shadows on the gayly frescoed walls! On either side moved Elwood and Duchâtel, eagerly eying the changing places of the lightning swordsmen!

Cherubini drew a long breath, as he noted Grosvenor's firm supple wrist,—his high-held point,—his calm parries and quick cool defense, and then, saw him give ground gracefully, and yet, hold his stout defense, with no attempt at reprisal! There was no sound but the clashing of the swords until, with a shout, Duchâtel called a halt! There had been a "touche!"

Gravely motioning to the Doctor, he pointed to a flowing crimson stain covering Grosvenor's heart! The Englishman's eyes flashed fire, now!

With an imperious motion,—Grosvenor waved off the anxious Surgeon! And, then Duchâtel, with a sigh, gave again the signal for the attack! "It is a l'outrance! I hate to see an English Lord butchered,"—his murmur

stopped, for, with a lightning ferocity, the blood-thirsty Santa Marina now pressed home, upon his wounded foe!

And, inch by inch, Grosvenor then gave ground, his sword still high held, his wrist flexible, and still risking no opening.

There was a suppressed exclamation,—a half slip,—and Santa Marina rushed in, bending slightly forward! But, he had mistaken the iron nerve of the English athlete who had leaped back, and waited, undismayed by the false manœuvre and its muffled *appel*! The fencer's last trick had failed!

With a "disengage," Grosvenor gave one home thrust, springing forward to meet Santa Marina's reckless rush, and, as the Italian rolled heavily over on the floor, his loosened rapier flew over the waxen floor, with a hollow rattling sound.

The Englishman's blade had made a sortie of sixteen inches behind Santa Marina's left shoulder, and with one shuddering, sickening gasp, the Italian's arms relaxed and he was lying prone and dead there before them all! Grosvenor had trumped his last trick!

It was Doctor Seymour who quickly thrust his hand into Grosvenor's bleeding bosom!

"Here, what's this!" he muttered, as the four other men lifted Santa Marina's body and laid it upon a divan! The Italian's surgeon shook his head, and covered the dead duelist's face—in silence.

"Only a scraping flesh wound across the ribs, thanks to this!" said Seymour, as Elwood rushed to his friend's side! "The point has pierced it and dragged it, over your heart! The sword was entangled in this, and—that, alone—saved you!"

And, only the Honorable Charles Grosvenor of all there, knew that the lace handkerchief of Marguerite de Valeria had been wet with the heart's blood of her lover! His one fond silent adieu had been to place that token upon his breast! The blessed chance protection of his stately darling!

"I'll keep that!" he muttered, half dazed, as they were turned down the stair. "She is sealed to me for life, now

—with my blood! Come on! I'm able to walk! Let us get to Villa Kléber!"

At the door of the stairway, the Chevalier Duchâtel stopped Elwood! "I'll come around for you to sign the procès verbal, to-morrow! I will quiet all gossip here! And,—you can say to your principal, that I did not know Santa Marina proposed to grossly insult a defenceless lady! A last word,—

"Cherif Pasha would have been very glad to see this dead man kill Monsieur Cranford—the financier! But, the son of an English Lord, an ambassador, is another thing! He is glad,—at heart,—to get rid of Santa Marina, I know! Blame me not! Au revoir!"

When they were in the streets when the gray dawn began to gleam, Grosvenor cried, "Cherubini! Get the first passing carriage! I must go out to Villa Kléber! Just as soon as I am dressed again!"

"Oh! It's all right!" murmured the cool diplomat, lighting his cigarette! "Baroness Rhoten will be there with the Duchesse, and, her Intendent will amuse ce Monsieur Malcolm Cranford!

"Tell me, mon ami, where did you get the aplomb to meet his crafty trick manœuvre? It was with that, he killed poor Rustem Effendi, only last year. It's an old dodge!" And then, Grosvenor's stern face relaxed.

"I knew that he was going to do it,—but,—he will never do it any more!" he said, drawing deep breaths of the delicious morning air! "I felt that I was only scratched, but—there was plenty of blood in sight,—and so,—he forgot himself and ran blindly in upon me! He thought that I was fast weakening! I knew that I had him sure!"

The agnostic Cherubini knocked off the ash of his cigarette with a jewelled finger. "I thought that it was only a lucky accident! Here is a carriage!" And then he gayly signaled.

"Now, faites mes compliments! I envy you your déjeuner with Madame la Duchesse, and that diablement charmante, dame Russe,—la belle Baroness Rhoten! But, —none but the brave deserve the fair!"

He called the nearest donkey boy. "I'm off for some

beauty sleep! I think that your friend is a very lucky man—but,—really, of the two,—I envy you the most!” he said, with a last gay salute as he disappeared, muttering, “Voilà le fin! Cherif has now played his last trump card,—and lost! The game is too heavy for him! But, diantre, what a slashing thrust he gave Strilogo! Ca-naille!

“He is dead—at last—it is a blessing to nous autres Cairenes! The fair Morelli is left to dance alone ‘dans ses bas de soie!’

“And, she will be a charming,—and,—a light-hearted widow! Cherif Pasha will be a light-hearted mourner—and—perhaps, the sole legatee!”

The two Englishmen aided Grosvenor to his room! “Here are your two letters, my boy!” said Doctor Seymour!

“It was a pretty close call! Let it be your last duell!” And, then, a vision of a happy day in the future rose up before Grosvenor’s brooding eyes as his friends aided him to quickly conceal the results of the encounter!

“Not a word of my wound! I charge you both! All I must do now, is to get Gryffyth away and leave Marguerite in absolute ignorance of the death of this dog!”

He rose and tenderly laid away in his desk the filmy bit of lace and muslin which had stayed the assassin’s sword!

It was in the fresh cool dawn that Doctor Seymour finished a neat encasing of Grosvenor’s manly breast with adhesive plaster and gold-beater’s skin! He stepped back and bade his patient whirl his arms. The right one executed the windmill act very neatly, but the left was painfully raised no higher than the elbow! The old Doctor smiled knowingly!

“For a week you will keenly feel the sore muscles! I will keep my eyes on you! But, the real trouble lies deeper! You have a very serious heart affection!” And, then, Grosvenor crimsoned for the beloved name “Marguerite” had fallen all too tenderly, from his lips!

“And, what’s our programme now?” seriously demanded Captain Arthur Elwood! The grave event of

the night began to look seriously troublesome now! But, Charley Grosvenor was ready for the emergency.

"Seymour! You and Elwood will first go over to Gryffyth's rooms at the Esbekieyeh with me! I will send Soames over here with Kenneth's carriage! He packs all your traps, pays your bill, and then meets you at the railway station!"

"The Alexandria train leaves at eight! Soames will go down with you! I'll have Bruce Granton send his Secretary also down with you to see you on the P. and C. steamer for Malta!"

"We will all be over there in three months! We shall garrison Kenneth's castle till you start! And, then, I can go out to Villa Kléber and bring him quietly away!"

"Monsieur le Grand Equerry Armand Duchâtel will cook up some smooth lie about Santa Marina's death which Cherif will approve! Both of them have cogent reasons for keeping silence!"

"By the way, Elwood, you'll probably find the soi-disant Sir Horace Lingard, a passenger on the same train!"

"He will know enough to clear out! Give him these two fifty pound notes and tell him to let Bessie Lightwood alone! Or,—else—Wrexham will have him extradited and locked up!"

In half an hour, Soames' flying fingers were at work in Elwood's rooms, and Jacob Zacharias had returned from the British Consulate General, with a simple verbal answer, "All right!"

"My father waits below with the closed carriage, Sir!" he whispered. "I will stay here on guard with the servants!"

"Admit no one, on any pretext!" sternly said Grosvenor, as he caught up Soames' revolver from a table.

"Now! Doctor! You are to ride down to Tantah with Elwood, and I'll see you to-night here in my rooms!"

"See here! Grosvenor! I have not said Adieu to Madame la Duchesse!" objected the gallant Elwood.

And then the Honorable Charles smiled faintly. "My Dear Boy! Don't let that bother you! I will bring her

over to Malta on our way home! As for Madame Carioli,—” thereat, the staff Captain winced.

“You can write her a letter in the train, and Seymour will bring it! I will deliver it,—*parole d'honneur!* We must separate,—and—now,—silence as to the duel!” Elwood nodded gloomily.

“The procès verbal?” hazarded Elwood, still anxious for another glimpse of Madame Carioli. He had resigned the Duchess with a last memorial sigh!

“Cherubini and Duchâtel are just the two modern Osries to execute that ceremony, ‘jusq’ au point d’ épingle!’ That sort of thing is their trade! I only wish to shield the Duchesse! Telegraph me your safe arrival on board, and at Malta!”

With a silent hand grasp, the party separated, as Lorenzo Zacharias showed a pallid face at his carriage window!

“He is dead?” shuddered the old man, as the carriage dashed away to Villa Kléber through the crowds of early marketmen, donkey boys and green clover peddlers!

“Dead,—who?” said Grosvenor, with a start!

“Poor Gryffyth! Our cause is ruined now!” mourned the old banker.

“Not a bit of it! He never was jollier in his life. He returned from the ball to Villa Kléber with a party! I am only going out there to fetch him home!”

The cautious Hebrew laid a hand on Grosvenor’s arm! “Can it be that you were mad enough to risk—”

“Say nothing, my dear old friend! Tell me all!” gravely answered Lord Wrexham’s heir!

“Jacob has informed me of Santa Marina’s death! There was a terrible outcry and wailing in Madame Morelli’s rooms! He was brought down into the extra set of apartments where the supper was given!

“And,—Abdallah stole away at once, and brought Cherif Pasha secretly into her rooms! She has her maids packing and she is going away to Cherif’s villa at Heluan! He will hide her there!”

“Ah!” remarked Grosvenor. “Then the blow must fall, at once! We will have Kenneth’s carriage at Villa Kléber when the train starts! I wish you to go and rouse

up Carioli, and, tell him all the story of the attempted poisoning!

"La Morelli is an Italian subject! You can tell Consul General Carioli that I shall have an order of arrest demanded at once by the British Consul General! She must never get into a harem's dim security!"

"Get from him an order for her to report at the Consulate General of Italy, at eleven, this morning! I will be there!"

"Come there and bring your chemist and the retained poison! She must leave the country instantly! I must hold the crime over Cherif! Take the order to her yourself, and tell her that she will be, at once, arrested if she dares to leave the Hotel!"

"I will come to Carioli,—the very moment I get Gryffyth away from Villa Kléber!"

"I thought that he had been killed!" said the old financier! "Santa Marina was a desperate swordsman! He had killed a dozen men in his time!"

"Listen, Zacharias! You and no one else must know this! For, Gryffyth has now to face Cherif and fight him to a finish before Gordon's face, next week! Ha! There he goes!"

Grosvenor pointed to Sir Harry Lingard dashing along toward the railway station, in an Arab fiacre!

"One rascal the less! We are safe now!" sadly sighed Zacharias, "but, at the price of blood on your hand!"

"The blood of a cold-hearted villain!" sternly cried Grosvenor.

"Poor Stephanie was in Santa Marina's power! Her shadowed past gave her no right to protect herself! The victim of untoward fate,—the mere hapless plaything of men's passing passions,—and—yet, with all a woman's soul struggling to throw off a burden of shame,—and,—to save others, while waiting passively for her surely approaching death at the hands of some jealous lover!"

Grosvenor sighed, and resumed. "When Lischen and Bessie Lightwood begged her to save them, and I guaranteed them all a safe conduct over to Trieste,—then, Stephanie at last, broke down, and in a storm of tears, told me that, for two weeks, Santa Marina had been prac-

ticing in her music room, down in the Arab quarter, with Testa Ferrata, the Italian Court fencing master!

"He hoped to provoke poor Gryffyth to a challenge, by striking him, and then, in a sword duel easily butcher him! The false slip,—the *appel*,—the exclamation,—all this was only a trick practiced by the two,—until Santa Marina was perfect in his part!

"In her jealous love for me, for I had always been kind to the poor girl,—she secreted herself in a closet, and heard the whole thing planned out just as coldly as the butchering of a lamb!

"And so—assured that the fracas would, in some way, occur at the Ball, I instantly knew the import of the Morelli's intrusion upon our quadrille! Thoroughly aware of his game, I waited in the duel, for his false stroke of cowardly gymnastics.

"I retired, instead of pressing him,—he was greatly disconcerted, and then, left himself open! Then,—I slew him to save Kenneth Gryffyth's life! He was caught in his own trap!

"Elwood is the best swordsman in the English army! I just let Santa Marina scrape me on the left breast, and then, he forgot all his habitual cruel craft! He run in to finish me with his theatrical trick! He was deceived by the blood stains!"

"But, Lord Wrexham!" murmured Zacharias.

"Will pardon me when he knows all! We have Cherif now in our power!" cried Grosvenor as they drove up to Villa Kléber's gates!

"Hasten back, now! Zacharias!" said the wounded lover, as he sprang out of the carriage! "Drive like the wind!

"Tell the Morelli that if she palters, we will have the Consuls General sternly denounce her and Cherif openly to the Viceroy—and he will be obliged to throw her in prison for life! All that I wish to do, is to get her over to Italy, and we will track Cherif's nest, by her movements, and so,—locate his hiding place for his plunder!"

"Lord Wrexham knows already! So do I,—where it is—at Baie—in the old domains of Tiberius," cried the Jew, "but—Ismail's hoard we can not find as yet!"

"Ah! There is where Gryffyth comes in! The fight is only begun!" murmured Grosvenor, as he threaded the leafy labyrinths!

A dozen servants waited his beck and call, and, seating himself in an arbor, he soon saw Kenneth Gryffyth, haggard eyed and pale, dashing down the path to meet him. "I am ready!" he cried.

"Is all arranged? Let us get away quietly!" said Gryffyth, in a hollow voice. "They are all sleeping! I have written my last letters! Here they are! Come on!"

He saw the carriage in waiting at the gate,—and Abdallah's turban gleaming white upon the box seat!

"There's no hurry! Ken, old man!" quietly said Grosvenor. "But, you must come, at once, down to the Esbekieyh with me! I've been called to see Carioli at once!" he muttered, as Gryffyth turned pale, and then started back—

"Santa Marina met with an accident, during the night, and—" the sentence was never finished, for Kenneth Gryffyth dashed back to the silent villa!

Grosvenor slowly walked toward the great shaded porches, and as he mounted the steps of the broad entrance, the doors of Villa Kléber were thrown open! The Intendant gravely advanced with a profound bow!

"Madame la Duchesse and Baroness Rhoten insist upon seeing Monseigneur, at once!" the startled functionary said. "I will conduct you to them!"

As he passed the drawing room, he saw Gryffyth seated with his head in his hands, and he heard the sound of a strong man's hopeless sobs.

"I have lost my honor! He fought for me!" wailed Gryffyth.

The Honorable Charles Grosvenor paused upon the threshold of the boudoir to which the Intendant had led him, and, with an unerring step, he crossed the threshold.

There was Baroness Rhoten, her dark expressive face now thrilled with a wondrous excitement, and, as he turned, a noble presence was at his side! He dared not breathe, in his loving ecstasy.

Marguerite de Valeria held his hands clasped in her

own. They were burning as with a lava fire! Her voice was low and sweet as the first murmurs of the awakening forest at dawn! Her eyes strove to read the message of his tender glances.

But, he stood silently before her!

"You faced your death without a single word, to me!" she slowly faltered. "And, you risked breaking my heart,—and, driving me mad!" She was gazing hungrily into his eyes!

"Seymour had the letter,—you knew—" he faintly replied. "There was no time, if I would save Kenneth's life,—and,—I thought that it was my place! Did you not know when I came to you at the carriage? I did not wish you to suffer! It is all over, now! Be calm!"

He ceased, for her loving arms were round him, and her head lay on his breast, as she fondly cried, "This seals us for life! You shall not wait now, for your kingdom!"

The beautiful Russian was stealing away, when Marguerite de Valeria cried, "Stay, Cecile! I have no more words! The rest is hidden,—here!" And,—she placed her hand upon her throbbing heart!

It was a Paradise of Love to the two who clung in a fond embrace!

"Do you know, Marguerite, that you saved my life?" cried Grosvenor, and, he stooped and kissed her pallid and trembling lips, leaving her cheeks glowing with Love's triumphant crimson!

"It was your own handkerchief which you dropped at Geneva, and Soames had given to Kenneth, that stopped the point of Santa Marina's sword,—and so, saved me! You were with me to the last! It was resting upon my heart!"

And, then, Cecile Rhoten fell upon her friend's neck in a storm of happy tears!

The morning came with its golden glory—and the day with strange events.

Madame Morelli left an aching void in the operatic circles of Cairo, for, by some strange magic, after a half hour's private conference with the outraged Carioli,—in the presence of Charles Grosvenor, she departed for

Alexandria, without even returning to the Hotel Esbékieyeh.

And the Consular Cavasse and the astute Cherubini never left her till the "Garibaldi" was well out to sea!

But,—Cherif Pasha,—when the disappearance of the dashing Morelli and Santa Marina was noted, only shrugged his shoulders and sneered—"They are queer cattle,—these same Italians!" And, no one but Cherif Pasha ever knew where the dishonored corpse of the dead bravo was hidden!

BOOK III—THE WRECK OF A THRONE.

CHAPTER XI.

WITH GORDON IN THE SHOUBRAH PALACE.—A VAIN AND EMPTY SHOW.—GORDON'S ULTIMATUM.—ABDALLAH'S BROTHER.—THE SECRET MEETING.—AT THE CITADEL.

Three weeks after the bright-eyed singer Morelli had astounded fashionable Cairo by her sudden flight, Grosvenor and Kenneth Gryffyth sat in the evening glow by the gleaming Nile. They had wandered away from Gordon's favorite palace, for the great Englishman was absent, dining with His Highness Ismail the Khedive, tête-à-tête at Abdin Palace! The struggle for the papers was now on!

The watchful Soames wandered near by, armed with Gryffyth's blackthorn, and conscious of the comforting weight of two freshly loaded revolvers! "No more a cuttin' up monkey shines,—now!" glowered the stout servitor, as he eyed with comfort a couple of Gordon's Sudanese sentinels, carbine in hand, pacing along not ten paces away!

They were of the tried and true score of men who came down with him from the Soudan!

Grosvenor's face was radiant with a clearly shining happiness and even Kenneth Gryffyth's grave countenance was serenely composed! The younger man eyed the Honorable Charles mischievously as he said, "I'm happy to see that you are released from duty at the Villa Kléber at least long enough to come over and visit an actuary who does not act! What is new at the hotel?"

"Nothing!" gayly answered Grosvenor! "The rush of tourists, and—the city drags along under the grateful laziness of the Ramadan! Our Moslem friends abstain from all work in this ninth month, as well as all creature comforts just 'as long as a white thread can be told from a black thread!'

"The echoes of the Ball have all died away, and I the faithful look forward to the Great Bairam, and its seventy-day-later replica, Little Bairam!

"But, our gay Cairenes make up from sunset to dawn, what they miss from dawn to sunset! It makes every evening a Walpurgis night. I'm glad that Gordon will not let you leave these palace grounds! You would be surely assassinated if you visited Cairo at night! The times are desperate, now!"

"Any further gossip as to the Morelli and,—that dead rascal?" anxiously said Kenneth!

Grosvenor knocked the ashes from his cigar and then slowly said, "I've had late private advices from Wrexham!

"She is hidden at Baie Castle, where Cherif's cozy nest was at once opened to her! Every one of the wiseacres here thinks that Cherif has hidden her at his Hellish harem! 'Certain stars shoot madly from their spheres,' often in the glowing Nile land,—and a smile and a sigh only mark their disappearance.

"Wrexham has a good secret service man in Italy watching her! And,—she knows now that Cherif would probably put her out of the way, if she ever trusted herself again in Cleopatra's domain! Carioli has telegraphed to his Home Government, and,—*la belle Morelli* will be secretly protected,—in return for her evidence,—when we need it!

"Of course,—all the gilded youth believe that Santa Marina spirited her away, for Cherif! No one sees him! He went down,—'unwept, unhonored and unsung!'

"T' *hâtel* is craftily quiet,—'Sir Horace Lingard' has just been thrown into a German prison for the attempted swindlery of a bank, and he will 'do time' for the Kaiser!"

"And the other women?" demanded Gryffyth.

"Bessie Lightwood once more bounds upon the boards

of the Savoy—with her open countenance and benign smile—to the huge edification of the British Public!

"Stephanie and Lischen are hidden at Innspruck in the Tyrol! Stephanie has a splendid summer engagement, Lischen is her haus-frau,—and—so, all their troubles are over! Elwood is promoted to a Majority, and goes out to Canada!"

"Hence, Madame Carioli will let 'the tears down fa' for Jock o' Hazeldean! There has been a secret meeting of the five Consuls General this week, and—they all agree that Nubar Pasha's ministry only holds on now by a hair! That will bring the final crash!"

"Each one of them fears to topple over the card house of the Khedive, and, so, all depends on your Commission here!"

"And I may be tied up here for months yet?" chafed Kenneth! "Even Gordon seems to work very slow'y! Shall you stay? It is a dreary, dragging suspense!"

"I am wretchedly undecided!" gravely replied Grosvenor. "There's Wrexham's dangerous state of health!

"The physician of the Embassy has been writing me some very gloomy letters! As sure as the spring opens, he will call Milly and Baronne de Saint-Nazaire over to Chillon, and—probably, Kathleen Lawrie will be of the party! I will hold myself ready to leave at the first telegram!

"But,—there's Marguerite! Her new steam yacht 'As-tarte' is ready to take us all up to the first cataract!

"Madame Carioli, and Cecile Rhoten will go! Of course, la charmante little Comtesse Renée will be on board, and,—the Duchess hopes to bring you with me! I would run over at once, to see Wrexham! But, he absolutely orders me to stay here till your work is done!

"He is in daily telegraphic cipher communication with Gordon,—and I know now,—that David Hart will never come to Egypt, and, that Benjamin and Son have already effected a plan for the syndicating of these three hundred millions of claims—and handling them through the different Governments! I can see the proof of that!

"The five leading Consuls General here do not fight any longer with each other, they are only holding Is-

mail's failing pulse, and waiting to telegraph home his first official death rattle! His reign is doomed!"

"I believe that you are right! Grosvenor!" said Gryffyth! "Zacharias tells me the same! That James Lawrie only holds me here, in the gap, to obtain the absolute proofs of where the missing hundred millions went to—or to nail Ismail down as a dilatory liar! He can never get away, now, from his broken pledges! David Hart will not be the puppet of an unfaithful bankrupt!"

"Can not Gordon Pasha see that Ismail is only jockeying him?" asked Grosvenor!

Kenneth Gryffyth sighed. "It is so hard to prove a man sitting upon a throne to be an arrant rascal! Gordon can not as yet see that Ismail Khedive lies to him, with his eyes open!

"But, I am told now, only to follow up Gordon, and to take my dismissal when he says 'Go!' And, besides, next month Lawrie will be Sir James Lawrie, and he has written to me his entire approval! I have done my whole duty—and, if the documents are ever unearthed, I will have three months more work here!"

"If not,—I hope to go home, via Lausanne and Chillon! Will the Duchesse leave Egypt when you do?"

"Cela dépend!" laughed Grosvenor, with his face crimsoning! "We have each some very entangling alliances, but I can wait till the end of my life for her word to lead her to the altar! Life can make her no more mine than she is now,—heart and soul!"

"There's Wrexham's cold insular pride,—that's all. He dislikes all foreign blood on principle. He will not let me go up against his superb fatherly nature and wound him, even in a false pride! You do not know how patient love can be, Kenneth! We can wait! We will wait!"

"I think that I do know," muttered Gryffyth. "If it were not Kathleen Lawrie's father who holds my pledge of honor—some other man would watch this crafty modern Sphinx, Ismail, in my place! He is a thorough paced royal dissembler and schemer! I am not his slave—and—I am tired out!"

"What have you done officially, so far?" demanded Grosvenor.

"You know the thousand plausible excuses of the 'Boukra-country!' answered that angry actuary of the great Commission, "Mr. Malcolm Cranford."

"Delay, dissimulation, and daily twaddle! Since our organization, we have had our regular sittings three times a week!"

"And,—they last only from two to three hours! The Finance Minister and Prince Hassan never open their mouths! The dozen mollahs, secretaries and attendants nod or smoke in the hall! Cherif Pasha holds tightly to De Lesseps' sleeve and cajoles him all the while! Gordon does all the urging!"

"Now, mark Ismail's sly craft! The Marquis Ferdinand De Lesseps, Eugenie's cousin, le Grand Français, is the Khedive's household guest at his own palace of Abdin! They do not even let De Lesseps have a word with me! Cherif attends to that!"

"The Prince,—the Finance Minister,—and the Marquis De Lesseps, give to Ismail Pasha—a friendly majority, and they are all closeted together at the palace every evening!"

"Cherif Pasha pleasantly occupies Gordon—and,—daily the Viceroy sends for Gordon, flatters him, consults him in all,—and dallies with him, and, so, beyond our organization, we have done nothing! Gordon is my only friend,—my only mouthpiece! The Khedive keeps secretly calling for backsheesh! That's no go!"

"And, Cherif Pasha, how does he treat you?" curiously said Grosvenor.

"With a silken courtesy," answered Kenneth, "and he has never even once referred to the ugly past!"

"Not even a mention of la belle Morelli, much less the dead Count. Only, once, he sighed, 'If you would only confide in me, as you do with Gordon Pasha, then our three votes would soon end your mission, for, you see that De Lesseps supports me! It is the Viceroy's wish, too!'"

"And, your reply?" impatiently cried Grosvenor.

"I will confide only in the Viceroy's signed and sealed

pledge of honor,—nothing else!" slowly said Gryffyth. "And, then, I roundly told him that all the documents sent to the Hotel Esbékieweh, and examined by Zacharias and the half dozen officers there were mere waste paper trash!

"You must remember it is the month of Ramadan—your Lent, and—we move slowly in Egypt," he grinned! He wishes to tire me out—or—force me into his camp!"

"How long will this child's play go on?" darkly demanded Grosvenor. "Now! I ought to break away and see my father! I have a presentiment of trouble. Gallant old dad! He would sacrifice anything for Her Majesty's Service!"

"Until Gordon loses his temper—and—discovers, at last, that the Khedive is lying to him!" replied Gryffyth. "In view of his vast charge in the Soudan, I do not wish to be the means of bringing on one of his characteristic 'turns of life'—but,—I prophesy that the day will come when even the dauntless Gordon will throw up the sponge!"

"Here is Zebehr Pasha, with his enormous wealth and all his hidden influence, secretly aiding Cherif to undermine and overthrow Nubar Pasha,—if they succeed—then, out goes Gordon—and,—back to Khartoum goes Zebehr Pasha—to be Governor—as Cherif's tool!"

"There are twenty wealthy ivory merchants coming here to see Gordon—in a few days,—for a last attempt to get a five years' contract for all the tribute ivory of the Equatorial provinces!"

The rattle of a cavalry escort was heard and a splendid court carriage came dashing down the magnificent avenue!

"There's Gordon, now!" cried Grosvenor, as they walked back to the palace. "It is a terrible time! Cairo is racked with the financial strain of the mountainous unpaid bills!

"The army is half starved and unpaid,—the streets are crowded with miserables,—the poor painted Harem fugitives throng the Esbékieweh in crowds at night,—and,—I believe if Cherif does not make his coup d' état, he will

soon clear out for Italy,—perhaps with or without Ismail!

"The pressure is too great to last! Over goes Nubar, or,—out goes Ismail! Of course,—the masses blame poor Nubar for all these foreign complications, Cherif is personally popular, as all easy-going devils are—and—he is now the head of the native Egypt party, with Sadik Pasha as his aide, the winged-foot coward of Gura plain!"

"So, you think the lady of Baie will have her tyrant soon with her!" cried Gryffyth! "They must have concealed their hoards over there!"

"I think that Ismail has divided up his cash between French, Hollandish, German, and Swiss bankers, but,—he, also,—probably owns a retreat on the blue bay of Naples!"

"For, there he and his fellow plunderer can renew the orgies sacred to Venus, Mercury and Diana Lucifer! Horace, Cæsar, Julia Manomæa, Pompey, Piso, and the red-handed Nero have left lingering memories there, capped in voluptuous vice, only by Tiberius!"

"Seneca's words are true to-day, 'There is no resisting passion on the Bay of Naples!' But, Ismail Pasha may find a Turkish frigate ready to escort him to the doubtful hospitalities of the Bosphorus, and—his end may be a silken bowstring! He richly deserves it! If you can only find out his hidden treasures, you will be a made millionaire, in a single day!"

"I agree with you, Grosvenor," muttered Gryffyth. "The two arch thieves will be true to their secret pact, at the last, and, no moral pressure will ever break down the guilty bond between Khedive and Pasha!"

There was a slight gray-eyed man standing awaiting them upon the palace steps! A throng of obsequious lackeys had darted out to meet Charles George Gordon! The gorgeous court carriage, with its splendid escort of red and gold-bedizened hussars was yet at the door and the ruler of Equatorial Africa nodded, as the friends came up!

"Let me send you in, Grosvenor! I need Gryffyth at

once!" he said. And, then, the Honorable Charles whispered, "Send me word by Zacharias when you want me!

"Remember—not ten feet, do you move out of this palace enclosure—unless under guard! Cherif's arm is a long one! You know how far he can strike!"

In a few moments, the Governor of Equatoria was left alone with his one secret aide! It seemed incredible that twenty-five years had passed since Captain Gordon served in the trenches of Sebastopol,—that fifteen long years before,—he had restored the tottering throne of China, and had crushed out the Tae Ping rebellion!

But, the Crimean soldier,—the friend of Li Hung Chang, stood there, alert and almost boyish-looking,—at forty-six! His close wavy gray hair, and the drooping gray mustache alone told of the lapse of time!

The slight side-whiskers of the Englishman detracted from the foreign splendor of his blue Pasha uniform, with the golden epaulettes of a General of Division!

Upon his head, shone out the red fez of the Moslem, his richly gold-embroidered coat blazed with a jewelled star and many orders, and the coquettish galonnerie of a French general gleamed out upon his sleeves.

His rounded high forehead, firm aquiline nose, and keen sensitive lips, with the strongly carven chin marked his face as strong and reposeful.

The Crimean medal,—the Legion of Honor,—and a Belgian decoration told of his stormy past, while a diamond-set sword, Ismail's gift, hung below his rich silken sash!

There was the glassy blue-gray eye of the strange man who had perfect faith in himself,—who instinctively commanded the respect and obedience of others,—the fixed mien of the unalterable enthusiast,—the man who, filled with some secret fires of faith,—was, like the old Scotch covenanters, "not open to conviction!"

"Come into my cabinet!" he simply said, as he handed his golden sheathed sword to an attendant!

There was the silence of a few moments as Gordon Pasha strode up and down, communing with himself!

"We must get at our serious work here, at once!" he began, in a species of lofty soliloquy, while the financier

wondered if the storm was about to break! "This dallying Commission is only a vain and empty show! And, I can see the realm of Egypt beginning to break down, now, at both ends!"

"There is alarming news from the Soudan,—and, in the face of all, His Highness has pressed upon me to promise that I will make it support itself! 'Lightly held, lightly won, easy lost!' " he murmured, speaking as if in a dream.

"For twelve hundred years the Moslems have looked for 'El Mahdi,'—a new leader! The Hegira dates make that epoch to be November 12, 1882! Now,—when I forced the Khedive to dismiss Ismail Pasha Yacoub,—the Governor of the Soudan,—I found that he was really behind the vile slave trade! There has been millions made in that infamous traffic!

"Zebehr, the slave king, is nominally under arrest here! His son is yet all powerful in Khartoum, and the father, with the dismissed Governor, and Cherif Pasha are now at work, forcing me to pledge the Khedive, from ivory alone, that surplus of revenue which came from the slave trade! It was an easy way to feed the harems with the price of human flesh!

"And, Mohammed Achmet, of the Island of Abbas on the White Nile, has now openly declared himself to be the Mahdi! The sacred standard is flying! With an empty treasury here,—all lower Egypt in a ferment, and the clash of Nubar and Cherif, to ruin all concert of action,—I can see that Equatorial Egypt will soon fall of itself!

"I have demanded of the Khedive my release from the empty mummery of this Commission! And,—he will not let me go,—not, until De Lesseps, Cherif and myself have agreed upon a financial plan to supplement the revenues! The other two are mere figure-heads! And,—I will not consent to lose Upper Egypt for a few weeks' dangling here at Cairo!

"We can do nothing! All the attachés spy upon us! The Finance Minister and the Prince simply slumber at the board! We are blocked by sloth and treachery!"

And then, turning to Gryffyth, he said, "What is to be

done? I will either resign,—or else leave Cairo, and go back to the Soudan! There, I can be of use!"

"There is but one thing, General!" calmly said Gryffyth. "You can bring De Lesseps and Cherif Pasha for a last talk together, secretly! Make your ultimatum to them to demand the documents from the Viceroy! Cherif is not yet ready to see you openly abandon him!"

"Bring it to a head! Let them authorize you to enforce the opening of the real archives to me! If the Vice-roy refuses, then—resign from the Commission, state your reasons—and, let me go back to England!"

"Then, between France and England, they will either provide funds to hold this government up,—or else select a stronger hand to hold the reins of government! Ismail Pasha has dallied with you!"

Then Gordon's face grew stern! "You are right! I will do my work either here or there! I will bring matters to a head!"

"Let Cherif name the place for your secret conference!" boldly said the young man, divining Gordon's mood! "De Lesseps is personally fond of the man who has made his fortune! Appeal to him now to save Ismail the Khedive! Charge Cherif boldly with holding the papers back! I can provide ample funds in two months, if Ismail only keeps his pledge!"

"It is Cherif alone, who undermines you in the Soudan! Cherif,—who befriends your enemies! Cherif who protects the cruel slave dealers! And,—Cherif, who has tried to have me assassinated, at second hand,—to break up this Commission! He has something to hide!"

"Why would he break it up?" demanded Gordon! Then Kenneth Gryffyth unflinchingly faced the honest inquisitor.

"He wants to have this financial deadlock continue, till Nubar is overthrown! Then, and, not till then, will he act to aid in getting funds! And,—France and England may act, first, and, so, Ismail lose his ill-gotten throne!"

"Even then,—Nubar would be disgraced,—and, Cherif be made prime minister under a new Khedive!"

"I believe you!" energetically cried Gordon Pasha, as

he picked up his pocket Testament! "I will have that meeting, I will have it out with them!"

"And, then, give Ismail Khedive the alternative to let me resign from this hollow mockery—or leave Egypt! Good night! I will give the Khedive my flat ultimatum!"

When Gryffyth gazed back, the singular moral enthusiast had dropped his head upon his hand, and was already eighteen hundred years away from the ineffable villainy and shams of the "golden rule" of the great Khedive! Soldier, zealot, leader, dreamer and lonely-hearted recluse was Gordon. He who would not wear the Yellow Robe,—and, who, scorned the Chinese Emperor's gold!

"I think that it is now the hour of doom," mused the lonely young Englishman. "Gordon's unshaken manhood will bring the wily Khedive to book, at last! And—Cherif, in conquering, must overthrow him, as well as foil me,—or else,—himself go to the wall!"

"It may be, at the last, an Egypt without either Nubar or Cherif! One English cannon shot,—and,—the whole rotten fabric will tumble!"

Seated on the great porch of the palace, listening to the faint-floating music of the distant pleasure haunts on the Shoubrah road, Gryffyth was musing over the awakening of his mystical hero host, when Lorenzo Zacharias descended from his carriage! He sprang to meet the anxious actuary!

"Come out into the summer pagoda!" entreated Lorenzo! "There is grave news!" And, followed by Soames, they hid themselves in the garden, where nothing but theplash of the fountains and the crunch of the sentry's heels on the gravel broke the silence!

There was a double line of guards around Gordon's palace home, for the Viceroy loved to honor a man whom, in some vague way, he felt had a niche of his own, in the hearts of the great English people—the overmastering "beef-eaters!"

"Home letters!" cried Kenneth, recognizing the handwriting of George Wilton,—the merry-hearted Ada,—and that sweet patrician Milly Grosvenor, as well as the covered enclosures of Benjamin and Son, which con-

tained those jewels of love,—Kathleen Lawrie's tender appeals for his return!

"All Cairo is in a ferment!" gravely said Zacharias! "There are now grave rumors of a revolt at the Citadel, and the unpaid troops threaten to take possession of it under Arabi Bey!

"I have had a sheaf of telegrams to-day! Vienna,—Paris,—Berlin,—Frankfort,—Amsterdam, and London, are excited. The whole Egyptian loan coupons have defaulted again! We intercepted an open dispatch of Mustapha Fehmy Pasha, from London to the Khedive, even threatening to close up the Personal Agency on Portman Square!

His last words were ominous. "Penniless here; all bankers refuse to cash official drafts or make private advances! Send personal funds, or, I shall have to retire with Prince Faoud and return with Prince Mahmud from Saint Cyr! Only Your Highness can save us now!"

"That means our Commission, and, my report!" coolly said Kenneth!

"Exactly!" remarked old Zacharias! "All the Cairene bankers, too, absolutely refuse to handle any governmental orders, scrip or warrants, and the Abdin Palace has been haunted all day, by the French and British Consuls General, in one angry party—and,—our three friends as an outside clan!

"Two score of Pashas have been gathered in the Divan room all day, murmuring and clamoring, and, the American Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Stone Pasha, has been sent secretly to garrison the Citadel and to hold it with a battalion of the Nubian Guards.

"He has a detail of fifty officers under orders to render the cannon temporarily useless, and to secretly guard all the sally posts! The garrison is really thrust out of the Citadel. No one can enter without the Viceroy's cabinet order!"

"Is the crisis at hand?" murmured Gryffyth, hopeful of a release!

"Not yet!" sagely said Zacharias. "All this, is only Cherif's by-play, aided by Ratib Pasha, to render Nubar

Pasha unpopular! A coterie of Cherif's friends have surrounded Ismail Khedive all day!

"The great ivory and slave-dealing gang, Ismail Yacoub Pasha,—the deposed Khartoum ruler,—and all the palace friends of Zebehr's ring are now working upon the Khedive to give Cherif,—carte blanche,—as Prime Minister! They offer to furnish temporary funds, but for the crown only,—if Ismail will dismiss Nubar!

"And, now, Madame la Duchesse takes a hand! She begs me to warn you that she will invite Gordon Pasha to dine at Villa Kléber to-morrow!

"You and Grosvenor are to be guests, with la Baronne Rhoten and Madame Carioli! You two men are to be mere social pawns! Be on your guard! For, she will appeal to General Gordon to force the documents out of Ismail Khedive!

"She is a witch of witches! There is nothing she does not know! She is on the trail of the papers which disappeared when the Mefettish was murdered!

"They were hidden up the river, and but one man knows,—that man is Hassan, the brother of Abdallah! General Gordon's head dragoman here!"

"You astound me!" said Gryffyth. "Gordon is not a party to their concealment!"

"No!" whispered Zacharias. "But, I fancy that Hassan thinks Gordon of the charmed life, the safest man in Egypt! He evidently fears that Cherif Pasha will have him murdered if he ever gets him in his power! Hassan was Chief Dragoman with the Mefettish on the Viceroy's yacht, 'Mahmoudieh' when the unlucky Fellah prince went up the Nile,—never to return!

"Hassan cleaves to Gordon,—like his very shadow! Now! I know that the Duchess has received secret tidings from our highest associate in Europe which has put the whole initiative in her beautiful slender jewelled hands! She alone, can influence Gordon Pasha without alarming him, for, he well knows that she is beyond all personal motives!

"And,—she can make De Lesseps bow to her will, and these two men, can force Cherif to vote with them,—if she informs Gordon of the absolute proofs that Cherif,—

Zebehr,—his son, Yacoub Pasha,—the ivory and slave dealers, and all the old Soudan ring, are stirring up this half crazy Mahdi to overthrow Gordon's loosely-held Equatorial domain!"

"Why?" demanded Kenneth. "To force Gordon's resignation or dismissal and to turn the whole of Upper Egypt over to the old band! For, they all know the funds of Lower Egypt will be handled soon by a Foreign Control!"

"Ismail fears to turn Nubar out too quickly, for then falls on him alone, the heavy hand of England and France! His only hope of ready money lies in Cherif and this party, and,—he dare not betray Cherif!"

"There is the record to face of all the funds which so strangely disappeared!"

"No! We have but one trump card to play! It is Gordon's fearless faith against Ismail's craft! Only the Duchess can undeceive him!"

"And she must act, for Cherif has set Chief Equerry Duchâtel on now to haunt Villa Kléber, with messages, cards and visites de ceremonie!"

"Mademoiselle Andrée Lafarge, too, has reappeared, en élégance,—as a guest at the Hotel Esbékieyeh! Duchâtel, the Lafarge, and Abdallah watch over your hotel headquarters, and spy on Grosvenor, and,—they will soon embarrass the Duchesse de Valeria greatly! She will have to leave Cairo, or dismiss your friend,—or perhaps both!"

"The days are drawing on to a mad riot of some kind! There is no money for the Bairam feasts, even the street beggars are desperate, and, the palaces and harems are all filled with angry conspirators."

"Even the pastry cooks will not supply the harems!"

And then, Kenneth Gryffyth told Zacharias of Gordon Pasha's stern wrestling with himself! The old banker's eyes kindled with delight!

"*A la bonne heure!*" cried Zacharias. "I will tell the Duchess, of all this, and Gordon's secret meeting with these men must go on at once! She will prepare De Lesseps,—who is wax in her hands!"

"It is the fight à l' outrance, between Gordon and Cherif, now! Gordon may win,—too!"

"Yes!" gloomily said Kenneth, "and, it may end as his fight with Li Hung Chang, after the victory of Soo-chow, when the crafty Futai infamously massacred the captive Wangs! Cherif is next to Ismail,—as Li Hung Chang was to the Emperor!"

"Six years of the best of Gordon's life will be sacrificed to his sense of honor and fairness! The Equatorial map of Egypt will roll up as a scroll in the fire!"

"And,—Gordon?" demanded Zacharias.

"Who knows what his fate will be? As God wills!" solemnly said Kenneth.

"From what you have told me, I hope that he will resign and leave Egypt at once! If he goes up to Khartoum, he will be surely sacrificed to this cabal, or,—perhaps assassinated!"

"He is a law unto himself! A wonderful man, and, yet, a man who has more of worldly guile, might go farther than he will!"

"There is no power to change Fellahin clay,—no medicine for the mortal illness of Egypt! It is only a gilded corruption! Now, remember,—your rôle at the dinner! You are to come with Gordon!"

Two nights later, Kenneth Gryffyth watched Gordon's grave face shining out, stern and silent, in the moonlight, as they drove home from the Villa Kléber! He had forgotten all the merry badinage of Madame Catioli and the Baroness Rhoten!

He had joined Grosvenor in gallantly squiring these lovely dames, while Charles George Gordon earnestly talked alone for an hour, with la Duchesse de Valeria, in her favorite nook on the piazza, under the Venetian awnings!

And—even the rosebud face of Countess Renée was forgotten, as he watched the stern self commune of the man who held, in some strange way, the fate of Egypt in his maturer hands, as he had, with the clutch of youth,—held up the cause of China! England's Christian soldier,—a later Havelock wasting his life in remaking the destinies of infidel and pagan lands!

"I shall have to work late to-night!" dreamily said Gordon Pasha,—as he stretched out his hand. "You will hear news from me in a few days which will either make our Commission a verity, or else—both you and I may leave Egypt! Good Night!"

As Gryffyth retired, he heard the last sharp command:

"Bring Hassan the dragoman to me at once!" Long after Gryffyth was tossing restlessly upon his couch,—the inscrutable Gordon interrogated Hassan, until the dragoman believed a Djinn, a veritable afrite of wondrous powers stood before him!

And, at last, with a plea for protection, Abdallah's brother then broke down and told Gordon Pasha a story which kept the Christian Knight wrestling with his sense of duty and honor till overwearied, the Angel of Sleep touched him, and he yielded, as Jacob did of old!

His last sigh being a long-drawn inspiration, "I wish that I were back in Khartoum!"

And, then, in Fellahin hut,—gilded palace, and guarded harem,—in café and hotel,—in the dim Mouski,—and the tents of the shameless Ghawazees,—all Cairo forgot its cares and pleasures, while the dark wing of the Sleep Angel drifted over the Mokattam hills!

Kenneth Gryffyth was summoned to Gordon Pasha's cabinet before eight o'clock the next morning, and found the conqueror of the Tae Pings already in his full court regalia. There was a stony look upon his face, and his eyes were red and haggard, with much loss of sleep!

"I am going to deliver my final ultimatum to His Highness!" he said as if addressing some distant sentinel posted upon a far-off hill! It was easy to observe that the particular party addressed was out of all interest!

He was slowly conquering his faith in Ismail Pasha's honor! "I shall send the carriage and escort back for you at two o'clock, here! You must bring with you, the list of the documents sealed by the Viceroy himself! What are they?"

"One set show every receipt of money from seventy-five to seventy-nine,—the whole record! Governmental,—loans,—subsidiies,—Suez dividends,—private estate,—gifts,—and, in fact, the State and crown monies, includ-

ing all the sales of personal obligations!" answered Kenneth!

"The other side of the schedule is to show the actual disposition of every cent of these funds,—and,—of course,—the Finance Ministry furnishes one half of these, and His Highness' Private Cabinet—the other! This is his task to furnish—and—it casts off the veil!"

"You have his own sealed engagement to furnish these? Bring that document with you!" commanded Gordon! His brow was darkened! "I must get it, then, from my place of secret deposit!" gravely said the financier! Gordon clapped his hands, and Hassan the Dragoman appeared!

"You are to take four troopers of my escort! Take this gentleman where he would go! Execute his orders! Guard him as you would your own life! Bring him over to the Abdin Palace at two o'clock! On your head be it!"

The dragoman bowed in silence! Gordon's finger pointed to the door! When they were alone, the Governor General of Equatoria said: "You will have these documents—forthwith—or I will leave Egypt,—in a week!"

Seizing his sword, he descended the stairs to his carriage, as if he were leading a forlorn hope!

In half an hour, Gryffyth's equipage drew up before the Grand Hotel Esbekieyeh, which he had not visited for a month!

And then, with Hassan at his side, and his guard of honor,—he ascended to his rooms, where Jacob Zacharias sat buried in worthless documents!

The Viceroy had ostentatiously kept up his guest's establishment and a score of underlings sprang to their feet! It was a visit of honor, now!

It was in the little room, that "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" whispered a few words to Jacob which caused him to turn pale! "Hasten! Hasten!" cried Gryffyth!

The young man turned to his superior. "There is only one place where you will not be spied upon—Villa Kléber! I will meet you there!"

"Good!" cried Kenneth! "I will drive there at once, and—await your father! To-day is the day of days!"

There was a gathering crowd upon the Square as Gryffyth's equipage dashed away toward the Shoubrah road!

The passage of Gordon's cavalcade and the movements of the mysterious guest of Ismail added to the burning unrest of a city which now knew that the Khedive's personal guard and officers were defending the citadel against his unpaid and half-starved army! A single chance shot might give Cairo over to storm and flames!

But, on the portico of Villa Kléber that morning, Madame la Duchesse, graceful and beautiful, listened apparently unmoved to the young man's recital of Gordon Pasha's vigil of the night, and, his prompt expedition to Abdin Palace!

"A human rocket, he blazes in these calm skies!" she murmured! "It is now the high tide of the fever in Cairo, and its turn will tell the whole story!" She eyed Hassan the dragoman, as he watched Kenneth Gryffyth, while the two secret agents of the great syndicate of creditors waited for Zacharias!

"Listen!" she said. "A new court is arising and, Ismail is practically deserted in his own halls! Nubar Pasha put all the young princes out of responsible office!"

"Now, both Prince Hassan, the cowardly hero of Gura plain, and the Turkish contingent disgrace,—and his brother Hussein,—are paying court to their easy-going brother Tewfik, as the coming Khedive! The whole Circassian party, too, rally around Tewfik, as the legal heir,—for, England and France will surely respect primogeniture! Cherif is the spinning spider, and,—his relative Ratib Pasha,—Osman Pasha, the Ex-Minister of War, the Soudanese slave and ivory dealers, all are fomenting the army mutiny, and, the Nubar ministry must soon go!"

"Arabi Bey is ready to storm the citadel in a moment—if Cherif gives the word! The whole of Cairo is honeycombed with revolt!"

"And, if Gordon succeeds to-day?" breathlessly said Kenneth as Zacharias stole modestly down through the shrubbery to the side door of Villa Kléber.

"Then, you will, perhaps, get all the papers of the first

half of the schedule! so that you can expect the enormous floating claims! Cherif will aid this, for it will enable him to roll the burden of debt, over, Nubar's political tomb,—but,—the second half,—you will never see! Before that,—the crash will come!

"Ismail dare not show the papers, and—if Cherif gains official control, he will not produce them! For, it would prove that Ismail and Cherif have abstracted a hundred millions of francs, in these five years!"

"How can he resist Gordon Pasha's demand, if Gordon forces the order from the Khedive to-day?" said the Englishman.

"He will dissemble! And,—there are a dozen ways left open! As for this court, they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net!"

"There sits Hassan!" said the Duchess, her eyes sparkling! "I know not what he did tell Gordon last night! I do know what he could tell him! He was in secret charge of the Khedive's yacht 'Mahmoudieh,' when the Mefetish was lured away on that floating coffin! Sadik Pasha never came back!"

"The Khedive grasped his score of millions! And,—Toussoun Pasha,—the real heir of Halim,—in the direct line,—he, too, went 'up the Nile!' Again a rich haul of plunder,—and,—another missing man! Then,—two eunuchs of fabulous wealth were, one by one, entrapped! That man Hassan could tell you—of the story of the gilded 'Mahmoudieh' slowly drifting on the broad Nile, when other cries than of the wild night bird—'shivered to the tingling stars'!"

"No! The Khedive, years ago, boldly plundered both his banished uncle and brother! He fears but one man,—and,—that one is Cherif Pasha!"

"To-day, the desperate Khedive has around him only the clamorous Fellahin party,—the German friends of Prince Hassan,—and a few foreign adventurers!"

"He has dismissed, one by one, the forty-eight brave Americans who grasped Kordofan and Darfour for him, and who, with a few others of the respectable foreign General Staff, did all the fighting in Abyssinia!"

"He would even dismiss Gordon Pasha to-morrow, but

that he fears the Prince of Wales! There is a popular belief here that in some strange way, Sir Samuel Baker and Gordon represent the geographical ideas of the great English people! He really wants the old gang back in Khartoum once more!

"Twenty men of wealth and rank have been sent up there at different times, to die in the Governor's palace at Khartoum! Gordon, himself, may meet his fate, there, by poison,—or treachery! And the news from the White Nile is ominous! Nur-el-Daim, the 'Continuous Light' of Abbas Island,—and,—Mohammed Achmet, the false Mahdi, are being stirred up to open rebellion by Zebehr and the infamous traders in flesh! Cherif Pasha has protected these covert sales of humanity from here, and,—they have supplied the harems with the wild Abyssinian beauties who rule those detestable haunts!

"And, the millions spent since 'seventy,' in Equatoria are all lost! The German Emperor, now Ismail's military fetich, is pushing into Africa on the west side, and, France and England will fall heir soon to the two elements of value here! France takes the main canal profits,—England will dominate lower Egypt—but,—all the rest goes in Ismail's fall!

"Gordon may sacrifice himself,—or perhaps abandon his wondrously victorious career, here—as suddenly, he did in China—leaving nothing behind, nothing—but, a stainless memory! Go now! Be silent! Trust to Gordon! Watch Cherif, and you have done all your duty!

"Do not come here again till I send for you! I am still your loyal Spirit of the Night! And,—I must work in darkness! Go to your Shoubrah palace home now, and, thence, direct to the Abdin Palace! I will keep Zacharias here!

"We have fifty agents watching all the eddies now of the great Cairene conspiracy! Ismail, the Khedive, a good natured Cæsar Borgia,—will soon be left without a friend but Cherif,—and,—Cherif will overturn Nubar! The banked-up forces may be fanned into a riot at any moment! Ismail dares not make away with Nubar! But, he will drift to ruin, with Cherif at the helm!"

As Kenneth Gryffyth stood in the door in view of Has-

san, Zacharias reached out a furtive hand with the paper! "You take your life in your own keeping now!" he murmured from his hidden coigne of vantage. "Ismail himself would kill you,—to get this paper back out of your hands! Do not leave Gordon's sight,—till I come to-night to Shoubrah, and take this away! May the God of Jacob protect you!"

With a strangely beating heart, Kenneth Gryffyth eyed the glittering throng of pleasure seekers on the Shoubrah, as he was whirled away to Gordon's headquarters to await the hour for the Abdin meeting!

"Sodom and Gomorrah in one,—beautiful Cairo!" he sighed!

He mused, as he sat on his guarded verandah, on the work of sixty years in the Soudan! His mind went back to conquests before the Greeks and Romans.

And all the mighty invaders of Equatoria had been foiled at last! The first cataract only bore the seal of a vain military daring on its eternal gates, and,—at Philae's unravished temple of beauty, the soldiers of Alexander,—Cæsar, and Napoleon, had left their proud inscriptions and sadly turned back from the burning and unconquered Soudan!

Bonaparte's wild voyage over the desert to Suez was but a reconnaissance to ponder over an attack upon India, and Alexander, the great Greek who lies in the drifting sands of the temple of Jupiter Ammon on the Oasis, had gone beyond in conquest! Even the wildest dreams of the Corsican! No man has ever equalled Alexander.

The wonderful Mehemet Ali, and fierce Ibrahim, his adopted son, had indeed grasped the Soudan, but no hand had ever held the reins firmly, since the "lion of Syria" came back as bootless as the rest!

Kenneth Gryffyth knew of the daring Americans who had served Ismail! Gallant Chaillé Long, with his handful of men had broken the mystic seals of ages at the Nyanza, Prout's work in Kordofan,—Purdy Pasha's wild rides through Darfour, had availed little, and, now, the black storm was gathering over the dauntless Gordon!

Of Sir Samuel Baker's work not a vestige remained! Gordon held the Soudan—but, only by his prestige!

And, loyalty, valor, bold hardihood had availed them no more than the services of the two score of Americans in lower Egypt! Only three or four American officers were left in ill concealed disgrace or mere palace danglers at Cairo!

A dozen had yielded up their lives,—of three Lieutenant Generals, Mott, Loring and Stone,—but one remained, now a mere figure-head! And, Generals Sibley, Reynolds, the gallant Carroll Tevis, they were all gone!

The services of Colonel Rhett,—the dashing Jenifer,—the brave Beverly Kennon,—Colston,—Dye,—and Ward were forgotten! Lockett,—Graves,—Dennison,—Loshé,—Lawson, Martin, and Porter received nothing for gallant and energetic service! While, Generals Loring and Dye,—Colonels Field,—Derrick,—Johnson,—Wilson, and Irgens received only a carelessly-tossed medal! Panders and cowards had double pay and exhibited decorated bosoms!

And, as Kenneth Gryffyth drove to the Abdin Palace, he recalled the fact that no military foreigner had ever made fame or fortune in Egypt, unless he became a renegade to both country and religion!

The career of Sevè,—Planat,—Minié, and others showed that Napoleon's flexible conscience was right, as to the easy road, when he himself became a Mussulman, in Egypt!

"The fate of the honest man is to be slighted, and—the pliant renegade to be sacrificed, after all, to court cabals!" mused Gryffyth!

And, knowing the lofty personal code of Gordon Pasha—he saw only defeat and self-sacrifice before the man who was now sternly holding the cruel and crafty Khedive to his bond and seal of honor! But, the silent stars gave Gordon no warning of blackening skies!

As he mounted the steps of the Abdin Palace, the loose disrespect of the usual ceremony was everywhere apparent! The house of Belshazzar was distracted with its servants running wildly to and fro! Grave Hassan piloted "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" on, through vacated

halls, and past the whispering knots of wolfish-eyed lackeys!

"The Soudan is all aflame!" he whispered to Gryffyth, after a conference with a group of excited Pashas! "Gordon is to go back!" There was huddling about, and—vain running to and fro!

But, mindful of his life in his hand, Kenneth Gryffyth was pale and resolute, as he was ushered into the presence of Ismail Pasha, and his restless visitor Charles George Gordon! The table before them was covered with a multitude of papers and the floor was littered with maps, on which the great Nyanza gleamed out, a huge blue lake! Stern and motionless, Gordon Pasha watched Ismail Khedive as he began his easy discourse!

"I have prevailed upon Gordon Pasha to stay here another month," he said uneasily, "on the sole condition that you receive the documents he demands for you, before his departure! They are to be sent to his palace,—to be under his charge,—forthwith, and, you are to examine them there—return them, and then make your inspection, as far as the first cataract, including all lower Egypt and the mills, factories and Barrage!

"This is my final agreement! I have ordered the documents to go to you from the Ministry to-morrow! And, —now, Sir, be active in your mission! Is this satisfactory?" said Ismail to the stony-faced Gordon! The words were full of abundant promise!

"Let me see the schedule?" quietly said the General, holding out his hand to Kenneth Gryffyth! "Have you anything to say?"

His calm eye seemed to pierce the young man's very soul! Gryffyth placed the document in his secret champion's hand! His courage rose at the sight of the calm English hero!

"I would state, General Gordon," the financier said, "that unless I receive the papers on both sides of the schedule, marked 'Cabinet of His Highness,' it is useless to attempt any work! For they alone represent the sovereign's handling of the vast sums to and fro, which have equalled the governmental budget!"

"The source and disposition of these very funds is the

main object of this secret examination! My report upon that, goes direct, to the principals in London who have only engaged to furnish funds here at once—on the basis of an absolutely searching secret examination of every resource!"

Turning to Ismail Pasha, Gordon said calmly: "When will these be produced—Your Highness?" Ismail extended his hand for the paper!

The Khedive read it with a changing color! "There are many of these which are very dangerous documents! Some are hidden away with care,—some are at my Hellenan Palace,—some in the hands of—," and—the sovereign hesitated, for Gordon's eye was upon him. The Khedive was at bay now!

"Will we have them?" the General directly queried, eying both Khedive and accountant! And then, Ismail sighed. "I engage to furnish them!" he slowly said! Gordon Pasha turned to Kenneth Gryffyth! "You have His Highness' personal word now. Let us retire! I will await the documents!" the great Englishman said. "On that condition,—and,—upon no other—I remain! If there is any default, I request my instant relief from the Commission! I shall inform the Marquis De Lesseps and Cherif Pasha of your personal guarantee! If they do not come, Your Highness can either send me back to the Soudan, or—to England! It is in your hands now,—and,—I have given my friend here, my word,—as well as Your Highness' guarantee!"

As Ismail Pasha carelessly thrust the document in his bosom, the young Englishman respectfully extended his hand! "Your Highness! That original schedule is the property of my principals, and was delivered to them by Fehmy Pasha, in your name!"

"It is my document!" sullenly said Ismail Khedive! "It represents my honor and your faith!" firmly said Kenneth! "You have the duplicate original, in your personal archives! Cherif Pasha, even, has obtained a copy from Your Royal Highness!"

Ismail met Gordon's steady eye and then he thrust the paper in the young man's hand,—without a word! He turned his back upon Gryffyth, saying carelessly to Gor-

don: "You are to attend the meeting of my secret council here to-morrow at noon! Remember!"

Down the crowded halls the two men walked along in silence, and Kenneth Gryffyth affected an absolute unconcern, until they reached the Shoubrah Avenue!

General Gordon was lost in a day dream! Suddenly, he awoke as they dashed down the splendid avenue to the embowered Palace! "I will meet Cherif Pasha and De Lesseps, to-morrow, at day break, at the Citadel! I have arranged for a secret conference!

"If they will do their duty, then, your friend's help may yet be in time to save this personal dynasty! If they do not,—there will be a sudden change of ministry, or Egypt will break up, both above and below the cataract! The Khedive is now friendless, penniless, desperate, and,—between Nubar and Cherif, he drifts to his ruin! Be wary how you return that document to its safe deposit! It is a continual menace to your life!"

"I have arranged for that!" gravely said Gryffyth!

Seized upon by a sudden impulse, he gazed at the great Englishman. "Do you ever think of yourself, General?" And, in a surprised voice, Gordon answered: "I will do my work! I have already promised to myself what I shall do—and,—to only one other,—I have given my word that I will not leave the Equatorial government, till he releases me, from my voluntary compact! I can see my duty, now, clearly shining out before me!"

He then lapsed into a sudden silence, as if ashamed to speak of himself! "You are not to leave the Palace until I return, to-morrow!" he kindly said, pausing at the grand entrance! "If they do not back me up, both our life paths may diverge here!"

"Remember, I am morally responsible for your safety! If this negotiation breaks off from any shameful cause, I will see you,—safe out of Egypt, before I go back to face the rising black clouds overshadowing Khartoum!"

"But, your own personal safety?" persisted Gryffyth. "He who noteth even the fall of the sparrow will guide my ways!" gravely said the heroic Gordon, with a deep sigh! "I am a believer, too, in Kismet!" And, he passed on to his cabinet, where he communed alone with his

own high soul, and sought the relief of a soldier's prayer!

Five short years of life lay before him! And, no man dared to dream of the ferocious hordes sweeping down on Eel Obeid,—of the thrice repulsed Dervishes, at last, madly storming the walls! The terrific slaughter of Hicks Pasha's army, at Kashgill,—the annihilation of the Egyptians at Tokar on the morn of the Dervishes' victory,—the slaying of Moncrieff by Osman Digna,—the terrible defeat of Baker Pasha,—the murder of the brave garrison of Sinkat,—the breathless struggle of El Teb,—the fearful fight of Tamai,—the stern struggles of Abu Klea and Gubat!

That night, while Kenneth Gryffyth counseled late, in cautious whispers with Zacharias, and sent the document coveted by Ismail away, under escort, the crafty Viceroy Ismail supped with the sly Cherif!

There were bold-eyed women at the board,—there was a huge bribe of gold secretly purveyed by the old Soudanese ring now heaped up in Ismail Pasha's strong rooms, and,—over the wine cup,—the two hollow betrayers of Gordon and the great Syndicate, laughed over a new plan! "We can outwit them—all—at the last!" laughed Cherif Pasha.

"I leave all the details to you,—Cherif!" musingly said Ismail the Khedive, "only,—I will make no change before Gordon is on his way back to Khartoum, then—at your call,—over goes Nubar, and,—you can fool these English bankers at the last!"

"As for the two hostile governments,—with the native Egypt party behind us,—France and England will be glad to handle the debt, and offer us funds—for,—you will have the sole charge of the autonomy of Egypt! But,—money,—present money, I must have!"

"Call on me! Your Highness!" laughed Cherif—"only—let me, bring a revenue in future, out of the Soudan! Geography will not pay your debts! You need money! I alone can get it!"

Charles George Gordon's faith above all fear, showed to him, that night in his slumbers, no picture of how he was "bought and sold with a price!" He slept all unconscious of the weary return to Khartoum only to be duped!

He little recked of the grim work of the fates leading him back to England,—and, then to India,—of a strange bootless voyage to revisit China, and find the murderous Futai, now grown to be the great Li Hung Chang,—the Bismarck of China. He recked not of wanderings in Ireland,—of the princely hospitalities of King Leopold, who would build up a new Belgium in Africa,—of an honorable exile of the strange lonely island of Mauritius,—of future toil and trouble and failure in Cape Town and Basuto Land,—of a lonely mystic pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and then, of dreaming again in London, of new conquests on the Congo! But, it was all written in the stars that he should be “called back,” and,—faithful among the faithless, receive again the Governor Generalship of the Soudan!

The long nine-months’ siege of Khartoum,—the stern leagues of the mad Dervishes,—the slow crawling up the Nile of the British relief, paving its path with corpses,—the whole of England holding its breath, and the platoon volley of the victor rabble which ended a noble life! Then —the martyr’s crown—and—the hero’s dirge!

“Through night, to light,” a wild pathway, winding upon itself beyond all the dreams of fiction, was to lead the noble Gordon back to the very house of his smooth enemies, to die nobly,—but—betrayed,—and,—alone! And,—England’s universal sorrow not unmixed with shame, was to be his monument of sighs and tears!

But, cheerful and gallant, recking not of his future, the alert General rose before dawn, and with a dozen troopers, galloped away through sleeping Cairo!

Down the dark Mouski, past the dreaming harems, and the vacant, open mosques—on, past bazaars where millions of treasure were lightly guarded by wooden locks, and the human parapets of sleeping porters, lying across the street thresholds, the brave General sped,—out past the tombs of the slaughtered Mamelukes, and, then, unnoticed in reaching the Arabs’ gate of the Citadel,—he was admitted by the guard on a secret password, just as Cherif Pasha rolled up in a closed carriage, with that half-slumbering genial old man of the world, the Mar-

quis Ferdinand De Lesseps, the courtly cousin of the woman who shared Louis Napoleon's throne.

The light of dawn was beginning to roll away the valley mists, and the shrill muezzins to call out from airy perch, "Arouse ye faithful and pray! Prayer is better than sleep!" as an officer piloted them up the steep defile to the courtyard of the vast citadel!

In that same dark defile, of the north face, a thousand haughty Beys had died grimly, caught in Mehemet Ali's grim death trap! Gordon rode on past the Mameluke's leap to the court yard, where Saladin's Banquet Hall in ruins, still overshadowed Joseph's magnificent rock-hewn well!

A monument of the treachery of the Khedive's blood was the dark blood stains still visible, the seas of blood which flowed on March first, eighteen hundred and eleven, where the cruel old Mehemet calmly smoked his chibouque on the portico of the palace there, and saw the Mamelukes roll in dying agony at his feet!

It was a game for their heads, or his own—and—he won!

Gordon Pasha walked into the great hall, and ascended to the rooms where Napoleon Bonaparte and Kléber had vainly planned the conquest of India,—eighty years before!

The rooms were haunted with grisly memories of old crimes! But, standing there to receive him, was the graceful and accomplished General Charles P. Stone—who had honorably filled every rank from Cadet to Lieutenant General! The dashing explorer Purdy Pasha, and that gallant Virginian, Mason Bey, and the lonely General were the last of his fellow Americans!

Gordon Pasha showed his order from the Viceroy to the last man really faithful to Ismail the Khedive, in the whole discontented army!

While waiting for the other two Commissioners,—Gordon Pasha mused over the story of that old headquarters! There, in the vast citadel storehouses, the plunder of the Mamelukes still is hidden! The spoils of Mehemet and Ibrahim, and even the remains of the panoply of Saint Louis and his defeated crusaders! Only the

Turkish treasury at Constantinople equals the hidden riches of the old Citadel of Cairo.

Gordon knew that the forgotten archives, hidden there, covered the disgrace of great historic commanders,—of many Christian renegades,—of Egyptian generals who were also paid spies of the Sultan,—the agents of Louis Napoleon, and double traitors to God, their honor, and their native lands! He knew that no Christian had ever gazed upon the hidden splendors of the Citadel hoards, where a thousand gray-bearded Moslems, cross-legged and weary, droned over these unending papers!

Gordon Pasha, with haunting memories of his own betrayal at Soochow, in the very hour of victory, conferred with the patient old veteran Chief of Staff, as to Ismail Pasha's weakened military situation! There was a long delay before them while the luxurious Cherif and the easy-going Marquis De Lesseps were established in the Pasha's vacant council room, and, coffee and cigarettes opened their easy day!

Stone Pasha sighed as he mournfully said: "Khartoum, the Khedive's jewel, depends on you—alone, General Gordon,—and, now only this old Citadel overawes Cairo! I am holding it with a few alien blacks, and,—a small detail of officers! There is already the rumbling of a terrible storm, which will break from the White Nile to the sea! We can only do our duty! And,—you, are no lonelier or less supported in burning Equatoria, than I am here, at the apex of the Nile delta!"

"It seems that Egypt is doomed! No one has ever built up a secure empire from this frowning Citadel, and,—who can hope to be greater than Saladin, wiser than Napoleon,—or bolder than Mehemet Ali? Even my predecessor General Mott, with the Sultan's favor to back him—failed! Suleiman Pasha signally failed, and no abler man than Colonel Séve, Ney's favorite aide de camp,—ever entered Egypt! We all have failed in divers ways,—Sir Samuel Baker failed,—and,—you, too, will fail, I fear. Where is the fault?"

Then Gordon,—the stern moralist,—the lonely man without wife or children—pointed out to the superb pan-

orama of Cairo, unrolled before them in the growing golden light!

"There is the cause,—" he curtly said. "A hundred harems,—the haunts of the vile Ghawazee and the accursed charmeuse! In the seraglio's infinite bestialities, all human worth is slowly sapped! I fear that there is no hope for Egypt!"

And, the man already secretly marked out for sacrifice, went out to meet his deceiver, for a guard was now posted around the Pasha's hall, and the arch millionaire Cherif Pasha was laughing over his breakfast, with the courtly old bon vivant De Lesseps!

Left alone, on the balcony, Stone Pasha's grave face was careworn, as he stroked his silvery moustache and imperial,—with slender fingers! Though the stars of the Osmanli, and the Medjidieh gleamed on his breast, the hero of a score of battles knew that never a single Mussulman would pull trigger at the order of a Christian!

"Gordon and myself are in the same boat,—or,—out of it!" he muttered, as the clouds rolling away,—showed the superb panorama of mighty Cairo, from the Barrage to Sakkarah, and from Abbasith to the Pyramids of Gizeh!

"There shall be no more a Prince of the House of Egypt," he sadly said, as he faced the walls which had once re-echoed Bonaparte's tread—and—yet he loyally played Officer of the Guard,—for the conference within!

The debonair old Marquis De Lesseps poised his golden eye-glasses, and trifling with his rosette of Grand Commander of the Legion of Honor,—murmured "Très bien! Très bien! Volontiers!" to every remark of the earnest and agitated Gordon!

The sleepy-eyed Circassian Cherif showed his Armenian cunning in leading out General Gordon upon the whole matter! There was an anxious hour of most energetic discussion!

De Lesseps nodded his round, well-shaped head—pulled his gray moustache,—and, enjoyed his cigar, while Cherif warily played his fish! "I am, of course, a personal friend of the Viceroy! It is my tradition to serve him loyally!" he cheerfully said, as he finished his

Chablis! "I will vote with you and my esteemed friend Gordon Pasha, my dear Cherif," he concluded!

"But," and, his gray eyes twinkled, "You know what votes and promises are in Egypt! Easy gotten,—easy recalled! The fact is," and the old engineer grew grave.

"You, Cherif and the Finance Minister are the only men in Egypt who can produce these papers, even on the Viceroy's order! General Gordon will get nothing of me,—but my vote,—and—my good wishes! I am powerless since Napoleon's fall! It is for the Khedive, himself, to avoid a sudden crash by seeing that Gordon gets them at once. And,—there are always intolerable delays and evasions!"

"I once put in five of the best years of my life to get Said Pasha to answer one single question! Now, Cherif," said De Lesseps, rising and flecking the dust off his Parisian frock coat.

"If you do not hold the Khedive up to his word,—he will be left penniless,—and he will lose the brave Gordon,—his only hope in the Soudan. He will be forced into bankruptcy—and,—perhaps lose Egypt! It all depends now upon you—Cherif!" And, the gay old French aristocrat shrugged his shoulders and then sauntered away!

Gordon grasped Cherif's hand—"We will vote and act, now, as a unit! Will you see that Ismail keeps his word?" he demanded! The oily candidate for the Prime Ministry smiled upon his appealing Anglo-Saxon colleague.

"If you will aid me to turn Nubar out,—General Gordon—you will surely have the papers!

"To-morrow,—you shall have all but the secret ones, the private cabinet papers of the Khedive, and, these will never appear while Nubar is Prime Minister! Let me pledge you my honor that if you will force this inflexible young Englishman to go over the government documents, and make his inspections, I will produce, later, all the other papers just after the Bairam!"

"For, I shall be Prime Minister then,—and,—I give you my sacred word! Will you help me with Ismail?"

Gordon Pasha's face grew stern. "It is for the Khedive to name his own ministers! If he asks me for advice—

as Nubar has fought against all Equatorial extension,—I shall surely advise the change,—but,—only on your personal pledge of honor to produce the papers!"

"He shall ask you, my friend Gordon," cheerily cried Cherif. "And you shall have all you ask, if you do as you say,—and,—you shall be supported, Egypt will be saved —and,—the Viceroy's debts paid! I will, now, call in De Lesseps and we pledge our solemn honor to vote, act and work together to the last!"

It was a solemn scene, and, when the crafty Cherif sent his noble guest De Lesseps out by the Gate of the Mamelukes to return by one way alone,—he descended the hill well pleased, leaving behind him three deluded and betrayed Christians! For, one Moslem,—backed by the Khedive,—had been too much for them all!

"Once that Nubar is out,—and, I am in,—then, Egypt is mine to control,—and—the game can be made to break any way!" laughed Cherif as he drove to his harem! For thrones could totter, but—the Harem could not wait!

Satisfied and yet not altogether deceived, Gordon rode away with his troopers and then returned by Abbasieh to his palace, bearing to Kenneth Gryffyth the news of at least partial success! He was just a bit agnostic at heart!

Left alone, on his stern silent guard, pacing the portico of Mehemet Ali's palace, General Stone Pasha reviewed his own chequered career, as strangely romantic a life path as Gordon's, and,—as little fruitful with all its heroism. Brilliant Mexican war soldier,—friend of Humboldt,—the guest of Kings,—Pacific pioneer,—and the Viceroy's trusted Chief of Staff,—he looked back to the dark days of "sixty-one,"—when he was "the first American soldier mustered in for the suppression of the rebellion."

And the drifted smoke of twenty battle fields only showed to him—the vain butchery of Ball's Bluff,—of which he was innocent,—his own seven months' life as a prisoner of state with no charges filed against him—the disasters and rout of the Red River campaign,—and the implacable hatreds of the politicians which drove him, sword in hand,—from the field.

A loyal, gallant and unfortunate man—he had gone away to an honorable exile under the crescent and star! “My life, too, has been wasted in vain!” he muttered. “For there will be a crash of the throne of Egypt!” And the man who had languished in an American Bastile on a modern *lettre de cachet*, sighed as he gazed at his straggling soldiers.

CHAPTER XII.

THE INSPECTION TOUR.—ON THE NILE.—NUBAR PASHA'S OVERTHROW.—THE PAW OF THE SPHINX.—RATIB PASHA'S PROPOSALS.

The balmy days of April brought bud and leaf and fruitage back to the trees of every clime, and flowers of every hue bloomed in the superb shades of Boulak, starring the enchanted groves of the Shoubrah palace, and lighting up the vast gardens of the Ghezireh!

In Gordon Pasha's palace,—there was a tireless band of workers now, for Lorenzo Zacharias and his keen-eyed son Jacob toiled there night and day over the mass of documents which had been finally submitted to “Mr. Malcolm Cranford!” The whole receipts of the government were submitted at last.

The Grand Commission of Five now held its regular sittings three times a week, and a singular unanimity of vote between Gordon, Cherif and the Marquis De Lesseps dragged along the Finance Minister and Prince Hussein, in a sullen acquiescence! There was a spurt of sudden activity!

In a separate wing of the palace, Kenneth Gryffyth had sternly toiled for a month, with all the devotion of a man whose life's future depended now upon his diligence!

A guard of Gordon's private escort watched the wing night and day, and four selected soldiers never lost sight, day or night, of the precious documents, at last dragged to light! The records of squandered millions!

The pleasure seekers were leaving the city of Victory! The Shoubrah Road was half deserted, and the flowers

bloomed unnoticed now in the leafy alleys of Villa Kléber!

For, Madame la Duchesse de Valeria was cruising on the Nile in her splendid new yacht "Astarte," and Madame Carioli,—the vivacious Baroness Rhoten,—and the little Countess, too, were rambling among the temples of the past far up the Nile! A guard of four men was on the yacht, with a staff officer selected by Gordon Pasha,—the Italian Consul's official dragoman,—and that serenely happy young nobleman, the Honorable Charles Grosvenor were the protector of these nymphs of the Nile!

Grosvenor had only quitted Cairo, upon Gordon's positive assurance that Kenneth Gryffyth should be guarded, day and night, and,—on his first army inspections, be accompanied by a responsible Pasha, a selected guard, and one of the Zacharias, as interpreter, with Hassan the dragoman, who had received secret instructions from the Governor General of Equatoria himself!

The Bairam fêtes were over,—the waters of the Nile had been duly measured at Barrage,—the Doseh with its revolting spectacle of human beings trodden under the hoofs of the Sheik-ul-Islam's horse was grandly celebrated—and, still the Court clung together,—and, still, the ministry of Nubar hung on!

There had been a lull in the urgent dispatches from London,—for, in some strange way, gold had been procured to ease off the most pressing claims of the moment. It was the last golden flicker of the fading light!

Khedive Ismail, when not closeted with Gordon Pasha in the intervals of the Great Commission's labors, and formulating new Soudan schemes, was now shut up with Cherif Pasha, who seemed to have rallied around him the whole vice regal family, and the power and wealth of the Pashas of Upper and Lower Egypt! His name was on every tongue—as—the coming man!

There was a lull in the surface intrigues of the court, and the Commission had really grasped, at last, the well-devised plan of quintupling the cotton acreage—of reducing all useless expenses,—of cleaning and opening the neglected canals,—and were, in good faith, now look-

ing to the great green triangle, stretching from the sea to Girgēh,—for the golden returns of the never-failing harvests only to be won by patient toil and the rejuvenating chemistry of old father Nilus' overflow!

The easy-going Ismail eyed his secret master Cherif, waiting now only the word to turn Nubar Pasha out, and,—he was ready with a final demand for royal back-sheesh destined to alarm even Cherif and his council of Pashas, with his cohorts of slave dealers and ivory stealers!

Cherif, at night, seated in late conference with Zebehr and the ivory dealers, whispered gleefully, "Once that Gordon is on his way, then—out goes Nubar,—the Sudan regime will be immediately changed,—and,—your contracts for ivory will be made for three years as soon as I am Prime Minister!"

Whereat, the modern Iago bade them purse up their gold for the Khedive's secret cabinet, and—to trust to Cherif!

Gordon Pasha was lulled into a thorough belief in Cherif, day by day,—as the three trained financiers at last drew something like order out of the chaos of the governmental documents! It had been the labor of thirty years for Lorenzo Zacharias to feel with his tentative finger, every corner of the intricate Egyptian financial problem!

And, Jacob's keen and youthful brain well seconded Kenneth Gryffyth's midnight labors! Gordon Pasha was busied by day with his fawning employer Ismail, or else, in dispatching to Siout and Assonan, the munitions and supplies needed to fill up the Khartoum magazines against all contingencies! He was as restless as a stormy petrel!

And so—noble and single-hearted,—Gordon toiled on in these April days,—his pet projects, his moral reforms and his clear-cut administration of equal justice, replacing the need of wife and children to round out his stern and lonely life! He panted to be back in Equatoria, and yet, he dared not insist upon his departure, for, he now felt himself dependent upon Cherif Pasha, the rising star of the Viceroy's court!

The Fellahin party was to have its innings at last! And, he must lock arms with them, to be safe!

But, while the official mill was at last really grinding out facts and proposed reforms,—while the opportunity to arrange and equalize the debt grew nearer daily, and the Commission was hopefully cultivating cotton and sugar on paper,—in lower Egypt, the sickening fellahs toiled half starved, cleaning the canals, and the villagers cowered under the lash of the professional tax gatherer!

In upper Egypt,—the Beys and Pashas ground the poor and long lines of men and women chained together, were being driven in from the outlying provinces,—the track of the caravan marked by flights of ravens hovering over dead bodies!

And so—bearing on their bleeding shoulders, the ivory tribute, both slaves and ivory were hidden till Gordon should go on beyond these depots, on his return,—till Nubar should fall—and—Cherif be Prime Minister! And vice walked abroad, while starvation and disorder lurked ready!

The palace and harem discipline was relaxed! The Ghawazee tents around Cairo,—the barracks,—the bazaars and cafés, even Boulak Island, and the great gardens, mosques and tombs, were populated with scantily veiled anonymas abroad in search of the stranger! A human harvest of slaves awaited the market, to be smuggled down—as soon as Gordon had passed!

Tantah fair was on, with its jugglers,—its charmeuses,—its wild crowd of maenads, and the tourists were intercepted there, by the greatest display of open wickedness in the world! Nautch girls,—santons,—soothsayers,—and fakirs,—villains and murderers,—gambling Greeks,—thieving Armenians,—escaped prisoners,—renegade soldiers, and enlarged odalisques, filled up the whole of lower Egypt!

It was a temps de relâche! But, the social poison quietly circulated in the whole body politic, and,—Nubar Pasha walked alone,—performing his duty in a perfunctory way,—secretly awaiting a French fleet in the Canal,—and,—the thunder of the English guns at Alexandria!

The secret foes watched each other like two grim swordsmen!

The weak-minded Tewfik Pasha, flattered on all sides,—cajoled Arabi Bey and the native officers into quieting the army with promises, and, the whole glittering ring around Ismail Khedive now danced to the quiet movements of the sly Cherif Pasha's fingers on the keys!

There were the piping tunes of peace! But—nobody paid the piper! It was, "Boukra—Boukra!"

"Two months more will tell the story!" said Lorenzo Zacharias, when he at last received the verified results of the whole governmental examination, for a secret transmission to Sir James Lawrie, in London—for the great Scotch banker had at last been raised up to the dignity of a Baronetcy! "If we can get at the Cabinet papers of Ismail now, and,—you can quickly finish your inspections of the proposed improvements upon the Barrage,—the canals, and the great irrigation system,—if you can hopefully report upon the value and extent of the Khedive's lands,—it may be that the Khedive's affairs can be floated!

"With the work once laid out,—the whole thing will move steadily on, to a final fruition!

"But,—whether we settle it or not,—through David Hart,—Sir James Lawrie,—and our Syndicate,—these plans when finished will yet be the basis of Sir Evelyn Baring's recommendations to the Government!

"It seems that Cherif is now ready for his coup d' état, and that for once,—it has paid him, personally, to urge the Khedive to keep his word! But, mark me, Gordon goes,—and Nubar is out,—before the Private Cabinet papers are delivered to you! Miracles can happen,—even in Egypt,—and,—we will see,—what we will see! Fear may have made Ismail honest,—for once!"

There was an unwonted splendor of display around Gordon Pasha's palace when Ratib Pasha was ordered by the Viceroy to personally hasten the labors of the great Englishman! Cherif and De Lesseps gracefully feted each other, and,—allowed "Chinese Gordon" to drag the whole official load!

To a man of Gordon's austerity, the black shriveled

petit maître General Ratib, was repulsive! Once the Circassian slave of Said Khedive,—he had passed a brief apprenticeship in French arts, vices, and wines,—and, his reputation as a man of the world, was duly equaled by his delight in cognac and champagne! A flatterer of Princes,—he had crawled up to the rank of Ferik Pasha,—General in chief,—and had been the social bear leader to the elder Princes! A notable example of a man who had “arrived!”

Now, cruel, crafty and wealthy, he was a brother-in-law of the great Cherif and had cruelly shot officers and men, right and left, by scores, at Massowah, Boulak and in Abyssinia, to cover up the burning disgrace of the Gura campaign, when the Abyssinians slaughtered an entire Egyptian army in a two hours' engagement.

Ratib Pasha was as fierce in vengeance, as fast in flight!

The open-hearted Gordon was unsuspecting when Ratib Pasha produced an order from the Khedive to personally conduct Kenneth Gryffyth over the whole of lower Egypt as far as Port Said and Alexandria,—and then up the Nile to Siout.

A sign manual firman of Ismail's opened the whole of the country to the inspection of the young Englishman! And—so—the land of Goshen was put under examination!

Kenneth Gryffyth was never aware of Gordon's personal precautions that Zacharias should report daily by telegraph, and,—of the network of safeguards thrown out by the three Consuls General!

The wise old Lorenzo telegraphed to them daily, and, also along the Nile to the yacht “Astarte,” now lingering between Cairo and Girgèh! The courtesy due the Italian diplomatic representative enabled the yacht party to know of their friend's every movement!

Ratib Pasha was to conduct them over the land—and leave them—at Siout to return on the “Astarte!”

It was indeed a wonderful voyage of inspection which opened to Kenneth Gryffyth all the secrets of the inner life of the Egyptian cultivators! The special rail train of magnificent appointments sped along over the great

green delta, the party eying the white sails in the midst of green fields as the barges moved along over canals both irrigating and navigable! Great palm groves,—vast fields,—the lines of patient camels,—the fellahs' village,—the banks eloquent of old tradition, and the remains of past luxury,—present oppression, and squalor; were companion pictures to the confusing wonders of the magical cultivation of rich Egypt, blending all seasons, times, and classes,—in one wealth of profusion!

It was in early May that Ratib Pasha brought his official guest back to Cairo, for the week of leave taking with General Gordon! The lonely hero was ready to return to his burning kingdom!

It was on the eve of General Gordon's departure, that Grosvenor arrived by rail from Siout to satisfy himself of his friend's real progress and physical well being! The young noble was struck with the preoccupied air of the great soldier of fortune! Gordon, who cared not for gold,—who was wifeless and childless,—drew the young noble into his private cabinet! He leaned his head on his hand wearily, as the visitor awaited some strange confidence!

"I knew your father, Lord Wrexham, well, and—I trust you—as I would him! I am about to be relieved from the Commission,—at my own request!

"The Khedive is growing jealous of my daily intimacy with your friend, and,—in some strange secret way,—he has got hold of a good deal of money! Ismail begins to fear some secret plan tying me to Gryffyth's friends in England,—and—to the money barons of Continental Europe! I,—of all men,—have never cared for money! I never sought it! He knows it!"

"But, he thinks that money and modern statecraft are always linked together, and,—I can see that he would gladly now separate Gryffyth and myself! I am glad that you are here, for, your friend must be safe! I may go up the Nile hurriedly—perhaps secretly!"

"There is talk of this powerful Zebehr Pasha's friends reopening the slave trade. They destroyed a hundred thousand men in Darfour in four years, only seeking an infamous human profit, and making the slaves' legs carry

them to market! And,—I may even have to go to Abyssinia again!

"I have the ivory trade contracts, too, to supervise, for I must try and make Equatoria support itself! Now! I will have a few last necessary conferences with the Khedive and Cherif! I will not be here, when the private documents are to be turned over to him!"

"Cherif has kept his word, so far! There is going to be a change in the ministry! I am glad that I am going! For, the French Consul General hates De Lesseps, as a friend of Ismail,—and all the Governments are strongly pressing the Khedive! I go away,—Cherif is relieved from the Commission as Prime Minister,—and,—the Khedive's jealousy is over!"

"But!" he said, solemnly, "You must watch over your friend's life! You know what dangers surround him! You must not leave him, for a moment! I have a plan!"

"What is it, General?" said the alarmed Grosvenor.

"I will ask the Khedive to bid Gryffyth to make his upper inspection as far as Siout, now. I know that he will never get the Khedive's private papers, till Cherif is Prime Minister! I will give you a staff officer, Hassan the dragoman, and a guard of six men! They will watch over Gryffyth!"

"You can telegraph to the 'Astarte' to meet you at Siout! A week on the upper Nile from Siout to Edfon, will give Cherif Pasha a chance to get at the papers which were in the keeping of the dead Mefettish! You can telegraph me the result up to Assouan! Keep the escort, the officers and, Hassan! Cherif will send them all on to me, later," and,—he gloomily concluded:

"I shall know if the papers are turned over! If they are not—I shall not allow Ismail to break his sealed royal word! I shall go out of Egypt,—by Massowah,—and the Red Sea,—when my work is done! If he breaks his word,—I go!"

The Honorable Charles Grosvenor grasped General Gordon's hand. "I give you my word, as an Englishman, that I will not lose Gryffyth from my sight, till you know him safe out of Egypt,—or—his work done!"

"Then, I go back happy-hearted!" said Gordon. "Be my guest here,—till I send you away!"

And, that night, Grosvenor confided to Kenneth Gryfyth what he dared not hint to Gordon! His fears that the slave-trading army would vastly outnumber Gordon Pasha's forces! "Twice the cowardice of the Egyptians in the field has nearly sacrificed him, and, the only fighting man he has up there is that brave Italian, Gessi!

"But, Zebehr's son Suleiman was slain as a rebel! They tell me," mournfully said Grosvenor, "that Cherif will coldly abandon Gordon, if there is a change on the throne! That the slave and ivory ring will again regain control! That the Dervishes will be loosed,—and,—that if England interferes to save her darling son,—it may be too late!

"Gordon goes back with neither army,—money—nor reliable officers! And,—if betrayed, Kenneth," he murmured, "it will be by friends,—abandoned at Cairo,—and,—betrayed—at Khartoum!"

"Why don't you tell him all your fears?" queried Kenneth.

"I can not prove this,—" sadly said Grosvenor, "and my only hope is that Gordon himself may become disgusted, see Cherif's double dealing,—then, throw up his empty honors,—and—leave Egypt forever!

"Slaves and ivory, they will have—and, sell Gordon's head to get them!"

The two friends sat late in the night with Zacharias, for the London dispatches needed attention! Sir James Lawrie's final instructions, in careful cipher were to finish the inspections, to await the change of ministry, to report on the Khedive's private documents and to repair to London, then, for a face to face conference with his hidden principals!

"And, you go via Lausanne!" gayly cried Grosvenor. "Lord Wrexham will be there, with Milly and Miss Kathleen! I will convoy you over—" he said—"as Madame la Duchesse goes later to her beautiful castle near Ferney! I shall await Wrexham's complete recovery—and then,—ask for his consent to my marriage!"

"And, if he should refuse?" said Gryffyth, laying his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"I will wait till I am free to marry Marguerite, then," gravely answered her lover,—"for our lives are one in heart now,—one in life and death! My soul and hers have grown together, in God's union of a perfect peace! We are one—in heart—to all eternity!"

Two days passed, with Gordon dashing from Palace to Ministry,—and hastening away men, munitions and supplies! The Commission awaited the results of Kenneth Gryffyth's inspection of upper Egypt, and the secret preparations of Gordon and his friends for departure were all finished!

There was a lull at Gordon's palace, whence the two Zacharias had departed to make their own arrangements for the secret tour with the Viceroy's mysterious guest!

On the afternoon of the last day, two score of swarthy faces filled Gordon Pasha's reception room!

There was Cherif Pasha,—and Ratib,—secretly smiling at the success of their plans, for the three years' contract for all of the Equatorial ivory was to be concluded in the interest of their friends. The special train was in waiting for the actuary's party at Ghizéh, and it was only as spectators, the two friends watched the bronzed captive, Zebehr Pasha!

He was a prisoner of state, conferring eagerly with the swarthy millionaires of the bazaars! A multitude of attendants and guards thronged the vast gardens! Lackeys served chibouques and coffee, while the motley throng of dealers watched for Zebehr's private nods,—and,—Cherif Pasha's smiling signals!

The great slave king, Zebehr, towering up six feet two, in his Arab dress, approached General Gordon with profound salaams! Through Cherif as interpreter, he proudly said to his manly conqueror, "You gave me my life! Gessi slew my brave son,—but, you are a great chief! I would sooner take your simple word, than the Khedive's bond!"

"I have been safe, here in Cairo, protected on your word of honor!" And, then he stalked away, dragging his wounded leg.

A fierce native chieftain of savage grandeur was Zebehr, and one who could not in his simple savage heart, see why Gordon did not make himself rich with slaves,—gold dust,—ostrich feathers, and ivory!

There had been a last private conference at the Abdin Palace, and Gordon Pasha, irritated by the Khedive's pleadings to make the Soudan self-supporting, had at last agreed to carry it on for three years, if given men and munitions, but, to be allowed to claim the proceeds of the ivory for his sole exchequer! And, he had carefully studied the problem for years!

And, the quantity of ivory which Gordon announced as even then, under his control had made Cherif and the slave dealer rub their eyes in astonishment! A treasure of vast extent!

It was the profits of this annual product for three years which was to return to the ring of dealers gathered around the high-souled Englishman, the secret bribes paid over to the Khedive! And, they hungered—for the fat contract!

The council had gone on an hour when the dozen of spokesmen announced their final figures for the ivory tribute of each year, payable in Turkish golden guineas at the Treasury, to the credit of the Soudan government!

The proposition was a cool and crafty one!

"The amount of the ivory is so enormous that we are forced to band together, and to unite all our resources in order to handle the enormous transactions!"

"We are all known to His Excellency, Cherif Pasha, and,—we make this as our joint bid for the whole amount,—or nothing!" was the final speech of the crafty Armenian millionaire, who was Zebehr's secret partner, and now Cherif's purse bearer, for his penniless sovereign!

"Do you approve of this, Your Excellency?" quietly said Gordon Pasha, turning to Cherif, the would-be Prime Minister! His gray eyes were blazing.

"I do! I do! These are our greatest ivory merchants!" suavely said the secret partner. He was on the eve of repaying his confederates easily!

"Then, I am not satisfied!" cried Gordon Pasha,—in a ringing voice. "The price is just one-third of the real

value of the ivory,—and,—I will break off the conference! I will sell the ivory myself—in London! It is under my control—by the Khedive's word and order! He shall not be robbed!"

An hour of expostulation and explanation failed to shake the clear-headed Englishman's views! There was a scene of barbaric confusion as Cherif, Ratib and Zebehr clattered away to meet and conspire in their palace harems! "If we could only kill him," they growled—but, he was a lion in their path now!

Gordon Pasha quietly wrote a half dozen telegrams to the greatest ivory merchants of London and Antwerp, and then—handed them to his Secretary!

Calling his escort,—he repaired, at once, to the Abdin Palace!

There was an interview with the Khedive which made the ruler cower under the glances of a fearless man! It was a tropical storm in fierceness!

"Your Highness! If I am right, you will support me,—and your Soudanese realms will be upheld! If I am wrong,—then, you must provide other revenue,—or another Governor General! I will not see you pillaged by your greedy subjects! These funds are now your life blood!"

Before the sunset of the next day—the telegrams from London and Antwerp, reported the price of the ivory to be exactly according to the General's estimate and the London syndicate offered the same price which they had previously sent in, as a private estimate to Gordon Pasha! It was fully three times the bid of the banded rogues!

To the astonishment of the dwellers in Shoubrah palace, the council was suddenly reconvened,—then, and the Cairene adherents of Cherif unblushingly offered the highest London price, cash down, at Cairo! There was no alternative left but to give the refusal to the Egyptians!

That night, Gordon Pasha gave his bond upon the contracts, and, after a long final interview of instructions, departed secretly for Khartoum!

But, the two Englishmen waiting for their train now,

were sad at heart! Gordon had not been allowed to say "Adieu!" to them!

His crafty spy and deceiver, Cherif, had used every state craft,—and,—only the telegram told the two friends as their train left for Siout, that Gordon would wait for them at Edsou, to say the last words!

"I must see you—both—perhaps—for the last time!" he signalled.

"Kenneth!" said Grosvenor, gravely, "Either Charles George Gordon will be assassinated,—tortured into resignation,—or else ignored and soon removed! The ivory ring has some reserved trick in store! His honesty has cost him his influence with the Khedive! They will never pay an honest price for that immense amount of ivory!"

And, that very night, the smug Cherif Pasha was gratefully intrusted with the government as Prime Minister! Nubar had fallen! Gordon was outwitted!—and,—the Englishmen were hoodwinked,—and already on their way up the Nile!

There was a sly deal in progress!

"Now, for the coming of Tewfik!" laughed Cherif,—"and,—in a month,—the priceless documents will be mine! Then,—I can make my own terms with France and England! I am, now, invincible!"

The Khedive slept happily,—for he had tricked both sides of his counselors,—foiled France and England—he had pacified the Fellahins,—and,—his secret private coffers were filled with Zebehr the slave-dealer's gold! And outwitted and betrayed, the lonely Gordon pressed on up the Nile!

It was on the second evening after Grosvenor and Gryffyth had left Cairo, that the special train glided into Siout, the terminus of a railroad useless to Ismail Pasha, but in time, a boon to Thomas Cook and Son,—the successors of the Pharaohs in Nile navigation,—as well as the future Syndicated Hotels, which will be a chain of resting places for dilettantes from gay Alexander to the majesty of Philae's lonely isle!

Under the watchful eyes of Zacharias, the friends had avoided conversation, for, Hassan, the dragoman, was

there—watchful at every turn, friend as well as foe,—and,—available to the highest bidder and, the last bidder.

They had passed a long procession of storied spots, from the Nilometer with its record of two thousand years,—to Memphis' scanty ruins,—Sakkarah and Dashoor's chain of pyramids,—Crocodilopolis, with its lost lake Maeris,—its vanished giant twin pyramids,—its fabled labyrinth!

Caravans of pilgrims on their way to Mecca had passed over the mystic Nile in their sight,—and the dark Mokattan mountains of Manfaloot hung grandly over the river to the east, as they neared Siout, hiding countless tombs!

The sun was setting as they stepped from the train, and its rays were gilding the brown sails of the fleet of Nile boats, anchoring in front of the superb causeway leading a half a league, to the mosques and palaces of Siout! There was a splendid carriage and escort waiting, and, one of Gordon's staff officers delivered a note, with great ceremony to the eager Hassan!

Zacharias examined the document and then handed it to Gryffyth, his finger pressed to his lips! A secret conference awaited them!

"He awaits us here! And,—at the Governor's palace!" There was no swift 'Astarte' in sight, and,—Grosvenor grumbled—"Another mystery,—as usual!" But, dashing down a beautiful valley, in half an hour, they crossed a stream where at the end of a stone bridge, was the walled city's one gate! Ten minutes more,—brought the two friends into Gordon's presence, in the magnificent interior of the Governor Pasha's palace!

The streets were filled with rampant beggars,—bayaderes,—Nautch girls and Ghawazees,—pilgrims, wild Dervishes, Bedouins, and lounging Arabs, eunuchs and all the motley soldiery. A train of dark-robed women with wild howls, followed a funeral procession, while Copts, Turks, and peddlers lounged in wait, in every corner!

Hideous Santons, filthy and with matted hair,—rushed around in semi-nudity,—mild-eyed Kootebs and austere

Welis watched unmoved, the Santons' promiscuous embraces of the passive and deluded Mussulman women!

It was the whole infamous procession of the Nile,—where the living profane the face of Nature,—as well as the stupendous tombs of the mighty royal dead! Their friend received them with callous caution! Gordon Pasha, with a sign, bade them be seated! He was examining a file of telegrams, and dictating answers to his favorite interpreter! The General's face was overcast with care!

In ten minutes, he led the tired travelers away to a private banquet room, when he had received a personal report from his steward! There was no one in the room, when Gordon quietly said, "Dine and rest yourselves! I'll send Hassan in here to wait upon you! and your two interpreters! There is news of vast importance!"

"Cherif is now Prime Minister! We are still watched here by Nubar's hostile spies! At midnight, there will be two carriages for us! I will go up to Girgèh, with you on the 'Astarte!' The yacht will pick us up to-night two or three miles above the city! I must see the Duchess of Valeria,—and,—Madame Carioli! Not one word to a soul here!"

The sad-eyed Zacharias was the last to join the hungry travelers!

He whispered to Gryffyth, "Carioli has sent dozens of telegrams to his wife! There is history being quickly made at Cairo, now, and that is why we, as well as Gordon, were rushed off by Cherif, on this distant tour!"

The old banker would not speak of their dangerous quest, but in the long hours of waiting he told of the Nile legends of his own mysterious race,—of the Greek convents of the Natron Valley,—of Birket lake,—and the vanished Maeris,—of Abusir's pyramids,—of mystic Beni Hassan,—of Saint Anthony's rocky haunts,—of magnificent Heracleopolis,—and the sculptured catacombs of Mokattam,—the exquisitely painted tombs overhanging Siout!

"It is sad and strange!" he whispered to Gryffyth, as Gordon himself came to lead them away, after his conferences with the lying Pashas were finished! "That

noble man,—with spies, enemies and liars around him, can not see that he is daily betrayed! At night, they pull the wall down, faster than he builds it!

"All his telegrams sent through Cherif's crafty hands now, are only blinds, altered mutilations or lying traps, to lull him away to Khartoum! He never will be able to deliver a single ton of that ivory!"

They were smuggled out of a side door, and in the soft night driven rapidly along under the stars!

"Our luggage?" queried Gryffyth!

"Gordon Pasha has attended to all!" musingly said Zacharias! "I only pray that no spy is allowed to board the 'Astarte'!"

Along the cool banks of the Nile, under the midnight stars, they rolled along, until,—abruptly halting at a small cove, the party were ferried out fifty yards in a canoe, to the graceful "Astarte," where steam was hissing a warning signal! At the gangway, the stern-faced Gordon Pasha inspected every face as the party boarded the yacht!

And, as Lorenzo Zacharias quietly slipped aboard, Gordon raised his hand to the Italian Consul General's Dragoman,—then,—the "Astarte" sped away with her paddle-wheels throwing up fountains of diamond spray, and every plate quivering under her bird-like speed! The shades of night covered the flitting!

The friends were seated on the deck, in anxious expectancy for an hour, while the lights shone out from the cabin, where Charles George Gordon, for the first time,—learned all the truths of the overthrow of Nubar from the astute Madame Carioli, and that fair Spirit of the Nile, the Duchess Marguerite! The Pasha's face was marble pale, as he was conducted to his berth in the guest cabin! With only a whispered greeting of welcome,—the Duchess dismissed her younger guests!

"Not a word till Gordon leaves the vessel, to-morrow night, at Girgèh! We will have another day's cipher dispatches there! He is walking in the Valley of the Shadow! Cherif's hand is clutching now, at all of Egypt!"

"And,—my mission," faltered Gryffyth.

"Wait!" smiled the beautiful apparition! "You have only your duty to do,—and,—your reward is sure! The curtain then rings up,—for the closing act! Wait till he leaves the yacht! The play is played around him,—now,—as a central figure!"

"Why not undeceive him?" impetuously burst out Gryffyth!

"No one dares to break in upon his self-devotion,—and,—his fate is written in the stars! No one can guide Gordon! Half hero,—half recluse,—I dare not attempt it!"

The Duchess turned—and,—as she fled,—the night seemed to have lost its loveliness, though Madame Carioli and the winsome Baroness Rhoten had sighed softly, "Good Night, and pleasant dreams!"

It was a long day which dawned for Grosvenor and Gryffyth as the beautiful "Astarte" swept along towards Girgēh! The young men were sole tenants of the deck with the pretty Baroness Rhoten, for, in the cabin, General Gordon sat, as the eager listener, while Madame Carioli and the Duchess deciphered the Consul General's secret dispatches from Cairo!

There was food for the eye,—sport for the gunner, and interest for the tourist, as the swift boat stemmed the current! Zacharias was a guide book of Bahari,—Vostani,—and Said, the three divisions of Egypt proper, and he accentuated the skirmishing for wild geese and fowl, and the rifle practice for gazelle and the sly crocodile,—with tales of the great Oasis, where the Roman forts still mark the track of the army which despoiled the Temple of Jupiter Ammon, and robbed its golden hoards!

The "Astarte" swept on past Djiddeh, as the sun declined, and there, Zacharias led Gryffyth to the side of the vessel! Hundreds of rude huts stretched out to the hills beyond the town! "Here," he whispered, "is the distributing point, for the slaves from Dongola and Sennaar! I learned, last night, that Zebehr, Cherif and their friends, will have ten thousand slaves here ready for sale and distribution, as soon as Gordon is safely out of the way, crossing the Big Bend of the Nile to Khartoum!"

"For what purpose? The trade is forbidden!" cried

the astonished actuary! "They will be drafted to secretly fill up the cotton and sugar plantations of the Viceroy and the Prime Minister! Gordon has been hoodwinked,—from first to last! He has stopped the open slave trade in the Soudan, but, now,—the gates are ajar! The multitude will be marched down the left bank of the Nile, avoiding the first cataract, and, distributed from here! The men to the fields and canals,—the women to the harems and drudgery,—the children sold as attendants! Moving millions of profit in human flesh will march here, and,—in future years,—they will be laden with ivory stolen from the government!

"Gordon Pasha rang the knell of his government when he admitted that he could supply yearly for London and Antwerp's auctions, a million pounds of ivory worth an average of three dollars a pound! All but a tithe of this great store,—nearly two million pounds sterling in value, will be diverted from the public revenue!"

"And how?" queried Gryffyth.

"By advancing a half million sterling, ready money, to the bankrupt Khedive, this infamous ring has just turned the government over! They mean to steal the ivory later!"

Kenneth Gryffyth dared not break in upon the forced calmness of Gordon Pasha—when the "*Astarte*" swept up to the bank at Girgēh, and a score of attendants removed the Pasha's belongings to the Viceregal steamer, "*Mehemet Ali*," waiting there, densely crowded with troops and escort! The parting hour was at hand!

"I will send for you—as soon as I get my dispatches, gentlemen," said Gordon. "I have before me a week to the first cataract, and a long forty days by boat and camel to Khartoum! Pray do not leave this boat a moment!" There was a Viceregal dispatch boat lying alongside the "*Mehemet Ali*!"

Madame Carioli, her husband's dragoman, and the Duchesse de Valeria passed on to the cabin of the Pasha on the "*Mehemet Ali*!" It was nearly midnight when the ladies returned, under the escort of Gordon himself!

They passed weeping down into their cabin, while the great Englishman signed to the friends to follow him!

The little dispatch boat whistled and then—sped away down the river, as General Gordon closed the door of his private cabin! His face was as fixed and stern as a carven cameo!

"I have had my first personal orders from Cherif Pasha as Prime Minister here! Hassan, the Dragoman, is already on his way, down the river, to join the Chief Accountant who will now find and produce for you the private cabinet documents which will finish your labors! I have directed Madame la Duchesse to show you the river as far as Edfou, and then,—to safely return you to Cairo. You have the whole arable land in view, from Edfou to Cairo, an average width of twenty miles, save at Rikka, where the valley is eighty miles broad.

"One plantation, one ditch, one canal, one field, is a type of all! I have had private hints from Lord Wrexham of what should be done for you! Carioli will be your best friend! In finesse, he is an Egyptian! Trust to him, he will quarter you at Villa Kléber while you look over the last private figures, and, Madame la Duchesse will be his guest! She will guard you and advise you!"

"I shall know at the Cataracts if Cherif has kept his word and has given you the documents! I have done all I could! De Lesseps is now President of the Commission, Osman Pasha, and Ratib Pasha replace myself and Cherif! I can leave you safely here with Lord Wrexham's son,—and,—under British protection! Make an honest and able report to the Viceroy, and to your principals!"

"Tell the whole truth! If you do no more than furnish a basis for a final liquidation by the five great powers, you have done your duty!" Gordon paused! "I fear," he slowly said,—"that Egypt is hopelessly bankrupt,—however, and—that liquidation will only mean foreign control!"

"But, my duty is at Khartoum, perhaps even a second visit to Abyssinia!" He held his hand out to Kenneth! "Good-bye, my brave young friend!"

"And, your own future? General!" said Gryffyth, his eyes moistening!

"As God wills! A wifeless, childless soldier can lay

his bones anywhere! No king ever had power to choose his own fate,—neither sage,—conqueror, nor magi can read the future, any further than a gaping infant! We are all of us in God's hands!"

Kenneth Gryffyth silently passed out of the room, as Gordon Pasha signed to Grosvenor to remain! A strange light shone on the soldier's noble face!

In half an hour, the overloaded "Mehemet Ali" was straining her way around the farthest bend of the river! The "Astarte" had dropped down a mile below the town, and the mournful silence of the Nile was unbroken save by the splash of the leaping fish!

Grosvenor had sought his cabin, in silence, for Gordon's last word had been, "I give your friend's life into your watchful care! Egypt is now under the paw of the Sphinx! Cherif Pasha reigns supreme! And,—whether revolution,—abdication,—or deposition, awaits Ismail Pasha, no one can tell; not, even, the royal spendthrift beggar, himself!

"But,—I charge you,—the very moment his duty is done,—get him out of Egypt! I shall await the slow unrolling of the scroll of Fate,—and,—I may even be in London before you! If Cherif does not furnish the documents,—then beware of the stroke of the Sphinx' paw!

"There are unseen forces behind Cherif which baffle me,—for my official stories are not the secret dispatches sent by Carioli to warn the Duchess!"

The "Astarte" was still lying motionless when Marguerite de Valeria received her silent knight upon the quarter deck, the next morning, while Grosvenor led away the fair Italian and Russian!

"Now!" said the stately lady. "We have seen the last of the noblest knight of modern Christendom! I have tried to warn or save Gordon Pasha! He is utterly indifferent to removal,—and,—alas—equally fearless, as regards betrayal! To throw off all Nubar's spies, we will give a week to Denderah, Thebes and Karnak! Hassan, the Dragoman, is on his way back, and Carioli's two best spies are unconsciously watching him!"

"When I receive the private signal which I wait for at

Girgèh, then the 'Astarte' will land you in two days at Cairo!

"For, in Cherif's hands, now, rests the destiny of Egypt and—the fate of his partner and master, his prince and his accomplice! I do not dare even to whisper to you,—what you must only know, when the paw of the Sphinx has crushed its prey!"

They all gathered under the stern awning while Zacharias told strange stories of Djinn and Afrite, of the vanished kings of Antacopolis,—Chennis, and Abydus! The beautiful yacht moved forward at half speed, while the Duchess questioned the recondite old Hebrew scholar!

"There was a great expedition fitted out a few years ago, under the direction of the Khedive, to search for an immense golden treasure concealed here! Brugsch Bey, the wonderful savant, found an old papyrus taken from one of the temples of Denderah! What became of it?"

Zacharias smiled, as he pointed to the far mountains overhanging Gheneh. "Twenty leagues to the eastward, at old Gheneh, the ruins were discovered whose traces answered the description of the papyrus! A French equerry,—a German mining engineer,—and, one of the Khedive's trusted eunuchs, were given this secret mission!

"The Beni Wassel Arabs and a detachment of the Nubian Guards were given the task of the excavations! At length, wearied out with fatigues and disputes, the Arabs mutinied, and even the soldiers were drawn away by a pig-headed Pasha! The Frenchman and German wandered back down the Nile, and were contemptuously dismissed the service! .

"But, two years later, one of the American officers found, on a reconnaissance, that extensive secret and recent work had been done. The bones of the murdered eunuch were found! The trail of a recent caravan to Kosseir was discovered, and, a modern Monte Cristo in France,—together with a suddenly enriched Freiherr, by purchase on the Rhine, never told the details of the enormous treasure in gold, pearls and emeralds which they had promptly discovered and recovered with artful care, after silencing the eunuch!"

"In two seasons, the work of discovery was done,—and,—all the treasure trove removed, upon a French pleasure yacht which had long hovered idly around Kosseir. Nothing succeeds in Egypt," mused Zacharias. "I secretly learned of this treachery from some of my co-religionists, and,—only the fear of sacrificing the innocent Brugsch Bey, kept me silent!"

"Perhaps the two scoundrels had as much legal right to the treasures as the nameless grandson of the Albanian woman whom Mehemet Ali loved so tenderly! Everything is sold in Egypt,—the plans of the citadel,—the torpedo system at Alexandria,—the details of the Barrage, and the great bridge at Kafreez, and Asi, have been sold to every available foreign government!"

"It is a land of misery and mystery,—of treachery and terror! The discovered treasure was of an enormous value, both artistically and intrinsically!"

"We will now go up to the most royal panorama of the world," said the musing Duchess. "Denderah,—Thebes,—Luxor, and Karnak! We will dream a few days in the past, and,—then,—drift down again, into the meaner Egypt of to-day,—the vilest of the vile of nations!"

Four days later, the "Astarte" swept, bird-like, back down the Nile from Edfou, bearing the secretly excited tourists! Though the five who were now in the secret of Gordon's uneasiness, and Cherif Pasha's sudden rise to power, feared a secret change of heart, there was yet, the Khedive's solemn promise to rely on!

They had wandered through the stupendous ruins of Karnak, Luxor and Thebes! They had seen Edfou with all its hordes of wild spearmen, and the fierce Bedouin Arabs in their war panoply, with their movable wealth of fleet dromedaries, superb Arab steeds, wonderfully bred asses and the unique donkey of Egypt, the poor fellah's only friend!

Care-worn and wondering, they had gazed upon the avenues of sphinxes,—the towering columned gateways,—the huge temples,—and the sun had gilded the ruined convents on the hills by Edfou, where crumbling halls told of a Christianity which fell before the fierce swords—

men of Mahomet,—and, whose fiery cross was now only upheld by the rude Abyssinians, the mysterious protégés of wily Russia!

But, all the drifting shallops and fleet steamers now only bore the crescent save the broad-winged dahabiehs of the tourist, or the packets of the invincible Thos. Cook and Son,—foes of distance,—annihilators of space,—and, —the universal Dragomen of the Nineteenth Century!

It was easy for Kenneth Gryffyth to see that the Duchesse de Valeria was gravely preoccupied! In vain, Grosvenor tempted Kenneth to view the Coptic convents,—the Arab encampments,—the villages of the wild fellahs,—and the catacombs of the mighty dead! For, a play for Empire was now being secretly pushed to its dramatic end,—far down the mystic river,—and the secret agent felt, that the Spirit of the Nile now held from him both her hopes and fears!

They were mooring the yacht at Denderah when a swift Khedivial steamer crowded with troops sped over from the city of Gheneh, and, slowing up in the current, a boat approached with an officer whose gleaming uniform of Bey, announced a visitor of distinction! With a courteous greeting to the young men, the stranger—a bronzed American, of forty-five years of age, hastened to the presence of the Duchess, whose post with the ladies of honor was under the stern awnings!

"*Dispatches of the greatest importance, Madame la Duchesse! I brought them on to you from Girgèh! I am hastening up to overtake General Gordon at Assuan!*"

There was scant time for ceremony, as the Egyptian steamer was in the full thread of the current! Madame Carioli and the dashing Baroness Rhoten, gazed approvingly upon Mason Bey,—whose title of Colonel Alexander Macomb Mason, only told to Americans the story of the gallant Virginian's lineage,—son of a Governor and Senator, and grandson of a Commander-in-Chief of the American Army, he had served in Virginia's tiny Confederate navy, in the desperate battles of the "Merrimac," the first fighting ironclad of historic renown.

Sailor-bred,—a soldier and artillerist, he became till

Lee's downfall, and then, his splendid talents found him later military employment in Chile,—and far-off China! Engineer, artillerist, sailor and soldier, he earned the proud distinction of being the only American of the forty-eight officers to hold rank to his dying day, admired both by friend and foe,—and trusted by all!

In a score of years of service under three Khedives, he became an Arab of the Arabs, in desert lore and language! His daring foot knew the banks of the far Nyanza!

With neither friends, fortune nor political protectors,—he won his way up to be later named Governor of Equatorial Africa; just, gallant and generous,—he loyally served under Gordon, and, having faced every danger of the tented field,—deserts wild and “antres vast,”—returned to breathe his last within sight of the Capitol at Washington, where his father's voice as a Senator,—had been raised boldly for Virginia in the historic years!

A soldier of high fortune,—true and gallant,—he was the noble rear guard of the American military mission to Egypt, and, in him,—the chivalric Virginian gentleman was typified Doctor Johnson's depicted warrior nature, “No dangers fright him, and,—no labors tire!”

“Gordon Pasha has one real man with him, now,” cried the Duchess, with brightening eyes, “and there is also the intrepid Italian, Gessi, to help to rally his troops against the slave-traders and Dervishes! Colonel Mason will be a tower of strength!”

There was a brief colloquy between Grosvenor, Gryffyth and the eager Mason Bey!

“Tell Gordon that our hearts go with him, out over the great bend to his Soudan home!” they cried, as Mason, with a last hearty hand grasp, sprang into his boat, and, long they watched his white signal waving while the Duchesse and that diplomate of the last finesse Madame Carioli deciphered the dispatches!

Then, Madame de Valeria, led Gryffyth aside with sparkling eyes. “The Marquis de Lesseps dispatches to me that one half of the cabinet papers already await you!

“The Head Accountant is all ready to work with you! Cherif Pasha begs for your instant return,—and, the

Viceroy himself is now ready to hasten your report,—to close the negotiations,—turn in his private estates for a period of years to the control of your syndicate,—and, with a sinking fund handled by Sir James Lawrie and David Hart to finally extinguish his personal debts! He even offers to name a Board of Control made up of David Hart,—Cherif Pasha,—and,—one banker named by his continental creditors!

"And, to that committee, he will really turn over all his Egyptian estates, and personal assets, to unify, secure and liquidate all his personal arrearages!"

"It looks like good faith,—and,—a final victory!" doubtfully said Grosvenor! "And, yet I am willing now to leave Egypt! When shall we start down the river?"

The Duchess mused a moment! "The two Zacharias have finished all their inspections and their secret examinations of the upper Nile! They can conclude this, while Gryffyth goes through the long hidden personal cash accounts of Ismail! We must not delay a single moment!

"But,—now, one last glimpse of Denderah! Then, down the river to Siout! Carioli telegraphs that our next reports will await us there! It may be that Cherif Pasha will be true to his word,—but there is the fearful temptation always dear to a Moslem heart, of the backsheesh of the slave and ivory trade—the dark spoils of the Soudan!

"He called Gordon Pasha 'an insane dreamer,' when the noble Englishman voluntarily cut down his own salary from ten thousand pounds a year to two! And,—Tewfik is—the rising sun! Weak and vain,—he may be pushed on by the sly Cherif to officially throttle his father, now gasping in the last throes of bankruptcy!

"Under the paw of this modern Sphinx, some one will be crushed! Will he save Gordon and the Khedive? Or, crush one old enemy himself and then let Tewfik's conspiracy dethrone the useless voluptuary Ismail? Ah! Nous verrons!

"In the meantime, I have kept for you my last Nile jewel,—the Temple of Athor!" They could even now see a mile distant, upon the fringing edge of the yellow desert, the superb propylon of the stupendous temple, the

great pre-historic ruin shone out clearly cut behind it, with the rolling rocky hills, with magnificent tombs and arches to the south!

The whole landing party, under strong guard, were soon transported by the crowding Arabs of the shore, on over the plain to where the scattered gigantic ruins told of the work of tens of thousands! There were countless Fellahs huts, and dozens of movable Bedouin Arab encampments! Wreck and ruin ruled the lonely scene! A half dozen races of vandal conquerors had quarried in these violated shades of beauty, for the materials for fort, bridge and causeway! And, even in the silent desolation, the wonderfully executed engineering challenged admiration!

"A race which knew not iron or steel," said the Duchess, "without the aid of our modern mechanical contrivances, who handled these constructions of hundreds of tons! Who tunneled under the broad Nile from the island of Philae to the shore at Bigge, so that the lover priests, and hidden miracle workers, could mystify and appall their prostrate sovereigns with daring artifices in these dreamy solitudes! No modern Brunel would dare to try to tunnel the Nile! And, yet, these old wonder workers had neither transit, level—nor compass. No powder—iron nor steel!"

The beautiful Spirit of the Night was standing under the gateway haunted by the mighty memories of Memnon of Osiris,—"Him who sleeps in Philae,"—of Isis and Horus!

Around them were gaping the vacant halls gleaming with paintings still as fresh as when the artist had wrought long thousands of years before,—his vivid sketches of the immemorial art of scientific killing! "They knew all, those old gods, who died before the gods of Greece!" sighed Marguerite de Valeria. "We are only groping in the threshold! There is the serpent of life carved above us, writhing on the cross! It ties together the history of Moses and Him who died for us all!"

"The lotus-headed scepter,—the soldiers' trappings, the varied arts of war and peace,—the priests, courtiers, gods, goddesses, women in festal array; the pomp of the

haughty dead,—the vanity and wickedness of the living—all,—all of life is here—painted in fadeless colors! And,—the world grows old apace, and soon forgets itself! The only new thing is the vain fever of human hearts throbbing on, forever—in impulses generated long before the myth of Adam and Eve, the varying stories of all nations, savage or civilized!

"All the olden arts glow here! Sculpture,—painting,—design are here,—and,—these walls echoed the music of full-throated beauty long before the Pyramids looked down upon the silent Sphinx!"

"Even this, shall pass away!" she murmured, as she led them into the temple of Tentyris, sacred to Athor, the goddess of eternal love,—where Remphah, Queen of Heaven, still triumphed in the glorification of woman's mystic trust, was pictured as giving birth to the sun, moon and stars! The Woman Creator of all things,—deified long before the male conqueror ruled, the world in a bloody sway!

"Long before the French bayonets twinkled here," the Duchess cried, "the soldiers of Cæsar trod in the footprints of the hardy Greek spearman; the Ptolemies were crownless, when Cambyses with his Persian archers, here gazed upon the pathway of the legendary Sesostres! Religions have been buried under the mist of ages,—dynasties and kingdoms crumbled,—and, the hyenas and jackals howl here over the dust of priest and noble, king and conqueror blended with the clay of the despised toiler, and the wind-blown sand of the desert! These ruins have voiceless but thrilling memories for us all!"

"The seats of the mighty are vacant, and the petty game of human villainy, craft and greed has been crowded down the Nile, to the rich quagmires of lower Egypt! But, far above these changing creeds and shadowy shapes,—even to-day, rises the universal worship of creative womanhood!"

"Bhavani,—Aثور,—Aphrodite,—Venus,—Remphah or, the veiled Isis, the secret of the seed in the flower,—the bud and blossom and fruit of Life, is blazoned here high over the rolling storms of dead ages! The world's one Incarnate Mystery."

She pointed to where creative Love—the triumphant woman form,—hung over them, high above all the gaudy devices of court and camp,—of sacred procession,—of winged globe and sacred vulture,—of hawk and ibis,—far above the painted altars with their robed votaries, their harpists, and the multitudes clapping their hands in praise!

The whistling winds howled around them, blowing the sands higher upon the mounds, half burying the stupendous ruins in places, and now capped with squalid Arab huts! Mean beggars were housed in the sculptured rooms whose polished floors had been sacred to princesses in golden sandals, or the lustrous-eyed priestesses,—the arch confederates of the haughty iron-willed rulers of the hoodwinked votaries! For, Greed and Craft and Might and Luxury ruled over the human dupe—in these forgotten days—as now!

There, the ever fresh-born beauty, of the glowing form of woman, shone triumphant over years of sorrow, toil, suffering, and reappearing in unending return in the glowing victorious beauty of woman's eternal trust of beauty and vigor,—the one fixed quantity of the human race! Mysterious gift of nature,—the charm of shining eyes,—of smiling lips,—of chiselled bosoms, and of rounded life-dispensing forms!

With four-fold face,—reigning there over scenes of joy and pleasure,—her women attendants worshiping her with children clinging to their breasts,—in the great hall, the mighty Athor hovers; the polished argent of her breasts laid bare, and, from her mouth are issuing the winged globe, the heavens,—and the earth!

The weird splendor of these ravished halls of Time, cast a silent spell upon them all! They lingered there, rapt, until the Duchess said:

"These are memories too mighty for the human mind to grasp! We have here seen only a single sheet of the unending scroll! The whole of life, tragedy or comedy, begins and ends in the still unveiled mysteries of Nature!"

"None born of woman has ever grasped the secret of the tiniest seed,—or the birth of 'the wild seed flower that simply blows!' I understand, now, the moan of that old

lion Walter Landor, when he sighed in his darkening age,—

“Nature I loved, and,—next to Nature,—Art.”
 “I strove with none,—for,—none was worth my strife!”
 “I warmed my hands before the flame of Life,—”
 “It sinks,—and,—I am ready to depart!”

The stars were hanging over the Nile, and the dash of the waters upon the banks lulled the sleeping women on the “Astarte,” and the jackal’s wild howl was borne on the winds to them, when Lorenzo Zacharias led the two friends over to the tents of the wild-eyed Ghawazees! The palms nodded black over the blue gliding waters and the distant lights of Gheneh gleamed out beyond the flood, only eclipsed when some bat-like dahabieh drifted slowly by, with its dark wings spread to catch the evening breeze!

“It is strange,” mused the old Hebrew banker, “that the shameless dancing girl who hands down the mysteries of Eleuthysis is a houseless stranger in every land! The Zingari,—the Bayaderes,—the Nautch girls, the Ghawazees, the Geisha, all these the votaries of the Venus of Mitylene are only wanderers upon the face of the earth!”

They were wending to a score of tents where at every door, vile shapes of men and hags called the passer-by with shrill flutes, and croaking cries, and the mystic green bush denoted the strange mixture of religious frenzy and licentiousness, in the reproductions of the orgies of Greece, and Rome, and the tainted human nature from far Hindostan! The hidden night side on human nature to be revealed in frenzied fever, for base-won gold!

“You have seen pictured upon the walls of Thebes, these same dances which once captivated the curled darlings of Greece and Rome! Some subtle connection of spirit between the upper Nile,—Arabia,—and Hindostan, keeps alive this plastic infamy of the Ghawazees! In stern old Mehemet Ali’s time, there was a stronghold of these votaries of Venus, at Tantah, and Sakkarah, near Cairo!

“There was a fever of infection which threw Cairo and Alexandria into a ferment, the whole community became

affected, and—the Pezavink Bashi,—or Superintendent of Dancing Girls,—was the arch traitor of Cairene society! The Bayaderes,—Nautch girls, and Ghawazees leaders,—in a graded aristocracy of crime, were tacitly allowed to dance in the harems, the palaces and private houses!

"Mehemet Ali then busied with building navies, and laying out an iron rail line from Suez to Port Said, on the later canal line, learned with horror, that even the most fastidious Egyptian and foreign ladies often sought anonymously the excitement of what has crept over Europe and far western lands, as the '*danse du ventre*!'

"In eighteen thirty, the last barriers of all private decency in Egypt seemed to have disappeared,—and, then, Mehemet's iron hand sternly smote the evil! He suppressed all the bands of dancing girls, forbade all further exhibitions under pain of death, and had one-half of the audacious beauties promptly thrown into the Nile, and drowned,—while the other, were deported to the Soudan to marry his brutal soldiers!"

"An energetic reformer!" laughed Kenneth Gryffyth. "This same stern old ruler who married off his vast harem, by a sweeping military order—to his principal court followers, when he abjured all 'personal luxury,' and tired of the twinkling feet and waving forms! They were ticketed off, upon the fanciful selection of the wrinkled old Mother of the Harem."

"There is a lesson in the slow disruption of all Mohammedan communities!" gravely said Zacharias, an hour later, as he led them away from the panting maenads of the last generation of Athor's maddest children. They had gazed upon the indescribable human abasement. "Mohammed allured the hardy Arabians by the artful development of the soft harem life in this world,—and, the promised glowing houris to materialize in the next!"

"Herein, lies the doom of Egypt! The moral and physical ill health of the body politic! And, the same gliding covert wickedness which sapped Greece, Rome, and has closely followed the Latin domain will yet destroy nations, 'farther west, than your sire's islands of the blest!'

"Therein, lies their doom,—no nation in its gilded ages ever recovers from the sway of the unbridled horrible vices of the dominant and corrupted classes. But Israel—alone—has thriven in the house of the stranger, and,—never will her children disappear! The invincible family system of the Hebrew, the iron social armor of the Mosaic laws, has built up Israel, even while bending the back as servants, in a strange land!"

When the midnight hour was rung on the silver bell of the dainty yacht, the "Astarte" sped away down the storied river,—and, daybreak found them passing Girgéh! The moon was silvering the distant walls of Siout when the graceful gliding craft darted, swallow-like, into her landing!

A bedizened officer hastily strode upon the deck with a bundle of dispatches which reached no hand but that of the fair commander! It was not ten minutes, until the resolute Spirit of the Nile directed full speed for Cairo!

For, the talking wires had brought strange tidings!

"The game is on, now!" she mysteriously said. "We all have our allotted parts to play in the last tableau! The paw of the Sphinx is, even now, raised!"

There was a cavalcade of anxious palace attendants waiting to welcome them on the banks of the Gheziret Roda, two days later, when the "Astarte" stopped her polished engines at the landing quay! Consul General Carioli leaped aboard and, hurried the whole party into court carriages in waiting!

"This is Cherif's amusing by-play!" said Grosvenor, as they were hurried along toward Carioli's Shoubrah villa!

In a half hour after their arrival, Kenneth Gryffyth was closely closeted with the Marquis de Lesseps, and Ratib Pasha! In a distant room, the Consul General and the Duchess de Valeria were seated with Hassan the dragoon, as their eager relator!

The Honorable Charles Grosvenor had disappeared to escort the Countess Renée to her home, and already Zacharias and his son were in garrison at the Hotel Esbekieyeh, and the banker's hidden home! Hassan's face was pale as he listened to the words of Consul General

Carioli and his beautiful ally! There was both fear and cunning upon his face as he eyed his stern inquisitors!

The young actuary listened, with bated breath, to De Lessep's courteous parley, and Ratib Pasha's cunning explanation of Cherif's private orders! The Chief Accountant of the Viceroy sat by, with an unmoved face! A slim Syrian,—in plain dark frock coat and red fez,—his mobile face and keen eye showed him to be a master of Moslem craft!

In the two months' sessions of the Commission, this silent keeper of the Khedive's secrets had proven his rare intellect in every crafty move! He had never been driven to an awkward admission or even a brief loss of temper by hours of Gordon's sternly honest cross-examination! A vigorous man of thirty-five, he was plainly the master of all commercial arts, and, of the modern continental languages!

He smiled faintly, as Ratib Pasha said: "This man, Rustem Effendi, has now delivered over to me the twelve secret books of the Viceroy's receipts since his accession! You are to be sent daily by the General Carioli, with your two interpreters, and the Consular Cavasse to my own palace!"

"In my presence alone,—you will be allowed to take off the figures, and each copy in duplicate of your work will be verified with our joint seals! One copy is for His Highness,—and the other, for the great bankers whom you represent!"

"In a week,—you will know that the official published figures, are not the data of the private cabinet! All that you have complained of, will soon be made clear!" There was only one section of the papers missing now! The balance sheet could then be stricken!

"And, Your Excellency," the young Englishman said. "The expenditures! I want only to know the disposition of the vast monies used in the reign of Ismail! When will these books be produced?"

"Rustem Effendi goes to-day, with Hassan, Gordon's own dragoman, on the Khedive's own yacht 'Mahmoudieh' to the Palace of Helouan to bring away the reserved records, and,—that ends our last labors! Only in the

presence of Cherif Pasha,—myself,—and yourself, can these private records be examined!"

When the conference broke up, Carioli informed Kenneth Gryffyth that a palace carriage and a royal guard would escort him daily to and from Ratib's palace, whither the two Zacharias would be sent in Carioli's official equipage! And, he knew now also that his last days in Cairo would be watched more jealously,—a prisoner guest in Carioli's home,—than any lovely queen of the Harem!

The conference soon broke up, and Hassan, pale faced, drove away with Rustem Effendi, the keeper of Ismail's secrets! The Duchess de Valeria smiled, in triumph, when Hassan whispered, "I will do it! I will obey you—but,—my brother Abdallah must be guarded night and day. A single word from him to Cherif—and—I would die! Watch him well!"

The Duchess smiled in her triumph, for she had at last bought the pliant Hassan with a royal bribe!

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE BRINK!—THE KHEDIVE'S MESSAGE!—ONCE MORE AT ABDIN PALACE.—A SOVEREIGN'S TEARS.—IN OLD FORT TURRA.—ABDALLAH OUTWITTED!—THE "ASTARTE'S" RACE.—A NEW KHEDIVE! — GROSVENOR'S TELEGRAM.—"ALL HANDS ABOARD!"

Two weeks passed away, the busiest and most exciting of Kenneth Gryffyth's whole life! It seemed as if the tension of the political situation had infected every member of the high Cairene society as well as the quasi-diplomatic corps!

The hotels and cafés were all filled with crowds of eager gossipers, a considerable foreign fleet was gathered at Alexandria, and, two armored Turkish frigates floated the dominating crescent without the star, proudly before

the feebly-garrisoned forts of the Sultan's bankrupt vassal!

Merchants and bankers ran, hither and thither, in an antlike activity, and even the gayety of the Esbékieyeh gardens, the splendor of the Shoubrah parade sank to a mere skeleton of the winter's noisy throngs!

The rich pageantry of the daily harem parades, too, was missing,—the sullen guards and fierce eunuchs glared out from gate and doorway at the passing Giaour,—and even the voice of scandal was hushed! Lights burned late at night in all the bankers' offices and the telegraph offices were burdened with cipher messages!

It was the hush before the storm,—the unnatural calm which always precedes some sudden convulsion, and the faces of men wore the strained pallor of those who wait the word for the bounding away of the forlorn hope, or the dreaded coming on, of the last frenzied assault!

All monetary business was now at a stand still, and the gay falcons of winter plumage had all fled away to seek their victims at Continental spas!

Gryffyth, busied four hours a day with the astute Ratib Pasha, toiled till the early morning hours at Carioli's villa, in sending away, through Zacharias, sheet after sheet, of the priceless figures revealed by Ratib's clever handling of the secret records of the sixteen years of Ismail Pasha's reign!

He knew that the French and English Consuls General now haunted the Abdin Palace, with urgent demands growing daily in their menaces! That the Russian and Austrian diplomats, too, were working nightly with Chevalier Carioli to undo the work of the others, and, that Madame la Duchesse de Valeria was now ready for an instant departure!

Tumult, riot or revolution was daily feared, and the handsome Grosvenor, on the terrace of Shepheard's Hotel, was daily busied as the executive officer of the Duchess' hidden forces!

Grosvenor secretly had arranged all Kenneth Gryffyth's private affairs, and closely watched the sly Abdallah, still nailed down to his useless duties of spying upon Gryffyth's empty rooms!

The red star of Cherif Pasha burned high over Egypt!

There were private daily conferences between Carioli, Zacharias, the Duchess and Grosvenor,—for, Gryffyth was now pushing on his work with all energy, to be ready for the return of Rustem Effendi, the secret Accountant, with the key to the vast expenditures of sixteen years of the most infamous profligacy which a sovereign's private life, has ever left as a badge of disgrace to human nature!

The theaters and opera were deserted and silent in these last days of May!

There were no dispatches as yet from that great desert traveler, Gordon Pasha,—the restless city was divided into three camps, between the adherents of Khedive Ismail, the haughty Premier Cherif Pasha, and the rising young Prince Tewfik!

Shut up in his palace, Nubar Pasha only met his French and English diplomatic friends, and he daily dispatched a secret messenger to Constantinople! He was fighting alone—and—not altogether in the dark!

The foreign journals announced that Sir Evelyn Baring was on his way to Alexandria, and, while Kenneth Gryffyth toiled over the last tell-tale report, the Duchess and her three counsellors secretly noted the dispatch of huge sums of gold to Stamboul, gathered up by Cherif and his slave-dealing friends!

A golden bribe for the Sultan! "That tells the story," gravely said Zacharias, one night, to his beautiful chief! "Lord Wrexham's agents telegraph me that this gold which lately has flowed to the Khedive, from the wily Cherif, now goes direct to the Sultan! What does it mean?"

"It means a fallen star!" answered Marguerite de Valeria, pointing to the heavens, where a great golden star left the crescent moon and trailed swiftly across the heavens to vanish, in the distant Mediterranean. "Ismail, in some strange way, has lost his last hold upon Cherif,—and,—the end cometh! But,—how?"

And, neither of them dared to openly demand of Cherif, "Where is Rustem Effendi and Hassan?" There was no

sign of the return of the viceregal yacht "Mahmoudieh!" And, the days drifted slowly by!

It was the last week in May, when the young Englishman finished the examination of the twelve books, which Ratib Pasha daily produced.

There was a secret key to each volume, and from the entries designated only by stars up to the number of five, and many recurring initials, Gryffyth learned of the bribes, and subsidies of nations,—the gifts of bankers,—the backsheesh of the great corporate companies, and, all the inner romance of a personal exchequer greater than that of the luckless Man of Sedan!

The accounts were marvels of clearness, and, so, it was easy to discern the absence of a sum equal to a hundred and fifty millions of dollars as accounted for in the financial work of the Commission!

There was no sign of Rustem Effendi's return when the great Cherif Pasha, himself, came to the conference room with a message from the Viceroy.

"His Highness will order the instant delivery to you of the last private documents from Helouan Palace, within a few days! He begs you to hasten your report, when you get them, and then—to deliver one copy, sealed, to the Marquis De Lesseps, who, with you, will be deputed to bring it personally to him! The Commission will then be convened for the purpose of recording your actions—and,—then dissolved! He begs that you will then at once, telegraph your London principals to advance him on his estates at least, a million sterling!"

"And,—you may be now summoned, at any moment, to the palace! My brother-in-law Ratib will conduct you!"

"Has His Highness any property in Continental Europe or any securities deposited in England? It all comes under the terms of my commission to examine!" boldly said Gryffyth, now burning for his recall!

"That question you must ask of him, personally!" replied Cherif, with a singular smile, whereat, Ratib Pasha only loudly laughed, and—the great Premier stalked away to his carriage! The shaft struck near home to them both!

Left idle and alone with Ratib Pasha, for several days of lingering suspense, Kenneth Gryffyth was lured in every way to forget himself, by the polite voluptuary!

Tales of the wondrous adventures of the Viceroy's haughty sister,—the history of Ismail's singular tenderness for his mother, and a score of weird revelations of the Court were thrown out as bait to entrap the cool Briton into confidences.

Ratib cordially did the honors of his splendid halls, and he even gave his confidential guest private glimpses of all the oriental scenes of a princely harem! Keeping only the principal beauties out of the way. But, the whole tableau was opened as a private view.

Conjurors,—magicians,—bands of dancing girls, wild singers, and all the romantic attendants of his pleasures were exhibited before the wary young ascetic whom even Ratib could never tempt to the cup, nor, any of the seductive beverages of the orient!

The Pasha even sent out his own imprisoned doves from their lovely nest, and, himself led the wondering Giaour, through the courts and gardens, the cool galleries,—and the splendid porticos of his harem palace! Flashing fountains,—golden wire aviaries,—the rarest exotics, all were hidden behind the overhanging upper stories of the great latticed palace,—with its mosaic enriched saracenic pointed arched windows!

They trod the marble inclined planes, lingered at the superb alabaster baths, walked under the priceless frescoed ceilings and over inlaid floors of semi-precious stones! Clustered marble columns upheld delicate arabesques of costly sculpture, and scores of rock crystal chandeliers, lit up these scenes of princely magnificence! Gryffyth studied the "maud arah,"—the "soofeh,"—the "lewan,"—the "mukad," and, all the quaint arrangements of rooms filled with the spoil of the East and the splendors of Europe!

Golden coffee services,—jewelled arms,—priceless diamond set chibouques,—with rare golden and silver perfume flagons were scattered around in the silent halls!

Divans draped in costly shawls and richest hangings,—windows of superbly jewelled glass in richest colors,—se-

cret doors,—golden grillages, prayer carpets worth a prince's ransom, and pictures and statues of insidious voluptuousness added to the romantic richness of the dazzling interior!

It was a dazzling Arabian Night's dream!

When Ratib Pasha led the bewildered visitor out of the vast labyrinth of luxury, through the "Bab-el-Harem," the young Englishman murmured his surprise!

"Ah! Your western nations are all races of fools! Your pampered women only shine for others! Ours belong to the master,—alone!" cynically said Ratib Pasha! "Woman has no place as a free agent! She is only born for the delight and solace of man! We do not support our women to be the pride of the eye—for the careless stranger! The Giaour is often the dupe of his women!"

As the escort drew up around Gryffyth's carriage, when they quitted the great harem, Ratib Pasha whispered to Gryffyth, after an officer had dashed up to report:

"Cherif just informs me that the 'Mahmoudieh' will be due here to-morrow night! He has been ordered to go and receive the papers, personally, at the Ghezireh Palace, and,—as soon as His Highness has verified Rustem Effendi's work,—the documents will be delivered by Cherif, to me,—for your use! So,—as to-morrow is our only day of leisure,—let me show you the secrets of the Bazaars of Cairo! You may think that Egypt is poor!

"Tourists see really nothing, only the husks of things. In Europe and America, property is exhibited and money made to work for interest! Here,—in the Orient and Asia, the wise man only hoards and hides! A reputation for wealth frequently brings—" the motion of the hand across the throat was all significant!

And, Kenneth Gryffyth shuddered as he thought on the dead Mefettish who went up the Nile as a royal guest, on the same "Mahmoudieh,"—darkly fated never to return! He had secretly wondered at Rustem Effendi's long delay!

"Ah! He is too small a fish,—for Ismail Pasha's net! 'Mafees filoos!' No money! His poverty is a shield and buckler!"

That night, Gryffyth was left to his own reflections upon Ratib Pasha's singular invitation, and the slyness of his attempts to dazzle and deceive! Wine and women, and cards had failed! Ratib was never for a single moment morose or threatening in manner, and,—he had never even hinted at Cherif's attempts to sway the actuary's conduct by cajolery!

"Can it be that Cherif is really going to keep his plighted word?"

Long that night, the young Briton gazed out on the Nile and, he could easily note all the signs of an unusual local commotion! Troops were in movement,—clattering messengers sped afar—dozens of palace carriages clattered along filled with Pashas, Beys and Effendis, and,—in the Carioli villa,—not a soul lingered to distract his musings, for, there was an important secret council at Villa Kléber!

The morning brought no news save Chevalier Carioli's grave warning!

"The air is filled with every vague rumor! Something of moment has happened,—may happen—or will happen! We,—the five great powers, most interested,—must know the truth at last! And, all the Turkish officials,—even the phlegmatic German representatives, are at last waking up!"

"Go your ways! Wait warily, now, for Rustem! I advise you to make ready for a flight out of Egypt! There's nothing here to protect us foreigners! It is far different at Alexandria, under the sweep of the guns of the fleet! The Duchess has the 'Astarte' at the landing, with banked fires, ready to move at a moment's notice!"

"In twelve hours, the yacht could put our entire party of friends on board of a foreign vessel at Rosetta, or, by landing you at Dessouk,—get you under the protection of foreign guns at Alexandria, and,—continental steamers leave there daily!"

"I should take refuge myself at the Citadel, where De Lesseps and General Stone will give me a refuge! Even the cynical old Marquis De Lesseps now fears a tumult!"

"Am I safe with Ratib Pasha?" asked Gryffyth. "Perfectly!" smiled Carioli. "His brother-in-law, Cherif, is

the sole master of the situation, and—beyond the Khedive's personal guard,—and the Viceroy's charming embarrassment of a dozen harems,—Cherif really holds the whole Khedivial power to-day!

"What he will do with it, is the enigma which no one but this modern Sphinx can answer! Go with Ratib—but,—don't let him fool you! He is only his relative's catspaw! Smile,—and,—watch him for—'your life'!"

It was a day of wonderful surprises for Gryffyth, when Ratib Pasha, led him a merry dance through all the square miles of the bazaars and the dark portions of unimproved Cairo!

The narrow passages blown out by Bonaparte's sappers to suppress the great revolt, gave the cat-like Ratib a mysterious pathway! Followed by an escort of four armed men, the Pasha and his guest probed Cairo to its innermost secrets! And,—every door but the guarded harem gates of others, flew wide open to welcome the Ex-Minister of War,—now, a rising court luminary once more!

Sights and scenes and sounds abounded recalling the Arabian nights. There were a hundred mingled races of strange men and women,—with everywhere dark squalor and dazzling splendor alternated!

There were caravanseras,—coffee booths,—beggars' holds,—strongholds of Santons and Dervishes, and all the haunts of a mongrel Levantine population!

In dim chambers, he saw heaped up the untold hoarded wealth of the caravan trade and the oriental gulf commerce! Millions were lying dormant in carpets,—hangings,—silks and gauzes,—crystal vases,—gold and silver harem goods,—mother of pearl,—gold and gems!

Laces,—velvets,—brocades of gold,—India "dew" muslins,—jewelled table ware,—tortoise shell,—jade and ivory,—priceless lacquer and Asian bronzes,—the whole outfit of zenana—seraglio and harem were hidden in the dim booths.

Guns,—jewelled armor,—scimitars,—daggers and girdles, resplendent in gems, and every wealth of the human fancy were heaped up, save the forbidden graven images!

Huge stores of every rich product of the East,—the

spoils of Damascus, Delhi, and Canton,—were stored in the gloomy warehouses, while the booths of antiques displayed the myriad articles of the bazaar dating back to the days of Coeur de Lion. The mediæval age seemed to shine out again in all its splendor!

It was near sunset, when Ratib Pasha lured the wearied Gryffyth into the richest concealed jewel mart of the vast bazaars! They had lingered long over a royal Arab breakfast in a haunt, where the proud Circassian girls and ravishingly lovely alien Georgians, served them a kingly feast!

The wine of Shiraz and that of "Veuve Cliquot" were equally grateful to the genial Ratib Pasha who also gayly kissed a ruby lip, here and there! But, Kenneth Gryffyth drank only coffee and, only that, after Ratib had been served!

The kaleidoscopic scenes of the day had bewildered the young financier and he wearily eyed the suave Ratib when he whispered his instructions to the grave and turbaned jewel merchant who was their host. The Moslem returned at last with two boxes which he placed upon the table before the Pasha!

They were left alone—and,—the evening call of the muezzin was sounding as Ratib opened the cases! "There is a story of romance in these two necklaces! It was the Empress Eugenie's dearest wish to possess a pearl necklace outrivaling the Czarina's!

"And,—the Emperor himself, wished her also to have a magnificent diamond necklet worthy of that swan-like beauty of the graceful Montijo! But, alas,—Sedan's grim thunder, Beaconsfield's manœuvres, and the hand of Fate, prevented Ismail the Khedive from being able to present these glittering fortunes to the only true hearted protector that he ever had!"

The sly tempter paused, as Kenneth Gryffyth in amazement, examined the superb parure of pearls,—four rows of matchless beauties!

The superb diamonds, too, gleamed, a river of snaky light! "They are worth just one hundred thousand pounds!" softly said Ratib. And, then he leaned confidentially down over Kenneth, and whispered:

"Take them! They are yours,—if you will only work with Cherif and myself for a single week! Tell me all the names of your secret backers, and,—write up such a report on the last documents—as will be suggested by Cherif! Your fortune will be made!"

"I will take you down to Alexandria in my private car, and, you can secretly put this fortune on a ship,—and see it leave Egypt! I will give you paid insurance for a hundred thousand pounds till it reaches the Banque de France, to await you! No one will ever know!"

Carioli's warning words rang in the young man's ears; he could see the noble face of the Duchess, and the clear eyes of Kathleen Lawrie shine down upon him!

"Let us return, Your Excellency! I am wearied out!" sternly said Gryffyth, as he sprang up, with his eyes blazing in anger! "I am not for sale!"

"You are a simple fool,—blind to your own interests!" cried Ratib, now forgetting all caution! Here was a second English fool of the Gordon school!

"But, I am neither a spy nor a traitor!" remarked Gryffyth calmly, as he drew his Adams revolver!

"If you do not lead me out of this den,—I will put a ball into your carcass! Take me home! I am the Khe-dive's sacred guest! Where is your Arabian hospitality? I will defend both my life and my honor!"

There was not a word spoken as the Pasha led the way to where the carriage awaited them!

Down the Mouski they dashed with the wild runners clearing the way, and, with a low bow,—the Briton coldly left Ratib himself, speechless at the door of Carioli's lodge on the Shoubrah! He had never left Ratib's side, nor relaxed his grip upon the revolver butt!

As Gryffyth entered the villa, a beautiful woman dashed forward to meet him! "What has happened? You are as pale as marble!" the Duchess cried!

"Nothing has happened, Madame," the young man said, as he dropped into a chair. "But, I have just played a silent part, in a comedy, which might have been a tragedy!"

"Listen!" the lovely Spirit of the Night said! "There is a private carriage here, with an Equerry of the Viceroy,

to lead you to him, instantly, at the Abdin! We will follow you in secret! Make no mistake,—on your life! When you are dismissed,—Carioli, himself, will be in the court yard to meet you!

"Come back with him! Remember! It is the last throw of the dice! The game is made now! You may be the very first to hear of the last turn of Fortune's wheel! Are you armed?"

Kenneth tapped his pocket! "Then, go,—in God's name! And,—come back to me!" Marguerite de Vatoria herself led him to a side door, and in five minutes, the startled secret agent was half way to the gates of the historic, Abdin palace! "What was the burden of the next lying song?" He could not imagine.

His silent companion never spoke a word, and, Gryfyth feared to turn to look for the friendly pursuers! His heart was throbbing wildly, when he was hastily led into the private cabinet of the Khedive, now standing at bay! The Viceroy was awaiting him alone!

Ismail the Khedive faced his visitor, as a hunted criminal turns to glare at his pursuers! His voice was broken and husky as he muttered:

"I have sent for you,—to tell you—that you must leave Egypt, at once! You came out here, under my royal word, and under the sacred seal of my private protection as a monarch! The 'Mahmoudieh' is lying at Ghizeh!"

"Rustem Effendi is dead!" The listener started as Ismail sullenly said: "A sudden cholera,—and,"—he darkly grumbled, "the papers are missing! So—your mission is at an end! I sent for you to tell you to telegraph at once—for your recall! I can protect you no longer!"

"But, Your Highness!" faltered the Englishman. "Surely, Your Highness' trusty officers will find and deliver the papers! Remember Gordon Pasha! Remember all these months of toil! Your own engaged honor! The promises of Cherif and—Ratib! Think of your own princely future, of your throne!"

"I am unable to fulfill my word either as a sovereign, or a gentleman! I dare not give an order now!" des-

perately broke out Ismail, starting up and down in a growing agitation!

"Leave Egypt,—leave Egypt, I tell you! I have been preyed upon by the two hostile powers for weeks! I have been pressed to abdicate! I have flatly refused!" he proudly cried! "I have been also menaced with a forcible deposition! Cherif, too, seems to be powerless! I had hoped for help from London,—through you,—to soften both passive France and greedy England! No help,—no hope is in sight now! Constantinople may act at any moment. Go,—while there is yet time! The papers I fear I will never see! They may have been destroyed or stolen!"

"My lazy secret service agents are all unpaid—and—they are faithless! My enemies lavish gold at Constantinople! My army is only a starving mob! I have no navy! My sons all shun me! Cherif treats secretly with my enemies! In a week, I may be an exile,—a fugitive, or,—a prisoner on a Turkish frigate, bound for the Bosphorus! Ah! Sédan! Sédan! Napoleon's last words: 'Etiez vous aussi à Sédan?' The cholera story,—the disappearance of the papers—it is the beginning of the end!"

The Khedive's bosom heaved and his voice came in thick sobs, all unmindful of the strange auditor, of a sovereign, in tears!

"The richest sovereign in Europe had no fortune like mine!" he bitterly cried. "I have been improved out 'of a throne!' 'Modernized' along to my ruin! The canal interest alone would have paid my whole debts! I paid for it! They have it! The powers will wrangle, but—England will surely grasp my private estate here! I see the snare now! I held on to Nubar too long!"

"Two years ago,—with the native party at my back,—I could have raised an army, fought for a quasi-settlement,—defended Egypt for a campaign, and finally, obtained terms of honor! Now,—strangers will choose my successor! I have wasted mountains of gold with the Sultan! Stamboul, too, has abandoned me!"

"But,—my name will live! I gave to the world its greatest artificial waterway,—and, then, threw away a

throne!" He clenched his fists and cried: "Spies and traitors have sold me, right and left. No one has been true. One of my Ferik Pashas was the Sultan's spy! General Stone has the proofs in the Citadel! I would have beheaded the dog! But,—Turkey at once, ordered me to send him out unharmed. And, England, too, has danced to the Turk's fiddle! The fatal Abyssinian war! I was urged on to that!

"Russia secretly upheld the enemy! General Fadieff gave them all my secret plans in advance! Nubar played confidential secretary to your own Beaconsfield! But," he raged, "I shall be revenged! Some day, Russia will throw her millions of Cossacks upon England in India, and,—then, the overland route to India will be useless! For, England can not find men to face the millions of the Muscovite. Her fleet can not hurt the sly Russians with no ocean commerce to prey upon. Enough! I never had but one clearly honest adviser! He was,—

"Gordon Pasha!" impetuously said Kenneth, who was wrought up beyond all bounds!

"Yes! Gordon!" cried the Khedive, dropping into a chair! "De Lesseps, too, was a good enough summer friend—and,—I believe he was fond enough of me—as a bon camarade!

"Poor Gordon! He will be soon cast away as useless! He can never hold the Soudan now! My personal friendship will be his later ruin! Some other puppet of Fate will sit upon the throne of the Pharaohs!" Turning with dignity to the young man, Ismail drew off a superb diamond ring! "Good-bye! Take this ring as a remembrance!" he murmured! "Go!

"Go back to your London principals! Tell them, that the whole scheme was two years too late! You have done your duty! I know all! You will not see me again! For, I can not keep my pledged word! I only ask you now to telegraph and ask for your immediate recall! Leave Egypt, instantly, and,—ask me nothing more!

"Cherif Pasha is now the defacto government! I am only waiting for the last blow to fall! Remember my last words, Russia will revenge me,—in the years to come!"

And, in silence, Kenneth Gryffyth stole away, to the great entrance where knots of underlings now whispered in low tones of the strange happenings which were soon to be a story of a day—the wreck and crash of a tinselled throne! The curtain was falling upon Ismail's ruin!

In the soft starlight, a nervous hand clutched Gryffyth's arm, as he passed out of the palace, and, Carioli himself thrust the young man into the carriage! The flying feet of the horses struck fire, as they raced away to the villa on the Shoubrah!

When the Italian functuary would have spoken,—Gryffyth only hoarsely murmured: "Wait till I see the Duchesse, and,—Grosvenor!"

"They are all there!" Carioli cried. "The whole party leaves here to-night! Grosvenor and Zacharias have made all ready for you! Not a human being must know of your departure! You may be butchered in revenge for your manly efforts to do your duty!"

It was in the Duchess' boudoir at Villa Kléber that Gryffyth met once more the mysterious woman who had so long ruled his strange guest! Only Grosvenor and Zacharias were there! The Intendant and a dozen servants were all mustered on the portico! There were signs of every possible activity in making ready for a flitting!

"Quick! Your news!" said Marguerite de Valeria,—as Carioli waited in an ante-room! But, not a moment was lost when Gryffyth finished his story! The Duchess exchanged a few whispers with Zacharias, and then cried, "To the 'Astarte'! You, Grosvenor, go on with him! Carioli will bring me! I am safe here! Go!"

Down the stairs, Gryffyth followed Grosvenor, and then—Zacharias silently sprang in with them! There was Soames, on the box, and, the waiting carriage was driven along swiftly toward the landing! Kenneth turned to question his friend!

"Not a word! It's all right!" whispered Grosvenor. Zacharias already has your telegraphed order of recall! Wait, till we are on the Nile! Trust to me! I know all!"

As Gryffyth sprang on board the "Astarte" he was led down to the guests' cabin, and, there, saw the long absent

Hassan the dragoman, seated and calmly smoking his chibouque, cross legged upon a divan!

The great wheels were driving them along at a fifteen-knot speed before the startled Gryffyth could understand that Madame Carioli, and the Baroness Rhoten, were also hidden in the Duchess' cabins with the frolicsome little Countess!

"Don't you bother, old man!" cheerily said Grosvenor. "Just lie down and take a few winks! Soames and Zacharias and myself have closed all your affairs up! This is a silent flitting! You will know more later! Your traps, too, are all on board, and, we are bound for Alexandria! Then, thank God, for Lausanne and London!"

"Trust to me! Sir James Lawrie knows all now!"

Three hours later, Gryffyth sprang to his feet, as Grosvenor silently touched his arm! The yacht was motionless, and, when the young men reached the deck, there was a darkly shadowed range of hills overhanging the eastern bank! A score of horsemen were huddled upon the bank, and all the lights were darkened upon the yacht!

Kenneth Gryffyth rubbed his eyes in astonishment as Grosvenor led him ashore, and throwing open a carriage door, said, "Jump in, for there's not a moment to spare!"

And, on the front seat, facing them, Gryffyth could see the turbaned heads of Hassan, and Soames, whose hand slipped an extra revolver into his master's pocket!

"What does all this mystery mean?" cried Gryffyth, as they dashed off, the clattering hoofs of the escort making the words almost inaudible.

"You'll have to wait and get the whole story from Hassan, by and by!" said Grosvenor. "Just stand in with me! I'll bring you out all right!"

But, Gryffyth was not deceived! "We have gone up the Nile!" he cried. "There are no mountains whatever below Cairo, or on the river!"

And—yet, not a single word of explanation would Grosvenor vouchsafe as they dashed up a long ravine, and, in an hour, had crowned a range of hills, overlooking the blue Nile! A fifteen-minute dash along the plat-

eau brought them to the ruined walls of an old fortification!

And, in ten minutes, led by Hassan, the party had silently gathered around an old magazine traverse! The fort was deserted, and only the howls of the jackals broke the haunting silence of the night!

It was Grosvenor's mighty arm which, wielding a sledge hammer, soon broke open the clumsy door!

Hassan sprang in after the stalwart Englishman, and, in a few moments, they dragged out a heavy Turkish cof-fer! A dozen stout arms raised it, and then—the mys-terious deposit was quickly thrust into the carriage!

Not ten minutes had been wasted, and only Grosvenor and Gryffyth watched over its safety—as they swept back down the long ravine! Speech was impossible, as the carriage dashed along at a frightful speed, and, but an hour and a half had elapsed when the party stood upon the deck of the "Astarte!"

Kenneth Gryffyth saw a woman's form at the steering wheel, as Grosvenor's voice rang out, "All right!" He turned to look at the shadowy horsemen whose mute escort had been so effective in this strange midnight raid!

They were even now gone! And, as the "Astarte" gathered headway, under the influence of steam and cur-rent, darting around a bend, the secret agent grasped Grosvenor's arm!

"Enough of this folly! Where have we been?" he de-manded!

"In old Fort Turra!" laughed Grosvenor. "And, you have helped, unwittingly, to do the best night's work of your whole life! The 'Astarte' will land us all in Des-souk—before sundown, and, by midnight, we will be safe on the Brindisi steamer! Carioli himself has gone down, in a special train, to hold the boat, and to officially say Good-bye to all his family. If we are not betrayed and caught on the river—we have checkmated the very neat-est game ever played in Egypt!"

"Carioli will wait for us there at Dessouk, with the train all ready, and an escort of Italians sent up from Alexandria by Dellepiane!"

"Abdallah?" anxiously demanded Gryffyth—

"Has been outwitted at last!" gayly said Grosvenor. "Cherubini took him to Alexandria yesterday to engage passages for the Consul's family—and,—for us,—also! He will not be left alone for a moment! That is the Duchess' work! You had better go and pay your respects to her, now! Do not agitate her, needlessly!"

Gryffyth sprang to the vessel's stern! The "*Astarte*" was now racing along like a startled gazelle, and, he could see the lights of Cairo, for they were now dashing along near the spurs of the Mokattam Hills! The Spirit of the Night met him with extended hands!

"What does all this strange expedition mean?" eagerly demanded Gryffyth, gazing intently into her shining eyes! They sparkled like diamonds under the soft starlight! And, she warmly pressed his hands!

"It means, my silent Knight, that we will reach Alexandria before the Sultan's firman, depositing Ismail Pasha as Khedive of Egypt arrives here. When the batteries salute Tewfik Pasha, as the sixth Khedive,—we will be out on the blue Mediterranean!"

"Our night expedition? Its purpose?" cried the agitated Kenneth.

"Some valuable antiquities, which I wished to smuggle out of Egypt!"

"Trust me yet a day longer! They should have gone to the Boulak Museum, but—I decided to take them with me, at my risk!"

"And, Hassan's story?" persisted Kenneth, gazing upon the beautiful sorceress!

They were darting along past Cairo now and, she murmured, "Thank God! There are no forts upon the river!"

Then, leading him back to Grosvenor, she said, "You shall have all of Hassan's story upon the Brindisi steamer! He goes over to Europe with me, upon a secret mission to Lord Wrexham! Zacharias, too, will go as far as Brindisi, or even to Lausanne! Now, our lives depend upon silence!"

"Ask me nothing more! When we are under the shadow of Pompey's Pillar, once more,—then, you shall know all,—and,—from my own lips! Now, leave me, for I must direct our race against time!"

"Only the Viceroy's very swiftest yacht could hope to overtake us! Once with Consul General Carioli again, we are safe from all interference, but,—not till then!" And so, without a single light exposed—the beautiful boat sped along, past the Shoubrah palace!

Kenneth Gryffyth slept the deep sleep of exhaustion, while at the stern of the vessel, the lonely Duchess still watched the glow of dawn deepen into the golden day which shone down upon Ismail Pasha, defeated and deposed,—waiting, alone and deserted,—in his palace of Abdin, the summons of his suzerain, to go out, as a wanderer and a political exile, and leave his faithless son Tewfik to reign over the wreck which the betrayed father had made.

For, Egypt had a new sovereign, and Belshazzar's throne was wrecked at last!

Kenneth Gryffyth awoke from the wildest dreams and leaped to his feet as the "Astarte's" wheels stopped.

The afternoon sun was shining down in a royal glow, and through the silken curtains looped up, he could see a line of giant masonry piers! The whole strange night expedition returned to him,—the frowning hills,—the ramparts of the old fort, crowning the flowing Nile,—the dark and silent horsemen,—the wild lonely glen,—the strange midnight quest for the antiquities, and the graceful panorama of sleeping Cairo,—beautiful Boulak,—the thousand twinkling lights of the great city,—the fleets of Nile boats with folded wings,—and all the strange silhouettes of mosque and kiosk, palace and minaret!

He remembered the drooping glories of the Ghezireh gardens, and the noble line of the Shoubrah! And then, he sprang to the stairway! But, on guard there, only his head visible above the deck, the giant Grosvenor forced him back! He placed his hand roughly over Gryffyth's mouth!

"Be silent, for your life!" he whispered. "This is the great Nile bridge,—at Kafreez-Zaiyat! The very last telegraph station on the river. The Pasha in command here, is on deck with the Duchess now, and looking at the yacht's irade to pass all customs inspections. The Con-

sul General's cavasse too is there! And,—all the others are hidden!"

Gryffyth saw that Grosvenor had an army revolver in his hand and a Remington rifle leaned in readiness against the stair case near him!

Five minutes of suspense,—the shuffling of steps on deck,—and then,—the great wheels revolved, and with increasing rhythm, beat once more upon the waters of old father Nilus!

It was a noble sight which met Gryffyth's eyes as he gazed at the magnificent railroad bridge from the cabin windows!

"Thank God! There is not a single steamer in sight!" cried Grosvenor, as he sprang to his friend's side! "We have passed Menouf, the only dangerous point, and, there is Kafreez, now a half a mile behind! Now, for full speed, ahead, and a last race to Dessouk!" He beckoned to Gryffyth to come up on deck!

No one was visible as the boat swept around a bend, and only the low canal dikes,—the green wastes,—the scattered mud huts,—the old abandoned temples, and distant cotton and sugar factories, met the eye! On the "Astarte" leaped, on past troops of wondering camel drivers, and gathering crowds of muddy fellahs!

The faint hail, "O! Backsheesh, Howadji!" came floating out over the waters! They were now out of sight of Kafreez Bridge, at last, and—the Duchess extended her hands, in a royal welcome!

She was pale and haggard, from her long night vigil!

"Safe at last! Thank God!" she cried, her splendid eyes filling with happy tears. "I have received two telegrams at Kafreez. Cherubini is now waiting for us at Dessouk, with an Italian marine guard of twenty-five men! There is great excitement in Alexandria! The 'Ré Vittorio Emmanuele' waits but for us! The special train is there,—and—Carioli, too, passed Kafreez on his own car, at midnight! He left his cavasse to bring us on! And,—sunset will bring us to Dessouk!"

The astounded secret agent murmured, "What is your secret purpose? Have we all failed?"

There was the ring of victory in Marguerite de Valeria's voice as she cried—

"If the machinery does not break down, we have all succeeded! And, we will owe it all to my chosen realm,—the Nile,—the world's mystery,—'Hapi Mu,'—the genius of the waters!

"It has brought down for thousands of years its six inches of freshening soil in every century! The gift of the White Nile, the Blue Nile, and—the Atbara! Here, the Israelites toiled by 'Sihor,' the black river! And, the work of Mungo Park, Burton, Speke and Grant Livingstone, of Samuel Baker and Gordon, will not be lost,—though a weakling sovereign falls!"

On they sped over the great river's broad bosom, now throbbing in these early days of June for its mysterious rise, which graded from thirty feet at Thebes, to five feet on the Delta,—which spread the vivifying silt of the Atbara,—Abyssinia's eternal tribute,—over the vast lake of the Delta,—a sea island for three months and a smiling paradise of fertility for nine!

Here the fruitful breast of an eternally reinforced Mother Earth gives three abundant crops in every year! The wonder of the world's fertility!

"How did you know in advance of the Khedive's deposition?" whispered Gryffyth, leaning over the Duchess and kissing her trembling hands! She placed a rosy finger on his lip!

"Silence upon your life—till I bid you speak! Wrexham telegraphed the news to me, alone, in an agreed-on cipher. Now, not another word, till we are out on the sea!"

"Cherif?" he impetuously demanded.

"Has been fooled, and at his own game! Remember! I enslaved you first on the blue Mediterranean! There, alone, will I set you free!" She pointed to the forward deck! "Go and amuse yourself! I will now call up all my imprisoned birds!"

It all seemed like a dream of the Arabian nights, for Grosvenor gayly led Gryffyth forward, to the crew's cabins! Come and see my little hidden army!"

He then laughingly showed to the secret agent, a score of armed men, huddled in the men's quarters!

"I think that I could whip anything on the river, but a force with field pieces here—or, at least, cut our way through! I must go down now and order only three-quarters racing speed! A broken link,—a single heated bearing, or a collision with a floating log, might cost you a reward now, that you little dream of, my financial friend!"

He smiled knowingly and dove into the engine room!

"This is the land of misery and mystery,—of midnight intrigue and daylight surprise!" muttered Kenneth, as he wandered back to where Zacharias,—Hassan the dragoman,—the Consular Cavasse, and the grinning Soames, were grouped merrily laughing around the smoke stack!

"It's a record-breaking run for the Nile!" cried Grosvenor, as he dragged Gryffyth back to the quarter decks, where Madame Carioli, the Baroness Rhoten, and the pretty Countess Renée were vainly trying to make Marguerite de Valeria abandon her searchlight glances at the long foaming wake they left behind! But, the Duchess was inexorable!

"Breakfast here now, a feast à la Cleopatra, on deck!" gayly cried the Duchess!

"Grosvenor! You shall be Antony, in a pith hat, while I enact the Serpent of old Nile, with a silken parasol, as a scepter!"

And, then, they laughed and lingered long, at their feast, while the varying banks swept by, with visible vestiges of the wars of a thousand years, and the splendors which had faded long before the bright-brained Alexander dreamed of conquest!

The last golden Nile glow was lighting up the western skies, as the "Astarte" swept up triumphantly to the bank at Dessouk!

With a pale face,—the Duchess commanded an absolute silence, as Cherubini leaped aboard the yacht with his score of stout Italian marines.

There was a joyous group of excited women gathered about Consul General Carioli and Dellepiane, while the

whole force hastily transformed the luggage to the two freight cars of the special train! Soames and Rawlins, (Grosvenor's hard-faced veteran valet), soon reported all in readiness to the two friends, when a sudden thought struck Gryffyth!

"Fill me a dozen bottles of the Nile water, Soames!"—he cried, pointing to the debris of the merry feast! "Seal them when we get to the 'Ré Vittorio Emmanuele!' I may wish yet to drink the health of England's most daring and neglected explorer!"

For, it was Richard Burton,—linguist,—author,—hero, and geographer,—daring adventurer, and true Briton, who, on August 3, 1858,—first of all our wanderers, set eyes on the Nyanza, and, so saw the true source of the Nile! Livingstone's error, disproved later by Stanley, only proved the pioneer Burton's unerring judgment!

And, then, Gryffyth thought of British East Africa, creeping up from the shores of the vast lake of Nyanza, on northward to Khartoum—"The Nile must yet be British, from the very source to the sea!" And, then, he wondered if he had himself helped on the work of a century, the task of England's most patient heroes! He drew the Duchess aside, as the party hurried from the "Astarte!"

"Gordon?" he whispered!

"Has been secretly warned! He will hear from me, long before that wretch Cherif at Cairo can betray him! The secret messenger went away last night, by rail, to Siout, and Lord Wrexham has cabled me 'carte blanche' to warn Gordon,—who will, if displaced, leave Nubia, by Massowah!

"You can see that Cherif's backers will soon reduce the Soudan to anarchy! If a stronger hand ever grasps it, it will be that of the British sovereign, and, not the degenerate breed of Ismail!

"Remember,—not a drop of Mehemet's lion blood flows in Ismail and Tewfik's muddy veins! Silence,—and,—wait!"

Kenneth Gryffyth gazed in wonder, at the gloomy Abdallah, now on the yacht's deck in obsequious attendance upon the smooth diplomat Cherubini, who called the last of the Cairene escort around him, and then,

swung his hat in triumph as the "Astarte" moved steadily away up stream!

"There!" cried Grosvenor, "Abdallah is outwitted, and, Cherif foiled!

"We will all be out on the Mediterranean long before the 'Astarte' reaches Kafreez! Cherubini has never lost sight of Abdallah for a moment, day or night, and—the sly dragoman is a cajoled prisoner on the yacht! She will take at least three days to reach Cairo, going up stream, and,—so,—Carioli will be back there long before Abdallah!"

Kenneth Gryffyth took a last look of the hoary Nile, wrapped in its blackness of ages, and dragging its voiceless secrets three thousand two hundred and fifty miles from the Equator to the sea, where the first galleys built by man hovered in hostile purpose, upon the coast of Egypt thousands of years ago! A sigh as of the slaves of Khartoum,—the groaning fellahs,—the myriads who have died under the lash,—the millions whose miseries are long forgotten, swept down the great river in the wailing winds of evening! The engine whistled shrilly!

"The antiquities?" demanded Kenneth, as they leaped into the train and, at a signal from Carioli's finger the train rushed along toward Damanhoor!

"A platoon of marines are gathered around that cof-
fer!" cheerfully said Grosvenor. "They kept Hassan out
of his brother Abdallah's sight, also! We are all safe
now! We can laugh, even at the hosts of Pharaoh!"

"You had better relapse now into pale ale and pore over the last *London Times*! You have nothing to do, my boy, till we arrive at Lausanne! Lord Wrexham is waiting for us there! Try these cheroots! They are excellent!"

And, Charley Grosvenor gaily relapsed into his old lazy self!

Kenneth Gryffyth, with crimsoning cheeks, dared not ask if the great English diplomat had gathered together his family around him!

"Will the Duchess—," he began—in a diplomatic way!

"Not a word,—old boy,—till we are on the water! I'm

not going to submit to the torture of the rack of the interviewer! Patience, and silence!"

They were alone in their car with Zacharias, who had never left the side of Hassan the dragoman, and the two valets! There had been no exchange, even of signals, between Hassan and the brother whom he now feared.

Their departure from Dessouk had attracted no attention. The ugly street mob only howled "Back-sheesh!" and,—spat after the vanishing Giaours! The lazy officials, the wandering soldiers and the bazaar merchants of the straggling Nile city knew that the foreign magnates of Cairo always sent their families over to the cool Tyrol or Switzerland's lake regions during the unhealthy summer, when all the fatness of the inundation steamed in the malarial air!

They were half way to Damanhour, and Soames had reported all the details of the closing up of his master's personal affairs, before Kenneth Gryffyth noted the frightened face of Hassan the dragoman! And, then, it flashed upon him, that there had been no word of greeting between the brothers!

For, Hassan had been marched off in the solid platoon escort of the mysterious coffer of antiquities! As they ran along through Damanhour without stopping, the dragoman trembled like a leaf at the wild cries of the lounging street rabble of Damanhour! He was in a mortal fear of his betrayed master—the crafty Cherif,—now all powerful!

It was nine o'clock when the train pulled up at the mole of Alexandria, and, the whole party were soon hustled aboard a great tug lying in waiting! The troops stacked arms and aided to toss the luggage on the tug, and, Gryffyth, even though confused with the rapid glimpses of the fairy-like scenes of the Alexandria peninsula, marked how Hassan cowered in the midst of the squad of marines, who formed a solid ring around the luggage when the tug swept out into the great bay! They were off,—at last!

Gryffyth was silent as he noted the red gleam of the Pharos,—the blue throbbing bay lit up with the red lanterns of the anchored battle-ships,—the fringing palms,

—the sweeping semi-circle of Alexandria's gaudy human hive,—the forests of masts of the Mediterranean coastwise fleet,—the fleets of steamers. The evening was calm and the wild shrill cries of the shore were borne faintly to his ears.

A splendid moon lit up the scene as the tug lay alongside of the huge "Ré Vittorio Emmanuele!"

There was a babel of yells and shrieks as the seamen beat away the mosquito fleet of boatmen, and polyglot curses, from Coptic to good round English, filled the air!

The great steamer was now straining at her buoy, with a slowly turning screw, as the tug Captain screamed his last report in Italian!

The whole party from the "Astarte" was gathered on the quarter deck, when the gold-banded cap of the Italian skipper was lifted, in his last signal, "All Hands Aboard!"

With loudly sounding gong clangs, the mariner ordered, "Forward, half speed!" and, under the guidance of a shrieking Moslem pilot,—the Brindisi steamer moved grandly out to sea over the fanged sunken rocks below. The tug was still lashed alongside, and Gryffyth knew that Grosvenor, with Zacharias, and the two valets were standing on guard over Hassan the dragoman, who was now locked up in Gryffyth's double cabin. Long before the agitated Consul General Carioli had stolen the last good-bye kiss from his pretty wife's lips they were well out at sea—and Carioli was hailed in a fond chorus of farewell, when the wild-eyed pilot dropped down into his canoe, and, the tug was left drifting shoreward behind them! The two Englishmen clasped hands with a joyous shout!

"Dellepiane tells me that there have been incipient riots in Alexandria," cried Grosvenor. "I am glad that we are all safely out on the high seas! Take your last look of the Land of Cleopatra! Ken, old man!

"You will never see it again,—I think,—nor,—even care to, when you know all!" The shores were fading behind them, as the mists gathered around, and the wild sea mews circled and screamed, in their augury of a rising storm!

The scattered forts where French and British blood had

watered the thirsty sands once reeking with the carnage of Greek and Roman,—of Saracen and crusader—slowly faded from sight!

"Tell me, Grosvenor," cried Gryffyth—"for we are safe now! Who were those armed fellows who escorted us up the hill and later manned the 'Astarte'?"

"They were Carioli's Consular guard! You must ask the Duchess! By Jove! I forgot! I must go and release Hassan!"

"And, there is a great bag of letters for us—that the Captain received by the mail tug! Dellepiane has carefully gathered up everything! And,—we have some telegrams!"

A half hour later, Kenneth Gryffyth was seated, with a wildly throbbing heart, reading letters from Kathleen Lawrie, which seemed laden with all the auguries of a heaven upon earth!

A telegram from Sir James Lawrie, at Lausanne, bade him a thousand welcomes back to Europe. "Your fortune is made for life!"—were the startling words which astounded him, coming from the gray-eyed old dictator of Mammon's hosts!

"What have I done to deserve all this?" mused Gryffyth! For, he was drifting on the Mediterranean, and, still in the dark!

"This has been a victorious campaign!" cried Grosvenor, coming laughing in, at last—with his hands filled with letters. "Stephanie and Bessie Lightwood and Lischen have unfolded intrigues that we never dreamed of, to Wrexham's secret service men!

"Sir Harry Lingard, too, has confessed all his Egyptian tricks, and been enlarged from the sober German lockup, as a reward! And,—that full-throated nightingale, la belle Morelli, has also yielded to Wrexham's cunning representative! She has also given him some valuable information as to the secrets of Baie, and Ismail's hidden nests in Europe which will make both Cherif and the double-faced Ismail, the deposed and bankrupt prince —wish that these same bright Italian eyes had never peeped behind the arras of their strange secret partnership! Arcades ambo,—birds of a feather!"

"Wait,—wait, my boy, till we get to Lausanne! You will be still further mystified there. Fortune's favors wait for you! But, I will not spoil a pleasant surprise!"

"And, you, Charley!" fondly said Kenneth, thinking of the stern, unrewarded courage which had bared his friend's breast to Santa Marina's thirsty sword!

"Oh! I am going to be married, soon,—and,—to retire from public life and private adventure, for awhile! For, the last obstacle is now swept away! Milly is to marry Lord Morninghouse in July! I shall not wait a day, not a single day, after the wedding, to make Marguerite,—my wife!"

There was a tap at the door! It was the sad-eyed Zacharias! "Madame la Duchesse would speak with you in the ladies' private salon!" he muttered, indicating Kenneth Gryffyth, and then—the old Hebrew banker sighed, as he gazed at the handsome young patrician Grosvenor, striding up and down, impatiently, till Gryffyth should return!

"I must say Good Night to you—soon!" he gayly cried. "For, we all need rest after our flight out of Egypt!" Zacharias stood mutely by, in a secret sorrow!

In the salon, Madame Carioli and the vivacious Baroness Rhoten watched the whispered colloquy between the Duchess and her faithful silent knight!

The little Countess had long since been "rocked in the cradle of the deep," and the great ship had left the land of the Lotos far behind! They were dashing along at full speed now!

Marguerite de Valeria's eyes were downcast, and her bosom heaved, as she murmured, "You have won an unconscious victory of vast international importance! For three years, the public revenues of Egypt have been administered by the Board of Control! Your own keen-witted work has wrested the truth, at last, out of Ismail and Cherif,—and, has paved the way for a final plan of control which will clear up all the floating debt and, especially if England assumes a larger influence,—for, the source of the mysterious leakage of the past three years has been traced!

"Your reports and data needed but one unerring proof!

The secret records of the dual expenditures of Ismail Khedive and his confederate, Cherif! Chance made you the instrument of forcing them into our hands!"

"The antiquities!" cried Gryffyth, grasping her hands. "I see, now, why you have captured Hassan the dragon-man! But, the books have a secret key!"

"That I have, even now, in my own jewel case!" sighed the Duchess. "To-morrow, you shall have all of Hassan's story, in my presence! And,—at Lausanne,—you and Zacharias will finish up your labors! You will find Sir James Lawrie awaiting there!

"Not a word of this, even to Grosvenor,—until I bid you speak!" Then, Gryffyth silently laid before her the telegram of Sir James Lawrie, whose words told him of a waiting fortune!

"This is as it should be!" she said, with a sad smile! "We have gained, at last, a complete control of Cherif Pasha! He will be narrowly watched by our three friends and, young Jacob Zacharias will report all to us by telegrams. The evidence we now have is irresistible. And, moreover, Tewfik Pasha will not be publicly proclaimed Khedive, for three weeks yet! Gordon will perhaps be able to resign, and so avoid a shameful dismissal by Tewfik's crowd of panders and slave-dealers! He will be protected!"

"We make silence a condition! Cherif Pasha will never dare to raise a public storm, no matter what Ratib imagines, as to the theft of the papers—or discovers as to our secret hegira! Next year,—the five powers will insist upon a new law of Liquidation, and,—all the great interests which you have represented will be properly treated in the international settlement.

"In twenty years, Egypt will be under full English control from Khartoum to the sea, and a yearly surplus of revenue will show the truth of the golden policy laid out by David Hart and Sir James Lawrie!

"Stability,—economy,—honest administration, and a continually increasing cotton acreage, will redeem in time the whole Egyptian debt! The lash will leave the fellah's back, and his burden, at most, be only that of ordinary toil!"

"You shall know, to-morrow, how Cherif has tricked himself! He was outbidden at his own game,—and,—foiled by a woman's hand!"

Gryffyth wondered at the sadness of her voice, the mist lingering upon her splendid eyes! Where was the love to meet Grosvenor's glowing anticipations? That heaven to come, by the beautiful shores of blue Lake Leman!

"Now, you must send Grosvenor to me!" the stately woman faltered. "I have kept this from him, to the last! He must, however, take a special engine at Brindisi,—run up to Ancona,—Mantua, over the Brenner, and by Constance to Lausanne! There is no unmixed joy in this world!"

"And, I know not how to soften this to him!"

She handed to Gryffyth a telegram. The words of Sir James Lawrie were all too sadly direct! The shadow of the Valley of Death was falling upon the home of Wrexham, at last!

"Lord Wrexham is seriously ill! The worst is almost inevitable! Send Grosvenor on, from Brindisi,—with all possible speed! Let nothing delay him for an instant!"

Gryffyth stood there irresolute, as the lovely Spirit of the Night sobbed, "He would have died for me! I would to God that I could now spare him the touch of the dark hand of Death, which makes him a peer of England!"

The two women were lingering with their sorrowing sister, as Gryffyth sought out Grosvenor upon the deck!

"Go down to her!" he faltered. "There is some grave news for you! Remember, you must be a man, now!"

The speaker was left alone as the gallant steamer cleared her way along through the phosphorescent seas!

Late that night, Kenneth Gryffyth walked the deck alone under the splendid stars, for, the threatened storm had veered away,—and he watched the lovers seated in a hidden nook, and, then, he knew that her head had sought the rest of her lover's breast, for Marguerite de Valeria was pouring out the tenderness of her loyal heart to comfort the gallant man who would have died in her defense!

CHAPTER XIV.

HASSAN'S STORY.—A DINNER ON THE MAHMOUDIEH.—AT BRINDISI!—“THERE IS YET TIME!”—THE HOTEL DE RUSSIE AT CHILLON.—SIR JAMES LAWRIE'S GIFT.—A VOICE FROM THE PAST.—CARIOLI'S TELEGRAM.—LORD WREXHAM'S RETURN.

The “Ré Vittorio Emmanuele” was rushing along over smooth sapphire seas, at her highest possible speed when Kenneth Gryffyth awoke! The potent influence of the Duchess de Valeria led the stout Italian Captain to do his utmost to aid the sorrowing son in reaching the side of his dying father!

For, the great Lord Wrexham had fought the good fight and would soon rest from his labors!

The knots of excited passengers brought with them all the unrest of Alexandria's incipient tumults and Cairo's fitful fever, now at its climax! Zacharias never left the side of the anxious-eyed Hassan, who gazed over the stern of the steamer as if the fell “Mahmoudieh” were in pursuit!

It was late in the afternoon when the Duchess gathered Grosvenor and Gryffyth around her, to hear Hassan's strange story! Abdallah's brother was, now, willing to speak the whole truth, for thirty-six hours more would land them in Brundusina, whence the old Crusaders streamed off by scores of thousands to die in the Orient!

And,—the protecting Italian flag was over him, and,—Ismail Khedive had no ship to follow, and,—Cherif, the dreaded, had been outwitted, and,—best of all,—the last half of his promised recompense was to be paid, in ringing gold,—at the end of their voyage!

This last affair peculiarly appealed to the heart of the greedy Egyptian! The young noble, soon to be Lord Wrexham, was called up from his study of maps and

railway tables with the Captain, who had devised a plan of signaling from the outer harbor of Brindisi for a special engine and carriage, and then, sending on Grosvenor (with a royal dispatch bearer's privileges) over the road to Ancona,—Modena,—Piacenza, Como, and Berne, thus saving a day in transit over the Brenner route,—and—they would gain nearly another now precious day by rushing along the "Vittorio Emmanuele" at her top speed!

"You must listen to the dragoman's story!" cried Grosvenor's despairing bride-to-be. "For, Lord Wrexham may linger till you arrive. There is always hope while life lasts, and, he must know that his labors of years have not been wrought in vain! For, the mystery of the failure of Nubar's Reform Administration of the last two years is plain at last! Ismail Khedive was in Cherif's power!

"And, the captured books show that they had jointly secretly diverted the sums received to found the two private hoards now hidden in Europe! And, these same books—with the secret key will enable Ismail to purchase peace and England's protection for his future, only, by a partial restitution!

"As for Cherif, he must now aid the International Liquidation of next year! Otherwise,—the Bosphorus' gilded state prisons will open for the deposed prince,—with the certainty of swift punishment for his sly confederate, Cherif!

"De Lesseps is already turning his eyes to Panama! Egypt is but an empty shell now,—and, Ismail must tell the whole truth, at last, for he can no longer balance Nubar against Cherif!

"He may avoid the bowstring,—by making secret terms with England! Otherwise,—the Turkish iron-clad which takes him to Stamboul may be a floating charnel house, like his own 'Mahmoudieh'!"

"You must know all,—and,—Lord Wrexham shall live, please God, to see his labors crowned! It is the harvest of ten years of the most exciting secret diplomacy!"

The beautiful woman's eyes gazed into her lover's, with a despairing tenderness! Grosvenor read all the story of

that mute appeal! "Lord Wrexham should know, even at the last, that he owed his secret victory to the woman whom his son would wed!"

In a timidly hushed voice,—Hassan, the legacy of Gordon, slowly told a strange, weird story as he gazed at the two men and appealingly glanced at the Duchess for her support! He faltered out:

"Before I left Cairo on the 'Mahmoudieh,' Cherif Pasha sent Abdallah to bring me to him, in private, at his palace of the Esbekieyeh! My brother stood by when he bade me secretly watch Rustem Effendi on the whole trip and see that he sent neither letter nor telegram to any one!

"There were, also, two Captains selected by Ratib Pasha, and, the Chief Eunuch of Cherif's harem, who were to have sole charge of him as escort! 'If you discover aught that he tries to send away to others—I will make your fortune,' said Cherif!

"If he confides in you, you are then to tell all to my Chief Eunuch. If you forget yourself,—you shall die! And,—you are to return and report to His Highness the Khedive, just what the Chief Eunuch tells you! On your faith,—hangs your life,—and,—your brother's! It is a sly Syrian dog,—this Rustem Effendi,—a secret spy of Nubar Pasha's, and of the English,—and, besides, he knows far too much! Look to it!"

"A great purse of gold he flung to me, and then I went away in a mortal fear!" The poor dragoman shuddered!

"We left Ghezireh, at night, and by sunset, were anchored off the Viceroy's Palace at Helouan! The Eunuch debarked only our own party of five,—Rustem,—the two officers, and myself! A long week we were all shut up in the viceregal palace, with two companies of Nubian guards, on duty there, day and night!

"The whole palace attendants obeyed every sign of the Chief Eunuch!"

Hassan sighed and trembled as he said, "Day and night—the three men never left Rustem, and I, alone, slept in peace, for I had a divan with the officers of the palace guard! I knew that I would have a story to tell, and—that I was to be spared to tell it!"

"Day by day, we searched all over the vast palace, and,—silent at Rustem's side,—I aided him and the three, in turning over hundreds of books and papers,—stored away in a dozen different vaults, and hiding-places. Movable mirrors hid the doors of some of these hiding-places!

"There were steel strong boxes, too, and, a deep crypt with a secret door under the Viceroy's own state chambers!

"When Rustem found, after hours of toil,—book by book,—the Chief Eunuch then sealed up each one, and, marked them down on a list of which both he, and the two Captains had a copy! The doors were all sealed up again with Cherif's own private seal! I could see poor Rustem grow pale and haggard, day by day, and his despairing eyes often sought mine in silence! But, he dared show no fear to the others! The whole deserted palace was as lonely as the caves of the Afrites!

"I dared not speak! And, I waited, mutely, on the four men when, in the last two days, they bitterly quarreled over some books which Rustem could not find! More than once, the Chief Eunuch's hand was clutched on his scimitar! I could see the shadow hanging over the doomed wretch!

"It was along before dawn, on the eighth day, that we were all aroused before the daylight, by a special vice-regal messenger from Cairo, and then, hurried aboard the 'Mahmoudieh,' where steam was already up! A guard of a platoon soon surrounded us, and four Nubian mutes, whose tongues had been cut out,—carried a heavy Turkish coffer on board the yacht,—the Eunuch marching in front of us with his scimitar bare, and the two Captains, pistols drawn, at the sides! In rear, slowly walked Rustem Effendi!

"I was stumbling on the gangplank in the dark, when his left hand clutched my sleeve as he thrust it out behind him!

"I was afraid to breathe, as with his right, he pressed a small book into my right hand! I thrust it deeply into my bosom! On the deck, the guards soon separated, and I fled away to my room, for, they had dragged Rustem Effendi below with them, and the coffer!

"I closed my own door and, then, ripping open, slyly, the divan cushion at its seam, with my dagger,—after turning it over, I thrust the fatal book deep down into the matted wool and hid it secure from all discovery!

"Then, I waited for the dawn to say my prayers, and to make my ablutions! I dared not look, at any one, but, I was apparently neglected, for the boat was then rushing swiftly along, up the Nile towards Beni-Souet!

"All that day, I marvelled, as I sat silent on my prayer carpet, and smoked my chibouque amidships!

"I could see Rustem Effendi there under the stern awning, seated with the two officers, and the Chief Eunuch, and they were all drinking Frankish wine, and all making merry! The messenger of the Viceroy, too, was with them at table! I was served my noonday and sunset meal, with the yacht Captain and his officers, and, it was dark long before we saw the lights of Beni-Souet!

"Lying on the deck, I could see them all below, feasting at the splendid dinner table and hear their shouts of laughter in the main cabin! Once in the afternoon,—Rustem Effendi had walked towards me, and then I met the frightened glance of his eyes! They were like the eyes of the tired gazelle,—when the jackals bound forward as she lies panting on the sand!

"The Chief Eunuch quickly called him back,—in a croaking voice, and, then, he turned on his heel, with one last look of inexpressible fear! I can see him, even now!

"There was a silence in the listening circle as Hassan groaned! The binnacle windows were slightly raised up, and, I could see down into the cabin through the opening at the end of the windows! Rustem, at the head of the table was seated with the royal messenger and the Chief Eunuch at his side! Suddenly, a frightful scream sounded out, ringing loudly over the still waters, and then, the yacht's steam whistle shrieked aloud, deafening my ears! I could not withdraw my gaze, in rooted horror!

"For, with a single glance,—I saw the huge Eunuch bending over the dying Rustem, with his brawny arms straining and his great black hands clutching, at the struggling man's throat! I glided along the deck to the

bow,—my heart palsied with horror, and dumbly waited there for my own fate! The crew were wandering about, all apparently unconcerned,—and it seemed to me as if it had been only a hideous dream! But, I was left all unmolested!

"I scarcely dared to breathe!

"But, we anchored soon, before Beni Souet, and then, a boat put the messenger ashore! I heard the whistle of a railway train, as I wandered around the forward deck! I dared not to go below! I dared not even to speak to any one—and, I waited!

"The boat moved off slowly up the river and, at last, anchored for the night! When I was called below by the Chief Eunuch's slave,—the great cabin was filled with pans of burning camphor and incense!

"The stern windows were all thrown open, and there was no sign whatever of Rustem Effendi! The boat was now swinging idly from her anchor with her head up the Nile, and the paddle wheels slowly clicking under the current! I awaited my fate with quaking knees!

"The three brutes were making merry over their champagne in the forward end of the state cabin! It was in Ismail's own seat of honor, that the poor Syrian had been strangled! Bending his fierce glances on me,—Mustapha the Eunuch then growled:

"'Rustem Effendi is dead,—of a sudden cholera! You will make the necessary report to Cherif Pasha! His garments are all in a net here, dragging in the Nile! They will be kept for a witness!'

"He grinned as he pointed to two stout ropes hanging out of the stern window!

"'And, you will remember, say that you were with him when he died,—and,—that he said nothing!'

"He pointed to the door of my cabin, and I fled away and hid myself in the room!

"Not once did I close my eyes that night, for I fancied that I could hear poor Rustem's naked body bobbing and striking against the sides of the vessel! For, I knew that they had despoiled him, and then, cast his carcass to the hungry fishes!

"Not a word was said of the missing man, next day,

as we slowly moved down to Wadi Turra! And, there, we cast anchor below the old Fort Turra, where a troop of horsemen signaled us at dusk!

"Their Captain soon came on board, and the three murderers then landed, bearing with them the coffer! I could see the troop move up the ravine toward the old fort and a carriage on the strand was awaiting the scoundrels who had left me without a word!"

"I knew the Captain of the Hussars well! He had been on duty at Gordon's palace, and had once been a messenger with me to the Soudan!"

"I had with me still the purse of gold which Cherif had given me! At ten o'clock the party returned, and feasted gayly in the cabin till midnight! I was lingering on the deck when the Captain of the troops came up to get into his canoe, and he paddled ashore!"

"It was but the work of a moment to slip the purse into his hands! And he told me then, they had hidden the coffer in the one magazine traverse of the old Fort Turra! He thought it contained only the clothes of the murdered man! And, then, I knew that Cherif had betrayed his own master!"

"He would try and hide the coffer of books away elsewhere, later! Perhaps in his own palace,—with Ratib's aid!"

"The next morning I was put off at Ghezireh, landing by daylight! They gave me a carriage and then bade me hasten and make my report to Cherif Pasha!"

"I had hidden the little book with care in my bosom! I drove to the Esbekieyeh, and saw Abdallah, whom I sent to Cherif Pasha with the news, as bidden. And, while Abdallah was absent,—I hastened to Villa Kléber with the little red book! The rest you know!"

"I was taken, before night, by Cherif Pasha, to the Viceroy at Abdin, and I told my whole false story, as bidden! Abdallah went away to Ghezireh and brought over the raiment of the poor murdered Effendi! I received five purses from Cherif, and he then bade Abdallah watch me, telling him that both our lives were in his power! But,—now I am safe,—I will never see Cairo again!"

"I throw myself before you, great lady!"

"I have told you how Gordon Pasha's every action has been spied on by Cherif for six years! His papers,—documents,—telegrams—have been robbed—and,—all the Soudan is now only a network of his enemies! Zebehr and Cherif,—the ivory dealers,—Ratib,—Osman, and the Prince Tewfik,—they all swear that Gordon shall be tricked at every turn!"

When the story of Hassan was done, Madame la Duchesse said: "You shall be sent to the English embassy at Constantinople, and,—there, your life is safe forever! You have been true to Gordon,—Hassan,—and, true to me!"

"Abdallah?" he murmured.

"Fear him not!" cried the Duchess! "Cherif will keep him always near him!"

The travelers never knew that even before Lord Wrexham had drawn his last breath, Cherif Pasha bade his woman spy, Andrée Lafarge, summon Abdallah to the kiosk where the Duchess had met Kenneth Gryffyth in Cherif's garden!

A watchful spy of Cherif's had seen the pale Hassan in the company of travelers smuggled aboard the tug at Alexandria! There was a brief and ugly recrimination between the startled French woman and the smug scoundrel who had failed, at last, to trap Kenneth Gryffyth! The Pasha's eyes glared as he strode to the door!

"I believe neither of you!" he growled, as he passed out! There was a half-stifled scream as a dozen dusky forms swarmed into the lonely kiosk, and Cherif Pasha went smiling, up alone under the leafy avenue in the pale moonlight!

Two headless bodies were found floating in a canal, a few days later, by a toiling fellah who shuddered, and turned away as he had heard weird tales of the Princess Esmé's work! But, the brawny swordsmen only laughed over their spoil, and neither Abdallah, nor the woman ever returned to vex the crafty Cherif!

Hassan's evasion was to him the first sign of the coming of a long-deferred day of reckoning, and, he hastened to send beseeching and loving telegrams to la Morelli, at Baie!

Columbus never gazed out westwardly more anxiously for the signs of land than the stern and silent Grosvenor, as, seated with Marguerite de Valeria, he watched for the lights of Brindisi long after midnight on the morrow of his final arrangement for a future plan of action.

The day was breaking, as the "Ré Vittorio Emma-nuele" sped into the outer harbor, her signal flags fluttering in a rapid exchange of messages to the Chef de Donane, and the Captain of the Port.

The two loving hearts were surrounded by their excited friends as a customs tug sped away from the promontory of the bay of Lecce. Grosvenor was ready at the gang-way with his valet, as the Italian officer sprang up the stairs, with a telegram in his hand. "Milor' Grosvenor!" he cried, saluting profoundly.

"Thank God! There is yet time!" joyously exclaimed the stately lover as he folded Marguerite de Valeria in his arms before them all. "I will take Soames with me. He will bring you my last news." And in a few moments the little tug was darting away to where the engine stood ready for that wild race to Como. A race to receive a dying father's last benediction!

In her own cabin, the Duchess read the words of consolation: "Slight rally. Lord Wrexham may even live for several days! Hasten on. Answer." And the signature "Morninghouse," was supplemented with that of England's greatest physician.

It had been arranged that the whole party should move on slowly by the Brenner, under the conduct of the still wondering Gryffyth! His mind was filled with the strangest emotions as they left for Ancona that evening, and he read over the abundant mail from Chillon!

The coffer for which Rustem Effendi had died was safe in the passenger carriage where Zacharias and Gryffyth watched it every moment! Soames was in the compartment of Her Grace,—repeating for the twentieth time, —the last words of the man who was now far away ahead racing with Death for a noble father's last blessing.

A courier from the British Embassy at Rome had already made the way smooth for them with the insanely sensitive Italian customs officials, and his orders bade him

conduct the party across the Austrian, German and Swiss frontier to where the great English diplomat lay dying at the Hotel de Russie, under the shadows of the romantic Castle of Chillon.

Every other consideration but Grosvenor's meeting with his father had vanished from their minds, and, the day passed quickly as they rushed along to Foggia and Castellamare! Gryffyth's life of the last three months had made the letters of George Wilton and that gentle housewife, Ada, seem almost the utterances of strangers!

Between him and the beautiful Kathleen Lawrie was that stern faced old enigma, her father, who waited at Chillon for an account of the secret quest,—and,—the last discoveries!

There was a telegram which told him that, in some great game, in which he had been only a valiant man-at-arms—success had followed the joint efforts of the great banker—the dying diplomat,—his gallant friend,—and the lovely Spirit of the Night!

Zacharias dreamed in his corner as they dashed along, and Kenneth Gryffyth saw the whole strange life of the past months again unroll in a panorama, where secrets were not all yet unveiled!

It was at Ancona that the Duchess called him into her compartment to shyly exhibit two telegrams received from her flying Knight Errant! They had only a glimpse of each other at Brindisi, and the other detachment of three ladies were busy with each other!

But the young actuary burned to know the reasons of many things now hidden!

"Tell me," earnestly cried Gryffyth, who had now dropped "Mr. Malcolm Cranford" forever, "Did you take leave of Ismail Pasha?" The Duchess smiled!

"I can never tell you all the turns of this strange intrigue! I was determined never to leave Egypt till we had provided for Gordon's safety! There is an English gunboat at Massowah, and we have telegraphed up there, and they will also send out to him some secret messengers! The Khedive knew dimly of all the intrigues at Constantinople, but he could not trace the reasons for the use of Cherif's gold!"

"All his dispatches and mail had been tampered with for months! He knew not whether his friend Cherif or his enemy Nubar was behind the growing movement to place Tewfik on the throne! He knew not if he would be asked to abdicate—would be suspended—deposed or even imprisoned!

"And, with Cherif near him, he clung to his old partner and secret foe—now his very master! The pressure of the French and English Consuls Generals on him has been tremendous! He dared not to openly throw himself into the hands of the Italian, Russian and Austrian. He hoped to make terms with the English at the last.

"And, the grim fate before him, presses on him now with a thousand nameless terrors.

"He sent for me, and I wished to know if Cherif had at all undeviated him. Cherif even tried to be present at our last interview. I only flattered the wily Cherif a little to see that he was still ignorant of the fact that the robber himself had been robbed."

The Duchess smiled sadly. "I was forced to pity the broken Ismail at the last! He could see in my eyes that I knew the secret of his impending doom, and I dared not tell him of the facts—that the formal deposition was only held back for three weeks to enable us to save General Gordon.

"Gordon may be back in the Soudan, yet, as ruler—but another Khedive will rule, and red-coats will be on the Nile. The days of harem rule and the Pasha ring have fled—forever."

The Duchess' face crimsoned as she said, "Ismail even did me the honor to offer me an enormous bribe of his jewels, if I would tell him in advance of the secret determination of the Sultan. He knew that I was in communication with Lord Wrexham, and he, also, thought, with Sir Evelyn Baring and the English Ambassador at Stamboul. But, I would not take his baubles!"

"I advised him urgently to make secret terms with England—to leave Egypt forever—and to buy his right to live safely on the Continent with the use of a part of his private hoard, in bribing the Sultan!"

"If you do this, through the English Ambassador,

after giving up your secret records, you may untangle all your affairs, and so be guaranteed life—liberty—and comfort, even on the Bosphorus. But only if you unravel all your past money intrigues, so that the English can properly adjust the debt.

"'You can see that De Lesseps is leaving you for Panama,' said I. 'Deliver over frankly these withheld records.'

"Then," said the pitying Duchess, "poor Ismail pointed to the door of the room where Cherif hovered, a princely spy—and even then his secret master:

"I dare not!" he murmured, with pale lips. 'The man whom I sent for them is dead! Cherif's answers are evasive! He will tell me nothing! I have no friend to execute an order! Cherif may have either stolen them or else delayed their arrival, so that my enemies will get them. He may have hidden the records! He may have stolen them himself, and secretly destroyed them!

"I dare not quarrel with him now, and not a sword will be drawn for me, not a guinea can I command! Cherif has the whole government in his hands now! If he has lied to me, it is too late! I dare not quarrel with him,—for then—he will make terms with the English, save himself alone—and,—betray me to ruin!"

"The Khedive was in tears," said the Duchess, "when he burst out, 'It is the old curse of Ham! The shadow which lies floating upon hapless Africa! There are not so many games left for sovereigns to play now! The vacant wastes of the whole world are appropriated! There are no more aboriginal nations to be swept away by the cross-bearing dealers in rum, whose cannon finish what the alcohol poison does not!'

"Africa will be soon parcelled out! In fifty years the name will be but a geographical memory! France and England will grasp all of northern Africa—Italy, Belgium, Portugal and Germany will eat into its heart from east to west.

"The English must fulfill their great destiny! They never recede! From South Africa,—creeping up the east,—they will grasp the whole Nile from Nyanza to the sea,—they have the entire Suez Canal now dominated

with their fleet, and so can bar all use of the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean!

"They will blast out the cataracts, and they will soon make a great military depot at Khartoum! The heart of Africa will send its treasures of goods safely down an English-guarded waterway, for money, dredging and dynamite will make the Nile only an inland English canal! A few portage steamer cradle railways will perhaps be needed! Equatoria has ruined the house of Mehemet Ali, and, foreign friendship has made Egypt the vassal of England!"

"The Khedive groaned in his rage as he said:

"But, Russia will revenge me in the coming years, with her Asian and Trans-Siberian railways finished, she will leap some day upon Constantinople, and will then stir up the wild Abyssinians to attack the English in upper Egypt!"

"With Turkey dismembered,—and Stamboul only a Russian place of arms—it will cost England hundreds of millions yet to fight Russia, and—her grip on the Soudan may be only that of the dying lion! Time will revenge me, and—I appeal to its dread hand!"

"When he saw that I would tell him nothing more, he gave me a handful of jewels! 'Madame la Duchesse!' he pleasantly said, 'You do not wish to give me the coup de grâce, I see! Keep these gems as memories of an unfortunate prince! And, of our pleasant days at Ismailia, when I opened the great canal for the whole world—and made it an unwilling present to France and England!"

"I have been improved out! I have been slain in the house of my friends. I will wait for the fatal news,—which, I see, in your truthful eyes, that you already have heard.—Go—and be happy.—I wish you Bon Voyage! Leave Egypt for,—there may be bloodshed!"

"It was the grinning Cherif who escorted me to my carriage, and my only pleasure, was to mystify him at the very last! 'What did Ismail say to you?' demanded the wily Cherif.

"'Go and ask him!' I replied, with a neat nod of the head!"

"And—now, my labors?" demanded Gryffyth. "You

are only to make a skeleton copy of the stolen books which will be turned over in the original later to the International Commission! I will keep the key! You can study the whole later in London!

"In the meantime Sir James Lawrie and his friends will make an immense fortune in the purchase of the veritable claims as certified by you—for the great money syndicate will have the first news, a full year before the world at large!"

"Fehmy Pasha has already fled from London! Gordon's resignation will be half-way to Cairo, before Tewfik Khedive is publicly proclaimed! De Lesseps will leave Cairo next week,—and in two weeks' time, the Sultan's firman will be given out to the world! Voilà tout! All the five Consuls General are secretly warned of the change,—even now! Did you see the foreign fleet lying at Alexandria? Everyone knows the future now,—but—the ruined Khedive!"

"And, at Chillon? what shall I say to Sir James Lawrie?"

"Ah! I will smooth your pathway! You shall have your future reward!" laughed the Duchess.

"But, there are dark days for Egypt ahead! The fleet swinging sullenly at Alexandria,—the vast horde of crazy Dervishes gathering in the Soudan, Cherif's secret hold on the weak Tewfik,—the wide-spread conspiracy in the disaffected army,—all are menaces, and bold Arabi Pasha is there, a foe to all, at the Citadel.

"Tewfik's trembling hand will not hold the scepter very long! He is only a harem-born weakling! No warrior soul like Ibrahim!"

"And Ismail, the ex-Khedive," said Gryffyth, anxiously. "He will soon buy his personal safety dickering with Turkey on the other side,—and also—make some secret concessions to England, on the other!"

"His vast private hoard will enable him to join the colony of dethroned kings at Paris,—and become a bloated Silenus,—or a festering Blue Beard in the infamous shades of his European haunts, or hidden in his villa, on the Bay of Naples, where every human villainy has survived, on that smiling earthly paradise, where the Ro-

mans wielded every Grecian and Oriental vice, into the blackest infamy of historic times!

"He may escape a bloody doom, but only to linger on—clad in shame!"

The morrow brought them to Mantua, where a telegram soon brought the happy light back to Marguerite de Valeria's dreaming eyes! She handed it to her silent Knight! The words were cheering! The son had reached his father! And tender words of love followed the announcement that Lord Wrexham was still conscious!

"My sister was married, yesterday, to Lord Morninghouse," were the concluding words!

And, then, as they swept on into the dark defiles of the Brenner Pass, Kenneth Gryffyth knew that there would soon be left no obstacle to the union of his gallant friend with the loving and gracious woman for whom he had risked his life!

And, biding his time, in vain conjecture as to his own future, he prepared to face the stern old Scotch millionaire! "Kathleen is as far above me as the stars now!" the lover sighed, and,—yet the steadfast eyes of the Duchess de Valeria bade him hope!

"Will the death of Lord Wrexham change your course of action?" anxiously asked Kenneth Gryffyth. He wondered where fate would lead him! Back to Benjamin's, or—away on some new quest; one that would separate him from Kathleen!

"As to Egyptian matters,—no!" answered Marguerite de Valeria, with a rosy blush! "Carioli will look out for my villa and yacht! I leave my Intendant there!"

"I have several sugar and cotton estates, which were purchased by the Duke in the time of the Canal fever and the American war! De Lesseps and the Empress led him into some great investments! I have now played out my secret rôle! With this penitent Lingard, with Stephanie and Lischchen,—and the English music-hall singer,—with the Viceroy's unveiled secret accounts, and the private key,—both Zacharias and Sir James Lawrie can conclude the great secret adjustment of our syndicate's affairs. The true claims and the false can be separated—

at last. Cherif Pasha must now act secretly, with our party or else 'walk the plank!'" she sweetly smiled.

"He is in our power! Hassan will be safely conducted over to Constantinople by Lorenzo Zacharias, who is a high member of the great monied Free Masonry of Europe. And—a thirty-third degree member, too!

"I shall never revisit Egypt, until England has taken on herself the practical control of the Nile! For, I can see that France will soon fall away! In the three-quarter ownership of the Suez Canal, she has all that she wants!

"And,—if England bears the whole burden,—then, let her wear the crown! Any guns fired for law and order in Egypt, whether at Alexandria,—or in the Soudan, will be British! And the others will, of course, growl—and, finally, yield!

"There is that irresistible fleet,—the greatest movable force of the world! Nothing can withstand England's sea power,—the legacy of the heroic one-armed Admiral who lies in St. Paul's crypt,—cased in a coffin made of the main mast of the 'Victory'!"

"It was Nelson alone who turned the god-like Napoleon back from India. Nelson who withered the laurels of Austerlitz,—Nelson who made it impossible for Napoleon to hold Spain,—or to cross the Channel,—for the dead hero's policy then, animated every loyal English heart!

"There is not marble enough in Carrara's exhaustless quarries to raise the monument that England should build to the lion-hearted Horatio Nelson!"

"Tell me of the future of Egypt," demanded Gryffyth.

"There shall be no more a Prince of the House of Egypt," solemnly said Marguerite. "Its wondrous history sweeps back to the fourteen thousand years of the reign of Ptah,—Ra,—Sôs,—Seb,—Oseris,—Set, and Hor! From the night of these fabled gods,—shines out Menes,—clear cut against these legendary shadows,—nearly six thousand years before the blessed era of Christ!"

"The temples and pyramids,—and the splendid shrine of Athor date back to that morning dawn of all human knowledge! And, every problem of Life had been pon-

dered by the astute priests, (hiders of all knowledge), long before the Shepherd Kings came to rule!

"And, now, begins the dark procession of conquerors! Arabs,—Phoenicians,—Horus,—great Rameses,—Sesostræ; the Assyrians,—Cambyses,—Alexander, the god-like Greek who died in his youthful madness, the Ptolemies,—the Romans,—the Eastern Emperors,—the feeble Coptic Kings,—the stern Omar,—the mad Crusaders,—the wild French soldiers of the Republic under the eagle-eyed Napoleon,—stern Mehemet Ali, the noble tyrant,—and, his disgraceful adopted line.

"And, all these shadowy masters, are gone to oblivion, leaving behind no mark but the awful shrines of the dead gods, and those wretchedly debased mongrels, the fellahs of the Nile valley!

"The strong hand of England is the only hope for a regulation of Egyptian affairs,—the gradual breeding out of Mohammedanism is its only moral remedy!

"For there, as elsewhere, Church and State in union, has enervated and emasculated the common people! My secret work is done! It was to save and shield you,—and to co-operate in penning up Cherif Pasha, into a close corner, where he will have to be silent while the disgraced Ismail buys his life from the Sultan, with a third of his stolen hoard. The purchase of his freedom and a personal guarantee from England will be a partial restitution of public properties.

"All this will be soon effected now, thanks to our complete private records,—developed by your searching labors, and the private key to the accounts which we so daringly stole from that official spoiler Cherif!

"He is now powerless! He will be only a dummy in the hands of the five great diplomats there, for, at a single murmur, he will hear the fatal word, 'Disgorge!'

"All these documents will, through the proper hands, go before the permanent liquidators, next year, under laws devised to fit the startling facts which we have discovered! For the present,—till Hassan and Zacharias are rewarded,—till you are recompensed,—I will keep the key to the last secrets of the expenditures of the sixteen years!

"Je m'en charge de celà!" she merrily laughed. "I wish to know your future settled, in more ways than one!"

"And,—Grosvenor?" timidly said Gryffyth.

"Ah! He must seek for his own reward!" said the beautiful woman, turning her head away in a sudden confusion! Kenneth could divine that reward in the blushes mantling her lovely face.

At Innspruck and Munich, they received news that the dying diplomat still lingered, in the arms of his son, and was watching him with the daughter whose hasty nuptials had gladdened his glazing eyes!

And, as they moved on by Constance and Berne, to Lake Leman, Kenneth Gryffyth appreciated more every hour the delicacy of the loving woman who would not abridge one moment of these last hours of affectionate surveillance!

The charming Madame Carioli and Baroness Rhoten were now ready to set up their own summer tents by the lovely lake, and as they neared Chillon,—these devoted friends assumed charge of the pretty little Countess! There was only Hassan, the faithful Soames and Zacharias, present with the Duchess de Valeria when Kenneth aided her to alight from the railway carriage at Chillon! A carriage was in waiting, with Grosvenor's own man, in charge, as the Embassy courier took the Duchess' last orders!

"If Madame will deign to hasten,—there is so little time,"—cried the agitated servant!

The carriage whirled away while Gryffyth, with his watchful bodyguard escorted the precious coffer toward the place of rendezvous.

There is a quiet but sumptuous hotel upon a beautiful jutting point a mile or so beyond the gray old water-encircled keep of Chillon,—called the Hotel de Russie,—in gratitude by a former chef of the great Czar of Russia,—the mighty Nicholas, who had greatly enriched his culinary guardian.

In an easy retirement, the old 'Cordon bleu,' enjoyed his handsome property, and then, died in a golden peace,—bequeathing his "pudding à la Nesselrode," and "Potage à la Nicholas," with sundry other priceless secrets of

the Winter Palace,—to his handsome widow, who promptly married the attractive head cook—and, “continued the business at the old stand!”

This choice retreat, conducted “on fastidious principles,” was now filled with the party gathered around the great Lord Wrexham! Only high diplomats and “personages” of rank were allowed to bask in the golden calm of the Hotel de Russie!

When Kenneth Gryffyth arrived at the enchanting spot he was met at the grand entrance by Sir James Lawrie, who extended both his hands in a welcome, tropical indeed for a Scotch millionaire, and a newly made Baronet, of most approved hauteur?

“Come with me, my dear boy! I have my own confidential men here! First, the papers must be made safe!”

The first word that Gryffyth uttered was the quarry:

“Lord Wrexham?”

“He has just breathed his last!” gravely said Sir James Lawrie, “after joining the hands of Grosvenor, (I beg pardon, Lord Wrexham), and that wonderful woman, the Duchess!”

“Do you know her, Sir James?” faltered Kenneth Gryffyth. The old Scotchman gave him a parthian glance! Gryffyth shuddered at his own boldness!

“She has been the leading spirit of our great enterprise! She has nobly aided your superb struggle! And, we have gained the contest! The end of nearly twenty years’ of protracted financial diplomacy!

“Come down into the garden, and let me now present you to Lady Lawrie and my daughter! Then,—you can go up to your rooms! Grosvenor (I beg pardon, Lord Wrexham) will come to you for a moment! I must secure the invaluable papers!”

It was the one crucial test of Kenneth Gryffyth’s nerve that he only murmured a few commonplaces, and fled away, as the faded beauty mother turned to her radiant daughter, standing there, with Heaven’s own light in her loving eyes.

But there was a pledge in Kathleen’s eyes which redeemed the whole exile in Egypt! Her hand lay for one blessed moment—in his own!

"Let me say, sir," briefly remarked Sir James Lawrie, as he unsuspectingly led Gryffyth away, "I have a last secret work for you to do here! The careful preliminary examination of these accounts! Be patient! Your fortune is made!"

"You will hear from me at once, again on this matter. I must now go to Lord and Lady Morninghouse and the Baronne de Saint Nazaire! They are crushed with this affliction, for, up to the very last,—we had hoped to save the late Lord Wrexham! I will have the trunk of documents sealed up, and placed in the steel vault here! You have won England's secret fight here!"

"And the restoration of order in Egypt is England's charge,—and,—England's duty! Fehmy Pasha has already fled from London, but, we hold the future of Egypt in our hands, here! The present Lord Wrexham will have a secret commission to turn these invaluable records over to the proper parties for a final custody! Cherif Pasha is muzzled forever! They will not see the light in a year,—but,—our skeleton reports will enable us to act!"

And, taking Zacharias' arm the old millionaire departed while in the sunny rooms overlooking the dreaming lake the new Lord Wrexham led in Marguerite de Valeria!

"Ken, old fellow!" the stately young Briton faltered. "You are one of our family circle now! Morninghouse and Milly will see you later! We shall be privately married here—before my return to England!"

"It was my dying father's last request!"

There was soon a considerable gathering of dignitaries and notable personages assembled from England and the Continent at the preliminary obsequies of the great Lord Wrexham at Montreux.

When the last rites were over and the body of the illustrious diplomat was consigned to its temporary resting place in the vault of the little English church by Lake Leman, there was only Lord Morninghouse and his saddened bride, with the dejected Baronne de Saint Nazaire, left at the Hotel de Russie in conference with the new Lord Wrexham.

Madame la Duchesse de Valeria had gathered all her

guests around her in a beautiful villa at Montreux, where Lady Lawrie and the anxious-eyed Kathleen now awaited the great financier's summons for departure! Her castle at Vevey was being superbly renovated, for some mysterious purpose.

But, not alone mourning for their departed ally had brought David Hart,—and the head of the house of Benjamin,—with several other magnates of King Mammon's court to the Hotel de Russie! The court of King Gold is always in session!

There, daily,—while the Grosvenors awaited the arrival of the family solicitor from London, Kenneth Gryffyth bent his brows over the books which unveiled all the past financial jockeying of Ismail Pasha, and his dark familiar sprite, Cherif.

Only Zacharias,—Sir James Lawrie, and the Duchess de Valeria, were admitted to the startling interpretations of the vast missing sums, given by the key book, the preservation of which had made Hassan's fortune for life! The five stars were all understood—in their whole significance, and their italic entries!

"There is one trust of honor left to us four!" pithily remarked the grave Scotsman. "If Rustem Effendi left any kith and kin,—they must be provided for, as long as the warmest gratitude would suggest!"

It was true that the key book alone gave the power to trace the huge abstractions of the two great Egyptians from current funds belonging to the State, foreign government and baffled creditors!

Rustem Effendi was a Syrian maronite, and his family were destined to be lifted up later to an easy affluence, in memory of the poor hunted husband and father, who defeated at the last, Cherif's one object, the hiding of all records of the secret hoards. The red key book given to Hassan being once destroyed,—no one could have mastered the secret scrolls of shame!

"It was for this that he would have murdered you," gravely said Lawrie to Gryffyth. "He feared that the Khedive would be the first to make terms for himself and then, give his secret partner up to the financial vengeance of the new liquidators! It was only when he ob-

tained the supreme power that he could reach the long hidden records.

"He dared not destroy them, but,—once in his hands,—he could either use them to dominate the foolish Tewfik to make terms with the five great powers,—or, sell himself out, bodily, to England,—as her secret service agent!

"And,—as long as Ismail's hoard lasts,—the ex-Khedive will have to pay a huge blackmail to Cherif,—for,—Cherif is all too cunning to publicly admit the loss of the private records! It may be in watching for the daily expected deposition of Ismail, that he has not yet explored the casemate of old Fort Turra! But, Ratib Pasha will be soon ordered to garrison Fort Turra!

"When Ratib reports to Cherif that the books have been stolen,—with true Egyptian craft,—Cherif will believe Ratib himself has stolen and secreted them! He dare not openly bewail their loss! Our hand is covered from all Europe!"

The acute Scotsman was in error. For, aroused by the slipping away of Hassan,—it was Cherif's first duty to visit his own harem palace at Helouan, and, with Ratib at his side,—to explore old Fort Turra! Then,—in the rage of his unpitying heart,—he had quietly returned to Cairo, and the butchery of Abdallah and the unfortunate French woman spy had been only his first vengeance!

A vengeance that was not slaked, until all the officers of the troop who had escorted the coffer to Fort Turra had been sent "to the Soudan,"—in chains,—and,—the "Mahmoudieh" knew another dark tragedy when,—at Helouan,—Ratib Pasha had lured the officers of the yacht ashore to a banquet! The Chief Eunuch and the two Captains were present, at that dark Borgian feast!

When Cherif Pasha and Ratib laughingly left the room,—a company of slashed faced Nubian guards rushed fiercely into the banquet hall! The pillage of the bodies of the entrapped bunglers was the reward of the ferocious Soudanese conscripts, and—they made merry over the remains of the feast, while the slaves cast the naked bodies of the strangled men into the Nile! The rich Eunuch

had died with his teeth fastened in the hand of a strangler, and,—desperate to the last!

The opening of the late Lord Wrexham's will brought the balm of consolation to the agitated heart of the Baroness de Saint Nazaire. A magnificent life pension enabled her to gracefully retire from her unwelcome post of "arbiter elegantairum," as the sweet-faced Lady Mornighouse was now "a bird let loose," in the higher ether of the social skies!

The stately society dragon found her "occupation gone!"

The balmy skies of June were spread in a clear blue vault over Leman's sapphire waters, and the magic mantle of Nature was now thrown over the stern and rugged Alps! The young Lord Wrexham was busied with the inflowing tide of testimonials and honors to the memory of his lamented father, and the great journals of Europe were all voicing the merits of one of the last of the "old line" diplomats!

The family party rested their bruised hearts in commune with the wild witchery of Alps and lake,—of glade and forest, of sun-lit upland, and grateful mountain shades!

Kenneth Gryffyth knew that the secret coterie of millionaires only now awaited his skeleton report, to separate,—for, the daily arriving "Times" was filled with wild Cairene rumors, which convulsed the stock market, and they all sighed to be back in the city, and "spoil the Egyptians!"

"In vain, did Benjamin plead with his ablest employe to hasten back to London and fix a time for his departure for Buenos Ayres! 'The 'Argentines' need your skill,' he said. 'You can have a year's leave of absence later!' But, the great money king was forestalled by that watchful Scotsman, Sir James Lawrie!

"Benjamin, you loaned me this young man!" dryly said Sir James. I've got my claws on him, for a good bit, yet! You must send Monteith down to Buenos Ayres! For three months,—this Egyptian pot will be boiling over!"

To which,—David Hart, the President of the great

money alliance gravely assented! And Kenneth Gryffyth saw a future dismissal in Benjamin's angry eyes!

Conscious that he was under fire, Gryffyth toiled all day, and was monopolized at night, by Lawrie and Zacharias,—for, the beautiful Duchess was only Her Grace of Hospitality now! The head claimed the young lover's every moment, and the heart, was forced to wait and bide its time!

And yet, Kathleen had only found time to whisper "We have one strong ally in my mother! She knows all," and the all-compelling Duchess had mysteriously said "I will bring your reward to you, in good time! Be silent, and, trust to me,—as you did beneath Pompey's Pillar, and, in Cherif's garden of Death! Kathleen is my maid of honor now! Leave her with me!"

It was to Lord Wrexham that Gryffyth poured out all the longings of his impassioned heart! The young peer smiled sadly! "Hasten nothing!—my boy,—all will be well! For, I shall keep you here, until I have made Marguerite de Valeria, my wife! The Morninghouses must soon go back to England, and they only wait for Sir James Lawrie's departure!

"Any day now, there may come news which will force him to return to Threadneedle Street! I will stay here, at Marguerite's villa, and,—try and prepare myself in time to follow in my father's footsteps!"

"There is no unmixed happiness!" sighed Wrexham. "But, as to your future interests, leave that with us! Marguerite and I, understand each other! We must play our royal old Scottish salmon warily!"

With a secret glee, Gryffyth noted how completely the beautiful Spirit of the Night had fascinated the pallid beauty who as Rose Nugent had brought to Lawrie the golden stepping stones of his vast fortunes! Mother and daughter were only wax in the hands of the graceful enchantress.

The preliminary work was over at last, and only Zacharias and Hassan now lingered waiting for orders. The great financiers had stepped quietly away, leaving only Sir James Lawrie on duty, and the priceless documents

were all sealed and redeposited in the vault of the Hotel de Russie!

"There is a chance for you to rest now," quietly remarked Sir James Lawrie. "We will take no further action until coming events have made some new moves, on our part, necessary!"

"I have been closely watched in London, and, I was glad to flee away, but—we are on the verge of a great stock excitement!"

The young actuary was disheartened by Sir James Lawrie's callous quiet, as he observed Sandy McPherson, the great man's valet, hustling around, in all the preparations for a coming flitting! The precious documents were now all deposited in the joint custody of Lord Wrexham, the Duchess of Valeria, and the undemonstrative Lawrie.

A sudden ripple of interest in his daily life was brought to Gryffyth, by the summons of the Duchess to repair to her Montreux villa, on the evening of the day when Lawrie's flitting was so easily to be prophesied!

It suited Kenneth Gryffyth, for he was now in the receipt of urgent daily telegrams and the most flattering allurements of the House of Benjamin and Son. He was consumed with a secret anxiety, for Zacharias and Hassan the dragoman were also all ready to take the road! And—neither of them, as yet, knew either their destination or orders! His future career was trembling in the balance!

There was a peculiar smile on Lord Wrexham's face as he murmured a last caution to Gryffyth, when the young lover was about to step into his carriage to obey the Duchess' summons! "Do not be led into hastily promising the Benjamins to go back to them,—yet,—a while!" urged the one confidant of his secret love campaign. "Be patient with the noble Sawney!"

And, Gryffyth nodded his promise, as he drove away to the villa of the Three Graces! He was chilled and astounded at first,—at the formality of his reception! For in the drawing room, only Sir James Lawrie and his placid wife were the companions of Marguerite, the Duchess de Valeria.

That gracious lady received him, with all the reserved dignity of an Elizabeth receiving proposals on her English throne, for her most desirable royal maidenly hand! And, for once, there was no tender light of guidance shining in the beautiful eyes which had watched over him in all the dangers of the Nile-born intrigues!

And, strangely,—it was Sir James Lawrie who broke the embarrassing silence! There seemed to be some awkward formality to dispose of!

"I have sent for you," quietly said the banker, "to offer you, in the presence of Her Grace the Duchess,—a fitting reward for all your fidelity of the last five months! I will not speak of mere figures, now,—but I wish to say, that I have decided to offer you an interest in my banking business!"

"It will lift you for life out of all financial struggles! I am old! I have never taken a partner,—but, you have well earned an interest.

"Having no son,—I shall feel that I have taken into my house, the ablest and most promising young financier of London!"

There was a solemn pause, and,—Sir James Lawrie gazed expectantly upon his passive wife, and the Duchess who now seemed to be elevated above them all, upon an invisible throne! The young man's face was shadowed with conflicting emotions!

There was a start of astonishment, when Kenneth Gryfyth in a broken voice replied: "I thank you, Sir James Lawrie, for your most flattering offer! There are private reasons why I can not accept it;—grave reasons!"

The struggle between interest and honor in the young man's heart was now of the bitterest, and yet he sought no consolation in the Duchess' eyes. For once, their light was veiled to him! And, the old Baronet was aghast to see the ruin of his secret plan to aid the son of the woman whom he had loved in his hey-day of youth!

"Man!" cried the excited banker. "Are ye promised to the Benjamins? Y'e'll never have another such proposal,—in yer life-lang days!" His sudden fears brought back the accent from beyond the Tweed! Had they outwitted him?

Even the gently submissive Lady Rose Nugent Lawrie was astounded, and raised her fine eyes toward the ceiling with apprehensions of a sudden disaster! No one had ever braved her stern husband before in her presence!

And, Marguerite de Valeria's head was turned away! Her sculptured bosom was heaving in some strange excitement! And, then, the wrathful Lawrie saw the prize slipping away from him into the clutches of his appreciative confrères! He began to fume and lose his temper!

"Ye've not been so blind as to bind yerself already?" he cried, with some asperity, and, in vain, the angered Scotsman launched his Parthian glances appealing for help to the impassive Duchess! That gracious lady was gazing at the door!

And the ringing laughter of lovely Kathleen Lawrie could be heard afar, mingled with the girlish treble of the pretty little Countess Renée!

"I intended, Sir James,—to have asked another recompence of you!" firmly said Kenneth Gryffyth, "but,—" he stammered, "your sudden business proposal would have made that both, inopportune, and ungrateful!

"To conceal the facts from you longer, moreover, would be dishonorable! And, so, I must decline!"

There was a simultaneous starting up of the three observers as Her Grace the Duchess of Valeria hastened from the room, struggling with some strong internal excitement! There seemed to be a strange purpose in her sudden exit!

Kenneth Gryffyth would fain have bade his only friend pause, before leaving him, like Daniel among the lions! But, the graceful woman had eluded him as swiftly as she had vanished from Cherif Pasha's Kiosk under the white trembling stars of the Nile! All eyes were fixed upon the door!

The night seemed to blossom with a suddenly flowering loveliness as Marguerite de Valeria led Kathleen Lawrie into her grim father's presence!

Then, with one loving glance of tender cheer which thrilled Kenneth Gryffyth's sorrowing heart, like the sud-

den April rainbow,—the Duchess softly said: "Kathleen! I have brought you here to ask the man who has just gained an enormous fortune for your father,—to enter the house of James Lawrie, as the only partner, for all time!" Madame Rose Nugent Lawrie broke into a sudden mist of happy tears, as she gazed at her child's glowing face.

The girl's trembling hand stole into her lover's, as she raised her beautiful eyes in a last mute pleading for aid to the loving mother who had timidly shared her momentous secret! There was the rose blush of a maiden's first avowal, upon the exquisite face,—but all the bravery of her strong loving soul, rang out in the words which brought Sir James Lawrie to her side, in a towering excitement!

"I do ask it! Kenneth! For my sake,—do as my father bids you!"

She stood there with her slender hands clasped, her arms resting upon a wildly heaving bosom! The whole circle had been only skilfully playing a loving game of Blind Man's Buff!

Marguerite de Valeria glided to Sir James Lawrie's side! "It is the voice of the past! Sir James!" she cried, as she clasped his hands in her burning palms! "An old love will live again in these happy years to come!" James Lawrie's eyes were wildly wandering around over the loving group!

There was a quick throwing open of an outer door, and then, Lord Wrexham dashed into the room with breathless haste!

"A telegram from Consul General Carioli! Ismail Pasha was deposed to-day, the twenty-eighth,—by the five powers, and,—Tewfik Pasha has been named as Khedive! Gordon reached Massowah on June third, and he is safe on an English gunboat. He has resigned the Soudan. All is quiet in Egypt! Cherif Pasha is in temporary charge, holding over!"

"See here! Lord Wrexham!" cried Sir James Lawrie! "It seems that I have either gained a son, or lost a daughter,—I can hardly tell which! You must take charge for

me here! Haste Zacharias and Hassan away to Constantinople to-night!

"I must catch the London train! I shall leave my wife and daughter with you, Your Grace!" He strode up and placed Kathleen Lawrie's hand in her lover's! "If I must buy you, my dear boy, let it be so! Wait for my orders here!" And, he took his gentle wife's hand!

"There is some mystery here, Rose!"

"I can unveil it!" laughingly cried the Duchess, as Madame Carioli and the Baroness Rhoten entered the room, with the rosebud Countess!

"Twenty years ago, on a visit to Lausanne, when I was only a budding girl, not even yet a promised bride, waiting for my soldier husband,—I knew and loved sweet Marjorie Gryffyth! I have been a fairy god-mother here, by happy chance, and the legacy of an old love! Come! Sir James, say good-bye to all! Wrexham and I will drive you to the station!" Sir James Lawrie was secretly delighted! He had feared his wife's condemnation of his gift to Kenneth, and—the passive beauty was now in the enemy's camp!

The old millionaire left the lovers lingering, hand in hand, under the beaming glances of Lady Lawrie, who had escaped the most dreaded ordeal of her life! "I got ahead of the Benjamins,—at last!"—he exultingly cried.

In a fatherly embrace, folded from sight of all, Kathleen Lawrie heard words of tenderness which set her cheeks aflame, for she knew now that the stern old man had been called back in memory, to the days when Marjorie Gryffyth's eyes had led him from England to vainly plead for her hand by the witching shores of beautiful Leman! It was an acknowledgment—a proof of unfaded early love—and—a triumph of the heart!

An hour later, the old Croesus was wrapped in his dreams of the vast games to be played upon the London market! At Geneva, he had a score of telegrams ready to send to marshal his financial battalions! He did not dare to confess it, but, happy tears were in his eyes, as he softly murmured: "Marjorie's son,—to wed my girl! The long-past sorrow has righted itself,—at last!"

He had given his word to the all-conquering Duchess

de Valeria,—and he only stipulated that the day should be fixed so that Lord and Lady Wrexham should grace a wedding in which Sir James proposed to show the velvet hand under his steel gauntlet!

"It's a noble lad, Wrexham!" was Sir James' last greeting, "But, you all have worked in the dark against me! I can see that!" Whereat, Lord Wrexham grasped his old friend's hands in an honest admission!

"Milly and I, were the chief conspirators! The Duchess aided us, but, Love conquers all things! Kathleen's mother was not deceived! The bird was singing in her child's heart and its voice echoed in the mother's bosom! Remember,—all's fair in love and war!"

That night, after Zacharias and Hassan the dragoman had been dispatched Viennawards, with their last instructions,—Lord Wrexham returned with Gryffyth, who had telegraphed his burden of joy to George and Ada Wilton! He had rubbed Aladdin's lamp for the last time,—and—his cup was overflowing with joy!

There were two loving couples wandering under the mellow stars in the transfigured gardens that night where the lake throbbed below their wandering feet! Kathleen Lawrie and her heart-hungry lover were opening all the love-sealed chambers of their happy hearts, and the chivalric Lord Wrexham, leading Marguerite de Valeria aside, clasped her to his breast!

"Life is all too short, Marguerite," he murmured, "for a love like ours! There is a reason why Morninghouse and Milly should see us quietly married, and leave us here by the lake, where your love first came to me, to hallow my life!"

"Be mine, at once, and, those who go on before will set all in order for Lady Wrexham's return! It was his wish that it should be so! There's Cyril and Sidney, you know! They should learn to love you as soon as possible! For, as Lady Wrexham, you will be the head of the old line in society!"

The woman at his side gazed up in a transport of love at the man who would have died for her! "Be it as you shall decide!" she whispered, as her head fell upon his bosom! "There is no life for me, without your love!"

And, they wandered away to the shores of the gleaming lake where he first had won her womanly heart by his prompt daring! They were a noble pair, the lady and her lord,—and the dreaming peace of the hour entered into their thrilled hearts, beating as one in the rapture of mighty Love!

Far away the cannon were thundering at Alexandria and Cairo, over the forced accession of the weakling Khedive Tewfik,—and, the disgraced Ismail, abandoned by all, was panting to hide his shame under the storied walls of the Bay of Naples!

Cherif Pasha, trembling in his harem, muttered: "How much do they know?" And Gordon Pasha, on his homeward way,—little dreamed that, five years later,—a capricious Fate would call him back to the wild Soudan, to die a world's martyr,—at the rifle muzzles of a mongrel mob before the blood-stained gates of Khartoum Palace!

THE END.

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