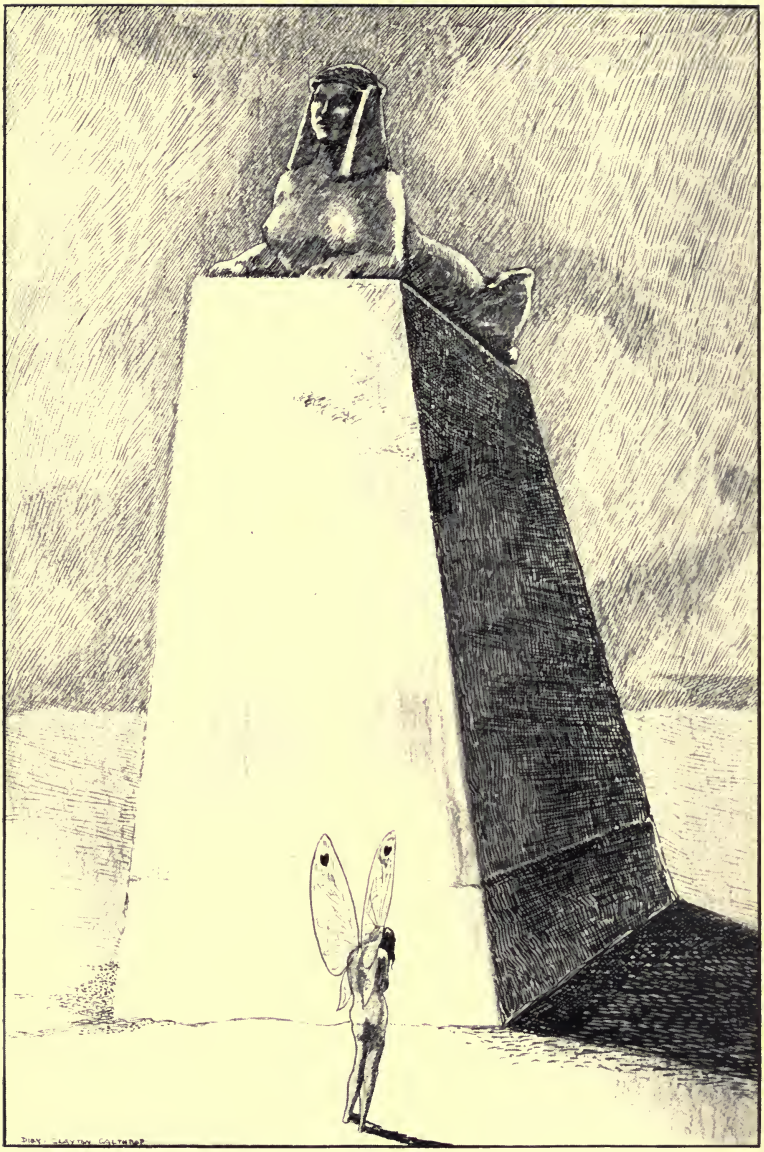
PSYCHE



PSYCHE AND THE SPHINX

[*Frontispiece*

PSYCHE

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH,
WITH THE AUTHOR'S PERMISSION,

BY

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"Cry no more now and go to sleep, and if you cannot sleep, I will tell you a story, a pretty story of flowers and gems and birds, of a young prince and a little princess. . . . For in the world there is nothing more than a story."

PSYCHE

CHAPTER I

GIGANTICALLY massive, with three hundred towers, on the summit of a rocky mountain, rose the king's castle high into the clouds.

But the summit was broad, and flat as a plateau, and the castle spread far out, for miles and miles, with ramparts and walls and pinnacles.

And everywhere rose up the towers, lost in the clouds, and the castle was like a city, built upon a lofty rock of basalt.

Round the castle and far away lay the valleys of the kingdom, receding into the horizon, one after the other, and ever and ever.

Ever changing was the horizon : now pink, then silver ; now blue, then golden ; now grey, then white and misty, and gradually fading away, and never could the last be seen.

In clear weather there loomed behind the horizon always another horizon. They circled one another endlessly, they were lost in the dissolving mists, and suddenly their silhouette became more sharply defined.

Over the lofty towers stretched away at times an expanse of variegated clouds, but below rushed a torrent, which fell like a cataract into a fathomless abyss, that made one dizzy to look at.

So it seemed as if the castle rose up to the highest stars and went down to the central nave of the earth.

Along the battlements, higher than a man, Psyche often wandered, wandered round the castle from tower to tower, from wall to wall, with a dreamy smile on her face, then she looked up and stretched out her hands to the stars, or gazed below at the dashing water, with all the colours of the rainbow, till her head grew dizzy, and she drew back and placed her little hands before her eyes. And long she would sit in the corner of an embrasure, her eyes looking far away, a smile on her face, her knees drawn up and her arms entwining them, and her tiny wings spread out against the mossy stone-work, like a butterfly that sat motionless.

And she gazed at the horizon, and however much she gazed, she always saw more.

Close by were the green valleys, dotted with grazing sheep, soft meadows with fat cattle, waving corn-fields, canals covered with ships, and the cottage roofs of a village. Farther away were lines of woods, hill-tops, mountain-ridges, or a mass of angular, rough-hewn basalt.

Still farther off, misty towers with minarets and domes, cupolas and spires, smoking chimneys, and the outline of a broad river. Beyond, the horizon became milk-white, or like an opal, but not a line more was there, only tint, the reflection of the last glow of the sun, as if lakes were mirrored there ; islands rose, low, in the air, aerial paradises, watery streaks of blue sea, oceans of ether and light quivering nothingness ! . . . .

And Psyche gazed and mused. . . . She was the third princess, the youngest daughter of the old king, monarch of the *Kingdom of the Past*. . . . She was always very lonely. Her sisters she seldom saw, her father only for a moment in the evening, before she went to bed ; and when she had the chance she fled from the mumbling old nurse, and wandered along

the battlements and dreamed, with her eyes far away, gazing at the vast kingdom, beyond which was nothingness. . . .

Oh, how she longed to go farther than the castle, to the meadows, the woods, the towns —to go to the shining lakes, the opal islands, the oceans of ether, and then to that far, far-off nothingness, that quivered so, like a pale, pale light ! . . . . Would she ever be able to pass out of the gates ?—Oh, how she longed to wander, to seek, to fly ! . . . . To fly, oh ! to fly, to fly as the sparrows, the doves, the eagles !

And she flapped her weak, little wings.

On her tender shoulders there were two wings, like those of a very large butterfly, transparent membranes, covered with crimson and soft, yellow dust, streaked with azure and pink, where they were joined to her back. And on each wing glowed two eyes, like those on a peacock's tail, but more beautiful in colour and glistening like jewels, fine sapphires and emeralds on velvet, and the velvet eye set four times in the glittering texture of the wings.

Her wings she flapped, but with them she could not fly.

That, that was her great grief—that, that made her think, what were they for, those wings on her shoulders? And she shook them and flapped them, but could not rise above the ground; her delicate form did not ascend into the air, her naked foot remained firm on the ground, and only her thin, fine veil, that trailed a little round her snow-white limbs, was slightly raised by the gentle fluttering of her wings.

CHAPTER II

To fly ! oh, to fly !

She was so fond of birds. How she envied them ! She enticed them with crumbs of bread, with grains of corn, and once she had rescued a dove from an eagle. The dove she had hidden under her veil, pressed close to her bosom, and the eagle she had courageously driven off with her hand, when in his flight he overshadowed her with his broad wings, calling out to him to go away and leave her dove unhurt.

Oh, to seek ! to seek !

For she was so fond of flowers, and gladly in the woods and meadows, or farther away still, would she have sought for those that were unknown. But she cultivated them within the walls, on the rocky ground, and she had made herself a garden ; the buds opened when she looked at them, the stems grew when she stroked them, and when she

kissed a faded flower it became as fresh again as ever.

. . . . . .

To wander, oh, to wander !

Then she wandered along the battlements, down the steps, over the court-yards and the ramparts, but at the gates stood the guards, rough and bearded and clad in mail, with loud-sounding horns round their shoulders.

Then she could go no farther and wandered back into the vaults and crypts, where sacred spiders wove their webs ; and then, if she became frightened, she hurried away, farther, farther, farther, along endless galleries, between rows of motionless knights in armour, till she came again to her nurse, who sat ever at her spinning-wheel.

Oh ! to glide through the air !

To glide in a steady wind, to the farthest horizon, to the milk-white and opal region, which she saw in her dreams, to the uttermost parts of the earth !

To glide to the seas, and the islands, which yonder, so far, far away and so unsubstantial, changed every moment, as if a breeze could alter their form, their tint ; so unfirm, that no

foot could tread them, but only a winged being like herself, a bird, a fairy, could gently hover over them, to see all that beautiful landscape, to enjoy that atmosphere, that dream of Paradise. . . .

Oh ! to *fly*, to *seek*, to *wander*, to *soar* ! . . . .

And for hours together she sat dreaming in an embrasure, her eyes far off, her arms round her knees, and her wings spread out, like a little butterfly that sat motionless.

CHAPTER III

EMERALDA, that was the name of her eldest sister. Surpassingly beautiful was Emeralda, dazzling fair as no woman in the kingdom, no princess in other kingdoms. Exceedingly tall she was, and majestic in stature; erect she walked, stately and proudly; she was very proud, for after the death of the king she was to reign on the throne of the Kingdom of the Past. Jealous of all the power which would be hers, she rejected all the princes who sued for her hand. She never spoke but to command, and only to her father did she bow. She always wore heavy brocade, silver or gold, studded with jewels, and long mantles of rustling silk, fringed with broad ermine; a diadem of the finest jewels always glittered on her red golden hair and her eyes also were jewels; two magnificent green emeralds, in which a black carbuncle was the pupil; and people whispered secretly that her

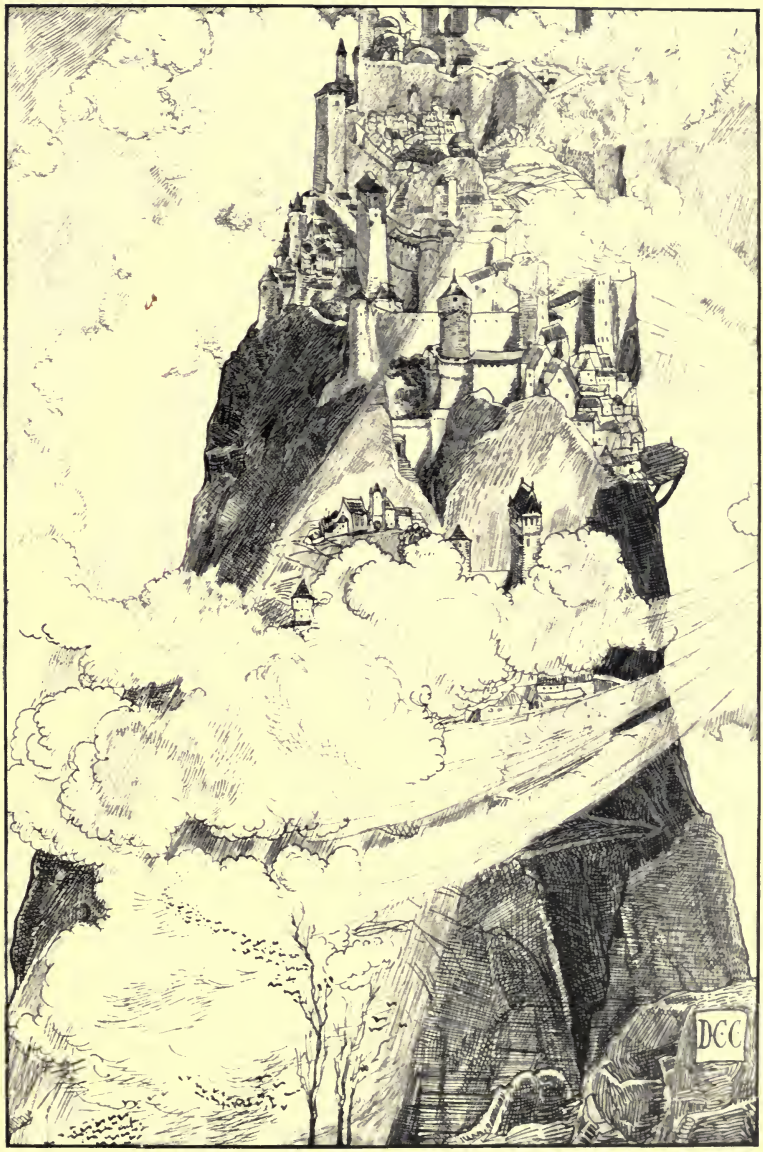
heart was cut out of one single, gigantic ruby.

Oh, Psyche was so afraid of her !

When Psyche wandered through the castle and suddenly saw Emeralda coming, preceded by pages, torches, shield-bearers, and maids-in-waiting, who bore her train, and a score of halberdiers, then she was struck with fear, and hastily concealed herself behind a door, a curtain, no matter where, and then Emeralda rustled by with a great noise of satin and gold and all the trampling of her retinue, and Psyche's heart beat loudly like a clock, tick ! tick ! tick ! tick ! till she thought she would faint. . . .

Then she shut her eyes so as not to see the cold, proud look of Emeralda's green emeralds, which pierced through the curtains, and saw Psyche well enough, though she pretended not to see her. And when Emeralda was gone, then Psyche fled upstairs, high up on to the battlements, fetched a deep breath, pressed her hands to her bosom, and long afterwards her little wings trembled from fear.

Astra, that was the name of the second princess. She wore a living star upon her head ; she was very wise and learned ; she knew much more than all the philosophers



THE KINGDOM OF THE PAST

[*To face p.* 10

and learned men in the kingdom, who came to her for counsel.

She lived in the highest tower of the castle, and sometimes, along the bars of her window, she saw clouds pass by, like spirits of the mist. She never left the tower. She sat, surrounded by rolls of parchment, gigantic globes, which she turned with a pressure of her finger ; and after hours of contemplation she described, with great compasses, on a slab of black marble, circle after circle, or reckoned out long sums, with numbers so great that no one could pronounce them.

Sometimes she sat surrounded by the sages of the land, and the king himself came and listened to his daughter, as in a low, firm voice she explained things. But because she possessed all the wisdom of the earth, she despised all the world, and she had had constructed on the terrace of her tower a telescope, miles long, through which she could look to every part of the illimitable firmament. And when the sages were gone, and she was alone, then she went on to the terrace and peered through the giant, which she turned to all the points of the compass. Through the diamond lenses, cut without facets, she saw

new stars, unknown to men, and gave them names.

Through the diamond lenses she saw sun systems, spirals of fire, shrivel up through the illimitableness of the universe. . . . But she kept gazing, for behind those sun systems, she knew, were other spheres, other heavens, and there farther still, illimitably far, was the Mystic Rose, which she could never see. . . .

Sometimes, when Psyche wandered round the castle, she knocked nervously, inquisitively at Astra's door, who graciously allowed her to enter. When Astra stood before the board and reckoned out long sums, Psyche looked very earnestly at her sister's star, which glistened on her head, in her coal-black hair. Or she went on to the terrace and peeped through the telescope, but she saw nothing but very bright light, which made her eyes ache. . . .

CHAPTER IV

In the evening, before she went to sleep, Psyche sought the king.

A good hundred years old he was, his beard hung down to his girdle, and generally he sat reading the historical scrolls of the kingdom, which his ministers brought him every day.

But in the evening Psyche climbed on to his knees and nestled in his beard, or sat at his feet in the folds of his tabard, and the scroll fell to the ground, and crumpled up, and the withered hand of the mighty monarch stroked the head of his third child, the princess with the little wings.

"Father, dear," asked Psyche once; "why have I wings, and cannot fly?"

"You need not fly, child; you are much safer with me than if you were a little bird in the air."

"But why then have I wings?"

"I don't quite know, my child. . . ."

"Why have I wings, and Astra a living star upon her head, and Emeralda eyes of jewels?"

"Because you are princesses; they are different from other girls."

"And why, dear father," whispered Psyche, secretly, "has Emeralda a heart of ruby? . . ."

"No child, that she has not. She has, it is true, eyes of emerald, because she is a princess —as Astra has a star and you two pretty wings —but she has a human heart."

"No, father, dear, she has a heart of stone."

"But who says so, my child?"

"The nurse does, father, her own pages, the guards at the gates, and the wise men who come to Astra."

The king was very sad. He and his daughter looked deep into each other's eyes, and embraced each other, for the king was sad, on account of what he saw in the future, and Psyche was frightened: she always trembled when she thought of Emeralda.

"Little Psyche," said her old father, "will you now promise me something?"

"Yes, father, dear."

"Will you always stay with me, little Psyche? You are safe here, are you not? and the world is so great, the world is so wicked. The world is full of temptation and mystery. Winged horses soar through the air; gigantic sphinxes lurk in the deserts; devilish fauns roam through the forests. . . . In the world, tears are shed, which form brooks, and in the world people give away their noblest right for the lowest pleasure. . . . Stay with me, Psyche, never wander too far away, for under our castle glows the Nether-world! . . . . And life is like a princess, a cruel princess with a heart of stone. . . ."

Of precious stone, like Emeralda, thought Psyche to herself. Who rides in triumph with her victorious chariot over the tenderest and dearest, and presses them stone-dead into the deepest furrows of the earth. . . .

"Oh, Psyche, little Psyche, promise me always to stay here in this high and safe castle: always to stay with your father!"

She did not understand him.

His eyes, very large and animated, looked over her into space, with inexpressible sadness. Then she longed to console him, and threw her white arms round his neck; she hid herself, as

it were, in his beard, and she whispered playfully :

"I will always stay with you, father dear. . . ."

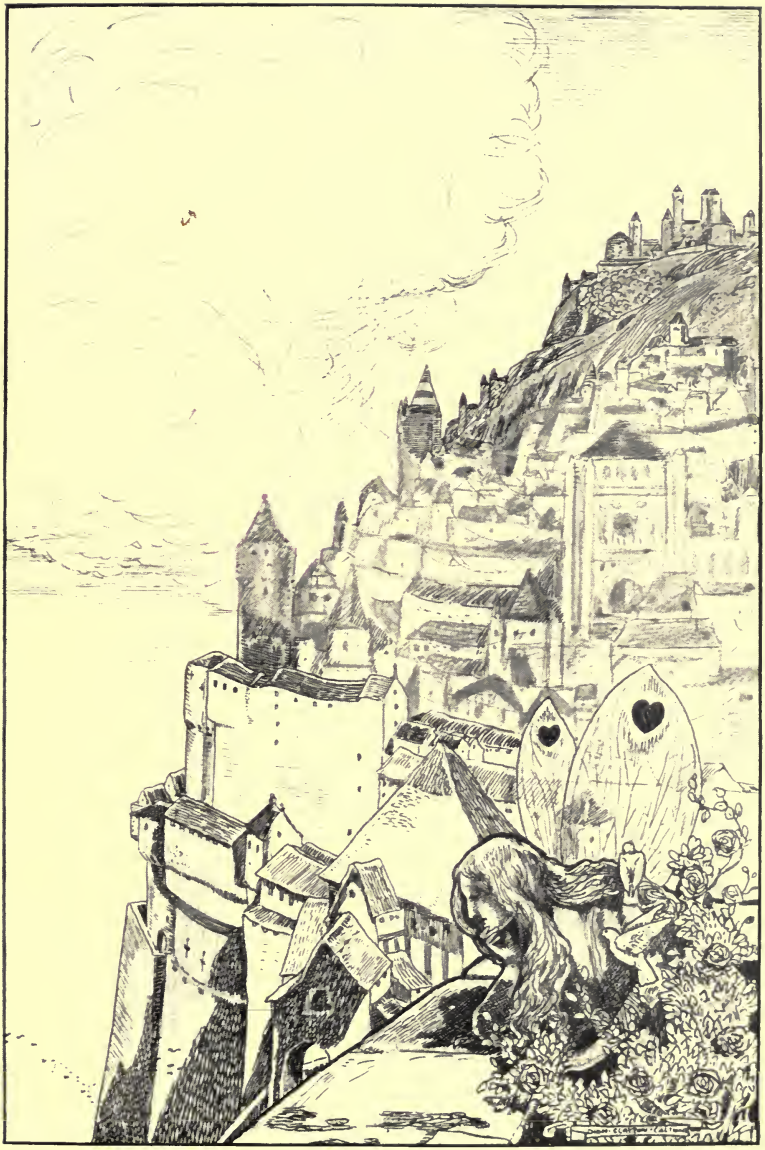
Then he pressed her to his heart, and thought that he would soon die. . . .

CHAPTER V

Psyche was often very lonely, but yet she had much: she had the flowers, the birds; she had the butterflies, which thought that she was a bigger sister; she had the lizards, with which she played, and which, like little things of emerald, she held against her veil; she had the swans in the deep castle moats, which followed her when she walked on the ramparts; she had the clouds, which came floating from distant islands and paradises beyond; she had the wind, which sang her ballads; the rain, which fell down wet upon her and covered her wings with pearls. She would gladly have played with the pages in the halls, have laughed with the shield-bearers in the armoury, have listened to the martial tales of the bearded halberdiers at the gates, but she was a princess and knew she could not do that, and she always walked past them with great dignity, maidenly modest in her fine,

thin veil, which left her tender limbs half exposed. That was the noble Nakedness, which was her privilege as a princess, a privilege given her at her cradle, together with her wings by the Fairy of Births, as to Emeralda was given the Jewel and to Astra the Star. For never might Psyche wear Jewel or Star, and never might Emeralda or Astra go naked. Each princess had her own privilege, her birthright. Adorable was Psyche as, unconscious of her maidenly, tender purity, she was seen with her crimson glittering wings, naked in the folds of her veil, walking past the armour-bearers and soldiers, who presented their swords or halberds as the princess, nymph-white, stepped past them.

Psyche was often very lonely, for her nurse was old and mumbled over her spinning-wheel ; playmates Psyche had not, because she was a princess, and she would not get court-ladies till she was older and more dignified. But with the birds and the clouds and the wind Psyche could speak and laugh, and she was seldom dull, although she sometimes wished she were no longer *Princess of Nakedness* with the wings, but one of those very ordinary peasant-girls



THE RAMPARTS

[*To face p.* 18.

whom she had seen milking the cows, or plucking the thick bunches of grapes in the vineyard at harvest-time, whilst the pressers, handsome brown lads with sturdy arms, encircled the girls and danced.

But Psyche wandered along the ramparts; she looked at the clouds and spoke with the wind, and she asked the wind to give flight to her wings, so that she could fly far off to the opal landscapes that kept shifting and changing. But the wind rushed away with a flapping noise of wings that Psyche envied, and her own wings flapped a little, but in vain.

Psyche looked at the clouds. They floated along so stately in all kinds of forms—in the forms of sheep, swans, horses—and the form never remained: the seeming forms, thick-white in the blue ether, were constantly changing. Now she saw three swans which were drawing a boat, in which stood three women, who guided the swans; then she saw the women become a tower, the swans a dragon, and from far, far away came a knight, sitting on a winged horse. But now slowly the scene changed into a flock of little silver-fleeced, downy sheep, which were browsing

far off in the sunshine as in a golden meadow. The knight disappeared, but the horse glided nearer and flew on his wings, high over the castle, towards the sheep.

Then Psyche dreamed at night of the swans, the tower, the dragon, the knight, the horse ; but the horse she liked best, because it had strong wings. And next morning she gazed from the battlements to see if the horse would come again.

But then the sky was either gloomy from the rain or blue from the absence of clouds, or covered with white peacock's feathers, splendid plumes, but motionless, far, far away in the air. The wind changed, when she said : " Away ! blow now from the East again ! Begone, North wind, with your dark perils, begone ! Begone, West wind, with your rain-urns ! Begone, South wind, with your peacock's feathers ! Come now, wind from the East, with your treasures of luxurious visions, ye dragons, ye horses, ye girls with swans ! . . . ." Then the clouds began to shift, the winds to blow, and play an opera high up in the air, and Psyche, enchanted, sat and gazed.

Then after weeks, after she had missed it for weeks, came again the winged horse.

And she beckoned to it to approach, to descend to her; but it flew past over the castle. Then she missed it again for many days, and, angry, she looked at the sky and scolded the wind. But then the horse came again, and, laughing, she beckoned to it. The horse ascended high, its wings expanded in the air, and oh, wonder! it beckoned to her to come up, up to it. She gave a sign that she could not, shook her little shoulders helplessly, and, trembling, flapped her wings and spread her arms wide out to say that she could not. And the horse sped away on the breath of the wind from the East.

Then Psyche wept, and, sad at heart, sat looking at the far, far-off landscapes which she would never reach.

But weeks afterwards the treasure-bringing wind blew again, and again appeared the horse in the horizon, and it flew near and beckoned to Psyche, her heart heavy with hope and fear. . . . The horse mounted up; it beckoned to her. . . . She gave a sign that she could not; and oh! she feared that it would speed away again, the horse with the strong wings.

No . . . . no . . . . the horse descended!

Then Psyche uttered a joyful cry, sprang up, danced with delight and clapped her little hands. From the lofty, lofty sky the horse came down, gliding on its broad wings. It came down.

And Psyche, the little, joyful, excited Psyche, saw it coming, coming down to her. It descended—it approached. Oh, what a beautiful horse it was! Greater than the greatest horses, and then with wings! Fair it was, fair as the sun, with a long curly mane and long flowing tail, like a streamer of sunny gold. The noble head on its arched neck proudly raised and its eyes shone like fire, and a stream of breath came from its expanded nostrils, cloud after cloud. Big, powerful, muscular, its wings were stretched out like silvery quills, as Psyche had never seen in a bird before. And its golden hoofs struck the clouds and made them thunder; and sparks of fire shot forth in the pure, clear daylight. Enraptured Psyche had never seen such a beautiful horse before, never a bird so beautiful; and breathless, with her head raised, she waited till it should descend, descend on the terrace. . . . At last there it stood before her. Its nostrils steamed, and its hoofs struck sparks from the

basalt rock, and it waved its mane and switched its tail.

"Splendid, beautiful horse," said Psyche, "who are you?"

"I am the Chimera," answered the horse, and his voice sounded deep as the clang of a brazen clock.

"Can you really speak?" asked Psyche, astonished. "And fly? Oh, how happy you must be!!"

"Why have you called me, little princess?" said the Chimera.

"I wanted to see you quite near," replied Psyche. "I only saw you dart like winged lightning through the air, so soon were you away again; and I was always sorry when I could not see you any more. Then I became, oh, so sad!"

"And why did you want to see me quite near, little princess with the wings?"

"I find you so beautiful. I have never seen anything so beautiful; I did not know that anything so beautiful existed. What are you? A horse you are not. Nor a dragon either, nor a man. What are you?"

"I am the Chimera."

"Where do you come from?"

"From far away. From the lands which are beyond the lands, from the worlds beyond the worlds, from the heavens beyond the heavens."

"Where are you going?"

"Very far. Do you see those distant regions yonder, of silver and opal? Well, thousands of times so far I am going. . . . I go from illimitableness to illimitableness; I come from nothingness and I am going to nothingness."

"What is nothingness?"

"Everything. Nothingness is as far as your brains can think, my little princess; and then still farther, and nothingness is more than all that you see from this high tower. . . ."

"Are you never tired?"

"No, my wings are strong; I can bear all mankind on my back, and I could carry them away to the stars behind the stars."

"If Astra knew that!"

"Astra knows it. But she does not want me. She reckons out the stars with figures."

"Why do you fly from one end to the other, O splendid Chimera? What is your object? What are you for?"

"What is your own object, little Psyche? What are you yourself for? For what are flowers, men, the stars? Who knows?"

"Astra. . . ."

"No, Astra knows nothing. Her knowledge is founded on a fundamental error. All her knowledge is like a tower, which will fall down."

"I should like to know much. I should like to know more. I should like to seek far through the universe. I long for what is most beautiful. . . . But I do not know what it is. Perhaps you yourself are what is most beautiful, Chimera. . . . But why are you now spreading out your wings?"

"I must go."

"So soon? Whence? Oh, why are you going so soon, splendid Chimera?"

"I must. I must traverse illimitableness. I have already stayed here too long."

"Stay a little longer. . . ."

"I cannot. I may not."

"Who compels you, O powerful horse, quick as lightning? . . . ."

"Power."

"What is power?"

"God. . . ."

"Who is God? Oh, tell me more! Tell me more! Don't go away yet! I want to ask you so much, to hear so much. I am so stupid. I have longed so for you. Now you have come, and now you want to go away again."

"Do not ask me for wisdom; I have none. Ask the Sphinx for wisdom; ask me for flight."

"Oh, stay a little longer! Don't flap so with your flaming wings! Who is the Sphinx? O Chimera, do not give me wisdom, but flight!"

"Not now. . . ."

"When, then?"

"Later. . . ."

"When is that?"

"Farewell."

"O Chimera, Chimera . . . . !"

The horse had already spread out his wings broad. He was ascending. But Psyche suddenly threw both her arms round his neck and hung on to his mane.

"Let me go, little princess!" cried the horse. "I ascend quickly, and you will fall, to be dashed to pieces on the rock! Loose me!"

And slowly he ascended. . . .

Psyche was afraid ; she let go her arms ; she became dizzy, fell against the pinnacle, and bruised one of her wings. That pained her . . . . but she heeded it not ; the horse was already high in the air, and she followed his track with her eyes. . . .

" He is gone," thought she. " Will he come again ? Or have I seen him for the first and last time ? "

" As a dream he came from far-off regions, and to still farther regions he has gone. . . . Oh, how dull the world seems ! How dead is the horizon ! And how dizzy I feel. . . . My wing pains me. . . ."

With her hand she smoothed the wrinkle out of her wing ; she stroked it till it was smooth again, and tears ran down her cheeks.

" Horrid wings ! They cannot fly, they cannot follow the strong Chimera ! I'm in such trouble, such trouble ! ! But . . . . no. . . . Is that trouble ? Is that happiness ? I know not. . . . I am very happy . . . . ! I am so sorrowful. . . . How beautiful he was ! how strong, how sleek, how splendid, how quick, how wise, how noble, how broad

his wings! how broad his wings!! How weak I am compared to him. . . . A child, a weak child; a weak, naked child with little wings. . . . O Chimera, my Chimera, O Chimera of my desire, come back! Come back!! Come back!! I cannot live without you; and if you do not come again, Chimera, then I will not live any longer lonely in this high castle. I will throw myself into the cataract. . . ."

She stood up, her eyes looking eagerly into the empty air. She pressed her hands to her bosom, she wept, and her wings trembled as if from fever.

Then suddenly she saw the king, her father, sitting at the bow-window of his room. He did not see her, he was reading a scroll. But anxious lest he should see her trouble, her despair, and longing desire, she fled, along the battlements, the ramparts, through the passages and halls of the castle, till she came to the tower, where her nurse sat at her spinning-wheel, and then she fell down at the feet of the old woman and sobbed aloud.

"What is it, darling?" asked the old crone, frightened. "Princess, what is it?"

"I have hurt my wing!" sobbed Psyche.

And she showed the nurse the wrinkle in her wing, which was not yet quite gone.

Then, with soothing voice and wrinkled hand, the old nurse slowly stroked the painful wing till it became smooth.

CHAPTER VI

The old king, assisted by pages, sat down slowly on his throne; his ministers and courtiers gathered round him. Then there was a great rustling of satin and gold, and in came Emeralda, the Princess Royal, the Princess of the Jewel, as her title ran: first pages, life-guards, and then she herself, glittering with splendour, in her dress of silver-coloured silk; her bosom blazed with emeralds, a tiara of emeralds adorned her temples; her red-golden tresses, intertwined with emeralds, fell in three-fold plaits down each side of her face, from which the eyes of emerald looked proud, soulless, ice-cold, and arrogant. Court-ladies bore her train. A great retinue of halberdiers surrounded her jewelled majesty, and as she passed along, the trembling courtiers bowed lower to her than they did to the king, because they were in deadly fear of her.

Astra, with dragging step, followed her.

She wore a dress of azure covered with stars, a white mantle full of stars, and her living star sparkled in her coal-black hair.

The sages of the country surrounded her : grey-haired men in velvet tabards, with very long silver beards, dim eyes, and wise, close-pressed lips.

The two princesses sat down on either side of the throne.

And for a moment the middle space of the hall between the waiting crowd remained empty. But then appeared Psyche, the third daughter, the Princess of Nakedness with the wings ! Shyly she approached, looking right and left, with the laugh of a child. She was naked : only a golden veil was tied in a fold round her hips. Her wings were spread out like a butterfly's. She had no retinue : only her old nurse followed her ; and she was so pretty and charming that people forgot to bow as she passed along, that the courtiers smiled and whispered, full of admiration, because she was so beautiful in her pure chastity. Slowly she walked along, shy and laughing a little ; then close to the throne, where her father saw her approaching hesitatingly, her bare foot got entangled in her trailing golden veil, and to

ascend the steps she lifted it up, knelt down, and kissed the king's hand.

Then calmly she sat down on a cushion at his feet, and was no longer shy. She looked round inquisitively and nodded a greeting here and there, child as she was, till all at once, to the right of the throne, she met the emerald look of Emeralda, and started and shivered ; a cold thrill shot through her limbs, and she hid herself in the ermine of her father's mantle to be safe and warm.

Then there was a flourish of trumpets, and at the door of the Hall heralds announced Prince Eros, the youthful monarch of the Present. He came in all alone. He was as beautiful as a god, with light-brown hair and light-brown eyes. He wore a white suit of armour over a silver shirt of mail, and his whole presence portrayed simplicity and intelligence.

The courtiers were astonished at his coming without a suite ; Emeralda laughed scornfully aside with one of her court-ladies. She did not find him a king, that plain youth in his plain dress. But Eros had now approached and bowed low before the mighty monarch, and the latter bade him welcome with fatherly condescension.

Then spoke the prince :

" Mighty Majesty of the Past, accept my respectful thanks for your welcome. Diffident I come to your throne, for I am young in years, have little wisdom, little power. You reign over an extensive kingdom, the horizon of which is lost in illimitableness. I reign over a country that is not larger than a garden. From my humble palace, that is like a country-house, I can survey all my territory. Your Majesty possesses lands and deserts, which you do not know. I know every flower in my beds. And that your Majesty, in spite of my poverty and insignificance, receives me with much honour and acknowledges me as sovereign in my kingdom, fills my heart with joy. Will your Majesty permit me to kneel and pay my homage to you as an obedient vassal ? "

Then the old king nodded to Psyche, and the princess rose, because Eros was about to kneel.

Then said the king : " Amiable Eros, I love you as a son. Tell me, have you any wish that I can satisfy ? If so, then it is granted you."

Then said Eros : " Your Majesty makes my heart rejoice by saying that you love me as a

son. Well, then, my greatest joy would be to marry one of the noble princesses, who are your Majesty's daughters. But I am a poor prince, and whilst confessing to your Majesty my bold desire, I fear that you may think me too arrogant in presuming to cherish a wish that aims so high. . . ."

"Noble prince," said the king, "you are poor, but of high birth and divine origin, higher and more divine than we. You are descended from the god Eros; we from his beloved Psyche. The history of the gods is to be read in the historical rolls of our kingdom. It would make my heart rejoice if you found a spouse in one of my princesses. But they are free in their choice, and you will have to win their love. Permit me, therefore, first of all to present to you my eldest daughter, the Princess Royal, Princess of the Jewel: Emeralda. . . ."

Emeralda rose, and bowed with a scornful sneer.

"And," continued the monarch, "in the second place, to my wise Astra, Princess of the Star. . . ."

Astra rose and bowed, her look far away, as if lost in contemplation.

"And would Emeralda permit me to sue for her love and her hand?" asked the prince.

"Majesty of the Present," replied Emeralda, "my father says that you are of more divine origin than we. I, your humble slave, consider it therefore too great an honour that you should be willing to raise me to your side upon your throne. And I accept your homage, but on one condition. That condition is: That you seek for me the All-Sacred Jewel, Jewel of Mystery, the name of which may not be uttered, the noble stone of Supremacy. The legends respecting this jewel are innumerable, inexplicable and contradictory. But the Jewel exists. Tell me, ye wise men of the land—tell me, Astra, my sister, does the Jewel exist?"

"It exists!" said Astra.

"It exists!" said all the wise men after her.

"It exists!" repeated Emeralda. "Prince, I dare ask much of you, but I ask you the greatest thing that our soul and ambition can think of. If you find me beautiful and love me, then seek, and bring me the Jewel, and I will be your wife, and together we shall be the most powerful monarchs in the world."

The prince bowed, and with imperceptible irony said :

" Royal Highness of the Jewel, your words breathe the splendour of yourself, and I will weigh them in my mind. Your beauty is dazzling, and to reign with you over the united kingdoms of the Past and the Present, appears to me indeed a divine happiness. . . ."

" For other kingdoms exist not," added Astra, and the wise men repeated her words.

" Yes," murmured the king. " There is another kingdom. . . ."

" What kingdom ? " asked all.

" The kingdom of the Future," said the king, in a low tone.

Emeralda laughed scornfully. Astra looked compassionately. The wise men glanced at each other ; the courtiers shook their heads.

" The king is getting old," they whispered. " The mind of His Majesty often wanders," muttered the ministers.

" Our monarch has always had much imagination," said the wise men. " He is a poet. . . ."

But then spoke the prince.

" And you, wise Astra, Royal Highness of

the Star, will you, like Emeralda, allow me to sue for your hand and heart ? "

" Most willingly, Prince Eros ! " said Astra, with a far-off look and in a vague tone. " But I have conditions to make as well as Emeralda, the Princess Royal. Will you hear them ? Then listen. If you see any chance of lengthening my telescope, of strengthening the lenses, that I can see through them to the confines of the universe, to the last sun-system, to the Mystic Rose, to the Godhead Himself, then I will be your wife, and together we shall be the most powerful beings of the world, because then we are omniscient. For the universe is limited. . . ."

" The universe is limited ! " said the wise men, after her.

" Endless is the universe ! " said the king, in a subdued voice.

The people laughed and shook their heads. " The king is getting very old," was repeated everywhere.

" The king will soon die," prophesied the wise men, in a low tone. " He speaks like an old man, without reason ; he will soon die. . . ."

" Royal Highness of the Star," said the

prince, "your words, pregnant with wisdom, I will also consider. For to be omniscient must indeed be the greatest power. But your Majesty has a third princess," he continued, addressing the king. "Where is she?"

"She is here," said the king. "She is the Princess of Nakedness with the wings. But she is still a child, Prince. . . ."

Psyche blushed and bowed.

The prince looked long at her. Then he said to her, gently: "Your Highness is called Psyche? You have the name of the ancestress of your race, as I have the name of the god who begot mine. Is it not true?"

"I believe so," murmured Psyche, embarrassed.

"She is still a child, prince—forgive her!" repeated the king.

"Will your Majesty not permit me to ask for the hand and heart of your third daughter, the princess?"

"Certainly, prince; but she is still so young. . . . . If she leaves me I shall be very sad. But if she loves you, then I will give her up to you, for then she will be happy. . . ."

"Tell me, Psyche, will you be my wife?"

Psyche blushed exceedingly. Her naked limbs blushed, her wings blushed.

"Prince," said she hesitatingly and looked bashfully at her father, "you do me much honour. But my sisters are more beautiful and wiser than I. And my father would miss me if I went with you to the kingdom of the Present."

"But tell me, Psyche, what conditions do you impose upon me?"

Psyche hesitated. She was about to exclaim joyfully: "Catch me the Chimera, bind him in a meadow to graze, and give me power over him, that I may mount his back and fly through the air as I like."

But she durst not before the whole court and her father. And so she only stammered: "None, prince. . . ."

"Could you love me?"

"I don't know, prince. . . ."

Psyche was shy. She kept blushing, and all at once began to tremble and weep.

And she looked round to the king, fled to his arms, hid her face in his beard and sobbed.

"Prince Eros," said the king, "forgive her. You see she is a child. Seek for Emeralda's Jewel, or seek for Astra the Glass which

will bring to view the confines of the universe ; but leave me my youngest child."

Then the prince bowed. An indescribable sadness rose in his soul, like a sea. And pale he stammered, " I obey your Majesty."

Then the king descended from his throne and embraced the prince. And whilst the fanfares sounded, he put his arm through the arm of Eros, took Psyche by the hand, and conducted his guest to the banquet, the princesses following, surrounded by the whole court.

CHAPTER VII

For days had Psyche watched in vain, and all hope died out of her heart.

But one windy morning—the thick white clouds were speeding through the air—she saw the desire of her heart again. Far away appeared a cloud, but as it drew nearer it became a horse: it was the Chimera.

She beckoned to it, and the Chimera came down.

"What do you want, little Psyche?"

She clasped her hands imploringly. "Take me with you. . . ."

"You will become dizzy. . . ."

"No, no. . . ."

He descended, stamping on the basalt rock; the terrace shook, sparks flew up, and the steam of his breath shot out in clouds.

"Take me with you," she implored.

"Where do you wish to go?"

"To the islands of opal and silver."

"They are too far away."

"Take me, then, nearer to them; take me with you where you will."

"Are you not afraid?"

"No."

"Will you hold fast to my neck?"

"Yes, oh yes!"

"Come, then. . . ."

She uttered a cry of joy. He bent his knees, and she got up with a beating, thumping heart. Between his flaming wings, on his broad, broad back, she sat almost as safe as in a nest of silver feathers.

"Trust not to my wings," he warned her; "I move them at every stroke. They open and shut, open and shut. Hold fast on to my neck. Clasp my mane. If you are not frightened and do not become giddy and sick, you will not fall, however high I go. "Do you dare, Psyche?"

"Yes."

She fastened his mane round her waist, as if it were strong rope of golden flax. She put her arms round his neck.

"I am ready," she said courageously.

He ascended, very slowly, with his broad

wings. Under him, under her, the terrace sank away.

She shut her eyes, she held her breath, and the blood left her heart. Under her the castle sank away.

"Stop!" she implored. "I am dying. . . ."

"I thought so, Psyche. You are much too weak. You cannot go up with me. . . ."

She opened her eyes slightly. She sat on his back in the silver down, where his quills clave to his light-gold loins. And round her, circles of light revolved, one after the other, and made her dizzy.

"Descend!" she implored. "Oh, descend! I cannot endure it. I have no breath; I am dying."

He descended. . . . He stood on the terrace. She slid along his wing to the ground. She put her hands before her face, and when she opened her eyes she was alone.

Then she was very, very sad. But next day, he appeared again. And, more courageous, she wished to mount him again. He let her do as she desired, and she got on his back. She shut her eyes, but smiled. He went higher and higher with her, without her saying "Descend." She travelled for a time

high up in the air, she opened her eyes and kept smiling; she got accustomed to the rarefied air. The third time he soared away with her; she saw, far below, the royal castle, small as a toy, towers, ramparts; and then she realised for the first time that she had left the castle.

She thought of the king.

"Take me back!" she said to the horse commandingly.

He obeyed her. He took her back. But as soon as he was gone, she longed again for him and the lofty air. And she had but one thought, the Chimera. She no longer cared for the flowers which she had planted between the walls, and the flowers withered. She no longer cared for the swans, and the swans, neglected, followed her in vain, in the green moats; she forgot to crumble bread for them. And she looked at the clouds and she gazed at the wind, thinking only of him, the light-gold horse with the silver wings, because he came on the wind, on the clouds, which thundered when he struck with his hoofs.

On the day that he did not come, her fair Chimera, she sat pale and lonely, gazing from the battlements, her eyes far away, her arms

round her knees. In the evening she nestled in the king's beard, in the folds of his tabard, but she durst not tell him that she had ridden a wondrous winged horse and flown with him through the air. But on the days that her beloved horse had come and taken her away with him, carefully flapping his wings, her face shone with golden happiness in the apotheosis of her soul, and through the gloomy halls, where sacred spiders, which were never disturbed, wove their webs, rang Psyche's high voice, and from the faded gobelin the low vault and the motionless iron knights strangely re-echoed the words of her joyous song.

CHAPTER VIII

"PSYCHE, where do you wish to go?"

"To the opal islands, to the seas of light, to the far-off luminous streaks. . . ."

"Take a deep breath; hold fast on to my neck; twist my mane more tightly round your hand, then we will begin our journey."

The clouds sent forth a rumbling sound of thunder; the Chimera's hoofs shot fire; his wings expanded and shut, and his strong feathers rustled in the air.

Psyche uttered a cry.

She had ascended higher than ever before, and under them sank away the castle, the meadows, the woods, the cities, and the river; under them, like a map, lay stretched out province after province, desert after desert, the whole Kingdom of the Past. How great it was! how great it was! The frontiers receded from view again and again; far

down below rose up town after town ; river after river meandered along, mountain-ranges rose up one after the other, now only slightly elevated, then rising arabesquely through the plains. Then there were great waters like oceans, and Psyche saw nothing but white foaming sea. But on the other side of it began again the strand, the land, the wood, the meadows, the mountains, and so on endlessly. . . .

" How much farther away are the opal islands, the streaks of light I see in the distance, my beloved Chimera ? "

" We have already passed them. . . ."

She raised her head, bent over his streaming neck, and gazed about her.

" But I do not see them any longer ! " she said, astonished. " I see wood and meadow, towns and mountains. . . . Is the world, then, the same everywhere ? Where are the opal islands ? "

" Behind us. . . ."

" But I do not see them. . . . Have we passed them without my seeing them ? O naughty Chimera, you did not tell me ! "

" And where are the luminous streaks of the far-off land ? "

"We are going through them. . . ."

"I see nothing. . . . Below, land; around, clouds, as everywhere. But no lands of light. . . . And yet there, in the distance, very far away—what is that, Chimera? I see, as it were, a purple desert on a sea of golden water, with winding borders of soft mother-of-pearl; in the desert are oases like pale emerald, palms with silvery waving tops, azure bananas; and over the purple desert trills ether of light crimson, with streaks of topaz. . . . Chimera, Chimera, what is that country? What is that beautiful country? The golden sea with its foam forms a pearly fringe along the shore; the palms wave their tops to a rhythm of aerial music, and the bananas, blue, pink, glow in the ether till all is light there. . . .! Chimera, is that the rainbow?"

"No. . . ."

"Chimera, is that the land of happiness? Is that the kingdom of happiness? Chimera, are you king there?"

"Yes, that is my country. And I am king there."

"Are we going thither?"

"Yes."

"Do you remain there, Chimera? Do we remain there together?"

"No. . . ."

"Why not?"

"As soon as I have reached my purple land, I must go farther . . . . and then back again."

"O Chimera, I will not go back! I will forget everything—my father, my country. I will remain there with you!"

"I cannot. . . . But now pay great attention; we are approaching my kingdom, little Psyche. Look! now we are going over the sea, now we are approaching the shore, lined with soft mother-of-pearl."

"The sea is a dirty green, like an ordinary sea; the borders are sand. . . . You are deceiving me, Chimera! As soon as we approach, then you charm away everything that I saw beautiful."

"Now, under us is the purple desert; under us are the oases of pale emerald."

"You are deceiving me, Chimera! The desert glows in the strong sun, the oases fade away to nothing, like a meteor. . . . Chimera!"

"What, Psyche?"

"Where are you going?"

"To the land, as far off as you can see. . . ."

"I care not about it! You always deceive me! You carry me away through endless space, and everything beautiful that I see disappears from my view. But yet . . . . there, behind the horizon, behind the sand of the desert, is a dazzling scene. . . . Are those silver grottos on a sea of light? Does the light there wave like water? Are those groves of light, cities of light, in a land of light? Tell me, Chimera, do people of light live there? Is that Paradise?"

"Yes, will you go thither?"

"Yes, oh yes, Chimera. There is happiness, the highest happiness, and there I will remain with you . . . . !"

"We are now approaching it. . . ."

"Let that land of light now stay, the paradise of glowing sunshine; do not charm away the land of happiness, O naughty Chimera: go to it now with me, and descend with me. . . ."

"We are there. . . ."

"Descend. . . ."

He descended.

"Have we not yet reached the ground of light?"

"Look below: can you see nothing. . . . ?"

She looked along his wing.

"I see nothing . . . . ! It is night. . . . It is dark. . . . Chimera ! ! !"

"What, little Psyche ?"

"Where is the land of silver light, the land of the people of light ? Where is it gone ?"

"Do you not see it ?"

"No. . . ."

"Then it is gone. . . ."

"Whither ?"

"Behind us, under us. . . ."

"Why did you not descend sooner ?"

"My flight was too quick, and I could not, Psyche. . . ."

"You are deceiving me ! You could have done so. You would not. . . . Now . . . . now it is night, pitch dark, starless night. . . . There is an icy coldness in the air. . . . O Chimera, take me back . . . . ! !"

He turned with a swing of his powerful wings. And as he turned, the lightning broke forth and darted zigzag through the air, like smooth-bright electric swords; the black clouds parted asunder with a violent peal of thunder like the clapping of cymbals, a storm of wind arose, the rain fell down in torrents . . . !

"O Chimera, take me back ! "

She threw herself on to his neck ; she hid her face in his mane, and through the bursting storm, whilst at every blow of his hoofs it lightened round them, he winged his way, back with her to her country : the Kingdom of the Past, inky there, in the inky night. . . .

CHAPTER IX

The old king was dead.

Black flags hung from the three hundred towers, and cast their dark shadows below.

A dim light fell through the bow-windows into the castle, for the three hundred flags obscured the sun.

With funeral music, that made the heart feel sad, the procession, with long flickering torches, followed the king's coffin down the steps to the deep vaults below.

The priests, in black, prayed in Latin ; the court, in black, sang the litany ; and the princesses, in black, sang alternately a long Latin sentence. . . .

Behind the coffin walked, first, Emeralda ; behind her, Astra her sister ; and then little Psyche, wrapped in her black veil. Emeralda sang with a voice of crystal ; Astra, distracted, was too late in answering ; and Psyche's voice

trembled when she had to sing alone the long monotonous sentence. . . .

There, in the deepest vault, they placed the coffin, next to the coffin of the king's father, and kneeling round it, they prayed. The low Roman vaults receded in impenetrable darkness. They sang and prayed the whole live-long day, and Psyche was very tired ; and whilst she was kneeling, her little knees quite stiff, she fell asleep against the coffin of her father. Her last thought had been to kiss the dear old face for the last time, but she felt nothing but the goldsmith's work, and the great round jewels that were in it hurt her head. . . . Then she fell asleep. . . .

And when the court had prayed, and all went up the steps again, there above, to do homage to Emeralda, as queen of the Kingdom of the Past, they all forgot Psyche.

Long, long she slept. . . .

And when she awoke, she did not know at first where she was.

Then by the light of the long torches she espied the coffin.

And through the crystal of the sarcophagus she saw the dead face of the king, and pressed a kiss upon the glass.

"Dear father!" she whispered, trembling, "why have you gone? I am now quite alone! Of Emeralda I am afraid, and Astra does not think of me; she only thinks of the stars. Father, dear, forgive me! I have deceived you. I have travelled through the air on the back of the flying horse. But father, dear, the horse is beautiful, and I love the Chimera! O father dear, I have deceived you, and now I am alone, and I have nobody who cares for me! You are dead, father, and embalmed, and shut up in gold and crystal and jewels, and do not hear your little Psyche. You do not think of your little daughter. Alone! alone! Awe-inspiring is the castle; three hundred towers rise high up in the air. I have never been in all the three hundred, however much I have wandered. O father, father, why have you left me? Who is there to love me now? who to protect me now in the world? Father, farewell! I will not stay here; I will go away! I will leave the castle. Great is the world and wicked, but Emeralda is powerful and I am afraid of her. If I remain, she will drive me away with her look and shut me up all my life, and my wings I shall break against the unbreakable lattice.

"Father, farewell! I will not remain here. I will flee! Whither? Whither shall I flee? I do not know. O father, dear, alone your child remains in the great, unsafe world! Alone! alone! O father, farewell, farewell! and forever!"

She rose, she shivered. The dark vaults receded more and more. By the light of the long torches she saw the sacred spiders, which wove web after web; they were never disturbed.

"Sacred spider!" said Psyche to a big fat one, with a cross on its back, "tell me where I must go."

"You cannot flee," replied the spider, high up in the dark vault, in the middle of its web. "Everything is as it is; everything becomes as it was; happens as it happens; all goes to dust. Every day sinks into the deep vaults of the dark pits under us; under us everything becomes the Past, and everything comes into the power of Emeralda. As soon as anything is, it has been, and is in the power of Emeralda. Seek not to flee—that is vanity; submit to your lot. The best thing is that you become one of us, a sacred spider, and weave your web. For our web is sacred; our web is indisturbable; and with all our

webs, one for the other, we serve the princess and protect her treasures—the treasures of the Past, which behind our weaving go to dust."

"But if they go to dust, of what value are they?"

"Foolish child, dust is everything. The Past is dust; remembrance is dust. Everything becomes dust; love, jewels—all becomes dust, and the sacred dust we watch over behind our webs. Become a spider like us, weave your web, and be wise."

"But I live. I am young, I desire, I love, and I cannot bury myself in dust. . . . Oh, tell me whither I must flee!"

The spider laughed scornfully, and moved its eight legs with great impatience.

"Ask me not about the places of the world—the regions of the wind. I sit here and spin. I am holy. I watch over the treasure of the throne. Disturb me no more with your frivolity, and let not your wings get entangled in the rays of my web, although you are not a moth, but princess of the Kingdom of the Past. . . ."

Psyche was frightened. The spider reverenced her because she was a princess, but coveted with his wicked instinct. . . . And

she drew back. She cast a last look at the dead face of her father, and fled up the hundred steps. In every corner sat the sacred spiders and moved their legs. Shuddering, she fled on. Whither? She thought of her love, the light-gold Chimera, but nowhere could he be with her for ever. She glided with him through the air, and he brought her back to the castle. His lot was to fly restlessly through the air. Oh, were she but a Chimera like him, had she but two strong wings instead of princesses' wings, she would have gone with him everywhere . . . . !

Whither? Above, from the enthronement-hall, came the sounds of joyful music. There Emeralda was being crowned. Whither? ? She fled to the terrace. . . . Oh, if Emeralda missed her, how angry she would be! She would think that Psyche refused to do her homage. She could never return. Farewell, flowers, swans, doves!

The three hundred flags obscured the light. She would never be able to see the Chimera coming. Oh, if he came and she did not see him, and did not beckon to him, and he flew past! He was her only safety! If needs be, she would wait for days together on the

battlements. But if Emeralda sent to search for her ! Oh, if she did, then there was the cataract ; then she would throw herself headlong down, for ever, for ever, into the rushing water with its rainbow colours !

A wind arose. That was the wind that brought her beloved. The flags flapped and impeded her view. And although she saw nothing, she beckoned as in despair, and called out :

" Chimera, Chimera ! "

CHAPTER X

It lightened. It thundered. Suddenly between the black flags the horse descended.

"What is it, little Psyche?"

"Take me with you."

"Where?"

"Where you like. Take me somewhere. My father is dead. Emeralda reigns. I dare not stay here any longer."

"Get up. . . ."

She got up. He flew away with her. He flew with her the whole day. The sun set; the stars glistened in the dark firmament; and he flew back. Again they approached the castle. The day began to dawn.

"Fly past!" she entreated.

He flew on. Under her she could just see the castle, small as a toy; the three hundred towers, where green flags now fluttered because Emeralda reigned. He flew on.

"Chimera!" she cried. "I love you; you

are the most beautiful, most glorious creature that I have ever beheld. Safe I lie upon your back, tied to your mane, my arms round your neck. But I am tired. I am dizzy. I am cold. Put me down somewhere. . . . Can you not rest with me in a beautiful valley, amongst flowers, near a brook? Are you not thirsty? Are you not tired, and never dizzy and cold? Will you not graze and lie in a meadow? Do you never, never rest? Chimera, I love you so! But why this restless flying from East to West, from West to East?"

"I must do it, little Psyche."

"Chimera, descend somewhere. Stay somewhere with me. I am tired, I am cold. I want to go to sleep on a bed of moss, under the shade of trees; sleep there with me."

"I cannot. My lot is to fly through the air, apparently without an object, but yet with an object; and what that is, I do not know."

"But what then does the Power want? You fly through the air; the spider spins its web; Emeralda reigns over dust; everything is as it is. Oh, life is comfortless! Chimera, I can hold out no longer! I love you with all

my soul, but if you do not descend, then I will loose the knots of your mane, I will let go my arms that are so tired, and then I shall fall down into nothingness. . . ."

"Hold out a little longer. Yonder is the purple desert. . . ."

"Oh, that is beautiful!" she exclaimed. "But you fly past it, always past it . . . . !"

"Do you want to rest, Psyche?"

"Oh, yes. . . ."

"Then I will descend. . . . Hold out a little longer." She held him tight, and looked about. He plied his wings with a rapidity that made her dizzy; they blew a wind round Psyche. . . .

In the air there loomed the purple sands on the golden sea, with a pearly border of foam; the azure bananas, which waved their tops in the light-pink ether. . . .

Psyche held her breath. . . . "Would he descend there . . . . ?"

Yes, indeed, he was descending . . . . he was descending. The purple, she thought, grew pale as soon as he descended; the sea was no longer golden, the foliage no longer blue. . . . But yet, yet it was beautiful, a dream-conceit, an enchanted land, and he was

descending. With his broad wings he glided down. Now he stood still, snorting his breath in a cloud of steam. She glided gently down his back on to the sand, and laughed, and gave a sigh of relief!

"Rest now, here, Psyche!" said he dejectedly, and the quiver in his bronze-sounding voice startled her; she laughed no more.

"Rest now. Look! here are dates, and there is a spring. The soft violet night is rapidly spreading over the sky and cooling the too warm air. A few pale stars are already glistening. Now quench your thirst; now refresh yourself and rest. . . . This is a pleasant oasis. Now sleep, little Psyche. To-morrow will soon be here. . . . Farewell!"

She looked at him with wondering eyes. She threw herself on his broad, powerful, heaving breast, and round his arched neck she threw her trembling arms.

"What . . . .? What do you say, Chimera?" she asked, pale with fear. "What are you going to do? What do you mean? Surely you will rest here with me in the soft violet night and amongst the blue flowers? With me you will refresh yourself with dates and water? You will let me sleep in the shadow

of your wings, and watch over me during the dreadful night ? "

" No, little Psyche. I am going farther and farther, and then I will return. Then after weeks . . . . after months, perhaps, you will see me again in the air. . . ."

" You will forsake me ? Here in the desert ? "

" Take courage, little Psyche : you are now too tired to fly farther with me through the air. You would slip from my back and fall into nothingness. Here is a pleasant oasis ; here are dates and a murmuring stream. . . ."

She uttered a cry ; her sobs choked her. She uttered a second, which frightened the hyenas far away in the desert and made them prick up their ears. She uttered a third, which rent the night-air, and the stars quivered from sympathy.

" Alone ! " she cried, and wrung her hands. " Alone ! O Chimera, you will leave me alone with dates and brook ! and I thought . . . . and still hoped, that you would stay with me, king in your country of the rainbow !

" Alone ! you will leave me alone in a sandy desert, in nothing but sand, sand in the night, with a single tree and a handful of water !

Alone! O Chimera, you cannot do that . . . . ! For I love you ; I adore you with all my soul, and shall die of grief and tears, Chimera, if you fly away from me! I love you ; I worship your golden eyes, your voice of bronze, your steaming breath, your panting flanks, your mane, to which I bound myself, your flaming wings, which carried me far, farther and farther . . . . to this place . . . . ! O Chimera, lay down your smoking limbs in the shadow of the night ; lay your noble head in my arms and my bosom, and together we will rest, and to-morrow fly away farther, united forever!"

"I cannot, O little Psyche. I too love you, sweet burden which lay between my wings—little butterfly with weak wings, that lent strength to my flight ; but now . . . ."

"But now—O Chimera, but now . . . . ?"

"But now I must go, continue my lonely journey to and fro, without knowing why. . . . Farewell, little Psyche, hope in life, hope in the morrow. . . ."

He spread his wings, his limbs quivered, he ascended into the air.

She wrung her arms, her hands. She sobbed, she sobbed. . . .

"Have pity ! !" she implored. "Pity, pity ! What have I done ? Why do you punish me so ? My God, what have I done ? I have trusted, hoped, given my soul in happiness. . . . Is happiness then punished ? Is it not good to hope, to trust, and to love ? Ought I then to have mistrusted and hated ? What do I ask ? He no longer hears me ! What do I care for the problems of life ! Him I love, and in me is nothing but my love and despair, and round me is the desert and the night, and now . . . . now I must die ! "

She sobbed, and her tears flowed. She was alone. Around her loomed the night, around her stretched the sands as far as the perceptible horizon. And above her glistened the stars.

And she wept. Her grief was too great for her little soul. She wept.

"Alone ! " she sobbed. "Alone . . . . ! I will not quench my thirst, I will not refresh myself, nor will I sleep. I am tired, but I will go on. . . ."

On she went, and wept. In the night she walked on through the sand, and she wept. She wept from fear and despair. And she wept so, her tears flowed so many down her cheeks that they fell, her tears, like drops,

great and warm, deep into the sand. Her tears flowed down into the sand. And she wept, she kept weeping, and as she went along . . . . her tears did not stop. Then in the sand, her tears so warm and so great, formed little lakes. And as she went and kept going on and weeping, the little lakes flowed into one another, and behind her flowed a stream of tears. Meandering after her flowed her tears. And on she went in the night and wept. . . . After her, meandered faithfully the stream of her tears. . . . And she thought of her lost happiness. . . . He had forsaken her. . . . Why . . . .? She had loved him so, still loved him so. . . . Oh, she would always love him so—always, always!

And in her love she did not scold him. For she loved him and scolded not. She longed for no revenge, for she loved him. . . .

"That was fate," she thought, weeping. "He could not do anything else. He was obliged. . . ."

She wept. And oh! she was so tired, so tired of the wide sky, so tired of the wide sand! Then she thought she could go no farther, and should fall into the stream of her tears. . . . But before her a lofty shadow fell with gloomy dark-

ness on the violet night. She looked up, and had to strain her neck to see to the top of the shadow. The shadow was round above, and then tapered off behind. . . . But she wept so, that she did not see. . . . Then with her hand she wiped away the tears from her eyes, and gazed. . . . The shadow was awful, like that of an awfully great beast. And she kept wiping away her tears, which formed a pool around her, and gazed. . . .

Then she saw. She saw, squatting in the sand, a terribly great beast like a lion, immovable. The beast was as great as a castle, high as a tower ; its head reached to the stars. But its head was the head of a woman, slender, enveloped in a basalt veil, which fell down, right and left, along her shoulders. And the woman's head stood on the breast of a woman, two breasts of a gigantic woman, of basalt. But the body, that squatted down in the sand, was a lion, and the forepaws protruded like walls.

The night shone. The sultry night shone with diamonds over the horizonless desert. And in the starlight night the beast, terrible, rested there, half-woman, half-lion, squatting in the sand, its paws extended and its breasts

and woman's head protruding, gigantic, reaching to the stars. Her basalt eyes stared straight before her. Her mouth was shut and so were the basalt lips, which would never speak.

Psyche stood before the beast. Around her was the night ; around her was the sand ; above her the diamond, shining stars. Silently shuddering and full of awe, stood Psyche. Then she thought : " It must be she, the Sphinx. . . ."

She wept. Her tears flowed ; she stood in the stream of her tears, which, winding along, followed her. And weeping, she lifted up her voice, small in the night—the voice of a child that speaks in the illimitable.

" Awful Sphinx," she said, " make me wise. You know the problem of life. I pray you solve it to me, and let me no longer weep. . . ."

The Sphinx was silent.

" Sphinx," continued Psyche, " open your stony lips. Speak ! Tell me the riddle of life. I was born a princess, naked, with wings ; I cannot fly. The light-gold Chimera, the splendid horse with the silver wings, came down to me, took me away with him in wanderings through the air, and I loved him. He has left me—me, a child—alone in the

desert, alone in the night. Tell me why? If I know, I shall—perhaps—weep no more. Sphinx, I am tired. I am tired of the air, tired of the sand, tired from crying. And I cannot stop ; I keep on crying. If you do not speak to me, Sphinx, then I will drown you, gigantic as you are, in my tears. Look at them flowing around me ; look at them rippling at your feet like a sea. Sphinx, they will rise above your head. Sphinx, speak !"

The Sphinx was silent.

The Sphinx, with stony eyes, looked away into the night of diamond stars. Her basalt lips remained closed.

And Psyche wept. Then she cast a look at the stars.

"Sacred Stars," she murmured, "I am alone. My father is dead. The Chimera has gone. The Sphinx is silent. I am alone, and afraid and tired. Sacred Stars, watch over me. See my tears no longer flow ; for this night they are exhausted. . . . I can cry no more. I will go to sleep, here, between the feet of the Sphinx. She speaks not, it is true ; but—perhaps she is not angry, and if she wants to crush me with her foot, I care not. But yet I will go to sleep between her power-

ful feet. In your looks of living diamond, I feel compassion thrill. . . . Sacred Stars, I will go to sleep ; watch over me. . . ."

She lay down between the feet of the Sphinx, against the breast of the Sphinx. And she was so little and the Sphinx so great, that she was like a butterfly sitting near a tower.

Then she fell asleep.

The night was very still. Far, far away in the boundless desert, a mist drifted horizonlessly along, and lit up the darkness. The stream of Psyche's tears meandered, like a silver thread, far away from whence she had come. She herself slept. The Sphinx, with staring eyes and closed mouth, looked out high into the night. The stars twinkled and watched.

CHAPTER XI

WITHOUT a cloud arose on the horizon the first dawn of day, the round, rosy-coloured morning glimmer. And in the dawn appeared the horizon, and bordered the sandy plain.

In the rosy light, gigantic, towered the gloomy Sphinx. Psyche slept. But through her weary eyelids, the light softly sent its rays, coral-red, and suddenly she awoke. She opened her eyes, but did not move.

She remained in her slumbering attitude, but her eyes looked about. She saw the desert, without an oasis, only the brooklet of tears that meandered far away from whence she had come. It was like a silver thread in the rosy light of the dawn, and she followed its windings with her eye as long as she could. And when she thus looked, she began to weep again. The tears fell on the feet of the Sphinx, and Psyche wept, in her slumbering position. There was a mist before her eyes, and through

the mist glimmered the rosy desert and the little glistening stream.

But now she wiped away her tears, which trickled through her fingers, for she thought she saw . . . . and that was so improbable. She wiped her eyes again, and saw. She thought she saw . . . . and it was so improbable. . . . But yet it was so: she saw. She saw someone coming; along every winding of the brook, she saw someone approaching. . . . Who was it coming there? She knew not. . . . He came nearer and nearer. Was she dreaming? No, she was awake. He came, whoever he was. He was approaching. . . .

She remained sitting in the same attitude. And he came nearer and nearer, following the briny track, till he stood before the Sphinx. The Sphinx was so great and Psyche so little, that at first he did not see her. But because she was so white, with crimson wings, he saw her, a little thing red and white!

He approached between the feet of the Sphinx till he stood right before her.

He approached reverentially, because she had wept so much. When he was quite close, he knelt down and folded his hands.

Through her tears she did not recognise him.

"Who are you?" she asked in a faint voice.

He stood up and approached still closer, and then she recognised him. He was Prince Eros, the King of the Present.

"I know who you are," said Psyche. "You are Prince Eros, who was to have married Emeralda, or Astra."

He smiled, and she said:

"Why do you come here in the desert? Are you seeking here for the Jewel, or the Glass that magnifies?"

He smiled and shook his head.

"No, Psyche," he said gently. "I have never sought for the Jewel nor for the Glass.

"But first tell me: why are you here and sleeping by the Sphinx?"

She told him. She spoke of her father who was dead, of the light-gold Chimera, of the purple desert and the sorrowful night. She told him of her tears.

"I have followed them, O Psyche!" he replied. "I have come ever since I saw you before your father's throne—a day never to be forgotten!

"I have come here every day. Every day I leave my garden of the Present, to ask the awful Sphinx for the solution of my problem."

"What problem, Prince Eros?"

"The problem of my grief. For I am grieved about you, Psyche, because you would not follow me and stayed with your father. . . . Now I know why. You loved the Chimera. . . ."

She blushed, and hid her face in her hands.

"Who could see the Chimera and not love him more than me?" said Eros gently. "Who could love him, and not weep over him?" he whispered still more gently; but she did not hear him.

Then he spoke louder.

"Every morning, Psyche, I come to ask the Sphinx how long I must still suffer, and why I must suffer. And still much more, O Psyche, I ask the Sphinx, that I will not tell you now, because . . . ."

"Because . . . . ?"

"Because it would perhaps pain you to hear the question of my heart. So I came now, O Psyche, and then I espied a brooklet meandering through the sand. I did not know it; I was thirsty, for I am always

thirsty. I stooped down and scooped up the clear water in my hand. It tasted salt, Psyche : they were tears."

"My tears . . . ." she said, and wept.

"Psyche, I drank them. Tell me, do you forgive me for that ? "

"Yes. . . ."

"I followed the brook, and now I have found you here."

She was silent ; she looked at him. He knelt down by her.

"Psyche," said he gently, "I love you. Because I saw you little and naked and winged, standing amongst your proud sisters— Psyche, I love you. I love you so much, that I would weep all your tears for you, and would give you . . . . the Chimera."

"You can't do that," she said sadly.

"No, Psyche," answered he, "that cannot, alas ! be done. I can only weep for myself ; and the Chimera . . . . nobody can catch him."

"He flies too fast," she said, "and he is much too strong ; but it is very kind of you, Prince Eros. . . ."

She stretched out her hand, and he kissed it reverentially.

PSYCHE AND EROS

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Then he looked at her for a long time.

"Psyche," said he, gently, "will the Sphinx give me an answer to my question this morning?"

She cast down her eyes.

"Psyche," he went on, "I have drunk your tears; I respect your grief, too great for your little heart. But may I suffer it with you? O Psyche, little Psyche, little, in the great desert, now your father is dead, now the Chimera is away, now you are all alone . . . . O Psyche, now come with me! Oh, let me now love you! O Psyche, come now with me! Psyche, alone in the desert, a little butterfly in a sandy plain—Psyche, oh, come with me! I will give you a summer-house to live in, a garden to play in, and all my love to comfort you. Don't despise them. All that I have will I give! Small is my palace and small my garden round it, but greater than the desert and the sky is my great love. O Psyche, come with me now! Then you will suffer cold and hunger and thirst no more, and the grief that your heart now suffers, Psyche, ... we will bear together."

He stretched out his arms. She smiled, tired and pale from weeping, slid from the

foot of the Sphinx, and nestled to his heart.

"Eros," she murmured, "I suffer. I pine. I weep. I gave away all that I had. I have nothing more than my grief. Can grief . . . . be happiness in the Present?"

He smiled.

"From grief . . . . comes happiness," he answered. "From grief will come happiness, not in the Present, but . . . . in the Future!"

She looked at him inquiringly.

"What is that?" she asked. "Future . . . ! It is a very sweet word. . . . I do not know what it is, but I have heard it before. . . . Father sometimes spoke of it with an affected voice. . . . It seems to be something far away, far, far away. . . . From grief will come . . . . in the Future . . . . happiness!

"Far behind me lies the Past. . . . Then I was a child. Now I am a woman. . . . A woman. . . . Now I am, Eros, a woman, a woman, who has wept and suffered, and asked of the silent Sphinx. . . . Now I am no longer a princess, but a woman, a queen . . . . of the Present . . . . !"

She fell against his shoulder and fainted. He gave a sign, and out of the air flew a

glittering golden chariot, drawn by two panting griffons. He lifted her into the chariot. He held her tight in his arm, and pressed her to his heart. With his other hand he guided his two dragon-winged lions through the glowing air of the desert.

CHAPTER XII

When Psyche opened her eyes, she heard the soft music of two pipes. And she awoke from her swoon with a smile. She lay still and did not move, but looked about her. She was reclining upon a soft bed of purple, on a couch of ivory. She lay in a crystal palace ; round the palace were pillars of crystal and a round crystal gallery. The pillars were entwined with roses, yellow, white, and pink, and they perfumed the sunny spring morning. Through the gallery of pillars, through the walls of crystal, she saw round her a pleasant meadow, like a round valley, a valley like a garden, through which ran a murmuring brook between beds of flowers. Quite near appeared the horizon of a low hill-slope, and the cloudless sky was like a chalice of turquoise.

The pipes changed their music. Psyche raised herself a little higher, leaning on her

arm ; she laughed and looked about. In the middle of the crystal palace was a basin of white marble, full of water, and doves were hopping about it or drinking. Sitting at the gate of crystal pillars, Psyche saw two girls ; with their fingers they raised the flutes to their mouth and played. Psyche laughed and listened. Then she fell back on the bed again, happy, but tired, full of rest and contentment, and she raised her head and looked up ! . . . .

Through a crocus-coloured curtain fell the tempered spring sunshine, quiet and soft, joyous and still.

Psyche breathed more freely, and a sigh escaped from her heart. She put her arms under her head ; her wings lay stretched out right and left on either side of her, and when she heard the music of the flutes, her thoughts drifted away like an aimless dream, like rose-leaves upon water.

She dreamed and she listened. . . . She no longer felt tired, and her eyes, which had shed a brook of tears, felt moist and fresh, cooled by an invisible hand, with invisible care. Her breathing was regular, and her soul felt safe. . . . And she smiled continually. . . .

The pipes ceased playing. . . .

The two girls, seeing that the queen had awaked, rose up and approached her bed with a basket of red-blushing fruit, which they set down near her. Then they made a deep reverence, but spoke not, and sat down again by the pillars and blew their pipes anew ; but to another tune, somewhat louder, like a voice calling, and both in unison. The pipes sounded jubilant in the morning, and outside, high in the air, the lark answered joyously. . . .

Psyche smiled, stretched out her hand and took a peach, a pear, a bunch of blue grapes. . . . The pipes played merrily together, and higher and higher and higher soared the lark and sang. Then Psyche heard the brook babbling gently ; the doves answered one another, and round her the morning sang her welcome.

Then footsteps light approached her softly ; the pipes ceased playing ; the girls rose and made a deep reverence. And between the pillars of crystal appeared Prince Eros, the King of the Present.

The girls withdrew, and Eros approached and knelt before Psyche.

He said nothing, but looked at her.

" Eros," said Psyche, " I thank you. . . .

THE KINGDOM OF THE PRESENT

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I have rested ; my eyes cease to burn ; my hunger is appeased. . . . I have heard sweet music, and everything appeared kind and to love me."

"Everything in my kingdom is glad that the queen has come. Everything is glad that the queen has awaked."

"The Queen of the Present," murmured Psyche.

Then she put her arm round his neck, and leant her head against his shoulder. "Eros," said she gently, "I love you. . . . How shall I express my love to you ! You have walked in the track of my tears, my salt tears you have drunk ; out of the desert, from the breast of the awful Sphinx, you lifted me in your chariot, drawn by swift griffons. . . . In my swoon I felt myself going through the air, not with the speed of the fair Chimera, whose hoofs struck lightning and made the thunder roll high in the ether . . . . but smoothly and evenly on wheels, over the clouds delicately tinted with the glowing dawn. How long did we travel . . . . ? How long have I slept ? Eros, how shall I express my love to you ! My love is deep gratitude, inexpressible, because you rescued me. My love is heart-felt

thankfulness, because you have cared for and refreshed me. My love is . . . ."

She paused for a moment, and rose from the bed.

" What, Psyche ? " said he gently, and stood up.

" My love is deep, submissive respect, O Eros, because you wanted to weep my tears and give me the wish of my heart, which, had it been fulfilled, would have caused you the most poignant grief."

She sank upon her knees and took his hand in hers and kissed it long. He lifted her up and pressed her to his breast.

" My gentle Psyche ! " said he. " My child and my wife and my tender princess ! Kneel not to me. In love it is sweet to give and to suffer. Love gives, and love suffers. . . ."

" I have only suffered, but not given," said Psyche, in a low tone.

" To suffer is to give most. To give to one we love the suffering of his suffering soul, is the greatest gift that can be given, my child and my princess ! Try, with the remembrance sacred to Suffering and Love, endured and loved, to be happy in the Present. Oh, let the Past be a remembrance, a sacred re-

membrance, a golden remembrance ; but now look to the Present. Oh, let the Present comfort you—the Present, little, humble, and poor. Look ! this is all. This cupola is my palace, this garden is my kingdom ; these flowers and these birds, they are all my treasures—roses and doves and the singing lark. More I have not ; but I have still my love—my love, great as the heaven and wide as the universe. But he who lives in love so great, needs no greater palace and no greater kingdom to rule over. For the treasures of Emeralda I would not exchange my kingdom and my love. . . . Psyche, my queen, yet I have ornaments for you. The Princess of Nakedness with the wings may never wear jewels of precious stones, and jewels I have not. But pearls, Psyche, I have pearls which Emeralda despises. Pearls, Psyche, I found in your tears of yesterday. See ! I strung them together, they were a crown for you. Pearls may adorn you, tears may adorn you, my child of suffering, my wife of love, queen of my soul and of my kingdom. . . ."

Then he took a little crown of twelve great pearls and put it on her head. Then he hung a necklace of pearls round her neck. And as she stood before him naked, so immaculately

delicate in her princessly nakedness, he threw around her loins a light, thin veil, richly adorned with pearls, and which she fastened in a knot. Then he gave her a mirror, and she beheld herself very beautiful, crowned like a queen, and smiled with contentment.

"Am I a queen?" she said softly. "Am I happy? Eros, do you love me? Is this the happiness of the Present? Eros, do I love you out of gratitude and respect, my husband and my king . . . . ?"

He led her gently away, through the porticos, down the crystal steps. Cupids hovered about them, the lark sang high in the heavens, the roses perfumed the air, the brook murmured gently. The spring rejoiced to welcome them, and behind the shrubs the pipes played a duet. The hill-slope of the horizon was peaceful, and above, the heaven, arched like a turquoise chalice.

Everything sang, everything was fragrant; in the grass buzzed thousands of insects; about the flowers fluttered butterflies; and where Psyche, on her husband's arm, walked along the flower-beds, all the flowers bowed to her in homage—the white slender lilies, the violets with laughing eyes, tall flowers and short

flowers, on long and short stems—and all gave forth their fragrance.

Eros pointed around.

"This is the Present, Psyche," said he, and pressed her to his heart.

"And this is happiness, that is as a lily and a violet . . . ." she whispered, with her lips to his.

CHAPTER XIII

The pleasant days followed each other like a row of laughing houris. . . . Eros and Psyche tended the flowers, which did not fade when Psyche stroked the stems or gently kissed the calyces. They wandered along the brook, and, if the days were warm, sought coolness under the crocus-coloured awning, in the crystal palace, where the doves cooed round the basin. The flutes played, or Eros himself took a lyre and sang, at Psyche's feet, the stories of days gone by.

It was one of the pleasures of the flower-laughing Present.

Between the shrubs, where May strewed fragrant snow-blossom, naked, chubby cupids with tender wings played or romped, hovering like little clouds in the air.

The sweet nights followed the pleasant days ; the diamond stars, the same which Psyche had entreated to watch over her in the desert,

glittered in the heavens. Under the roses, close to one another, slumbered the fair-winged children, tired out with play, their little mouths open and their chubby legs all folds. The air was heavy with the breath of lilac and jasmine ; it was spring, it was the Present, it was night . . . . !

And while Psyche lay with her head against Eros' shoulder and he wound his arm round her waist, while Psyche looked up at the stars, sacred in the violet night, the nightingale broke out into melody. The bird sang, and sang alone ; everything was still. The bird sang, and let her notes fall in the air like drops of sprinkled sound, like the harmonious falling of water from a playing fountain. The bird sang, and Psyche closed her eyes, and felt on her lips Eros' kiss.

The days followed the nights. It was always the sweet pleasure of flowers and birds, of spring and love, cupids and roses, music and dance. The flowers were more beautiful, and did not fade ; the fruits were sweeter and of richer colour ; the spring air was lighter, and life was happier than a golden day. It was day which lasted days and nights ; it was the Present.

If Psyche were alone she longed for Eros, and when she saw him again she spread out her arms, and they loved each other. If Psyche were alone, she wandered about in the rosy spring morning ; the flowers bowed down to her ; the brook flowed cool over her feet ; she played with the winged cherubs, who flew about her head like butterflies ; she sat down in the moss full of violets ; she bade the children take off her crown, loosen the plaits of her long hair, untie the knots of the drapery round her loins, and she lay down on the bank of the brook ; her hand played with the clear cold water, and, naked in the shade of flowery shrubs, she fell asleep and the cupids round her. Then the step of the king awoke her ; the children awoke ; they dressed her, and she went to meet her husband, and received him with open arms. It was the sweet delight of the Present.

One day she was sleeping naked under the shrubs, the boys round about her ; on the moss lay her crown and her veil, and the brooklet flowed on, gently murmuring. The day was very still, heavy with warmth. A storm was brewing, but the sky was still blue. In the far-off distance, where the horizon was like

THE STORM

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waves of the sea, clouds pregnant with storm curled up gloomily like ostrich feathers. And once there was lightning, but no thunder.

Then above the ridge of the hill something dark appeared to rise against the stormy clouds. It was round like a head, like a black head. From the black head leered two eyes, black as jet, and nothing more appeared. Long leered the eyes ; then from the palace a voice cried.

" Psyche, Psyche ! "

Psyche awoke, and the cupids with her. Eros approached and led her away. The air grew dark, and the next moment the summer storm burst forth, dark sky, lightning, rain, and thunder rapidly rolling on. It lasted only for a time ; then the sky became blue again, the flowers recovered their breath and raised their drooping heads, shaking with fresh rain.

CHAPTER XIV

NEXT day, when Psyche was sleeping again by the brook, the dark head with the leering eyes of jet appeared again on the horizon. For a long time the eyes leered, full of lust. Then the head rose up higher like a dark sun, behind the hill-slope in the sky.

It was a face tanned by the sun, with coal-black hair ; round the temples a wreath of vine leaves, and from the wreath protruded two horns like those of a young goat.

The eyes looked lustful and young, as though they were jet and gold. The lips laughed in the curly beard, and the sharp teeth were dazzling white ; the pointed ears stood up.

Then the dark face became perfectly visible in the light ; the shoulders rose brown and naked, and two brown hands with long fingers lifted to the lips a pipe of short and long reeds. The pipe played a fanfare, a march of very quick notes. Then it stopped, and the gold-

jet eyes leered. Psyche moved in her sleep. Then the pipe sounded again, and Psyche opened her eyes. Astonished, she listened to the notes of the pipe, as they rose and fell so as she had never heard before, lively and wanton, quick and playful. She sat up, leant on her arm, and looked. . . .

She started. There, on the horizon, like a dark sun, she saw the brown face and the lips in the curly beard blowing the reeds, short and long. Psyche started and looked on trembling. Then the pipe stopped again, and roguishly the head nodded to her. Psyche was frightened ; she woke the boys. She fled away. From the palace Eros came to meet her.

At first she meant to speak, but he kissed her ; and why, she did not know, but she spoke not. Then she made up her mind to tell Eros that night, but in her husband's arms she lacked the courage to speak. She did not tell him. The next morning she resolved not to repose again in the moss by the brook. But that afternoon she played with the cupids, and tired, fell asleep in the same place. The pipe awoke her ; on the horizon, the brown face stood out against the sun, and roguishly nodded to her.

Psyche, indignant, looked up.

The head rose, the shoulders rose, and the whole form then rose up : a sunburnt youth, with the legs of a goat, rough-haired and cloven hoofs. There he stood, his dark shadow reflected in the golden rays of the setting sun. He blew his reeds ; he piped lustily and merrily, roguishly and joyously and as well as he could, to please Psyche. She listened—about her the boys were sleeping—and she smiled. He saw her smile and smiled too. Then proudly she pointed with her finger for him to go. He went, but the next day he was there again. Then she saw him every day. He stood in the sun, which was going down, and blew his reeds, laughed and nodded to her roguishly. Sometimes Psyche bade him be gone ; sometimes she pretended not to see who was playing there ; sometimes she listened graciously. When she heard the king call :

" Psyche ! Psyche ! " she woke the cupids, who dressed her in a moment, and went to meet her husband. She kissed him, and wished to tell him that every day a young man with goats' legs stood on the hill and played upon his pipe. But because she had kept silence so long, she was silent again, and could not

THE SATYR

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open her lips. It made her sad, and Eros saw her sadness, and often asked her what it was that disturbed the equanimity of her soul. She said "*Nothing*," and embraced him and declared that she was happy. But when the lark warbled and the nightingale's sweet notes were heard, when Eros sang to the lyre and the brook murmured gently, Psyche always heard, between the pleasant sounds, the impudent tunes of the reeds, short and long. She tried not to hear, but she always heard them. They sounded saucily and merrily, like the sounds of a little bird in a wood calling something to her from afar ; she heard, but did not yet understand what.

One day, when he stood in the same place blowing lustily with puffed-out cheeks, Psyche, indignant, rose with her lips closely pressed together. She put her veil on and wound it tightly round her loins, without waking the boys. Then, with a firm step and innocently, she crossed a little slope, and came into a valley, a valley of grass ; there the brook flowed away between multitudes of irises and narcissi. The goat, leering and laughing, tripped nimbly down the hill on his hoofs to meet her.

"Who are you?" said Psyche haughtily.

"I am the Satyr," said he deferentially. "And now will you just see me dance?"

He piped a waltz, and danced for her to the measure of his tripping music. He turned out his feet, spun round and round, and underneath, on his back, she saw his tiny tail wagging. She laughed, and found him amusing, with his tail, and feet, and horns. Then he turned a somersault, and finished his dance with a bow.

"You may not come here," said Psyche severely. "This is the Kingdom of the Present, and I am the queen, and my husband is Eros, the king of this kingdom. You dance indeed nicely, and you play rather pretty tunes, but you may not come here. We have here the lark and the nightingale, and my husband sings to the lyre."

"That is classical music," said the Satyr.

"I don't know what you mean by *classical music*. But you may not come here and pipe, and disturb me in my afternoon slumber. If my husband knew it, he would be very angry, and have you torn to pieces by two raging griffons."

"I am not afraid of that," said the Satyr.

"Why, I tame panthers, and they are much more dangerous."

"I had pity on you," continued Psyche severely, raising her head in queenly dignity, "and have not yet said anything to the king. But if you come again to-morrow, I will tell him."

"No, you won't!" said the Satyr saucily.

"You are an ill-mannered boy!" said Psyche, angry and offended. "You must not speak so to a princess. I ought not to condescend to speak to you. I can see very well that you don't know how people behave at court, and that you come from the wood. And you are ugly, too, with your hairy feet and your tail."

The Satyr looked at her astonished.

"I think you very pretty!" he whispered admiringly. "Oh, I think you so pretty! You have such pretty eyes, and such golden hair, and such a white skin! Only, I don't like your wings. The nymphs haven't any."

"You may not speak to me like that!" said Psyche vexed. "I am the queen. How dare you? Go away now, else I will call the wild beasts here."

"Well, don't be angry!" said the Satyr in

a low, imploring tone. "That is my way of speaking. We all speak like that in the wood. The Bacchantes, too, are not particular what they say. We are unacquainted with your court language. And we don't know anything of classical music. But we are always very merry and sociable together; but you must come once. . . ."

"Are you going?" said Psyche imperiously, and red with passion, and with her finger she pointed to him to be gone. He crouched down suddenly in the reeds of the brook among the irises and narcissi, and she saw him stealing away through the high grass. When she turned round she beheld the cupids; they were bringing her her crown.

"The king is looking for you, Psyche!" they cried out in the distance, and like a cloud they hovered round her.

She went back with them and threw herself into the arms of her husband.

"Don't roam so far away, my little Psyche!" said Eros. "In the wood behind the hills are wild beasts. . . ."

Night came on; Eros sang, the nightingale filled the air with her sweet notes.

"Classical music!" thought Psyche.

CHAPTER XV

Psyche had a secret. Why did she not tell it? She did not know. She could not, after having once kept silent. She knew that she was not doing right by being silent, and yet she did not speak. But she was very sad about it, and felt dissatisfied. Then she wanted to speak with Eros; but because she had said nothing at first, she was afraid. And then she said to herself: "The Satyr does nothing wrong by standing there and piping a little, and it is not worth while thinking much about it. . . ."

And yet she *did* think about it, and in her ears she always heard his saucy voice, his coarse words, countrified and funny.

Then she laughed about it all.

"But what does he do—what is he? a Satyr? What is a Satyr? What are Bacchantes? And what are nymphs? Panthers, too, I have never seen. I should like to see

them. What is their life there in the wood? There are many lives in the world, and most of them are a secret. I only know the courtiers of the Kingdom of the Past. . . . Here there are the two girls that play on the pipe and the winged children. I should like to see all that there is in the world, and experience all that is in life. There must be strange things, which I never see. . . . The Chimera was glorious, and deep in my soul I always long for him; but in other respects everything is the same. . . . No wonders take place in this garden. . . . Eros is a young prince; then there are the doves, the griffons, the cupids. . . . That is all so commonplace. . . . Oh, to seek, to wander! The world is so great! the universe is awful, although it has limits. My father said it had no limits. . . . Oh, if it had no limits . . . . ! Oh, *to seek*, *to wander*, *to soar* in the air! . . . . I shall never see the Chimera again. Never shall I soar in the air again. . . . He conjured up visions for me, and then let them pass away. . . . Oh, to soar through the air! When shall I see him again, and when shall I soar again . . . . ? Eros I love—he is my husband; but he has no wings. The Chimera had powerful wings

of silver feathers. He has left me for ever. . . ."

So, alone with her thought, she wandered in the garden. The cupids she drove away, and, crying, they hid themselves among the roses. When the Satyr appeared, she went to meet him in the valley, where the irises were blooming.

"So, you are there again!"

"Yes! won't you just see me dance again?"

He danced and frisked his tail.

"I have already told you more than once that you may not come here," said Psyche severely.

He winked roguishly; he knew very well that his presence was not disagreeable to her.

"You are so beautiful!" he said, in his most flattering tone; "much more beautiful than any of the nymphs."

"And the Bacchantes, then?" said Psyche.

"Much more beautiful than the Bacchantes!" he answered. "But they are also very nice. Tell me, wouldn't you like to see them?"

Psyche was very inquisitive, and he noticed it.

"Won't you just see them?" he repeated temptingly.

"Where?" said Psyche.

"Look . . . . there!" He pointed in the distance with his finger.

On the hill Psyche saw forms madly whirling round in a dance.

"Those are the Bacchantes!" said the Satyr. Psyche laughed.

"How madly they whirl round!" she exclaimed. "Are they always so merry?"

"Oh, we are always dancing," said the Satyr. "In the wood it is always pleasure. We play at tag with one another, we drink the juice of the grapes, and we dance till nightfall."

"Psyche! Psyche!" called a voice.

It was her husband. The Satyr fled through the flags, and Psyche hastened back.

She threw herself into Eros' arms, who asked her where she had been. And without answering him, she began to cry and hid her face in his breast.

"What is it, little Psyche?" asked Eros. "Are you in trouble? Amongst the roses the boys cry, and by the brook the queen cries. Is there then sadness in my kingdom? Does not Psyche feel happy?"

She wept and shrugged her shoulders, as if

to say that she did not know. And she hid her face in his breast.

"Tell me, Psyche, what is the matter?"

She would have liked to tell him, but she could not; a stronger power kept her back.

"Does not Psyche feel happy? Does she long for the Chimera?"

She laid her little hand upon his lips.

"Don't speak about him. I am not worthy of him. I am not worthy of you, Eros."

He kissed her very gently.

"What does my Psyche think about? May I not leave her any more, alone by the brook?"

"No, no!" said she hastily, and drew his arms round her. . . . "No," she continued quickly. "Don't leave me alone any more. Always stay by me. Protect me from myself, O Eros . . . . !"

"Is little Psyche ill?"

She nodded in the affirmative, and laid her burning head upon his breast; she nestled against him and shut her feverish eyes.

He stayed by her, and all around was still, and the cupids appeared fluttering in the air. That night she slept in Eros' arms. She awoke for a moment out of her sleep; far

away in the distance through the crystal of the palace she heard the sound of pipes. She raised her head and listened. But she would not hear any more, and hid herself in Eros' arms and fell asleep on his heart.

The next day he stayed by her, and they wandered to the brook. Sadness hung over the garden, the flowers drooped. In the afternoon Psyche became uneasy ; she heard the pipe, and in the distance caught a glimpse of vague forms dancing.

" Do you see nothing ? " she asked Eros.

" No. . . ."

" Do you hear nothing ? " she said again.

" No," he answered. " Poor Psyche is ill. And the flowers are ill too, because she is. Oh, let Eros cure you . . . . ! "

The following night, in the arms of her husband, she heard the pipe. It played saucy, short, lively tunes. " Come, come, now dance with us ; we are drinking the grapes. Come . . . . come . . . . ! "

She could resist no longer. Trembling, she loosed herself from her husband's arms, who was asleep. She got up, stole out of the palace, fled through the garden to the alluring voice.

The flowers in the brook seemed to entreat

her : " Oh, go not away ! Oh, go not away ! " The nightingale uttered a cry, and she thought it was an owl.

She hurried on to the valley, where the irises were in blossom. There, near the brook, in the light of the moon, stood the Satyr, tripping to the sound of his pipe, and round him, hand in hand, madly danced the Bacchantes, naked, a panther's skin cast about them, their wild streaming hair encircled with vine-leaves. They danced like drunken spectres in the pale moonlight night ; they waved their thyrsus, and pelted each other with grapes, which smashed to juice upon their faces.

" Come, come ! " they cried triumphantly.

Psyche was startled by their voices, rough and hoarse. But they opened their circle, two stretched their hand out to Psyche, and they danced round with her. The wild dance excited her ; she had never known till then what dancing was, and she danced with sparkling eyes. She waved a thyrsus, and pressed the grapes to her mouth. . . . Then suddenly the Satyr caught hold of her and kissed her passionately, pressing the grapes to her lips. . . .

" Psyche ! Psyche ! "

She started and stood still. The Bacchantes, the Satyr, fled.

Psyche hastened back ; with her hand she wiped her contaminated, burning lips.

" . . . . Psyche ! "

She ran to meet Eros, but when she saw him, godlike and beautiful as an image, spotlessly pure in the moonlight, with his noble countenance, his deep brown eyes full of love, she was so disgusted with herself that she fell at his feet in a swoon.

He lifted her up and laid her on the bed.

He watched while she slumbered.

The whole night he watched by her. . . .

And it seemed as if she were wandering in her mind. . . .

Her face glowed with fever, and ever and anon she wiped her lips.

Outside in the garden the flowers drooped in sorrow. The lark was silent, and the little angels sat together with their wings drawn in. The sky was ash-coloured and gloomy.

That night Psyche slept in Eros' arms, and afar off the pipe allured her. . . .

She extracted herself from Eros' embrace and got up. . . .

She wanted to kiss him for the last time, but durst not, for fear of waking him.

"Farewell!" she whispered very gently. "Noble Eros, beloved husband, farewell! I am unworthy of you. The Satyr's kiss is still burning on my lips; my mouth is on fire from the juice of the grapes. Farewell . . . . ! And if you can, forgive me!"

She went.

The night was sultry and heavy with thunder; the flowers, exhausted, hung their heads; the nightingale uttered a cry, and she thought it was an owl. Bats flitted about with flapping wings.

She walked with a firm step. She followed the brook to where it flowed into the valley. Yonder . . . . with the Satyr in their midst, danced the Bacchantes.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" they cried out, rough and hoarse, and threw at her a bunch of grapes.

She hesitated a moment. . . . She raised her eyes. Through the gloomy night a single star glistened like a cold, proud eye.

"Sacred star!" said Psyche, "you who watched over me before, and now leave me for ever . . . . tell him that I am unworthy of him and beg him to forgive me!"

The star hid itself in the darkness.

"Come!" cried the Bacchantes.

Psyche took a step forward. . . .

"Brook!" she then cried, "little stream of the land of the Present, babbling pure and peacefully, in which I never more may cool myself . . . . oh, tell him that I am unworthy of him and beg him to forgive me!"

The brook went murmuring over the stones, and muttered: "No, no. . . ."

"Come, come!" cried the Bacchantes.

Then Psyche plucked a single violet, white as a maiden's face.

"Sweet violet!" said she, "humble flower, don't be proud. Your queen, who is forsaking her kingdom, entreats the star and brook in vain. She is no longer a queen. She is no longer obeyed. Sweet violet, hear the prayer of Psyche, who, unworthy, is forsaking the Present. . . ."

"Stay, Psyche!" implored the flower in her hand.

"Dear little flower!" said Psyche, "born in the moss, withering when you are plucked, what do you know of gods and mortals? What do you know of soul and life and power? Psyche can no longer stay. But

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beg Love to forgive her . . . . ! Oh, give him my last message ! "

She kissed the flower and laid it in the moss.

" Psyche ! Psyche ! Come ! " cried the Bacchantes.

She sprang forward into the midst of the dance.

" Here I am ! " she cried wildly. And they dragged her away with them to the wood.

CHAPTER XVI

When Eros awoke that morning, he found not Psyche by his side. He got up, thinking that she was in the garden, and went out.

The sky was dull and lowering, a mist hung over the hills. The lark had not sung, the cupids were not fluttering about.

"Psyche!" cried he, "Psyche!"

No answer was returned. No sigh rustled in the leaves of the trees; no insect hummed in the grass; the flowers hung down withered on their limp stems. A deathly chilliness reigned around. A fearful presentiment took possession of Eros. He walked along the flower-beds, along the brook.

"Oh! where is Psyche?" he cried. "Oh, tell me, water, flowers, birds, where is Psyche!!"

No answer was returned. The brook flowed on murkily and noiselessly, the flowers lay across the path; no bird sang among the leaves. He wrung his hands and hastened on.

Then he came to the spot where Psyche was wont to rest in the moss by the brook, in the shade of the shrubs.

"Who will tell me where Psyche is?" he exclaimed in despair, and threw himself on the moss and sobbed.

"Eros!" cried a weak voice.

"Who speaks there?"

"I, a white violet, which Psyche plucked. . . . Hear me quickly, for I feel I am dying, and my elfin voice is scarcely audible to your ear. Listen to me. . . . I am lying close to you. Take me in your hand. . . ."

Eros took the flower.

"Psyche has been enticed by the Satyr into the wood. The Bacchantes have taken her away. This was her last word: that she was unworthy of you, and went away praying for forgiveness. . . . She could not remain, she said; she went. . . . ! Eros, forgive her!"

The flower shrivelled up in his hand. Eros rose and tottered; he too felt that he was dying.

Sad at heart walked Eros, and all along his path the flowers now lay shrivelled. The brook was dry. The lark lay dead before his feet. The cupids lay dead in the withered roses.

Eros went into the castle and fell upon the purple bed.

A single dove was expiring at the marble basin.

The strings of the lyre were all broken. . . .

Eros too felt that his life was leaving his body.

He raised his eyes, over which the film of death was stealing, and looked about the castle ; the crystal crumbled off and split from the top to the bottom.

"Sacred powers!" prayed he, "forgive her as I forgive her, and love her till the End, as I shall and for ever. Let her find what she seeks ; let her wanderings once come to an end ; let her soar through the air, if she must, till she comes to the purest sphere. . . ." This sphere was the earth, the sweet Present, the little resting-point on which she could not wander, and thus felt within her the irresistible desire. . . .

"Sacred powers, let her one day find what her happiness is. Then, if it is not I . . . . Let her find . . . ."

His voice failed, his eyes opened as in a vision, and he whispered and finished his prayer : ". . . . find . . . . in the Future . . . . !"

That sacred word was his last. He died.

In the Kingdom of the Present, that once had been as a smiling garden, everything was now dead. . . .

. . . . . .

Then . . . . in the mist, which hung over the ridge of the mountains, something seemed to be creeping near, something with feet that could only move slowly. From many sides, over the hill-top, the strange creeping came nearer. . . . Gigantic, hairy feet of monstrous spiders were walking over it; they came nearer and nearer; they were spiders with big, swollen bodies and feet always in motion. . . .

They were the sacred spiders of Emeralda, Princess of the Past. Eagerly they ran to the dead garden of the Present. . . .

They surrounded the garden and threw out their filaments to the crystal roof of the palace. Then they wove over the Present, that lay dead, one single gigantic web. . . .

And whilst they wove, the dead Present went to dust.

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XVII

In the wood, in the autumn sun, Autumn was keeping festival.

The foliage shone resplendent in yellow, bronze, purple, golden-red, and pink; the sulphur-coloured moss looked like antique velvet. With gusts of wind, the branches, madly arrogant, shook off their exuberance of sere and yellow leaves, as if they were strewing the paths with silver and gold and rustling notes.

Loudly laughing danced the dryads through the whirling leaves.

Out of the foaming stream between moss-covered rocks, rose the white, naked nymphs.

"Where is she? Where is she?" cried they inquisitively.

"There she comes! there she comes!" shouted the mad dryads, and in handfuls they cast the leaves into the air, which whirled over the nymphs and fell down on the water.

The dryads danced past, and the nymphs looked out inquisitively. They stood, a naked group, in their rocky bath ; their arms were clasped round one another ; green was their hair and white as pearls were their bosoms. The sere and yellow leaves kept whirling about. Trampling feet were approaching and were heard amongst the rustling leaves. Merry-makers were drawing near ; the golden foliage quivered like a curtain of thin, fine, gold lace. . . .

"There she comes ! there she comes !" exclaimed the nymphs with joy.

The branches cracked, the leaves whirled about, the tender sprays recoiled from the noisy merry-makers, who were advancing.

Nearer they came with the sound of pipe and cymbal. Drunken Bacchantes danced before them, waving the thyrsus, hand in hand with fauns and satyrs ; they encircled a triumphal car, drawn by spotted lynxes.

High on the car sat a youth, beardless, with a wreath of vine-leaves round his forehead, full of laughter and animal spirits, with blue eyes that showed his love of pleasure. Naked were his godlike limbs, chubbily formed like the tender flesh of a boy, and his legs were

long and slender, his arms rounded like those of a woman. He was the prince of the wood, of divine origin: Prince Bacchus was his name.

And next to him on the triumphal car, sat little Psyche enthroned. She too was naked, with nothing on but her veil, and her wings were so strikingly beautiful, crimson and soft yellow and with four peacock's-feather eyes. Round the car, close together as a bunch of grapes, sported madly a number of wine-gods, tumbling over one another, grape-drunken children.

In triumph the procession rushed on through the golden wood. The Bacchantes and satyrs sang and danced; two satyrs drove the lynxes, which, spiteful as cats, spat at them; the wine-gods entwined the vine and bore great heavy bunches of grapes.

High up, like a butterfly, which was a goddess, sat Psyche, and laughed with glistening eyes and glowing cheeks, waving to the nymphs.

"Live! long live Psyche—Psyche with the splendid wings!" shouted the nymphs.

The wind blew, the leaves whirled about; the procession swept past as though hurried

along by the gale. A little wine-god had fallen and lay in the yellow leaves, playing with his chubby legs, purple-red from the juice of grapes ; he was crying because he had been left behind ; then he succeeded in getting on to his feet, and tottered after the procession. . . .

The nymphs laughed loudly at the little wine-god ; they dived under and beneath the rocks.

The wind blew, the yellow leaves whirled about.

And the wood became still and lonely.

CHAPTER XVIII

"PSYCHE, stay!" said Bacchus entreatingly.

"No, no, let me alone!"

"With you goes all joy from the feast; Psyche, stay!"

"I will not always sing, dance, drink. No, no, let me alone!"

She pushed him away from her; she pushed the satyrs away from her; she broke the round dance of the Bacchantes, who, drunken, shouted with drunken eyes and wide-open, screaming mouths.

"Psyche! Psyche!" screamed all.

She laughed loudly and coquettishly, like a spoilt child.

"I will come back to-morrow, when you are sober!" she said with a mocking laugh. "Your voices are hoarse, your song is out of tune, your last grapes were sour! I will only have the sweet of your feast, and the bitter I will leave to you. Spread out your panther

skins ; go and sleep off your drunkenness. If your feast has to last till winter, you need rest—rest for your hoarse throats, rest for your drunken legs, rest for your heads, muddled with wine. . . . I will come back to-morrow, when you are sober ! "

She gave a loud, mocking laugh, and rushed into the wood. It was a moonlight night ; in the pale moonbeams she left the wild feast behind. The jealous Bacchantes danced round Bacchus, and embraced him.

Psyche hastened on. Her temples throbbed, her heart beat, and her bosom heaved. When she was far enough away, she stopped, pressed both her hands to her bosom, and gave a deep sigh. More slowly she went on to the stream. Fresh was the autumn night, but burning were her naked limbs !

The wood was still, save that in the top-most branches the wind moaned. Like a silvery ship the moon sailed forth from the luminous, ethereal sea, and the rushing mountain-stream foamed like snow on the rocks. With a longing desire for coolness and water, Psyche stepped down to the flags on the bank ; with her hands she put aside the irises, and made her way through

the ferns and plunged her foot into the water.

Then the nymphs dived up.

"Psyche! Psyche!" cried they joyously, "Psyche with the splendid wings!"

Psyche smiled. She threw herself into the water, and the snow-white foam dashed up.

"Let me be with you a moment," entreated Psyche. "Let me cool myself in your stream."

The nymphs pressed round her and carried her on their arms. She lay down at full length.

"Cool my forehead, cool my cheeks, cool my heart!" she cried imploringly. "Dear nymphs, oh, cool my soul! Everything burns on me and in me; fire scorches my lips, fire scorches my brain. . . . O dear nymphs, cool me!"

The nymphs sprinkled water on her; Psyche put her arm round the neck of one of them.

"Your water-drops hiss on my forehead as on burning metal. Your flakes of foam evaporate on the fire in my breast. And on my soul, O dear nymphs, you cannot sprinkle your coolness!"

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The nymphs filled their stream-urns and poured them over Psyche.

"Pour them all out! Pour them all out!" cried Psyche entreatingly. "But although my hair is dripping, and my wings and my limbs too, my lips are scorched, my poor forehead burns, and within me, O nymphs . . . . ! within me, my soul is consumed as in hell-fire. . . . !"

The nymphs took her gently in their arms; they dived with her below, they came up again; they kept diving up and down.

"Oh, bathe me, bathe me!" cried Psyche imploringly. "Benevolent nymphs, bathe me! Some coolness still hangs about my body . . . . but my soul, oh, my soul you can never cool!" She wept, and the nymphs caught up her tears in mother-of-pearl shells.

"Are you collecting my tears? Oh, no, they are not worth it. Once I wept a brook full; once they were drunk, drunk by Love; once they were pearls, and Love crowned me with them! Now, now they are like drops of wine, drops of fire, and though they should congeal and become rubies or topazes, they may never crown me more. Henceforth my tears I shall always shed . . . . for Emeralda!"

In the shells the nymphs saw glistening pearls, and they understood not. . . . But all their urns they poured out upon Psyche's eyes.

"My eyes are getting cool, O beloved nymphs; many tears I shall never shed again; never again shall I weep a brook full. . . . But cool my soul, extinguish deep within me the burning flames!"

"We cannot, Psyche. . . ."

"No, no, you cannot, O nymphs! Let me lie still, then, still in your arms. Let me rock quietly to and fro on your white-foaming water, then let me sleep quietly. . . . But in my sleep my soul keeps burning; in my dreams I see it flame up, high up as out of a hole in hell. . . . Oh!"

She uttered a cry, as of pain. . . . The nymphs rocked her in their entwined arms, as in a cradle of lilies, and softly sang a song. . .

"Nymphs, nymphs . . . . ! This is the fire that nothing can extinguish—no, never. . . . This is remorse. . . ."

The nymphs understood her not; they rocked her and sang in a low, soft voice.

CHAPTER XIX

THAT morning she wandered about in the rosy autumn dawn—a mist between the trees stripped of leaves. Along the path she trod ; on a skin she found a satyr and a Bacchante lying in a drunken sleep, tight in each other's arms ; a cup lay on the ground, a broken thyrsus, pressed-out grapes. She hastened on and sought the most lonely spots. The foliage became scantier, the trees grew farther apart, the wood ended in a plain and, violet misty, a perspective of very low hills.

Psyche walked on over the plain and climbed the hills.

The autumn wind blew and howled between shrubs and bushes, and sang the approach of winter. But Psyche felt not the cold, for her naked limbs glowed : her soul was all on fire.

On the highest hill-top she looked out, her hand above her eyes, gazing into the violet mist. . . . Unconscious to herself, she hoped

for something vague and impossible : that she might see Eros, that he would come to her, that she would fall at his feet, that he would forgive her tenderly, and take her away with him. Impossible. " What was impossible ? Could not everything be possible ? Had he not followed the track of her tears ? had he not found her in the arms of the Sphinx ? " Oh, she hoped, she hoped, she hoped more definitely ! Her remorse-burned soul longed for the balsam of his love in the palace of crystal, for the sounds of his lyre, for the tender words in the garden of the Present.

She hoped, she gazed. . . .

In the pale glow of the morning sun, the violet mist cleared up, and parted like violet curtains. . . .

She gazed : there was the Present. . . .

There Eros would be, mourning for his naughty Psyche !

There he would presently forgive her. . . .

Oh, how she hoped, how she longed ! . . . . She longed ; she stretched out her arms and dared cry in a plaintive voice :

" Eros ! "

The wind blew through bush and shrub and sang the approach of winter. The violet

curtains of mist were drawn aside. The sad autumn morning appeared. There, now visible, lay the Present. . . .

And Psyche gazed, screening her eyes with her hand. . . .

There she saw her happiness of days gone by, destroyed. In a dead, withered garden, a ruin : crystal pillars crumbling to pieces. And between the pillars, spiders' webs ; all over the garden spiders' webs, web upon web, and in them spiders with bloated bodies and lazy-moving feet. . . .

Then she saw that Emeralda was reigning !

Then she felt that Eros was dead !

She had murdered him !

Oh, how her limbs glowed, how her soul burned ! Oh, the burning pain within her, deep within—a pain which no grape-juice could allay, which no mad dance could deaden and the nymphs could not cool, though they poured over her all their urns ! Oh, that hell in her soul, for the irretrievable desolation, for the murdered one, past recall ! Oh, that suffering, not for herself, but for him —for another ! that repentance, that burning remorse ! . . . .

She fell to the ground and sobbed.

The pale sunbeams faded away, thick grey clouds came sweeping along, a shower of hail rattled down, flinging handfuls of icy-cold stones. . . .

She felt a touch on her shoulder. She looked up.

It was the Satyr who had allured her with his pipe, there, on that very spot.

"Psyche!" said he, "what are you doing here, so far away from all of us? Winter is coming, Psyche; listen to the whistling winds, feel the rattling hail; the last leaves are being blown away. We are going to the South, and Prince Bacchus is seeking for you. . . . What are you doing here, and why are you crouching down and weeping?

"We are having a feast and are fleeing the winter; come!"

"I feel no cold; I am burning. . . . Let me stay here, and weep, and die. . . ."

"Why should you die, O Psyche, Psyche, so pretty and so gay—Psyche, the prettiest and gayest, who can dance the maddest, who can dance out all the Bacchantes? Come! . . . ."

She laughed through her tears, a laugh like a piercing shriek.

"But Psyche, do you know what it is?"

said the Satyr, whispering confidentially. "Do you know what it is that prevents you from being happy, and why you are not like all of us? I told you before, Psyche: it is on account of your wings. Your wings prevent you from putting a beast's skin round you, and entwining your hair with vine. The nymphs find your wings pretty, but what do you want with things that are pretty, yet of no use whatever? If you could only fly with those wings!"

. . . . "If I could only fly with those wings!" said Psyche, sighing. "No, I have never been able to fly with them, my poor, weak wings!"

"The nymphs think your wings pretty, but the nymphs are sentimental. The Bacchantes think them ugly, and laugh at you in secret. Prince Bacchus does not like wings either; he cannot embrace you well with those things on your back. Psyche, dear Psyche, listen: shall I tell you something . . . .? You must let me cut those wings off with a pair of grape-scissors. For when you have got rid of your wings, then you can throw a panther's skin round you, and put a vine-wreath round your hair, and you will be altogether one of us. . . ."

The wind blew, the hail rattled down: winter was coming on.

. . . . " Eros is dead ! " murmured Psyche, " Spring is past, the Present is withered, Emeralda reigns. . . . ' What are you doing with things that are pretty, and have no use at all. . . . ? '

" If I cannot possibly get cool, if I keep burning deep within me . . . . it is better, perhaps, to renounce my princess's rights, to go naked no longer, to have no wings. . . ."

" Tell me, Psyche, may I cut them off ? "

" Yes, clip them ! Cut them right off, my wings, which are only pretty ! " she cried fiercely. " Cut them off ! ! "

His eyes glowed jet and gold, his breath came quickly from joy. He produced his sharp scissors. . . .

And whilst she knelt, he cut off both her wings.

They fell on the ground and shrivelled up.

" Oh, that pains, that pains ! . . . . Oh, that pains ! " cried Psyche.

" It is a little wound, it will soon heal," said the Satyr soothingly, but grinning with pleasure.

Then he threw a panther's skin round her,

put a wreath of vine-leaves on her head, and she was like a fair Bacchante still very young and tender, with her white skin, with her tender eyes of soul-innocence, in which, deep down, dejection reigned.

" Psyche ! " cried he delighted, " Psyche ! How pretty you are ! "

She uttered her shrill laugh, her laugh of bitter irony. He led her away down the hills. She looked about : yonder lay the Present, reduced to dust and spider-webs. She looked about : in the wind, which was blowing, her wings whirled away, shrivelled up, whirled away like dry leaves.

She laughed and put her arm round his neck, and they hastened back to the wood.

The wind blew ; the first snowflakes fell.

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XX

Slowly followed the seasons—winter, spring, summer, autumn. . . .

Winter, spring, summer, autumn, fell in turn, like dust, into the caves of Emeralda.

Winter, spring, summer, autumn, were the Present for a moment, and sank into the Past.

And again it was spring. . . .

In the grassy plains, the shepherds drove out their flocks, and they sang because the sky was blue, because the world trilled with hope, in the new and tempered sunshine.

What did the shepherds know of Emeralda? They had never seen her. They sang, they sang; they filled the air with their song. As a reed, their song remained quivering and hanging in the air. In the wood and in the mountains, over the meadows and in the air, Echo sang with them their song. They sang because the sky was blue. . . .

Emeralda they did not know. . . .

Blue, blue . . . . blue was the air ! Hope quivered in the sunshine, and love in their hearts. . . .

Into the grassy plains the shepherds drove their flocks, and they sang because the sky was blue.

. . . . . .

On the border of the wood, where endless plains extended, there lived in a grotto between rocks, a holy hermit who was a hundred years old.

How many seasons had he seen sink into the pits of the Past . . . .!

How many times had he heard the Lenten song of the shepherds ! Wrapped in contemplation, he heard them singing. They sang because the sky was blue. The lark was soaring because the world trilled with hope. . . . They sang because fleecy lambs were sporting again in the meadows. They sang because they were young and loved the shepherdesses. They sang of blue sky, of hope, of lambs, and love. . . .

The hermit continued deep in thought. . . .

Every spring it was the same song, and he had never sung with them. Never had he

known the Present, the spring Present of the shepherds.

The hermit continued deep in thought; he dreamed that Satan was tempting him, but his pious mind resisted. He dreamed that he had died in prayer, and his soul, purified, ascended into heaven.

Far off in the grassy plains was heard the bleating of the lambs, the voices of the shepherds.

The hermit heard a step. He looked up.

He saw a little form, as of a naked girl with no covering but her hair. And he thought it was really Satan, and he muttered an exorcism; he knit his brow, he crossed his arms.

The little form approached and knelt down.

"Holy father!" said she, in a low, trembling voice, "don't drive me away. I am poor and unhappy. I am a sinner, and come to you for help. I am not shameless, holy father, and I am ashamed that I appear before you naked. I asked the shepherdesses for something to cover me, but they laughed at me, drove me away and threw stones at me. Father, O father, men are merciless, they all drive me away. . . . I come from the wood, and the wild beasts are not so cruel as men. In the wood the beasts spared me. A lion

licked the wounds on my feet, and a tigress let me rest in the lair of her whelps. Holy father, the wild beasts had pity ! "

" Then why don't you remain in the wood, devil, she-devil ? "

" Because I must fulfil a duty among men."

" Who lays the task upon you, witch, devil ? "

" In my dream, soft voices have spoken to me, the voice of my father, and of him whom I loved, and they said : ' Go among men, do penance.' . . . . But naked I cannot go among men, for they throw stones at me. And therefore, O father, I come to you, and entreat you : give me something to cover me ! I have only my hair to hide me, and under my hair I am naked. O father, give me something to cover me ! O father, give me your oldest mantle for my penance garb ! "

The hermit looked up at her, as she knelt in her fair hair, and he saw that she was weeping. Her tears were blood-red rubies.

" He who weeps rubies has committed great sin ; he who weeps rubies has a soul crimson with sin ! "

The penitent sobbed and bowed her head to the ground.

" Here," said the hermit sternly, but com-

passionately. "Here is a mantle. Here is a cord for your loins. And here is a mat to sleep on. And here is bread, here is the water-pitcher. Eat, drink, cover yourself, and rest."

"Thanks, holy father. But I am not tired, I am not hungry and thirsty. I am only naked, and I thank you for your mantle and your cord."

She put on the mantle as a penance-garb, and whilst, red with shame, she covered herself, the hermit saw on her shoulder-blades two blood-red scar-stripes.

"Are you wounded?"

"I was, long ago. . . ."

"Your eyes glow: have you a fever?"

"I do not know men's fever, but my soul is always burning like a cave in hell."

"Who are you?"

"One heavy burdened with sin."

"What is your name?"

"I have no name now, holy father. . . . Oh! ask no more. . . . And let me go."

"Whither are you going?"

"Far, along the way of thistles, to the royal castle. To the Princess Emeralda."

"She is proud."

"She is the Princess of the Jewel, and I weep jewels. I shed them for her. Once there was a time . . . . that I wept pearls. . . . O father, let me go!"

"Go, then. . . . And do penance."

"Thanks, father. . . . Oh, give me your blessing!"

The hermit blessed her. She went then as a pilgrim in her penance-garb. The path was steep and covered with thistles.

In the distance was heard the song of the shepherds.

CHAPTER XXI

The path was steep, and covered with cactus and thistles. It was a narrow path, hewn out of the rocks, winding up the basalt mountain, where, high on the top, stood the castle. The castle had three hundred towers, which rose to the sky ; along them swept the clouds. In the path were many steps hewn out of stone. Heavy masses of cactus grew on the side of the precipice, and over the leaves, prickly and round, Psyche saw the grassy valleys of the Kingdom of the Past, the villages, the towns, the river : a broad silver streak, and there, behind it, opal-like views, lakes in the sky, and quivering lines of ether. Higher and higher she went up the steps, up the path, in the gloomy, chilly shadow, whilst the sun shone over the meadows. She climbed up, and below she saw the shepherds with their sheep, and their song, quite faint, came up to her.

In the coppice she broke a strong stick for a staff. A lappet of her mantle she had drawn over her head as a hood. And with her staff and her hood, she looked like a pious pilgrim.

The solitary countryman who was coming down the rocky path, did not throw stones at her, but greeted her reverently.

She kept climbing up.

High in the air lay the castle, gloomy and inaccessible, a town of towers, a Babel of pinnacles; along it swept the clouds. As an innocent child, as a naked princess with wings, Psyche had lived there like a butterfly on a rock, had wandered along the dreadful parapets, had longed and hoped and dreamed. Oh! her longings of innocence, her hope to fly through the air to the opal islands, her dreams, pure as the doves that flew round about her . . . . !

She had wandered through clouds, through desert and wood, from the North to the South. She had loved the Chimera, had put questions to the Sphinx; she had been Queen of the Present and the beloved of Bacchus, and now . . . . now she came back, wingless, with a soul that burned her continually, like a scarlet

child of hell ; now she came back up the steep path. . . .

Her penance-garb she had borrowed. But the thistles tore her foot, and pale from pain and suffering, from wounded feet, and ever-smarting shoulders, and a soul that burned continually, was her face, that peeped out from under her wide hood.

Up, up, she went, supporting herself with her staff. . . .

Oh, the voice of her father, of Eros, in her dream, when the grape-dance was over ! Then repentance had begun. Then she had fled through the wood, through the wild beasts. And the lion had licked her foot, and the tigress had allowed her to rest in the warm lair of her whelps. . . .

Then she went on, climbing higher and higher. . . .

Would she never get to the top ? Would the castle, the Babel of pinnacles, the town of towers remain ever inaccessibly high in the clouds ?

Her step left blood behind on the rocky stone.

But she did not rest. Rest did not help her.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF PSYCHE

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She preferred to go on, to climb. If she walked, if she climbed, the sooner would she reach the castle.

Step by step she advanced. Oh, she was no longer afraid of Emeralda ! What could Emeralda do to her to make her afraid ? What greater suffering could her sister inflict upon her than the pain of remorse, that was ever with her wherever she went !

And on she climbed, and the thistles tore her feet, and the solitary man who was coming down the rocky path greeted her reverently, when he saw the blood of her footstep.

CHAPTER XXII

The night was pitch dark, when she stood before the awful gate and asked admittance.

And the guards let her in because she wore a holy dress. The halberdiers took her to the hall, where they slept or kept watch, and invited her to rest.

She sat down on a rude bench, she ate their brown soldier's bread, she drank a drop of their wine.

Then she offered them a ruby for their hospitality and evening meal.

And while they wondered that a pilgrim possessed such a beautiful jewel, she said in her strange voice, weak, tired, and yet commanding :

"I have still more topazes and rubies and dark purple carbuncles. Tell the princess that I have come to do her homage and give her my jewels."

The message was sent to Emeralda, and the queen asked the pilgrim to come. She sent pages to conduct her to the throne where she sat.

And Psyche understood that Emeralda was afraid of treachery, afraid of the approach of soul, and therefore was so surrounded by armed men.

She passed between the pages, up the steps, over passages; then iron gates were opened, and a curtain was drawn aside.

And Psyche stepped into the golden hall of the tower.

There sat Emeralda in the light of a thousand candles, on a throne, under a canopy, surrounded by a great retinue.

"Holy pilgrim!" said Emeralda, "be welcome! You have come to bring me jewels?"

A cold shiver ran like a serpent over Psyche's limbs, when she heard Emeralda's voice. She had not thought that she would be afraid any more of her proud sister, but now when she saw her and heard her voice, she almost fainted from fear.

For her look was most terrible.

Emeralda had grown older, but she was still beautiful. Yet her beauty was horrible. In

the hall, lit up with thousands of candles, a hall of gold and enamel, sat Emeralda like an idol on her throne of agate, in a niche of jasper. There was nothing more human about her; she was like a great jewel. She had become petrified, as it were, into a jewel. Her eyes of sharp emerald looked out from her face, that was ivory white, like chalcedony; from her crown of beryl there hung down her face six red plaits of hair, as inflexible as gold-wire, and stiffly interwoven with emeralds. Her mouth was a split ruby, her teeth glittered like brilliants. Her voice sounded harsh and creaking, like the noise of a machine. Her hands and inflexible fingers, stiff with rings, were opal-white, with blue veins such as run through the opal. Her bosom, opal, chalcedonic, was enclosed in a bodice of violet amethyst—and over the bodice she wore a tunic of precious stones. Her dress was no longer brocade, but composed of jewels. All the arabesque was jewels; her mantle was jewelled so stiffly that the stuff could not bend, but hung straight down from her shoulders like a long jewelled clock.

And she was beautiful, but beautiful as a monster, preciously beautiful as a work of art—

made by one, both jeweller and artist, barbarously beautiful, in the incrustations of her crown, the facets of her eyes, the lapis lazuli of her stiffly folded under-garments, and all the gems and cameos which bordered her mantle and dress.

In the light of thousands of candles she glistened, a barbarous idol, and shot forth rays like a rainbow, representing every colour; dazzling, fear-inspiring was her look, pitiless and soulless.

Proud she sat and motionless, glistening with lustre, oppressed by the weight of her splendour; and covetous, her grating voice said again eagerly:

"Holy pilgrim, welcome! You have come to bring me jewels?"

Psyche gained courage.

"Yes," she said in a firm voice. "Powerful Majesty of the Past, I come to do you homage and bring you jewels. But I beg that we may be left alone."

Emeralda hesitated; but when Psyche remained silent, her cupidity got the better of her fear and she gave a sign. She raised her stiff hand. And by that single movement she cracked and creaked with grating jewels, and

shot forth rays like the sun, which, like a nimbus, streamed around her.

Her suite disappeared through side-doors. The shield-bearers withdrew. Psyche stood alone before her sister. And then Psyche unfastened the cord round her waist and took off her mantle ; her long hair fell about her, and she was naked. Naked she stood before Emeralda, and said :

" Emeralda, don't you recognise me ? I am Psyche, your sister ! "

A cry escaped the princess. She rose up ; she creaked ; her splendour and pomp grated, and she glittered so, that Psyche was dazzled.

" Wretched Psyche ! " she exclaimed. " Yes, I know you ! I have always hated you, hated as I hate everything that is gentle, as I hate doves, children, flowers ! So you have deceived me, intruder ! you bring me no jewels ! "

Psyche knelt down and showed her open hand.

" Emeralda, I offer you the homage which I once refused you. I present you with topazes, rubies, and dark purple carbuncles. I kneel in humility before you. I offer you my

tears, which have turned into stone, and I ask you humbly : punish me and give me a penance to do. Look ! I have lost my wings. I may not go naked any longer. I have committed sin. Emeralda, make me do penance ! Inflict on me the heaviest that you can think of. If I can do it, I will do it. Lay a heavy task upon my wingless shoulders."

Emeralda looked down at kneeling Psyche. The princess approached her sister, took the jewels, examined them attentively, held them up to the light of the candles, and then dropped them into an open casket. Thoughtfully she continued gazing at Psyche. And she seemed to Psyche like a gigantic jewel-spider, watching from the midst of her glittering web the rays of her own splendour. But whatever she were, princess, sun, spider, or jewel, a woman she was not, a human being she was not, and through the opal of her bosom gleamed her heart of ruby.

Psyche, kneeling penitent, spoke not, awaiting her fate, and Emeralda watched her.

Thoughts, mechanical as wheels, rolled through her brain. She thought as a machine. She was inexorable, because she had no feeling ;

she thought inhumanly because she had no soul. Soulless she was and hard as stone, but she was powerful, the mightiest ruler of the world. She ruled with a movement, she condemned with a look, she could kill with a smile ; if she spoke a word, it was terrible ; if she appeared in public there was disaster ; and if she rode through her kingdom in a triumphal chariot, then everything was scorched by her lustre and crushed under her triumph.

At last she spoke, motionless like a spider in her web of glittering rays, and her voice sounded like an oracle in a screeching incantation.

" Psyche, fled from her father's house, fallen from all princely dignity, dethroned Princess of the Present, immoral Bacchante, corrupt and wingless, weeping tears of scarlet sin—listen !

" Psyche, who wandered frivolously to purple streaks of sky, who longed for the nothingness of azure and of light, who loved a horse, who forsook her husband, who wandered and sought and asked, in desert and in wood—wander, seek, and ask !

" Wander, seek, and ask, till you find !

"Wander along the flaming caves, seek in the fire-vomiting mouths of monsters, ask of the martyred spirits, who roll upon the inky sea.

"Descend to the Nether-world! Seek the Mystic Jewel, the Philosopher's Stone that gives the highest omnipotence; seek the Mystic Jewel, the rays of which reach to eternity and penetrate to the Godhead.

"Descend, wander, ask, seek, and find!"

Her voice grew terrible, and, screeching, she stepped nearer, and with a look at the casket, said pitilessly:

"Or . . . . weep for it . . . . suffer for it. I care not how much."

She paused, and then in a voice of horrible hypocrisy, continued:

"And then, if you bring me the Sacred Jewel, the name of which may not be uttered . . . ." She drew still nearer.

. . . . "Then be blessed, Psyche, and share with me, Emeralda, your sister, the divine omnipotence!"

Like an oracle sounded her hypocritical voice. She felt in Psyche an unknown power; she feared for her soul, and wished to gain that power for herself, to make sure of the two-fold

omnipotence of the world, both soul and body. And in the horrible penance which she laid upon Psyche, she feigned tender love. Creaking and cracking, she drew nearer, and in her web of rays shed a sunbeam over her kneeling sister, and with her stiff opal fingers stroked the bent head with its fair, long tresses.

An ice-cold shiver ran through Psyche, as if her burning soul were being frozen.

"I obey," she murmured.

And she rose up, intoxicated from splendour, stiff from icy coldness. She tottered and shut her eyes. When she opened them, she was in a gloomy ante-chamber, clad in her coarse mantle; and the shield-bearers approached with torches.

"Conduct me to Astra!" she commanded.

There was something strange in her voice which made them obey, the voice of a princess, the soft voice of command, which appealed strangely to the men, as if they had heard it when they were pages.

They conducted Psyche through halls, over passages, up steps, to another tower. They opened low doors, and, through silent vaults, guided the strange pilgrim, rich in rubies.

"Who comes there?" asked a voice, tired, weak, and faint.

Then the men left Psyche alone, and she was with Astra, and she saw her sister in the twilight on the terrace, sitting before her telescope, surrounded by globes and rolls of heavy parchment spread out. And Psyche saw Astra, looking very old, with thin grey hair, which hung down her wax-white face, from which two dull eyes stared out; her white dress hung down limp on her sunken shoulders, her withered breast, and attenuated limbs. Bitter dejection was in her dull eyes; her thin hand hung down powerless, tired, and incapable of work, and her voice, faint and weak, said:

"Who comes there?"

"I, Psyche, your little sister, come back, O Astra, as a penitent . . . . !"

"As a penitent?"

"Yes, I fled, committed sin, and now I will do penance. . . ."

Astra mused.

"It is true," she murmured. "I remember, little Psyche. Come nearer. Take my hand, I cannot see you."

"The night is dark, Astra: there are few

stars in the sky, and the torches are not yet lit. . . ."

"No? Is it dark about me? That does not matter, Psyche, for I cannot see, I am blind. . . ."

Psyche gave a cry.

"Astra! Poor sister, are you blind? Oh! you who could see so well! are you blind?"

"Yes, I have gazed myself blind!! I have turned my telescope from left to right, to all the points of the universe. I thought to become the centre, the kernel of science, the focus of brilliant knowledge; now I am blind, now I see nothing more, now I know nothing more. The colossal numbers have become confused in my brain since the living Star on my head faded. Do you still see its faint splendour between my grey hair? Ah! now I have your hand.

"What is that, child? What round things are falling over my fingers?"

"My tears, Astra, poor Astra!"

"How hard they are and cold! What hard, cold tears, Psyche! . . . . Sit down here at my feet. Is the night dark? Are the torches not yet lit? Well, let it be dark, for

PSYCHE AND ASTRA

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I see nothing ; but I feel you, I feel your hair ; now I stroke your head, round and small. I feel along your shoulders, Psyche, little child with wings. . . . But your wings I do not feel. . . . Have you none now ? Have they been cut off ? My star has faded, and your wings are cut ; Emeralda triumphs alone ! Her gift from the fairy has brought her prosperity. Her heart of ruby feels no pain ; she is clad in the majesty of precious jewels. She is hard and beautiful, hard as a stone, beautiful as a jewel. . . . Psyche, creep close to me. . . . We can do nothing against her, child. My star is faded, your wings clipt ; we have lost our noble rights. . . . I am old, but you—are you still young ? You feel so young, indestructibly young. . . . You have suffered so, asked and wandered . . . . not appreciated your happiness, and murdered Eros ! Poor child, you a murderess. . . . ! You weep rubies . . . . you will do penance. You are strong, Psyche, and always young. . . . You will do penance after all your sins ! Emeralda has laid penance on you. . . . To seek the Philosopher's Stone in the caverns of flaming hell ! ! O Psyche, the Stone does not exist. The unutterable name is a legend.

The Jewel exists only in the pride of man. The universe is limited, the Godhead is not limited; no rays from precious stones can reach the Godhead and rule over God. No looking through lenses of diamond can penetrate the Godhead. It is all pride and vanity. Psyche, there is nothing but resignation. Emeralda is powerful, but more powerful she cannot become. . . .

"In vain will you seek."

"Yet I will seek, Astra, although it be in vain. . . . And do you also, sister, lay penance on me. . . . Let me do penance for Astra, as I do for Emeralda."

"No, child, I know no penance. There is nothing but resignation. There is nothing but to wait. Everything else is vanity and pride. But do penance, little Psyche. Penance is illusion, yet illusion is pleasant: illusion ennobles. Believe, poor child, in your penance, believe in your illusion. I have never known it. I have always calculated. The colossal numbers roll through my dull and hazy brain in endless series of figures. However you count, you never come to the sum of the endless. . . . The stars cannot be counted. The farthest sun is incomputable,

the divine is limitless. Even the nearest frontier of the Future is beyond computation. There is a sea of unfathomable light. . . . O Psyche, I am tired, I am blind, and I shall soon die. In this place, here I will stay. Psyche, look through the telescope. Is the night too dark ? Do you see anything ? "

" The stars give a dim light."

" Look through the telescope. What do you see ? Tell me, what do you see ? "

" In the glass, right at the top, I see a dark spot, which emits a few rays. Is that a black star ? "

" No, Psyche, that is a spider. Emeralda has sent a spider. The spider has crawled to the top, along the smooth diamond ; there the spider weaves his web. And the diamond . . . . is crumbling to pieces. . . .

" Astra . . . . ! ! "

" Psyche, creep closer to me. . . . Let me feel your little round head, your wingless shoulders. . . ."

" Astra, everything is black ; clouds are drifting past the stars ! "

" Sleep thus in my mantle, sleep thus at my feet. Sleep, my little child, and cover yourself for the night. . . . Psyche, your old

nurse is dead. Psyche, now I am your nurse. . . . Sleep now by blind Astra. . . ."

Feeling for Psyche, she threw her mantle round her. The night was dark. Astra's powerless hand dropped over Psyche. Psyche fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIII

It was still dark when Psyche awoke. She looked up at Astra, who sat sleeping, her grey head on her breast ; faintly shone her star. Very gently, so as not to wake her, Psyche rose, and left the terrace. She knew the way. She went through the halls and passages, down the steps, the endless steps. In the corners sat the sacred spiders, and wove. . . .

Psyche went lower down, to the vaults. There burnt the everlasting lamps. She went among the royal tombs, crystal sarcophagi, and found her father's coffin. By the lamp, which was always kept burning, she recognised his embalmed, rigid face. The eyes were closed. He knew nothing about her : that she had gone away and come back. Death was between them, and severed them forever.

She kissed the glass, and her tears, round, hard, and red, clattered on the crystal.

She knelt down and tried to pray. In a corner of the vault a black spot moved. It was a big spider with a white cross on its body.

"So, you have come back again. . . . I knew that you would come. We can escape from nothing. Everything happens as it happens. Everything is as it is. Everything goes to dust; into the pits of the Past, into the power of Emeralda. . . . Now become a spider like us, weave your web, and be wise. . . ."

Psyche got up.

"No . . . . !" she exclaimed, "I will not become a spider, I will weave no web. I have sinned, but I will weave no web; I have sinned and will do penance. The world is awful—desert and wood and space; life is awful—love and pain, joy and despair, sin and punishment. And if fate is as it is, it is in vain to weave a web and to heap up treasures of dust. Spider, were it not more human to love, to live, and even to sin, than to weave web upon web? Spider, I envy you not your sacredness . . . . !"

The spider puffed itself out maliciously.

"You seem to be still proud of your murder

and your immorality and shamelessness ! Your princely name you have dragged through the mire, your wings you have given up for a panther's skin and a grape-wreath, and know not yet what repentance is. If you had been wise and become a spider, you would have served Emeralda, and there would have been no need to go down to the Under-world ! "

But Psyche was no longer afraid. She had come to kiss her father's coffin ; she left her jewelled tears in the treasure, which the spiders watched over, and ascended the hundreds of steps and came on to the terrace of the battlements.

There as a child she had wandered and gazed, a child with wings, and innocent, her soul full of dreams. Now she wandered again along the ramparts and battlements high as a man ; the doves fluttered about her, the swans looked up at her . . . . and full of dejection for former innocence and youth, she wept and wept : no longer a brook, but topazes, rubies, tears of sin, that, rattling down, frightened the doves and the swans, which, indignant, thought that she was pelting them with stones. The doves flew away, and the swans, offended, turned their backs on her. Then she sat

down in an embrasure—no wings now lay against the stone-work—and she folded her arms round her knees. She looked towards the horizon; behind it loomed other horizons, first pink, then silver; blue, then gold; behind the grey, pale and misty, and then fading away. Then beyond, the horizon became milk-white, like an opal, and in the reflection of the last rays of the setting sun, it seemed as if lakes were mirrored there; islands rose in the air, aerial paradises, watery streaks of blue sea, oceans of ether and light-quivering nothingness.

And Psyche bowed her head, full of sadness, and sobbed.

The world was not changed, but more beautiful than ever; gloriously beautiful loomed the ever-changing horizon. Yet Psyche sobbed, full of sadness. She knew that the horizons were pure delusions, and that behind them was the desert with the Sphinx. Oh! if she could once more believe in the aerial paradises, the purple seas, the golden regions with people of light, who lived under rosy bananas! Alas! had she not trod a paradise, the sweet Present, the adorable garden of a moment, so little and so short in

duration ? It was past, it was past ! Oh, how her soul scorched, how her shoulders pained, how her eyes burned !

She wept and she sobbed, and hid her face in her hands. She did not notice that the wind was rising, that the horizon quivered, that clouds were speeding through the air, white colossi like towers and dragons, riders and horses. She did not see the changes in the sky ; she did not see the going up and down of wings, of flaming wings in the silver lightning, that flashed from the sky ; she did not hear the warning thunder, nor did she see the clouds emitting sparks. But suddenly she distinctly heard a voice :

" Psyche ! Psyche ! "

She looked up. Before her, she saw descending on broad wings a steed of pure light and flame. And she uttered a cry, that sounded in the air like an endless shout of gladness :

" Chimera ! "

It was he. He descended. The basalt terrace trembled, as though shaken by an earthquake ; under his hoofs the stone shot sparks, and he stood before her resplendent and beautiful.

"Chimera!" she cried, and folded her hands and sank down before him on her knees.

She could say nothing else. She was dazzled, and it seemed as though her soul ascended heavenward in the pure delight of love.

"Psyche!" sounded his voice of bronze, "I have come down, for I love you. But I may not bear you any more on my back through the delusive regions of air, because you have committed sin. Psyche, it is your bounden duty to obey Emeralda's command. Go down to Hell and seek the Jewel."

"Chimera, adored one, delight of my soul, oh, your splendour fills my eyes! Your word gives strength to my weakness! I feel it! You may not bear me away; I am unworthy of your wings. But I adore and bless you for coming! Chimera, Chimera, your splendour has beamed once more upon me! your voice has inspired me, and I will do what you say. . . . You let the light of hope break in upon me; new strength flows through my limbs. Chimera, I hope, I hope! I will go down into Hell; I will seek. . . . Shall I find? I know not. . . . But I hope! The horizon

is quivering with hope and ether and the Future !

" Psyche ! " sounded his voice again like bronze, " be strong ? Take heart ! Descend ! Do penance ! Seek . . . . ! Once more you will see me. . . ."

" Once more ! "

" Be strong, take heart, do penance ! "

He ascended, whilst Psyche remained kneeling. When he was high in the air, there came a peal of thunder, as if the heavens would burst asunder. The sky was dark, but lit up by the lightning. In the black sky, in the lightning flame, rose fearfully the three hundred towers. And the thunder-claps rumbled on, one after the other, as if the Past were perishing in the last day. . . .

With a joyful cry, Psyche hastened along the terraces, the battlements, ramparts, entered the castle, and went down the steps. Lower and lower she descended, lower than the vaults ; and as she passed them, she threw a kiss in the direction where the old king lay buried. . . . She descended still lower, and yet she heard the thunder pealing above, and the castle seemed to tremble to its very foundations.

She descended still lower: she descended very deep pits, built like towers reversed to the central nave of the earth. She descended step after step, thousands of steps, groping in the darkness. She walked with unerring foot, that felt for the next step, that detected the slippery stone; she felt and never hesitated. Another step and then another; again a pit, pit after pit, all the pits of the Past. Bats flew up and flapped their wings, spiders she felt crawling over her, an icy dampness fell like a chill wind upon her shoulders.

Deeper down she went, and deeper. It was pitch dark, and above she heard nothing more; she heard only the flapping of the gigantic bats, the droning of the envious spiders. But she defended herself with her little hand; as she descended, she beat about her, beat the bats away, seized a vampire, held it tightly by the neck, and strangled it. Her foot glided over toads, she slipped over snakes, but she got up again and beat the bats and fought with the vampires. The Chimera had so inspired her with strength, that she felt strong as a giant, young and courageous; he had filled her eyes with such light that she saw him in the darkness.

In the pitchy darkness his flaming wings were distinctly visible. And on she went descending ; thick clouds of dust, the deepest shadows of Emeralda's transitoriness, rose up, but she kept breathing, never hesitating, and her foot felt instinctively the next step, and she struck at the bats and fought with the vampires. When she throttled them, a human cry was heard, and the echo sounded a thousand times like the anxious cry of a murder. But she was not afraid. She kept on descending. . . .

She kept descending. At last she felt no more steps but voidness under her feet, and she sank . . . . like a feather, through heavier air ; she sank, she sank deeper and deeper, deeper and deeper. . . . A black draught of air, an invisible wind, damp and chill, made her feel that she had passed all the pits, that she was sinking outside them in the open air, invisible and black, thick as ink. Then she began to sink more slowly, and . . . . her feet touched ground.

Sounds soft and low, like the plaintive strains of a viol, rose up from afar, like music of the sea, the plaint of a thousand voices which never became melody.

The far-off sound continued quivering as an accompaniment of wind, of a black wind which blew, and overpowered the music of the sea. Sometimes it went a little higher, sometimes a little lower, and always remained the vague and distant incomprehensible harmony.

From where the wind came, from where the plaintive murmuring arose, thither would Psyche go. And with her foot she kept feeling, and with her outstretched hands, and on she went. . . .

Long, long she went in the darkness, till the darkness became less opaque and lit up with phosphoric flickerings; and she saw:

That she was ascending a path between two inky seas.

Black as ink were the waves.

Then she heard them roaring; then she saw their crests lit up with a blue phosphorescent glow.

Then she heard the soft, low sounds, the plaintive viols swell, till they became a dull, continuous soughing.

The black wind rose as with a gigantic sail, and suddenly blew the hurricane.

In the pitch-dark air, the lightning flashed blue.

And between the two inky seas, Psyche went slowly on, against the gusts of wind.

Then she uttered a cry, as though she were calling. . . .

The hurricane took her cry for help over the endless sea of Hell. . . . And from all sides dived up the gruesome frights—leviathan monsters. They opened their jaws at Psyche, and the water streamed out. Their scaly tortuous bodies wound along over the black surface of the ocean, and on the horizon, lit up with phosphorous blue, their tails meandered. They came from the horizon, they dived up and down, and the ocean dived with them. Storm-flood, waterfall—storm-flood, waterfall. . . . They spread out their dragon wings, and caught up the boisterous wind ; they shot up waterspouts like towering fountains, of a blue and yellowish hue. Their round squinting eyes stood out watchful, like green and yellow signals ; they lifted their red-lobed jaws, abysses of red-slimy desires, bubbling with foamy slaver.

" Monsters of the sea of pain, where shall I find the Jewel for Emeralda ? "

Psyche asked the question in a high, musical key, and her voice rang out clearly in the hurricane and plaintive moanings of the sea. Her high soprano sounded above all the roaring of the elements and plaintive cries; and three times she repeated the question:

"Monsters of the sea of pain, where shall I find the Jewel for Emeralda?"

The leviathans pressed together along the path that Psyche trod. But amidst the noise of their tossing and snorting and spouting, she heard the plaintive sea swelling, the sea of plaintive voices; and then in the blue phosphorescent glow between the monsters, she saw the drowned shades heaving to and fro, always writhing in fear, always drowning in the inky sea; the everlasting wailing of the plaintive sea, the cry of souls in pain; the gigantic plaintive viol, with strings ever playing. . . .

"Vanity, vanity!"

Did she hear aright?

It was one single sound, like a note repeated again and again. "Vanity, vanity!" was the inexorable answer, first vague as a dream, mystic as a thought, sounding more distinctly as an admonition against worldly pride. And

so distinct did the sound become, that Psyche, brave Psyche, who feared neither vampire nor monster of the deep . . . . that courageous Psyche hesitated and felt all her strength giving way. . . .

"If it were vanity to seek, to ask for the Jewel, how much farther should she go?"

"Should she go back?"

She looked round.

But she saw what made her soul sink within her.

She saw that behind her step, the seas immediately closed till they became one single sea of ink; she saw that the only path for her stretched across the seas, that behind her it immediately sank away.

She could not go back, she must go on.

And she buoyed up her sinking soul; she went on, and in a high soprano voice repeated again and again her question:

"Spirits in the sea of pain, where shall I find the Jewel for Emeralda?"

"Vanity, vanity!"

The plaintive viol kept trembling, and the same sound sounded ever, the unchangeable answer. The hurricane was no longer chill,

but warm, sultry, strangely sultry ; more and more sultry blew the everlasting cyclone.

The sea-monsters kept back ; they dived again below ; the sea sank with them, the shades swayed to and fro in storm-flood, waterfall—storm-flood, waterfall, and many-headed hydras came sinuously up. The sea no longer shone with phosphorescent glow, but was quite black, pitch black, black as boiling pitch, without foam and without light, and kept sending up a discharge of miry, vaporous matter. In the boiling pitch, the hydras, with their thousand snaky heads, kept diving up, tortoise-scaled ; swayed to and fro, to and fro the pale faces of the shades, but ever sounded the plaintive viol, and ever rang forth the same note, the unchangeable answer to Psyche's shrill question :

" Hydras of the sea of pain, spirits in the sea of pain, where shall I find the Jewel for Emeralda . . . . ? ? "

" Vanity, vanity . . . . ! "

The pitch seethed and hissed and steamed.

It was no longer a sea of water, no longer a sea of pitch ;

It was a sea of nothing but flame, pitch-black flame, a sea of jet-black fire, fire and flame, that waved from the horizon, where a

single streak of pale light appeared. In the black flames burned the shades, in the black flames wound the hydras in and out; the thick smoke shot up into the clouds, and the clouds sent it back again. . . .

"Spirits in the pitch-black flames, where shall I find the Jewel for Emeralda . . . . ? ? ?"

"Vanity, vanity . . . . !"

The hurricane kept blowing, the plaintive viol kept trembling, and ever sounded the same note, the unchangeable answer. But scorchingly, more scorchingly blew the wind, like a tempest from a sun for ever doomed. The black night now assumed a dark-purple aspect, like purple steam; the clouds drove a bloody vapour into the heavens.

And on either side of Psyche's path suddenly shot out the flaming hurricane of the sun, gigantic purple tongues of fire, scarlet and orange. The lower clouds drove them back, and when Psyche looked round, she stood in a flaming fire. The flaming hurricane seethed round her; behind her feet the path was on fire. The air was fire. But Psyche, whose own soul was on fire, in her own scorching fire of remorse, felt not the glowing heat, and she saw,

Out of the living scarlet craters, the orange caves, the hellish chimeras working up their sinuous way like glowing spirals: half arabesque, half beast; half dragon, half tail; flaming sea-horses. They spat and fanned the glowing fire, and, riding aloft on the burning hurricane, the shades swept past Psyche.

"Spirits in the scarlet flames . . . ."

"Vanity, vanity!"

This was the only answer, that sounded afar off in her ears, the answer of the tortured, angry spirits, which in the strength of their sin and passion came flying up from the craters.

On she went. . . .

She went on along the path that unfolded before her.

How confidently she went on, how calmly! Why was she not afraid? Oh! she knew too much to be afraid and not to go on in confidence. Was the answer not always more distinct and unchangeable? Psyche's soul breathed freely, and in the fire around her her own fire seemed to diminish. For when the fire round her became yellower, sulphur-yellow, pure yellow, the pure golden yellow of the sun, then she uttered a cry of joy, as though she knew the answer:

"Spirits in the sulphur flames, spirits in the sun's flames . . . . !

She smiled. . . . Smiling, she hastened on, with joyful voice, with winged step; and so rapidly did she flee along the path smoothed out small for her foot, that behind her the answer could scarcely reach her.

"Vanity, vanity!"

Oh! it was always the plaintive viol, but the too poignant grief was tempered with melancholy; the plaintive sea became like a sea of melancholy; the thousands of voices were full of melancholy. And when the flames became less dense and lighter, when they changed from sulphur yellow to soft azure, a flaming sea of azure, in the silent dawning moonlight scenery, high, broad, blue flaming tongues that shot from the moon—when the hellish hurricane no longer raged, but gave away to a more benign breeze—then Psyche asked no more in so shrill a key, but knowing all, her voice murmured dejectedly:

"Spirits in the azure flames, where shall I find the Jewel for Emeralda?"

The melancholy viol vibrated more gently; the spirits rocking to and fro in the thin blue fire sang more softly:

"That is vanity, Psyche; that is vanity. . . ."

She uttered her jubilant cry, and hastened on with uplifted arms through the azure moon-flames. The firmament spread out in higher circles and formed wider spheres;

The flames became clearer and clearer; more benignly blew the breeze;

And pale, the spirits flitted to and fro: pale shades with melancholy eyes, singing their song of painful remembrances. . . .

And the spirits looked at Psyche—the spirits smiled benignly on her, astonished that she was still alive.

They pointed for her to go on farther and farther; they nodded to her, "On! on!"

And she gave a loud cry of joy and hastened on. . . .

She sped through the flames and shades;

Till the flames were still, and high and white;

High, still, white flames, like sacrificial flames, like altar flames, high in the sky, the lofty sky, the wide sky; the wide expanse full of white flame, still, white, ascending, purifying flames, refined and clear, over the whole wide expanse, the wide refining expanse. . . .

Once more she asked the pale shades, who swarmed about between the flames, hand in hand, who swayed continually to and fro between the flames :

" Spirits in the white flames, pure white, in the white flames, where shall I find the Jewel for Emeralda ? "

" Vanity, vanity ! " sang the shades softly and quietly, and in the answer, calm and assuring, of the expectant penitents, vibrated the great viol with a sound like a soft jubilant trill.

Psyche asked no more. She slackened her speed and began to walk, her arms raised, her head erect, through the silvery flames. Oh, the dear, tender flames, the adorable purifying flames ! how they cooled, in their snow-white glow, the burning remorse of her soul !

How freely Psyche breathed, in the innocently white glowing fire ! Like lilies were the tongues of flame, fragrant and soothing as balsam, cool and fresh as snow . . . . cold as water, as foam. The white flames foamed and rippled like a sea, lower and smoother, quieter and more serene ; they rippled like a sea of lilies, like a sea of silver snow. . . . They became moisture and water and foaming

ocean, the tender element of gentle compulsion, carrying along as an irresistible dream, white as paradise, and, as slightly rippling waves of foam, they bore Psyche away.

On the foaming waves Psyche drifted along, all white in the golden boat of her fair hair. So gently did they rock her, the foaming, rippling waves, that Psyche shut her eyes. Sleep was stealing over her. Her lips smiled with inward peace.

The waves bore her away, the sea washed her ashore. She awoke from her slumber, pearl-white she rose from the foam, amidst the joyful dolphins.

She stepped out of the sea on to the land. She felt quite cool, and her soul was calm and peaceful, full of reassuring, holy knowledge. But within her was a great desire.

Smiling, she stretched out her arms. She yearned for the desire of her heart. . . .

"Not yet . . . . not yet," was whispered tenderly to her cool and peaceful soul. "Wait, wait . . . ." sounded the echo.

In the silent joy of her soul, she wept. She lifted her hand to her eyes ; wet were her tears, and in her hand . . . . lay a pearl . . . .!

Then she looked round. She recognised the

sea-shore with its many bays, the shore of the Kingdom of the Past. There, on the opal-blue horizon, loomed a town of minarets and pinnacles, of cupolas and obelisks, surrounded with golden walls.

That was the capital of the kingdom. Thither she would repair.

There, proud and peaceful, still and cool, she would say to Emeralda, her powerful sister,

That her Jewel was vanity. That the gem did not exist.

CHAPTER XXIV

When Psyche approached the capital, she heard at the gates the excited cries of festive merry-makers. Outside the gates flocked the noisy crowd, dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, and bedecked with flowers, singing and dancing, but not knowing why. Everywhere was bustle and commotion; on the roadside sat hundreds of hucksters, and women extolling their wares—glasses with jewels and fruit, cooling drinks, dresses and flowers. In a shrill key they praised their wares; they spread out their stuffs with much ado, and offered the people flowers, and poured them out wine, and held up strings of glass pearls and cheap necklaces of coins.

Psyche was naked, and she veiled herself in her hair; she spread over the marks on her shoulders her golden mantle of hair, and as many of the dancing girls, some half naked and others quite, danced round, hand in hand,

people thought that she was naked, only because she was so fair—Psyche, so pearl-white in her golden hair. She was not wont to be ashamed of nakedness, which was once her right, her privilege as a princess; but now under the eyes of the people she blushed, and walked with downcast eyes. Then she turned to a saleswoman and asked:

"What is the feast for?"

"Where do you come from? 'What is the feast for!' Don't you know anything about it?"

"I come from the other side of the sea. . . ."

"'What is the feast for!' It is the great festival: it is the Festival, the Jubilee-festival, of Emeralda. It is the Triumphal Procession of the Queen!!"

. . . . "It is the Triumphal Procession of the Queen!" resounded on all sides. They danced and sang:

. . . . "It is the Triumphal Procession of the Queen!"

They were drunk with joy, dizzy from strange joy; but Psyche suddenly saw that they were deadly pale and frightened, deadly pale under paint and flowers, and frightened whilst they danced round in a ring.

" I have no dress for the occasion ; give me that veil of golden gauze ! " said Psyche to the saleswoman.

" That is very dear ! "

" I will pay you for it with this pearl."

. . . . " With that pearl ! Are you a princess, then ! "

Psyche then took the veil, and she bound it round her loins, just as she used to do before.

" I will give you a wreath of fresh roses as well ! " said the woman, pleased, and put the flowers on her head.

She smiled, and it suddenly occurred to her that she was decked out with those flowers as a victim for the altar ; that all the people who were making merry and dancing were bedecked as victims. She went on. Through the round gold gate she entered the city ; the squares were seen in the distance, connected with very broad streets ; square palaces of marble and bronze, of jasper and malachite, round cupolas and finely pointed minarets, glistered in the sun as if conjured up by magic. They stretched far away, and right behind the blue mountains rose the royal castle, a Babel of pinnacles and towers in-

numerable, almost indiscernible in the distance, with square ramparts and walls, and lofty summits lost in the rising mist. And along the squares, over palaces, and on the minarets, hung the thick festoons of flowers, as though the towns were decked out for an offering. Close up to the castle, Babel of pinnacles, the festoons of flowers seemed to reach. And in the squares the dancers threw flowers into the air, and it seemed as if white roses were raining down from heaven. To the sound of tabour and cymbals, the people danced madly round, and ever was heard the same cry :

"It is the Triumphal Procession of the Queen !"

Then Psyche, in the secret depths of her heart, saw clearly and indubitably what it all meant. As she went along with the dense crowds of noisy, shouting merry-makers, she saw all the people in the town trembling with fear, which made the blood congeal in their veins.

Their eyes, through fear, were ready to start out of their sockets ; their teeth chattered ; their limbs, bedecked with flowers, trembled ; the sun was shining, but everyone was shivering with cold.

But no one spoke of his trembling, and they danced, madly drunk with foolish joy, and they kept shouting the same thing :

" It is the Triumphal Procession of the Queen ! ! !"

CHAPTER XXV

A GREAT commotion was going on in the direction of the castle. In that direction all eyes were turned, and the dancing girls forgot to dance. From fear, the crowd stood still, as if petrified, and forgot to conceal the anxiety of their minds. The palaces seemed to tremble; the air-atoms quivered audibly. Something dreadful was about to happen.

The royal castle shone with a strange lustre; a sun seemed to send forth a halo; an ominous aureola appeared in the distance. The fearful rays of the Sun of Consternation outshone the day, outshone the sun: from their centre, they penetrated through houses and people.

And everything shone, softened by the glow of piercing sunbeams. The rays quivered everywhere in the air, and the aureola filled the world.

The cause of consternation came rattling on with the rapidity of an arrow.

All hearts stood still, all breath was taken away, all dancing was stopped, all rejoicing ceased.

From the castle, over the triumphal way, a triumphal chariot rattled along with the speed of an arrow. On the top, a living jewel, stood Emeralda, and guided the four and twenty steeds. It was her splendour and her aureola which appeared in the air. It was her rays which caused the houses to shine with splendour and pierced the people with flashes. She stood immovable, clad in the strength of precious stones, in a tunic of sapphire, in a robe of brilliants, with deep flounces of gems and white cameos ; her mantle was like a bell, with folds of purple carbuncle, lined with enamelled ermine. From her crown of beryl, from her heart of ruby, the rays shot forth, shone out her fear-inspiring aureola and streamed over the town and in the air, eclipsing the sun, which turned pale. Her eyes of emerald, stars in her opal face, chalcedonic, looked inexorable, and her bosom of precious stones heaved not. Only her heart of ruby beat regularly, and then her lustre grew alternately dim and bright. . . .

She stood immovable and guided her horses,

her four and twenty foaming stallions, rearing greys, which drew her triumphal car, like a broad enamelled shell on innumerable wheels, on cutting wheels so numerous, that they seemed to run into one another—a turning confusion of spokes.

The dazzling, fear-inspiring chariot rattled on with the rapidity of an arrow. And suddenly, awaking from their stupefaction, the people madly danced again and shouted the same jubilant cry. The tabours sounded, the white roses rained down, and before the queen the people prostrated themselves and paved her path with their bodies. The grey stallions foamed and reared ; they came on, they came on, they trampled over the first bodies—men and women, girls and children, dressed for a festival and bedecked with flowers. . . . Over her people rode Emeralda ; the innumerable wheels rattled, a confusion of spokes, revolving, cutting furrows in flesh and blood, reducing blood and human flesh to a muddy mass. But farther up they danced, farther up they sang, before casting themselves down for her Triumph. . . .

Then Emeralda, looking over her triumphal way, saw, with the keen glance of her black

carbuncle pupil, a little form, naked and fair, who lifted up her small, child's hand.

And fiercer and fiercer gleamed her heart of ruby, for she had recognised the form.

And the desire flamed up in her : the thirst for more power and to become like a god.

Emeralda recognised Psyche. And she reined in her twelve pair of horses, she drove them more slowly, and under the less quickly revolving wheels she heard the jubilant cry of the dying people. The blood dropped from the wheels, but the roses rained down and covered the horrible sight. On the bloody, muddy mass, the roses rained down, white, from the balconies of the palaces.

Emeralda stopped.

Under her, death was silent.

Around, the town was silent. She alone reigned and shot out her terrible fan of rays, which scorched the houses and pierced the air.

And before her, at a little distance, stood Psyche, proud, pearl-white, crowned with roses, in a veil of gold.

And the silent crowd recognised in her the third princess of the kingdom.

" Psyche ! " said Emeralda, and her voice

sounded loud through the town from the focus of her rays, "have you come to bring me the unutterable Jewel, the Gem of Power, the Bestower of Universal Power, the sacred Stone of Mysticism? Have you found the Mystery of the Godhead, and,

"—Do you rule with me the Universe and God?"

The town shuddered and quivered. The people were stupefied.

The air-atoms trembled audibly.

Then Psyche's voice sounded clearly, silver-clearly, from the consciousness of the wisdom and sacred knowledge which she possessed.

"Emeralda, for you I have gone through Hell along the black seas, oceans of pitch, along the horrible sloughs of flaming hurricanes, along the craters and caverns scarlet and yellow, along the azure fires and through the white and lilac glow. Give heed to what I say. Hell answered 'Vanity!' when I asked for the Jewel; the leviathans roared 'Vanity!'; the chimeras hissed 'Vanity!'; the spirits cried 'Vanity!'; and the whole plaintive viol trilled:

"'*Vanity!*'

"Do you understand me, Emeralda?

Your wish was Vanity, for the mystic Jewel that bestows godlike power is Vanity, and . . . . *Does not Exist.*"

Then it was terrible. The queen, a living idol, burned with rage, blazed with rage ; her heart was inflamed with rage.

Around her, decked out for sacrifice, in festive garb, in the sunshine and her own dazzling splendour, her people trembled with fear. And cruelty gleamed in her fixed face ; her emerald eyes started so revengefully from their sockets as though blinded by their own splendour, and she pulled at the numerous reins. . . .

The horses reared, the white roses fell down, the people screamed with joy and the fear of death, and the triumphal chariot rattled on.

Swift as an arrow it thundered on over the people, who paved the way in ecstacy, and Psyche saw the maddened horses approaching, snorting, foaming, panting, trampling, pulling, their eyes round and mad. . . .

For a moment she stood firm, proud, tall, pearl-white in the sacred knowledge she possessed ; then the angry hoofs struck her down, and the horses trampled her as a flower. Emeralda's chariot rattled over her, with its

many cutting wheels, and whilst she died like a crushed lily, trampled in her own lily-whiteness, she thought of her old father, and how she had crept to his breast and hidden her face in his beard, before she went to sleep at night. . . .

She died. . . . But while she lay trampled to death in the mud of human flesh and blood, and the sacrificial roses kept falling down over her corpse unrecognisable——

She returned to life, hovering through the air, and felt so light and unencumbered, and was whiter than ever and naked.

And on her tender shoulders she felt two new wings quivering . . . . !

She hovered over her own body into a drifting cloud, a mist of fragrance, which farther on she lost sight of ; and light, white, and rarefied, she looked wonderingly at her trampled body and laughed. Strange, clear, and childlike sounded her laugh in the cloud and vapoury fragrance. . . .

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

The triumphal chariot rattled on madly. Emeralda stretched out her sceptre, on the top of which glowed a star of destroying rays. When she stretched out the sceptre and directed the rays, she scorched monuments, palaces, and parks to a white ash, and, for her cruel jubilant procession, she cut down everything that came in her way. The thick white ashes flew up like dust ; the jubilant multitude were scorched ; the palaces of jaspar and malachite shrivelled up like burnt paper ; the breath of the horses blew away, like ash, the white burnt gardens. And right over everything went Emeralda, scorching as she went. Powerful, foolish, arrogant, and proud she was, and more unfeeling than ever, spiteful and cruel, hurt in her pride ; and she scorched, and made the way smooth before her. Behind her lay all the town, and she drove through her kingdom, filling the air with her rays. She

drove through valleys and burnt up the harvest; she reduced villages to dust; she dried up rivers; and before her, the mountains split asunder.

Her sceptre made a way for her, and no law of nature resisted her power. The air was grey with the clouds of ash, which rained down upon the earth.

She went along as swiftly as an arrow, swiftly as lightning, swiftly as light, swiftly as thought. She went so swiftly, that in a single hour she had gone all round her wide kingdom intoxicated with the pride of annihilation, and she drove her maddened horses through endless plains of sand.

Desert after desert she consumed; the lions fled before her; she overtook them in a moment; clouds of sand she sent up into the air. . . .

But then she relaxed her speed. She stopped.

Before her, grey and high through the clouds of sand and falling ash, there loomed a most dreadful shadow.

The shadow was like a gigantic beast, squatting in the sand, with a woman's head in a stiff basalt veil. The woman's head had

a woman's breast, two basalt breasts of a gigantic woman. But the body that squatted in the sand was a lion, and the paws stuck out like walls. And so great was the shadow, so monstrous the beast, that even the triumphal chariot of Emeralda appeared small.

"Sphinx!" said Emeralda, "I will know. I am powerful, but there is power above me. There are spheres above mine, and there are gods above my divinity. There are laws of nature which my sceptre cannot alter. Sphinx, tell me the riddle. Reveal to me the place where the Jewel lies hidden, which gives almighty power over the world and God, so that I may find it and become the mightiest of all gods. Sphinx, answer me, I say! Open your stony lips and let your voice once more be heard, that shall make the world tremble with wonder. For centuries you have not spoken. Sphinx, speak now! For if you do not speak, Sphinx, and reveal to me where the Jewel lies hidden, then, great and terrible as you are, I will scorch you to a white ash and go over you in triumph. Sphinx, speak!"

The Sphinx was silent. The Sphinx looked with stony eyes at the clouds of sand and raining ash. Her basalt lips remained shut.

"Sphinx, speak ! !" said Emeralda, threateningly and red with rage.

The Sphinx spoke not and looked.

Emeralda stretched out her sceptre and directed the destroying rays.

The rays split on the basalt with crackling sparks like flashes of forked lightning. Emeralda uttered a cry, hoarse and terrible. She threw away her broken sceptre. But of her greater power she did not doubt, and for the last time she threatened.

"Terrible Sphinx, tremble ! I am more terrible than you ! ! Speak, Sphinx ! !"

The Sphinx was silent.

Then Emeralda tugged at the reins.

The maddened horses reared, snorting, foaming, panting, trampling, pulling, and dashed against the Sphinx.

But the foremost horses were dashed to pieces against the god-like basalt.

Then Emeralda uttered cry after cry, one hoarse cry after another, which resounded through the desert. She tugged at the reins ; the horses, despairing of their attack against the immovable, drove at the Sphinx, and fell back crushed, falling over one another and trampling one another to death ; the triumphal

chariot split, and the splinters of sparkling jewels flew up like cracking fireworks, and Emeralda fell between the still revolving wheels. And her heart of ruby broke. All her dazzling splendour suddenly faded. The terrifying fan-like aureola suddenly grew dim, and the desert was grey and gloomy, with a gentle rain of thick white ash falling down.

The Sphinx was silent, and looked on. . . .

CHAPTER XXVII

. . . . . .

Psyche was alive again, soaring through the air, and felt so light and ethereal ; pearl-whiter she was than ever, and naked.

And on her tender shoulders she felt two new wings fluttering . . . . !

She hovered away over her own dead body into a drifting cloud, a fragrant mist, which farther on she lost sight of ; and light, white, and ethereal, she looked with wonder at her trampled corpse and laughed. . . .

Strange, clear, and childlike sounded her laugh in the cloud and vapoury fragrance. . . .

" Psyche ! "

She heard her name, but so dazzled and astonished was she, that she did not see. Then the wind blew about her ; the cloud moved, the fragrance ascended like incense, and she saw many like herself, restored to life, hovering

in the fragrant cloud, and round her she distinguished the outlines of well-known faces.

"Psyche!"

She recognised the voice, deep bronze, but yet strange. And the wind blew about her and she saw a bright light before her, and recognised the Chimera!

"You promised me: once more!" exclaimed Psyche joyfully.

She threw herself on to his back, she clung to his mane, and he soared aloft.

"Where am I?" said Psyche. "Who am I? What has happened? And what is going on around me? Am I dead, or do I live? Chimera, how rarefied is the air! how high you ascend! Are you going to ascend higher, higher still? Why is everything so dazzlingly bright about us? Is that water, or air, or light? What strange element is this? Who are going up with us—ethereal faces, ethereal forms? And what is the viol that is playing?

"I heard that once before. Then it sounded plaintively; now it has a joyous sound!

"Chimera, why is the air so full of joy here . . . .? Look! below us is the Kingdom of the Past.

"It lies in a little circle, and the castle is a

THE KINGDOM OF THE FUTURE

[*To face p.* 194

black dot. Chimera, where are you going so high? We have never been so high before. Chimera, what are those circles all round us, the splendour of which makes me giddy? Are those spheres? Do they get wider and wider? Oh, how wide they get, Chimera, how wide! How high it is here, how wide, how rarefied and how light is the air! I feel myself also so light, so ethereal! Am I dead . . . .? Chimera, look! I have two new wings, and I shine pearl-white all over. Do I not shine like a light? It is true I have been very sinful. But I was what I had to be! Is it good to be what we have to be? I do not know, Chimera: I have thought of neither good nor bad; I was only what I was. But tell me, who am I now, and what am I? And where are you taking me to, Chimera? You carry me so quietly, so safely; up and down go your wings, up and down. The stars are twinkling round us; around us whirl the spheres, and wider and wider they become . . .! How light, how ethereal! What is that I see on the horizon? Or is it not the horizon? Opal islands, aerial oceans . . . . O Chimera!!!! I see purple sands wrinkling far, far away, and round them foams a golden sea. . . . We saw

that once before, but not as it is now! For then it was delusion, and now . . . . ! The sands are growing more distinct; I see the ripple of the golden sea. . . . Chimera! What land is that? Is that the rainbow? Is that the land of happiness, and are you the king?"

"No, Psyche, I am not a king, and that Land . . . ."

"—And that Land . . . . ?"

"Is . . . . the Kingdom of the Future!"

"The Future! the Future!! O Chimera, where are you taking me to? Will the Future not prove to be a delusion . . . . ?"

"No, here is the Future. Here is the Land. Look at it well . . . . well. . . ."

"It is wider than the widest sphere, wider than anything I can think of. Where are the limits?"

"Nowhere."

"How far and how wide is the widest sphere?"

"Immeasurably far, indescribably wide. . . ."

"And what stretches away round the widest sphere?"

"The unutterable, and the *All*, *All!* The . . . ."

"The . . . . ?"

"I know no names ! On earth things are called by names ; here not. . . ."

"Chimera . . . . ! On the purple strand I see a town of light, palaces of light, gates of light. . . . Do beings of light dwell there . . . ? Are these the fore-spheres of the farthest sphere . . . . ? Is that the way through circles to . . . . the . . . . ? Chimera, I see forms, I see the people of light ! ! O Chimera ! Chimera ! ! They are beckoning us, they are waving to us ! I see two of them : a form of majesty, and another, near him, of love ! O Chimera ! I know them ! ! That is my father, and that . . . . O joy, O joy ! . . . . that is Eros ! Eros ! Quicker, Chimera—annihilate the space which separates us ; speed on, ply your wings faster—away, away ! Oh, faster, Chimera ! Can you not go faster ? You fly too slowly for me ! You fly too slowly ! ! I can fly faster than you."

She spread out her tender, light, butterfly wings ; she rose above the breathless, winged horse, and . . . . she flew . . . . !

She glided over the Chimera's head toward the strand, toward the city, toward the blessed spirits. There she saw her father, there she

saw Eros—Eros, godlike and naked, with shining wings !

Round her the viol of joy played its joyous notes, as if all the spheres rejoiced together. In the divine light, the faces of the cherubim began to blossom like winged roses. . . .

She glided swiftly through the air to her father and Eros, and embraced them. She laughed when she saw the flaming Chimera approaching, because she could fly faster than he !

" Come ! " cried Eros joyfully. And he wanted to take her to the gate, from whence sunbeams issued like a path of sunny gold : a path along which enraptured souls were going hand in hand. . . .

But the kingly shade stopped them for a moment, when they, Eros and Psyche, intoxicated with love, embraced each other. . . .

" Look ! " said the shade. " Look down below. . . ."

. . . . . .

They saw the Kingdom of the Past, with their glorified minds, lying visible, deep in the funnel of the spheres. They saw the castle, fallen to ruins, with a single tower still standing.

They saw Astra, old, grey, and blind, sitting before her telescope, and gazing in vain. They saw her star flicker up for a moment with a bright and final light.

Then they saw Astra's blind eyes . . . . see ! Astra looked and beheld the land of light, and the little band of happy, loving, dear ones in their shining raiment. Then they heard Astra murmur: "There ! there . . . . the Land . . . . ! The . . . . Kingdom . . . . of . . . . the . . . . Future ! ! ! "

And they saw her star extinguish :

She fell back dead. . . .

The viol of gladness trilled.

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Fiction.

The Sword Decides! By the Author of "The Viper of Milan," and "The Glen o' Weeping." MARJORIE BOWEN. Second Impression. 6s.

"This remarkable book is a series of the most vivid Italian illuminations, a collection of word pictures, as detailed and as splendid as the choicest gems from 'Les très riches heures' . . . She has told it with so much power and insight that it lives and convinces the reader without any need of proof. In this third novel the writer has gone back to the source of her first success, 'The Viper of Milan,' but she brings to this later story so much more strength of characterisation, so much greater freedom in the handling of the plot, and such a great deepening of emotional power, that the earlier book, praised as it was when it appeared, will seem a pale and amateurish novel beside its wonderful successor."—The Westminster Gazette.

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"It is probable that she will settle down for the next few years upon such reputation as 'The Sword Decides' may make for her. If that is so, we do not think she has much to fear. . . . The breathless spirit of the thing is so well sustained that it is impossible not to be carried away by it. . . . Her third book we think, secures her reputation."—The Daily Telegraph.

"For the scene of her new novel Miss Marjorie Bowen has returned to the country with which she won her first success. . . . This romance, indeed, in many ways, is superior to anything that its author has ever written. . . . In fact, her remarkable gifts of description, her quick eye for romance and passion and dramatic effect, never seriously falter. The whole story moves with resistless might to a great and awe-inspiring climax, in which a fierce conflict wages."—The Standard.

Heather. By the Author of "A Pixy in Petticoats," "Arminel of the West," and "Furze the Cruel." JOHN TREVENA. 6s.

"Almost everywhere on Dartmoor are furze, heather, and granite. The furze seems to suggest cruelty, the heather endurance, and the granite strength. The furze is destroyed by fire, but grows again; the granite is worn away imperceptibly by the rain. This work is the first of a proposed trilogy, which the author hopes to continue and complete with 'Heather' and 'Granite.'"

So ran Mr. John Trevena's Introductory Note in "Furze the Cruel," the brilliant success of which was one of the features of last year's publishing. Could there exist, it was asked by readers whose information was confined to holiday tours in the West, among those pleasant Devonshire folks men so brutal and so devoid of moral sense? Yes, answered those who knew, it was too true, and no more faithful picture of life among the Dartmoor peasants has ever been presented. But, happily, there are many delightful characters around Dartmoor for Mr. Trevena to portray, and though no Devonshire novel which blinked the depravity and ignorance that prevail could be pronounced really artistic, the title of "Heather," as being typical of endurance, suggests a singularly attractive story.

A Case for Compromise. By the Author of "The Adventures of Count O'Connor." HENRY STACE. 6s.

Mr. Henry Stace's name is familiar as the author of the rattling "Adventures of Count O'Connor," which was much appreciated. The author's delightful sense of humour and his pure literary style are sure to win him a wide popularity in the near future, and "A Case for Compromise" will be found to be even more entertaining than the author's first work.

The People Downstairs. By the Author of "Mr. Meyer's Pupil." EVA LATHBURY. 6s.

Few new writers have enjoyed a more satisfactory *début* than Miss Eva Lathbury. Her first novel, "Mr. Meyer's Pupil," was so extremely intellectual and refined that some publishers might well have hesitated in taking it up. The discernment of the English novel reader, however, was once more vindicated, and the majority of the critics were highly complimentary, one reviewer going so far as to suggest that Miss Lathbury would found a school of her own in fiction. The delicate wit that distinguished "Mr. Meyer's Pupil" pervades "The People Downstairs," which is sure to enhance an already enviable reputation.

A Bride on Trust. By the Author of "Tears of Angels," "An Imperial Love Story," etc. CAPT. HENRY CURTIES. 6s.

"A wonderful royal romance."—Times. "A veritable feast of romance and sensation of the better type."—Globe. "A capital book."—Daily Graphic. "A stirring and original story."—Birmingham Post. "Capt. Curties has achieved another success."—Liverpool Post.

Attainment. By the Author of "Kit's Woman," and "My Cornish Neighbours." MRS. HAVELOCK ELLIS. 6s.

Mrs. Havelock Ellis is already responsible for two books, one of which was the delightful volume of Cornish sketches entitled "My Cornish Neighbours"; the other "Kit's Woman," a fine story of which the characterisation was much admired. "Attainment," however, is her first attempt at a long novel, and its appearance is being eagerly awaited by a large circle of novel readers. The story is founded on experiments socialistic, philanthropic and idealistic, and points to the value of a natural life in every respect.

A Melton Monologue. DIANA CROSSWAYS. 3s. 6d.

"Those who appreciate hunting and hunting sketches will delight in this bright and interesting picture. . . . Should attain considerable popularity."—Southport Guardian.

The Disinherited of the Earth. By the Author of "The Tower of Siloam." MRS. HENRY GRAHAM. 6s.

Mrs. Henry Graham's previous novel, "The Tower of Siloam," was a notable success, her thorough knowledge of society being at once recognised. For her second book she has chosen a very different phase of life among the wealthy classes, the bigoted Lady Verrier being a distinct creation, whereas in her first book the author did not attempt to overstep the line of conventionality. In "The Disinherited of the Earth," moreover, a most commendable restraint is to be noted, while the characterisation is excellent throughout.

Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp. By "SAREL ERASMUS" (DOUGLAS BLACKBURN). A new edition of a South African Classic. Cloth gilt, 2s.

Though on publication nine years or so ago, "Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp" achieved a marked success in South Africa, and in circles well versed in South African affairs, there is no doubt that the little book never met with the general appreciation it deserved. On its merits it is a classic, and, though possibly the Boer and his ways may have altered, as a record of how a white republic could be governed in modern times, the "Tale of Transvaal Officialdom" can never be excelled. Certainly nothing more humorously naive has ever been written than this vindication, ostensibly written by his son-in-law, of the much maligned Piet Prinsloo's memory; it should occupy a place in the bookshelf of everyone who likes to be intellectually amused.

Leaven: A Black and White Story. DOUGLAS BLACKBURN. 6s.

The author of "Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp" has more than once proved his ability to write a sustained and, serious story, and though certain aspects of life in South Africa are so absurd as to be merely amusing, there is no question that the native problem with which he has chosen to deal in his latest book, is sufficiently grave. So far the Kafir in fiction has either been a farcical chatterbox or an object lesson of futile humanitarianism. Witty and pathetic as Mr. Douglas Blackburn can be on occasion, he indulges in neither low comedy, nor sickly sentimentality in "Leaven." He traces the young Kafir from leaving his native kraal in guilty haste, to the luxury of a good position in a mining compound. Incidentally young Bulalie is cast into prison and treated with the grossest brutality, and the characters who are concerned in his abasement and rescue are altogether original; the unconventional missionary, the Pietermaritzberg landlady, and the compound manager, are only a few of the admirable sketches which make "Leaven" a novel of remarkable and original merit.

General Literature.

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When the M.C.C. team left for Australia there were many sanguine people who prophesied that the deplorable withdrawals of well-known players notwithstanding, the Colonials would have to look after their laurels in the Test Matches. Unfortunately, in this case, optimism was misplaced, and the champions of the Northern Country are returning defeated but by no means disgraced. Previously to his departure as manager of the tour, Major Philip Trevor had promised to write an account of all that happened, and MR. ALSTON RIVERS has now issued the book at a popular price. Major Trevor is not only a consummate judge of all that concerns cricket, but is an exceptionally acute observer of all that goes on outside the actual game and, though it is to be regretted that he has not brilliant victories to record, his account of the Englishmen's Antipodean experiences are sure to be extremely interesting.

G. K. C. ANON. 5s.

To the uninitiated it must be explained that the title is composed of the three letters with which the Christian names and surname of Mr. Gilbert Chesterton commence, forming a *nom de guerre* of the first importance in literary circles. Everybody knows how delightful a humour is Mr. Chesterton's, and probably no one will enjoy the sallies of his anonymous critic more than he himself. Perhaps, however, "critic" is hardly the word for the author of "G. K. C."; he is rather a jester whose irrepressible hilarity is favoured by a fortunate choice of his subject.

The Spirit of Parliament.

DUNCAN SCHWANN, M.P. **3s. 6d.** net.

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THE PUBLISHER'S CIRCULAR SAYS: "Original documents form the basis of this remarkable and important work, and in chief those preserved in the Canadian Archives at Ottawa. A satisfactory survey of the exploration of N.W. America has not really existed until the publication of this book. This story is full of human interest. . . . The illustrations are good, so also the maps, the index, and the valuable bibliography of works dealing with the exploration of N.W. America—altogether the book is a model."

Psyche. Illustrated. **3s. 6d.**

Louis Couperus is a Dutch author, and he has written the most delightful work entitled "Psyche." Such a literary gem baffles description, for there has never been a book quite like it. The ennobling qualities of "Psyche" should assuredly not be overlooked by clergymen, schoolmasters and others whose concern it is, in a materialistic age, to guide youth into the proper paths; for behind the graceful imagery of "Psyche" is a moral which no sermon which was ever written could convey. MR. ALSTON RIVERS is publishing the work, translated by the Rev. B. S. Berrington, and illustrated by Dion Clayton Calthrop, towards the end of July.

The Citizen Books. Edited by W. BEACH THOMAS. 1s. net each.

The first of the Citizen Books series was "To-day in Greater Britain," and every review that has appeared so far has been enthusiastic in praise of its lucidity and sound sense. Following up this success, a second volume, to be quickly followed by more, has just been published. It is entitled "The Face of England," and the author, Mr. A. K. Collett, has thoroughly entered into the spirit of the series which is intended to supply "guide-books to the present." The scope of this useful little book can best be gauged by the titles of the eleven chapters: The Outline of Britain; The Surface of Britain; The Rainfall and the Rocks; Soil and Industries; Agriculture; Moors, Fens and Forests; Climate; Roads, Canals and Railways; Tides and Harbours; Sea Routes and Fisheries; Landscape and Language.

The whole series is planned with a view to use in schools, the information being conveyed in the plainest way possible, and extreme care being taken to make the matter readable; the books themselves are strongly bound in cloth, and the price, one shilling each, is decidedly moderate.

Though, of course, polemical matter could hardly be introduced into "The Face of England" (though it is wonderful how it can insinuate itself), there are other volumes such as "The Civic Life" (to be published shortly) where the greatest care has to be exercised. That no political bias of any kind will be introduced should be vouched for by the editorship of the series being in the experienced hands of Mr. W. Beach Thomas.

The New Transvaal. MISS M. C. BRUCE.

Cloth, 1s. 6d. net. Paper, 1s. net.

"One of the best books on South Africa we have had for a long time. It is priced at a shilling only, but it has more stuffing in it than half the pretentious expensive books which have been manufactured about the sub-Continent. The authoress is one who knows. That is apparent on every page. The book is full of common sense . . . we congratulate Miss Bruce on her clever work."

This is what "South Africa" has to say about a little book, which Mr. Alston Rivers has just published, written by Miss M. C. Bruce and entitled "The New Transvaal." It was high time that the ignorance and apathy of the English at home as to South Africa was dispelled, and only quite recently certain revelations have shed further light on the subject. Without being by any means a partisan, Miss Bruce has much to say about the Chinese Labour question; she speaks from her own personal observation. Her descriptions of the country and methods of life are extraordinarily interesting.

Though "The New Transvaal" is published in paper covers at one shilling net, it is obtainable at eighteenpence, tastefully bound in cloth.

Water: Its Origin and Use.

W. COLES-FINCH, Engineer of the Chatham Water-works. 21s. net.

Mr. Coles Finch's book should prove to be the standard popular work on the element with which it deals. Though written by an expert, "Water: Its Origin and Use," is not a purely scientific book; it is, as the author remarks in his Preface, "simply an ordinary person s interpretation of what he sees in Nature and represents his best efforts to describe the same."

How successful have been these efforts is attested by the warm eulogies of many eminent scientists to whom advance copies have been submitted.

An attractive volume, embellished by many beautiful illustrations, including Alpine scenes from photographs taken by Mrs. Aubrey le Blond, who has achieved wide renown in this branch of art.

France in the Twentieth Century.

By the Author of "ENGINES OF SOCIAL PROGRESS," W. L. GEORGE. 6s. net.

Mr. George, whose previous work was extremely well received, has undertaken a somewhat ambitious task, but the appearance of a book on modern France is most timely, and, even if less skilfully treated, a work of the kind would attract wide attention. "France in the Twentieth Century," however, is certain to prove much more than a book of the passing hour, for not only is it intelligently written, but it shows a thorough grasp of the subject. Every chapter is of value, and the fact that the author was educated in France, and actually served his time in the French Army, gives additional interest to a handsome volume.

Goethe's "Faust" Translated in Verse. SIR GEORGE BUCHANAN, C.B., K.C.V.O.

Post 8vo, cloth, gilt, **2s. 6d.** net, Leather, **3s. 6d.** net.

The Diplomatic Service, exacting though its duties may be, gives opportunities of a study of European literature that rarely falls to others. Though there have been other translations of "Faust" in prose or verse, Sir George Buchanan's rendering shows fine insight, and such an appreciation of the German poet's ideas as few scholars evince. Only the first part of Goethe's masterpiece is translated, the second part being described in a note by the author.

Fiction.

Mr. Meyer's Pupil. By Eva Lathbury. Second Impression. 6s.

Ever since the foundation of the publishing house of Alston Rivers, a persistent endeavour has been made to discover new authors, and to appreciate how successful has been the quest a mere glance at the firm's publications will suffice. In introducing Miss Eva Lathbury to readers of fiction, the publisher can but hope that he is not too sanguine in anticipating that the author's lively wit and whimsical outlook on the life of the leisured classes will meet with the reception which, in his opinion, it deserves. The author's style should at least escape the charge of being derivative. The volume is rendered still more attractive by means of a coloured frontispiece by Mr. R. Pannett.

The Adventures of Count O'Connor. By Henry Stace. 6s.

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The Lord of Latimer Street. By Jane Wardle. Author of "The Artistic Temperament." 6s.

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