

\$1.25



JAMES BRANCH CABELL
THE CREAM
OF THE JEST

"A book of dreams it is,
and of very wonderful dreams."
—Sinclair Lewis—



Introduction by Lin Carter

JURGEN
THE HIGH PLACE
FIGURES OF EARTH
THE SILVER STALLION
SOMETHING ABOUT EVE

Only five in the lexicon of works produced by James Branch Cabell—works devoted to the loosely linked universe of which he was the creator and which span some twenty generations—possibly. For tying down James Branch Cabell's universe is one of the happy pastimes of his devoted admirers and since his work abounds in allusion, allegory and anagram, their's is a rich and never-ending game.

As the writing itself was, indeed, a game, a challenge rather, which Cabell met with all the considerable wit and talent at his command, to emerge, finally, as one of the giants of American letters. There is not, in fact, anyone on either side of the Atlantic who can touch Cabell when it comes to highly sophisticated, polished and elegantly bawdy comment on the human condition.



"It shall come to pass that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty."

THE CREAM OF THE JEST:

THE LINEAGE OF LICHFIELD

Two Comedies of Evasion

James Branch Cabell

Introduction by
Lin Carter



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To
LOUISA NELSON

"AT ME AB AMORE TUO DIDUCET NULLA SENECTUS."

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Introduction by Lin Carter

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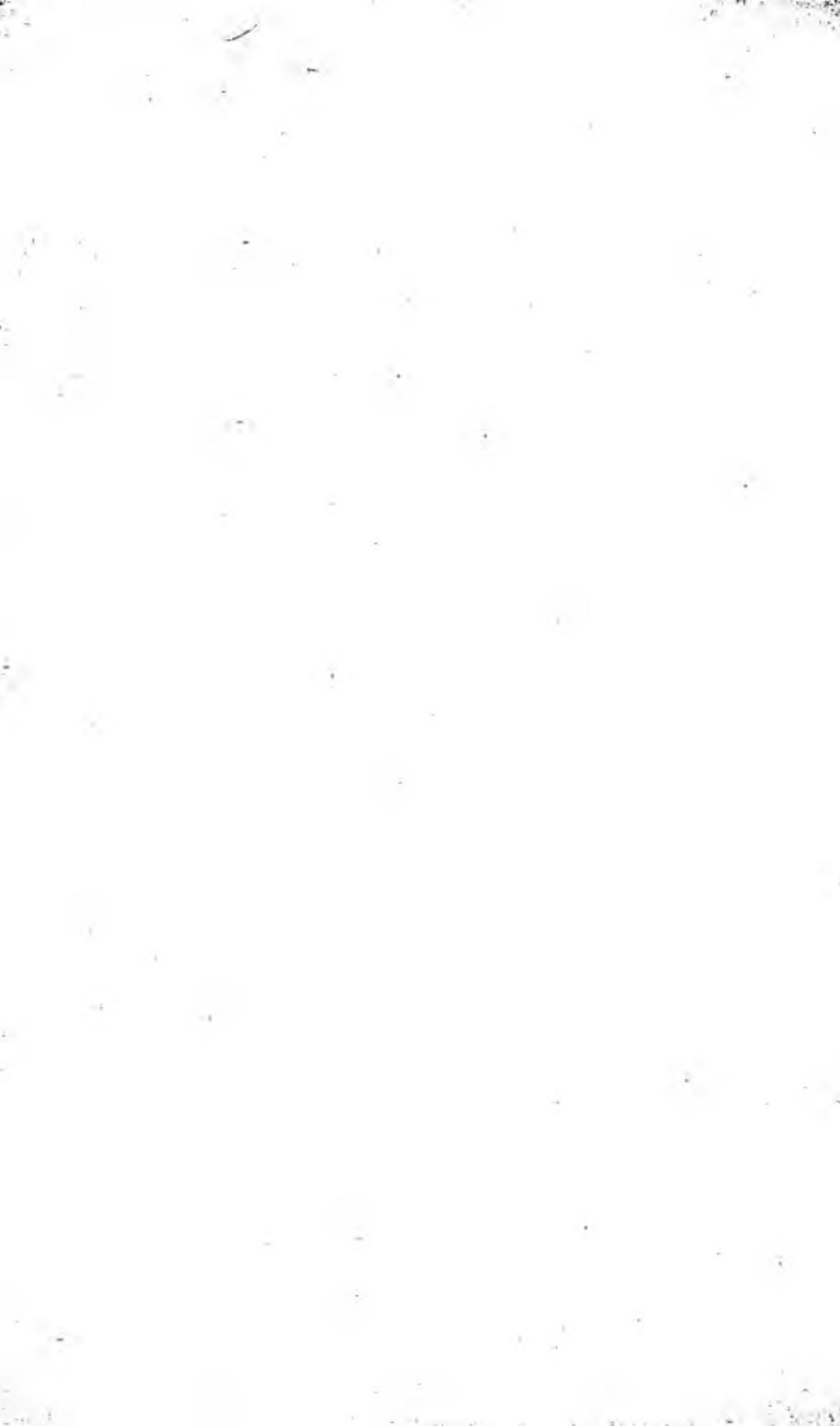
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About THE CREAM OF THE JEST
and James Branch Cabell:

THE DREAM TALISMAN

Strolling in his garden, Felix Kennaston, author of fairly unsuccessful romances, idly picks up an odd bit of broken metal which bears eleven rows of curious engraved characters. Later, dozing over the broken medallion, he finds himself transported into the world of his imaginings—as one of his own characters! And in that dreamworld of his own invention, Kennaston finds himself elevated to the level of a demiurge . . . he can do literally anything he wants. What does a romancer do when he suddenly finds himself in absolute command of a magic world? Why, he starts composing romances, of course, using live human beings for characters and the world itself for his settings. . . .

The Cream of the Jest is the fifth of the witty, urbane, highly polished and intricate fantasy novels by Cabell we have revived for the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series; of all his works it is my personal favorite.

The Virginia-born novelist, who died in 1958 at the age of eighty, was probably the only American author of genius to devote his career to fantasy. The

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only exception I might make to this would be Edgar Allan Poe. But he was more of a poet than a prose writer, and is more correctly described as the author of detective tales and macabre fiction than fantasy.

Cabell is clever and brilliant, and enormously complex. His books contain more—much more—than appears on their surface. Most of his work (he wrote over fifty books) is ordered into a series called *The Biography of Manuel*, because it purports to demonstrate three different viewpoints on life as utilized by the various descendants of one Dom Manuel, a thirteenth-century pig tender who rose to lordship over the feudal realm of Poictesme and was transformed, after his demise, into a kind of Messiah. This theme gives Cabell enormous scope with which to work, and he makes the most of it; however, unlike most other series of books, it is not necessary for you to read each volume in its correct sequence to derive enjoyment from the whole. You can easily take whichever book comes your way and enjoy it on its own merits.

This particular volume, for example, is far removed from Dom Manuel's Poictesme in the thirteenth century. It takes place in the twentieth century, in a town called Lichfield, which is in a southern state never precisely defined but more than likely meant to be Cabell's own Virginia. Felix Kennaston, the central character, is a descendant of the children of Dom Manuel and Dame Niafer in the twentieth generation.

With eight centuries to play with, and all the landscape between Poictesme and Lichfield for a setting, one might think Cabell needed nothing further in the way of scope. But he does, and his characters have a way of wandering in and out of history and geography into ages and lands for which you will search in mundane textbooks in vain, such as Heaven and Hell, to name only the more famous ones.

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The Cabellian cosmos is, if anything, almost as complicated as Einsteinian space-time, and Cabellists have spent much time attempting to figure out just who runs his universe. As this problem is intimately connected with the plot of *The Cream of the Jest*, this is a good chance for me to explore it in some detail.

Probably the most famous—or rather, notorious—of Cabell's novels is *Jurgen*; therein, as you may recall, the wandering pawnbroker travels to Heaven and finds it just the sort of bizarre, gaudy, uncomfortable-sounding place the Bible describes. God, when Jurgen meets him, is also much the Biblical stereotype: vain, jealous, pompous, and just a bit naive. In despair that the universe is run by a cardboard character out of Jewish mythology, Jurgen travels yet farther and finds, in a cluttered little office behind all stars and comets, a busy, practical little bureaucrat who *really* runs things, a mysterious personage known as Koschei the Deathless. Koschei explains that he created God—using the character in the Bible as his model—because Jurgen's own grandmother raised such vociferous complaints upon dying and finding the afterlife other than her sternly pious expectations had led her to believe, that Koschei knew no other way of quieting her down.

Thus, you might well assume that God runs the cosmos, but that Koschei runs God and is, so to speak, the final and absolute power behind the Throne.

Not so. Another novel, *The Silver Stallion*, relates the posthumous adventures of Donander of Évre, Thane of Aigremont, who is slain in battle against the Northmen and carried to *their* heaven instead of his own when a Christian angel and a sort of Norse valkyrie get confused and each bears off the wrong soul. He ends up in the Northern paradise where pagan gods, the Ænseis, rule in glittering halls over a host of slain

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Nordic heroes. A practical soul, Donander decides to make do with things as they are. Ere long he contracts a liaison with a young goddess of the *Aenseis* named Vanadis, marries her, and is elevated to the pantheon as Donander Veratyr. Also in the heaven of the *Aenseis* is one of Donander's younger brothers-in-law, who childishly plays at work world-making, the youth Koschei, a very junior Ans under the kingship of the mighty Sidvrar Vafudir.

We might assume, therefore, that Sidvrar, being superior to Koschei, is the real manager of things. But, again, not so . . . for all of these beings and personages, human or divine, are only lifelike characters created, or at least manipulated, by the sardonic, shadowy demiurge, Horvendile, who wanders in and out of the various books of *The Biography of Manuel* in a number of disguises.

And, as is disclosed in *The Cream of the Jest*, this peripatetic demiurge himself is but the dreamself of the Lichfield novelist, Felix Kennaston, dozing over a bit of broken metal which is "really" a potent talisman called the Sigil of Scoteia. (That it is no talisman at all is *really* the cream of the jest!)

Kennaston, then, must be—at several removes, of course—the *real* power behind the universe. No?

No—for Kennaston seems in the final analysis to be merely a character in a novel called *The Cream of the Jest*, written by one Richard Fentnor Harrowby, whom I assume to be a descendant of the Jonathan Harrowby who married Clara Bulmer, a nineteenth generation descendant of the Dom Manuel through the line of Niafer. . . .

And we are back where we started!

Cabell regarded novel-writing as a game; you, his readers, may if you so desire, approach the reading of

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his novels as a sort of game. Or you may read the novels for sheer entertainment; just as you wish. But for the gamesmen among you, let me point out the sort of playful prankishness Cabell indulges in, it being clearly understood that exploring Cabell and looking for the hidden meanings, the anagrams, the tricks, can be as absorbing as trying to make sense out of *Finnegan's Wake*. You have been warned.

Cabell rarely employs a name that is completely without meaning. Kennaston's town of Lichfield is an example: I have somewhere heard the story that Cabell searched the gazettes until he found one name that had never been used as a place name anywhere—Lichfield.* As you read this novel, keep that fact in mind, and you will note some amusing things. The town of Lisuarte in Poictesme is mentioned in Chapter II; if you have ever read the great fantastic romance, *Amadis of Gaul*, you may remember that the imaginary King of Britain in that book is named Lisuarte; how typical of Cabell to name a town in his imaginary realm of Poictesme after an imaginary king in somebody else's romance. And Nephelococcygia, which appears in a scene of Chapter XIX, is more than just an exotic place name; Aristophanes's comedy *The Birds* takes place in a fanciful country called Cloud-Cuckoo-Land . . . which is *Nephelococcygia* in the original Greek.

Similar games may be played with the names Cabell bestows upon the people in his books. "Horvendile," for example, derives ultimately from *Saxo Grammaticus*, "Maugis d'Aigremont" from the old French romancers, and about "Ettarre," the eternally pursued, ideal woman, it has, not unnaturally, been suggested that she may represent some lost love of Cabell's youth even as Felix Kennaston/Horvendile obviously is

*Alas, he did not search far enough, for Boswell's immortal Dr. Johnson was born in a town called Lichfield.

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meant to represent Cabell himself. This may or may not be so: at any rate Cabellists usually derive "Ettarre" from the medieval French romances. But only last week, I was browsing through a reference work called *Mythology of All Races* (Boston, 1918) and, in Volume III, devoted to the Irish myths, I ran across a reference to "Caibell and Etar, rulers of the sid-folk, the sidhe, or Fairies . . ."

You can never be exactly sure when Cabell has tucked a hidden meaning into a word or name or passage. Many of his names, like Doonham, Dersam, Caer Omn, Lytreia, Turoine, and Mispec Moor, in *Something About Eve*, are anagrams*—but other names, such as Alcluid and Scoteia have thus far remained impenetrable to the labors of anagramatology.

As for the all-important Sigil itself, take another look at the drawing of it which you will find on the panel page in this edition.

Then turn it upside down and read it.

—LIN CARTER
Editorial Consultant:
The Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series

P.S.: The relationship of the descendants of Dom Manuel was so important to Cabell that he wrote a little essay in genealogy to explicate it called *The Lineage of Lichfield*. This book seemed like a good place to revive it; you will find it at the end of the present volume, a sort of bonus. It is very, very rare.

Hollis, Long Island, New York

*Of Manhood, Dreams, Romance, Reality, Routine, and Compromise.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

We turn now to the last of the books by Richard Fentnor Harrowby, which is *The Cream of the Jest*. Meanwhile, continuing directly with the matter of *The Eagle's Shadow*, I must tell you—since Harrowby has omitted this information,—that Kathleen Saumarez and Felix Kennaston were married in June 1904, to confront, as it seemed, a future of genteel poverty. But, within four months, the death of old strange Henry Kennaston, the squire of Alclud, had changed all that gray prospect materially.

I avoid, though, any further entrance into affairs with which the Biography of Manuel's life has no close concern, and which in any case are more properly set forth in J. V. A. Froser's *Biography of Felix Kennaston*. You may read therein how the elopement of Kennaston's parents, in 1867, had begun the feud between their two families,—a feud which had resulted in Kennaston's being reared by the Bulmers, without any contacts with his father's kindred,—so that, when Henry Kennaston was killed, in October 1904, his only surviving nephew acquired a competence from a person whom Felix Kennaston had not ever known or

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talked with, nor even seen from a distance. . . . The point here is that Felix Kennaston in his middle thirties became economically independent and was made free to devote the rest of his days to whatsoever amusements he might prefer; and that he then gave over his life to the grinding thraldom of creative writing.

—Whereby, of course, American literature was enriched with *Men Who Loved Alison*. . . . Of the actual and eventual worth of this romance I cannot pretend to be an unprejudiced judge. The tale seems to me one of those many books which have profited, very dubiously indeed, by having obtained, in one way or another, the repute of being indecent. Such books tend to endure, but their tenure of survival is upon depressingly twilit terms. And they make for a most dolorous deal of dreary time-wasting. It is quite dreadful to consider with what sad and futile perseverance the sloppy and soporific catalogues of Rabelais, the pale inanities of the *Heptameron*, and the unendurably dull botcheries of Boccaccio—or, for that matter, of Fielding and of Smollett,—have been toiled through by misguided millions in quest of these authors' rumored obscenity. . . . But it is even more dreadful, for the ears of the fairly honest, to hear any one of these readers protest, as they all do invariably, that he reads not for the story's sake, but because of the delicate art and the sparkling wit with which the tale is told. Besides, he does get, in the way of indecency, so very little for his trouble.

Well, and just so I doubt if *Men Who Loved Alison*, in common with a great many other modern masterpieces, does not continue to be read to-day upon somewhat similar grounds. As books go, it has had a long life: indeed, the tale has survived its publication now by some twenty-one years; and it is handsomely

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written, of course, in its own over-ornate and self-conscious and clogged fashion. But I fancy that the most of this book's readers are, here again, those immature-minded persons who are content to put up with the diction and with the stylistic devices for the sake of the atoning talk about unnatural amours which, howsoever sparsely, here and there adorns and cheers the pornoscopic reader's laborious way.

It is, though, now that I think of it, with another book that this Author's Note should be concerned. And my appropriate point is, rather, that with the volume now in your hand the Biography completes the portrayal, begun in "The Eagle's Shadow," of Felix Bulmer Kennaston and of his adoption of the poetic attitude toward life, in the very same Lichfield which Robert Etheridge Townsend and Colonel Rudolph Musgrave coetaneously inhabited, and of Kennaston's ultimate success as an Economist. Herein-after, then, as I have written in another place, the story of the Biography is rounded off by presenting the poet—the poietes, the "maker,"—in modern conditions; and by presenting, too, the manner of this Felix Kennaston's return into Poictesme—into that all accommodating country wherein almost anything is rather more than likely to happen,—so that, through this return, the perpetuated life of Manuel ends its seven hundred years of journeying at the exact point of its outset. The circle is thus made complete, as my last poet annihilates, through quite other means than were employed by my first poet, Madoc, the intervening twenty generations.

That is the main point. Madoc triumphed, you may remember, through the amenities of judicious punctuation. Felix Kennaston made use of wholly different methods to gain very much the same end. But Kennaston also triumphed. And the protagonist of the

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Biography—that protagonist being, as I have perhaps already said, the perpetuated life of Manuel,—was thus enabled, once more, to do that which seemed expected. . . . I mean, that the life of Manuel, as that life is throughout *The Cream of the Jest* embodied in Felix Bulmer Kennaston, returned into its long-lost Poictesme. I mean, that the life of Manuel thus did, in a fashion told of hereinafter, conform to those ancient prophecies which had been begotten, in some part by Jurgen's essays in the imaginative, but mainly by the fond pride and faith of Dame Niafer. I mean, in brief, that this volume also narrates how "Manuel, as was his custom, did what Niafer thought best," and that it records how she had her way with him, as became a competent wife, a great long while after both of them were reputedly dead. . . . For I doubt if, in any important sense, either one of this primal pair of married lovers was truly dead, or ever will be dead. We know that the life of Manuel informed the body of Felix Kennaston: and I quite strongly suspect that Niafer survived in Kathleen Kennaston, and that Niafer continues to survive, wheresoever home-life flourishes, in the aging body of every really competent wife.

You may, likewise, hereinafter attempt in vain to read *The Lineage of Lichfield*, an anomalous production which none the less appears to me not unaptly to wind up and to illustrate the long story of the wanderings of the life of Manuel, in a shape somewhere between an index and a map of that journeying. The notion of this Lineage was not mine, but was suggested to me by Lewis Galantière, as you may observe that I have honestly recorded in this brief comedy's rather long dedication. It is a dedication which comprises in itself a complete Author's Note to *The Lineage of Lichfield*; and so to this Epistle Dedicatory

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I now refer you, for any information which you may desire as to the latter section of the present volume.

I add merely that the Lineage was written in the summer of 1921, especially for what I imagine to have been the most easily indescribable of all American magazines, the Reviewer. The Reviewer, as published at Richmond-in-Virginia,—from a side alley in immediate antagonism to a cathedral,—was at this season in theory a fortnightly periodical, which in point of fact appeared whenever the editors thought it might perhaps be amusing to get out another issue. In any case, the Reviewer was scheduled to become a monthly magazine in the autumn of 1921, and I had agreed to edit the first three issues in this new avatar. I did edit them, to such an extent as the vagaries of the printer permitted: and the Lineage thus made its first tripartite appearance, in the October, November and December numbers, for 1921, of the Reviewer. It was largely due to this fact, my conscience now and then tells me, that the Reviewer was not long afterward forced to become a quarterly, and by and by a legend.

To return to *The Cream of the Jest*, this tale was some while in the making. In January 1911, I think, was begun the dizain which under stars more favorable would have told about ten of Richard Harrowby's adventurings, for the most part, in the occult: but Saturn very plainly stood in the ascendant at the scheme's birth; for as these stories came into being, no one of them, save only Concerning David Jogram, met with the then present needs of any discoverable magazine. The dizain was therefore abandoned; and of the eight stories finished, some were destroyed, and others were utilized here and there quite variously. Two of these tales, as they had been written in the spring of 1911, were in 1913 combined and rewritten, with the

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addition of considerable new matter, so that before 1914 had well begun to make the world safe for hypocrisy, these stories had blended into one continuous and fairly long Comedy of Evasion, called then *In the Flesh*, but a little later rechristened *The Cream of the Jest*. . . . Thus did it come about that with the opening of 1915 this book set forth, in typescript, to seek the applause of enraptured multitudes.

The first of all its rejectors—acting on behalf of the George H. Doran Company, in January 1915,—was a romantic-minded and obviously young male who wrote me as to this book a wholly charming, if wholly disapproving, long letter. His objections I find to have been, severally, that my theme lacked sufficient weight to ballast more than a short story; that the portions relative to the publishing of Kennaston's novel (which turned out five years later to be uncommonly neat soothsaying) could interest no one unconnected with the world of book making; that “In the Flesh” was not verily “in the flesh,” but smelt over strongly of midnight oil; and that, above all, my book failed to present in its characters a group, or even any one person, who evoked the reader's sympathy and admiration. For, as this hypercritical romanticist went on to explain—prior to subscribing himself Sincerely yours, Sinclair Lewis,—the general reading public simply cannot be induced to buy novels about unattractive and ignoble people, although the future author of *Main Street* and *Elmer Gantry* did go so far as to admit that disagreeable characters might be permissible “as villains, in naïve literature which is still unashamed of melodrama.”

The typescript of *In the Flesh* was soon after that, but far less colorfully, rejected by the J. B. Lippincott Company, in the month of February. For some now inexplicable reason or another it seems to have

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been declined by no publishing firm during March. Then, in April 1915, I paid my first visit to the offices of Robert M. McBride & Company, where yet another hitherto unheard-of young person, who signed himself Guy Holt, had been interested by the typescript of *In the Flesh* to the highly noncommittal extent of wishing to see something else by its writer. I who had four unpublished books was willing enough to oblige him. So the visit took place in due form; and thus began, upon my thirty-sixth birthday, the most staunch and the most beneficent of all my literary friendships. Moreover, McBride's, in the upshot, accepted *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck* for publication in the autumn of that year, and *The Certain Hour* and *From the Hidden Way* for publication in 1916; but McBride's also quite wholeheartedly, declined to sponsor any printing of *In the Flesh*.

This comedy was then put by, for some months, to make way for the publishing and the instant failure of *The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck*. But in 1916 my typescript set forth once more a-traveling; and I find the itinerary to be succinct:—"Rejected by John Lane Company, in January 1916; by E. P. Dutton and Company, in March 1916; by Houghton Mifflin Company, in April 1916; by Charles Scribner's Sons, in June 1916;" The record finishes just thus, with a semi-colon, which one now finds rather pathetically defiant, through its implication that this is by no means to be the end. Nevertheless, I seem thereafter, for almost an entire year, to have squandered no more currency in express charges upon this unsalable typescript. . . . The particularly disheartening part, you see, was that even at McBride's, where others of my books had met at last with editorial though not with financial favor, even there the opinion appeared unanimous with the opin-

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ions of all other publishing firms, that this especial book was wholly null and virtueless.

What happened next, I simply cannot say. I do not recall whether McBride's asked for another sight of this book or whether I again submitted it without waiting for any such invitation. Nor do I know for what reason the editorial staff of McBride's then altered its opinion as to the book now before you, beyond the fact that this changing can hardly have been caused by the firm's having meanwhile published as many as three books by me, of which all had failed forthwith and utterly. But I do know that McBride's, in April 1917, accepted *The Cream of the Jest*, as the story was by this time called, just two years after they had rejected it; and I find also that the John Lane Company brought out this book in England, in 1923, some seven and a half years after the John Lane Company had rejected it. . . . The ways of all publishers, however, I discovered some while ago to be incalculable: and I do not think that any deduction can ever be drawn, through the channels of mere rationality, from any of their actions. It is perhaps the one trait which they share congenially with their authors.

The book was published, then, under its final title, "The Cream of the Jest," in September 1917, and as a marketable product fell wholly flat.

Yet its publication had results. H. L. Mencken, that unusual and indeed unique youngster who, as you may recall, had praised *The Cords of Vanity* some eight or more years earlier, now came forth, in the Smart Set, with a longish article in which *The Cream of the Jest* was favorably appraised in combination with yet another novel, quaintly entitled *The Three Black Pennys*, then lately published by

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yet another unknown author,—a youngish Pennsylvanian, who not long after this time came to Dumbarton as a direct result of this article, so that I then met Joseph Hergesheimer, just as I a bit later met Mencken also, through virtue of having published *The Cream of the Jest*.

And moreover an even younger Burton Rascoe, who, as yet in his early twenties, had very recently been made literary editor of the Chicago Tribune, chanced to be pleased by *The Cream of the Jest*; and he forthwith decided that it was a book which should not die unnoticed, at least, not in Chicago. What I take to have been the most remarkable, as it was certainly the most rambunctious, of all campaigns in the history of polite letters then opened, upon 29 December 1917, with the appearance, in the Chicago Tribune, of an article by Burton Rascoe headed Here's a Chance to Own Another First Edition. Thereafter, very much as the hapless Romans were formerly assured by the elder Cato, in his every public address upon whatsoever nominal theme, that Carthage must be destroyed, so now, upon each Saturday, week after week, all literate Chicago was assured by Burton Rascoe that Cabell must be read.

The assertion did not pass unchallenged. For at once Ben Hecht and Rupert Hughes, who, it may be remembered, ranked as well-known writers in those remote times, were moved to comment upon my various books with fervor, and with such taste as each of these then prominent littérateurs possessed, in one or another of the Chicago papers. Through the pages of the Herald-Examiners, Vincent Starrett joined in, to commend *The Cream of the Jest*: B. L. T.'s Line-o'-Type column took up the matter of my literary demerits, in another section of the Tribune, and in a rather more ribald vein: whereas Keith Preston and

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Richard Atwater waxed equally frank and derogatory in the Chicago News. And then,—as when upon some field of glory the cold draft laws have fetched face the intrepid patriots of two nations, and the loud machine-gun then answers to the ruthless speaking of its fellows ruthlessly,—so now did they who shared in this debate begin replying the one to another.

It all became quite learned, too, at the price of some lessening in coherence and in any exact meaning. Perhaps no one could ever have told you what all the printed rioting, and the tumultuary paragraphs, and the ungentle name-calling, were precisely about. But Molière, and Menander, and Novalis, and Agathon, and Shakespeare, and Praxiteles, and Robert W. Chambers, were all dragged somehow into the affair during the following months of insane dispute; and to each of these notabilities was accorded almost as much prominence in the various critical dicta as was being granted to me, now that Chicago had taken up polite letters in a really serious way. For some six months, did the literati of Chicago thus debate whether I was an unjustly neglected author or a posturing imbecile: and the city at large must have known, vaguely, that somebody of my name existed, and had published a book called *The Cream of the Jest*.

But the rest of America, so far as my publishers or I could perceive, remained deplorably oblivious of both facts: *The Cream of the Jest* had very soon appeared upon the *Marked Down* counters in all book stores: and yet two more years were to pass by before a book by me was to become a more or less salable commodity, under the transforming touch of Mr. John S. Sumner's monomania.

Meanwhile I had heard again from that stripling Sinclair Lewis who had been the first of this book's

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so many rejectors; and, since it developed that during the intervening three years his tastes had so altered that he now quite approved of *The Cream of the Jest*, therefore we met before long, and we got on together excellently. I found that, for my part, it was not possible to help liking and admiring this Sinclair Lewis, even after the droll and deferential boy whom I first knew had turned out to be a world-famous genius, of an especial sort which made his first letter to me of large monetary value.

And so it is that, when I reflect that through *The Cream of the Jest* I first met Lewis, and Hergesheimer, and Mencken, and Rascoe, and Guy Holt, I can see that in the end this book became, in some sense, the most potent of all my books in its influence upon my career as a writer. This book did not get for me any general recognition. It got for me, instead, something in every way more valuable. For it was *The Cream of the Jest* which first made for me, in the seventeenth year of my writing, a few warm friends who but a little later were to fight in my behalf very nobly, and with wholly heroic tenacity. . . . That, though, is not my present theme. I have not any need here to rehearse those now ancient battlings, which indeed had not anything in particular to do with *The Cream of the Jest*, and were not joined until 1920: but I have a strong need, and a never-dying urge, to record here, and to record upon every available occasion, my gratitude to all these and to yet other preservatory champions.

If few writers have met with more smug, more prurient, or more disingenuous opponents, no writer whatever, I think, has found more faithful allies. I now and then think also that, but for these allies, an almost all-important personage—I mean, that “general reader” who hereinafter becomes of a sudden aware of Felix Kennaston in very much the same fashion

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wherein “the author of ‘Jurgen’ ” also was discovered,—would perhaps have heard but little more of my later writings than in prior times this “general reader” had ever heard, during the gray and hope-deferring years before 1920, of my earlier books. And I deduce, at such seasons, that, inasmuch as it was *The Cream of the Jest* which got for me the most of these friends and valiant benefactors, I may very well be grateful to *The Cream of the Jest* likewise, upon grounds which are hardly, if at all, literary.

JAMES BRANCH CABELL

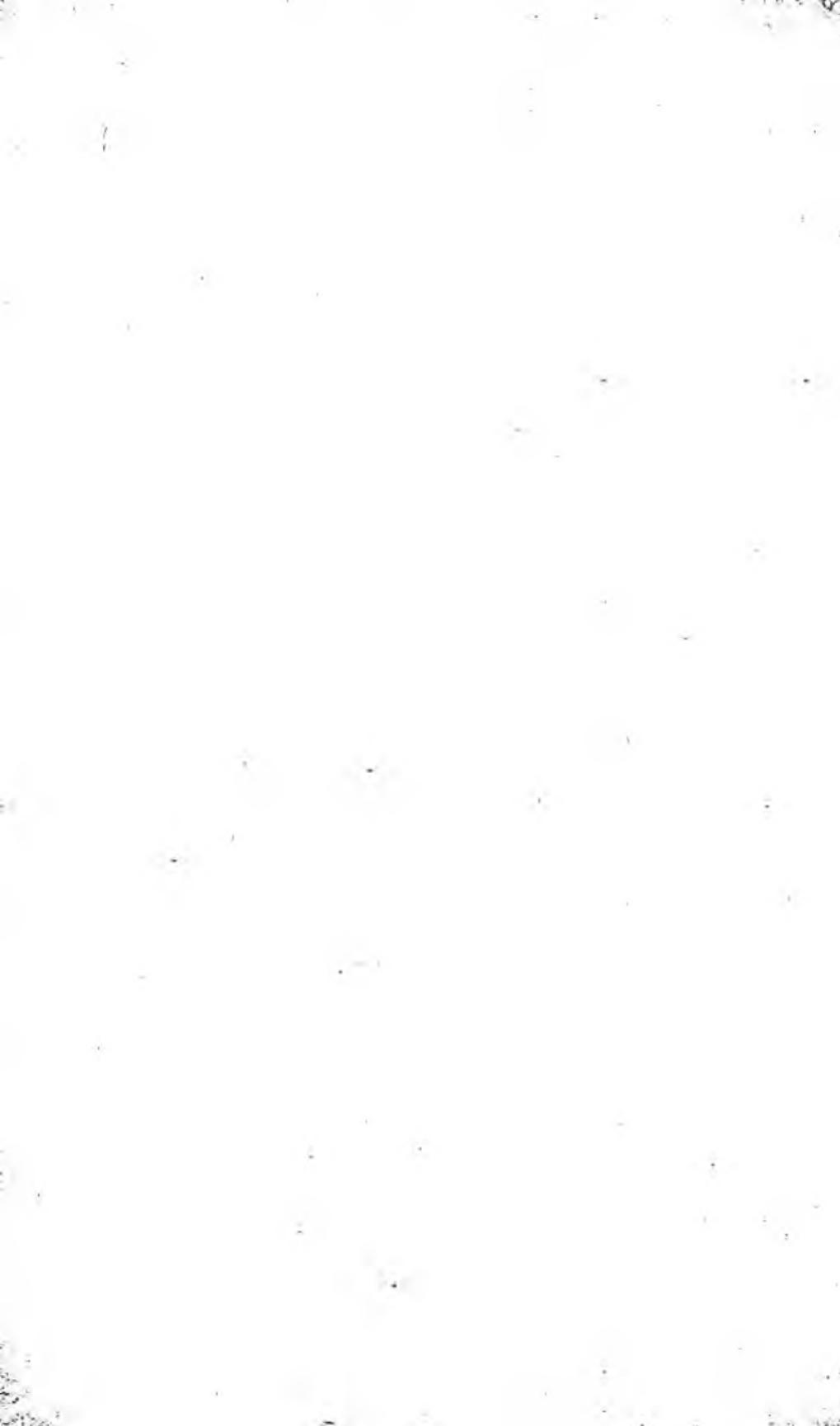
Richmond-in-Virginia

30 June 1929

THE CREAM OF THE JEST

A COMEDY OF EVASION

"Le pays où je voulais aller, tu m'y as mené en songe, cette nuit, et tu étais belle . . . ah! que tu étais belle! . . . Mais, comme je n'ai aimé que ton ombre, tu me dispenseras, chère tête, de remercier ta réalité."



PART ONE

Which touches upon Poictesme without
settling in the province

*"Give place, fair ladies, and begone,
Ere pride hath had a fall!
For here at hand approacheth one
Whose grace doth stain you all.*

*"Ettarre is well compared
Unto the Phoenix kind,
Whose like was never seen or heard,
That any man can find."*

I. Palliation of the Gambit

Much has been written critically about Felix Kennaston since the disappearance of his singular personality from the field of contemporary writers; and Mr. Froster's *Biography* contains all it is necessary to know as to the facts of Kennaston's life. Yet most readers of the *Biography*, I think, must have felt that the great change in Kennaston no long while after he "came to forty year"—this sudden, almost unparalleled, conversion of a talent for tolerable verse into the full-fledged genius of *Men Who Loved Alison*,—stays, after all, unexplained . . .

Hereinafter you have Kennaston's own explanation. I do not know but that in hunting down one enigma it raises a bevy; but it, at worst, tells from his standpoint honestly how this changing came about.

You are to remember that the tale is pieced together, in part from social knowledge of the man, and in part from the notes I made as to what Felix Kennaston in person told me, bit by bit, a year or two after events the tale commemorates. I had known the Kennastons for some while, with that continual shallow intimacy into which chance forces most country people with their

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near neighbors, before Kennaston ever spoke of—as he called the thing—the sigil. And, even then, it was as if with negligence he spoke, telling of what happened—or had appeared to happen,—and answering my questions, with simply dumbounding personal unconcern. It all seemed indescribably indecent: and I marveled no little, I can remember, as I took my notes. . . .

Now I can understand it was just that his standard of values was no longer ours nor really human. You see—it hardly matters through how dependable an agency,—Kennaston no longer thought of himself as a man of flesh-and-blood moving about a world of his compeers. Or, at least, that especial aspect of his existence was to him no longer a phase of any particular importance.

But to tell of his thoughts, is to anticipate. Herein-after you have them full measure and, such as it is, his story. You must permit that I begin it in my own way, with what may to you at first seem dreamstuff. So I commence at Storisende, in the world's youth, when the fourth Count Emmerick, gray Manuel's not over-glorious son, was again ruling in Poictesme, now that the rebellion of Maugis d'Aigremont appeared virtually at an end. . . . For with such roundabout gambits alone can some of us approach—as one fancy begets another, if you will,—to proud assurance that life is not a blind and aimless business; not all a hopeless waste and confusion; and that we ourselves may (by and by) be strong and excellent and wise.

Such, in any event, is the road that Kennaston took, and such the goal to which he was conducted. So, with that goal in view, I also begin where he began, and follow whither the dream led him. Meanwhile, I can but entreat you to remember it is only by preserving

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faith in human dreams that we may, after all, perhaps
some day make them come true.

RICHARD FENTNOR HARROWBY

Montevideo
14 April 1917

II. Introduces the Ageless Woman

The tale tells how Count Emmerick planned a notable marriage-feast for his sister La Beale Ettarre and Sir Guiron des Rocques. The tale relates that, in honor of this wedding, came from Nacumera, far oversea, Count Emmerick's elder sister Dame Melicent and her husband the Comte de la Forêt, with an outlandish retinue of pagan slaves that caused great wonder. All Poictesme took holiday. The tale narrates how from Naimes to Lisuarte, and in the wild hill-country back of Perdigon, knights made ready for the tournament, traveling toward Storisende in gay silken garments such as were suited to these new times of peace. The highways in those parts shone with warriors, riding in companies of six or eight, wearing mantles worked in gold, and mounted upon valuable horses that glittered with new bits and housings. And the tale tells, also, how they came with horns sounding before them.

Ettarre watched from the turrets of Storisende, pensively. Yet she was happy in these days. "Indeed, there is now very little left this side of heaven for you to desire, madam," said Horvendile the clerk, who stood beside her at his service.

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"No, there is nothing now which troubles me, Horvendile, save the thought of Maugis d'Aigremont. I cannot ever be sure of happiness so long as that man lives."

"So, so!" says Horvendile,—"ah, yes, a master-villain, that! He is foiled for the present, and in hiding, nobody knows where; but I, too, would not wonder should he be contriving some new knavery. Say what you may, madame, I cannot but commend his persistency, howsoever base be his motives; and in the forest of Bovion, where I rescued you from his clutches, the miscreant spoke with a hellish gusto that I could have found it in my heart to admire."

Ettarre had never any liking for this half-scoffing kind of talk, to which the clerk was deplorably prone. "You speak very strangely at times, Horvendile. Wickedness cannot ever be admirable; and to praise it, even in jest, cannot but be displeasing to the Author of us all."

"Eh, madame, I am not so sure of that. Certainly, the Author of those folk who have figured thus far in your history has not devoted His talents to creating perfect people."

She wondered at such foolish speaking, and she showed as much in the big blue eyes which had troubled so many men's sleep. "Since time began, there has lived no nobler person or more constant lover than my lord Guiron."

"Oh, yes, Sir Guiron, I grant you, is very nearly immaculate," said Horvendile; and he yawned.

To that, Ettarre replied: "My friend, you have always served him faithfully. We two cannot ever forget how much we have owed in the past to your quick wits and shrewd devices. Yet now your manner troubles me."

Dame Ettarre spoke the truth, for, knowing the

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man to be unhappy,—and suspecting the reason of his unhappiness, too,—she would have comforted him; but Horvendile was not in a confiding mood. Whimsically he says:

“Rather, it is I who am troubled, madame. For envy possesses me, and a faint teasing weariness also possesses me, because I am not as Sir Guiron, and never can be. Look you, they prepare your wedding-feast now, your former sorrows are stingless; and to me, who have served you through hard seasons of adversity, it is as if I had been reading some romance, and had come now to the last page. Already you two grow shadowy; and already I incline to rank Sir Guiron and you, madame, with Arnaud and Fregonde, with Palmerin and Polinarda, with Gui and Floripas,—with that fair throng of noted lovers whose innocuous mishaps we follow with pleasant agitation, and whom, when all is done, we dismiss to eternal happiness, in the while that we, with smiling incredulity, get back to our workaday world. For it is necessary now that I return to my own country, and there I shall not ever see you any more.”

Ettarre, in common with the countryside, knew the man hopelessly loved her; and she pitied him to-day beyond wording. Happiness is a famed breeder of magnanimity. “My poor friend, we must get you a wife. Are there no women in your country?”

“Ah, but there is never any woman in one’s own country whom one can love, madame,” replies Horvendile shrewdly. “For love, I take it, must look toward something not quite accessible, something not quite understood. Now, I have been so unfortunate as to find the women of my country lacking in reticence. I know their opinions concerning everything,—touching God and God’s private intentions, and touching me, and the people across the road,—and I know, too, what

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is the good faith and the loving tenderness and the never-sleeping jealousy of these women, and how these women's clothes are adjusted, and what they eat for breakfast, and what men have kissed them: there is no room for illusion anywhere. Nay, more: I am familiar with the mothers of these women, and in them I see quite plainly what these women will be some twenty years from this morning; there is not even room for hope. Ah, no, madame, the women of my country are the pleasantest of comrades, and the helpfulest of wives: but I cannot conceal it from myself that, after all, they are only human beings; and therefore it has not ever been possible for me to love any one of them."

"And am I not, then, a human being, poor Horvendile?"

There was a tinge of mischief in the query; but beauty very often makes for lightheadedness, both in her that has and in him that views it; nor between Ind and Thule was there any lovelier maid than Ettarre. Smiling she awaited his answer; the sunlight glorified each delicate clarity of color in her fair face, and upon her breast gleamed the broken sigil of Scoteia, that famed talisman which never left her person.

"And am I not, then, a human being?" says she. . . .

Gravely Horvendile answered: "Not in my eyes, madame. For you embody all that I was ever able to conceive of beauty and fearlessness and strange purity. Therefore it is evident I do not see in you merely Count Emmerick's third sister, but, instead, that ageless, lovable and loving woman long worshiped and sought everywhere in vain by all poets."

"But," said Ettarre, "but I had thought poets were famous for their inconstancy. It is remarkable hearing that, to the contrary, they have all loved steadfastly the

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same woman; and, in any case, I question how, without suspecting it, I could have been that woman."

Horvendile meditated for a while, and then said: "Assuredly, it was you of whom blind Homer dreamed, comforting endless night with visions of your beauty, as you sat in a bright fragrant vaulted chamber weaving at a mighty loom, and embroidering on tapestry the battles men were waging about Troy because of your beauty; and very certainly it was to you that Hermes came over fields of violets and parsley, where you sang magic rhymes, sheltered by an island cavern, in which cedar and citron-wood were burning,—and, calling you Calypso, bade you release Odysseus from the spell of your beauty. Sophocles, too, saw you bearing an ewer of bronze, and treading gingerly among gashed lamentable corpses, lest your loved dead be dishonored; and Sophocles called you Antigone, praising your valor and your beauty. And when men named you Bombyca, Theocritus also sang of your grave drowsy voice and your feet carven of ivory, and of your tender heart and all your honey-pale sweet beauty."

Ettarre replied, "I do not remember any of these troubadours you speak of, my poor Horvendile; but I am very certain that if they were poets they, also, must in their time have talked a great deal of nonsense."

"And as Mark's Queen," says Horvendile, intent on his conceit, "you strayed with Tristram in the sunlit glades of Morois, that high forest, where many birds sang full-throated in the new light of spring; as Medeia you fled from Colchis; and as Esclairmonde you delivered Huon from the sardonic close wiles of heathenry, which to you seemed childish. All poets have had these fitful glimpses of you, Ettarre, and of that perfect beauty which is full of troubling reticences, and so, is somehow touched with something sinister. Now all these

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things I likewise see in you, Ettarre; and therefore, for my own sanity's sake, I dare not concede that you are a human being."

The clerk was very much in earnest. Ettarre granted that, insane as his talk seemed to her; and the patient yearning in his eyes was not displeasing to Ettarre. Her hand touched his cheek, quickly and lightly, like the brush of a bird's wing.

"My poor Horvendile, you are in love with fantasies. There was never any lady such as you dream of."

Then she left him.

But Horvendile remained at the parapet, peering out over broad rolling uplands.

III. Wherein a Clerk Appraises a Fair Country

Horvendile peered out over broad rolling uplands. . . . He viewed a noble country, good to live in, rich with grain and metal, embowered with tall forests, and watered by pleasant streams. Walled cities it had, and castles crowned its eminences. Very far beneath Horvendile the leaden roofs of these fortresses glittered in sunlight, for Storisende guarded the loftiest part of all inhabited Poictesme.

And the people of this land—from its lords of the high, the low, and the middle justice, to the sturdy whining beggars at its cathedral doors,—were not all unworthy of this fair realm. Undoubtedly, it was a land, as Horvendile whimsically reflected, wherein human nature kept its first dignity and strength; and wherein human passions were never in a poor way to find expression with adequate speech and action.

Now, from the field below, a lark rose singing joyously. Straight into the air it rose, and was lost in the sun's growing brilliance; but you could hear its singing; and then, as suddenly, the bird dropped to earth. No poet could resist embroidery on such a text.

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Began Horvendile straightway: "*Quan vey la laudeta mover*"—or in other wording:

"When I behold the skylark move in perfect joy toward its love the sun, when I behold the skylark, growing drunk with joy, forget the use of wings, so that it topples from the height of heavens, I envy the bird's fate. I, too, would taste that ruinous mad moment of communion, there in heaven, and my heart dissolves in longing.

"Ailas! how little do I know of love!—I, who was once deluded by the conceit that I was all-wise in love. For I am unable to put aside desire for a woman whom I must always love in vain. She has bereft me of hope. She has robbed me of my heart, of herself, and of all joy in the world, and she has left me nothing save dreams and regrets.

"Never have I been able to recover my full senses since that moment when she first permitted me to see myself mirrored in her bright eyes. Hey, fatal mirrors! which flattered me too much! for I have sighed ever since I beheld my image in you. Your shining is a ruin fire. I have lost myself in you, like Narcissus in his fountain."

Thus he lamented, standing alone among the turrets of Storisende. Now a troop of jongleurs was approaching the castle,—gay dolls, jerked by invisible wires, the vagabonds seemed to be, from this height.

"More merry-makers for the marriage-feast. We must spare no appropriate ceremony. And yonder Count Emmerick is ordering the major-domo to prepare peacocks stuffed with beccaficoes, and a pastry builded like a palace. Hah, my beautiful fantastic little people, that I love and play with, and dispose of just as I please, it is time your master shift another puppet."

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So Horvendile descended, still poetizing: "*Pus ab midons no m pot valer*"—or in other wording:

"Since nothing will avail to move my lady,—not prayers or righteous claims or mercy,—and she desires my homage now no longer, I shall have nothing more to say of love. I must renounce love, and adjure it utterly. I must regard her whom I love as one no longer living. I must, in fine, do that which I prepare to do; and afterward I must depart into external exile."

IV. Of the Double-Dealer's Traffic with a Knave

Horvendile left the fortress, and came presently to Maugis d'Aigremont. Horvendile got speech with this brigand where he awaited encamped in the hill-country of Perdigon, loth to leave Storisende since it held Ettarre whom he so much desired, but with too few adherents to venture an attack.

Maugis sprawled listless in his chair, wrapped in a mantle of soiled and faded green stuff, as though he were cold. In his hand was a naked sword, with which moodily he was prodding the torn papers scattered about him. He did not move at all, but his somber eyes lifted.

"What do you plan now, Horvendile?"

"Treachery, messire."

"It is the only weapon of you scribblers," Maugis answered. "How will it serve me?"

Then Horvendile spoke. Maugis sat listening. Above the swordhilt the thumb of one hand was stroking the knuckles of the other carefully. His lean and sallow face stayed changeless.

Says Maugis: "It is a bold stroke—yes. But how do I know it is not some trap for me?"

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Horvendile shrugged, and asked, "Have I not served you constantly in the past, messire?"

"You have suggested makeshifts, very certainly. . . . And to a pretty pass they have brought me! Here I roost like a starved buzzard, with no recreation except upon clear forenoons to look at the towers of Storisende."

"Meanwhile, at Storisende," said Horvendile, "Ettarre prepares to marry Sir Guiron."

"I think of that. . . . She is very beautiful, is she not, Horvendile? And she loves this stately kindly fool who carries his fair head so high and has no reason to hide anything from her. Yes, she is very beautiful, being created perfect by divine malice, in order that she might be the ruin of men. So I loved her: and she did not love me, because I was not worthy of her love. And Guiron is in all things worthy of her. I cannot ever pardon him that."

Horvendile said then, "And I am pointing out a way, messire, by which you may reasonably hope to deal with Sir Guiron—ho, and with the Counts Emmerick and Perion, and Heitman Michael, and with Ettarre also,—precisely as you elect."

Now Maugis spoke wearily. "I must trust you, I suppose. But I have no lively faith in my judgments nowadays. I have played fast and loose with too many men, and the stench of their blood is in my nostrils, drugging me. I move in a half-sleep, and people's talking seems remote and foolish. I can think clearly only when I think of how tender is the flesh of Ettarre. Heh, a lovely flashing peril allures me, through these days of fog, and I must trust you. Death is ugly, I know; but life is ugly too, and all my deeds are strange to me."

The clerk was oddly moved. "Do you not know I love you as I never loved Guiron?"

"How can I tell? You are an outlander. Your ways

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are not our ways," says the brigand moodily. "And what have I to do with love?"

"You will talk otherwise when you drink in the count's seat, with Ettarre upon your knee," Horvendile considered. "Observe, I do not promise you success! Yet I would have you remember it was by very much this same device that Count Perion won the sister of Ettarre."

"Heh, if we fail," replies Maugis, "I shall at least have done with remembering. . . ." Then they settled details of the business in hand.

Thus Horvendile returned to Storisende before twilight had thickened into nightfall. He came thus to a place different in all things from the haggard outlaw's camp, for Count Emmerick held that night a noble revel. There was gay talk and jest and dancing, with all other mirth men could devise.

The barons of Poictesme had well-nigh lost the knack of dancing, during the twelve years of never-ending warfare which had been stirred up by the lust and greed of Maugis d'Aigremont: but to-night all trouble seemed to have departed from Storisende; and these warriors merrily returned to the sports of their youth.

V. How the Double-Dealer was of Two Minds

It was deep silent night when Horvendile came into the room where Ettarre slept. "Out, out!" cried Horvendile. "Let us have more light here, so that men may see the beauty men die for!" He went with a torch from lamp to lamp, kindling them all.

Ettarre stood between the bed-curtains, which were green hangings worked with birds and beasts of the field, each in his proper colors. The girl was robed in white; and upon her breast gleamed the broken sigil of Scoteia, that famed talisman which never left her person. She wore a scarlet girdle about her middle, and her loosened yellow hair fell heavy about her. Her fine proud face questioned the clerk in silence, without any trace of fear.

"We must wait now," says Horvendile, "wait patiently for that which is to follow. For while the folk of Storisende slept—while your fair, favored lover slept, Ettarre, and your stout brothers Emmerick and Perion slept, and all persons who are your servitors and well-wishers slept,—I, I, the puppet-shifter, have admitted Maugis d'Aigremont and his men into this castle. They

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are at work now, hammer-and-tongs, to decide who shall be master of Storisende and of you."

Her first speech you would have found odd at such a time. "But, oh, it was not you who betrayed us, Horvendile,—not you whom Guiron trusted!"

"You forget," he returned, "that I, who am without any hope to win you, must attempt to view the squabbling of your other lovers without bias. It is the custom of omnipotence to do that, Ettarre. I have given Maugis d'Aigremont an equal chance with Sir Guiron. It is the custom of omnipotence to do that also, Ettarre. You will remember the tale was trite even in Job's far time that the sweetmeats of life do not invariably fall to immaculate people."

Then, as of on a sudden, Dame Ettarre seemed to understand that the clerk's brain had been turned through his hopeless love for her. She wondered, dizzily, how she could have stayed blind to his insanity this long, recollecting the inconsequence of his acts and speeches in the past; but matters of heavier urgency were at hand. Here, with this apparent madman, she was on perilous ground; but now had arisen a hideous contention without: and the shrieks there, and the clash of metal there, spoke with rude eloquence of company even less desirable.

"Heaven will defend the right!" Ettarre said bravely.

Horvendile replied: "I am not sure that Heaven has any finger in this pie. An arras hides all. It will lift presently, and either Good or Evil, either Guiron or Maugis, will come through that arras as your master. I am not certain, as yet, which one I shall permit to enter; and the matter rests with me, Ettarre."

"Heaven will defend the right!" Ettarre said bravely.

And at that the arras quivered and heaved, so that its heavy embroideries were converted into a welter of

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shimmering gold, bright in the glare of many lamps, sparkling like the ocean's waters at sunset; and Horvendile and Ettarre saw nothing else there for a breathless moment, which seemed to last for a great while. Then, parting, the arras yielded up Maugis d'Aigremont.

Horvendile chuckled.

VI. Treats of Maugis d'Aigremont's Pottage

Maugis came forward, his eyes fixed hungrily upon Ettarre. "So a long struggle ends," he said, very quiet. "There is no virtue left, Ettarre, save patience."

The girl said: "While life remains I shall not cease to shriek out your villainy. O God, men have let Guiron die!" she wailed.

"I will cause you to forget that death is dreadful, Ettarre!"

"I need no teacher now. . . . And so, Guiron is dead and I yet live! I had not thought that would be possible." She whispered this. "Give me your sword, Maugis, for just a little while, and then I will not hate you any longer."

The man said, with dreary patience: "Yes, you would die rather than endure my touch. And through my desire of you I have been stripped of wealth and joy and honor, and even of hope; through my desire of you I have held much filthy traffic, with treachery and theft and murder, traffic such as my soul loathed: and to no avail! Yes, I have been guilty of many wickednesses, as men estimate these matters; and yet, I swear to you, I seem to myself to be still that boy with whom

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you used to play, when you too were a child, Ettarre, and did not hate me. Heh, it is very strange how affairs fall out in this world of ours, so that a man may discern no aim or purpose anywhere!"

"Yet it is all foreplanned, Maugis." Horvendile spoke thus.

"And to what end have you ensnared me, Horvendile?" says Maugis, turning wearily. "For the attack on Storisende has failed, and I am dying of many wounds. See how I bleed! Gurion and Michael and Perion and all their men are hunting me everywhere beyond that arras, and I am frightened, Horvendile,—even I, who was Maugis, am frightened!—lest any of them find me too soon. I desire now only to die untroubled. Oh, Horvendile, in an ill hour I trusted you!"

As knave and madman, Ettarre saw the double-dealer and his dupe confront each other. In the haggard face of Maugis, no longer evil, showed only puzzled lassitude. In the hand of Horvendile a dagger glittered; and his face was pensive, as he replied:

"My poor Maugis, it is not yet time I make my dealings plain to you. It suffices that you have served my turn, Maugis, and that of you I have no need any longer. You must die now, Maugis."

Ettarre feared this frozen madman, she who by ordinary was fearless. Ettarre turned away her face, so that she might not see the two men grapple. Without, the uproar continued,—for a long while, it seemed. When she looked again it was, by some great wonder-working, to meet Guiron's eyes and Guiron's lips.

VII. Journeys End: With the Customary Unmasking

"My love, Ettarre, they have not harmed you?" Sir Guiron cried to her, in the while that the maid answered: "None has harmed me, Guiron. Oh, and you?"

"Maugis is dead," the tall warrior said joyously. "See, here he lies, slain by brave Horvendile. And the rogues who followed Maugis are all killed or fled. Our woes are at an end, dear love."

Then Ettarre saw that Horvendile indeed waited beside the dead body of Maugis d'Aigremont. And the clerk remained wholly motionless while Ettarre spoke. She told Guiron of this Horvendile's baleful work.

Sir Guiron then said, "Is this true speech, Horvendile?"

"It is quite true I have done all these things, mes-sire," Horvendile answered, without moving, even now.

"And with what purpose?" said Sir Guiron, very sadly; for to him too it seemed certain that such senseless treachery could not spring from anything but madness, and he had hitherto esteemed Horvendile as a competent and a quite useful servant.

"I will tell you," Horvendile replied, "though I much

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fear you will not understand—" He meditated. He shook his red curls, smilingly. "Indeed, how is it possible for me to make you understand? Well, I blurt out the truth. There was once in a land very far away from this land—in my country—a writer of romances. And once he constructed a romance which, after a hackneyed custom of my country, he pretended to translate from an old manuscript written by an ancient clerk—called Horvendile. It told of Horvendile's part in the love business between Sir Guiron des Rocques and La Beale Ettarre. I am that maker of romance. This room, this castle, all the broad rolling countryside without, is but a portion of my dream, and these places have no existence save in my fancies. And you, messire,—and you also, madame,—and dead Maugis here, and all the others who seemed so real to me, are but the puppets I have fashioned and have shifted, for a tale's sake, in that romance which now draws near to its ending."

He paused; and Sir Guiron sighed. "My poor Horvendile!" was all he said.

"It is not possible for you to believe me, of course," the clerk assented. "And it may be that I, too, am only a figment of some greater dream, in just such case as yours, and that I, too, cannot understand. It may be the very cream of the jest that my country is no more real than Storisende. How could I judge if I, too, were a puppet? It is a thought which often troubles me...."

Horvendile deliberated, then spoke more briskly. "At all events, I must return now to my own country, which I do not love as I love this bright fantastic Poictesme that I created—or seemed to create,—and wherein I was—or seemed to be—omnipotent."

Horvendile drew a deep breath; and he looked downward at the corpse he had bereft of pride and daring and of agility. "Farewell, Maugis! It would be indecorous, above all in omnipotence, to express

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anything save abhorrence toward you: yet I delighted in you as you lived and moved; and it was not because of displeasure with you that I brought you to disaster. Hence, also, one might evolve a heady analogue. . . .”

Guiron was wondering what he might do in accord with honor and with clemency. He did not stir as Horvendile came nearer. The clerk showed very pitiful and mean beside this stately champion in full armor, all shining metal, save for a surcoat of rose-colored stuff irregularly worked with crescents of silver.

“Farewell, Sir Guiron!” Horvendile then said. “There are no men like you in my country. I have found you difficult to manage; and I may confess now that I kept you so long imprisoned at Caer Idryn, and caused you to spend so many chapters oversea in heathendom, mainly in order that I might here weave out my romance untroubled by your disconcerting and rather wooden perfection. But you are not the person to suspect ill of your creator. You are all that I once meant to be, Guiron, you are all that I have forgotten how to be; and for a dead boy’s sake I have loved you even when I shrugged at your so many chivalrous virtues.”

“Listen, poor wretch!” Sir Guiron answered, sternly; “you have this night done horrible mischief, you have caused the death of many estimable persons. Yet I have thriven by your aid; and I know that Heaven, through Heaven’s inscrutable wisdom, has smitten you with madness. That stair leads to the postern on the east side of the castle. Go forth from Storisende as quickly as you may, whilst none save us knows of your double-dealings. It may be that I am doing great wrongs; but I cannot forget I have twice owed my life to you. If I must err at all hazards, I prefer to err upon the side of gratitude and mercy.”

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"That is said very like you," Horvendile replied. "Eh, it was not for nothing I endowed you with sky-towering magnanimity. Assuredly, I go, messire. And so farewell, Ettarre!"

Long and very long Horvendile gazed upon the maiden. "There is no woman like you in my country, Ettarre. I can find no woman anywhere resembling you whom dreams alone may win to. It is a little thing to say that I have loved you; it is a bitter thing to know that I must live among, and pursue, and win, those other women."

"My poor Horvendile," she answered, very lovely in her compassion, "you are in love with fantasies."

He held her hand, touching her for the last time; and he trembled. "Yes, I am in love with my fantasies, Ettarre; and, none the less, I must return into my own country."

As he considered the future, in the man's face showed only puzzled lassitude; and you saw therein a quaint resemblance to Maugis d'Aigremont. "I find my country an inadequate place in which to live," says Horvendile. "Oh, many persons live there happily enough! or, at worst, they seem to find the prizes and the applause of my country worth striving for whole-heartedly. But there is that in some of us which gets no exercise there; and we struggle blindly, with impotent yearning, to gain outlet for great powers which we know that we possess, even though we do not know their names. And so, we dreamers wander at adventure to Storisende—oh, and into more perilous realms sometimes!—in search of a life that will find employment for every faculty we have. For life in my country does not engross us utterly. We dreamers waste there at loose ends, waste futilely. All which we can ever see and hear and touch there, we dreamers dimly know,

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is at best but a portion of the truth, and is possibly not true at all. Oh, yes! it may be that we are not sane; could we be sure of that, it would be a comfort. But, as it is, we dreamers only know that life in my country does not content us, and never can content us. So we struggle, for a tiny dear-bought while, into other and fairer-seeming lands in search of—we know not what! And, after a little”—he relinquished the maiden’s hands, he spread out his own hands, shrugging,—“after a little, we must go back into my country and live there as best we may.”

A whimsical wise smile now visited Ettarre’s lips. Her hands went to her breast, and presently one half of the broken sigil of Scoteia lay in Horvendile’s hand.

“You will not always abide in your own country, Horvendile. Some day you will return to us at Storisende. The sign of the Dark Goddess will prove your safe-conduct then if Guiron and I be yet alive.”

Horvendile raised to his mouth the talisman warmed by contact with her sweet flesh. “It may be you will not live for a great while,” he says; “but that will befall through no lack of loving pains on your creator’s part.”

Then Horvendile left them. In the dark passage-way he did not pause, but he glanced back at Guiron and Ettarre for the while of a heart-beat.

Guiron and Ettarre had forgotten his existence. Hand in hand they stood in the bright room, young, beautiful and glad. Silently their lips met. The two had put away all sorrow. They did not know of the gray Norns’ decreeing as to Ettarre, nor of that long imprisonment which awaited her in the Waste Beyond the Moon, nor of that ruining which was to come of her loveliness in yet other centuries thereafter.

Horvendile closed the door, and so left Storisende. Without, he came into a lonely quiet-colored world

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already expectant of dawn's occupancy. Already the tree-trunks eastward showed like the black bars of a grate. Thus he walked in twilight, carrying away from Storisende one half of the sigil of Scoteia. . . .

PART TWO

Which deals with, among other unsatisfying
matters, Lichfield

“Whate’er she be—
That inaccessible She
That doth command my heart and me:

“Till that divine
Idea take a shrine
Of crystal flesh, through which to shine:

“Let her full glory,
My fancies, fly before ye;
Be ye my fictions—but her story.”

VIII. *Of a Trifle Found in Twilight*

Thus he walked in twilight, regretful that he must return to his own country, and live another life, and bear another name, than that of Horvendile. . . . It was droll that in his own country he should be called Felix, since Felix meant "happy"; and assuredly he was not pre-eminently happy there.

At least he had ended the love business of Ettarre and Guiron happily, howsoever droll the necessitated makeshifts might have been. . . . He had very certainly introduced the god in the car, against Horatian admonition, had wound up affairs with a sort of transformation scene. . . . It was, perhaps, at once too hackneyed and too odd an ending to be aesthetically satisfactory, after all. . . . Why, beyond doubt it was. He shrugged his impatience.

"Yet—what a true ending it would be!" he reflected.

He was still walking in twilight—for the time was approaching sunset,—in the gardens of Alclud. He must devise another ending for this high-hearted story of Guiron and Ettarre.

Felix Kennaston smiled a little over the thought

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of ending the romance with such topsy-turvy anti-climaxes as his woolgathering wits had blundered into; and, stooping, picked up a shining bit of metal that lay beside the pathway. He was conscious of a vague notion he had just dropped this bit of metal.

"It is droll how we great geniuses instinctively plagiarize," he reflected. "I must have seen this a half-hour ago, when I was walking up and down planning my final chapters. And so, I wove it into the tale as a breast-ornament for Ettarre, without ever consciously seeing the thing at all. Then, presto! I awake and find it growing dark, with me lackadaisically astray in the twilight with this picked-up piece of trash, just as I imagined Horvendile walking out of the castle of Storisende carrying much such a jigumicrank. Oh, yes, the processes of inspiration are as irrational as if all poets took after their mothers."

This bit of metal, Kennaston afterward ascertained, was almost an exact half of a disk, not quite three inches in diameter, which somehow had been broken or cut in two. It was of burnished metal—lead, he thought,—about a sixteenth of an inch in thickness; and its single notable feature was the tiny characters with which one surface was inscribed.

Later Felix Kennaston was destined to puzzle over his inability to recollect what motive prompted him to slip this glittering trifle into his pocket. A trifle was all that it seemed then. He always remembered quite clearly how it sparkled in the abating glare of that day's portentous sunset; and how the tree-trunks westward showed like the black bars of a grate, as he walked slowly through the gardens of Alcluid. Alcluid, be it explained, was the queer name with which Felix Kennaston's progenitors had seen fit to christen their fine country home near Lichfield.

IX. Beyond Use and Wont Fares the Road to Storisende

Kennaston was to recall, also, that on this evening he dined alone with his wife, sharing a taciturn meal. He and Kathleen talked of very little, now, save the existent day's small happenings, such as having seen So-and-so, and of So-and-so's having said this-or-that, as Kennaston reflected in the solitude of the library. But soon he was contentedly laboring upon the book he had always intended to write some day.

Off and on, in common with most high-school graduates, Felix Kennaston had been an "intending contributor" to various magazines, spasmodically bartering his postage-stamps for courteously-worded rejection-slips. Then, too, in the old days before his marriage, when Kennaston had come so near to capturing Margaret Hugonin and her big fortune, the heiress had paid for the printing of *The King's Quest* and its companion enterprises in rhyme, as well as the prose *Defence of Ignorance*,—wide-margined specimens of the far-fetched decadence then in vogue, and the idol of Kennaston's youth, when he had seriously essayed the parlor-tricks of "stylists."

And it was once a familiar story how Marian Win-

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wood got revenge on Felix Kennaston, when he married Kathleen Saumarez, by publishing, in a transparent guise of fiction, all the love-letters he had written Miss Winwood; so that Kennaston might also have claimed to be generally recognized as the actual author of her *Epistles of Ananias*, which, not long before this time, had created some literary stir.

But this book was to be different from any of his previous compositions. To paraphrase Felix Kennaston's own words (as recorded in the "Colophon" to *Men Who Loved Alison*), he had determined in this story lovingly to deal with an epoch and a society, and even a geography, whose comeliness had escaped the wear-and-tear of ever actually existing. He had attempted a jaunt into that "happy, harmless Fableland" which is bounded by Avalon and Phæacia and Sea-coast Bohemia, and the contiguous forests of Arden and Broceliande, and on the west of course by the Hesperides, because he believed this country to be the one possible setting for a really satisfactory novel. Kennaston was completing, in fine, *The Audit at Storisende*,—or, rather, *Men Who Loved Alison*, as the book came afterward to be called.

Competent critics in plenty have shrugged over Kennaston's cliché of pretending that the romance is "retold" from an ancient manuscript. But to Kennaston the clerk Horvendale, the fictitious first writer of the chronicle and eye-witness of its events, was necessary. No doubt it handicapped the story's progress, so to contrive matters that one subsidiary character should invariably be at hand when important doings were in execution, and should be taken more or less into everyone's confidence,—but then, somehow, it made the tale seem real.

For in the writing it all seemed perfectly real to Felix Kennaston. His life was rather barren of motive

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now. In remoter times, when he had wandered impudently from one adventure to another, sponging without hesitancy upon such wealthy people as his chatter amused, there had always been exquisite girls to make love to,—such girls as the younger generation did not produce,—and the ever-present problem of whence was to come the fares for to-morrow's hansom, in which the younger generation did not ride. For now hansom cabs were wellnigh as uncommon as bicycles or sedan-chairs, he owned two motors, and, by the drollest turn, had money in four banks. As recreation went, he and Kathleen had in Lichfield their round of decorous social duties; and there was nothing else to potter with save the writing. And a little by a little the life he wrote of came to seem to Felix Kennaston more real, and far more vital, than did the life his body was shuffling through aimlessly.

This was not the first time that Kennaston had written of Ettarre and Horvendile: for *The King's Quest*, of course, tells all about that ruining which this evasive pair contrived for King Alfgar, in somewhat stodgy Spenserian verse. But Kennaston now understood this Horvendile more completely. . . . And so, as Horvendile, he now lived among such gallant circumstances as he had always vaguely hoped his real life might provide by and by.

This Horvendile, coming unintelligibly to Storisende, and witnessing there the long combat between Sir Guiron des Rocques and Maugis d'Aigremont for possession of La Beale Alison,—as Kennaston's heroine is called, of course, in the printed book,—this Horvendile now seems to us no very striking figure; as in *Rob Roy* and *Esmond*, it is not to the narrator, but to the people and the events he tells of, that attention is riveted. But Felix Kennaston, while writing this book, lived the strange life of Horvendile in Kennaston's long,

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happy hours of writing, in stints which steadily became longer and more pleasurable; and insensibly his existence blended, and was absorbed, into the more colorful life of Horvendile. It was as Horvendile that Kennaston wrote, seeming actually at times to remember what he recorded, rather than to invent. . . .

And he called it inspiration. . . .

So the tale flowed on, telling how Count Emmerick planned a notable marriage-feast for his sister La Beale Ettarre and Sir Guiron des Rocques, with vastly different results from those already recorded,—with the results, in fine, which figure in the printed *Men Who Loved Alison*, wherfrom Ettarre has wholly disappeared, and wherein Horvendile keeps his proper place as a more or less convenient device for getting the tale told.

But to Kennaston that first irrational winding-up of affairs, wherein a world's creator was able to wring only contempt and pity from his puppets—since he had not endowed them with any faculties wherewith to comprehend their creator's nature and intent,—was always the tale's real ending. . . .

So it was that the lonely man lived with his dreams, and toiled for the vision's sake contentedly: and we of Lichfield who were most familiar with Felix Kennaston in the flesh knew nothing then of his mental diversions; and, with knowledge, would probably have liked him not a bit the better. For ordinary human beings, with other normal forms of life, turn naturally toward the sun, and are at their best thereunder; but it is the misfortune of dreamers that their peculiar talents find no exercise in daylight. So we regarded Kennaston with the distrust universally accorded people who need to be meddling with ideas in a world which sustains its

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mental credit comfortably enough with a current coinage of phrases.

And therefore it well may be that I am setting down his story not all in sympathy, for in perfect candor I never, quite, liked Felix Kennaston. His high-pitched voice in talking, to begin with, was irritating: you knew it was not his natural voice, and found it so entirely senseless for him to speak thus. Then, too, the nervous and trivial grin with which he prefaced almost all his infrequent remarks—and the odd little noise, that was nearly a snigger and just missed being a cough, with which he ended them,—was peculiarly uningratiating in a fat and middle-aged person; his weak eyes very rarely met yours full-gaze; and he was continually handling his face or fidgeting with a cigarette or twisting in his chair. When listening to you he usually nibbled at his finger-nails, and when he talked he had a secretive way of looking at them.

Such habits are not wholly incompatible with wisdom or generosity, and the devil's advocate would not advance them against their possessor's canonization; none the less, in everyday life they make against your enjoying a chat with their possessor: and as for Kennaston's undeniable mental gifts, there is no escaping, at times, the gloomy suspicion that fiddling with pens and ink is, after all, no fit employment for a grown man.

Felix Kennaston, to fix the word, was inadequate. His books apart, he was as a human being a failure. Indeed, in some inexpressible fashion, he impressed you as uneasily shirking life. Certainly he seemed since his marriage to have relinquished all conversational obligations to his wife. She had a curious trick of explaining him, before his face,—in a manner which was not unreminiscent of the lecturer in “side-shows” pointing out the peculiarities of the living skeleton or the glass-eater; but it was done with such ill-concealed

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pride in him that I found it touching, even when she was boring me about the varieties of food he could not be induced to touch or his finicky passion for saving every bit of string he came across.

That suggests a minor mystery: many women had been fond of Felix Kennaston; and I have yet to find a man who liked him even moderately, to offset the host who marveled, with unseemly epithets, as to what these women saw in him. My wife explains it, rather enigmatically, that he was "just a twoser"; and that, in addition, he expected women to look after him, so that naturally they did. To her superior knowledge of the feminine mind I can but bow: with the addition (quoting the same authority) that a "twoser" is a trousered person over-addicted to dumbness in company and to the very thrilliest sort of play-acting in tête-à-têtes.

At all events, I never quite liked Felix Kennaston—not even after I came to understand that the man I knew in the flesh was but a very ill-drawn likeness of Felix Kennaston. After all, that is the whole sardonic point of his story,—and, indeed, of every human story,—that the person you or I find in the mirror is condemned eternally to misrepresent us in the eyes of our fellows. But even with comprehension, I never cordially liked the man; and so it may well be that hereinafter his story is set down not all in sympathy.

With which Gargantuan parenthesis, in equitable warning, I return again to his story.

X. Of Idle Speculations in a Library

Felix Kennaston did not write very long that night. He fell idly to the droll familiar wondering how this dull fellow seated here in this luxurious room could actually be Felix Kennaston. . . .

He was glad this spacious and subdued-glowing place, and all the comfortable appointments of Alcluid, belonged to him. He had seen enough of the scrambling hand-to-mouth makeshifts of poverty, in poverty's heart-depressing habitations, during the thirty-eight years that he weathered through before the simultaneous deaths, through a motor accident, of a semi-mythical personage known since childhood as "your Uncle Henry in Lichfield," and of Uncle Henry's only son as well, had raised Felix Kennaston beyond monetary frets. As yet Kennaston did not very profoundly believe in this unlooked-for turn; and in the library of his fine house in particular he had still a sense of treading alien territory under sufferance.

Yet it was a territory which tempted exploration with alluring vistas. Kennaston had always been, when there was time for it, "very fond of reading," as his wife was used to state in tones of blended patronage

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and apology. Kathleen Kennaston, in the old days of poverty, had declaimed too many pilfered dicta concerning literary matters to retain any liking for them.

As possibly you may recall, for some years after the death of her first husband, Kathleen Eppes Saumarez had earned precarious bread and butter as a lecturer before women's clubs, and was more or less engaged in journalism, chiefly as a reviewer of current literature. For all books she had thus acquired an abiding dislike. In particular, I think, she loathed the two volumes of "woodland tales" collected in those necessitous years, from her Woman's Page in the *Lichfield Courier-Herald*, for the fickle general reading-public, which then used to follow the life-histories of Bazoo the Bear and Mooshwa the Mink, and other "citizens of the wild," with that incalculable unanimity which to-day may be reserved for the biographies of optimistic orphans, and to-morrow veers to *vies intimes* of high-minded courtesans with hearts of gold. . . . In fine, through a variety of reasons, Mrs. Kennaston quite frankly cared even less for books, as manifestations of art, than does the average tolerably honest woman to whom books do not represent a source of income.

And you may or may not remember, likewise, what Kennaston wrote, about this time, in the "Colophon" to *Men Who Loved Alison*. With increased knowledge of the author, some sentences therein, to me at least, took on larger significance:

"No one, I take it, can afford to do without books unless he be quite sure that his own day and personality are the best imaginable; and for this class of persons the most crying need is not, of course, seclusion in a library, but in a sanatorium.

"It was, instead, for the great generality, who combine a taste for travel with a dislike for leaving home, that books were by the luckiest hit invented, to con-

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found the restrictions of geography and the almanac. In consequence, from the Ptolemies to the Capets, from the twilight of a spring dawn in Sicily to the uglier shadow of Montfaucon's gibbet, there intervenes but the turning of a page, a choice between Theocritus and Villon. From the Athens of Herodotus to the Versailles of Saint-Simon, from Naishapur to Cranford, it is equally quick traveling. All times and lands that ever took the sun, indeed, lie open, equally, to the explorer by the grace of Gutenberg; and transportation into Greece or Rome or Persia or Chicago, equally, is the affair of a moment. Then, too, the islands of Avalon and Ogygia and Theleme stay always accessible, and magic casements open readily upon the surf of Sea-coast Bohemia. For the armchair traveler alone enjoys enfranchisement of a chronology, and of a geography, that has escaped the wear-and-tear of ever actually existing.

"Peregrination in the realms of gold possesses also the quite inestimable advantage that therein one's personality is contraband. As when Dante makes us free of Hell and Heaven, it is on the fixed condition of our actual love and hate of divers Renaissance Italians, whose exploits in the flesh require to-day the curt elucidation of a footnote, just so, admission to those high delights whereunto Shelley conducts us is purchased by accrediting to clouds and skylarks—let us sanely admit,—a temporary importance which we would never accord them unbiased. The traveler has for the half-hour exchanged his personality for that of his guide: such is the rule in literary highways, a very necessary traffic ordinance: and so long as many of us are, upon the whole, inferior to Dante or Shelley,—or Sophocles, or Thackeray, or even Shakespeare,—the change need not make entirely for loss. . . ."

Yes, it is lightly phrased; but, after all, it is only

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another way of confessing that his books afforded Kennaston an avenue to forgetfulness of that fat pasty fellow whom Kennaston was heartily tired of being. For one, I find the admission significant of much, in view of what befell him afterward.

And besides,—so Kennaston's thoughts strayed at times,—these massed books, which his predecessor at Alclud had acquired piecemeal through the term of a long life, were a part of that predecessor's personality. No other man would have gathered and have preserved precisely the same books, and each book, with varying forcefulness, had entered into his predecessor's mind and had tinged it. These parti-colored books, could one but reconstruct the mosaic correctly, would give a candid portrait of "your Uncle Henry in Lichfield," which would perhaps surprise all those who had known old Henry Kennaston daily in the flesh. Of the fact that these were unusual books their present owner and tentative explorer had no doubt whatever. They were perturbing books.

Now these books by their pleasant display of gold-leaf, soberly aglow in lamplight, recalled an obscure association of other tiny brilliancies; and Felix Kennaston recollected the bit of metal he had found that evening.

Laid by the lamp, it shone agreeably as Kennaston puckered his protuding brows over the characters with which it was inscribed. So far as touched his chances of deciphering them, he knew all foreign languages were to him of almost equal inscrutability. French he could puzzle out, or even Latin, if you gave him plenty of time and a dictionary; but this inscription was not in Roman lettering. He wished, with time-dulled yearning, that he had been accorded a college education. . . .

XI. How There Was a Light in the Fog

As she came toward him through the fog, "How annoying it is," she was saying plaintively, "that these moors are never properly lighted."

"Ah, but you must not blame Ole-Luk-Oie," he protested, "It is all the fault of Beatrice Cenci. . . ."

Then Kennaston knew he had unwittingly spoken magic words, for at once, just as he had seen it done in theaters, the girl's face was shown him clearly in a patch of roseate light. It was the face of Ettarre.

"Things happen so in dreams," he observed. "I know perfectly well I am dreaming, as I have very often known before this that I was dreaming. But it was always against some law to tell the people in my nightmares that I quite understood they were not real people. To-day in my daydream, and here again to-night, there is no such restriction; and lovely as you are, I know that you are just a daughter of subconsciousness or of memory or of jumpy nerves or, perhaps, of an improperly digested entrée."

"No, I am real, Horvendile,—but it is I who am dreaming you."

"I had not thought to be a part of any woman's

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dream nowadays. . . . Why do you call me Horvendile?"

She who bore the face of Ettarre pondered momentarily; and his heart moved with glad adoration.

"Now, by the beard of the prophet! I do not know," the girl said, at last.

"The name means nothing to you?"

Ettarre replied pensively: "I never heard that name before. But it seemed natural, somehow,—just as it did when you spoke of Ole-Luk-Oie and Beatrice Cenci."

"But Ole-Luq-Oie is the lord and master of all dreams," said Kennaston. "And that furtive long-dead Roman girl has very often troubled my dreams. . . . When I was a boy, you conceive, there was in my room, at the first boarding-house in which I can remember dieting, a copy of the Guido portrait of Beatrice Cenci,—a copy done in oils, a worthless daub, I suppose. But there was evil in the picture,—a lurking devilishness, which waited, patiently and alertly, until I should do what that silent watcher knew I was predestined to do, and, being malevolent, wanted me to do. I knew nothing then of Beatrice Cenci, mark you, but when I came to learn her history I thought the world was all wrong about her. That woman was evil, whatever verse-makers may have fabled, I thought for a long while. . . . To-day I believe the evil emanated from the person who painted that particular copy. I do not know who that person was, I never shall know. But the black magic of that person's work was very potent."

And Kennaston looked about him now, to find fog everywhere,—impenetrable vapors which vaguely showed pearl-colored radiances here and there, but no determinable forms of trees or of houses, or of anything save the face of Ettarre, so clearly discerned and so lovely in that strange separate cloud of roseate light.

"Ah, yes, those little magics,"—it was the girl who

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spoke,—“those futile troubling necromancies that are wrought by portraits and unfamiliar rooms and mirrors and all time-worn glittering objects,—by running waters and the wind’s persistency, and by lonely summer noons in forests. . . . These are the little magics, that have no large power, but how inconsequently do they fret upon men’s heart-strings!”

“As if some very feeble force—say, a maimed elf,—were trying to attract your attention? Yes, I think I understand. It is droll.”

“And how droll, too, it is,” the girl marveled, “how quickly we communicate our thoughts,—even though, if you notice, you are not really speaking, because your lips are not moving at all.”

“No, they never do in dreams. One never seems, in fact, to use one’s mouth,—you never actually eat anything, you may also notice, in dreams, even though food is very often at hand. I suppose it is because all dream food is akin to the pomegranates of Persephone, so that if you taste it you cannot ever return again to the workaday world. . . . But why, I wonder, are we having the same dream?—it rather savors of Morphean parsimony, don’t you think, thus to make one nightmare serve for two people? Or perhaps it is the bit of metal I found this afternoon—”

And the girl nodded. “Yes, it is on account of the sigil of Scoteia. I have the other half, you know.”

“What does this mean, Ettarre?” he began; and reaching forward, was about to touch her, when the universe seemed to fold about him, just as a hand closes. . . .

And Felix Kennaston was sitting at the writing-table in the library, with a gleaming scrap of metal before him; and the clock showed bedtime.

“Well, it is undoubtedly quaint how dreams draw

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sustenance from half-forgotten happenings," he reflected. "To think of my recollecting that weird daub which used to deface my room in Fairhaven! I had forgotten Beatrice entirely. And I certainly never spoke of her to any human being, except of course to Muriel Allardyce. . . . But I would not be at all surprised if I had involuntarily hypnotized myself, sitting here staring at this shiny piece of lead,—you read of such cases. I believe I will put it away, to play with again sometime."

XII. Of Publishing: With an Unlikely Appendix

So Kennaston preserved this bit of metal. "No fool like an old fool," his common-sense testily assured him. But Felix Kennaston's life was rather barren of interest nowadays....

He thought no more of his queer dream, for a long while. Life had gone on decorously. He had completed *The Audit at Storisende*, with leisured joy in the task, striving to write perfectly of beautiful happenings such as life did not afford. There is no denying that the typed manuscript seemed to Felix Kennaston—as he added the last touches, before expressing it to Dapley & Pildriff,—to inaugurate a new era in literature.

Kennaston was yet to learn that publishers in their business capacity have no especial concern with literature. To his bewilderment he discovered that publishers seemed sure the merits of a book had nothing to do with the advisability of printing it. Herewith is appended a specimen or two from Felix Kennaston's correspondence.

DAPLEY & PILDRIFF—"We have carefully read your story, 'The Audit at Storisende,' which you kindly sub-

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mitted to us. It is needless for us to speak of the literary quality of the story: it is in fact exquisitely done, and would delight a very limited circle of readers trained to appreciate such delicate productions. But that class of readers is necessarily small, and the general reader would, we fear, fail to recognize the book's merit and be attracted to it. For this reason we do not feel—and we regret to confess it,—that the publication of this book would be a wise business enterprise for us to undertake. We wish that we could, in justice to you and ourselves, see the matter in another light. We are returning the manuscript to you, and we remain, with appreciation of your courtesy, etc."

PAIGE TICKNOR'S SONS—"We have given very careful consideration to your story, 'The Audit at Storisende,' which you kindly submitted to us. We were much interested in this romance, for it goes without saying that it is marked with high literary quality. But we feel that it would not appeal with force and success to the general reader. Its appeal, we think, would be to the small class of cultured readers, and therefore its publication would not be attended with commercial success. Therefore in your interest, as well as our own, we feel that we must give an unfavorable decision upon the question of publication. Naturally we regret to be forced to that conclusion, for the work is one which would be creditable to any publisher's list. We return the manuscript by express, with our appreciation of your courtesy in giving us the opportunity of considering it, and are, etc."

And so it was with the Gayvery Company, and with Leeds, McKibble & Todd, and with Stuyvesant & Brothers. Unanimously they united to praise and to return the manuscript. And Kennaston began reluctantly to suspect that, for all their polite phrases about

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literary excellence, his romance must, somehow, be not quite in consonance with the standards of that person who is, after all, the final arbiter of literature, and to whom these publishers very properly deferred, as "the general reader." And Kennaston wondered if it would not be well for him, also, to study the all-important and exigent requirements of "the general reader."

Kennaston turned to the publishers' advertisements. Dapley & Pildriff at that time were urging everyone to read *White Sepulchers*, the author of which had made public the momentous discovery that all churchgoers were not immaculate persons. Paige Ticknor's Sons were announcing a "revised version" of *The Apostates*, —by Kennaston's own loathed first-cousin,—which was guaranteed to sear the soul to its core, more than rival Thackeray, and turn our highest social circles inside out. Then the Gayvery Company offered *Through the Transom*, a daring study of "feminism," compiled to all appearance under rather novel conditions, inasmuch as the brilliant young author had, according to the advertisements, written every sentence with his jaws set and his soul on fire. The majority of Leeds, McKibble & Todd's adjectives were devoted to *Sarah's Secret*, the prize-winner in the firm's \$15,000 contest,—a "sprightly romance of the greenwood," whose undoubted aim, Kennaston deduced from tentative dips into its meandering balderdash, was to become the most-sought-after book in all institutes devoted to care of the feeble-minded. And Stuyvesant & Brothers were superlatively acclaiming *The Silent Brotherhood*, the latest masterpiece of a pornographically gifted genius, who had edifyingly shown that he ranked religion above literature, by retiring from the ministry to write novels.

Kennaston laughed,—upon which side of the mouth, it were too curious to inquire. Momentarily he thought

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of printing the book at his own expense. But here the years of poverty had left indelible traces. Kennaston had too often walked because he had not carfare, for a dollar ever again to seem to him an inconsiderable matter. Comfortably reassured as to pecuniary needs for the future, he had not the least desire to control more money than actually showed in his bank-balances: but, even so, he often smiled to note how unwillingly he spent money. So now he shrugged, and sent out his loved romance again.

An unlikely thing happened: the book was accepted for publication. The Baxon-Muir Company had no prodigious faith in *The Audit at Storisende*, as a commercial venture; but their "readers," in common with most of the "readers" for the firms who had rejected it, were not lacking in discernment of its merits as an admirable piece of writing. And the more optimistic among them protested even to foresee a possibility of the book's selling. The vast public that reads for pastime, they contended, was beginning to grow a little tired of being told how bad was this or that economic condition: and pretty much everything had been "daringly exposed," to the point of weariness, from the inconsistencies of our clergy to the uncleanliness of our sausage. In addition, they considered the surprising success of Mr. Marmaduke Fennel's eighteenth-century story, *For Love of a Lady*, as compared with the more moderate sales of Miss Elspeth Lancaster's *In Scarlet Sidon*, that candid romance of the brothel; deducing therefrom that the "gadzooks" and "by'r lady" type of reading-matter was ready to revive in vogue. At all events, the Baxon-Muir Company, after holding a rather unusual number of conferences, declared their willingness to publish this book; and in due course they did publish it.

There were before this, however, for Kennaston

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many glad hours of dabbling with proof-sheets: the tale seemed so different, and so infernally good, in print. Kennaston never in his life found any other playthings comparable to those first wide-margined "galley proofs" of *The Audit at Storisende*. Here was the word, vexatiously repeated within three lines, which must be replaced by a synonym; and the clause which, when transposed, made the whole sentence gain in force and comeliness; and the curt sentence whose addition gave clarity to the paragraph, much as a pinch of alum clears turbid water; and the vaguely unsatisfactory adjective, for which a jet of inspiration suggested a substitute, of vastly different meaning, in the light of whose inevitable aptness you marveled over your preliminary obtuseness:—all these slight triumphs, one by one, first gladdened Kennaston's labor and tickled his self-complacency. He could see no fault in the book.

His publishers had clearer eyes. His Preface, for one matter, they insisted on transposing to the rear of the volume, where it now figures as the book's tolerably famous Colophon,—that curious exposition of Kennaston's creed as artist. Then, for a title, *The Audit at Storisende* was editorially adjudged abominable: people would not know how to pronounce Storisende, and in consequence would hold back from discussing the romance or even asking for it at book-dealers. *Men Who Loved Ettarre* was Kennaston's ensuing suggestion; but the Baxon-Muir Company showed no fixed confidence in their patrons' ability to pronounce Ettarre, either. Would it not be possible, they inquired, to change the heroine's name?—and Kennaston assented. Thus it was that in the end his book came to be called *Men Who Loved Alison*.

But to Kennaston her name stayed always Ettarre. . . .

The book was delivered to the world, which received the gift without excitement. The book was delivered to

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reviewers, who found in it a well-intentioned echo of Mr. Maurice Hewlett's earlier mediæval tales. And there, for a month or some six weeks, the matter rested.

Then, one propitious morning, an indignant gentle-woman in Brooklyn wrote to *The New York Sphere* a letter which was duly printed in that journal's widely circulated Sunday supplement, *The Literary Masterpieces of This Week*, to denounce the loathsome and depraved indecency of the nineteenth and twentieth chapters, in which—while treating of Sir Guiron's imprisonment in the Sacred Grove of Caer Idryn, and the worship accorded there to the sigil of Scoteia,—Kennaston had touched upon some of the perverse refinements of antique sexual relations. The following week brought forth a full page of letters. Two of these, as Kennaston afterward learned, were contributed by the "publicity man" of the Baxon-Muir Company, and all arraigned obscenities which Kennaston could neither remember nor on re-reading his book discover. Later in this journal, as in other newspapers, appeared still more denunciations. An up-to-the-minute bishop ex-postulated from the pulpit against the story's vicious tendencies, demanding that it be suppressed.

Thereafter it was no longer on sale in the large department-stores alone, but was equally procurable at all the bookstands in hotels and railway stations. Even the author's acquaintances began to read it. And the Delaunays (then at the height of their vogue as exponents of the "new" dances) introduced "the Alison amble"; and from Tampa to Seattle, in certain syndicated cartoons of generally appealing idiocy, newspaper readers were privileged to see one hero of the series knock the other heels over head with a copy of Kennaston's romance. And women wore the "Alison aigrette" for a whole season; and a new brand of cheap tobacco christened in her honor had presently made her

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name at least familiar in saloons. *Men Who Loved Alison* became, in fine, the novel of the hour. It was one of those rare miracles such as sometimes palm off a well-written book upon the vast public that reads for pastime.

And shortly afterward Mr. Booth Tarkington published another of his delightful saccharine romances: one forgets at this distance of time just which it was: but, like all the other Tarkingtonian tales of the triumph of honest worth in somewhat melodramatic circumstances, it was exquisitely done, and sold neck and neck with *Men Who Loved Alison*; so that for a while it looked almost as if the American reading public was coming to condone adroit and careful composition.

But presently the advertising columns of magazines and newspapers were heralding the year's vernal output of enduring masterworks in the field of fiction: and readers were again assured that the great American novel had just been published at last, by any number of persons: and so, the autumnal predecessors of these new chefs d'œuvre passed swiftly into oblivion, via the brief respite of a "popular" edition. And naturally, Kennaston's romance was forgotten, by all save a few pensive people. Some of them had found in this volume food for curious speculation.

That, however, is a matter to be taken up later.

XIII. Suggesting Themes of Universal Appeal

So Felix Kennaston saw his dream vulgarized, made a low byword; and he contemplated this travestyng, as the cream of a sardonic jest, with urbanity. Indeed, that hour of notoriety seemed not without its pleasant features to Felix Kennaston, who had all a poet's ordinary appetite for flattery. Besides, it was droll to read the "literary notes" which the Baxon-Muir people were industriously disseminating, by means of the daily journals, as to this Felix Kennaston's personality, ancestry, accomplishments, recreations and preferences in diet. And then, in common with the old woman famed in nursery rhyme, he was very often wont to observe, "But, lawk a mercy on me! this is none of I!"

It was droll, too, to be asked for autographs, lectures, and for donations of "your wonderful novel." It was droll to receive letters from remote mysterious persons, who had read his book, and had liked it, or else had disliked it to the point of being goaded into epistolary remonstrance, sarcasm, abuse, and (as a rule) erratic spelling. And it was droll to be having so many scented letters from strange women whose designs as to his physical chastity were wholly frank. Yet it troubled

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Kennaston that only riffraff seemed to have read his book, so far as he could judge from these unsolicited communications; and that such people of culture and education as might have been thrilled by it—all people whose opinions he might conceivably value,—seemed never to write to authors. . . .

And finally, it was droll to watch his wife's reception of the book. To Kennaston his wife stayed always a not unfriendly mystery. She now could not but be a little taken aback by this revelation of his abilities, he reflected,—with which she had lived so long without, he felt, appreciation of them,—but he well knew she would never admit either fact. He much doubted if Kathleen would ever actually read *Men Who Loved Alison*; on various pretexts she had deferred the pleasure, and seemed, with perverted notions of humor, to esteem it a joke that she alone had not read the book of which everybody was talking. Such was not Kennaston's idea of humor, or of wifely interest. But Kathleen dipped into the volume here and there; and she assuredly read all the newspaper-notices sent in by the clipping-bureau. These she considered with profound seriousness.

"I have been thinking—you ought to make a great deal out of your next novel," she said, one morning, over her grapefruit.

Then the former poet wondered why, in heaven's name, it should matter to her whether or not the marketing of his dreams earned money, when he and she had already a competence. But women were thus fashioned. . . .

"You ought to do something more up-to-date, though, Felix, something that deals with real life—"

"Ah, but I don't particularly care to write about a subject of which I am so totally ignorant, dear. Besides,

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it isn't for you to fleer and gibe at a masterpiece which you have never read," he airily informed her.

"I am saving it up for next summer, Felix, when I shall have a chance to give every word of it the reverence it deserves. I really don't have any time for reading nowadays. There is always something that simply has to be attended to—For instance, the gasoline engine isn't working again, and I had to 'phone in town for Slaytor to send a man out to-day, to see what is the matter this time."

"And it is messy things like that you want me to write about!" he exclaimed. "About the gasoline engine going on another strike, and Drake's forgetting to tell you we were all out of sugar until late Saturday night! Never mind, Mrs. Kennaston! you will be sorry for this, and you will weep the bitter tears of unavailing repentance, some day, when you ride in the front automobile with the Governor to the unveiling of my various monuments, and have fallen into the anecdote of a great man's widow."

He spoke lightly, but he was reflecting that in reality Kathleen did not read his book because she did not regard any of his doings very seriously.

"Isn't this the third time this week we have had herring for breakfast?" he inquired, pleasantly. "I think I will wait and let them scramble me a couple of eggs. It is evidently a trifle that has escaped your attention, my darling, during our long years of happy married life, that I don't eat herring. But of course, just as you say, you have a number of more important and more practical topics than husbands to think about. I dislike having to put anyone to any extra trouble on my account; but as it happens, I have a lot of work to do this morning, and I cannot very well get through it on an empty stomach."

"We haven't had it since Saturday, Felix." Then

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Kathleen said, with aloof weariness, to the serving-girl, "Cora, see if Mr. Kennaston can have some eggs. . . . I do wish, Felix, that you wouldn't upset things so. Your coffee will get stone-cold; and it is hard enough to keep servants as it is. Besides, you know perfectly well to-day is Thursday, and the library has to be thorough-cleaned."

"That means, of course, I am to be turned out-of-doors and forced to waste a whole day somewhere in town. It is quite touching how my creature comforts are catered to in this house!"

And Kathleen began to laugh, ruefully. "You are just a great big baby, Felix. You are sulking and swelling up like a frog, because you think I don't appreciate what a wonderful husband I have and what a wonderful book he has written."

Then Kennaston began to laugh also. He knew that what she said was tolerably true, even to the batrachian simile. So he answered:

"When you insisted on adopting me, dear, you ought to have realized what you were letting yourself in for."

"—And I do think," Kathleen went on, evincing that conviction with which she as a rule repeated other people's remarks, "that you ought to make your next book something that deals with real life. *Men Who Loved Alison* is beautifully written and all that, but, exactly as the *Tucson Pioneer* said, it is really just colorful soapbubbly nonsense."

"Ah, but is it unadulterated nonsense, Kathleen, that somewhere living may be a uniformly noble transaction?" he debated,—"and human passions never be in a poor way to find expression with adequate speech and action?"

Pleased with the phrase, and feeling in a better temper, he began to butter a roll. And Kathleen said,

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"I don't know about that; but, in any event, people prefer to read about the life they are familiar with."

"You touch on a disheartening truth," Kennaston admitted. "People never want to be told anything they do not believe already. Yet I quite fail to see why, in books or elsewhere, anyone should wish to be reminded of what human life is actually like. For living is the one art in which mankind has never achieved distinction. It is perhaps an obscure sense of this that makes us think the begetting of mankind an undiscussable subject, and death a sublime and edifying topic."

"Yes—? I daresay," Kathleen assented vaguely. "This herring is really very good, Felix. I think you would like it, if you just had not made up your mind to be stubborn about it—" Then she spoke with new animation: "Felix, Margaret Woods was in Louvet's yesterday morning, having her hair done for a dinner they gave the railroad crowd last night, and of all the faded washed-out-looking people I ever saw—! And I can remember her having that hideous brown dress long before she was married. Of course, it doesn't make any difference to me that she did not see fit to invite us. She was one of your friends, not mine. I was only thinking that, since she always pretended to be so fond of you, it does seem curious the way we are invariably left out."

She returned then to the gasoline engine which was not working, she touched upon the possibility of there again being a dead frog in the well, she mentioned a number of her relatives who had herring for breakfast almost every morning, and she became emphatic as to the quite dreadful batch of persons who had been elected directors of the Woman's Club. And, as each topic arose, Felix Kennaston made one or another elaborately chilly reply, as he sat waiting, with elaborate patience, for his eggs.

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So Kennaston did not embroider verbally his theme —of Living Adaquately,—as he had felt himself in vein to do could he have found a listener.

"Some day," he ruefully reflected, in the while that Kathleen spoke of the sort of people that were getting into the Woman's Club nowadays, "I shall certainly write a paper upon The Lost Art of Conversing with One's Wife. Its appeal, I think, would be universal."

Then his eggs came. . . .

XIV. Peculiar Conduct of a Personage

Shortly afterward befell a queer incident. Kennaston, passing through a famed city, lunched with a personage who had been pleased to admire *Men Who Loved Alison*, and whose remunerative admiration had been skilfully trumpeted in the public press by Kennaston's publishers.

There were some ten others in the party, and Kennaston found it droll enough to be sitting at table with them. The lean pensive man—with hair falling over his forehead in a neatly-clipped “bang,” such as custom restricts to children,—had probably written that morning, in his official capacity, to innumerable potentates. That handsome bluff old naval officer was a national hero: he would rank in history with Perry and John Paul Jones; yet here he sat, within arm’s-reach, prosaically complaining of unseasonable weather. That bearded man, rubicund and monstrous as to nose, was perhaps the most powerful, as he was certainly the most wealthy, person inhabiting flesh; and it was rumored, in those Arcadian days, that kingdoms nowhere might presume to go to war without securing the consent of this financier.

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And that exquisitely neat fellow, looking like a lad unconvincingly made-up for an octogenarian in amateur theatricals, was the premier of the largest province in the world: his thin-featured neighbor was an aeronaut,—at this period really a *rara avis*,—and went above the clouds to get his livelihood, just as ordinary people went to banks and offices. And chief of all, their multifarious host—the personage, as one may discreetly call him,—had left unattempted scarcely any rôle in the field of human activities: as ranchman, statesman, warrior, historian, editor, explorer, athlete, coiner of phrases, and rediscoverer of the Decalogue, impartially, he had labored to make the world a livelier place of residence; and already he was the pivot of as many legends as Charlemagne or Arthur.

The famous naval officer, as has been said, was complaining of the weather. “The seasons have changed so, since I can remember. We seem to go straight from winter into summer nowadays.”

“It has been rather unseasonable,” assented the financier, “but then you always feel the heat so much more during the first few hot days.”

“Besides,” came the judicious comment, “it has not been the heat which was so oppressive this morning, I think, as the great amount of humidity in the air.”

“Yes, it is most unpleasant,—makes your clothes stick to you so.”

“Ah, but don’t you find, now,” asked the premier gaily, “that looking at the thermometer tends to make you feel, really, much more uncomfortable than if you stayed uninformed as to precisely how hot it was?”

“Well! where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise, as I remember to have seen stated somewhere.”

“By George, though, it is wonderful how true are many of those old sayings!” observed the personage. “We assume we are much wiser than our fathers: but

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I doubt if we really are, in the big things that count."

"In fact, I have often wondered what George Washington, for example, would think of the republic he helped to found, if he could see it nowadays."

"He would probably find it very different from what he imagined it would be."

"Why, he would probably turn in his grave, at some of our newfangled notions,—such as prohibition and equal suffrage."

"Oh, well, all sensible people know, of course, that the trouble with prohibition is that it does not prohibit, and that woman's place is the home, not in the mire of politics."

"That is admirably put, sir, if you will permit me to say so. Still, there is a great deal to be said on both sides."

"And after all, is there not a greater menace to the ideals of Washington and Jefferson in the way our present laws tend uniformly to favor rich people?"

"There you have it, sir,—to-day we punish the poor man for doing what the rich man does with entire impunity, only on a larger scale."

"By George, there are many of our so-called captains of industry who, if the truth were told, and a shorter and uglier word were not unpermissible, are little better than malefactors of great wealth."

This epigram, howsoever heartily admired, was felt by many of the company to be a bit daring in the presence of the magnate: and the lean Secretary of State spoke hastily, or at any rate, in less leisurely tones than usual, now that he pointed out:

"After all, money is not everything. The richest people are not always the happiest, in spite of their luxury."

"You gentlemen can take it from me," asserted the aeronaut, "that many poor people get a lot of pleasure out of life."

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"Now, really though, that reminds me—children are very close observers, and, as you may have noticed, they ask the most remarkable questions. My little boy asked me, only last Tuesday, why poor people are always so polite and kind—"

"Well, little pitchers have big ears—"

"What you might call a chip of the old block, eh?—so that mighty little misses him?"

"I may be prejudiced, but I thought it pretty good, coming from a kid of six—"

"And it is perfectly true, gentlemen,—the poor are kind to each other. Now, I believe just being kind makes you happier—"

"And I often think that is a better sort of religion than just dressing up in your best clothes and going to church regularly on Sundays—"

"That is a very true thought," another chimed in.

"And expressed, upon my word, with admirable clarity—"

"Oh, whatever pretended pessimists in search of notoriety may say, most people are naturally kind, at heart—"

"I would put it that Christianity, in spite of the carp-ing sneers of science so-called, has led us once for all to recognize the vast brotherhood of man—"

"So that, really, the world gets better every day—"

"We have quite abolished war, for instance—"

"My dear sir, were there nothing else, and even putting aside the outraged sentiments of civilized humanity, another great or prolonged war between any two of the leading nations is unthinkable—"

"For the simple reason, gentlemen, that we have perfected our fighting machines to such an extent that the destruction involved would be too frightful—"

"Then, too, we are improving the automobile to such an extent—"

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"Oh, in the end it will inevitably supplant the horse—"

"It seems almost impossible to realize how we ever got along without the automobile—"

"Do you know, I would not be surprised if some day horses were exhibited in museums—"

"As rare and nearly extinct animals? Come, now, that is pretty good—"

"And electricity is, as one might say, just in its infancy—"

"The telephone, for instance,—our ancestors would not have believed in the possibilities of such a thing—"

"And, by George, they talk of giving an entire play with those moving-picture machines,—acting the whole thing out, you know."

"Oh, yes, we live in the biggest, brainiest age the world has ever known—"

"And America is going to be the greatest nation in it, before very long, commercially and in every way. . . ."

So the talk flowed on, with Felix Kennaston contributing very little thereto. Indeed, Felix Kennaston, the dreamer, was rather ill-at-ease among these men of action, and listened to their observations with perturbed attention. He sat among the great ones of earth,—not all of them the very greatest, of course, but each a person of quite respectable importance. It was the sort of gathering that in boyhood—and in later life also, for that matter,—he had foreplanned to thrill and dazzle, as he perfectly recollects. But now, with the opportunity, he somehow could not think of anything quite suitable to say,—of anything which would at once do him justice and be admiringly received.

Therefore he attempted to even matters by assuring himself that the talk of these efficient people was lacking in brilliance and real depth, and expressed senti-

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ments which, microscopically viewed, did not appear to be astoundingly original. If these had been less remarkable persons he would have thought their conversation almost platitudinous. And not one of them, howsoever distinguished, or whatsoever else he might have done, could have written *Men Who Loved Alison!* Kennaston cherished that reflection as he sedately partook of a dish he recollects to have seen described, on menu cards, as "Hungarian goulash" and sipped sherry of no very extraordinary flavor. . . .

He was to remember how plain the fare was, and more than once, was to refer to this meal—quite casually,—through a "That reminds me of what Such-an-one said once, when I was lunching with him," or perhaps, "The last time I lunched with So-and-so, I remember—" With such gambits he was to begin, later, to introduce to us of Lichfield divers anecdotes which, if rather pointless, were at least garnished with widely-known names.

There was a Cabinet meeting that afternoon, and, luncheon ended, the personage wasted scant time in dismissing his guests.

"It has been a very great pleasure to meet you, Mr. Kennaston," quoth the personage, wringing Kennaston's hand.

Kennaston suitably gave him to understand that they shared ecstasy in common. But all the while Kennaston was, really, thinking that here before him, half-revealed, shone the world-famous teeth portrayed by cartoonists in the morning-paper every day, everywhere. Yes, they were remarkable teeth,—immaculate, marmoreal and massive,—and they were so close-set that Kennaston was now smitten with an idiotic desire to ask their owner if the personage could get dental floss between them. . . .

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"Those portions of your book relating to the sigil of Scoteia struck me as being too explicit," the personage continued, bluffly, but in lowered tones. The two stood now, beneath a great stuffed elk's head, a little apart from the others. "Do you think it was quite wise? I seem to recall a phrase—about birds—"

Kennaston's thoughts remained, as yet, dental. But there is no denying Kennaston was perturbed. Nor was he less puzzled when, as if in answer to Kennaston's bewildered look, the personage produced from his waistcoat pocket a small square mirror, which he half-exhibited, but retained secretively in the palm of his hand. "Yes, the hurt may well be two-fold—I am presupposing that, as a country gentleman, you have raised white pigeons, Mr. Kennaston?" he said, meaningly.

"Why, no, they keep up such a maddening cooing and purring on warm days, and drum so on tin roofs"—Kennaston stammered,—"that I long ago lost patience with the birds of Venus, whatever the tincture of their plumage. There used to be any number of them on our place, though—"

"Ah, well," the personage said, with a wise nod, and with more teeth than ever, "you exercise a privilege common to all of us,—and my intended analogy falls through. In any event, it has been a great pleasure to meet you. Come and see me again, Mr. Kennaston,—and meanwhile, think over what I have said."

And that was all. Kennaston returned to Alcluid in a whirl of formless speculations. The mirror and the insane query as to white pigeons could not, he considered, but constitute some password to which Kennaston had failed to give the proper response.

The mystery had some connection with what he had written in his book as to the sigil of Scoteia. . . . And he could not find he had written anything very definite.

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The broken disk was spoken of as a talisman in the vague terms best suited to a discussion of talismans by a person who knew nothing much about them. True, the book told what the talisman looked like; it looked like that bit of metal he had picked up in the garden. . . . He wondered if he had thrown away that bit of metal; and, searching, discovered it in the desk drawer, where it had lain for several months.

Laid by the lamp, it shone agreeably as Kennaston puckered his protruding heavy brows over the characters with which it was inscribed. That was what the sigil looked like,—or, rather, what half the sigil looked like, because Ettarre still had the other half. How could the personage have known anything about it? unless there were, indeed, really some secret and some password through which men won to place and the world's prizes? . . . Blurred memories of Eugene Sue's nefarious Jesuits and of Balzac's redoubtable Thirteen arose in the background of his mental picturings. . . .

No, the personage had probably been tasting beverages more potent than sherry; there were wild legends, since disproved, such as seemed then to excuse that supposition: or perhaps he was insane, and nobody but Felix Kennaston knew it. . . . What could a little mirror, or, of all things, pigeons, have to do with this bit of metal?—except that this bit of metal, too, reflected light so that the strain tired your eyes, thus steadily to look down upon this time-worn glittering object. . . .

XV. Of Vain Regret and Wonder in the Dark

"Madam," he was insanely stating, "I would not for the world set up as a fit exponent for the mottoes of a copybook: but I am not all base."

"You are," flashed she, "a notorious rogue."

It was quite dark. Kennaston could not see the woman with whom he was talking. But they were in an open paved place, like a courtyard, and he was facing the great shut door against which she stood, vaguely discernible. He knew they were waiting for someone to open this door. It seemed to him, for no reason at all, that they were at Tunbridge Wells.

But there was no light anywhere. Complete darkness submerged them; the skies showed not one glimmer. And he was replying:

"That I am of smirched repute, madam, I lack both grounds and inclination to deny. Yet I am not so through choice. Believe me, I am innately a lover of all bodily comforts: so, by preference, an ill name is as obnoxious to me as—shall we say?—soiled linen or a coat of last year's cut. But then, *que voulez-vous?* as our lively neighbors observe. Squeamishness was never yet bred in an empty pocket; and I am thus compelled

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to the commission of divers profitable peccadillos, once in a blue moon, by the dictates of that same haphazard chance which to-night has pressed me into the service of innocence and virtue."

She kept silence; and he went on in lightheaded wonder as to what this dream, so plainly recognized as such, was all about, and as to whence came the words which sprang so nimbly to his lips, and as to what was the cause of his great wistful sorrow. Perhaps if he listened very attentively to what he was saying, he might find out. He noticed that he was saying now:

"You do not answer, madam. Yet think a little. I am a notorious rogue: the circumstance is conceded. But do you think I have selfishly become so in quest of amusement? Nay, I can assure you that Newgate, the wigged judge, the jolting cart, the gallows, blend in no pleasant dreams. . . . But what choice had I? Cast forth to the gutter's miring in the susceptible years of infancy, a girl of the town's byblow, what choice had I, in heaven's name? If I may not live as I would, I must live as I may; in emperors and parsons and sewer-diggers and cheese-mites that claim is equally allowed."

"You are a thief?" she asked, pensively.

"Let us put it, rather, that I have proved in life's hard school an indifferent Latinist, by occasionally confounding *tuum* with *meum*."

"A murderer?"

"Something of the sort might be my description in puritanic mouths. You know at least what happened at The Cat and Hautbois."

(*"But what in the world had happened there?"* Kennaston wondered.)

"And yet—" The sweet voice marveled.

"And yet I have saved you from Lord Umfraville? Ah, madam, Providence labors with quaint instruments, dilapidating Troy by means of a wood rocking-horse,

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and loosing sin into the universe through a half-eaten apple. Nay, I repeat, I am not all base; and I have read somewhere that those who are in honor wholly shipwrecked will yet very often cling desperately to one stray spar of virtue."

He could tell her hand had raised to the knocker on the closed door. "Mr. Vanringham, will you answer me a question?"

"A thousand. (*So I am Vanringham.*)"

The girl continued: "I have not knocked. I possess, as you know, a considerable fortune in my own right. It would be easy for a strong man—and, sure, your shoulders are prodigiously broad, Mr. Cutthroat!—very easy for him to stifle my cries and carry me away, even now. And then, to preserve my honor, I would have no choice save to marry that broad-shouldered man. Is this not truth?"

"It is the goddess herself, newly stolen from her well. *O dea certe!*"

"I am not absolutely hideous, either?" she queried, absent-mindedly.

"Dame Venus," Kennaston observed, "may have made a similar demand of the waves at Cythera when she first rose among their billows: and I doubt not that the white foaming waters, amorously clutching at her far whiter feet, laughed and murmured the answer I would give did I not know your question was put in a spirit of mockery."

"And yet—" she re-began.

"And yet," the man echoed, "yet I resist all these temptations? Frankly, had you been in my eyes less desirable, madam, you would not have reached home thus uneventfully; for a rich marriage is the only chance adapted to repair my tattered fortunes; and the devil is cunning to avail himself of our flesh's frailty. Had you been the fat widow of some City knight I would

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have played my lord of Umfraville's part, upon my pettier scale. Or, had I esteemed it possible for me to have done with my old life, I would have essayed to devote a cleaner existence to your service and worship. Indeed, indeed, I speak the truth, howsoever jestingly!" he said, with sudden wildness. "But what would you have? I would not entrust your fan, much less your happiness, to the keeping of a creature so untrustworthy as I know myself to be. In fine, I look upon you, madam, in such a rapture of veneration and tenderness and joy and heartbreaking yearning, that it is necessary I get very tipsy to-night, and strive to forget that I, too, might have lived cleanly."

And Kennaston, as he spoke thus, engulfed in darkness, knew it was a noble sorrow which possessed him,—a stingless wistful sorrow such as is aroused by the unfolding of a well-acted tragedy or the progress of a lofty music. This ruffian longing, quite hopelessly, to be made clean again, so worshipful of his loved lady's purity and loveliness, and knowing loveliness and purity to be forever unattainable in his mean life, was Felix Kennaston, somehow. . . . What was it Maugis d'Aigremont had said?—"I have been guilty of many wickednesses, I have held much filthy traffic such as my soul loathed; and yet, I swear to you, I seem to myself to be still the boy who once was I." Kennaston understood now, for the first time with deep reality, what his puppet had meant; and how a man's deeds in the flesh may travesty the man himself.

But the door opened. Confusedly Kennaston was aware of brilliantly-lighted rooms beyond, of the chatter of gay people, of thin tinkling music, and, more immediately, of two lackeys, much bepowdered as to their heads, and stately in new liveries of blue-and-silver. Confusedly he noted these things, for the woman had paused in the bright doorway, and all the loveliness

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of Ettarre was visible now, and she had given a delighted cry of recognition.

“La, it is Horvendile! and we are having the same dream again!”

This much he heard and saw as her hand went out toward him gladly. Then as she touched him the universe seemed to fold about Felix Kennaston, just as a hand closes, and he was sitting at the writing-table in the library, with a gleaming scrap of metal before him.

He sat thus for a long while.

“I can make nothing of all this. I remember of course that I saw Muriel Allardyce stand very much like that, in the doorway of the Royal Hotel, at the Green Chalybeate,—and how many years ago, good Lord! . . . And equally of course the most plausible explanation is that I am losing my wits. Or, else, it may be that I am playing blindfold with perilous matters. Felix Kennaston, my friend, the safest plan—the one assuredly safe plan for you,—would be to throw away this devil’s toy, and forget it completely. . . . And, I will, too,—the very first thing to-morrow morning,—or after I have had a few days to think it over, any way. . . .”

But even as he made this compact it was without much lively faith in his promises.

PART THREE

Which points the truism that many more lead double lives than confess to it

*"Come to me in my dreams, and then
By day I shall be well again!
For then the night will more than pay
The hopeless longing of long day.*

*"Come, as thou cam'st a thousand times,
A messenger from lovelier climes,
To smile on our drear world, and be
As kind to others as to me!"*

XVI. They Come to a High Place

He was looking down at the most repulsive old woman he had ever seen. Hers was the abhorrent fatness of a spider; her flesh appeared to have the coloring and consistency of dough. She sat upon the stone pavement, knitting; her eyes, which raised to his unblinkingly, were black, secretive, and impersonally malevolent; and her jaws stirred without ceasing, in a loose chewing motion, so that the white hairs, rooted in the big mole on her chin, twitched and glittered in the sunlight.

"But one does not pay on entering," she was saying. "One pays as one goes out. It is the rule."

"And what do you knit, mother?" he asked.

"Eh, I shall never know until God's funeral is preached," the old woman said. "I only know it is forbidden me to stop."

So he went past her, aware that, through some nameless grace, the girl whom he had twice seen in dreams awaited him there, and that the girl's face was the face of Ettarre. She stood by a stone balustrade, upon which squatted tall stone monsters,—weird and haphazard collocations, as touched anatomy, of bird

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and brute and fiend,—and she in common with these hobgoblins looked down upon a widespread comely city. The time was a bright and windy morning in spring; and the sky, unclouded, was like an inverted cup which did not merely roof Ettarre and the man who had come back to her, but inclosed them in incommunicable isolation. To the left, beyond shimmering tree-tops, so far beneath them that it made Felix Kennaston dizzy to look, the ruffling surface of a river gleamed. . . . It was in much this fashion, he recalled, that Ettarre and Horvendile had stood alone together among the turrets of Storisende.

“But now I wonder where on the face of—or, rather, so far above the face of what especial planet we may happen to be?” Kennaston marveled happily,—“or east of the sun or west of the moon? At all events, it hardly matters. Suffice it that we are in love’s land to-day. What need is there to worry over any one inexplicable detail, where everything is incomprehensible?”

“I was never here before, Horvendile; and I have waited for you so long.”

He looked at her; and again his heart moved with glad adoration. It was not merely that Ettarre was so pleasing to the eye, and distinguished by so many delicate clarities of color,—so young, so quick of movement, so slender, so shapely, so inexpressibly virginal,—but the heady knowledge that here on dizzying heights he, Felix Kennaston, was somehow playing with superhuman matters, and that no power could induce him to desist from his delicious and perilous frolic, stirred, in deep recesses of his being, nameless springs. Nameless they must remain; for it was as though he had discovered himself to possess a sixth sense; and he found that the contrivers of language, being less prodigally gifted, had never been at need to invent any terms wherewith to express this sense’s gratification.

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But he knew that he was strong and admirable; that men and men's affairs lay far beneath him; that Ettarre belonged to him; and that the exultance which now possessed him was the by-product of an unstable dream.

"Yet it is not any city of to-day," he was saying. "Look how yonder little rascal glitters,—he is wearing a helmet of some sort and a gorget. Why, all those pygmies, if you look closely, go in far braver scarlets and purples than we elect to skulk about in nowadays; and nowhere in sight is an office-building or an electric-light advertisement of chewing-gum. No, that hotch-potch of huddled gables and parapets and towers shaped like lanterns was stolen straight out of some Doré illustration for Rabelais or *Les Contes Drolatiques*. But it does not matter at all, and it will never matter, Ettarre, where we may chance to be. What really and greatly matters, is that when I try to touch you everything vanishes."

The girl was frankly puzzled. "Yes, that seems a part of the sigil's magic. . . ."

XVII. *Of the Sigil and One Use of It*

It proved that this was indeed a part of the sigil's wonder-working: Kennaston learned by experience that whenever, even by accident, he was about to touch Ettarre his dream would end like a burst bubble. He would find himself alone and staring at the gleaming fragment of metal.

Before long he also learned something concerning the sigil of Scoteia, of which this piece of metal once formed a part; for it was permitted him to see the sigil in its entirety, many centuries before it was shattered: it was then one of the treasures of the Didascalion, a peculiar sort of girls' school in King Ptolemy Physcon's city of Alexandria, where women were tutored to honor fittingly the power which this sigil served. But it is not expedient to speak clearly concerning this; and the real name of the sigil was, of course, quite different from that which Kennaston had given it in his romance.

So began an odd divided life for Felix Kennaston. At first he put his half of the sigil in an envelope, which he hid in a desk in the library, under a pile of his dead uncle's unused bookplates; whence, when occasion served, it was taken out in order that when

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held so as to reflect the lamplight—for this was always necessary,—it might induce the desired dream of Ettarre.

Later Kennaston thought of an expedient by which to prolong his dreams. Nightly he lighted and set by his bedside a stump of candle. The tiny flame, after he had utilized its reflection, would harmlessly burn out while his body slept with a bit of metal in one hand; and he would be freed of Felix Kennaston for eight hours uninterruptedly. To have left an electric-light turned on until he awakened, would in the end have exposed him to detection and the not-impossible appointment of a commission in lunacy; and he recognized the potentialities of such mischance with frank distaste. As affairs sped, however, he could without great difficulty buy his candles in secret. He was glad now to be well-to-do, if only because, as one result of their materially bettered fortunes, he and his wife had separate bedrooms.

XVIII. Treats of a Prelate and, in Part, of Pigeons

The day-lit part of Kennaston's life was largely devoted to writing *The Tinctured Veil*,—that amazing performance which he subsequently gave to a bewildered world. And for the rest, his waking life went on in the old round.

But this is not—not, save by way of an occasional parenthesis,—a chronicle of Felix Kennaston's doings in the flesh. You may find all that in Mr. Froser's *Biography*. Flippant, inefficient, and moody, Felix Kennaston was not in the flesh particularly engaging; and in writing this record it is necessary to keep his fat corporeal personality in the background as much as may be possible, lest this workaday mask, of unamiable flesh and mannerisms, should cause you, as it so often induced us of Lichfield, to find the man repellent, and nothing more.

Now it befell that this spring died Bishop Arkwright —of the Cathedral of the Bleeding Heart,—and many dignitaries of his faith journeyed to Lichfield to attend the funeral. Chief among these was a prelate who very long ago had lived in Lichfield, when he was merely a bishop. Kennaston was no little surprised to receive a

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note informing him that this eminent churchman would be pleased to see Mr. Felix Kennaston that evening at the Bishop's House.

The prelate sat alone in a sparsely furnished, rather dark, and noticeably dusty room. He was like a lean effigy carved in time-yellowed ivory, and his voice was curiously ingratiating. Kennaston recognized with joy that this old man talked like a person in a book, in completed sentences and picked phrases, instead of employing the fragmentary verbal shorthand of ordinary Lichfieldian conversation: and Kennaston, to whom the slovenliness of fairly cultured people's daily talk was always a mystery and an irritant, fell with promptitude into the same tone.

The prelate, it developed, had when he lived in Lichfield known Kennaston's dead uncle,—“for whom I had the highest esteem, and whose friendship I valued most dearly.” He hoped that Kennaston would pardon the foibles of old age and overlook this trespass upon Kennaston's time. For the prelate had, he said, really a personal interest in the only surviving relative of his dead friend.

“There is a portrait of you, sir, in my library,—very gorgeous, in full canonicals,—just as my uncle left the room,” said Kennaston, all at sea.

But the prelate had begun to talk—amiably, and in the most commonplace fashion conceivable,—of his former life in Lichfield, and of the folk who had lived there then, and to ask questions about their descendants, which Kennaston answered as he best could. The whole affair was puzzling Kennaston, for he could think of no reason why this frail ancient gentleman should have sent for a stranger, even though that stranger were the nephew of a dead friend, just that they might discuss trivialities.

So their talking veered, as it seemed, at random. . . .

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"Yes, I was often a guest at Alcluid—a very beautiful home it was in those days, famed, as I remember, for the many breeds of pigeons which your uncle amused himself by maintaining. I suppose that you also raise white pigeons, my son?"

Kennaston saw that the prelate now held a small square mirror in his left hand. "No, sir," Kennaston answered evenly; "there were a great many about the place when it came into our possession; but we have never gone in very seriously for farming."

"The pigeon has so many literary associations that I should have thought it would appeal to a man of letters," the prelate continued. "I ought to have said earlier perhaps that I read *Men Who Loved Alison* with great interest and enjoyment. It is a notable book. Yet in dealing with the sigil of Scoteia—or so at least it seemed to me,—you touched upon subjects which had better be left undisturbed. There are drugs, my son, which work much good in the hands of the skilled physician, but cannot without danger be entrusted to the vulgar."

He spoke gently; yet it appeared to Kennaston a threat was voiced.

"Sir," Kennaston began, "I must tell you that in writing of the sigil—as I called it,—I designed to employ only such general terms as romance ordinarily accords to talismans. All I wrote—I thought,—was sheer invention. It is true I found by accident a bit of metal, from which I derived the idea of my so-called sigil's appearance. That bit of metal was to me then just a bit of metal; nor have I any notion, even to-day, as to how it came to be lying in one of my own garden-paths."

Kennaston paused.

The prelate nodded. "It is always interesting to hear

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whence makers of creative literature draw their material," he stated.

"Since then, sir, by the drollest of coincidences," said Kennaston, as unconcernedly as he could manage, "a famous personage has spoken to me in almost the identical words you employed this evening, as to the sigil of Scoteia. The coincidence, sir, lay less in what was said than in the apparently irrelevant allusion to white pigeons which the personage too made, and the little mirror which he too held as he spoke. Can you not see, sir," Kennaston asked gaily, "to what wild imaginings the coincidence tempts a weaver of romance? I could find it in my heart to believe it the cream of an ironic jest that you great ones of the earth have tested me with a password, mistakenly supposing that I, also, was initiate. I am tempted to imagine some secret understanding, some hidden co-operancy, by which you strengthen or, possibly, have attained your power. Confess, sir, is not the coincidence a droll one?"

Now Kennaston spoke lightly, but his heart was beating fast.

"It is remarkable enough," the prelate conceded, smiling. He asked the name of the personage whom coincidence linked with him, and being told it, chuckled.

"I do not think it very odd he carried a mirror," the prelate considered. "He lives before a mirror, and behind a megaphone. I confess—*mea culpa!*—I often find my little looking-glass a convenience, in making sure all is right before I go into the pulpit. Not a few men in public life, I believe, carry such mirrors," the prelate continued, slowly. "But you, I take it, have no taste for public life!"

"I can assure you—" Kennaston began.

"Think well, my son! Suppose, for one mad instant, that your wild imaginings were not wholly insane?

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suppose that you had accidentally stumbled upon enough of a certain secret to make it simpler to tell you the whole mystery? Cannot a trained romancer conceive what you might hope for them?"

Very still it was in the dark room. . . .

Kennaston was horribly frightened. "I can assure you, sir, that even then I would prefer my peaceful lazy life and my dreams. I have not any aptitude for action."

"Ah, well," the prelate estimated; "it is scarcely a churchman's part to play *advocatus mundi*. Believe me, I would not tempt you from your books. And for our dreams, I have always held heretically, we are more responsible than for our actions, since it is what we are, uninfluenced, that determines our dreams." He seemed to meditate. "I shall not tempt you, therefore, to tell me the whole truth concerning that bit of metal."

"Oh, as to that, sir—!"

"You said just now," the older man continued, equably, "'that bit of metal was to me then just a bit of metal.' There can be much virtue in a 'then.' So I suspect quite candidly, you are keeping something back. But, in doing so, you exercise a privilege common to both of us."

"At least," said Kennaston, "we will hope my poor wits may not be shaken by any more—coincidences."

"I am tolerably certain," quoth the prelate, with an indulgent smile, "that there will be no more coincidences."

Then he gave Kennaston his stately blessing; and Felix Kennaston went back to his life of dreams.

XIX. Local Laws of Nephelococcygia

There was no continuity in these dreams save that Ettarre was in each of them. A dream would usually begin with some lightheaded topsyturviness, as when Kennaston found himself gazing forlornly down at his remote feet,—having grown so tall that they were yards away from him and he was afraid to stand up,—or when thin men in black hoods carefully explained the importance of the task set him by quoting fragments of the multiplication tables, or when a bull who happened to be the King of Spain was pursuing him through a city of blind people. But presently, as dregs settle a little by a little in a glass of water and leave it clear, his dream-world would become rational and compliant with familiar natural laws, and Ettarre would be there,—desirable above all other contents of the universe, and not to be touched under penalty of ending all.

Sometimes they would be alone in places which he did not recognize, sometimes they would be living, under the Stuarts or the Valois or the Cæsars, or other dynasties long since unkingdomed, human lives whose obligations and imbroglios affected Horvendile and Ettarre to much that half-serious concern with which

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one follows the action of a romance or a well-acted play; for it was perfectly understood between Horvendile and Ettarre that they were involved in the affairs of a dream.

Ettarre seemed to remember nothing of the happenings Kennaston had invented in his book. And Guiron and Maugis d'Aigremont and Count Emmerick and the other people in *The Audit at Storisende*—once more to give *Men Who Loved Alison* its original title,—were names that rang familiar to her somehow, she confessed, but without her knowing why. And so, Kennaston came at last to comprehend that perhaps the Ettarre he loved was not the heroine of his book inexplicably vivified; but, rather, that in the book he had, just as inexplicably, drawn a blurred portrait of the Ettarre he loved, that ageless lovable and loving woman of whom all poets had been granted fitful broken glimpses,—dimly prefiguring her advent into his life too, with pallid and feeble visionings. But of this he was not ever sure; nor did he greatly care, now that he had his dreams.

There was, be it repeated, no continuity in these dreams save that Ettarre was in each of them; that alone they had in common: but each dream conformed to certain general laws. For instance, there was never any confusion of time,—that is, a dream extended over precisely the amount of time he actually slept, so that each dream-life was limited to some eight hours or thereabouts. No dream was ever iterated, nor did he ever twice find himself in the same surroundings as touched chronology; thus, he was often in Paris and Constantinople and Alexandria and Rome and London, revisiting even the exact spot, the very street-corner, which had figured in some former dream; but as terrestrial time went, the events of his first

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dream would either have happened years ago or else not be due to happen until a great while later.

He never dreamed of absolutely barbaric or orderless epochs, nor of happenings (so far as he could ascertain) elsewhere than in Europe and about the Mediterranean coasts; even within these confines his dreams were as a rule restricted to urban matters, rarely straying beyond city walls: his hypothesis in explanation of these facts was curious, but too fine-spun to be here repeated profitably.

For a while Kennaston thought these dreams to be bits of lives he had lived in previous incarnations; later he was inclined to discard this view. He never to his knowledge lived through precisely the same moment in two different capacities and places; but more than once he came within a few years of doing this, so that even had he died immediately after the earlier-timed dream, it would have been impossible for him to have been reborn and reach the age he had attained in that dream whose period was only a trifle later. In his dreams Kennaston's age varied slightly, but was almost always in pleasant proximity to twenty-five. Thus, he was in Jerusalem on the day of the Crucifixion and was aged about twenty-three; yet in another dream he was at Capreæ when Tiberius died there, seven years afterward, and Kennaston was then still in the early twenties: and, again, he was in London, at Whitehall, in 1649, and at Vaux-le-Vicomte near Fontainebleau in 1661, being on each occasion twenty-three or -four. Kennaston could suggest no explanation of this.

He often regretted that he was never in any dream anybody of historical prominence, so that he could have found out what became of him after the dream ended. But though he sometimes talked with notable persons,—inwardly gloating meanwhile over his knowl-

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edge of what would be the outcome of their warfaring or statecraft, and of the manner and even the hour of their deaths,—he himself seemed fated, as a rule, never to be anyone of importance in the world's estimation. Indeed, as Kennaston cheerfully recognized, his was not a temperament likely to succeed, as touched material matters, in any imaginable state of society; there was not, and never has been, any workaday world in which—as he had said at Storisende,—he and his like would not, in so far as temporal prizes were concerned, appear to waste at loose ends and live futilely. Then, moreover, in each dream he was woefully hampered by inability to recall preceding events in the life he was then leading, which handicap doomed him to redoubled inefficiencies. But that did not matter now, in view of his prodigal recompenses. . . .

It was some while before the man made the quaint discovery that in these dreams he did not in any way resemble Felix Kennaston physically. They were astray in an autumn forest, resting beside a small fire which he had kindled in the shelter of a boulder, when Ettarre chanced to speak of his brown eyes, and thereby to perplex him. But there was in this dream nothing which would reflect his countenance; and it was later, in Troy Town (Laomedon ruled the city then, and Priam they saw as a lad playing at marbles in a paved courtyard, where tethered oxen watched him over curiously painted mangers), that Kennaston looked into a steel mirror, framed with intertwined ivory serpents that had emeralds for eyes, and found there a puzzled stranger.

Thus it was he discovered that in these dreams he was a tall lean youngster, with ruddy cheeks, wide-set brown eyes, and a smallish head covered with crisp tight-curling dark-red hair; nor did his appearance ever change, save only once, in any subsequent

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dream. What he saw was so different from the pudgy pasty man of forty-odd who, he knew, lay at this moment in Felix Kennaston's bed, breathing heavily and clasping a bit of metal in his pudgy hand, that the stranger in the mirror laughed appreciatively.

XX. Of Divers Fleshly Riddles

A little by a little he was beginning to lose interest in that pudgy pasty man of forty-odd who was called Felix Kennaston, and to handle his affairs more slackly. Once or twice Kennaston caught his wife regarding him furtively, with a sort of anxious distrust. . . .

Let there be no mistake here: Felix Kennaston had married a woman admirably suited to him, and he had never regretted that act. Nor with the advent of Ettarre, did he regret it: and never at any time would he have considered separating his diurnal existence from that of his thin, beady-eyed, capable wife, with graver seriousness than he would have accorded, say, to a rambling notion of being gripped some day in a trap and having no way to escape save by cutting off one of his feet. His affection for Kathleen was well-founded, proved, and understood; but, as it happens, this narrative does not chance to deal with that affection. And besides, what there was to tell concerning Kennaston's fondness for his wife was duly set forth years ago.

Meanwhile, it began vaguely to be rumored among Kennaston's associates that he drank more than was

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good for him; and toward "drugs" also sped the irresponsible arrows of surmise. He himself noticed, without much interest, that daily he, who had once been garrulous, was growing more chary of speech; and that his attention was apt to wander when the man's or woman's face before him spoke at any length. These shifting faces talked of wars and tariffs and investments and the weather and committee-meetings, and of having seen So-and-so and of So-and-so's having said this or that, and it all seemed of importance to the wearers of these faces; so that he made pretence to listen, patiently. What did it matter?

It did not matter a farthing, he considered, for he had cheated life of its main oppression, which is loneliness. Now at last Felix Kennaston could unconcernedly acknowledge that human beings develop graveward in continuous solitude.

His life until this time had been in the main normal, with its due share of normal intimacies with parents, kinsmen, friends, a poet's ordinary allotment of sweethearts, and, chief of all, with his wife. No one of these people, as he reflected in a comminglement of yearning and complacency, had ever comprehended the real Felix Kennaston as he existed, in all his hampered strugglings and meannesses, his inadequacies and his divine unexercised potentialities.

And he, upon the other hand, knew nothing of these people with any certainty. Pettifoggeries were too easily practised in speech or gesture, emotions were too often feigned or overcolored in expression, and unpopular thoughts were too instinctively dissembled, as he forlornly knew by his own conduct of daily life, for him to put very zealous faith in any information gained through his slender fallible five senses; and it was the cream of the jest that through these five senses lay his only means of getting any information whatsoever.

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All that happened to him, he considered, happened inside his skull. Nothing which happened in the big universe affected him in the least except as it roused certain forces lodged in his skull. His life consisted of one chemical change after another, haphazardly provoked in some three pounds of fibrous matter tucked inside his skull. And so, people's heads took on a new interest; how was one to guess what was going on in those queer round boxes, inset with eyes, as people so glibly called certain restive and glinting things that moved in partial independence of their setting, and seemed to have an individual vitality,—in those queer round boxes out of which an uncanny vegetation, that people, here again, so glibly and unwonderingly called hair, was sprouting as if from the soil of a planet?

Perhaps—he mused,—perhaps in reality all heads were like isolated planets, with impassable space between each and its nearest neighbor. You read in the newspapers every once in a while that, because of one or another inexplicable phenomenon, Mars was supposed to be attempting to communicate with the earth; and perhaps it was in just such blurred and unsatisfactory fashion that what happened in one human head was signaled to the lonely inhabitant of yet another one of those queer round boxes, on those rare occasions when the signal was despatched in entire good faith. Yes, a perpetual isolation, for all the fretful and vain strivings of humanity against such loneliness, was probably a perdurable law in all other men's lives, precisely as it had been in his own life until the coming of Ettarre.

XXI. In Pursuit of a Whisper

Nightly he went adventuring with Ettarre: and they saw the cities and manners of many men, to an extent undreamed-of by Ithaca's mundivagant king; and among them even those three persons who had most potently influenced human life.

For once, in an elongated room with buff-colored walls—having scarlet hangings over its windows, and seeming larger than it was in reality, because of its many mirrors,—they foregathered with Napoleon, on the evening following his coronation: the emperor of half-Europe was fretting over an awkward hitch in the day's ceremony, caused by his sisters' attempt to avoid carrying the Empress Josephine's train; and he was grumbling because the old French families continued to ignore him, as a parvenu. All in all, the Emperor had got no pleasure out of his day's work.

In a neglected orchard, sunsteeped and made drowsy by the murmur of bees, they talked with Shakespeare: the playwright, his nerves the worse for the preceding night's potations, was peevishly complaining of the meager success of his later comedies, he was worrying over Lord Pembroke's neglect of him, and he was trying

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to concoct a masque in the style of fat Ben Jonson, since that was evidently what the theater-patronizing public wanted; and, working thus against the grain, Shakespeare had got not any pleasure out of his day's work.

Then they were with Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem, on the evening of a day when the sky had been black and the earth had trembled; and Pilate, benevolent and replete with supper, was explaining the latest theories concerning eclipses and earthquakes to his little boy, and he was chuckling with fond pride in the youngster's intelligent questions, because Pontius Pilate was exceedingly well pleased with his day's work.

These three were a few among the prominent worthies of remoter days whom Kennaston was enabled to view as they appeared in the flesh; but, as a rule, chance thrust him into the company of mediocre people living ordinary lives amid surroundings which seemed outlandish to him, but to them a matter of course. And everywhere, in every age, it seemed to him, men stumbled amiable and shatterpated through a jungle of miracles, blind to its wonderfulness, and intent to gain a little money, food and sleep, a trinket or two, some rare snatched fleeting moments of rantipole laughter, and at the last a decent bed to die in. He, and he only, it seemed to Felix Kennaston, could see the jungle and all its awe-inspiring beauty, where-through men scurried like feeble-minded ants.

He often wondered whether any other man had been so licensed as himself; and prowling, as he presently did, in odd byways of printed matter,—for he found the library of his predecessor at Alcluid a mine rich-veined with strangenesses,—Kennaston lighted on much that appeared to him significant. Even such apparently unrelated matters as the doctrine of metempsychosis, all the grotesque literature of witches,

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sorcerers, and familiar spirits, and of muses who actually prompted artistic composition with audible voices, were beginning to fall into cloudily-discerned interlocking. Kennaston read much nowadays in his dead uncle's books; and he often wished that, even at the expense of Felix Kennaston's being reduced again to poverty, it were possible to revivify the man who had amassed and read these books. Kennaston wanted to talk with him.

Meanwhile, Kennaston read of Endymion and Numa, of Iason and Anchises, of Tannhäuser, and Foulques Plantagenet, and Raymondin de la Forêt, and Olger Danske, and other mortal men to whom old legend-weavers, as if wistfully, accredited the love of immortal mistresses,—and he read, too, of less fortunate nympholepts, frail babbling planet-stricken folk, who had spied by accident upon an unhuman loveliness, and so, must pine away consumed by foiled desire of a beauty which the homes and cities and the tilled places of men did not afford, and life did not bring forth sufficingly. He read Talmudic tales of Sulieman-ben-Daoud,—even in name transfigured out of any resemblance to an amasser of reliable axioms,—that proud luxurious despot, “who went daily to the comeliest of the spirits for wisdom”; and of Arthur and the Lady Nimue; and of Thomas of Ercildoune, whom the Queen of Faëry drew from the merchants’ market-place with ambiguous kindnesses; and of John Faustus, who “through fantasies and deep cogitations” was enabled to woo successfully a woman that died long before his birth, and so won to his love, as the book recorded, “this stately pearl of Greece, fair Helena, the wife to King Menelaus.”

And, as has been said, the old idea of muses who actually prompted artistic composition, with audible voices, took on another aspect. He came to suspect

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that other creative writers had shared such a divided life as his was now, for of this he seemed to find traces here and there. Coleridge offered at once an arresting parallel. Yes, Kennaston reflected; and Coleridge had no doubt spoken out in the first glow of wonder, astounded into a sort of treason, when he revealed how he wrote *Kubla Khan*; so that thus perhaps Coleridge had told far more concerning the origin of this particular poem than he ever did as to some of his later compositions. Then, also, I have a volume of Herrick from Kennaston's library with curious comments penciled therein, relative to *Lovers How They Come and Part* and to *His Mistress Calling Him to Elysium*; a copy of Marlowe's *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* is similarly annotated; and on a fly-leaf in Forster's *Life of Charles Dickens*, apropos of passages in the first chapter of the ninth book, Kennaston has inscribed strange speculations very ill suited to general reading. All that Kennaston cared to print, however, concerning the hypothesis he eventually evolved, you can find in *The Tinctured Veil*, where he has nicely refrained from too-explicit writing, and—of course—does not anywhere point-blank refer to his personal experiences.

The Kennaston ran afoul of the Rosicrucians, and their quaint dogmas, which appeared so preposterous at first, took on vital meanings presently; and here too he seemed to surprise the cautious whispering of men who neither cared nor dared to speak with candor of all they knew. It seemed to him he understood that whispering which was everywhere apparent in human history; for he too was initiate.

He wondered very often about his uncle....

XXII. Of Truisms: Treated Reasonably

He seemed, indeed, to find food for wonder everywhere. It was as if he had awakened from a dragging nightmare of life made up of unimportant tasks and tedious useless little habits, to see life as it really was, and to rejoice in its exquisite wonderfulness.

How poignantly strange it was that life could afford him nothing save consciousness of the moment immediately at hand! Memory and anticipation, whatsoever else they might do,—and they had important uses, of course, in rousing emotion,—yet did not deal directly with reality. What you regretted, or were proud of, having done yesterday was no more real now than were the deeds of Cæsar Borgia or St. Paul; and what you looked forward to within the half-hour was as non-existent as the senility of your unborn great-grandchildren. Never was man brought into contact with reality save through the evanescent emotions and sensations of that single moment, that infinitesimal fraction of a second, which was passing now. This commonplace, so simple and so old, bewildered Kennaston when he came unreservedly to recognize its truth. . . .

To live was to be through his senses conscious of a

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restricted number of these fractions of a second, one by one. Success in life, then, had nothing to do with bank-accounts or public office, or any step toward increasing the length of one's obituary notices, but meant, instead, to be engrossed utterly by many, by as many as was possible, of these instants. And complete success in life required a finding, in these absorbing instants, of employment for every faculty he possessed. It was for this that Kennaston had always vaguely longed; and to this, if only in dreams, he now attained.

If only in dreams! he debated: why, and was he not conscious, now, in his dreams, of every moment as it fled? And corporeal life in banks and ballrooms and legislative halls and palaces, nowhere had anything more than that to offer mortal men.

It is not necessary to defend his course of reasoning; to the contrary, its fallacy is no less apparent than its conduciveness to unbusinesslike conclusions. But it is highly necessary to tell you that, according to Felix Kennaston's account, now, turn by turn, he was in Horvendile's person rapt by nearly every passion, every emotion, the human race has ever known. True, throughout these dramas into which chance plunged him, in that he knew always he was dreaming, he was at once performer and spectator; but he played with the born actor's zest,—feeling his part, as people say,—and permitting the passion he portrayed to possess him almost completely.

Almost completely, be it repeated; for there was invariably a sufficient sense of knowing he was only dreaming to prevent entire abandonment to the raw emotion. Kennaston preferred it thus. He preferred in this more comely way to play with human passions, rather than, as seemed the vulgar use, to consent to become their battered plaything.

It pleased him, too, to be able to have done with

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such sensations and emotions as did not interest him; for he had merely to touch Ettarre, and the dream ended. In this fashion he would very often terminate an existence which was becoming distasteful,—resorting debonairly to this sort of suicide, and thus dismissing an era's social orderings and its great people as toys that, when played with, had failed to amuse Felix Kennaston.



PART FOUR

**Which travels, roundabout, to edifying and
safe conclusions**

*“But there were dreams to sell
Ill didst thou buy:
Life is a dream, they tell,
Waking to die.*

*“Dreaming a dream to prize,
Is wishing ghosts to rise;
And, if I had the spell
To call the buried—well,
Which one would I?”*

XXIII. Economic Considerations of Piety

As has been said, Kennaston read much curious matter in his dead uncle's library. . . . But most books—even Felix Kennaston's own little books,—did not seem now to be affairs of heavy moment. For once abed, clasping his gleaming broken bit of metal, then the truthful history of all that had ever happened was, instead, Kennaston's library. It was not his to choose from what volume or on which page thereof he would read; accident, as it seemed, decided that: but the chance-opened page lay unblurred before him, and he saw it with a clarity denied to other men of his generation.

Kennaston stood by the couch of Tiberius Cæsar as he lay ill at Capreae. Beside the Emperor hung a memorable painting, by Parrhasius, which represented the virgin Atalanta in the act of preserving her virginity by according oral assuagements to her lover's ardor.

Charicles, a Greek physician, was telling the Emperor of a new religious sect that had arisen in Judea, and of the persecutions which these disciples of Christus

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were enduring. Old Cæsar listened, made grave clucking noises of disapproval, and said forthwith:

"It is, instead, a religion that should be fostered. The man preached peace. It is what my father before me strove for, what I have striven for, what my successors must strive for. Peace alone may preserve Rome: the empire is too large, a bubble blown so big and tenuous that the first shock will disrupt it in suds. Pilate did well to crucify the man, else we could not have made a God of him; but the persecution of these followers of Christus must cease. This Nazarene preached the same doctrine that I have always preached. I shall build him a temple. The rumors concerning him lack novelty, it is true: this God born of a mortal woman is the old legend of Dionysos and Mithra and Hercules, a little pulled about; Gautama also was tempted in a wilderness; Prometheus served long ago as man's scapegoat under divine anger; and the cult of Pollux and Castor, and of Adonis, has made these resurrection stories hackneyed. In fine, Charicles, you have brought me a woefully inartistic jumble of old tales; but the populace prefers old tales, they delight to be told what they have heard already. I shall certainly build Christus a temple."

So he ran on, devising the reception of Christ into the Roman pantheon, as a minor deity at first, and thence, if the receipts at his temple justified it, to be raised to greater eminence. Tiberius saw large possibilities in the worship of this new God, both from a doctrinal and a money-making standpoint. Then Cæsar yawned, and ordered that a company of his Spintriæ be summoned to his chamber, to amuse him with their unnatural diversions.

But Charicles had listened in horror, for he was secretly a Christian, and knew that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. He foresaw that, without salutary discouragement, the worship of Chris-

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tus would never amount to more than the social fad of a particular season, just as that of Cybele and that of Ela-Gabal had been modish in different years; and would afterward dwindle, precisely as these cults had done, into shrugged-at old-fashionedness. Then, was it not written that they only were assuredly blessed who were persecuted for righteousness' sake?—Why, martyrdom was the one certain road to Heaven; and a religion which is patronized by potentates, obviously, breeds no martyrs.

So Charicles mingled poison in Cæsar's drink, that Cæsar might die, and crazed Caligula succeed him, to put all Christians to the sword. And Charicles young Caius Cæsar Caligula—Child of the Camp, Father of Armies, Beloved of the Gods,—killed first of all.

Then a lean man, white-robed, and clean-shaven as to his head, was arranging a complicated toy. He labored in a gray-walled room, lit only by one large circular window opening upon the sea. There was an alcove in this room, and in the alcove stood a large painted statue.

This prefigured a crowned woman, in bright parti-colored garments of white and red and yellow, under a black mantle embroidered with small sparkling stars. Upon the woman's forehead was a disk, like a round glittering mirror; seen closer, it was engraved with tiny characters, and Kennaston viewed it with a thrill of recognition. To the woman's right were vipers rising from the earth, and to the left were stalks of ripe corn, all in their proper colors. In one hand she carried a golden boat, from which a coiled asp raised its head threateningly. From the other hand dangled a cluster of slender metal rods, which were not a part of the statue, but were loosely attached to it, so that the least wind caused them to move and jangle. There was

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nothing whatever in the gray-walled room save this curious gleaming statue and the lean man and the mechanical toy on which he labored.

He explained its workings, willingly enough. See now! you kindled a fire in this little cube-shaped box. The air inside expanded through this pipe into the first jar of water, and forced the water out, through this other pipe, into this tiny bucket. The bucket thus became heavier and heavier, till its weight at last pulled down the string by which the bucket was swung over a pulley, and so, moved this lever.

Oh, yes, the notion was an old one; the priest admitted he had copied the toy from one made by Heron of Alexandria, who died years ago. Still, it was an ingenious trifle: moreover—and here was the point,—enlarge the scale, change the cube-shaped box into the temple altar, fasten the lever to the temple doors, and you had the mechanism for a miracle. People had only to offer burnt sacrifices to the Goddess, and before their eyes the All-Mother, the holy and perpetual preserver of the human race, would stoop to material thaumaturgy, and would condescend to animate her sacred portals, so that they would unclose without human agency and would thus open her shrine to all the faithful who had attested the soundness of their faith by honoring her with burnt sacrifices.

"We very decidedly need some striking miracle to advertise our temple," he told Kennaston. "Folk are flocking like sheep after these barbarous new Galilean heresies. But the All-Mother is compassionate to human frailty; and this device will win back many erring feet to the true way."

And Kennaston saw there were tears in this man's dark sad eyes. The trickster was striving to uphold the faith of his fathers; and in the attempt he had constructed a practicable steam-engine.

XXIV. Deals with Pen Scratches

Then Kennaston was in Alexandria when John the Grammarian pleaded with the victorious Arabian general Amrou to spare the royal library, which at this period was the sole repository of many of the master-works of Greek and Roman literature.

But Amrou only laughed, with a practical man's contempt for such matters. Amrou then said, as became a devout Mussulman:

"The Koran contains all that is necessary to salvation: if these books teach as the Koran teaches they are superfluous; if they contain anything contrary to the Koran they ought to be destroyed. Let them be used as fuel for the public baths."

And this was done. . . . Curious, very curious, it was to Kennaston, to witness this utilitarian employment of a nation's literature; and it moved him strangely. For he had come at this season to believe that individual acts can count for nothing, in the outcome of things. Whatever might happen upon earth, affected infinitesimally, if it affected at all, the revealed universe of which this planet was a part so inconceivably tiny. To figure out the importance in this universe

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of the deeds of one or another nation temporarily clustering on earth's surface—when you considered that neither the doings of Assyria or of Rome, nor of any other kingdom, had ever at any period extended from earth's surface by more than a few hundred yards,—was a computing far too delicate for human reason. For human faculties to attempt to estimate the individuals of this nation, in the light of the relative importance of their physical antics while living, was purely and simply ridiculous. To assume, as did so many well-meaning persons, that Omniscience devoted eternity to puzzling out just these minutiae, seemed at the mildest to postulate in Omniscience a queer mania for trivialities.

No: with the passage of time, whatever a man had done whether for good or evil, with the man's bodily organs, left the man's parish unaffected: only man's thoughts and dreams could outlive him, in any serious sense, and these might survive with perhaps augmenting influence: so that Kennaston had come to think artistic creation in words—since marble and canvas inevitably perished,—was the one, possibly, worthwhile employment of human life. But here was a crude corporal deed which bluntly destroyed thoughts, and annihilated dreams by wholesale. To Kennaston this seemed the one real tragedy that could be staged on earth. . . .

Curious, very curious, it was to Kennaston, to see the burning of sixty-three plays written by Æschylus, of a hundred and six by Sophocles, and of fifty-five by Euripides,—masterworks eternally lost, which, as Kennaston knew, the world would affect to deplore eternally, whatever might be the world's real opinion in the matter.

But of these verbal artificers something at least was to endure. They would fare better than Agathon and

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Ion and Achæus, their admitted equals in splendor, whose whole life-work was passing, at the feet of Horvendile, into complete oblivion. There, too, were perishing all the writings of the Pleiad,—the noble tragedies of Homerus, and Sositheus, and Lycophron, and Alexander, and Philiscus, and Sosiphanes, and Dionysides. All the great comic poets, too, were burned pell-mell with these,—Telecleides, Hermippus, Eupolis, Antiphanes, Ameipsas, Lysippus, and Menander,—“whom nature mimicked,” as the phrase was. And here, posting to obliteration, went likewise Thespis, and Pratinas, and Phrynicus,—and Choerilus, whom cultured persons had long ranked with Homer. Nothing was to remain of any of these save the bare name, and even this would be known only to pedants. All these, spurred by the poet’s ageless monomania, had toiled toward, and had attained, the poet’s ageless goal—to write perfectly of beautiful happenings: and of this action’s normal by-product, which is immortality in the mouths and minds of succeeding generations, all these were being robbed, by the circumstance that parchment is inflammable.

Here was beauty, and wit, and learning, and genius, being wasted—quite wantonly,—never to be recaptured, never to be equalled again (despite the innumerable painstaking penmen destined to fret the hearts of unborn wives), and never, in the outcome, to be thought of as a very serious loss to anybody, after all....

These book-rolls burned with great rapidity, crackling cheerily as the garnered wisdom of the elder Cato’s octogenarian life dissolved in puffs of smoke, and the wit of Sosipater blazed for the last time in heating a pint of water.... But then in Parma long afterward Kennaston observed a monk erasing a song of Sappho’s from a parchment on which the monk meant to inscribe

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a feeble little Latin hymn of his own composition; in an obscure village near Alexandria Kennaston saw the only existent copy of the *Mimes* of Herondas crumpled up and used as packing for a mummy-case; in the tidiest of old English kitchens Kennaston watched thrifty Betty Baker, then acting as cook for Warburton the antiquary, destroy in making pie-crust the unique manuscript copies of some fifty plays, among which were never-printed tragedies by Marlowe and Cyril Tourneur and George Chapman, and comedies by Middleton and Greene and Dekker, and—rather drolly,—those same three dramas which Shakespeare, when he talked with Horvendile in the orchard, had asserted to perpetuate, upon the whole, the most excellent fruit of Shakespeare's ripened craftsmanship.

Yet—conceding Heaven to be an actual place, and attainment of its felicities to be the object of human life,—Kennaston could not, after all, detect any fault in Amrou's logic. Aesthetic considerations could, in that event, but lead to profitless time-wasting where every moment was precious.

XXV. By-Products of Rational Endeavor

Then again Kennaston stood in a stone-walled apartment, like a cell, wherein he saw a furnace and much wreckage. A contemplative friar was regarding the disorder about him with disapproval, the while he sucked at two hurt fingers.

"There can be no doubt that Old Legion conspires to hinder the great work," he considered.

"And what is the great work, father?" Kennaston asked him.

"To find the secret of eternal life, my son. What else is lacking? Man approaches to God in all things save this, *Imaginis imago*, created after God's image. But as yet, by reason of his mortality, man shudders in a world that is arrayed against him. Thus, the heavens threaten with winds and lightnings, with plague-breeding meteors and the unfriendly aspect of planets; the big seas molest with waves and inundations, stealthily drowning cities overnight, and sucking down tall navies as a child gulps sugarplums; whereas how many plants and gums and seeds bear man's destruction in their tiny hearts! what soulless beasts of the field and of the wood are everywhere enleagued in

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endless feud against him, with tusks and teeth, with nails and claws and venomous stings, made sharp for man's demolition! Thus all struggle miserably, like hunted persons under a sentence of death that may, at best, be avoided for a little while. And manifestly, this is not as it should be."

"Yet I much fear it is so ordered, father."

The old man said testily: "I repeat, for your better comfort, there can be no doubt that Satan alone conspires to hinder the great work. No; it would be abuse of superstition to conceive, as would be possible for folk of slender courage, that the finger of Heaven has to-day unloosed this destruction, to my bodily hurt and spiritual admonition."

Kennaston could see, though, that the speaker half believed this might be exactly what had happened. Meanwhile the old lean friar continued:

"—For I am about no vaunting transgression of man's estate; I do but seek to recover his lost heritage. You will say to me, it is written that never shall any man be one day old in the sight of God?—Yet it is likewise written that unto God a thousand years are but one day. For one thousand years, then, may each man righteously hope to have death delay to enact the midwife to his second birth. It advantages not to contend that even in the heyday of patriarchs few approached to such longevity; for Moses, relinquishing to silence all save the progeny of Seth, nowhere directly tells us that some of the seed of Cain did not outlive Methuselah. Yea, and our common parent, Adam, was created in the mature age of man, which then fell not short of one hundred years, since at less antiquity did none of the antediluvian fathers beget issue, as did Adam in the same year breath was given him; and the years of Adam's life were nine hundred and thirty; whereby it is a reasonable conceit of learned persons

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to compute him to have exceeded a thousand years in age, if not in duration of existence. Now, it is written that we shall all die as Adam died; and caution should not scruple to affirm this is an excellent dark saying, prophetic of that day when no man need outdo Adam in celerity to put by his flesh."

Then Kennaston found the alchemist had been compounding nitrum of Memphis with sulphur, mixing in a little willow charcoal to make the whole more friable, and that the powder had exploded. The old man was now interested, less in the breakage, than in the horrible noise which this accident had occasioned.

"The mixture might be used in court-pageants and miracle-plays," he estimated, "to indicate the entrance of Satan, or the fall of Sodom, or Herod's descent into the Pit, and so on. Yes, I shall thriftily sell this secret, and so get money to go on with the great work."

Seeking to find the means of making life perpetual, he had accidentally discovered gunpowder.

Then at Valladolid an age-stricken seaman, wracked with gout, tossed in a mean bed and grumbled to bare walls. He, "the Admiral," was neglected by King Philip, the broth was unfit for a dog's supper, his son Diego was a laggard fool. Thus the old fellow mumbled.

Ingratitude everywhere! and had not he, "the Admiral"—"the Admiral of Mosquito Land," as damnable street-songs miscalled him, he whimpered, in a petulant gust of self-pity,—had not he found out at last a way by sea to the provinces of the Great Khan and the treasures of Cipango? Give him another fleet, and he would demonstrate what malignant fools were his enemies. He would convert the Khan from Greek heresies; or else let the Holy Inquisition be established in Cipango, the thumbscrew and the stake be fittingly utilized there *ad majorem Dei gloriam*,—all should redound to the credit of King Philip, both temporal

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and celestial. And what wealth, too, a capable emissary would bring back to his Majesty,—what cargoes of raw silks, of gold and precious gems, ravished from Kanbalu and Taidu, those famed marvelous cities! . . . But there was only ingratitude and folly everywhere; the King was misled by wicked advisers; and the broth was cold as a king's heart.

Thus mumbled the broken adventurer, Cristoforo Colombo. He had doubled the world's size and resources, in his attempts to find some defenseless nation which could be plundered with impunity; and he was dying in ignorance of what his endeavors had achieved.

And Kennaston was at Blickling Hall when King Henry read the Pope's letter which threatened excommunication. "Nan, Nan," the King said, "this is a sorry business."

"Sire," says Mistress Boleyn, saucily, "and am I not worth a little abuse?"

"You deserve some quite certainly," he agrees; and his bright lecherous pig's eyes twinkled, and he guffawed.

"Defy the Pope, then, sire, and marry your true love. Let us snap fingers at Giulio de Medici—"

"Faith, and not every lass can bring eleven fingers to the task," the King put in.

She tweaked his fine gold beard, and Kennaston saw that upon her left hand there was really an extra finger.

"My own sweetheart," says she, "if you would have my person as much at your disposal as my heart is, we must part company with Rome. Then too, at the cost of a few Latin phrases, some foolish candle-snuffing and a little bell-ringing, you may take for your own all the fat abbey-lands in these islands, and sell them for a great deal of money," she pointed out.

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So, between lust and greed, the King was persuaded. In the upshot, “because”—as was duly set forth to his lieges,—“a virtuous monarch ought to surround his throne with many peers of the worthiest of both sexes,” therefore Mistress Anne Boleyn was created Marchioness of Pembroke, in her own right, with a reversion of the title and estates to her offspring, whether (as might best please Heaven’s high wisdom) the King’s well-beloved and most virtuous cousin should happen to bear legitimate children or bastards. True love provides against all, the King remarked.

Moreover, a pension of £1,000 per annum, with gold, silver and parcel-gilt plate to the value of £1,188, was likewise awarded her: and the King, by thus piously defying Romish error, earned the abbey-lands, as well as the key to his Nan’s bed-chamber, and the eternal approbation of zealous Protestants, for thus inaugurating religious liberty.

XXVI. “*Epper Si Muove*”

These ironies Kennaston witnessed among many others, as he read in this or that chance-opened page from the past. Everywhere, it seemed to him, men had labored blindly, at flat odds with rationality, and had achieved everything of note by accident. Everywhere he saw reason to echo the cry of Maugis d'Aigremont, —“It is very strange how affairs fall out in this world of ours, so that a man may discern no plan or purpose anywhere.”

Here was the astounding fact: the race did go forward; the race did achieve; and in every way the race grew better. Progress through irrational and astounding blunders, whose outrageousness bedwarfed the wildest clichés of romance, was what Kennaston found everywhere. All this, then, also was foreplanned, just as all happenings at Storisende had been, in his puny romance; and the puppets, here too, moved as they thought of their own violition, but really in order to serve a dénouement in which many of them had not any personal part or interest. . . .

And always the puppets moved toward greater efficiency and comeliness. The puppet-shifter appeared

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to seek, at once, utility and artistic self-expression. So the protoplasm—that first imperceptible pinhead of living matter,—had become a fish; the fish had become a batrachian, the batrachian a reptile, the reptile a mammal; thus had the puppets continuously been reshaped, into more elaborate forms more captivating to the eye, until amiable and shatter-pated man stood erect in the world. And man, in turn, had climbed a long way from gorillaship, howsoever far he was as yet from godhead,—blindly moving always, like fish and reptile, toward unapprehended loftier goals.

But, just as men's lives came to seem to Kennaston like many infinitesimal threads woven into the pattern of human destiny, so Kennaston grew to suspect that the existence of mankind upon earth was but an incident in the unending struggle of life to find a home in the universe. Human inhabitancy was not even a very important phase in the world's history, perhaps; a scant score or so of centuries ago there had been no life on earth, and by and by the planet would be a silent, naked, frozen clod. Would this sphere then have served its real purpose of being, by having afforded foothold to life for a few æons?

He could not tell. But Kennaston contemplated sidereal space full of such frozen worlds, where life seemed to have flourished for a while and to have been dispossessed,—and full, too, of glowing suns, with their huge satellites, all slowly cooling and congealing into fitness for life's occupancy. Life would tarry there also, he reflected; and thence also life would be evicted. For life was not a part of the universe, not a product of the universe at all perhaps, but, rather, an intruder into the cosmic machinery, which moved without any consideration of life's needs. Like a bird striving to nest in a limitless engine, insanely building among moving wheels and cogs and pistons and pulley-bands,

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whose moving toward their proper and intended purposes inevitably swept away each nest before completion,—so it might be that life passed from moving world to world, found transitory foothold, began to build, and was driven out.

What was it that life sought to rear?—what was the purpose of this endless endeavor, of which the hatching of an ant or the begetting of an emperor was equally a by-product? and of which the existence of Felix Kennaston was a manifestation past conceiving in its unimportance? Toward what did life aspire?—that force which moved in Felix Kennaston, and thus made Felix Kennaston also an intruder, a temporary visitor, in the big moving soulless mechanism of earth and water and planets and suns and interlocking solar systems?

"To answer that question must be my modest attempt," he decided. "In fine—why is a Kennaston? The query has a humorous ring, undoubtedly, in so far as it is no little suggestive of the spinning mouse that is the higher the fewer,—but, after all, it voices the sole question in which I personally am interested. . . ."

"Why is a Kennaston?" he asked himself,—thus whimsically voicing a real desire to know if human beings were intended for any especial purpose. Most of us find it more comfortable, upon the whole, to stave off such queries,—with a jest, a shrug, or a Scriptural quotation, as best suits personal taste; but Kennaston was "queer" enough to face the situation quite gravely. Here was he, the individual, very possibly placed on—at all events, infesting,—a particular planet for a considerable number of years; the planet was so elaborately constructed, so richly clothed with trees and valleys and uplands and running waters and multitudinous grass-blades, and the body that housed Felix

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Kennaston was so intricately wrought with tiny bones and veins and sinews, with sockets and valves and levers, and little hairs which grew upon the body like grass-blades about the earth, that it seemed unreasonable to suppose this much cunning mechanism had been set a-going aimlessly: and so, he often wondered if he was not, perhaps, expected to devote these years of human living to some intelligible purpose?

Religion, of course, assured him that the answer to his query was, in various books, explicitly written, in very dissimilar forms. But Kennaston could find little to attract him in any theory of the universe based upon direct revelations from Heaven. Conceding that divinity had actually stated so-and-so, from Sinai or Delphi or Mecca, and had been reported without miscomprehension or error, there was no particular reason for presuming that divinity had spoken veraciously: and, indeed, all available analogues went to show that nothing in nature dealt with its inferiors candidly. To liken the relationship to the intercourse of a father with his children, as did all revealed religions with queer uniformity, was at best a two-edged simile, in that it suggested a possible amiability of intention combined with inevitable duplicity. The range of an earthly father's habitual deceptions, embracing the sources of life and Christmas presents on one side and his own fallibility on the other, was wide enough to make the comparison suspicious. When fathers were at their worst they punished; and when in their kindest and most expansive moods, why, then it was—precisely—that they told their children fairy-stories. It seemed to Kennaston, for a while, that all religions ended in this blind-alley.

To exercise for an allotted period divinely-recommended qualities known as virtues, and to be rewarded therefor, by an immortal score-keeper, appeared a

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rather childish performance all around. Yet every religion agreed in asserting that such was the course of human life at its noblest; and to believe that matters were thus arranged indisputably satisfied an innate craving of men's natures, as Kennaston was, perhaps uniquely, privileged to see for himself.

Under all theocracies the run of men proved much the same: as has been said, it was for the most part with quite ordinary people that Horvendile dealt in dreams. The Roman citizenry, for instance, he found did not devote existence, either under the Republic or the Empire, to shouting in unanimous response to metrical declamations, and worrying over their own bare legs, nor did they in many other ways conform to the best traditions of literature and of the stage; nor did the Athenians corroborate their dramatists by talking perpetually of the might of Zeus or Aphrodite, any more than motormen and stockbrokers conversed continually of the Holy Ghost. Substantial people everywhere worshiped at their accustomed temple at accustomed intervals, and then put the matter out of mind, in precisely the fashion of any reputable twentieth-century church-goer.

They had meanwhile their business-affairs, their sober chats on weather probabilities, their staid diversions (which everywhere bored them frightfully), their family jokes, their best and second-best clothes, their flirtations, their petty snobbishness, and their perfectly irrational faith in Omnipotence and in the general kindness of Omnipotence,—all these they had, and made play with, to round out living. Ritualistic worship everywhere seemed to be of the nature of a conscious outing, of a conscious departure from everyday life; it was generally felt that well-balanced people would not permit such jaunts to interfere with their business-matters or home-ties; but there was no doubt men did not like

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to live without religion and religion's promise of a less trivial and more ordered and symmetrical existence to-morrow.

Meanwhile, men were to worry, somehow, through to-day,—doing as infrequent evil as they conveniently could, exercising as much bravery and honesty and benevolence as they happened to possess, through a life made up of unimportant tasks and tedious useless little habits. Men felt the routine to be niggardly: but to-morrow—and this was the sole point upon which their priests and bonzes, their flamens and imauns, their medicine men and popes and deacons, were unanimous,—to-morrow would be quite different.

To-day alone was real. Never was a man brought into contact with reality save through the evanescent emotions and sensations of that single moment, that infinitesimal fraction of a second, which was passing now,—and it was in the insignificance of this moment, precisely, that pious people must believe. So ran the teachings of all dead and lingering faiths alike. Here was, perhaps, only another instance of mankind's abhorrence of actualities; and man's quaint dislike of facing reality was here disguised as a high moral principle. That was why all art, which strove to make the sensations of a moment soul-satisfying, was dimly felt to be irreligious. For art performed what religion only promised.

XXVII. Evolution of a Vestryman

But, much as man's religion looked to a more ordered and symmetrical existence to-morrow, just so, upon another scale, man's daily life seemed a continuous looking-forward to a terrestrial to-morrow. Kennaston could find in the past—even he, who was privileged to view the past in its actuality, rather than through the distorting media of books and national pride,—no suggestion as to what, if anything, he was expected to do while his physical life lasted, or to what, if anything, this life was a prelude. Yet that to-day was only a dull overture to to-morrow seemed in mankind an instinctive belief. All life everywhere, as all people spent it, was in preparation for something that was to happen to-morrow. This was as true of Antioch as Lich-field, as much the case with Charlemagne and Moses and Sardanapalus, and with Agamemnon and with Tiglath-Pileser, as with Felix Kennaston.

Kennaston considered his own life. . . . In childhood you had looked forward to being a man—a trapper of the plains or a railway engineer or a pirate, for choice, but, pending that, to get through the necessity of going to school five times a week. In vacations, of course,

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you looked forward to school's beginning again, because next term was to be quite different from the last, and moreover because last session, in retrospection, did not appear to have been half bad. And of course you were always wishing it would hurry up and be your birthday, or Christmas, or even Easter. . . .

Later, with puberty, had come the desire to be a devil with the women, like the fellows in Wycherley's plays (a cherished volume, which your schoolmates, unaccountably, did not find sufficiently "spicy"); and to become a great author, like Shakespeare; and to have plenty of money, like the Count of Monte-Cristo; and to be thrown with, and into the intimate confidence of, famous people, like the hero of a Scott novel. . . . Kennaston reflected that his touchstones seemed universally to have come from the library. . . . And Felix Kennaston had achieved his desire, to every intent, howsoever unapt was posterity to bracket him with Casanova or Don Juan, and howsoever many tourists still went with reverence to Stratford-upon-Avon rather than to Alclud. He had enough money now to make taxes an ever-present nuisance; and quite certainly he had met more celebrities than any other person living.

Felix Kennaston reflected that, through accident's signal favor, he had done all he had at any time very earnestly wanted to do; and that the result was always disappointing, and not as it was depicted in story-books. . . . He wondered why he should again be harking back to literary standards.

Then it occurred to him that, in reality, he had always been shuffling through to-day—somehow and anyhow,—in the belief that to-morrow the life of Felix Kennaston would be converted into a romance like those in the story-books.

The transfiguring touch was to come, it seemed, from a girl's lips; but it had not; he kissed, and life remained

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uncharmed. It was to come from marriage, after which everything would be quite different; but the main innovation was that he missed the long delightful talks he used to have with Kathleen (mostly about Felix Kennaston), since as married people they appeared only to speak to each other, in passing, as it were, between the discharge of various domestic and social duties, and to speak then of having seen So-and-so, and of So-and-so's having said this-or-that. The transfiguring touch was to come from wealth; and it had not, for all that his address was in the *Social Register*, and was neatly typed in at the beginning of one copy of pretty much every appeal sent broadcast by charitable organizations. It was to come from fame; and it had not, even with the nine days' wonder over *Men Who Loved Alison*, and with Felix Kennaston's pictorial misrepresentation figuring in public journals, almost as prodigally as if he had murdered his wife with peculiar brutality or headed a company to sell inexpensive shoes. And, at the bottom of his heart, he was still expecting the transfiguring touch to come, some day, from something he was to obtain or do, perhaps to-morrow. . . . Then he had by accident found out the sigil's power. . . .

Men everywhere were living as he had lived. People got their notions of life, if only at second- or third-hand, from books, precisely as he had done. Even Amrou had derived his disastrous notions, as to the unimportance of books, from a book. Men pretended laboriously that their own lives were like the purposeful and clearly motived life of book-land. In secret, the more perspicacious cherished the reflection that, anyhow, their lives would begin to be like that to-morrow. The purblind majority quite honestly believed that literature was meant to mimic human life, and that it did so. And in consequence, their love-affairs,

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their maxims, their passions, their ethics, their conversations, their so-called natural ties and instincts, and above all, their wickednesses, became just so many bungling plagiarisms from something they had read, in a novel or a Bible or a poem or a newspaper.

People progressed from the kindergarten to the cemetery assuming that their emotion at every crisis was what books taught them was the appropriate emotion, and without noticing that it was in reality something quite different. Human life was a distorting, tarnished mirror held up to literature: this much at least of Wilde's old paradox—that life mimicked art,—was indisputable. Human life, very clumsily, tried to reproduce the printed word. Human life was prompted by, and was based upon, printed words,—“in the beginning was the Word,” precisely as Gospel asserted.

Kennaston had it now. Living might become symmetrical, well-plotted, coherent, and as rational as living was in books. This was the hope which guided human beings through to-day with anticipation of tomorrow.

Then he perceived that there was no such thing as symmetry anywhere in inanimate nature. . . .

It was Ettarre who first pointed out to him the fact, so tremendously apparent when once observed, that there was to be found nowhere in inanimate nature any approach to symmetry. It needed only a glance toward the sky, after the falling of any reasonably clear night, to show there was no pattern-work in the arrangement of the stars. Nor were the planets moving about the sun at speeds or distances which bore any conceivable relation to one another. It was all at loose ends. He wondered how he could possibly have been misled by pulpit platitudes into likening this circumambient anarchy to mechanism. The universe showed on a sudden as a vast disheveled horror.

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There was no harmony, and no sense of order back of all this infinite torrent of gyrations. Interstellar space seemed to be just a jumble of frozen or flaming spheres that, moving ceaselessly, appeared to avoid one another's orbits, or to collide, by pure chance. This spate of stars, as in three monstrous freshets, might roughly serve some purpose; but there was to be found no more formal order therein than in the flow of water-drops over a mill-wheel.

And on earth there was no balancing in the distribution of land and water. Continents approached no regular shape. Mountains stood out like pimples or lay like broken welts across the habitable ground, with no symmetry of arrangement. Rivers ran any-whither, just as the haphazard slope of earth's crevices directed; upon the map you saw quite clearly that these streams neither balanced one another nor watered the land with any pretense of equity. There was no symmetry anywhere in inanimate nature, no harmony, no equipoise of parts, no sense of form, not even a straight line. It was all at loose ends, except—bewilderingly—when water froze. For then, as the microscope showed you, the ice-crystals were arranged in perfect and very elaborate patterns. And these stellular patterns, to the mused judgment of Kennaston, appeared to have been shaped by the last love-tap of unreason,—when, in completing all, unreason made sure that even here the universe should run askew to any conceivable “design” and lose even the coherency of being everywhere irregular.

But living things aimed toward symmetry. In plants the notion seemed rudimentary, yet the goal was recognizable. The branches of a tree did not put out at ordered distance, nor could you discern any definite plan in their shaping: but in the leaves, at least, you detected an effort toward true balance: the two halves

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of a leaf, in a rough fashion, were equal. In every leaf and flower and grass-blade you saw this never entirely successful effort.

And in insects and reptiles and fish and birds and animals you saw again this effort, more creditably performed. All life seemed about the rather childish employment of producing a creature which consisted of two equal and exactly corresponding parts. It was true that in most cases this effort was foiled by an uneven distribution of color in plumage or scales or hide; but in insects and in mankind the goal, so far as went the eye, was reached. Men and insects, to the eye at least, could be divided into two equal halves. . . .

But even so, there was no real symmetry in man's body save in externals. The heart was not in the center, and the stomach appeared a sadly lopsided affair; there was no order in the jumbled viscera: all the internal organs of the human body seemed to have been thrust in as promiscuously as though this bag of flesh were a hand-bag packed at train-time in wild haste. Then, also, the two divisions of the brain did not correspond; there was nothing whatever on the left side to balance the troublesome vermiform appendix on the right; even the lines in the palm of one hand were unlike those which marked the other: and everywhere, in fine, there was some irrational discrepancy. Man, the highest form as yet of life, had attained at most only a teasing semblance of that crude symmetry toward which all life seemed to aim, and which inanimate nature appeared to ignore.

Nowhere in the universe could Kennaston discover any instance of quite equal balance, of anything which, as vision went, could be divided into two similar halves,—save only in man's handiwork. Here, again, insects approached man's efforts more closely than did the rest of creation; for many of them builded almost as

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truly. But man, alone in the universe, could produce exact visual symmetry, in a cathedral or a dinner-table or a pair of scissors, just as man so curiously mimicked symmetry in his outward appearance. The circumstance was droll, and no less quaint for the fact that it was quite probably without any significance. . . .

But Kennaston bemused himself with following out the notion that life was trying to evolve symmetry,—order, proportion and true balance. Living creatures represented life's gropings toward that goal. You saw, no doubt, a dim perception of this in the dream which sustained all human beings,—that to-morrow living would begin to be symmetrical, well plotted, and coherent, like the progress of a novel. . . . And that was precisely what religion promised, only in more explicit terms, and with the story's milieu fixed in romantic, rather than realistic, settings.

Kennaston had here the sensation of fitting in the last bit of a puzzle. Life, yearning for symmetry, stood revealed as artist. Life strove toward the creation of art. That was all life cared about. Living things were more or less successful works of art, and were to be judged according to art's canons alone. The universe was life's big barren studio, which the artist, certainly, had neither planned nor builded, but had, somehow, occupied, to make the best of its limitations. For Kennaston insisted that living things and inanimate nature had none of the earmarks of being by the same author. They were not in similar style, he said; thus, presupposing a sentient creator of the stars and planets, it would seem to have been in contradiction of his code to make both of a man's eyes the same color.

It was this course of speculation which converted Kennaston to an abiding faith in Christianity, such as,

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our rector informs me, is deplorably rare in these lax, pleasure-loving days of materialism.

To believe this inconsiderable planet the peculiar center of a God's efforts and attention had for a long while strained Kennaston's credulity: the thing was so woefully out of proportion when you considered earth's relative value in the universe. But now Felix Kennaston comprehended that in the insensate universe there was no proportion. The idea was unknown to the astral architect, or, at best, no part of his plan, if indeed there had been any premeditation or contriver concerned.

Singly on our small earth—and nowhere else, so far as man might judge, not even in the solar system of which earth made a part,—was any sense of proportion evinced; and upon earth this sense of proportion was apparent only in living things. Kennaston now seemed to glimpse an Artist-God, with a commendable sense of form,—Kennaston's fellow craftsman,—and the planet earth as that corner of the studio wherein the God was working, at present, and all life as a romance which the God was inditing. . . .

That the plot of this romance began with Eden and reached its climax at Calvary, Kennaston was persuaded, solely and ardently, because of the surpassing beauty of the Christ-legend. No other myth compared with it from an æsthetic standpoint. He could imagine no theme more adequate to sustain a great romance than this of an Author suffering willingly for His puppets' welfare; and mingling with His puppets in the similitude of one of them; and able to wring only contempt and pity from His puppets,—since He had not endowed them with any faculties wherewith to comprehend their Creator's nature and intent.

Indeed, it was pretty much the plight which Kennaston had invented for his own puppets at Storisende,

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as Kennaston complacently reflected. It was the most tremendous "situation" imaginable; and quite certainly no Author could ever have ever failed to perceive, and to avail Himself of, its dramatic possibilities. To conceive that the world-romance did not center upon Calvary was to presume an intelligent and skilled Romancer blind to the basic principles of His art. His sense of pathos and of beauty and of irony could have led Him to select no other legend. And in the inconsistencies and unsolved problems, or even the apparent contradictions, of Christianity, Felix Kennaston could see only a possible error or omission on the Author's part, such as was common to all romances. A few errata did not hamper the tale's worth and splendor, or render it a whit less meritorious of admiration. . . .

And, by and by, Felix Kennaston found that his theory of the Atonement was in harmony with quite orthodox teachings. The library at Alcluid revealed bewildered and perturbed generations at guess-work. How could a God have been placated, and turned from wrath and benevolence, by witnessing the torment of His own son? What pleasure, whereby He was propitiated, could the God have derived from watching the scene on Calvary? Or was the God, as priests had taught so long (within the same moment that they proclaimed the God's omnipotence), not wholly a free agent, because bound by laws whereby He was compelled to punish someone for humanity's disobedience, with the staggering option of substituting an innocent victim? For if you granted that, you conceded to be higher than the God, and overruling Him, a power which made for flat injustice.

Since Schleiermacher's time, at least, as Kennaston discovered, there had been reasoning creatures to contest the possibility of such discrepant assumptions, and a dynasty of teachers who adhered to the "subjective"

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theory of propitiation. For these considered that Christ came, not primarily to be crucified, but by his life to reveal to men the nature of their God. The crucifixion was an incidental and almost inevitable result of human obtuseness; and all the regrettable events of our first Good Friday were of value only in that through them the full extent of divine love was perfectly evinced. The personality, rather than the sufferings, of the Nazarene had thus satisfied, not any demand or attribute of the God by acting upon it from without, "but God's total nature by revealing it and realizing it in humanity." The God, in short, had satisfied Himself "by revealing and expressing His nature" in the material universe, precisely as lesser artists got relief from the worries of existence by depicting themselves in their books.

Just as poets express themselves communicatively in words, so here the Author had expressed Himself in flesh. Such, in effect, had been the teaching of Karl Immanuel Nitzsch, of Richard Rothe, and of Van Hoffman, in Germany; of Auguste Bouvier in Geneva; of Alexandre Vinet, and of Auguste Sabatier, in France; of Frederick Denison Maurice, and John Caird, and Benjamin Jowett, in England; and, in America, of Horace Bushnell, and Elisha Mulford, and William Newton Clarke. The list was imposing; and Kennaston rejoiced to find himself at one with so many reputable theologians. For all these scholars had dimly divined, with whatsoever variousness they worded the belief, that the God's self-satisfaction sprang from the consciousness of having, at last, done a really fine piece of artistic work, in creating the character of Christ. . . .

So, as nearly as one can phrase the matter, it was as an expression of entire confidence in his Author's literary abilities that Felix Kennaston was now confirmed, at our little country church, to the delight of

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his wife and the approbation of his neighbors. It was felt to be eminently suitable: that such a quiet, well-to-do man of his years and station should not be a communicant was generally, indeed, adjudged unnatural. And when William T. Vartrey (of the Lichfield Iron Works) was gathered to his grandfathers, in the following autumn, Mr. Kennaston was rather as a matter of course elected to succeed him in the vestry. And Kennaston was unfeignedly pleased and flattered.

To the discerning it is easy enough to detect, in all this fantastic theorizing, the man's obsessing love of ordered beauty and his abhorrence of slovenliness and shapelessness—very easy to see just what makes the writings of Felix Kennaston most admirable,—here alluring him to believe that such ideals must also be cherished by Omnipotence. This poet loved his formal art to the extent of coming to assume it was the purpose and the origin of terrestrial life. Life seemed to him, in short, a God's chosen form of artistic self-expression; and as a *confrère*, Kennaston found the result praiseworthy. Even inanimate nature, he sometimes thought, might be a divine experiment in *vers libre*. . . . But neither the justice of Kennaston's airdrawn surmises, nor their wildness, matters; the point is that they made of him a vestryman who in appearance and speech and actions, and in essential beliefs, differed not at all from his associates in office, who had comfortably acquired their standards by hearsay. It follows that the moral of his theorizing should be no less obvious than salutary.

XXVIII. The Shallowest Sort of Mysticism

Through such airdrawn surmises, then, as I have just recorded did Felix Kennaston enter at last into that belief which is man's noblest heritage. . . .

"Or I would put it, rather, that belief is man's *métier*," Kennaston once corrected me,—"for the sufficient reason that man has nothing to do with certainties. He cannot ever get in direct touch with reality. Such is the immutable law, the true cream of the jest. Felix Kennaston, so long as he wears the fleshly body of Felix Kennaston, is conscious only of various tiny disturbances in his brain-cells, which entertain and interest him, but cannot pretend to probe to the roots of reality about anything. By the nature of my mental organs, it is the sensation the thing arouses in my brain of which I am aware, and never of the thing itself. I am conscious only of appearances. They may all be illusory. I cannot ever tell. But it is my human privilege to believe whatever I may elect."

"Yet, my dear sir," as I pointed out, "is not this hair-splitting, really, a reduction of human life to the very shallowest sort of mysticism, that gets you nowhere?"

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"Now again, Harrowby, you are falling into the inveterate race-delusion that man is intended to get somewhere. I do not see that the notion rests on any readily apparent basis. It is, at any rate, a working hypothesis that in the world-romance man, being cast for the part of fool, quite obviously best furthers the dénouement's success by wearing his motley bravely. . . . There was a fool in my own romance, you may remember, a character of no great importance; yet it was an essential incident in the story that he should irresponsibly mislay the King's letter, and that Sir Guiron should thus be forced to seek service under Duke Florestan. Perhaps, in similar fashion, it is here necessary to the Author's scheme that man must simply go on striving to gain a little money, food, and sleep, a trinket or two, some moments of laughter, and at the last, a decent bed to die in. It very well may be that man's allotted part calls for just these actions, to round out the drama artistically. Yes; it is quite conceivable that, much as I shaped events at Storisende, so here the Author aims toward making an æsthetic masterpiece of His puppet-play as a whole, rather than at ending everything with a transformation scene such as, when we were younger, used so satisfactorily to close *The Black Crook* and *The Devil's Auction*. For it may well be that the Author has, after all, more in common with Æschylus, say, than with the Charles H. Yale who catered to our boyhood with those spectacular diversions. . . . So I must train my mind to be contented with appearances, whether they be true or not,—reserving always a permissible preference for the illusion which seems the more pleasant. Being mortal, I am able to contrive no thriftier bargain."

"Being mortal," I amended, "we pick our recreations to suit our tastes. Now I, for instance—as is, indeed, a matter of some notoriety and derision here

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in Lichfield,—am interested in what people loosely speak of as ‘the occult.’ . . . No, I do not attempt to persuade defunct poetesses to dictate, via the Ouija board, effusions which give little encouragement as to the present state of culture in Paradise, or to induce Napoleon to leave wherever he is and devote his energies to tipping a table about the room for my entertainment. That sort of thing is tosh. . . . Yet I fixedly believe the Wardens of Earth sometimes unbar strange windows, that face on other worlds than ours. And some of us, I think, once in a while get a peep through these windows. But we are not permitted to get a long peep, or an unobstructed peep, nor, very certainly, are we permitted to see all there is—out yonder. The fatal fault, sir, of your theorizing is that it is too complete. It aims to throw light upon the universe, and therefore is self-evidently moonshine. The Wardens of Earth do not desire that we should understand the universe, Mr. Kennaston; it is part of Their appointed task to ensure that we never do; and because of Their efficiency every notion that any man, dead, living, or unborn, might form as to the universe will necessarily prove wrong. So, if for no other reason, I must decline to think of you and me as characters in a romance.”



PART FIVE

**Which follows after Ettarre and wins to
every poet's reward**

*"This was the measure of my soul's delight;
It had no power of joy to fly by day,
Nor part in the large lordship of the light;
But in a secret moon-beholden way
Had all its will of dreams and pleasant night,
And all the love and life that sleepers may.*

*"But such life's triumphs as men waking may
It might not have to feed its faint delight."*

XXIX. Of Poetic Love: Treated with Poetic Inefficiency

So much for what Kennaston termed his "serious reading" in chance-opened pages of the past. There were other dreams quite different in nature, which seemed, rather, to fulfil the function of romantic art, in satisfying his human craving for a full-fed emotional existence,—dreams which Kennaston jestingly described as "belles lettres." For now by turn—as murderer, saint, herdsman, serf, fop, pickpurse, troubadour, monk, bravo, lording, monarch, and in countless other estates,—Kennaston tasted those fruitless emotions which it is the privilege of art to arouse, and gained large-hearted joys without any inevitable purchase-price, and regrets that were not bitter, and miseries which left him not a penny the worse.

But it was as a lover that his rôle quite engrossed him, in many dreams wherein he bore for Ettarre such adoration as he had always wistfully hoped he might entertain toward some woman some day, and had not ever known in his waking hours. It was sober truth he had spoken at Storisende: "There is no woman like you in my country, Ettarre. I can find no woman anywhere resembling you whom dreams alone may win

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to." But now at last, even though it were only in dreams, he loved as he had always dimly felt he was capable of loving. . . . Even the old lost faculty of verse-making seemed to come back to him with this change, and he began again to fashion rhymes, elaborating bright odd vignettes of foiled love in out-of-the-way epochs and surroundings. These were the verses included, later, under the general title of "Dramatis Personæ," in his *Chimes at Midnight*.

He wrote of foiled love necessarily, since not even as a lover might he win to success. It was the cream of some supernal jest that he might not touch Ettarre; that done, though but by accident, the dream ended, and the universe seemed to fold about him, just as a hand closes. He came to understand the reason of this. "Love must look toward something not quite accessible, something not quite understood," he had said at Storisende: and this phrase, so lightly despatched, came home to him now as pregnant truth. For it was this fact which enabled him to love Ettarre, and had always prevented his loving any other woman.

All mortal women either loved some other man, and went with him somewhither beyond the area of your daily life, and so, in time were forgotten; or, else, they loved you, and laid bare to you their minds and bodies,—and neither of these possessions ever proved so remarkable, when calmly viewed, as to justify any continued infatuation therewith. Such at least Felix Kennaston had always found to be the case: love did not live, as lovers do, by feeding; but, paradoxically, got strength by hungering. It should be remembered, however, that Felix Kennaston was a poet. . . .

He would sometimes think of the women who had loved him; and would speculate, with some wistfulness, if it was invariably true, as with his own amorous

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traffic, that love both kept and left its victims strangers to each other? He knew so little of these soft-lipped girls and women, when everything was said. . . .

Yet there had been—he counted,—yes, time had known eight chaste and comely gentlewomen, in all, who had “given themselves to him,” as the hackneyed phrase was. These eight affairs, at any event, had conformed to every tradition, and had been as thorough-going as might romantically be expected: but nothing much seemed to have come of them; and he did not feel in the upshot very well acquainted with their heroines. His sole emotion toward them nowadays was that of mild dislike. But six of them—again to utilize a venerable conjunction of words,—had “deceived their husbands” for the caresses of an impecunious Kennaston; and the other two had anticipatorily “deceived” the husbands they took later: so that they must, he reflected, have loved Felix Kennaston sincerely.

He was quite certain, though, that he had never loved any one of them as he had always wanted to love. No one of these women had given him what he sought in vain. Kennaston had felt this lack of success dispiritedly when, with soft arms about him, it was necessary to think of what he would say next. He had always in such circumstances managed to feign high rapture, to his temporary companion’s entire satisfaction, as he believed; but each adventure left him disappointed. It had not roused in him the overwhelming emotions which lovers had in books, nor anything resembling these emotions; and that was what he had wanted, and had not ever realized, until the coming of Ettarre. . . .

He had made love, as a prevalent rule, to married women,—allured, again, by bookish standards, which advanced the commerce of Lancelot with Guenevere, or of Paolo Malatesta with his brother’s wife, as the

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supreme type of romantic passion. On more practical grounds, Kennaston preferred married women, partly because they were less stupid to converse with in general, and in particular did not bring up the question of marrying you; and in part because the husband in the background helped the situation pictorially,—this notion also now seemed to be of literary origin,—besides furnishing an unfailing topic of conversation.

For unfaithful or wavering wives, to Kennaston's finding, peculiarly delighted in talking about their husbands; and in such prattle failed either to exhibit the conventional remorse toward, or any very grave complaint against, the discussed better-half. The inconsistency would have worried Kennaston's sense of justice, had not these husbands always been so unconcealedly certain of Kennaston's insignificance. . . . Although judging of necessity only from his own experience, Kennaston was unable conscientiously to approve of adulterous love-affairs: they tended too soon toward tediousness; and married women seemed horribly quick to become matter-of-fact in the details of a liaison, and ready almost to confuse you with the husband.

The giggle and chatter of young girls Kennaston had always esteemed unalluring, even in his own youth. He had admired a number of them extravagantly, but only as ornamental objects upon which very ill-advisedly had been conferred the gift of speech. To-day he looked back wistfully at times, as we must all do, to that girl who first had asked him if he was sure that he respected her as much as ever: but it was with the mental annotation that she had seven children now, and, as Kathleen put it, not a ray of good looks left.

And he would meditate that he had certainly been fond of Margaret Hugonin, even though in the beginning it was her money which attracted him; and

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that Marian Winwood, despite her underhanded vengeance in publishing his letters, had been the most delectable of company all that ancient summer when it had rained so persistently. Then there had been tall Ida Vartrey, like a statue of gold and ivory; Kitty Provis, with those wonderful huge green eyes of hers; and Celia Reindan, she who wore that curious silver band across her forehead; and Helen Strong; and Blanche Druro; and Muriel. . . .

In memory they arose like colorful and gracious phantoms, far more adorable than they had ever been on earth, when each of these had loaned, for a season, the touch of irresolute soft hands and friendly lips to a half-forgotten Felix Kennaston. All these, and others, had been, a long while since, the loveliest creatures that wore tender human flesh: and so, they had kissed, and they had talked time-hallowed nonsense, and they had shed the orthodox tears; and—also a long while since,—they had died or they had married the conventional someone else: and it did not matter the beard of an onion to the pudgy pasty man that Felix Kennaston had come to be. He had possessed, or else of his own volition he had refrained from possessing, all these brightly-colored moth-brained girls: but he had loved none of them as he had always known he was capable of loving: and at best, these girls were dead now, or at worst, they had been converted into unaccountable people. . . .

Kathleen was returning from the South that day, and Kennaston had gone into Lichfield to meet her train. The Florida Express was late by a full hour; so he sat in their motor-car, waiting, turning over some verses in his torpid mind, and just half-noticing persons who were gathering on the station platform to take the noon train going west. He was reflecting how ugly and how trivial the faces of mankind appear when any

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crowd is viewed collectively,—and he was wondering if the Author, looking down into a hot thronged street, was never tempted to obliterate the human race as an unsuccessful experiment,—when Kennaston recognized Muriel Allardyce.

"I simply will not see her," he decided.

He turned his back that way, picked up the morning paper on the seat beside him, and began to read an editorial on immigration. What the deuce was she doing in Lichfield, any way? She lived in St. Louis now. She was probably visiting Avis Blagden. Evidently, she was going west on the noon train. If Kathleen's train arrived before midday he would have to get out of the car to meet her, and all three would come together on the platform. If Muriel spied him there, in the open car, it would be not uncharacteristic of her to join him. And he could not go away, because Kathleen's train was apt to arrive any minute. It was perfectly damnable. Why could the woman not stay in St. Louis, where she belonged, instead of gadding about the country? Thus Kennaston, as he reread the statistics as to Poles and Magyars.

"I think there's two ladies trying to speak to you, sir," the chauffeur hazarded.

"Eh?—oh, yes!" said Kennaston.

He looked, perforce, and saw that across the railway track both Muriel Allardyce and Avis Blagden were regarding him with idiotic grins and wavings. He lifted his hat, smiled, waved his own hand, and retired between the pages of the *Lichfield Courier-Herald*. Muriel was wearing a light traveling veil, he reflected; he could pretend not to know who she was. With recognition, of course, he would be expected to come over to speak to her. He must remember to ask Avis, the very next time he saw her, who had been that fa-

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miliar-looking person with her, and to express regret for his short-sightedness. . . .

He decided to step out of the car, by way of the farther door, and buy a package of cigarettes on the other side of the street. He could loaf there and pray that Muriel's train might leave before Kathleen's train had arrived. . . .

"I don't believe you recognized us," said Avis Blagden, at his elbow. "Or else you are trying to cut your old playmates."

The two women had brazenly pursued him. They were within a yard of him. It was indelicate. It was so perfectly unnecessary. He cordially wished some friendly engine had run them both down when they were crossing the tracks. . . .

"Why, bless my soul!" he was saying, "this is indeed a delightful surprise. I had no idea you were in town, Mrs. Allardyce. I didn't recognize you, with that veil on—"

"There's Peter at last," said Avis. "I really must speak to him a moment."

And she promptly left them. Kennaston reflected that the whole transaction was self-evidently prearranged. And Muriel was, as if abstractedly, but deliberately, walking beyond earshot of the chauffeur. And there was nothing for it save to accompany her.

"It's awfully jolly to see you again," he observed, with fervor.

"Is it? Honestly, Felix, it looked almost as if you were trying to avoid me." Kennaston wondered how he could ever have loved a woman of so little penetration.

"No, I didn't recognize you, with that veil on," he repeated. "And I had no idea you were in Lichfield. I do hope you are going to pay us all a nice long visit—"

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"But, no, I am leaving on this train—"

"Oh, I say, but that's too bad! And I never knew you were here!" he lamented.

"I only stopped overnight with Avis. I am on my way home—"

"To Leonard?" And Kennaston smiled. "How do you get on with him nowadays?"

"We are—contented, I suppose. He has his business—and politics. He is doing perfectly splendidly now, you know. And I have my memories." Her voice changed. "I have my memories, Felix! Nothing—nothing can take that from me!"

"Good God, Muriel, there are a dozen people watching us—"

"What does that matter!"

"Well, it matters a lot to me. I live here, you know."

She was silent for a moment. "You look your latest rôle in life so well, too, Felix. You are the respectable married gentleman to the last detail. Why, you are an old man now, Felix," she said wistfully. "Your hair is gray about the ears, and you are fat, and there are wrinkles under your eyes—But are you happy, dear?" she asked, with the grave tender speech that he remembered. And momentarily the man forgot the people about them, and the fact that his wife's train was due any minute.

"Happier than I deserve to be, Muriel." His voice had quavered,—had quavered in fact very nicely, it appeared to him.

"That's true, at least," the woman said, as in reflection. "You treated me rather abominably, you know, —like an old shoe."

"I am not altogether sorry you take that view of it. For I wouldn't want you to regret—anything,—not even that which, to me at least, is very sacred.

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But there was really nothing else to do save just to let things end. It was as hard," he said, with a continuous flight of imagination, "it was as hard on me as you."

"Sometimes I think it was simply because you were afraid of Leonard. I put that out of my mind, though, always. You see, I like to keep my memories. I have nothing else now, Felix—" She opened the small leather bag she carried, took out a handkerchief, and brushed her lips. "I am a fool, of course. Oh, it is funny to see your ugly little snub nose again! And I couldn't help wanting to speak to you, once more—"

"It has been delightful. And some day I certainly do hope— But there's your train, I think. The gates are going down."

"And here is Avis coming. So good-by, Felix. It is really forever this time, I think—"

It seemed to him that she held in her left hand the sigil of Scoteia. . . . He stared at the gleaming thing, then raised his eyes to hers. She was smiling. Her eyes were the eyes of Ettarre. All the beauty of the world seemed gathered in this woman's face. . . .

"Don't let it be forever! Come with me, Felix! There is only you—even now, there is only you. It is not yet too late—" Astounding as were the words, they came quite clearly, in a pleading, frightened half-whisper.

The man was young for just that one wonderful moment of inexplicable yearning and self-loathing. Then, "I am afraid my wife would hardly like it," he said, equably. "So good-by, Muriel. It has been very delightful to see you again."

"I was mistaken, though, of course. It was the top of a vanity-box, or of a toilet-water flask, or of something else, that she took out of the bag, when she was looking for her handkerchief. It was just a silly coin-

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cidence. I was mistaken, of course. . . . And here is Kathleen's train. Thank goodness, it was late enough. . . ."

Thus Kennaston, as he went to receive his wife's cool kiss. And—having carefully mentioned, as a matter of no earthly importance, that he had just seen Muriel Allardyce, and that she had gone off terribly in looks, and that none of them seem to hold their own like you, dear,—he debarred from mind that awkward moment's delusion, and tried not to think of it any more.

XXX. Cross-Purposes in Spacious Times

So Kennaston seemed to have got only disappointment and vexation and gainless vague regret from his love-affairs in the flesh; and all fleshly passion seemed to flicker out inevitably, howsoever splendid the brief blaze. For you loved and lost; or else you loved and won: there was quick ending either way. And afterward unaccountable women haunted you, and worried you into unreasonable contrition, in defiance of commonsense. . . .

But for Ettarre, who embodied all Kennaston was ever able to conceive of beauty and fearlessness and strange purity, all perfections, all the attributes of divinity, in a word, such as his slender human faculties were competent to understand, he must hunger always in vain. Whatever happened, Ettarre stayed inaccessible, even in dreams: her beauty was his to look on only; and always when he came too near that radiant loveliness which was Ettarre's—that perfect beauty which was so full of troubling reticences, and so, was touched with something sinister,—then the dream would end, and the universe would seem to fold about him, just as a hand closes. Such was the law, the kindly law, as

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Kennaston now believed, through which love might thrive even in the arid heart of a poet.

Sometimes, however, this law would lead to odd results, and left the dream an enigma. For instance, he had a quaint experience upon the night of that day during which he had talked with Muriel Allardyce. . . .

"You are in all things a fortunate man, Master—ah—whatever your true name may be," said the boy, pettishly flinging down the cards.

"Ods life, and have we done?" says Kennaston. . . .

The two sat in a comfortable paneled room. There was a big open fire behind Kennaston; he could see its reflections flicker about the woodwork. The boy facing him was glowingly attired in green and gold, an ardent comely urchin, who (as Kennaston estimated) might perhaps be a page to Queen Elizabeth, or possibly was one of King James's spoilt striplings. Between them was a rough deal table, littered with playing-cards; and upon it sat a tallish blue pitcher half-full of wine, four lighted candles stuck like corks in as many emptied bottles, and two coarse yellow mugs. . . .

"Yes, we have done," the boy answered; and, rising, smiled cherubically. "May I ask what is the object that you conceal with such care in your left hand?"

"To be candid," Kennaston returned, "it is the King of Diamonds, that swarthy bearded Spaniard. I had intended it should serve as a corrective and encourager of Lady Fortune, when I turned it, my next deal, as the trump card. I'faith, I thank God I have found the jade is to be influenced by such small hints. Oh, ay, sir, I may say it without conceit that my fingers have in these matters some tolerable compass and variety."

"A card-sharp!" sneers the boy. "La, half of us suspected it already; but it will be rare news to the town that Master Lionel Branch—as I must continue

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to call you,—stands detected in such Greek knaveries."

"Nay," Kennaston answered, "but you will hardly live to moralize of it, sir. Oh, no, sir, indeed my poor arts must not be made public: for I would not seem to boast of my accomplishments. Harkee, sir, I abhor vainglory. I name no man, sir; but I know very well there are snotty-nosed people who accord to these expedients for amending the quirks of fate their starched disfavor. Hah, but, signior, what is that to us knights of the moon, to us gallants of more generous spirit?—Oh, Lord, sir, I protest I look upon such talents much as I do upon my breeches and my codpiece. I do consider them as possessions, not certainly to be vaunted, but indispensable to any gentleman who hopes to make a pleasing figure in the world's eye."

The boy said: "All this bluster is wordy foolery, Master Branch. What I have seen, I have seen; and you will readily guess how I mean to use my knowledge."

"I would give a great deal to find out what he is talking about," was Kennaston's reflection. "I have discovered, at least, that my present alias is Branch, but that I am in reality somebody else." Aloud he said: "'Fore God, your eyesight is of the best, Master Skirlaw—(*How the deuce did I know his name, now?*)—Hah, I trust forthwith to prove if your sword be equally keen."

The boy replied, "I will fight with no cheats—"

"P'rfaith, sir," Kennaston cried out gaily, "but I have heard that wine is a famed provoker of courage. Let us try the byword."

So saying, Kennaston picked up one mug, and flung its contents full in the boy's face. It was white wine, Kennaston noted, for it did not stain Master Skirlaw's handsome countenance at all.

"The insult is sufficient. Draw, and have done!" the

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lad said quietly. His sword gleamed in the restive reflections of that unseen fire behind Kennaston.

"Na, na! but, my most expeditious cockerel," Kennaston replied, "this place is a thought too public. Now yonder is a noble courtyard. Oh, ay, favored by to-night's moon, we may settle our matter without any hindrance or intolerable scandal. So, I will call my host, that we may have the key. Yet, upon my gentility, Master Skirlaw, I greatly fear I shall be forced to kill you. Therefore I cry you mercy, sir, but is there on your mind no business which you would not willingly leave undischarged? Save you, friend, but we are all mortal. Hah, to a lady whom I need not name, it is an affair of considerable import what disposition a bold man might make of this ring—"

Leering, Kennaston touched the great signet-ring on the lad's thumb; and forthwith the universe seemed to fold about him, just as a hand closes. In this brief moment of inexplicable yearning and self-loathing he comprehended that the boy's face was the face of Ettarre.

And Kennaston, awake, was pleading, with meaningless words, "Valentia! forgive me, Valentia! . . ."

And that was all. This dream remained an enigma. Kennaston could never know what events had preceded this equivocal instant, or how Ettarre came to be disguised as a boy, or what were their relations in this dream, nor, above all, why he should have awakened crying upon the name of Valentia. It was simply a law that always when he was about to touch Ettarre—even unconsciously,—everything must vanish; and through the workings of that law this dream, with many others, came to be just a treasured moment of unexplainable but poignant emotion.

XXXI. Horvendile to Ettarre: At Whitehall

To Kennaston the Lord Protector was saying, with grave unction: "You will, I doubt not, fittingly express to our friends in Virginia, Master Major, those hearty sentiments which I have in the way of gratefulness, in that I have received the honor and safeguard of their approbation; for all which I humbly thank them. To our unfriends in that colony we will let action speak when I shall have completed God's work in Ireland."

"Yet the Burgesses, sir, are mostly ill-affected," Kennaston found himself saying, "and Berkeley, to grant him justice, does not lack bravery—"

Cromwell replied: "With Heaven's help, Master Major, I have of late dealt with a king who did not lack bravery. Nay, depend upon it, I shall some day grant William Berkeley utter justice,—such justice as I gave his master, that proud curled man, Charles Stuart."

Then the Lord Protector's face was changed, and his harsh countenance became a little troubled. "Yes, I shall do all this, with Heaven's help, I think. But in good faith, I grow old, Master Major. I move in a mist, and my deeds are strange to me. . . ."

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Cromwell closed and unclosed his hands, regarding them; and he sighed. Then it was to Ettarre he spoke:

"I leave you in Master Major's charge. It may be I shall not return alive into England; indeed, I grow an old man and feel infirmities of age stealing upon me. And so, farewell, my lass. Truly if I love you not too well, I err not on the other hand much. Thou hast been dearer to me than any other creature: let that suffice."

And with this leave-taking the Lord Protector was gone.

As the door closed upon Cromwell's burly figure, "No, be very careful not to touch me," Kennaston implored. "The dream must last till I have found out how through your aid, Ettarre, this bull-necked country squire has come to rule England. It is precisely as I expected. You explain Cromwell, you explain Mohammed,—Richelieu and Tamburlaine and Julius Cæsar, I suspect, and, as I know, Napoleon,—all these men who have inexplicably risen from nothing to earthly supremacy. How is it done, Ettarre?"

"It is not I who contrive it, Horvendile. I am but an incident in such men's lives. They have known me—yes: and knowing me, they were bent enough on their own ends to forget that I seemed not unlovely. It is not the sigil and the power the sigil gives which they love and serve—"

"And that small square mirror, such as Cromwell also carried—?" Kennaston began. "Or is this forbidden talk?"

"Yes, that mirror aids them," Ettarre replied. "In that mirror they can see only themselves. So the mirror aids toward the ends they chose, with open eyes. . . . But you cannot ever penetrate these mysteries now, Horvendile. The secret of the mirror was offered you

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once, and you would not bargain. The secret of the mirror is offered to no man twice."

And Kennaston laughed merrily. "What does it matter? I am perfectly content. That is more than can be said for yonder sanctimonious fat old rascal, who has just told me he is going into Ireland 'for the propagating of the gospel of Christ, the establishing of truth and peace, and the restoring of that bleeding nation to its former happiness and tranquility.' Why is it that people of executive ability seem always to be more or less mentally deficient? Now, you and I know that, in point of fact, he is going into Ireland to burn villages, massacre women, hang bishops, and generally qualify his name for all time as a Hibernian synonym for infamy. Oh, no, the purchase-price of grandeur is too great; and men that crown themselves in this world inevitably perform the action with soiled hands. Still, I wish I had known I was going visiting to-night in seventeenth-century England," said Kennaston, reflectively; "then I could have read up a bit. I don't even know whether Virginia ever submitted to him. It simply shows what idleness may lead to! If I had studied history more faithfully I would have been able tonight to prophesy to Oliver Cromwell about the results of his Irish campaigns and so on, and could have impressed him vastly with my abilities. As it is, I have missed an opportunity which will probably not ever occur again to any man of my generation. . . ."

XXXII. Horvendile to Ettarre: At Vaux-Le-Vicomte

"What fun!" says Kennaston; "we are at Vaux-le-Vicomte, where Fouquet is entertaining young Louis Quatorze. Yonder is La Vallière,—the thin tow-headed girl, with the big mouth. People are just beginning to whisper scandal about her. And that tall jade is Athenaïs de Tonnay-Charente,—the woman who is going to be Madame de Montespan and control everything in the kingdom later on, you remember. The King is not yet aware of her existence, nor has Monsieur de Montespan been introduced. . . .

"The Troupe of Monsieur is about to present an open-air comedy. It is called *Les Facheux*,—The Bores. It is rumored to take off very cleverly the trivial tedious fashion in which perfectly well-meaning people chatter their way through life. But that more fittingly would be the theme of a tragedy, Ettarre. Men are condemned eternally to bore one another. Two hundred years and more from to-day—perhaps forever,—man will lack means, or courage, to voice his actual thoughts adequately. He must still talk of weather probabilities and of having seen So-and-so and of such trifles, that mean to him absolutely nothing,—and must

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babble of these things even to the persons who are most dear and familiar to him. Yes, every reputable man must desperately make small-talk, and echo and re-echo senseless phrases, until the crack of doom. He will always be afraid to bare his actual thoughts and interests to his fellows' possible disapproval: or perhaps it is just a pitiable mania with the race. At all events, one should not laugh at this ageless aspersion and burlesque of man's intelligence as performed by man himself. . . .

"The comedy is quite new. A marquis, with wonderful canions and a scented wig like an edifice, told me it is by an upholsterer named Coquelin, a barn-stormer who ran away from home and has been knocking about the provinces unsuccessfully for nearly twenty years: and my little marquis wondered what in the world we are coming to, when Monsieur le Surintendent takes up with that class of people. Is not my little marquis droll?—for he meant Poquelin, soon to be Poquelin de Molière, of course. Molière, also, is a name which is not famous, as yet. But in a month or so it will be famous for all time; and Monsieur le Surintendent will be in jail and forgotten. . . .

"You smile, Ettarre? Ah, yes, I understand. Molière too adores you. All poets have had fitful glimpses of you, Ettarre, and of that perfect beauty which is full of troubling reticences, and so, is touched with something sinister. I have written as to the price they pay, these hapless poets, in a little book I am inditing through that fat pudgy body I wear in the flesh. . . . Do not frown: I know it is forbidden to talk with you concerning my life in the flesh. . . .

"Ah, the King comes,—evidently in no very amiable frame of mind,—and all rise, like a flurry of great butterflies. It is the beginning of the play. See, a woman is coming out of the big shell in the fountain. . . .

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"I wish my old friend Jonas d'Artagnan were here. It is a real pity he is only a character in fiction,—just as I once thought you to be, Ettarre. Eh, what a fool I was to imagine I had created you! and that I controlled your speech and doings! I know much better now....

"Ettarre, your unattainable beauty tears my heart. Is that black-browed Molière your lover too? What favors have you granted him? You perceive I am jealous. How can I be otherwise, when there is nothing, nothing in me, that does not cry out for love of you? And I am forbidden ever to win quite to you, ever to touch you, ever to see you even save in my dreams!"

XXXIII. Horvendile to Ettarre: In the Conciergerie

They waited in a big dark room of the Conciergerie, with many other condemned emigrants, until the tumbrils should come to fetch them to the Place de la Révolution. They stood beneath a narrow barred window, set high in the wall, so that thin winter sunlight made the girl's face visible. Misery was about them, death waited without: and it did not matter a penny-worth.

"Ettarre, I know to-day that all my life I have been seeking you. Very long ago when I was a child it was made clear that you awaited me somewhere; and, I recollect now, I used to hunger for your coming with a longing which has not any name. And when I went about the dusty world I still believed you waited somewhere,—till I should find you, as I inevitably must, or soon or late. Did I go upon a journey to some unfamiliar place?—it might be that unwittingly I traveled toward your home. I could never pass a walled garden where green tree-tops showed, without suspecting, even while I shrugged to think how wild was the imagining, that there was only the wall between us. I did not know the color of your eyes, but I knew what I would read

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there. And for a fevered season I appeared to encounter many women of earth who resembled you—" "

"All women resemble me, Horvendile. Whatever flesh they may wear as a garment, and howsoever time-frayed or dull-hued or stained by horrible misuse that garment may seem to be, the wearer of that garment is no less fair than I, could any man see her quite clearly. Horvendile, were that not true, could our great Author find anywhere a woman's body which wickedness and ugliness controlled unchecked, all the big stars which light the universe, and even the tiny sun that our earth spins about, would be blown out like unneeded candles, for the Author's labor would have been frustrated and misspent."

"Yes; I know now that this is true. . . . See, Ettarre! Yonder woman is furtively coloring her cheeks with a little wet red rag. She does not wish to seem pale—or is it that she wishes to look her best?—in the moment of death. . . . Ettarre, my love for you whom I could not ever find, was not of earth, and I could not transfer it to any of our women. The lively hues, the lovely curvings and the fragrant tender flesh of earth's women were deft to cast their spells; but presently I knew this magic was only of the body. It might be I was honoring divinity; but it was certain that even in such case I was doing so by posturing before my divinity's effigy in tinted clay. Besides, it is not possible to know with any certainty what is going on in the round glossy little heads of women. 'I hide no secrets from you, because I love you,' say they?—eh, and their love may be anything from a mild preference to a flat lie. And so, I came finally to concede that all women are creatures of like frailties and limitations and reserves as myself, and I was most poignantly lonely when I was luckiest in love. Once only, in my life in the flesh, it seemed to me that a woman, whom I had

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abandoned, held in her hand the sigil visibly. That memory has often troubled me, Ettarre. It may be that this woman could have given me what I sought everywhere in vain. But I did not know this until it was too late, until the chance and the woman's life alike were wasted. . . . And so, I grew apathetic, senseless and without any spurring aspiration, seeing that all human beings are so securely locked in the prison of their flesh."

The girl replied: "When immortals visit earth it is necessary they assume the appearance of some animal. Very long ago, as we have seen, Horvendile, was discovered that secret, which so many myths veil thinly: and have we not learned, too, that the animal's fleshy body is a disguise which it is possible to put aside?"

He said: "That knowledge, so fearfully purchased at the Sabbat, still troubles me, Ettarre. Yes, it is perturbing to be assured I am only a garment which is sometimes worn by that Horvendile who is of the Léshy, and who shifts other puppets than I can imagine. For I am an overweening garment, Ettarre,—or rather, let us say, I flauntingly esteem myself a fine feather in the cap of this eternal Horvendile. So does it sometimes seem to my vainglorious self-conceit that even this demiurgic Horvendile and his Poictesme, and, for that matter, all the living anywhere in this world, are only the notions of a certain fat and flabby dreamer—"

"Nobody can think that, dear Horvendile, so long as he recalls the Sabbat—"

"Indeed," said Kennaston, in startled haste, "I am not likely to forget the Sabbat. . . . Monsieur le Prince, I regret the circumstance, but—as you see—my snuff-box is quite empty. Ah, but yes, as you very justly observe, rappee, repose, and rationality are equally hard to come by in these mad days. . . .

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Is that not droll, Ettarre? This unvenerable old Prince de Gâtinais—once Grand Duke of Noumaria, you remember,—has in his career been guilty of every iniquity and meanness and cowardice: now, facing instant death, he finds time to think of snuff and phrase-making. . . . But—to go back a little,—I had thought the Sabbat would be so different! One imagined there would be cauldrons, and hags upon prancing broomsticks, and a black Goat, of course—”

“How much more terrible it is,” the girl replied,—“and how beautiful!”

“Yet—in despite of that which the Sabbat revealed,—even now I may not touch you, Ettarre.”

“My friend, all men have striven to do that; and I have evaded each one of them at the last, and innumerable are the ways of my elusion. There is no man but has loved me, no man that has forgotten me, and none but has attempted to express that which he saw and understood when I was visible.”

“Do I not know?” the man said, unhappily. “There is no beauty in the world save those stray hints of you, Ettarre. Canvas and stone and verse speak brokenly of you sometimes; all music yearns toward you, Ettarre, all sunsets whisper of you, and it is because they awaken memories of you that the eyes of all children so obscurely trouble and delight us. Ettarre, your unattainable beauty tears my heart. There is nothing, nothing in me, that does not cry out for love of you. And it is the cream of a vile jest that I am forbidden ever to win quite to you, ever to touch you, ever to see you even save in my dreams!”

“Already this dream draws toward an end, my poor Horvendile.”

And he saw that the great doors—which led to death,—were unclosing: and beyond them he saw confusedly a mob of red-capped men, of malignant frenzied women,

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of wide-eyed little children, and the staid officials, chatting pleasantly among themselves, who came to fetch that day's tale of those condemned to the guillotine. But more vividly Kennaston saw Ettarre, and saw how tenderly she smiled, in thin wintry sunlight, as she touched Kennaston upon the breast, so that the dream might end and he might escape the guillotine.

XXXIV. Of One Enigma That Threatened to Prove Allegorical

Then again Kennaston stood alone before a tall window, made up of many lozenge-shaped panes of clear glass set in lead framework. He had put aside one of the two great curtains—of a very fine stuff like gauze, stitched over with transparent glittering beetle-wings, and embroidered with tiny seed pearls,—which hung before this window.

Snow covered the expanse of house-tops without, and the sky without was glorious with chill stars. That white city belonged to him, he knew, with a host of other cities. He was the strongest of kings. People dreaded him, he knew; and he wondered why anyone should esteem a frail weakling such as he to be formidable. The hand of this great king—his own hand, that held aside the curtain before him,—was shrivled and colorless as lamb's wool. It was like a horrible bird-claw.

(“*But then I have the advantage of remembering the twentieth century,*” he thought, fleetingly, “*and all my contemporaries are superstitious ignorant folk. It is strange, but in this dream I appear to be an old man. That never happened before.*”)

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A remote music resounded in his ears, and cloying perfumes were about him. . . .

"I want to be happy. And that is impossible, because there is no happiness anywhere in the world. I, a great king, say this—I, who am known in unmapped lands, and before whom nations tremble. For there are but three desirable things in life,—love and power and wisdom: and I, the king, have sounded the depths of these, and in none is happiness."

Despairing words came to him now, and welled to his lips, in a sort of chaunt:

"I am sad to-night, for I remember that I once loved a woman. She was white as the moon; her hair was a gold cloud; she had untroubled eyes. She was so fair that I longed for her until my heart was as the heart of a God. But she sickened and died: worms had their will of her, not I. So I took other women, and my bed was never lonely. Bright poisonous women were brought to me, from beyond the sunset, from the Fortunate Islands, from Invallis and Planasia even; and these showed me nameless endearments and many curious perverse pleasures. But I was not able to forget that woman who was denied me because death had taken her: and I grew a-weary of love, for I perceived that all which has known life must suffer death.

"There was no people anywhere who could withstand my armies. We traveled far in search of such a people. My armies rode into a country of great heat and endless sands, and contended with the Presbyter's brown horsemen, who fought with arrows and brightly painted bows; and we slew them. My armies entered into a land where men make their homes in the shells of huge snails, and feed upon white worms which have black heads; and we slew them. My armies passed into a land where a people that have no language dwell in dark caves under the earth, and wor-

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ship a stone that has sixty colors; and we slew them, teaching ruthlessly that all which has known life must suffer death.

"Many stiff-necked kings, still clad in purple and scarlet and wearing gold crowns—monarchs whose proud faces, for all that these men were my slaves, kept their old fashion and stayed changeless as the faces of statues,—such were my lackeys: and I burned walled cities. Empires were my playthings, but I had no son to inherit after me. I had no son—only that horrible, blue, smashed and bleeding thing, born dead, that I remember seeing very long ago where the woman I loved lay dead. That would have been my son had the thing lived,—a greater and a nobler king than I. But death willed otherwise: the life that moved in me was not to be perpetuated: and so, the heart in my body grew dried and little and shriveled, like a parched pea: for I perceived that all which has known life must suffer death.

"Then I turned from warfare, and sought for wisdom. I learned all that it is permitted any man to know—oh, I learned more than is permissible. Have I not summoned demons from the depths of the sea, and at the Sabbat have I not smitten haggard Gods upon the cheek? Yea, at Phigalia did I not pass beneath the earth and strive with a terrible Black Woman, who had the head of a horse, and wrest from her what I desired to know? Have I not talked with Morskoï, that evil formless ruler of the Sea-Folk, and made a compact with him? And has not even Phobetor, whose real name may not be spoken, revealed to me his secrets, at a paid price of which I do not care to think, now I perceive that all which has known life must suffer death?

"Yea, by the Hoofs of the Goat! it seems to me that I have done these things; yet how may I be sure?

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For I have learned, too, that all man's senses lie to him, that nothing we see or hear or touch is truthfully reported, and that the visible world at best stands like an island in an uncharted ocean which is a highway, none the less, for much alien traffic. Yet, it seems to me that I found means whereby the universe I live in was stripped of many veils. It seems to me that I do not regret having done this. . . . But presently I shall be dead, and all my dearly-purchased, wearily-earned wisdom must lie quiet in a big stone box, and all which has known life must suffer death.

"For death is mighty, and against it naught can avail: it is terrible and strong and cruel, and a lover of bitter jests. And presently, whatever I have done or studied or dreamed, I must lie helpless where worms will have their will of me, and neither the worms nor I will think it odd, because we have both learned—by how countless attestings!—that all which has known life must suffer death."

A remote music resounded in his ears, and cloying perfumes were about him. Turning, he saw that the walls of this strange room were of iridescent lacquer, worked with bulls and apes and parrots in raised gold: black curtains screened the doors: and the bare floor was of smooth sea-green onyx.

Moreover a woman stood there who did not speak, but only waited. So did he perceive what terror was, for terror possessed him utterly; and yet he was elated, in the while that he said,—

"You have come, then, at last. . . ."

"To you at last I have come as I come to all men," she answered, "in my good hour." Then Ettarre's hands, gleaming and half-hidden with jewels, reached toward his hands, so gladly raised to hers; and the universe seemed to fold about him, just as a hand closes.

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Was it as death she came to him in this dream? —as death made manifest as man's liberation from much vain toil? Kennaston, at least, preferred to think his dreams were not degenerating into such hackneyed, crude, misleading allegories. . . . Or perhaps it was as the ghost of that dead woman whom the king had loved, and must love forever, that Ettarre had come, to guide him very tenderly out of his kingdom in this world, now that the king was age-stricken and near to death, for in this one dream alone Kennaston had seemed to be an old man.

Kennaston could not ever be sure. The broken dream remained an enigma. But he got sweet terror and happiness of the dream, for all that, tasting his moment of inexplicable, poignant emotion; and therewith he was content.

XXXV. Treats of Witches, Mixed Drinks and the Weather

Meanwhile, I used to see Kennaston nearly every day. . . . Looking back, I recollect one afternoon when the Kennastons were calling on us. It was the usual sort of late-afternoon call customarily exchanged by country neighbors. . . .

"We have been intending to come over for ever so long," Mrs. Kennaston explained. "But we have been in such a rush, getting ready for the summer—"

"We only got the carpets up yesterday," my wife assented. "Riggs just kept promising and promising but he did finally get a man out—"

"Well, the roads are in pretty bad shape," I suggested, "and those vans are fearfully heavy—"

"Still, if they would just be honest about it," Mrs. Kennaston bewailed,—"and not keep putting you off—No, I really don't think I ever saw the Loop road in worse condition—"

"It's the long rainy spell we ought to have had in May," I informed her. "The seasons are changing so, though, nowadays that nobody can keep up with them."

"Yes, Felix was saying only to-day," Mrs. Kennas-

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ton observed, with a bright smile, "that we seem no longer to have any real spring. We simply go straight from winter into summer."

"I was endeavoring to persuade her," Kennaston emended, "that it was foolish to go away as long as it stays cool as it is."

"Oh, yes, *now!*" my wife conceded. "But the paper says we are in for a long heat period about the fifteenth. For my part, I think July is always our worst month."

"It is just that you feel the heat so much more during the first warm days," I suggested.

"Oh, no!" my wife said, earnestly; "the nights are cool in August, and you can stand the days. Of course, there are apt to be a few mosquitos in September, but not many if you are careful about standing water—"

"The drain-pipe to the gutter around our porch got stopped somehow, last year"—this Kennaston contributed, morosely,—"and we had a terrible time."

"—Then there is always so much to do, getting the children started at school," my wife continued,—"everything under the sun needed at the last moment, of course! And the way they change all the school-books every year is simply ridiculous. So, if I had my way, we would always go away early, and be back again in good time to get things in shape—"

"Oh, yes, if we could have our way!"—Mrs. Kennaston could not deny that,—"but don't your servants always want August off, to go home? I know ours do: and, my dear, you simply don't dare say a word."

"That is the great trouble in the country," I philosophized,—"in fact, we suburbanites are pretty well hag-ridden by our dusky familiars. The old-time darkies are dying out, and the younger generation is simply worthless. And with no more sense of gratitude— Why, Moira hired a new girl last week, to help out upstairs, and the very first evening—"

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"No, dear, it was in the morning," my wife corrected me, "and everybody knows that the upstairs-girl everywhere used to help out with the cooking quite regularly—"

"Of course they did," Mrs. Kennaston remarked, with unconcealed indignation. "But now, even with the politest of them, you simply never know where you are. For what with the way they leave you, without one minute's notice, hag-ridden, Mr. Harrowby, is really not any name for it. They just *go!*"

"Oh, yes, hag-ridden! like the unfortunate magicians in old stories!" Kennaston broke in, on a sudden. "We were speaking about such things the other day, you remember? I have been thinking— You see, everyone tells me that, apart from being a master soapboiler, Mr. Harrowby, you are by way of being an authority on witchcraft and similar murky accomplishments?" And he ended with that irritating little noise, that was nearly a snigger, and just missed being a cough.

"It so often comes over me," says Moira—which happens to be my wife's name—"that Dick, all by himself, is really Harrowby & Sons, Inc."—she spoke as if I were some sort of writing fluid,—“and has his products on sale all over the world. I look on him in a new light, so to speak, when I realize that daily he is gladdening Calcutta with his soaps, delighting London with his dentifrice, and comforting Nova Zembla with his talcum powder.”

"Well, but I inherited all that. It isn't fair to fling ancestral soap-vats in my face," I reminded her. "And yes, I have dabbled a bit in forces that aren't as yet thoroughly understood, Mr. Kennaston. I wouldn't go so far as to admit to witchcraft, though. Very certainly I never attended a Sabbat."

I recollect, now, how his face changed. "And what

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in heaven's name was a Sabbat?" Then he fidgeted, and crossed his legs the other way.

I replied: "Well! it was scarcely Heaven's name that was invoked there, if old tales are to be trusted. Traditionally, the Sabbat was a meeting attended by all witches in satisfactory diabolical standing, lightly attired in smears of various magical ointments; and their vehicle of transportation to these outings was, of course, the traditional broomstick. Good Friday night," I continued, seeing they all seemed willing enough to listen, "was the favorite time for such gatherings, which were likewise held after dusk on St. John's Eve, on Walburga's Eve, and on Hallowe'en Night. The diversions were numerous: there was feasting, with somewhat unusual fare, and music, and dancing, with the Devil performing obbligatos on the pipes or a cittern, and not infrequently preaching a burlesque sermon. He usually attended in the form of a monstrous goat; and —when not amorously inclined,—often thrashed the witches with their own broomsticks. The more practical pursuits of the evening included the opening of graves, to despoil dead bodies of finger- and toe-joints, and portions of the winding-sheet, with which to prepare a powder that had strange uses. . . . But the less said of that, the better. Here, also, the Devil taught his disciples how to make and christen statues of clay or wax, so that by roasting these effigies the persons whose names they bore would be wasted away by sickness."

"I see," said Kennaston, intently regarding his fingernails: "they must have been highly enjoyable social outings, all around."

"They must have been worse than family reunions," put in Mrs. Kennaston, and affected to shudder.

"Indeed, there are certain points of resemblance," I conceded, "in the general atmosphere of jealous

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hostility and the ruthless digging-up of what were better left buried."

Then Kennaston asked carelessly, "But how could such absurd superstitions ever get any hold on people, do you suppose?"

"That would require rather a lengthy explanation—Why, no," I protested, in answer to his shrug; "the Sabbath is not inexplicable. Hahn-Kraftner's book, or Herbert Perlin's either, will give you a very fair notion of what the Sabbath really was,—something not in the least grotesque, but infinitely more awe-inspiring than is hinted by any traditions in popular use. And Le Bret, whom bookdealers rightly list as 'curious'—"

"Yes, I have read those books, it happens. My uncle had them, you know. But"—Kennaston was plainly not quite at ease,—"but, after all, is it not more wholesome to dismiss such theories as fantastic nonsense, even if they are perfectly true?"

"Why, not of necessity," said I. "As touches what we call the 'occult,' delusion after delusion has been dissipated, of course, and much jubilant pother made over the advance in knowledge. But the last of his delusions, which man has yet to relinquish, is that he invented them. This too must be surrendered with time; and already we are beginning to learn that many of these wild errors are the illegitimate children of grave truths. Science now looks with new respect on folklore—"

"Mr. Kennaston," says Moira, laughing, "I warn you, if you start Dick on his hobbies, he will talk us all to death. So, come into the house, and I will mix you two men a drink."

And we obeyed her, and—somehow—got to talking of the recent thunderstorms, and getting in our hay, and kindred topics.

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Yes, it was much the usual sort of late-afternoon call customarily exchanged by country neighbors. I remember Moira's yawning as she closed the cellarette, and her wondering how Mrs. Kennaston could keep on rouging and powdering at her age, and why Kennaston never had anything in particular to say for himself?

"Do you suppose it is because he has a swelled head over his little old book, or is he just naturally stupid?" she wanted to know.

PART SIX

Which indicates that Lichfield may stand not
far from Poictesme

*"Alas! the sprite that haunts us
Deceives our rash desire;
It whispers of the glorious gods,
And leaves us in the mire:*

*"We cannot learn the cipher
Inscribed upon our cell;
Stars taunt us with a mystery
Which we lack lore to spell."*

XXXVI. Sundry Disclosures of the Press

Such as has been described was now Felix Kennaston's manner of living, which, as touches utilitarian ends, it might be wiser forthwith to dismiss as bred by the sickly fancies of an idle man bemused with unprofitable reading. By day his half of the sigil lay hidden in the library, under a pile of unused book-plates. But nightly this bit of metal was taken with him to bed, in order that, when held so as to reflect the candlelight—for this was always necessary,—it might induce the desired dream of Ettarre; and that, so, Horvendile would be freed of Felix Kennaston for eight hours uninterruptedly.

In our social ordering Felix Kennaston stayed worthy of consideration in Lichfield, both as a celebrity of sorts and as the owner of four bank-accounts; and colloquially, as likewise has been recorded, he was by ordinary dismissed from our patronizing discussion as having long been "queer," and in all probability "a dope-fiend." In Lichfield, as elsewhere, a man's difference from his fellows cannot comfortably be conceded except by assuming the difference to be to his discredit.

Meanwhile, the Felix Kennaston who owned two

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motors and had money in four banks, went with his wife about their round of decorous social duties; and the same Felix Kennaston, with leisured joy in the task, had completed *The Tinctured Veil*—which, as you now know, was woven from the dream-stuff Horvendile had fetched out of that fair country, very far from Lichfield, which is bounded by Avalon and Phæacia and Sea-Coast Bohemia, and the contiguous forests of Arden and Broceliande, and on the west of course by the Hesperides.

Then, just before *The Tinctured Veil* was published, an accident happened.

Fate, as always frugal of display, used simple tools. Kennaston, midway in dressing, found he had no more mouthwash. He went into his wife's bathroom, in search of a fresh bottle. Kathleen was in town for the afternoon, at a card party; and thus it was brought about that Kennaston found, lying in the corner of her bathroom press, and hidden by a bottle of Harrowby's No. 7 Dental Delight, the missing half of the sigil of Scoteia,—the half which Ettarre had retained. There was no doubt about it. He held it in his hand.

"Now that," said Felix Kennaston, aloud, "is rather curious."

He went into the library, and lifted the little pile of unused bookplates; and presently the two pieces of metal lay united upon his wife's dressing-table, between the manicure-set and the pincushion, forming a circle not quite three inches in diameter, just such as he had seen once upon the brow of Mother Isis, and again in the Didascalion when Ptolemy of the Fat Paunch was master of Egypt.

"So, Kathleen somehow found the other half. She has had it from the first. . . . But naturally, I never spoke of Felix Kennaston; it was forbidden, and besides, the sigil's crowning grace was that it enabled me to forget

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his existence. And the girl's name in the printed book is Alison. And Horvendile is such an unimportant character that Kathleen, reading the tale hastily—I thought she simply skimmed it!—did not remember that name either; and so, did not associate the dream names in any way with my book, nor with me. . . . She too, then, does not know—as yet. . . . And, for all that, Kathleen, the real Kathleen, is Ettarre—‘whatsoever flesh she may wear as a garment!’ . . . Or, rather, Ettarre is to Kathleen as Horvendile—but am I truly that high-hearted ageless being? Eh, I do not know, for we touch mystery everywhere. I only know it is the cream of the jest that day by day, while that lean, busy sharp-eyed stranger, whose hands and lips my own hands and lips meet daily, because this contact has become a part of the day's routine—”

But he was standing before his wife's dressing-table, and the mirror showed him a squat insignificant burgess in shirtsleeves, with grizzled untidied hair, and mild accommodating pale eyes, and an inadequate nose, with huge nostrils, and a spacious naked-looking upper-lip. That was Felix Kennaston, so far as were concerned all other people save Kathleen. He smiled; and in the act he noted that the visual result was to make Felix Kennaston appear particularly inane and sheepish. But he knew now that did not matter. Nor did it greatly matter—his thoughts ran,—that it was never permitted any man, not even in his dreams, ever to touch the hands and lips of Ettarre.

So he left there the two pieces of metal, united at last upon his wife's dressing-table, between the manicure-set and the pincushion, where on her return she might find them, and, finding, understand all that which he lacked words to tell.

XXXVII. Considerations toward Sunset

Then Kennaston went for a meditative walk in the abating glare of that day's portentous sunset, wherein the tree-trunks westward showed like the black bars of a grate. It was in just such a twilight that Horvendile had left Storisende. . . .

And presently he came to a field which had been mowed that week. The piled hay stood in rounded heaps suggestive to Kennaston of shaggy giant heads bursting through the soil, as in the old myth of Cadmus and the dragon's teeth; beyond were glittering cornfields, whose tremulous green was shot with brown and sickly yellow now, and which displayed a host of tassels like ruined plumes. Autumn was at hand. And as Kennaston approached, a lark—as though shot vehemently from the ground,—rose singing. Straight into the air it rose, and was lost in the sun's abating brilliance; but still you could hear its singing; and then, as suddenly, the bird dropped earthward.

Kennaston snapped his fingers. "Aha, my old acquaintance!" he said, "but now I envy you no longer!"

Then he walked onward, thinking. . . .

"What did I think of?" he said, long afterward—

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"oh, of nothing with any real clarity. You see—I touched mystery everywhere. . . .

"But I thought of Kathleen's first kiss, and of the first time I came to her alone after we were married, and of our baby that was born dead. . . . I was happier than I had ever been in any dream. . . . I saw that the ties of our ordinary life here in the flesh have their own mystic strength and sanctity. I comprehended why in our highest sacrament we prefigure with holy awe, not things of the mind and spirit, but flesh and blood. . . . A man and his wife, barring stark severance, grow with time to be one person, you see; and it is not so much the sort of person as the indivisibility that matters, with them. . . .

"And I thought of how in evoking that poor shadow of Ettarre which figured first in *The King's Quest*, and which later came to be the gist of all my books, I had consciously written of my dear wife as I remembered her when we were young together. My vocabulary and my ink went to the making of each book's Ettarre: but with them went Kathleen's youth and purity and tenderness and serenity and loving-kindness toward all created things save the women I had flirted with,—so that Kathleen had contributed more than I. . . .

"And I saw that the good-smelling earth about my pudgy pasty body, and my familiar home—as I turned back my pudgy pasty face toward Alclud, bathed now in the sun's gold,—were lovely kindly places. Outside were kings and wars and thunderous zealots, and groaning, rattling thunderous printing-presses, too, that were turning off a book called *The Tinctured Veil*, whereinto had been distilled and bottled up the very best that was in Felix Kennaston; but here was just 'a citadel of peace in the heart of the trouble.' And—well, I was satisfied. People do

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not think very much, nor at all clearly, when they are satisfied."

But he did not walk long; for it was growing chilly, as steadily dusk deepened, in this twilight so like that in which Horvendile had left Storisende forever.

XXXVIII. One Way of Elusion

Kathleen was seated at the dressing-table, arranging her hair, when Kennaston came again into her rooms. He went forward, and without speaking, laid one hand upon each shoulder.

Now for an instant their eyes met in the mirror; and the woman's face he saw there, or seemed to see there, yearned toward him, and was unutterably loving, and compassionate, and yet was resolute in its denial. For it denied him, no matter with what wistful tenderness, or with what wonder at his folly. Just for a moment he seemed to see that; and then he doubted, for Kathleen's lips lifted complaisantly to his, and Kathleen's matter-of-fact face was just as he was used to seeing it.

And thus, with no word uttered, Felix Kennaston understood that his wife must disclaim any knowledge of the sigil of Scoteia, should he be bold enough to speak of it. He knew he would never dare to speak of it in that constricted hide-bound kindly life which he and Kathleen shared in the flesh. To speak of it would mean to become forthwith what people glibly called

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insane. So Horvendile and Ettarre were parted for all time. And Kathleen willed this, no matter with what wistful tenderness, and because of motives which he would never know,—for how could one tell what was going on inside that small round head his hand was caressing? Still, he could guess at her reasons; and he comprehended now that Ettarre had spoken a very terrible truth,—“*All men I must evade at the last, and innumerable are the ways of my elusion.*”

“Well, dear,” he said, aloud; “and was it a pleasant party?”

“Oh, so-so,” Kathleen conceded; “but it was rather a mixed crowd. Hadn’t you better hurry and change your clothes, Felix? It is almost dinnertime, and, you know, we have seats for the theater to-night.”

Quite as if he, too, were thinking of trifles, Felix Kennaston took up the two bits of metal. “I have often wondered what this design meant,” he said, idly,—not looking at her, and hopeful that they were at least permitted this much of allusion to what they dared not speak of openly.

“Perhaps Mr. Harrowby could tell you.” Kathleen also spoke as if with entire indifference,—not looking at him, but into the mirror, and giving deft final touches to her hair.

“Eh—?” Kennaston smiled. “Oh, yes, Dick Harrowby, I grant you, has dabbled a bit in occult matters, but hardly deep enough, I fancy, to explain—this.”

“At all events,” Kathleen considered, “it is a quarter to seven already, and we have seats for the theater to-night.”

He cleared his throat. “Shall I keep this, or you?”

“Why, for heaven’s sake—! The thing is of no value now, Felix. Give it to me.” She dropped the two pieces of metal into the waste-basket by the dressing-table,

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and rose impatiently. "Of course if you don't *mean* to change for dinner—"

He shrugged and gave it up.

So they dined alone together, sharing a taciturn meal, and duly witnessed the drolleries of *The Gutta-Percha Girl*. Kennaston's sleep afterward was sound and dreamless.

XXXIX. Past Storisende Fares the Road of Use and Wont

He read *The Tinctured Veil* in print, with curious wistful wonder. "How did I come to write it?" was his thought. . . . And thereafter Felix Kennaston wrote no more books. He revised painstakingly, for the uniform edition of his works, the "privately printed" volumes of his remote youth; he collected a body of miscellaneous verse in the curiously unequal *Chimes at Midnight*: but after *The Tinctured Veil* he wrote nothing more save only those occasional papers which later were assembled in *How Many Angels*. "I am afraid to write against the author of *Men Who Loved Alison*," he was wont flippantly to declare. And a few of us suspected even then that he spoke the plain truth.

For this Kennaston, to us, seemed like an instrument that had been used to accomplish a needed bit of work, and, when the work was done, had been put by. And he did not matter: what only mattered was the fact that we possessed *Men Who Loved Alison*. A quota of youngsters here and there, I know, begin to assert that we have in *The Tinctured Veil* an affair of even more grave importance, and they may be right.

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It is a question which will for our generation remain unsettled.

Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Kennaston continued their round of decorous social duties: their dinner-parties were chronicled in the *Lichfield Courier-Herald*; and Kennaston delivered, by request, two scholarly addresses before the Lichfield Woman's Club, he was duly brought forward to shake hands with all celebrities who visited the city, and he served acceptably in the vestry of his church.

Was Felix Kennaston content?—that is a question he alone could have answered.

"But why shouldn't I have been?" he said, a little later, in reply to the pointblank query. "I had a handsome home, two motors, money in four banks, and a good-looking wife who loved and coddled me. The third prince gets no more at the end of any fairy tale. Still, the old woman spoke the truth, of course,—one pays as one goes out. . . . Oh, yes, one pays!—that is an inevitable rule; but what you have to pay is not exorbitant, all things considered. . . . So, be off with your crude pessimisms, Harrowby!"

And indeed, when one comes to think, he was in no worse case than any other husband of his standing. "Who wins his love must lose her," as no less tunefully than wisely sings one of our poets—a married bard, you may be sure,—and all experience tends to prove his warbling perfectly veracious. Romancers, from Time's nonage, have invented and have manipulated a host of staple severances for their puppet lovers,—sedulously juggling, ever since Menander's heyday, with compromising letters and unscrupulous rivals and shipwrecks and wills and testy parents and what not,—and have contrived to show love over-riding these barriers

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plausibly enough. But he would truly be a boldfaced rhapsodist who dared at outset to unite his chosen pair of puppet lovers,—I mean, in plain prosaic marriage, with each other,—and then to depict their love as surviving their union, unchanged.

I am thus digressing, in obsolete Thackerayan fashion, to twaddle about love-matches alone. People marry through a variety of other reasons, and with varying results: but to marry for love is to invite inevitable tragedy. There needs no side-glancing here at such crass bankruptcies of affection as end in homicide or divorce proceedings, or even just in daily squabbling: these dramas are of the body. They may be taken as the sardonic comedies, or, at their most outrageous, as the blustering cheap melodramas, of existence; and so lie beyond the tragic field. For your true right tragedy is enacted on the stage of a man's soul, with the man's reason as lone auditor.

And being happily married—but how shall I word it? Let us step into the very darkest corner. Now, my dear Mr. Grundy, your wife is a credit to her sex, an ornament to her circle, and the mainstay of your home; and you, sir, are proverbially the most complacent and uxorious of spouses. But you are not, after all, married to the girl you met at the chancel-rail, so long and long ago, with unforgotten tremblings of the knees. Your wife, that estimable matron, is quite another person. And you live in the same house, and you very often see her with hair uncombed, or even with a disheveled temper; you are familiar with her hours of bathing, her visits to the dentist, and a host of other physical phenomena we need not go into; she does not appreciate your jokes; she peeps into your personal correspondence; she keeps the top bureau-drawer in a jumble of veils and gloves and powder-rags and hair-pins and heaven knows what; her gowns continually

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require to be buttoned up the back* in an insane incalculable fashion; she irrationally orders herring for breakfast, though you never touch it:—and, in fine, your catalogue of disillusionments is endless.

Hand upon heart, my dear Mr. Grundy, is this the person to whom you despatched those letters you wrote before you were married? Your wife has those epistles safely put away somewhere, you may depend on it: and for what earthly consideration would you read them aloud to her? Some day, when one or the other of you is dead, those letters will ring true again, and rouse a noble sorrow; and the survivor will be all the better for reading them. But now they only prove you were once free of uplands which you do not visit nowadays: and this common knowledge is a secret every wife must share half-guiltily with her husband—even in your happiest matrimonial ventures,—as certainly as it is the one topic they may not ever discuss with profit.

For you are married, you and she: and you live, contentedly enough, in a four-square world, where there is the rent and your social obligations and the children's underclothing to be considered, long and long before indulgence in rattle-pate mountain-climbing. And people glibly think of you as Mr. and Mrs. Grundy now, almost as a unit: but do you really know very much about that woman whose gentle breathing—for we will not crudely call it snoring,—you are privileged, now, to hear every night until the one or the other of you is done with breathing? Suppose, by a wild flight of fancy, that she is no more honest with you than you are with her?

So to Kennaston his wife remained a not unfriendly mystery. They had been as demi-gods for a little while;

*One preserves with vast pleasure this archaic quaint touch.

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and the dream had faded, to leave it matters not what memories; and they were only Mr. and Mrs. Felix Bulmer Kennaston. Of all of us, my fellow failures in the great and hopeless adventure of matrimony, this apologue is narrated.

Yet, as I look into my own wife's face—no more the loveliest, but still the dearest of all earthly faces, I protest,—and as I wonder how much she really knows about me, or the universe at large, and have not the least notion,—why, then I elect to believe that, in the ultimate, Kennaston was not dissatisfied. For each and all of us the dream-haze merges into the glare of common day; the *dea certé*, whom that fled roseate light transfigured, stands confessed a simple loving woman, a creature of like flesh and limitations as our own: but who are we to mate with goddesses? It is enough that much in us which is not ever to be measured by the strait tenets of common-sense has for once found exercise—has had its high-pitched outing, howsoever fleet,—and that, because of many abiding memories, we know, assuredly, the way of all flesh is not merely a futile scurrying through dining-rooms and offices and shops and parlors, and thronged streets and restaurants, “and so to bed.”

XL. Which Mr. Flaherty Does Not Quite Explain

With the preceding parchment I wish I might end the story. For what follows—which is my own little part in the story of Felix Kennaston,—is that uncomfortable sort of anticlimax wherein the key to a mystery, by unlocking unsuspected doors, discloses only another equally perplexing riddle.

Kathleen Kennaston died in her sleep some eleven months after her husband discovered the missing half of the sigil....

"I have a sort of headache," she said, toward nine o'clock in the evening. "I believe I will go to bed, Felix."

So she kissed him good-night, in just that emotionless preoccupied fashion which years of living together had made familiar; and so she left him in the music-room, to smoke and read magazines. He never saw her living any more.

Kathleen stopped in the hall, to wind the clock. "Don't forget to lock the front door when you come up, Felix." She was out of sight, but he could hear her, as well as the turning of the clock key. "I forgot to tell you I saw Adèle Van Orden to-day, at Greenberg's. They are going down to the Beach Thursday. She told

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me they hadn't had a cook for three days now, and she and old Mrs. Haggage have had to do all the work. She looked it, too,—I never saw any one let themselves go all to pieces the way she has—”

“How—? Oh, yes,” he mumbled, intent upon his reading; “it is pretty bad. Don’t many of them keep their looks as you do, dear—”

And that was all. He never heard his wife’s voice any more. Kennaston read contentedly for a couple of hours, and went to bed. It was in the morning the maid found Mrs. Kennaston dead and cold. She had died in her sleep, quite peacefully, after taking two headache powders, while her husband was contentedly pursuing the thread of a magazine story through the advertising columns. . . .

Kennaston had never spoken to her concerning the sigil. Indeed, I do not well see how he could have dared to do so, in view of her attitude in a world so opulent in insane asylums. But among her effects, hidden away as before in the press in her bathroom, Kennaston found both the pieces of metal. They were joined together now, forming a perfect circle, but with the line of their former separation yet visible.

He showed me the sigil of Scoteia, having told this tale. . . .

I had thought from the first there would prove to be supernal double-dealing back of all this. The Wardens of Earth sometimes unbar strange windows, I suspect,—windows which face on other worlds than ours; and They permit this or that man to peer out fleetingly, perhaps, just for the joke’s sake; since always They humorously contrive matters so this man shall never be able to convince his fellows of what he has seen, or of the fact that he was granted any peep at all. The Wardens without fail arrange what we call—gravely, too,—“some natural explanation.”

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Kennaston showed me the sigil of Scoteia, having told this tale. . . .

"You are interested in such things, you see,—just as Kathleen said. And I have sometimes wondered if when she said, 'Perhaps Mr. Harrowby could tell you,' the words did not mean more than they seemed then to mean—?"

I was interested now, very certainly. But I knew that Kathleen Kennaston had referred not at all to my interest in certain of the less known sides of existence, which people loosely describe as "occult."

And slowly, I comprehended that for the thousandth time the Wardens of Earth were uncompromised; that here too They stayed unconvicted of negligence in Their duty: for here was at hand the "natural explanation." Kennaston's was one of those curious, but not uncommon, cases of self-hypnosis, such as Fehlig and Alexis Bidoche have investigated and described. Kennaston's first dream of Ettarre had been an ordinary normal dream, in no way particularly remarkable; and afterward, his will to dream again of Ettarre, co-operating with his queer reading, his temperament, his idle life, his belief in the sigil, and co-operating too—as yet men may not say just how,—with the hypnotic effects of any small bright object when gazed at steadily, had been sufficient to induce more dreams. I could understand how it had all befallen in consonance with hackneyed laws, insane as was the outcome.

And the prelate and the personage had referred, of course, to the then-notorious nineteenth and twentieth chapters of *Men Who Loved Alison*, in which is described the worship of the sigil of Scoteia,—and which chapters they, in common with a great many other people, considered unnecessarily to defile a noble book. The coincidence of the mirrors was quaint, but in itself came to less than nothing; for as touches the

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two questions as to white pigeons, the proverb alluded to by the personage, concerning the bird that fouls its own nest, is fairly familiar, and the prelate's speech was the most natural of prosaic inquiries. What these two men had said and done, in fine, amounted to absolutely nothing until transfigured, in the crucible of an ardent imagination, by the curious literary notion that human life as people spend it is purposeful and clearly motived.

For what Kennaston showed me was the metal top of a cold cream jar. I am sure of this, for Harrowby's Crème Cleopatre is one of the most popular articles our firm manufactures. I hesitate to tell you how many thousand husbands may find at will among their wives' possessions just such a talisman as Kennaston had discovered. I myself selected the design for these covers when the stuff was first put in the market. They are sealed on, you may remember, with gray wax, to carry out the general idea that we are vending old Egyptian secrets of beauty. And the design upon these covers, as I have since been at pains to make sure, is in no known alphabet.

P. N. Flaherty (the artist implicated) tells me he "just made it up out of his head,"—blending meaningless curlicues and dots and circles with an irresponsible hand, and sketching a crack across all, "just to make it look ancient like." It was along this semblance of a fracture—for there the brittle metal is thinnest,—that the cover first picked up by Kennaston had been broken. The cover he showed me was, of course, complete. . . . So much for Mr. Flaherty's part in the matter; and of hieroglyphic lore, or any acquaintance with heathenry beyond his gleanings from the moving pictures, I would be the last person to suspect him.

It was natural that Mrs. Kennaston should have used Harrowby's Crème Cleopatre habitually; for indeed, as

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my wife had often pointed out, Mrs. Kennason used a considerable amount of toilet preparations. And that Mrs. Allardyce should have had a jar of Harrowby's Crème Cleopatre in her handbag was almost inevitable: there is no better restorative and cleanser for the complexion, after the dust and dirt of a train-journey, as is unanimously acknowledged by Harrowby & Sons' advertisements.

But there is the faith that moves mountains, as we glibly acknowledge with unconcernment as to the statement's tremendous truth; and Felix Kennaston had believed in his talisman implicitly from the very first. Thus, through his faith, and through we know not what soul-hunger, so many long hours, and—here is the sardonic point,—so many contented and artistically-fruitful hours of Kennaston's life in the flesh had been devoted to contemplation of a mirage. It was no cause for astonishment that he had more than once surprised compassion and wonder in his wife's eyes: indeed, she could hardly have failed to suspect his mind was affected; but, loving him, she had tried to shield him, as is the way of women....

In brief, I found the whole matter droll and rather heart-breaking. But the Wardens of Earth were uncompromised, so far as I could prove. Whatever windows had or had not been unbarred, there remained no proof....

So I shook my head. "Why, no," said I, with at worst a verbal adhesion to veracity, "I, for one, do not know what the design means. Still, you have never had this deciphered," I added, gently. "Suppose—suppose there had been some mistake, Mr. Kennaston,—that there was nothing miraculous about the sigil, after all?"

I cannot tell you of his expression; but it caused me

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for the moment to feel disconcertingly little and obtuse.

"Now, how can you say that, I wonder!" he marveled,—and then, of course, he fidgeted, and crossed his legs the other way,—"when I have been telling you, from alpha to omega, what is the one great thing the sigil taught me—that everything in life is miraculous. For the sigil taught me that it rests within the power of each of us to awaken at will from a dragging nightmare of life made up of unimportant tasks and tedious useless little habits, to see life as it really is, and to rejoice in its exquisite wonderfulness. If the sigil were proved to be the top of a tomato-can, it would not alter that big fact, nor my fixed faith. No, Harrowby, the common names we call things by do not matter,—except to show how very dull we are," he ended, with that irritating noise that was nearly a snigger, and just missed being a cough.

Then he was silent. Evening was approaching now, and twilight gathered in the room. But as Kennaston sat there looking down into the open fire, its glow made plainly visible his pudgy and vacuous face. . . .

And I was sorely tempted. . . . You see, I never liked Felix Kennaston. The man could create beauty, to outlive him; but in his own appearance he combined grossness with insignificance, and he added thereto a variety of ugly senseless little mannerisms. He could evolve interesting ideas, as to Omnipotence, the universe, art, life, religion, himself, his wife, a candlestick or a comet—anything,—and very probably as to me; but his preferences and his limitations would conform and color all these ideas until they were precisely what he desired to believe, no more or less; and, having them, he lacked means, or courage, to voice his ideas adequately, so that to talk with him meant a dull interchange of commonplaces. Again, he could aspire toward chivalric love, that passion which sees in

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womankind High God made manifest in the loveliest and most perfect of His creations; but in the quest he had succeeded merely in utilizing womenfolk either as toys to play with and put by or as drudges to wait on him; yet, with all this, he could retain unshaken his faith in and his worship of that ideal woman. He could face no decision without dodging; no temptation without compromise; and he lied, as if by instinct, at the threatened approach of discomfort or of his fellows' disapproval: yet devils, men and seraphim would conspire in vain in any effort to dissuade him from his self-elected purpose. For, though he would do no useful labor he could possibly avoid, he could grudge nothing to the perfection of his chosen art, in striving to perpetuate the best as he saw it.

In short, to me this man seemed an inadequate kick-worthy creature, who had muddled away the only life he was quite certain of enjoying, in contemplation of a dream; and who had, moreover, despoiled the lives of others, too, for the dream's sake. To him the dream alone could matter,—his proud assurance that life was not a blind and aimless business, not all a hopeless waste and confusion; and that he, this gross weak animal, could be strong and excellent and wise, and his existence a pageant of beauty and nobility. To prove this dream was based on a delusion would be no doubt an enjoyable retaliation, for Kennaston's being so unengaging to the eye and so stupid to talk to; but it would make the dream no whit less lovely or less dear to him,—or to the rest of us, either.

For it occurred to me, as we sat together there in the firelight, with the dusk rising everywhere about us, that his history was, in essentials, the history of our race, thus far. All which I advanced for or against him, equally, was true of all men that have ever lived. . . . For it is in this inadequate flesh that each of us must

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serve his dream; and so, must fail in the dream's service, and must parody that which he holds dearest. To this we seem condemned, being what we are. Thus, one and all, we play false to the dream, and it evades us, and we dwindle into responsible citizens. And yet always thereafter—because of many abiding memories, —we know, assuredly, that the way of all flesh is not, not merely, a futile scurrying through dining-rooms and offices and shops and parlors, and thronged streets and restaurants, "and so to bed." . . .

It was in appropriate silence, therefore, that I regarded Felix Kennaston, as a parable. This man was not only very human: he was humanity.

THE EPILOGUE

Which is the proper ending of all comedies; and
heralds, it may be, an afterpiece.

“The Past is over and fled;
Named new, we name it the old;
Thereof some tale hath been told,
But no word comes from the dead.

“Still we say as we go,—
‘Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day.’ ”

THE EPILOGUE

"And yet, sir," I have said, by and by, "yet it is only by preserving faith in human dreams that we may, after all, perhaps some day make them come true."

And Kennaston, without bothering to look toward me, had gravely inclined his head.

"In fact," he remarked, "that sums up everything nicely enough. So here, upon this note of temperate optimism—howsoever cautiously conditioned and be-hedged and qualified,—here let us end the long journeying of the life of Manuel. For logic now demands that of me, here and in no other place."

I was, you may depend upon it, startled. . . . I saw then that the old fellow was still looking, not at me, but into the fireplace where the red glowing seemed to detain his gaze. And I felt that this was not quite Felix Kennaston, but, rather, through the virtue of that small steady glowing, in some part Horvendile who was now talking.

"Meanwhile," he said, "that life has journeyed a far way, from the body of the Redeemer of Poictesme to the body of Felix Kennaston, and from the high turrets of Storisende to the penned-in, quiet library of

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Alclud. There has been adventuring in the journey, much of it pleasant enough: the codes of chivalrous and gallant persons, and of little poets also, have been fairly tested in many lands and times: yet the comedy has not, after all, very greatly differed in any place or era."

He moved, uneasily. He sighed. He said, still looking down into the fire:

"I deduce that the thing said to Florian de Puysange by the red-headed guide of all, holds true. The comedy of the life of Manuel does not vary. The first act is the imagining of the place where contentment exists and may be come to; and the second act reveals the striving toward, and the third act the falling short of, that shining goal,—or, else, the attaining of it, to discover that happiness, after all, abides a thought farther down the bogged, rocky, clogged, befogged, heart-breaking road."

To this more or less incomprehensible sort of talking I replied with quiet stubbornness. I said:

"But, even so,—and even then,—the wise will yet reflect that it is only by preserving faith in human dreams that we may, after all, perhaps some day make them come true,—and that we may thus add to the comedy of the life of man an afterpiece."

"You may be right," a strangely tired and shrunk looking Kennaston answered me, "and certainly I cannot go so far as to say that you are wrong. But, still, at the same time—! Yes, that is how I feel about it, even now. . . . In any case, the journeying must by every rule of logic end here. For the life of Manuel, housed, after twenty-two removes, in the fat body of Felix Kennaston, has, after all, regained the road to Storisende—"

At that I remarked: "I, in my turn, deduce, sir, that, now you possess—as you call the thing,—the complete

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sigil, you must have used it yet again, in some manner which you have never told me about?"

He said: "I have not ever employed the complete sigil. And it is true I have not told you everything. Why should I? No Author ever does. . . . So, as yet, this Kennaston waits, in the quiet library at Alclud, mildly bored and a bit puzzled by the Lichfield in whose affairs he has somehow become involved. But an assured way out of all these drab annoyances is known to him, and the way back is known, also, to that Poictesme from which the life of Manuel a great long while ago set forth. With Felix Kennaston—or, if you prefer it so, with Horvendale,—rests safe this secret and peculiar knowledge as to how the life of Manuel may yet repair to its first home after some seven centuries of exile. Thus will the traveller return—by and by—to the place of his starting; the legend of the second coming of the Redeemer will be justified, in, at all events, my lesser world; and the tale of Manuel's life will have come again, as it did once beside the pool of Haranton, full circle."

"Alas, my friend," I observed, "if you spoke Greek or Coptic now it might be I would understand you rather better."

But I was at large pains to talk unemphatically, and to keep my voice well lowered. For it was plain enough that this pudgy, old, neurotic wreckage of a man, once more, was partly hypnotized, by gazing thus steadily into the small bright fire; and I was finding his queer borderland condition to be of some interest.

He said then: "Felix Kennaston, alone of all the Manuelides, has returned to Storisende. He too has acquired that sigil and that secret—forever unknown to you, my poor Harrowby,—through which this elderly and this rather famous person has glimpsed, howsoever brokenly, the loves and the desires and the adventures

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he had when he wore another body than the gray body which he now wears. And to this Felix Kennaston also has been shown—a bit tantalizingly—the face of an unforgotten boy who has been free, through seven whole centuries, to follow after his own thinking and his own desires. . . . For the comedy of the life of Manuel, I repeat, does not ever vary."

"Yet by and by," I prompted him, "you, Horvendile, will employ the complete sigil?"

"Yes, by and by," the droning, very tired voice went on. "And then a lean and snub-nosed stranger will come to me also. 'And what is that thing?' this stranger will perforce be asking, as he asks of everyone at long last. Nor can the answer ever vary, whether it be you or I or any other man who speaks at the end of his living here. 'It is the figure of a man which I have modeled and remodeled, and cannot get exactly to my liking.' . . . For thus it has been in the old days and in every day. And this is the end of every comedy. Yet—I agree with you, my Harrowby,—yet, if the Author will it, there may be appended to any comedy an after-piece. Meanwhile, so far as I may judge, the life of Manuel ends here."

Thereafter he sat gazing rather moodily into the fire. And I too summed up in brief my entire knowledge as to this matter by saying nothing whatever.

EXPLICIT

THE
LINEAGE OF LICHFIELD
ANOTHER COMEDY OF EVASION

*" . . . atavis edite regibus,
o et præsidium et dulce decus meum"*

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THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY
To Lewis Galantière

"Lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. These are they which came out of great tribulation."

I. *The Epistle Dedicatory*

1

You have herewith the book which you once desired me to make, in just the utterly unreadable form which you suggested. Indeed, I can now see that in no less devastating manner could I well dispose of the questions you then asked, a bit sceptically, as to "the connecting theme" of my books in gross.

For the quite obvious connection is the fact that they constitute a largish family tree, which I herewith present for your confusion. It is a genealogy—although for reasons that are hereinafter, I trust, made plain, the compiler elects to call it a Biography,—of which the evolution was begun as far back as 1901, when I wrote the first of the stories afterward bound up together as *The Line of Love*. And the general "method" followed in that volume,—of depicting a decisive passage in the lives of two persons, then a similar untying of knots in the life of a child of that couple, and yet afterward in one of the grandchildren's life-history,—has been extended, but never altered, in my succeeding volumes. The most plain connection of my various books is, thus, precisely the same connection that exists between the several stories in my first written book, *The Line of*

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Love. And all traces—pretty clearly now—from Dom Manuel, and the descendants whom he and Alianora left in England, and the other descendants whom he and Niafer left in Poictesme, and from the eleven images that he and Freydis informed with fire from Audela, and set to live as men among mankind.

But I like to think that, in a deeper sense, the coherency of these books is not merely genealogic. . . . *Beyond Life* now stands as a sort of preface to embody the vital and æsthetic theories thereafter builded on, as well as generally to indicate the forces to which my protagonist later reacts. Forthwith you have Manuel, and have Jurgen, posed as the ancestors and life-sources of all my leading characters. Forthwith, too, you have my protagonist. For it is the life of Manuel, and the life of Jurgen, as this life is perpetuated in the descendants of each, that I continue to tell about. The vital principle of each of these extreme types is presently blended with the other, in the person and in the progeny of Mélite de Puysange; and the compound—need one say?—is very variously affected and guided and foiled by the *milieu* in which it thereafter happens to find itself. But, actually, with Manuel's life, and in somewhat less degree with Jurgen's life, as each life is transmitted through a score-and-odd of generations down to the present continuance of this life in Lichfield,—with this protagonist are my books concerned always. . . .

Manuel, let me say here, I planned to be the type which finds its sole, if incomplete, expression in action: I have, in consequence, been at some trouble to refrain from ascribing to Dom Manuel any thoughts whatsoever. And Jurgen was designed to illustrate Dom Manuel's utmost contrary, in that Jurgen derives his real, his deepest, his one unfailing pleasure, from the exercise of his—if the fact may here be rather bluntly

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outspoken without offending my friend and benefactor, Mr. John S. Sumner,*—in the exercise, I repeat, of his intelligence. To Jurgen, the progenitor of all the poets and all the inadequate, unpractical persons in my books, the most interesting thing in the world—in fact, the one wholly worthwhile thing,—is to watch his own brain working, especially when this fine curious toy is set to out-match the workings of some other brain. . . . Between these two extremes range the inherited traits of their descendants, who display, not unnaturally, an occasional marked family resemblance. And the “connecting theme” of the books, viewed in this light, would seem to be the lean and dusty axiom that human beings and human living are pretty much the same in most times and stations, and come by varying roads, as did Jurgen the pawnbroker and Manuel the high Count, to pretty much the same end.

Yet, underlying all, of course, is the quite other “connecting theme” that Horvendile is the erratic demiurge who composes and controls the entire business extempore, without any prompter except his own æsthetic whims: but that is really a matter almost too complex here to explain. Rather does discretion urge me to refer you to Sævius Nicanor’s fine chapter on this very interesting theory. For it all comes back to theory, and to the cooling reflection that it is the nature of every explanatory theory to be evolved some while after the phenomena which it accounts for,—even, I suspect, when it is one’s own theory about one’s own books.

*For whose fond thaumaturgy, compare *Taboo* in the eighteenth volume of this set of books.

In any event, it was your suggestion, some while ago, that I compile and put in order such a selection from Colonel Rudolph Musgrave's books and from his various genealogical notes and articles (now occultly enriching the back files of the *Lichfield Historical Association's Quarterly Magazine*) as would make plain the family connection between my chronicles of Lichfield and the stories of Poictesme. Here then is that selection. Hereinafter is that relationship set forth, very simply and baldly, with no effort toward any of the auctorial graces save the lean virtue of clarity. Just to be clear is my one aim: and so I need not tell you that I hereinafter avoid all pedantry and shun the antiquary's vice of larding his clipped jargon with as many tatters of strange tongues and patriarchal spelling as he can possibly lug in anywhere that plain English would serve him better.

Now on the face of it, as I have confessed, the thing is a pedigree which indicates the descent of various persons, about whom I have written the stories and books named marginally, from Dom Manuel of Poictesme. In reality, I think, this volume is an outline—or, say, a map,—of some nine centuries of Dom Manuel's life, the life of which my other books are the biography. For, be it repeated, the life that informed tall Manuel the Redeemer did not become extinct when the old champion rode westward with Grandfather Death. The body and the appearance of Dom Manuel had gone. But his life remained perpetuated in divers children—in, to be accurate, a respectable total of sixteen persons,—who afterward transmitted this life to their progeny, as did they in turn to their own offspring. So this life

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flowed on through time,—and through such happenings in France and England and America as, one by one, my books have recorded,—with every generation dividing and subdividing the troubled and attritioned flowing into more numerous streamlets. And Manuel's life came thus to Lichfield, by and by, and is not yet extinct in my contemporary Townsends and Kennastons and Musgraves, of all whom I hereinafter trace out for you the descent from Manuel.

It is about this life that I have written elsewhere, in many places, in various chapters of a Biography which is largish now, but stays incomplete, and may not ever be completed. For this human life, as I write about it, appears to me a stream that, in journeying toward an unpredictable river, itself the tributary of an unplumbed ocean, is fretted equally (still to preserve the fluvial analogue) by the winds of time and by many pebbles of chance. So are there various ripples raised upon the stream as it goes—ultimately—seaward: and, noting these, we say this ripple is Manuel, that Ormskirk, and the other Charteris; noting also that while we name it the small stir is gone. But the stream remains unabated, nor is the sureness of its moving lessened, any more than is the obscurity of its goal.

Or let us shift the figure. Let us, rather, liken this continuous reincarnated life of Manuel to an itinerant comedian that with each generation assumes the garb of a new body, and upon a new stage enacts a variant of yesterday's drama. For I do not find the comedy ever to be much altered in its essentials. I incline, precisely as Felix Kennaston inclined, to accept that summary which Horvendile delivered to Florian de Puysange

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beside the asherah stone. The first act is the imagining of the place where contentment exists and may be come to; and the second act reveals the striving toward, and the third act the falling short of, that shining goal, or else (the difference here being negligible) the attaining of it, to discover that happiness, after all, abides a thought farther down the bogged, rocky, clogged, befogged heart-breaking road, if anywhere. That is the comedy which, to my finding, as well as to the finding of Felix Kennaston, the life of Manuel has enacted over and over again on every stage between Poictesme and Lichfield.

I call it a comedy. Really there is thin sustenance for the tragic muse in the fact that with each performance the costume of the protagonist is spoiled, and the human body temporarily informed with Manuel's life is thrown perforce to the dust-heap. There is not even apparent, to reflection, any economic loss. For the wardrobe of this world-roving vagabond is self-replenishing, in that as each costume is used, it thriftily begets new apparel for the comedian to ruin in to-morrow's rendering of the old play. The parent's flesh is flung by like an outworn coat: but the comedian, reclad with the child's body, tricked out with strong fresh sinews and re-rouged with youth, is lustily refurbishing, with a garnish of local allusions and of the latest social and religious and political slang, all yesterday's archaic dialogue and inveterate "situations."

Now in the light of this comœdic metaphor—the metaphor which upon the whole I prefer,—the researches of Colonel Musgrave can deal with no large portion of the vagabond's wardrobe. For the Colonel

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has of course concerned himself with only that relatively brief part of the tour wherein life has worn human bodies. Previously, they whisper, the scenery was arboreal, and our comedian wore fur and a tail; as before that his costume was reptilian, and yet earlier was piscine. So do the scientists trace backward his career to life's first appearance upon the stage, when the *vis comica* which later was to animate the thews of Manuel had for its modest apparel only a small single bubble embedded in primeval slime.

Always, as Felix Kennaston perceived, our comedian has dressed his rôle with increasing elaborateness, progressing from a mere pinhead of sentiency to all the intricate fripperies of the human body, with its wealth of modern improvements, in the form of forward-looking bifocal eyes, and of prehensile fingers and of lips which are alike kissable and multiloquent.

Nor is this all. For, so magnificently has he, through many centuries of endeavor, reorganized his stage-setting in the sundry nooks of Earth enriched with his main centers of civilization and with his stupendous fulminating wars, that it is not past the reach of poetic imagining to suppose the telescopes of Earth's nearest neighbor may quite possibly have detected some one of these fermenting pustules.

That proud contingency as yet stays guesswork, but less remotely this comedian has made sure of his art's last need. Upon Earth's epidermis he has created an audience more certain and more immediate than are those it may be interested Martians, by very patiently training some cells in the human brain once in a while to think. And since every form of æsthetic effort is spurred by any prospect of applause from any source howsoever trivial, one must surmise that the performance is given with renewed gusto now the comedian's

The Cream of the Jest

antics may be marvelled over by this gray beading so unobtrusively inwrought into his latest costume.

Yet there is a drawback to this evolving of man's brain as a dramatic critic. This drawback is that the one honest verdict to be wrung from the small wet sponge which lines all skulls, even those of many authors and of famous clergymen, must be a lament that, in its every performance, the play has been (and, for that matter, bids fair to remain, in the last cold electric-lit futurity) a bit depressingly confined to this theme of striving toward a goal that, gained or lost, proves not to be the true goal, after all. And then *da capo!* . . . Yes, it really is depressing, because there is in this unending captaincy of a forlorn hope, in this futile and obstinate romanticism of life's vaudeville, just the element to which our most applauded "realists" most strenuously object, as being untrue to life; and in the withering light of our best aesthetic theories, the performance seems wanly rococo and unreal.

5

Still, I spoke overrashly of futurity, before which, in point of fact, my imaginings balk. For to-morrow the age-old comedian will be doing and wearing none knows what, although in reason the restless artist that we call life cannot long stay content with human bodies for his apparel and medium. Already, in considerate eyes, life tends to some more handsome expression, by means of the harnessed chemistries and explosions, and collaborating flywheels and vapors, and wire-dancing thunderbolts, that in all our cities dwarf the human beings who serve as the release levers. Already, as many philosophers recognize, we are so generally fed and clothed and sheltered and carried everywhither by

The Cream of the Jest

machinery that we can lay no grave claim to be thought more than its parasites. And already the era appears well in sight when every need of civilization and every business of life will be discharged by the pressure of electric buttons, and when, in America at least, the one essential part of man will be his forefinger.

But at prophecy, I repeat, I balk. I am duly tempted to weigh the likelihood that with disuse the other organs and members of mankind will atrophy and will disappear, and that our national nicety will then make an end of all by suppressing this surviving forefinger as a probably phallic symbol. But into these high considerations here is happily no need to enter. It may seem to hidebound logic quite certain that human beings are just one season's fashion in life's clothes, and that next season something entirely different will be worn. With such sartorial forecasts I have here no quarrel, and if I do not tell you the real truth of the matter it is merely because I do not know this truth. I merely know that, even though the life of our planet may by and by discard mankind just as it has discarded the dodo and the dinosaur, at present men and women are life's latest clothing: and I take it to be the part of urbanity to accept the mode of our day. So I must tacitly confine myself to this one season in Dom Manuel's endlessly roving life,—and in your life and mine,—and neither here nor in my books may I presume to prattle of apotheoses.

Dumbarton Grange
August, 1921



THE LINEAGE OF LICHFIELD

Being a partial list of the descendants of Dom
Manuel, Count of Poictesme, as compiled from
the books and papers of R. V. Musgrave.

Figures above the line indicate the generation in descent from Dom Manuel of Poictesme. Dates prior to 1752 are Old Style, except that the year is estimated as beginning 1 January.

Abbreviations Employed:

- b. = born.
- bapt. = baptized.
- dau. = daughter.
- d.s.p. = decessit sine prole.
- m. = married.
- unm. = unmarried.

II. *The Tribe of Niafer*

Manuel¹ the Redeemer, Count of Poictesme, b. 23 Dec. 1213, d. 29 Sept. 1239, was, according to tradition, the son of the water demon Oriander and the peasant girl Dorothy of the White Arms, who is called in one version of the story Vraswen. The perhaps partly mythical exploits of Dom Manuel¹ form the basis of the familiar mediæval romance *Les Gestes de Manuel*, now accessible to English readers in the Selborne Series. Of the other relatives of Manuel¹ nothing is known except that his half-sister Matthiette was the wife of Meunier, Comte de Montors, and had issue: Gui, Comte de Montors; and Ayrart de Montors, afterward Pope.

FIGURES
OF EARTH

THE SILVER
STALLION

DOMNEI

By a matrimonial alliance with Niafer, b. circa 1210, m. 3 Nov. 1235, d. spring of 1277 (the dau., according to some historians, of the Soldan of Barbary), Dom Manuel¹ had issue: Melicent²; Emmerick², who succeeded his father as Count of Poict-

THE SILVER
STALLION

The Cream of the Jest

JURGEN

THE CREAM
OF THE JEST

FIGURES
OF EARTH
DOMNEI

FIGURES
OF EARTH

esme, b. June 1237, accidentally killed by his nephew Raymondin⁸ de la Forêt 26 July 1300, m. Radegonde, then the widow of King Elphanor, and left issue (for whom, compare Lewistam's *Popular Tales of Poict esme*, Appendix F); Dorothy², called La Desirée, b. Dec. 1238, d. 1292, m., in 1256, Heitman Michael of Asch, the son of Guivric of Perdigon, and left descendants (again, compare Lewistam); and Etтарre², called La Beale, b. Oct. 1239, m. Sir Guiron des Rocques (who, circa 1276, succeeded his elder brother Etienne as Prince de Gâtinais), but of her issue no record survives.

Melicent², b. Aug. 1236, d. Feb. 1324, m. (1) Demetrios of Anatolia, who was lord of the region between Quesiton and Nacumera (b. 1233, d. July 1274, son of the noted magician Miramon Lluagor and Gisèle d'Arnaye), by whom Melicent² had no issue. Melicent² m. (2), in 1274, a French nobleman, Perion, Comte de la Forêt (b. 1233, d. 14 Jan. 1315), by whom she had, with other issue: *Adelaide*⁸ *de la Forêt*; and Raymondin⁸ de la Forêt, b. 1279, d. 1340, m. Mélusine, b. circa 1230 (dau. of that King Helmas of Albania whom Dom Manuel¹ converted from folly), and had issue: Urien⁴ of the Ears; Edon⁴ Red-Face, Comte de la Marche; Guyon⁴ of the Twisted Glance; Anthony⁴ Lion-Foot; Raynold⁴ the One-Eyed; Fromond⁴ Hairy-Nose, who became a monk, and was killed by his brother Geoffrey⁴ at the sack of Maillières; Geoffrey⁴ of the Great Tooth, who succeeded

The Cream of the Jest

his father as Comte de Lusignan; Horrible⁴ who was killed by his mother; Raymond⁴, afterward Comte de la Forêt; and Theodorick⁴, Lord of Parthenaye, Vernon, and Rochelle.

Adelaide³ de la Forêt, b. 1275, d. 1332, m. in 1293, Ralph, Comte de Nointel (b. 1267, d. Nov. 1320, son of Fauxpas de Nointel, and grandson to Saraïde), and had, with other issue: Henri⁴ de Nointel, b. 1299, d. 1335, m. — (a dau. of Adhelmar de Perdigon), and had a son, Sir Adhelmar⁵ de Nointel (hero of the mediæval romance, *Les Aventures d'Adhelmar*), b. May 1332, d. unm. 24 Oct. 1356; and *Sylvie⁴ de Nointel*.

THE LINE
OF LOVE

*The
Wedding
Jest*

*Adhelmar
at
Puysange*

Sylvie⁴ de Nointel, b. 1305; d. Dec. 1345, m. in May 1323, Florian, Vicomte de Puysange, b. 1269, d. 2 Feb. 1347 (the reputed son of Poictesme's legendary Jurgen* and Félice de Puysange: see *La Haulte Histoire de Jurgen*, in the eighth chapter), and had, with other issue: Reinault⁵, Vicomte de Puysange, b. 1324, d. 1375, m. Berthe —, and left issue; and *Mélite⁵ de Puysange*.

*The
Wedding
Jest*

(JURGEN)

*Adhelmar at
Puysange*

Mélite⁵ de Puysange, b. 1337, d. 20 Aug. 1363, m. in Oct. 1360, a Norman lord, Hugues, Sieur d'Arques, b. 1330, d. Dec. 1387. The Sieur

*Bülg, it may here be said, fixes the birth date of Jurgen as 8 April 1235, and estimates that the pawnbroker set forth on his supernal adventurings 30 April 1277. The replevined Wednesday would, by this chronology, have been borrowed from the August of 1256. Jurgen's most permanent wife, Dame Lisa, was generally reputed to be the daughter of the fiend Surkrag, known in Poictesme as Ninzian of Yair, but as concerns this *Lineage* her paternity is unimportant, since Jurgen left no legitimate issue.

The Cream of the Jest

"Sweet
Adelais"

*Love-Letters
of Falstaff*

"Sweet
Adelais"

*The
Conspiracy
of Arnaye*

*In Necessity's
Mortar*

d'Arques, in the wars attendant upon the transfer of the French throne to the house of Valois, sided with the English, and after the peace of Brétigny, signed in Sept. 1360, he settled in England, near Yaxham in Norfolk. The name was Anglicized as Darke. Hugues d'Arques and Mélite⁵ de Puysange had issue: *Sylvia⁶ Darke*; *Adelais⁶ Darke*, b. July 1361, d. unm. 18 March 1415; and *Hugh⁶ Darke*, b. Aug. 1363, d. June 1404, m. *Maude de Spencer*, and had a son, *Roger⁷ Darke*, b. 1395, d. 1427, m. *Lucy Archer*, and left descendants.

Sylvia⁶ Darke, b. July 1361, d. 10 Nov. 1419, m. in 1379, *Sir Robert Vernon of Winstead*, b. 1355, d. 16 Aug. 1419, and had, with other issue: *Sir Hugh⁷ Vernon*, knighted at Agincourt, b. 1380, d. May 1431, m. *Isabel* —, and left descendants (for whom, compare *Villiers' Visitations of Norfolk*, in "Vernon of Oke"); *Jane⁷ Vernon*, b. 1387, m., in 1404, *Henry Heleigh, Earl of Brudenel*, and had numerous issue; *Sylvia⁷ Vernon*, b. 1390, m., in June 1410, *Richard Degge, Earl of Venour*; and *Adelais⁷ Vernon*.

Adelais⁷ Vernon, b. 1402, d. Oct. 1429, m., 30 Sept. 1422, *Fulke, Sieur d'Arnaye*, b. 1395, d. Feb. 1429, one of the French prisoners taken at Agincourt. This couple made their home in France, and had issue: *Noel⁸ d'Arnaye*; and *Raymond⁸*, Sieur d'Arnaye 1473–98, b. 1426, d. Jan. 1498, m. *Anne de Nérac*, and left descendants.

Noel⁸ d'Arnaye, called *Le Joli*, Sieur d'Arnaye 1429–73, b. 1425, d.

The Cream of the Jest

26 Dec. 1473, m., in Sept. 1462,
Catherine de Vaucelles, b. 1439, d. in
autumn of 1470, and had issue only:

Matthiette⁹ d'Arnaye, b. 1467, d. *The Conspiracy of Arnaye*
8 Aug. 1516, m., 18 July 1484, Raoul⁹, Vicomte de Puysange, b. 1462, d. 13 Feb. 1520, a great-great-grandson of Reinault⁵ Vicomte de Puysange, as above. Raoul⁹ de Puysange was one of the Frenchmen who fought under Philibert de Shaundé in the Earl of Richmond's behalf at Bosworth, and he was rewarded with an estate in Devonshire, including Tiverton Manor. From him descend the Pierson family of Devon, the head of which, Lord Tiverton, was attainted in 1745. Raoul⁹ de Puysange and Matthiette⁹ de'Arnaye had, with other issue:

Adeliza¹⁰ de Puysange (or de Pierson), b. 1500, d. 6 Oct. 1537, m., 7 Oct. 1519, Stephen Allonby, ninth Marquis of Falmouth, b. 1494, d. 24 Nov. 1557. He was a great-grandson (as was also, on the wrong side of the blanket, Will Sommers, the King's once-famous jester) of the sixth Marquis of Falmouth, who wooed, without winning, Adelais⁷ Vernon: all these Allonbys, of course, being descendants of that first Marquis who in the thirteenth century was a notable leader of the baron's party against Alianora of Provence. Stephen Allonby and Adeliza¹⁰ de Puysange had issue: Thomas¹¹ Allonby, bapt. 3 Jan. 1521, d. unm. 1554; Adela¹¹ Allonby, bapt. 11 Sept. 1523, m., in 1540, Sir Edmund Floyer, after 1555, Lord Rokesle; George¹¹ Allonby, called *(The Story of the Sestina)*

The Cream of the Jest

Fitzroy, bapt. 10 March 1526, d. unm.
18 Feb. 1556; and *Stephen¹¹ Allonby*.

*In Ursula's
Garden*

Stephen¹¹ Allonby, bapt. 7 June 1530, d. 3 Feb. 1596, who became Marquis of Falmouth after his father's death in 1557, m., in June 1559, Katherine Beaufort, b. March 1533, d. 11 Apr. 1576, and had, with numerous other issue: *Gerald¹² Allonby*, bapt. 24 March 1560, d. 20 Aug. 1625, the eleventh Marquis of Falmouth, m. his cousin Ursula¹² Bulmer (for kinship, see appended Bulmer Excursus) and left issue*; and *Cynthia¹² Allonby*.

*Porcelain
Cups*

Cynthia¹² Allonby, bapt. 13 Apr. 1576, d. 3 Oct. 1629, m. Captain Edward Musgrave, b. 8 Feb. 1570, d. 16 March 1647. This couple were among the earliest settlers of the Colony of Virginia. They had issue: *Edward¹³ Musgrave*, who died in infancy; *Theodorick¹³ Musgrave*; *Stephen¹³ Musgrave*; and a dau., *Katherine¹³ Musgrave*, who m. Lieutenant Gervase Woods.

**THE EAGLE'S
SHADOW**

From this last marriage descended the noted banker and philanthropist, *Frederick Ramsey²¹ Woods*, b. 15 Oct. 1829, d. 18 June 1902, m. *Martha Musgrave*, d. s. p. His younger brother (the sixth-born child), *William Bellingham²¹ Woods*, b. 21 Apr. 1842, d. 2 Feb. 1885, m. *Anne Vartrey*, and had issue: *William*

*Among the sons was Sir William Allonby, the poet and diplomat, who in 1626 published the first book of a proposed metrical version (apparently never completed) of the *Roman de Lusignan*.

The Cream of the Jest

Vartrey²² Woods, b. 26 Feb. 1878,
d. 10 Aug. 1913, who, in Oct. 1904,
m. Margaret Elizabeth Anstruther
Hugonin.

BULMER EXCURSUS

Francis Orts of Stornoway* had two daughters: Cicely Orts, m., circa 1525, Sir Gerald Beaufort of Tintagel, and had Katherine Beaufort, m. Stephen¹¹ Allonby, and had Gerald¹² Allonby; and Aveline Orts, m., in 1529, Henry Heleigh, Earl of Brudenel (a descendant of Jane⁷ Vernon, as above), and had Ursula Heleigh, m. John¹¹ Bulmer, Earl of Pevensey, and had Ursula¹² Bulmer, who, as above, m. Gerald¹² Allonby.

In Ursula's Garden

Ursula¹² Bulmer was the second dau. of John¹¹ Bulmer, Earl of Pevensey, b. 1532, d. 30 Nov. 1575. This nobleman was a descendant, in the ninth generation, of Roger⁸ Bulmer, the first Earl of Pevensey, the natural son of Edward² Longshanks and Hawise Bulmer, as will be later shown. Gerald¹² Allonby's brother-in-law, the tenth Earl, was George¹² Bulmer, b. 7 Nov. 1567, d. May 1593, Queen Elizabeth's favorite, who, in Nov. 1589, m. Mary Heleigh, b. 1570, d. 28 April 1592, and had issue only: John¹³ Bulmer, the eleventh Earl, b. 27 April 1592, d. 1644, who left numerous descendants.

(*The Story of the Tenson*,
The Story of the Rat-Trap)

Porcelain Cups

*The head of a once distinguished family now believed to be extinct in the male line. The last bearer of the surname was a debauched clergyman, Simon Orts, who died unmarried in the March of 1750. He was survived by a younger brother, Frank Orts, who had, however, on becoming an actor, taken the name of Francis Vanringham. The career of the last-named worthy may be found detailed in Thorsby's *Roscius Anglicanus*.

The Cream of the Jest

GALLANTRY:
Actors All,
April's Message, *In the*
Second April,
Heart of
Gold, The
Scapegoats,
Love's
Alumni

THE HIGH
PLACE

(GALLAN-
TRY)

GALLAN-
TRY:

Among them, in the fifth generation, was the soldier-statesman, John¹⁷ Bulmer, b. 15 April 1705, d. 4 Dec. 1779, better known to history as the first Duke of Ormskirk. His grace of Ormskirk m., in May 1750 (as is duly stated, of course, in Lowe's *Life*) Claire Gabrielle Antionette,¹⁷ dau. of the fourth Duc de Puysange, who was (as is not made clear by Lowe) descended from the younger brother of Raoul⁸ de Puysange. The dukedom in this famous French family dates back no farther than 1638.

Florian¹⁶, fourth Duc de Puysange, Prince de Lisuarte, Marquis and Baron de Manneville, Vicomte de Puysange, &c., was b. 23 March 1688, and d. Nov. 1736. He m. (1), in Sept. 1706, Carola de la Rivière, b. 1683 (reputedly the bastard of Charles the Second of England), d. 1711, by whom Florian had issue a son: Gaston Pierre¹⁷, statesman and minister (who in 1736 succeeded to his father's titles as fifth Duc de Puysange, b. 12 May 1707, m. *en secondes noces*, in 1735, Hélène d'Agenois, and by her left issue). Florian¹⁶ de Puysange m. (2), in 1713, Hortense de Bouteville; m. (3), in 1715, Aurelie d'Arlanges; m. (4), in 1717, Marianne de Vertus: but had no children by any of these wives. He m. (5), on 20 July 1723, Louise de Nérac, by whom he had issue: Marguerite Geneviève¹⁷, b. 1725, m. Louis Félix, Comte de Harlai; Louise Charlotte¹⁷, b. 1728, m. Jean Louis de Clermont, Marquis de Vigéan; and Claire Gabrielle Antoinette¹⁷, b. 13 Feb. 1731, who,

The Cream of the Jest

as above, m. John¹⁷ Bulmer, Duke of *In the Second
Ormskirk.* April

In addition, Florian¹⁶ de Puysange left innumerable illegitimate children, among whom is usually ranked Achille¹⁷ Cazaio, the once notorious brigand, b. Jan. 1707, d. April 1750: for whose exploits, compare Du Maillot's *Hommes Illustres*, chap. 25, and d'Avranches' *Ancêtres de la Révolution.*

I record thus extensively this Bulmer-Puysange alliance because it has to-day its representatives in Lichfield, through the fourth child of this marriage. For Lord Gaston¹⁸ Bulmer, b. 29 Nov. 1758, d. 31 Oct. 1809, fourth child and second son of the aforementioned Duke of Ormskirk, m. Lady Marian¹⁸ Audaine, b. 28 March 1760, d. 26 Aug. 1803 (dau. of Francis, Lord Garendon, author of the once widely known memoirs, and his wife, Dorothy¹⁷ Allonby, who was a descendant of Gerald¹² Allonby: compare Sparks' *Landed Gentry*, in article "Allonby of Shaw.") This Gaston Bulmer came to America circa 1779-80, surrendered at Yorktown, and subsequently made his home in Lichfield.

His wife already had connections living in Lichfield. Her cousin, Mary⁸¹ Allonby (dau. of Gerald¹⁷ Allonby), had, in 1773, m. Theodorick Quentin Musgrave (for whom, and whose children, see *The Musgraves of Matocton*, p. 202 *et seq.*), by whom she had, with other issue: Gerald¹⁹ Musgrave, the once noted ethnologist,

SOMETHING
ABOUT EVE

(GALLAN-
TRY:
*Love at
Martinmas*,
*The Casual
Honeymoon*,
*The Rhyme
to Porringer*,
Actors All)

(GALLAN-
TRY)

The Cream of the Jest

b. 3 July 1776, d. unm. 17 Feb. 1845; and Theodorick Quentin¹⁹ Musgrave, governor, judge of the (state) Supreme Court, &c.

The older dau. of Gaston¹⁸ Bulmer, Clara¹⁹ Bulmer, m. Jonathan Harrowby (compare articles "Harrowby of Montevideo" in *Lichfield Hist. Mag.*, Vol. VI); his second dau., Evelyn¹⁹ Bulmer, m. Francis Townsend, and had issue only one child: John Bulmer²⁰ Townsend, m. Caroline Van Orden, and had, with other issue: John Bulmer²¹ Townsend, who m. Alice Vartrey, and had an only son, Theodore²² Townsend, to whom we shall return hereinafter.

The great-grandson of the propositus of the Bulmer family in Lichfield, Felix²¹ Bulmer, b. 16 July 1828, d. 13 Nov. 1875, the inventor of Bulmer's Baking Powder, m. Ellen Etheridge, leaving issue: George²² Bulmer, b. 6 Sept. 1853; Marian²² Bulmer; and Claire²² Bulmer.

Marian²² Bulmer, b. 3 June 1850, d. 23 Feb. 1883, m., in opposition to her father's wishes, Samuel Kennaston, and had issue: Felix Bulmer²³ Kennaston (author of *Men Who Loved Alison*, *The Tinctured Veil*, *The King's Quest*, etc.), b. 9 Dec. 1870, m. Kathleen Saumarez (née Eppes, of the old Virginia family), but had no issue. I assign to Kennaston, be it noted, the birth date given by Kennaston himself, it may be, out of vanity. J. V. A. Froser, in his fine *Biography of Felix Kennaston* (pp.

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4-7), educes strong evidence to support the belief that Kennaston was b. in 1868; and charitably inclines to discredit Lichfieldian rumors that the elopement of Kennaston's parents, in 1866, was prompted by the imminence of his birth.

Claire ²² Bulmer, b. 6 Nov. 1855, d. 5 Aug. 1900, m. Theodore ²² Townsend (as above), b. 11 Sept. 1848, d. 17 Nov. 1884, and had issue: Robert Etheridge ²³ Townsend, b. 23 Sept. 1877, another noted figure in the world of letters, author of *The Apostates, Afield, The Cords of Vanity, From the Hidden Way*, etc.

THE CORDS
OF VANITY
FROM THE
HIDDEN WAY

III. *The Tribe of Freydis*

Manuel¹ the Redeemer, Count of Poktesme, b. 1213, d. 1239, by his alliance, 30 Apr. 1235, with Queen Freydis (who lived as a mortal woman from 30 Apr. 1235 to 30 Apr. 1238), became the progenitor of certain figures of earth, which were animated, by the Tuyla process, with sparks of the magic fire of Audela. Of these vivified figures the first and chief was:

Sesphra, a god of the Philistines (completing with Ageus and Vel-Tyno the Trinity of the Shephelah), b. 30 Apr. 1235. For the myths and ceremonies connected with this divinity, the reader may profitably consult Garnier's *Recherches sur le Culte de Sesphra* or Douwer's *Urgeschichte der Philistaer*.

To the ten smaller figures which Dom Manuel¹ modeled of the image-makers (compare *Les Gestes de Manuel*, in the seventeenth and twenty-seventh chapters), and which he left unquickened when he deserted Freydis,

The Cream of the Jest

life was subsequently loaned by her, in a manner somewhat too complicated to be explained in the limited space here available. Whereafter these figures, as the old chap-book has it, were "eche at a certayne Houre . . . sett . . . to live among Mans Kind,* with all which of such a State aparteyneth: to grete Hurtes and Harmes, by Cause that these x Ymages were unlyke to Beings naturallie conceyued, in so much that they hadde inside them Sparkes and smalle Flamings of the Fyer of Audela."

THE CER-
TAIN HOUR:

These figures, according to Codman (*Handbook of Literary Pioneers*, pp. 210-12), were:

I. Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, poet and crusader, b. circa 1160, d. 8 May 1225, m., in May 1220, Biatritz de Montferrat,† then the widow of Conrat, Prince of Orange, and previously the widow of the Lord of Del Carat. It is noticeable that in this, the first figure quickened by Freydis unaided, the magic was misdirected through inexperience, and the life of Raimbaut (for which, compare Raynouard's *Choix des Poésies originales des Troubadours*, Vol. III, p. 258, and

*Belhs
Cavaliers*

*In Ackermann's *Volksagen*, IV, 196, the curious may find an hypothesis—which, although it, unluckily, cannot be given in a volume intended for general circulation, would seem in connection with the above rather strikingly significant,—to account for the everywhere prevalent legends of Changelings.

†The circumstances of this marriage have been recorded elsewhere. The story of this couple's original entry into amorous relations, however, is perhaps best left to the discreet obscurity of the Provençal, which depicts the lady as equally unembarrassed by shyness and the fact that her first husband was then living: "Ma dona Biatritz li dis que be fos el vengut; e que s'esforses de ben far e de ben dire e de valer, e qu'ela lo volia retener per cavayer e per servidor. Don Raimbaut s'esforset d'enansar son pretz tan quan poc."

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*Balthazar's
Daughter*

*THE JEWEL
MERCHANTS*

*Judith's
Creed*

*(Porcelain
Cups)*

Vol. V, p. 417, Paris, 1816–20) was precipitated into the past. Raimbaut de Vaqueiras had no issue.

II. Alessandro de Medici,* æthete, Duke of Citta di Penna, Duke of Florence, &c., b. circa 1512, d. 5 Jan. 1537, m. Margaret of Austria, but had by her no issue. He left three illegitimate children: Giulio, who entered the church, and became grand prior of the order of S. Stefano; Porcia, who took the veil, and founded the convent of S. Clement at Florence; and Juliet, who m. Francesco Cantelmo, but left no issue: the line thus becoming extinct. Compare *Tenh. Mém. Gém.* liv. XXII, p. 62: and see also Checino's *Storia del Granducato di Toscana sotto il governo d'Alessandro de Medici*.

III. William Shakespeare, poet and master of the pastiche, author of *Richard the Third*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Winter's Tale*, &c., bapt. 26 Apr. 1564, d. 23 Apr. 1616, m., in Nov. 1582, Ann Hathaway. There is a tradition (compare *The Musgraves of Matocton*, p. 33) that this playwright was enamored of Cynthia¹² Allonby (as, certainly, was Christopher Marlowe),† and that she was

*The name and arms borne by him are somewhat incredibly explained by Verini (*de Illust. Urbis*, lib. III): "Est qui Bebryaca Medices testetur ab urbe venisse; et Toscam sobolem delesse superbam asserat: hinc Medicis meruit cognomen habere quod Medicus Tosci fuerit, sic ore venenum dixerunt patrio: factique insignia portet senis in globulis flaventem sanguine peltam."

†Indeed there can be little doubt that the letter comparing her to Helen, in the quaint French which Colonel Musgrave modernizes, was the rough draft of the famous passage in *Dr. Faustus*: "Violà donc la figure qui lança mille navires et fit tomber les tours d'Ilion. . . . Oh! tu es plus belle que la nuit vêtue de la beauté de milliers d'étoiles. Tu es plus brillante que

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the Dark Lady commemorated in Shakespear's *Sonnets*. William Shakespeare had issue: Susanna Shakespeare, b. May 1583, d. 11 July 1649, m. John Hall, and had issue only a dau., Elizabeth Hall, b. Feb. 1608, d. Feb. 1670, m. (1) Thomas Nash, and (2) Sir John Bernard, but had by neither husband any issue; Hamnet Shakespeare, only son, b. Jan. 1585, d. Aug. 1596; and Judith Shakespeare, b. Jan. 1585, d. 9 Feb. 1662, m. Thomas Quiney, but left no descendants surviving her.

IV. Robert Herrick, clergyman and Rosicrucian, author of *Hesperides*, *Noble Numbers*, &c., bapt. 24 Aug. 1591, d. unm. Oct. 1674. For a curious account of his end, compare Borsdale's *Pathologica Dæmonica*, in the fourth chapter.*

V. William Wycherley, dramatist and man of fashion, author of *The Plain Dealer*, *The Country Wife*, &c., b. circa 1640, d. Dec. 1715, m., in 1680, Olivia, Lady Drogheda, née Chichele, and (2), in Dec. 1715, Ann

Concerning Corinna

Olivia's Pottage

Jupiter en feu, quand il apparut à p'infortuné Sémélé. Tu es plus belle que le monarque du ciel, dans les bras azurés de la capricieuse Aréthuse!"

*Borsdale's comment thereon, as preserved elsewhere, seems sufficiently quaint to be recorded: "Surely such Astrologers are Erra Pater's Disciples, and the Devil's Professors, swaddling hell-nurtured Wisdom in spurious ænigmatical doubtful Tearmes, like the Oracle at Delphos. What a high Dotage and shameless Impudence is in these men, who aspire to knowe more than shining Saints and Angels! Can they read other Men's fates by those glorious Characters the Starres, being ignorant of their owne? *Qui sibi nescius cui præscius?* If all were served as this uppstarte Herrick, with his Devill in a Christal, his horrid Flie in a Box, we should have none that would relye so confidently on the falsehood of their Ephemerides, and in some manner shake off all divine providence, dreaming to make themselves equal with GOD, between whom and Man the greatest difference is taken away, if Man should foreknow more than his own ignorant unworth."

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*A Brown
Woman*

Pro Honoria

*The
Irresistible
Ogle*

*A Princess of
Grub Street*

GALLANTRY:
*The
Scapegoats*

Jackson, but left no issue by either marriage. There seems to be nowhere any satisfactory *Life* of Wycherley, but Major Pack's gossip is valuable.

VI. Alexander Pope, a cripple, author of *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, &c., b. 22 May 1688, d. unm. 30 May 1744. Compare his *Life* by Deetz, Leipzig, 1876.

VII. Horace Calverley, Lord Ufford, virtuoso and diarist, author of *Sixpenny Satires*, *The Vassal of Spalatro*, &c., b. 22 Apr. 1725, d. unm. 28 Jan. 1762. His Works have not recently been reprinted, but all editions that I have seen contain Wharton's judicious biography; and Pater's inedited essay, it it can be come by, is critically valuable.

VIII. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, dramatist and mountebank, author of *The School for Scandal*, the arraignment of Warren Hastings, a vast number of I. O. U.'s, &c., b. 30 Sept. 1751, d. 7 July 1816, m. (1) in 1773, Elizabeth Linley, and (2) in 1795, Esther Jane Ogle, by whom he had no issue. For the descendants of the first marriage, too numerous to be catalogued here, the reader is referred to Perkins' *Life of Mrs. Norton*, and Burke's *Peerage and Baronetage*, articles "Dufferin" and "Somerset."

IX. Hilary Rudolph of Saxe-Kesselberg, critic and essayist, editor and annotator of the texts of Sophocles, Sævius Nicanor, Praxagoras, &c., b. 2 Aug. 1780, d. 27 Jan. 1848, who, in 1803, took the name of Paul Vanderhoffen, m., in Sept. 1805, Mildred¹⁹ Claridge.

Paul Vanderhoffen traced his descent from the old Princes de Gatinais,

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elsewhere mentioned, in the following line: Antoine, Prince de Gâtinais, Marquis de Soyecourt, &c., b. 1 May 1670, d. 18 Sept. 1750, m. (2nd) in Oct. 1708, the Princess Clotilda Agatha of Noumaria, and had issue only: Louis de Soyecourt, b. 26 Nov. 1709, guillotined 9 Jan. 1793, Prince de Gâtinais after Sept. 1750, Grand-Duke of Noumaria 1750–55, who m., in Nov. 1750, Victoria von Uhm, and had issue: Anthony Augustus, Grand-Duke of Noumaria 1755–87; Prince Ludwig, whose old-world verses yet lurk in anthologies, and were remarkably commended by a greater brother in Apollo;* and Agatha. Princess Agatha of Noumaria, b. 2 Dec. 1755, d. 8 Apr. 1785, m. Rudolph Wilhelm Sébastien Friedrich, Crown Prince of Saxe-Kesselberg, b. 25 Aug. 1753, d. 8 Apr. 1785, and had issue: Hilary Rudolph, known later as Paul Vanderhoffen.

Paul Vanderhoffen m., as has been said, Mildred¹⁹ Claridge (a child of Lord John Claridge, the Egyptologist, and his wife Lady Helen¹⁸ Bulmer, dau. of the first Duke of Ormskirk), and they had, with other issue: Mildred Stella²⁰ Vanderhoffen, b. 4 Nov. 1807, d. 22 July 1855, m. (2nd wife) Theodorick Quentin Musgrave, governor and judge, b. 17 Jan. 1780, d. 13 Oct. 1850, and had, with other issue: Lieutenant Colonel William Sebastian²¹ Musgrave, C. S. A., b. 8 May 1829, d. 3 July 1863, m. Martha Allardyce. Among the children of this

In the Second April, Heart of Gold, The Scapegoats, The Ducal Audience, Love's Alumni

A Princess of Grub Street

THE RIVET
IN GRAND-
FATHER'S
NECK

*Heine's words will bear repetition: 'Die harmonischen Verse umschlingen dein Herz wie eine zärtliche Geliebte; das Wort umarmt dich, während der Gedanke dich küsst.'

*The Lady of
All Our
Dreams
BEYOND LIFE,
THE CORDS
OF VANITY,
THE RIVET
IN GRAND-
FATHER'S
NECK,
STRAWS AND
PRAYER-
BOOKS*

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last marriage was Colonel Rudolph ²² Musgrave, the noted genealogist, from whose scholarly compilation, *The Musgraves of Matocton*, this information is derived.

X. John Charteris, novelist, author of *In Old Lichfield*, *Ashtaroth's Lackey*, &c., b. 22 Nov. 1857, d. 15 Sept. 1903, m., 22 Nov. 1893, Anne Willoughby, but left no surviving legitimate issue. The only child of this couple was a son, Holland Charteris, who died in boyhood.

IV. The Tribe of Alianora

Manuel¹ the Redeemer, Count of Poictesme, b. 1213, d. 1239, by his alliance, in Sept. 1238, with Alianora of Provence, b. circa 1220, d. 24 June 1291, then the wife of King Henry the Third of England, supplied an heir for England, in the person of: Edward² Longshanks. Compare *Les Gestes de Manuel*, in the thirty-fourth chapter: the authorities* for all this portion of the pedigree, however, have been enumerated by Verville in both editions of his *Notice sur la vie de Nicolas de Caen*, in the sixth chapter, and need not here be cited.

Edward² Longshanks, b. 16 June 1239, King of England after 1272, d.

FIGURES OF
EARTH
THE SILVER
STALLION
CHIVALRY:
*The Story of
the Sestina*

*M. Paris, M. of West., Walt. Hem. *Chron.*, Paulus Emilius, *De Ant. Leg. Lib* (Cam. Soc.), Rymer's *Fædera*, Piers Langtoft, Leland's *Collectanea*, Polydore Vergil, Guthrie folio Hist., Caley's *Fædera*, Dom Morice *Chron. de Bretagne*, MS. *Chron. of Nantes*, Titus Livius of Friuli, Guillaume de Gruel, Wm. of Wore., *Chron.* T. Wikes, *Annals of Margan*, Wav. *Annals*, *Annals of Burton*, Nich. Trivet, *Chron. Melrose*, T. Walshingham *Hist. of Kings*, W. Thom *Chron.*, H. Knighton, G. le Baker of Swinbroke, &c.

The Cream of the Jest

(FIGURES OF
EARTH)

*The Story of
the Rat-Trap*

*The Story of
The Choices*

*The Story of
the House-
wife*

*The Story of
the Satraps*

7 July 1307, had by Hawise Bulmer, b. 1242, d. 28 Oct. 1270, a natural son, Roger⁸ Bulmer, first Earl of Pevensey, b. July 1263, d. circa 1320, who left issue, and descendants as aforetime recorded. Edward² Longshanks m. (1), in Aug. 1254, Ellinor of Castile, b. 1244, d. 29 Nov. 1290 (dau. of that St. Ferdinand, King of Castile and Leon, whom Dom Manuel¹ converted from wickedness), and had, with other issue: *Edward⁸ of Caernarvon*. Edward² Longshanks m. (2), 8 Sept. 1299, Meregrett of France, b. 1281, d. 14 Feb. 1317, and had, with other issue: Edmund³, Earl of Kent, b. 1302, who in turn had issue: Joan⁴ of Kent, m. (1) Sir Thomas Holland, and (2), as hereinafter, Edward⁵ the Black Prince.

Edward⁸ of Caernarvon, b. 25 Apr. 1284, King of England after 1307, murdered by his wife's orders 22 Sept. 1327, m., 23 Jan. 1308, Ysabeau of France, b. 1295, d. 22 Aug. 1358, and had:

Edward⁴ of Windsor, b. 13 Nov. 1312, King of England after 1327, d. 21 June 1377, m., 24 Jan. 1328, Philippa of Hainault, b. 1312, d. 14 Aug. 1369, and had, with other issue: *Edward⁵ the Black Prince*; Lionel⁵ of Clarence, b. 29 Nov. 1338; *John⁵ of Gaunt*; Edmund⁵ of York, b. 1344; and Thomas⁵ of Gloucester, b. 1354.

Edward⁵ the Black Prince, b. 15 June 1330, d. 8 June 1376, m. (1), in Sept. 1360, Alixe Riczi (dau. of Gilbert, Vicomte de Montbrison), b. 1342, d. Aug. 1361, and had issue: Edward⁶ Plantagenet, known as Ed-

The Cream of the Jest

ward Maudelain, b. Aug. 1361, d. unm. Feb. 1400. Edward⁵ the Black Prince m. (2), 10 Oct. 1361, his cousin, Joan⁴ of Kent, as above, and by her had issue:

Richard⁶ of Bordeaux, b. 13 Apr. 1366, d. 26 Feb. 1441, King of England after 1377, who, following his dethronement in 1400, took the name of Richard Holland. He m. (1), 14 Jan. 1382, Anne of Bohemia, b. 1367, d. 7 June 1394, by whom he had no issue; m. (2), 1 Nov. 1395, Isabel of Valois, b. 9 Nov. 1387, d. 13 Sept. 1410, by whom he had no issue; m. (3) 30 June 1403, Branwen of Wales, b. 1385, d. Jan. 1423, by whom he had four children. Compare, for the descendants of his second son, "The Hollands of Lichfield," in *Lichfield Hist. Mag.*, Vols. III, IV.

John⁵ of Gaunt, as above, b. 24 June 1340, d. 3 Feb. 1399, m. (1) Blanche of Lancaster, by whom he had issue:

Henry⁶ of Derby, known also as Bolingbroke, and after 1400 as King Henry the Fourth of England, b. 1366, d. 20 March 1413, m. (1), in 1381, Mary Bohun, and (2), by pro-curation 3 Apr. 1402, in person 7 Feb. 1403, Jehane of Navarre, b. 1372, d. 9 July 1437, then the widow of Duke Jehan of Brittany. Queen Jehane subsequently m., as her third husband, Antoine Riczi, Vicomte de Montbrison. By his second marriage Henry⁶ of Derby had no children; by his first marriage he had issue:

Henry⁷ of Monmouth, b. 19 Aug. 1387, King of England after 1413, d. 31 Aug. 1422, m., 3 June 1420,

*The Story of
the Heritage
The Story of
the Scabbard*

*The Story of
the Satraps*

*The Story of
the Scabbard*

*The Story of
the Satraps
The Story of
the Scabbard*

*The Story of
the Navar-
rese*

*The Story of
the Fox-
Brush*

The Cream of the Jest

Katherine of Valois, b. 27 Oct. 1401, d. 3 Jan. 1437. After his death she m. (2) Owain Tudor. Henry⁷ of Monmouth had issue only:

Henry⁸ of Windsor, b. 6 Dec. 1421, King of England after 1422, dethroned in 1465, d. 21 May 1471. His downfall, through his wife's relations with the Duke of Suffolk, and the extinction of this line of Manuel's descendants, are narrated in *Le Cocu Rouge*, that very curious romance erroneously, I think, ascribed by Hinsauf to Nicolas de Caen, and never as yet, I believe, put into English.

V. Bibliographic Summary

Beyond Life, 30 April—1 May 1918

Figures of Earth, 7 August 1234—29 September 1239

The Silver Stallion, 23 November 1239—25 May
1277

Domnei, August 1256—July 1274

The Music from Behind the Moon, all dates canceled
by Madoc's decimal point

Chivalry, October 1264—May 1420

Jurgen, 30 April 1277 (canceled time, 30 April 1277
—30 April 1278)

The Line of Love, 30 April 1293—30 May 1593

The High Place, October 1698 (canceled time, 15
July 1723—30 April 1724)

Gallantry, 5 March 1750—6 October 1755

Something About Eve, 30 April 1805—30 April 1835

The Certain Hour, 30 April 1220—17 June 1893

The Cords of Vanity, December 1884—15 September
1903

The Jewel Merchants, April 1533

The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck, 30 April 1896—
1 June 1927

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The Eagle's Shadow, May 1904

The Cream of the Jest, 30 April 1907—29 September 1915

Straws and Prayer-Books, 30 April—1 May 1924

*THE EPILOGUE,
WHICH IS CALLED EXIT*

Since this paper formed a part of the original issue of *The Lineage of Lichfield* it is here included. I reprint it, though, with an unwillingness which is due to no desire to retract or in aught to qualify an occasional note of acerbity.

The trouble here is, rather, that all the abuse, and the defence too, of Jurgen and of *Figures of Earth* in 1921 seems now—in common with all that pother which was raised in 1904 as to *The Eagle's Shadow*, —to have been a tempest so very unimportant and remote, in such an extremely ancient teapot. Yet (as has been most justly observed, by one or another staple philosopher) the written word remains. Before that axiom I shrug. But I reprint, also.

VI. *The Epilogue, Which is Called Exit*

1

Here I make an end of writing, now that my vogue is over, and now that, in this current year of grace 1921, the blazing and sulphureous splendors which went everywhere before me are thinning like blown smoke. . . . The signs are many that there has been a slump in Cabell stock. The literary supplement that only recently had a "Cabell number" now has a review of *Figures of Earth*, written by Maurice Hewlett, who has himself made a specialty of the mediæval romance, and who says he never heard of the word "geas," and who contemptuously dismisses Cabell's work as a pretentious and often meaningless jargon—"parading a science it does not possess,"—elaborately concocted to impose upon the credulous reading public. And still another Englishman, the scholarly Solomon Eagle, has expressed a similar opinion. Now if only the agreeable Mr. Hugh Walpole will turn a similar flip-flop, the Cabell balloon may completely collapse.

—Thus far the New York *Globe*,* with rather unaccountable omission of any applause for Mr. Richard

*In its issue of 30 April 1921.

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Le Gallienne's shocked fulminations against Cabell,—unaccountable, I say, because the erstwhile fumbler with the Golden Girl's underwear went about his assassinatory labors* with far more dexterity than did either of the other British battlers for nineteenth-century traditions. Indeed Mr. Hewlett did but arise—with words more keen than the scissors with which he nowadays writes novels “based upon” Icelandic sagas,—to proclaim that, since he personally had never heard of a variety of matters to be found in any encyclopædia,† for anyone else to have knowledge of these things was wantonness and coxcombery and mere frivolity; whereas Mr. J. C. Squire of the *London Mercury*—under, to be sure, the explanatory pen name of the once famous imbecile, Solomon Eagle,—evinced his somewhat less readily explicable wrath with inarticulate bellowings and with beatings upon the editorial desk, and with objurgations against *Jurgen* for failing to satisfy his curiosity. I do not know what he was curious about, and it would be, perhaps, imprudent to inquire; but upon one point, at least, it was clear that a remarkably perturbed Mr. Squire was in whole-hearted accord with the two hardier survivors of no inconsiderable talents. All were agreed that either the lungs of the right-minded or else the Cabell balloon must be burst.

Well, I shall be, in some ways, rather sorry to see

*In the *New York Times* of 13 February 1921.

†With real astonishment the antiquary may yet learn, from the *New York Post* of 23 April 1921, that Maurice Hewlett was not sufficiently acquainted with the familiar story of Mélusine to know that the Albania over which King Helmas reigned was in Scotland; that he was not aware St. Ferdinand was King of Castile and Leon; that his knowledge of Gaelic legend did not extend to the very common word “geas,” or to the famous fairy song “Pighin pighin, da phighin, pighin go ieith agus leith phighin”; and that he was ignorant of the cries which the Talmudic and Mohammedan stories about Solomon ascribed to the various birds.

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this Cabell pass to oblivion. For I foresee that he will pass quickly now. He was nourished, he was bred and fattened and sustained, entirely upon newspaper paragraphs; and our literary editors retain a naïve faith in anything which emanates from England. You may notice the decisive turn of the above "And yet another Englishman," as if that quite settled the affair. But that is hardly all. Most of the reviewers, I fancy, are sufficiently like me to have grown a little tired of so much tall talk about Cabell, and to think it high time the monotony was varied. . . . So this Cabell, too, must pass, with all the other novelists who have had their brief hour of being "talked about"; and this Cabell, too, must presently be at one with Marie Corelli and Maurice Hewlett and Elinor Glyn and Richard Le Gallienne and Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe.

2

I repeat that, in some ways, I am sorry to see the passing of this Cabell. I found it interesting to read about this Cabell's romantic irony, his cosmic japes, his bestial obscenities, his well-nigh perfect prose, his soaring imagination, his corroding pessimism, and all the rest of the critical chorus. It loaned each Wednesday (when the very fat, large envelopes from my press-clipping bureau had come in on the first mail) quite an exciting morning, and it sustained me well toward lunch time with prideful thoughts that I was more or less identified with such a remarkable person.

To the other side, I shall, upon the whole, rejoice at the passing of this Cabell. One very positive benefit will be the saving in the matter of my bills for the aforementioned press-clippings; and the devotion to some better purpose of the time which I of late have

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squandered on the process of inserting these clippings (almost uniformly idiotic) in my scrap-books. I shall be left unmolested by the bother of autographing my novels and wrapping them up again, and, occasionally, of supplying the return postage, and, not infrequently, of finding these same volumes on sale next week at the second-hand book dealer's, as "presentation copies." I shall no longer be invited to lecture before mature and earnest-minded and generally appalling females, whom it is not possible to convince that the fact of my having written a book or two can no more qualify me to enliven their foregatherings with a lecture than with a violin solo. The younger of sex will no longer evince via voluminous epistles their willingness to marry me, or even to dispense with the ceremony; and I shall be spared the trouble of concealing these letters from my wife, who emphasizes her disapproval of such notions by an offensive eagerness to pack my luggage for the suggested trips. And I shall return, in time, to the old orderly enjoyable reading of newspapers and magazines without any first feverish skimming through the pages to see what this issue contains about me.

Yes, certainly, oblivion has its merits, to which I now direct a brightening eye. Now, no longer will the publishers' agreement, not to woo away the writers brought out by some other house, be honorably preserved by each deputing his pet author to transmit nefarious suggestions through personal visits to me; and now, chief of all, will magazine editors desist from disturbing my entranced concoction of a book with offers of incredible and iniquitous prices for "something in the short-story line." Yes, but iniquitous is a far too mild description of these allurements when, as may happen, you have a wife uncursed by dumbness, or a child to whom in common-sense you owe it to earn as much money as can be come by reputably. For you

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can think of no possible excuse, none plausible at least to domestic inspection, not to put by the book, and let it wait, while you "dash off" a few thousand words, in full consciousness that if you turn out balderdash your employer will be, as touches you, quite satisfied, and as concerns his readers' approval of the speculation, vastly reassured. And the artist really must—though there is no explaining it,—work either just at what he chooses or else toward exhaustion as an artist.

In fine, the passing of this boom will permit me once more to do, unmeddled-with, what I prefer to do. That is, for some of us, a privilege not at any price to be purchased exorbitantly. So I stand ready to join forces with Messrs. Hewlett and Squire and Le Gallienne. I yield to the right-minded. I abandon all the above-mentioned privileges of fame. And I dismiss this overmuch be-paragraphed Cabell into that dreary limbo of out-of-datedness wherein abide, with always rarer and more spectral revisitations of the public eye, the wraiths of Marie Corelli and Maurice Hewlett and Elinor Glyn and Richard Le Gallienne and Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe.

3

Now in departing I would smile friendly toward those who understand the nature of this withdrawal; but to others I would say, as courteously as may be, that—Well, that, at the request of friends, a considerable portion of my original manuscript has here been deleted. For so long as the author and publishers of *Jurgen* remain disfigurements to the criminal classes,* a certain reticence is required of me in addressing the general public.

*This, it should be recalled, was written in May 1921: we were manumitted a year and a half later.

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I may say at least, though, that the general public has now very tolerably authority for abandoning all talk about this Cabell's being a literary artist. This present bit of writing, to begin with, may be regarded as exculpatory evidence. Moreover, Hewlett and Le Gallienne were no great while ago quite respectable names, which even in their owners' auctorial decrepitude may still pass muster among, anyhow, the general public; whereas Mr. Squire enjoys, everywhere that anybody has read as much as is humanly possible in the *London Mercury*, a deservedly high repute for many very handsome expressions of the mediocre in terms of the academic.* Such are the not unformidable trio that have emulated Goliath, and come forth beautifully clad in brass to battle for the faith of Philistia. And I, for one, can feel no hesitancy in endorsing these gentlemen's protests that, by every standard illustrated in their recent writings, I have no claim whatever to be considered a literary artist; and I, for one, derive from their admonitory utterances a warning perhaps more salutary than intended.

For the moral which I personally educe is that, in this world, wherein no fervor endures for a long while, and every clock-tick brings the infested tepid globe a little nearer to the moon's white nakedness and quiet, the wise will play while playing is permitted. The playthings will be words, because a man finds nowhere any lovelier toys. The wise will have their small, high-hearted hour of playing, with onlookers to applaud.

Then vigor abates, and therewith dwindle their adroitness at this gaming. The skill that was once their glory has become their derision; to Richard-Yea-and-Nay succeeds a Mainwaring, and gray Narcissus bleats

*This sentence also stands as it was written in 1921, since there appears to be in 1929 no least reason for changing it.

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angry pieties. At this season will the gamester who is truly wise—thus I console myself,—give over his playing, sedately, without any corybantic buttings of a bald head or any gnashing of old teeth to affray his juniors who may, as yet, thrive at this game. His hour is over, but the end of their hour too approaches, not to be stayed. He will make this savory thought serve as a drug to envy, and as a liniment to his bruised vanity, and as a muffler to the thin-voiced spite of all outworn old women that inhabit Oblivion's seraglio. Wherein abide—but you already know my refrain.

Dumbarton Grange
May 1921

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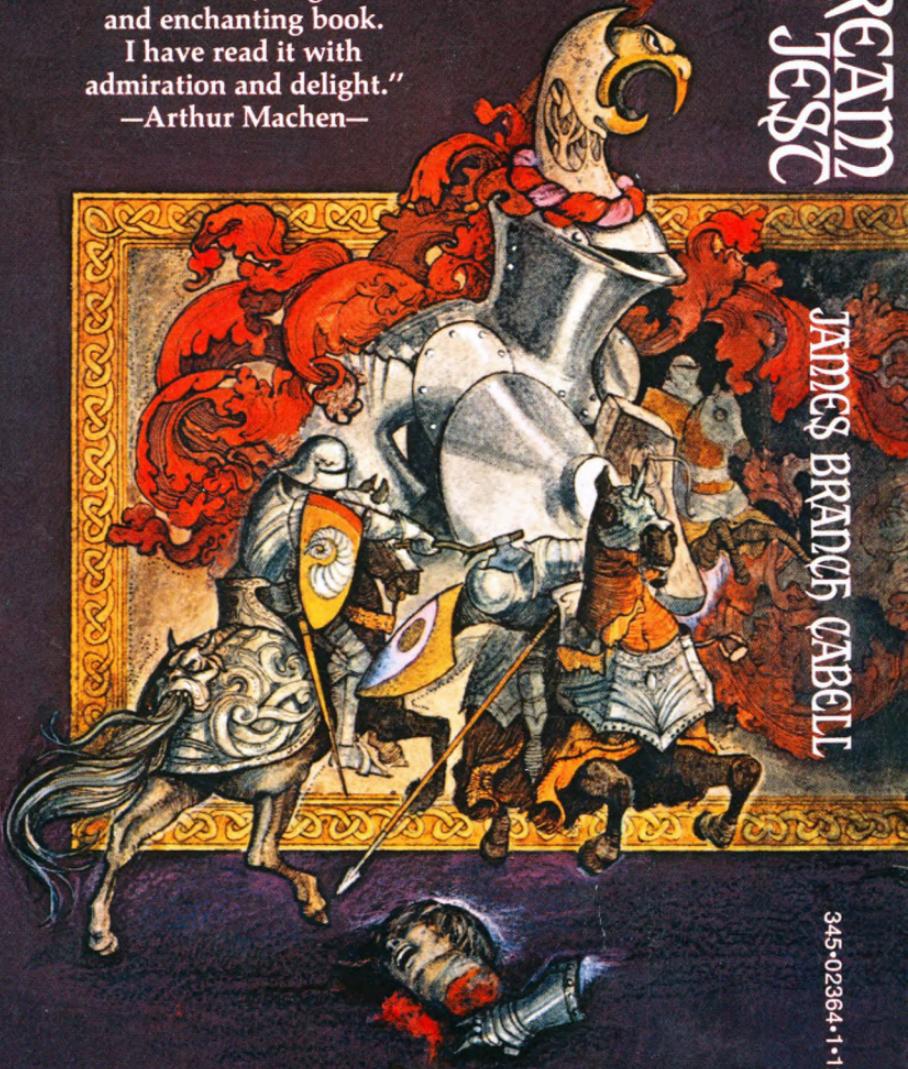


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