Verses Stories and Translations

Mary F. Nixon

Verses Stories and Translations

Verses Stories and Translations

BY
MARY S. PETTIT

PRIVATELY PRINTED
MINNEAPOLIS
1915

THE TORCH PRESS
CEDAR RAPIDS
IOWA

CONTENTS

Translations

Verses

CHILDHOOD

Ah, little laughing maiden,
With floating golden hair,
With bright eyes ever sparkling
And life without a care,

You little know the pitfalls
That wait your dancing feet;
You turn in scornful wonder
When told that joys are fleet.

Then live your joyous life, dear,
As long as e'er you may,
And brighten with your laughter
Our shadowed elder day.

THE DIFFERENCE

The leaves that fall when the wind
blows cold,—
I wonder where they go.
Do they like to lie on the hard,
bare ground,
And be covered by the snow?

A leaf blew into my room last night
And I dreamed that it spoke to
me.
It shivered and shook with fear of
the dark,
And was sad as sad could be.

This morning I looked where it lay
on the floor,
And the leaf was all jolly and
red.
Do you think that my dream was
because *I* was sad?—
I'd forgot to take dolly to bed.

I guess that the leaves just tumble
and toss
And don't really care where they
go.
They haven't got hearts and they
haven't got heads,
So they wait for the wind to
blow.

But I'm a small girl who is sorry
or glad,
And always must think and feel;
So I guess I must try to do it quite
well
And *make* things come right a
good deal.

FRAGMENT

Alas and alack for Edna,
  Alas for Donald, too;
However long they pondered
  They couldn't tell what to do.

Away from home in the twilight,
  They had followed a firefly's
    spark;
They hoped they should catch a
    fairy,
  But they only got lost in the
    dark.

A PLEA

Little sparrow on the tree,
Sing a spring-time song to me;
Sing of sunshine, sing of clover,
Sing of flowers the wide world over.

Oh, I know that winter's here,
That the land is cold and drear;
But 'tis sure that summer's coming,
And I weary for bees' humming.

Can't you sing it, soft and free,
From your perch upon the tree?
Let's forget the wintry weather,
Call up summer, both together!

TREE-TOPS

The trees are green and rustling,
  The trees are very tall;
And I cannot reach around them
  Because I'm yet so small.

The little leaves are dancing
  And playing in the sun;
And the sun-rays slip in past them
  Wherever they can come.

And when I lie close under
  And look up very high,
I can see the tree-tops pointing
  Like fingers, to the sky:

And the sky is blue above them,
  And it seems to me so queer
That the trees so big and mighty
  Should be to me so dear.

A TREASURE SHIP

Wide is the lake, deep is the lake —
The lake my little boat shall take;
If I set it on its breast,
It will bear it to the west.

For the little waves, they run
Toward the setting of the sun;
And the wind, it lightly blows
Toward the place of gold and rose.

Now the sky is gold in hue
Where before 'twas blue as blue;
It is like the look of honey
Or the glistening of money.

And if my little boat I send
Westward, where the waters end;
Then I'll see its sails all pink,
Floating on the great lake's brink.

And I hope that if some day
It should come again this way,
I shall find it full of gold —
Just as full as it will hold.

LULLABY

Lullaby, lullaby,
Here as you lie,
Close on your mother's breast,
Taking your needful rest;
Close now your eyes, my sweet,
Shut lids for sleep are meet:
Sleep, baby, sleep.

Lullaby, lullaby,
Dream-things are nigh;
Moons for the taking,
Stars in the making,
All things you love the best,—
Fairies and all the rest:
Sleep, baby, sleep.

Lullaby, lullaby,
Hush, do not cry!
Soon you will wake again,
Reach for your toys again,
Rest now from all your play,
Rest till another day:
Sleep, baby, sleep.

FRAGMENT

Once as I walked in the land of dreams
Taking my way by devious streams,
I came to a lake so clear and bright,
It seemed but a well of sapphire light.

Dazzled at first, I lowered my eyes,
But raised them again to a glad surprise;
For over the waters there moved a boat
Lying as light as a lily afloat.

LULLABY

The winds cry loud, my sweet, my own,
The winds are wailing o'er the sea,
The waves shriek back in agony,—
Lie soft, my little one.

Thy father's boat, my love, my life,
Is tossing on the tossing sea,
The waves snatch at it hungrily,—
Sleep sweet, my baby dear.

Thy father's corpse, my babe, my own,
Is tossed and heaved on the restless sea,
Is sunk and lost eternally,—
Dream glad, my only one.

BY THE LAKE-SIDE

Calm lies the lake beneath the evening sky,
Like a clear gem reflecting sunset hues
Caught from the flaming glory of the west;
Long lines of living light and purple shade
Lie all athwart its gleaming surface smooth,
Stretching a radiant bridge from shore to shore.

So placid is its beauty and so pure,
It seems that he who once has gazed thereon
Can ne'er again be vexed by petty cares:
Like some Madonna looking from the wall

With eyes made glorious by celestial calm;
So do these limpid waters lap the soul
In peace that passeth knowledge evermore.

And though, alas, when once again we face
The fret and worry of another day,
The heart may lose its vantage of sweet calm,
Yielding again to stress of circumstance;
Yet sure such moments are not wholly lost,
Nor all in vain is Nature's healing touch;
For to the man who once has looked with seeing eyes
And carries deep within his deepest soul
The image of an utter loveliness,—
To him there will remain some lasting good:

A stronger purpose and a larger life;
A stouter heart to beat his way through pain,
To that high end toward which his face is set.

Or if, perchance, he be of weaker mould,
Fitted to suffer, not to buffet Fate,
Then shall such grace of cherished memory
Be unto him a sanctuary throughout life,—
A refuge whither sometimes he may flee
From human ills, and taste untainted bliss,
God-given, in the beauty of the world.

Stories

TIGER-LILIES

UP among the hills, in a distant country, there lived once on a time, a simple and kindly people — farmers and herdsmen and vinedressers — who knew little of the great world beyond the hills, but did their simple tasks in content and neighborly kindness.

One touch of romance brightened their homely lives and bred in them a love for beauty not often found among so plain a people.

Where the valley broadened toward a swift-flowing river, there lay a field of tall, fair lilies, thick-grown and tangled. No one knew whence or how the seed had been carried, but though old men remembered when a few of the plants had first appeared, now, quick-

spread in the marshy soil, they covered hundreds of feet, blooming all summer long with a strange, intense beauty — a white radiance almost painful by very loveliness. They were the pride and joy of all the countryside and the thing first shown to any stranger who chanced to pass that way.

Now, in one of the cottages of the valley there was born one winter a girl-child, wondrously beautiful from her birth, with a white beauty that made all who saw her name her "the lily child."

And as year by year she grew in sweetness and in beauty, the people came to care more for the fair lily maid who could give back love for love, than for the indifferent blossoms; so that these were neglected by all but the child herself. She loved the flowers with all her heart, and every spring watched eagerly for the first green buds, hailing the

final outburst of white bloom as the deepest delight of the year.

But after a few years the seasons began to bring her disappointment. With the same eagerness she watched the swelling buds, but when they broke into flower, her quick joy was marred. The great sheet of bloom was lovely indeed, yet it seemed to her to lack something of the vivid purity, — the white, starry radiance that she remembered in her earlier childhood.

And each year her disappointment deepened. When she asked the people about her whether they, too, did not think that a blight had come to the lily field, they answered carelessly, sometimes telling her playfully that it might be so, that she had drawn the sweetness and fairness from the field flowers to keep for herself.

And when the breeze bore their words over the blossoms, one watch-

ing might have seen a shadow, ever so slight, yet which did not pass with the lifting of their heads.

The winter of the child's eleventh birthday was unusually severe, with little snow to cover the bare earth and gaunt trees, and as spring approached, she waited with more than usual longing for the blooming of the lilies, seeking to persuade herself that she had only fancied their beauty abated.

They were unusually late in flowering, but one morning when she looked from her eastern window, she saw at last the sheet of white, and in the morning light it looked to her as fresh and fair as in her memories.

With a cry of joy she ran out and straight across the fields to the place of the lilies. But alas! when she reached them she was saddened; for some were tainted by mildew, some marred by worms—

not one shone upon her, star-white and perfect from its background of leaves.

She paused a moment, then pushed in among them, drawn on by fairer looking flowers beyond. On and on she pressed, but only to new disappointment until, sobbing and blinded by tears, she tripped on the tangled roots and fell.

Her hand thrown out to save herself, touched water. She struggled up, startled, and turned, as she thought, toward home, but she could not see over the great plants and she was confused by sudden fear and by a buzzing murmur that seemed to arise all about her. No matter what way she turned, she felt the water growing deeper while the intertwined roots seemed to give way under her feet. After a few minutes of struggle her foothold broke quite away and with a little cry she sank into the river.

Now, two neighbors, watching the child's impetuous rush from the house, had seen her disappear among the lilies, and when the swaying of the flowers marked her path toward the river, they called a warning to her; then, getting no answer, hastened to the bank of the stream. They were but just in time. Reaching the shore at a point below where she had fallen, they saw her borne toward them by the swift current, and wading waist-deep into the water, they caught her and bore her, dripping and unconscious, homeward.

All that day she lay, weak and pale, too much exhausted to remember or to wonder what had befallen her. All day the neighbors came, singly or in groups, to ask how she was doing, and throughout the valley the talk was only of the child and her escape from peril.

The next morning, almost recov-

ered from her accident, the girl went somewhat sadly to the window to look again at the lilies, but at her first glance she started back with a little cry that brought her mother to her side.

Instead of a sheet of white, swaying and rippling in the morning breeze, there was now a mass of vivid color — gleaming yellows and flaming scarlet and vermilion, all streaked and spotted in strange gorgeousness.

The mother, catching up the half-terrified child, cried, pointing: — "Ah, the lilies, the lilies — tigers that would have killed my child!"

And others looked and wondered, and the name then given them held. "Tiger-lilies" they were for all time and objects of horror and aversion to the country people.

Strangers might admire their

flaunting beauty, but those who knew their story turned from them shuddering; for they believed that the lilies had in truth been proud and jealous, giving back hatred for the child's love; and so at last exchanging their white purity for a new and sinister coloring.

VIOLETS

I HAVE brought you some violets, mama," said a little boy, nestling into his mother's lap. "Can't you tell me a story about them? They are pretty enough to have one — see, they are like wee faces looking love at us, are they not, mama?"

"They are, indeed," answered his mother, "and they have many stories. I will tell you the one I like the best.

"There was once a fair young princess imprisoned in a gloomy castle. She was very lonely and very weary of her captivity and almost her only pleasure was to walk in a little courtyard filled with many kinds of garden flowers — tulips and roses and lilies and as

many more as you can think of. And as she walked among them, the blossoms danced and nodded and whispered of many things:—of glory and fame; of the power of beauty; and the joy of life and freedom. And watching them her loneliness grew more bitter.

"But often the maiden turned from the garden blooms to a secluded corner of the court, where, almost hidden by the taller, gayer plants, had grown up some little wood-violets; and these she loved better than all the lilies and the roses. She told them her sorrow and her longing for freedom in the bright, wide world, and the little blossoms comforted her with their beauty and their sweet perfume. And as they bent to the breeze, they seemed to say softly: 'Love — love and wait — wait and love — love — love.' And day by day the

princess learned a truer patience and a sweeter resignation.

"She knew little of her own story. As far back as she could clearly remember she had been, as now, a close prisoner. Yet she had a few memories of other things known in early childhood: of wide fields bright with sunshine; of the glint of armor on marching men, and the piercing bugle call; of merry troops of shouting children, and herself one of them; of a noble and soldierly man to whom all others bent the knee, and whom she had called 'father.' And dearest of all her memory pictures, that of a fair and stately woman, who, holding her in her arms as a little child, had looked at her with beautiful eyes deep with a brooding, passionate love;—and this, she felt sure, was the image of her mother. But again she remembered that face

cold and rigid, with closed eyes, and there came back her ill-defined, childish sense of loss, amounting to physical desolation and darkness. Then came a strange, dreadful night; a hasty awakening by an unknown voice; the sound of whispers, loud and ominous in the dark; a flicker of lights down broad halls; a hurried journey through the blackness, and then — her prison. She had often tried to weave these broken images into a connected story, but it was to no purpose.

"Now, as she gained peace and quiet of heart, new dreams began to visit her; and these looked, not to the past, but to the present and future. They were changeful visions of castle-court and meadow and woodland, bright-hued in sunshine, or grey and veiled in mist. But one figure reappeared always — that of a youth, strong and stal-

wart and good to see. He was at first a mere lad, sporting with his comrades, or practicing knightly exercises in happy carelessness. Yet there was at times a certain dreaminess in his eyes, and gradually she could see him grow in earnestness and manly purpose as he grew in years. And in her dreamy loneliness, she wove her fancies about this figure. What if he should one day come to her offering freedom and love? Did not old stories tell of many a captive maiden freed through the devotion of some brave man who knew her story and pitied her? If this should, indeed, prove her deliverer, could she repay him as his service would deserve; could she give him her heart and her life? For the visions were after all vague, and the far-seen figure commanded nothing warmer than wonder and in-

terest. So her day dreams brought both hope and an added wistful sadness.

"Thus passed the long, quiet days, in sorrow and unrest, yet with a certain guarded peace and sweetness. And the kindly sky and the little flower faces gave comfort. So she grew softly among her flowers to the perfect dawn of womanhood. And after so long waiting, looking one day from her chamber window she saw far off, on the hitherto untraveled road, a light dust cloud and the flash of steel in the sunshine, and her heart gave one choking throb and stood still in a great hope and fear. Then looking closer she saw and knew the youth of her dreams, but clearly seen now in truest manly beauty and strength, and deep peace came to her, and her heart went out to him in faith and love.

"Then she went into the garden

and plucked a handful of violets and so waited.

"Soon he came to her with the truth of her story; how she had been seized and carried off by a strong and subtle foe of her house; how the king, her father, had died of grief and despair, leaving his people a prey to the enemy and his little daughter helpless; how the story, told him in boyhood, had ruled his thought and formed his will to the one purpose of winning back her right; how he had stirred her people to her service, until now the usurper was conquered and powerless and broad lands and eager subjects awaited her return. And he told her, too, how his passionate pity had grown to a more personal feeling as he bore hardship and danger for her he had never seen, until now, with the first sight of the fair, sweet figure in the garden, his devotion had flowered

into perfect love and all the world had taken on a sudden brightness. Yet he would not force her will, but would give her all needful help as simply as before, awaiting her answer with steady patience.

"When he had done, she spoke no word but looked at him smiling through quick tears and held out the flowers. He caught the little hand with its gift, and bending to her lips, said with a great tenderness in his voice: 'My love, my sweet wood-violet,' and so led her from her dream-garden out into life and the world.

"And in the garden-court there was rich perfume and merry dancing of blossoms as before; but the violets remembered the princess and whispered her story among themselves though all the other flowers forgot. They had learned the secret of hope and loving sym-

pathy, and have kept it ever since to add charm to their delicate beauty and make them the sweetest of all flowers."

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN IN THE WORLD

SHE was a very beautiful princess: for her eyes were deep blue like the summer sky; her hair was as golden as the sunshine; her skin was like the mingling of snow and roses, and all her movements were as graceful as the motion of the grasses when the wind bends them. She was a very rich princess, too: for her father's lands stretched out to north and south and east and west of her palace gates, — lands fertile and well-watered, where many flocks grazed, and crops grew plenteously.

But she was not happy, for she was very lonely. Her mother had died when she was a little child;

she had no brothers or sisters, and her father gave little heed to his daughter, excepting to direct her education as he thought fitting for a future queen. Nurses, attendants, instructors — these she had, but nobody to play with, nobody to whom she could tell her childish wishes and fancies, nobody to give her any deep affection.

One day she was sitting listlessly in the garden, looking dreamily at a great bed of violets. Suddenly, as a whiff of wind stirred the blossoms, she started forward with a little cry. Lying flat on the ground, fast asleep, was a manikin, tiny enough to be hidden even by the low-growing violets. As she bent over him, he opened his eyes and stood up, looking at her, first, in surprise; then, with a certain breathless intentness.

Half frightened and wholly

amazed, she sat silent, with hands clasped, returning his intent gaze, until at last he said slowly:

"Please, will you tell me, are you, perhaps, the most beautiful maiden in the world?"

The princess smiled, half sadly, and answered simply:

"I cannot tell you, I have seen but few maids. I think I am fairer than my nurses, but they are old and perhaps were once prettier than I."

There was another long pause while the queer little creature examined her from head to foot. Then he said:

"Will you follow me?"

"Where are you going? Do you wish to lead me far?"

"No, it is not far away. I want you to go home with me — I live within yonder hill."

"Within the hill! How can that be?"

"Come with me and I shall show you."

So she gathered up her long skirt and followed, asking no more questions.

He led her straight toward the hill at which he had pointed and up a narrow, winding path to a little ravine. Here he pushed through a thicket and she had to watch the movement of the bushes in order to follow, for they quite hid him.

In a moment more they came to a cleft in the bluff and suddenly the little fellow was gone.

Bewildered and half-frightened, the princess sat down on a very uncomfortable stone and waited.

Presently there was a grating noise and slowly a bit of the rock forming the bluff was turned, making a small opening. In this her little guide appeared, much out of

breath, and after puffing and blowing, asked if she could squeeze through. This she accomplished with some damage to her frock, and after following again over stones and pebbles along a twisting way, she came out into an open space.

Here were dozens of little figures, somewhat like her guide, all ugly, all active, all evidently thrown into great excitement by her arrival. Gradually, with much buzz and hum of conversation, they gathered about, staring, questioning her first acquaintance, then talking excitedly to one another.

After a few moments several came forward together and knelt at her feet, holding up a slender golden coronet set with sparkling jewels.

"Will you be our queen?" they asked in chorus.

"How can I be your queen?"

she asked wonderingly. "Soon I must go home again. Moreover, I do not understand why you wish me to rule over you."

There was a whispered conference, then one little figure came forward alone.

"I will tell you the meaning of our request," he said. "Long ago we had a king who ruled us wisely, but he left no heir. When he came to die, those gathered at his bedside asked him to whom he wished to leave his crown and power and he answered thus: 'Your lives, my people, are simple and orderly. You have little need of a lawmaker or of a strong hand to govern you; but one thing you do need —someone to whom you can look for help and sympathy; someone whom you can reverence and obey, and in obedience to whom, you can keep strong your hope and pride as a people. Now, what I would have

you do when I am gone, is to seek out the most beautiful maiden in the world and set my crown upon her head. Her gentleness and loveliness will help and uplift you and give you happy years.' So saying he died.

"Since then we have sent messengers far and wide, seeking the most beautiful maiden in the world, but we have not found her. Sometimes a messenger has come back telling us of some beautiful girl, but then has followed another, sure that he has seen one more lovely in another place; yet none has ever felt certain that his was the true one — not until to-day. When Heinrich awoke and saw you he thought at first that he was dreaming. Never before had he seen anyone who was as lovely as the sky and the clouds and the summer flowers, and at once he thought that perhaps you were the most beauti-

ful maid in the world and the queen for whom we have waited so long. He brought you here and we all know that you are more lovely than anyone whom we have ever seen.

"Now we have waited and watched through long years and we have gone wherever tidings of famous beauty have led us, yet we have never before been satisfied; so we are sure, one and all, that you are our true queen if you will but accept this crown."

The little princess hesitated; then said earnestly:

"But how can I accept it? I cannot stay within the hill, but must go home again very soon."

The spokesman bowed and withdrew and again there was a low hum of discussion.

In a few moments he returned, and bowing again, said:

"Most beautiful princess, even that, we think, need not hinder, if

you are willing to be our queen. Our dying king bade us look, not for a strong ruler, but for a beautiful girl. We live, as he said, simply and quietly and follow out the rules which he laid down for us long ago, and through our years of waiting and searching, we have learned to depend upon ourselves from day to day.

"But look at us, dear maid;—we are little and brown and ugly and we live among these hard, dead stones. Sometimes we go out and see the bright, living beauty of the upper world, but no bit of it belongs to us. From day to day we look at these ugly rocks and the dark earth and then at one another, and we are sorrowful and discouraged. I think we should almost have grown to hate ourselves and each other but for this quest set us by our wise old king. It has given us something to hope

for and to dream about and now its fulfillment will bring us happiness, if you can do what we ask. You will live in your own world and be of it;—nor should we wish, even if we could, to shut you up in our underground home. But we shall know that you belong to us; you will visit us sometimes, and we shall have a part in your thoughts. Will you take the crown with our love and duty?"

The princess smiled, dropped on her knees and bent her head until her little subjects, standing tip-toe, could set the crown upon it. Then she rose and said:

"I am not very old yet and I do not know how to be a queen, but I shall try to learn so that I can be a good one. I must go back now, for my people will be seeking me; but I shall take the crown with me and set it in my chamber, and every day I shall remember that I belong

to you and you to me. Soon I shall visit you again, if you will send me a guide until I have learnt the way alone.

"One thing more I want to say: —you have chosen me because you think I am the most beautiful maid in the world, but you have not seen all. Now if, when I am your queen, you should find someone who seems to you prettier, you must not forget that I shall no longer be your rightful ruler, nor fear to wound me by telling me the truth. Will you promise me this?"

A murmur of assent answered her, and, bidding them goodbye, she started home.

During the years which followed, she often visited her little subjects, learning their ways and helping them with simple counsel. In this new interest she lost her loneliness and grew as bright and happy as she was beautiful.

While she was still young, she became queen of her father's land; then she was married and a few years afterward a little daughter was born to her. Still she visited her hill-people and learned, year by year, to love them better.

So the years passed quietly until her babe had grown into a tall, slender girl of seventeen. Then one day, standing with her before a mirror, the queen looked startled and then very thoughtful.

"What is it, mother?" asked the girl. "You look at me so strangely, — almost sadly."

The queen smiled and kissed her daughter quietly.

"No, I am glad, not sorry, my child, but I cannot tell you to-night. To-morrow you shall know of what I was thinking."

The next day she bade the girl dress herself in a simple gown of soft, white stuff; then put a garland

of fresh roses on her head and, giving her a bunch of long-stemmed blossoms, led her into the garden where the violets still grew in their quiet corner. She seated herself and told her daughter the story of her kingdom within the hill; then took her hand, saying:

"Now I want you to visit these little folk."

She led her within the hill and solemnly assembled all her little subjects.

Standing before them, with her daughter beside her, she said:

"Long ago, you chose me for your queen because you thought me more beautiful than any other maid you had ever seen, and all through these years of my womanhood you have served me faithfully. But beauty fades with years and though I have thought little about it and you have shown no dissatisfaction, I must long since have ceased to re-

mind you of the sky and the clouds and the summer flowers and all the loveliness of those growing things from which you are shut away in your daily lives. Surely it is time that I should lay aside a crown which no longer belongs to me."

She paused a moment, then went on with a little catch in her voice:

"I should not wish to ask you to replace me by a queen of my choosing. You must use your own eyes; yet it would be easier for me to give up this crown, which has so long been dear to me, if I could see it set upon my daughter's head. To me she seems more beautiful than I ever was, but you must judge for yourselves."

She led the girl forward where all could see her and waited.

There was quick, low speech among the people; then all knelt excepting three or four who pressed forward eagerly to the queen's feet.

One of these spoke clearly:

"My queen, I speak not for myself, but for all your subjects. Your daughter is as fair as a young girl can well be, and if we had a crown to offer, we should gladly give it to her. But, dear madame, look once more in the glass, or better, ask your daughter. It may be that your cheeks are no longer like the summer roses, nor your skin like sunbathed lilies — I do not know. But I do know that your eyes are deeper and softer than in your girlhood and that for us, who have so long looked to you for help and sympathy, your face has each year gained more of the sweetness which gives meaning to the world's beauty. We have but one crown, my queen, and that is yours for all your life."

The queen's eyes filled and she said softly:

"Are you sure, are you sure?"

There was quick assent from all the little people; and silently, as in her girlhood, she knelt before them, placing the gleaming crown on the ground. Again she bent her head and let them set the crown upon it.

Then she rose and said:

"I thank you; I thank you all, and I shall keep this little crown for all my life without further doubt or fear."

So she ruled them happily all her life, and at her death they chose her daughter queen; nor was there ever lacking a fair woman of her house to guide and help the little hill people.

THE LAND OF SUNSHINE

THERE was once a country of rich, fertile lowlands, and soft rolling, wooded hills, called the Land of Sunshine; for from year's end to year's end the sky was always blue and the air bright with sunlight.

Yet flowers and grass and corn and all sweet growing things throve there, for a broad river flowed down from neighboring mountains through the valley, and springs in the lower hills fed many a clear brook. There were showers too, sometimes,—warm and refreshing, but the clouds never gathered thick or solid over the sky, and the raindrops fell sunkissed. And the people throve like the crops that they tended, growing

tall and strong and comely, — a goodly race and a happy one.

But over this fair land and its lighthearted people there hung ever a menace of disaster — a trouble touching their else carefree lives with a strange foreboding.

Bordering the Land of Sunshine on the west lay a great forest of fir trees, stretching for many miles black and gloomy against the sky. At times there gathered over this forest dark, sombre storm-clouds, and the people in the sunny valley heard peals of thunder, rushing winds, and the crash and rending of mighty trees. At such times terror filled the land; strong men ceased their work to watch the far-off storm with dread in their eyes; mothers caught up their children, soothing them with trembling voices. Not only was the sight and sound of elemental violence in it-

self terrible to this gently nurtured folk, but tradition added to their fear. The story had come down through generations, that deep in that forest there lived a powerful and malevolent giant, whose rage caused storm and darkness, and some day, so ran the sombre prophecy,— some day, though none knew when, that rage would surely find vent beyond the forest, and storm and earthquake would sweep the valley bare of life, leaving only sun-bathed desolation.

From this fate there was but one possible escape. It might be, that if the king's eldest born should choose to face the monster for his people's sake, and should come home victorious, he would win safety for his kingdom. And from time to time young princes had taken the task upon themselves and had gone bravely forth. Some had never returned or been heard of

more; a few, it was said, had come back after weeks or months of wandering, broken and aged, having found no giant, but spent by the horror and loneliness of the forest. For many years no such attempt had been made, and these adventurous princes, too, had become traditional.

At the time of my story there was in the king's palace no prince, but a motherless girl of eleven years, the center of her father's love and of his people's.

It was never meant that she should know so soon, this threatened danger, and all believed her ignorant, but she had pieced together broken bits of conversation — servants' chatter, talk of her playmates, whispers between her father and mother, while the queen yet lived — until all was clear to her, and though with a child's strange reticence, she kept it to herself, yet

is was often in her thoughts. In her childish imaginings she was one of those princes who had gone forth with such gay courage; but the dream expeditions always ended successfully. In her visions she returned with the monster's horrid head at her saddle-bow to be greeted by wild acclaim from all the country side. Then the reality would break through her fancies; she was after all but a little maid, and weak; never, never could she even try to conquer giants, however great the need — and many times she wept that it was so.

Every year on the princess' birthday there was great rejoicing throughout the land, and all the children, gentle and simple, rich and poor, made festival with flowers and games and music. For her eleventh birthday the plans were unusually elaborate. The little princess and many hundreds of

children from the capital city were to be taken out into the country, to a beautiful spot lying towards the west, where they could amuse themselves all day long with dances and sylvan games and contests.

Soon after daybreak the merry procession left the town. First there were outriders and trumpeters — young nobles of the court, in gay uniforms and mounted on prancing black horses. Then, seated in a great shell-shaped coach of scarlet poppies and drawn by eight milk-white ponies, came the princess, dressed as a flower queen. A crown of starry white blossoms bound her loosely curling golden hair and in her hand she held, as a sceptre, a great white lily. Her robe, too, was of clinging white stuff, but over it were thrown strings of tiny flowers of many pale, bright colors. With her radiant, childish beauty set off by the simple

sumptuousness of the flowers, she was a vision of fairylike loveliness — one deeply imprinted on many hearts and held throughout life as a dearly cherished memory. After the royal carriage, came the military escort — a company of boys who formed the princess' special body-guard, and following them a long line of carriages and riding ponies with happy, excited children, all in holiday dress and adorned with flowers. Of the grown people, some had already gone to the chosen place to make needful preparations; others, who had waited in the streets or houses to see the pretty procession pass, followed after.

The princess was very happy and all through the morning she watched the spectacles prepared for her amusement or joined in the games light-heartedly. But in the afternoon, as the sun dropped to-

ward the west and threw the great fir-wood into sharper relief, the forest and its mystery took hold on all her thoughts. She had never been so near it before, and her eyes would turn wistfully out over the bright fields that lay near her to the gloom and darkness just beyond.

At last, in a pause of the games, when for a few moments she was unnoticed by her attendants, she started off alone toward the west. Straight through the fields she went, half unconscious of her direction — a pretty figure, if anybody had looked to see, as she walked waist-deep in the rippling green grasses, the sun that bathed the level fields brightening her hair into a golden halo. She walked on slowly, almost forgetting forest and giant in sheer joy of freedom and pleasure in the soft, murmuring breezes, the little field flowers and blue and golden butterflies.

Soon she had a great sheaf of rosy clover and yellow-hearted daisies, but was led ever onward by a prettier flower or a brighter butterfly — a little Persephone of the fields going heedlessly toward the deep, sunless pine-gloom.

It was not until the shadows cast by the first trees fell dark across her path that she quite realized how far she had walked and that she was alone in this place so dreaded by all her race. Her first impulse was to run back quickly to the sun-steeped, peopled carnival ground, but other instincts prevailed. She felt very far away from her companions and the shimmering fields between looked very wide. Then, too, the strangeness of the forest, though it awed her, yet enticed, and in its new and curious fashion it was very beautiful. The great trees were more magnificent than anything she had ever

seen or imagined, and between their swaying tops she could still see the friendly blue sky. The first trees, too, grew somewhat wide apart and the sunlight filtered through their branches, lying in delicate, golden tracery over the shadowed carpet of soft, elastic pine-needles. But deeper than all her childish curiosity and love of adventure was the thought that she was almost face to face with the mysterious enemy of her country, and there surged over her once more the strong attraction of the old princely stories. So that it was, after all, true courage that carried her forward down the long, green aisles of the forest.

There was little underbrush and she walked on quickly, noticing curiously the strange things about her, yet too eager to reach her goal for any delaying. It was like a new world to her in whatever di-

rection she looked: overhead the tall, rustling trees that seemed to stretch up to the sky; underfoot the aromatic needles or exquisitely delicate mosses; about her, green shadows pierced through by fretted sunlight. There were pale flowers, too, that she had never seen before, brilliant woodpeckers and chattering squirrels.

She walked far without tiring, but at length, as the ground grew rough and broken and the shadow under the more closely growing trees, deepened, weariness and fear came upon her at once and she sank sobbing to the earth. Every sound added to her terror: the soughing of the light wind in the tree-tops seemed full of sadness and of threat; the crackling of a twig, the whir of a bird's wing, the ripple of water in an unseen stream:—all were frightful, while the green gloom seemed peopled with dim,

horrible shapes pressing forward from all directions. She buried her face in the moss and, pressing her hands over her ears, lay quiet until, at last, utterly spent with fright and weeping, she fell asleep.

When she awoke the shadows had changed from green to purple and a silvery radiance over the trees and a star or two shining down between the branches, showed her that it was night. Yet she was calmer; and though, perhaps, no less afraid, she arose and made her way forward once more — forward or back, she no longer knew in which direction she was going.

Her progress was now a continual struggle and she was often forced to throw herself to the ground for rest. Hunger and thirst beset her now and then, too, though several times she got refreshment from a clear stream, or a bush of scarlet berries.

At last when the shadows were deepening toward the second nightfall, she became aware of a new sound not far distant — the movement, she felt sure, of some living thing. Choking down her fear she made her way toward it resolutely, through an almost impenetrable tangle of undergrowth. She struggled on, blinded by wet leaves, scratched by thorns, caught a dozen times and held fast — then suddenly emerged into an open space.

She stopped, catching her breath in surprise and fright. About twenty feet from her there was a huge, rough boulder, in shape somewhat like an altar or an anvil, and beside it, drooping forward in an attitude of weariness and sadness, was a human creature. He was enormous, — quite a foot taller than the tallest of her stalwart countrymen, and his girth was proportionate. But as she looked

closely at him, what most impressed her tender child's mind was not his mighty, sinewy strength but his look of despair. She had expected to find a fierce, raging monster, joyful in his wickedness, and here, instead, was this man for whom she felt pity instead of hatred.

She walked forward timidly and said:

"Who are you and why do you live in the forest?"

The giant raised his head quickly and she saw that he was almost blind. A great wonder spread over his gray old face as he asked slowly and with difficulty:

"What are you and whence do you come?"

She answered quietly:

"I come from the Land of Sunshine and I am a princess of that country."

Then she questioned him and he answered. He spoke in a thick

guttural voice, as one long unaccustomed to speech, and, though his language was hers, he used a rough dialect, so that it was hard for the princess to understand.

But at last she had his story. It seemed that long before the giant was born his grandfather had been king of a mighty race dwelling in the clefts of the mountains. He did not know where, excepting that it was probably far westward. Toward the end of the king's reign an evil man had gained much power among the people, and at the king's death his son, then a youth, was overpowered by conspirators, carried off, and with his girl-wife, set down in the forest.

At first they tried to find their way home again, but after repeated failures they gave up and settled to a forest life. Children came to them and in that warm and pleasant climate, with roots and berries

for food and the trees for shelter, they had lived happily enough until their sons grew to early manhood. Then, moved by ambition for their children, they had tried, over and over again, to find their own home, sure that their people would, long since, have tired of the usurper's rule.

But all efforts were fruitless. Arms of the woods seemed to stretch interminably toward the west, and when, once or twice, they did get free from the forest, it was only to find impossible crevasses or waste stretches of sand or stone.

After they had at last given up all hope they wandered gradually toward the east finding it pleasanter in that direction. One day they came, by chance, upon this open spot with the great altar-shaped rock and a huge, rough hammer of stone lying beside it. In sport, one of the youths threw the hammer at

the rock and they were startled by a heavy peal of thunder and a vivid flash of lightning. Repeated trials proved that storm always followed a blow of the hammer upon the rock. Over and over again, they tried it, sometimes in sport and boyish daring; sometimes hoping, when the storm grew fierce and the earth shook beneath their feet, that perhaps a way of escape into the great world might be opened to them.[1]

. . . . . .

So they took up the great stone hammer and fixed it above the altar as a lasting memorial of the princess' courage and devotion to her people and a witness for all time that henceforth none need dread.

[1] The connecting part of this story has been lost. G. R. P.

Translations

THE BRAIN-MENDER

By Felix Duquesnel

IN the great square of Ispahan, old Abou-Hassan had a drug-shop. Shall we call it a drug-shop? — For old Abou-Hassan was quite as much a sorcerer as an apothecary. If he had no equal in pointing aright the instrument dear to Molière, he made also marvelous cures; read hands like the late Desbarolles; predicted the future simply from an account of the past; treated with mysterious words the most rebellious wounds; and finally, he consulted coffee-grounds and mandrake roots pulled on Mount Chiraz during the seventh night of the New Moon.

From all parts of Asia people

flocked to ask him for miracles and to implore help from his art.

The doctors of Ispahan were angry. So, from under their pointed astrakan caps, they had opined that appeal must be made to the magistrate for justice upon this spoil-trade who cured without a diploma. And the medical body had gone in great pomp to its dean, Sidi-Bougredâne, to ask his intervention.

He, a man of ponderous mind and in touch with wisdom, uniting the prudence of the serpent with the cleverness of the crow, caressed his beard and gave himself over to reflection. Then, having dozed and asked counsel of Shiva, goddess of good resolutions, he decided that the best thing was to do nothing and let the water flow.

"Let us take care," he said, "not to anger the populace: the torrent

would overleap the dyke and, furious at the obstacle, would sweep us away like straws in its brutal course! Since the common people are for Abou-Hassan, let us bend to their will. Even that will be better than seeing the Faculty of Medicine flame up like dry wood!"

This good advice was followed and Abou-Hassan was allowed to continue, without opposition, the course of his little business, for which he had had a sign engraved in letters of gold on a background of mosaic:

"THE POSSIBLE IS IMMENSE."

The day of the great turquoise market—you know those beautiful Persian turquoises which are unchangeable and never fade because they do not know weariness such as causes the green death of

their Caucasian sisters,—on this day, I say, his shop swarmed with the crowd eager to demand health and to seek a cure for its ailments.

And, indeed, it was a curious place and truly strange, that shop filled with vases of enamelled earthenware and with transparent jars, symmetrically arranged and bearing odd inscriptions. For besides the conventional medical terms, that all countries of the world borrow from the Latin language,—*Diascordium, Theriaca*, or *Pulvis cinchonae*—known to the illiterate as "quinine powder,"—there were others more suggestive, such as these, for example: *extract of illusion*, for the aged; *grains of good sense*, for the use of everybody; *pills of independence*, for the magistracy;—or yet others: court-plaster, *for those who have meddled with edged tools*; *essence*

of foresight, for generals and commissaries of the army; *spirits of modesty*, for musicians and men of letters; and on the rounded side of an enormous mortar filled with a fatty substance having metallic and golden gleams, there stood out these words in huge letters: "*Ointment for Greasing Itching Palms.*" And this mendicament was not the least sought after, — the spatula was thrust into it ceaselessly, scarcely able to supply the demand.

Toward the end of the day, when the hour of calm comes, — "between dog and wolf," as the saying goes, — let us say between day and night, — Abou-Hassan saw enter his shop a person of distinguished appearance, but of undecided bearing: his face was sad and vague, he was long as a day of waiting, rather soft than flexible, rather flabby than

supple, more like a leek than a reed, and his blue eyes swam uncertainly.

"Sir, what do you wish?" asked old Abou-Hassan.

"I do not know," replied the new-comer, "I suffer from a strange malady and come to seek a remedy."

"How do you feel?"

"There it is! My conscience is undecided and troubled; I can no longer distinguish between good and evil; my ideas lack logical order; I go first one way and then the other, without knowing why; in short, it seems to me that my brain is unbalanced and needs repairing."

"What is your name and what is your profession?"

"My name is Ali-Gaga, and I am a lawyer."

"Eh! Your state of health seems

grave to me! Anyhow, we shall see what the trouble is. Sit down there—"

And the old doctor took up a hammer of tempered steel. With a sharp little blow upon a cold chisel he lifted the top of Ali-Gaga's skull as he might the lid of a box.

Ali-Gaga felt a current of cool air through his brain and began to sneeze, while the operator, after pressing a watch-maker's glass over his right eye, attentively considered the lawyer's skull.

"Atchi! I think decidedly that I am catching cold in my brain," exclaimed Ali-Gaga, sneezing again. "Atchi! there it is again! I shall have a severe cold in my head."

"It won't amount to anything; besides, I am going to take out your brain and that will greatly inconvenience the cold, for it will

have nowhere to vent its malice. Don't move, it will only take a minute."

And armed with a sort of silver skimmer old Abou-Hassan gently lifted out Ali-Gaga's brain, without shock and all in one piece. He laid it with extreme care upon a marble table and examined it in detail, sighing several times, clacking his tongue, shrugging his shoulders,—all which did not show complete satisfaction; in short, his face expressed only partial content.

"Well?" asked Ali-Gaga anxiously.

"Well! there is much to be done. Between ourselves mending won't do. It must be completely made over; you shall have it for sixty *tomans*."

"Hum! That is dear."

"Take it or leave it. But just think! Here, look at this little

mirror: it is your conscience. It is dim, very dim; it must be newly silvered and repolished; it has been completely clouded by skepticism. As to your brain, it is honeycombed by false ideas which have penetrated it in all directions, and your logic is entirely broken down. Nevertheless, it is plain that you were born intelligent and honest; but your good qualities have been choked by ambition. In short, it is all in very bad condition; there is six weeks' hard work on it. After that I shall give you back a clear conscience and a brain like new; and truly, that is not dear at sixty *tomans*."

While saying this he covered Ali-Gaga's brain with a glass cylinder, a sort of cheese-bell such as watch-makers use to protect the works of watches during repairs.

Then he closed the empty skull and fastened it with a bit of glue.

"Now," he added, "you may come back in six weeks and I shall put everything back into place."

"Eh! Eh!" exclaimed Ali-Gaga, arising staggeringly, "that has a queer effect on me; my heart feels light and my head perfectly empty. — I miss something."

"It always has that effect for a moment, but you will get used to it very soon, and in a week you'll think no more about it. Goodbye then!"

The six weeks passed and Ali-Gaga's brain, put into condition again, was like new, the work having been done with the utmost care.

Abou-Hassan was delighted with his work, rejoicing at the approaching return of his client, whose joy and astonishment he counted upon in advance, and at the thought he laughed into his old white beard.

But Ali-Gaga did not meet his appointment.

Weeks became months, months became years, and still Ali-Gaga did not come!

Eight years had passed in this way since the day when Ali-Gaga had come to Abou-Hassan, and the latter, who had grown impatient at hearing nothing from his client and was thinking of leaving his shop and retiring to the country with the fortune he had made, said to himself that the best thing he could do would be to sell Ali-Gaga's brain at second-hand to some amateur in need of supplementary mentality. He had even begun to bargain with a magistrate, when one day at sundown someone knocked at his door.

"It is I," said a voice which he seemed to recognize.

And Ali-Gaga entered, a little

embarrassed, like a man who is not quite on time.

"Excuse me;" he said, "I am a little late."

"*Dame*! only eight years, and you come in the nick of time: I was on the point of making over your brain at second-hand—"

"Oh no! Don't do that! No indeed, no, nonsense! I think a great deal of my brain and I've come to get it."

"Without impertinence, why have you delayed so long? Was it for lack of money? I should have given you credit."

"No, it was not on that account: I will tell you my reasons. After my former visit I threw myself into politics: first I became deputy, then minister,—even Prime Minister. And I thought that in that new situation my conscience was useless; that it would, perhaps, be troublesome,—and that my brain, at all

events, was assuredly superfluous."

"Eh! Eh! Not such bad reasoning as things go—"

"So I left all that encumbrance with you for safe-keeping."

"Well, then,—and to-day?"

"To-day—the shah has put us out at the door. There has been a change of ministry.—I am no longer of any importance and am retiring to private life. So then, I said to myself, that although I needed neither my brain nor my conscience while managing public affairs, for which I care not a whit, it is different now when it is a question of managing my own affairs, which are, assuredly, much dearer to me; and accordingly I have come to take back both from you. Here is your money. Go and—"

"Sit down there," said Abou-Hassan, and picking up again the little hammer of fine steel and the cold chisel, he reopened Ali-Gaga's

skull at the same place and replaced the brain, after carefully dusting it.

"There you are!" he said; "and now, how do you feel?"

"Very queer! My head feels heavy — as if I had sick-headache."

"That will be all right! It is only lack of habit."

"Ah, but it is intolerable — "

"How then?"

"Here is my conscience bestirring itself already; it reproaches me."

"The explanation is simple: it is making up for lost time; and then, too, I put a new spring in it. After a while you will find that it will be calmer — "

"You know, old Abou-Hassan, I told you the last time that I lacked something. — This time it is just the opposite, it seems to me that I have too much of something."

LAZARINE

By André Theuriet

THE old cabriolet which rolled along with a noise of clanking iron on the road from Chauvigny to La Roche-Posay, stopped short at the entrance to a village, and Saint-Martial, who was dozing under the hood, opened his eyes suddenly upon hearing the coachman jump to the ground and swear in his Poitevin dialect.

"What is the matter?" asked the traveler.

"I have lost the hub from one of my wheels. Heavens!—We shall have to spend the night here, and lucky enough if we find a wagon-

maker who can mend my carriage!"

Saint-Martial was fifty-four years old. At that ease-loving age the prospect of spending the night in a chance inn did not at all please him; so the coachman's information put him into a bad humor. He was hoping to arrive before night at the Trappist Abbey of Font-gombault where he had planned to make a retreat, and this unlucky incident irritated him.

Saint-Martial was a disillusioned man. A subtle and delicate man of letters, he had dreamed in his youth, like so many others, of literary fame, and first of all the theater had tempted him. But his plays had had only moderate success and after the war of 1870 he had let himself drift into politics.

For twenty years he had sat as a deputy at the Palace-Bourbon; then, disgusted with electoral meth-

ods, outraged by the spectacle of trickery, overreaching and shady transactions, he had left parliamentary life in complete intellectual and moral disorder. He had drained to the dregs the bitter cup of renunciation and did not know where to turn. During those bitter hours when all desire for life seemed lost, memories of a pious childhood had returned and he had clutched again at religious ideas as at a plank of safety. That is why, this October evening, he was going toward the Trappist Abbey of Fontgombault. The Abbot was a friend of his and a hospitable house annexed to the monastery offered to a number of men, disillusioned like himself, the beneficent peace of a half secular, half monastic retreat.

His ill humor passed, however, at sight of the friendly and smiling landscape before his eyes. The

road, before entering the village, skirted a promontory bordered by chestnut trees and looked down upon steep, shady streets, gay with little terraced gardens. In front, on a rocky prominence, stood the crumbling, but still noble ruins of a twelfth century château. Deep down in the narrow, wooded valley, a sinuous river wound between files of yellowed poplars. The sun, a red disk, was sinking behind the woods, and the purple color of the clouds was reflected in the calm water where a fisherman, guiding his boat, came and went, lifting sweep-nets, his slender, busy figure silhouetted in black against the rosy surface of the river.

"What is the name of this village?" asked Saint-Martial of the driver.

"Angles. — And the river which you see below is the Englin."

"Angles!" — These two syllables

had for Saint-Martial a half familiar ring. Where and by whom had he heard them spoken before? Certainly the name was not new to him. He made an effort to remember, and little by little the odd name was associated in his mind with certain confused impressions of the theater. Slowly, like a ghost emerging from shadow, a feminine image arose in his memory, the pretty face of an actress, outlined against a piece of scenery.

Ah, yes indeed! Angles was the village where Lazarine used to own a cottage of whose verdant solitude she boasted to her friends, and of which she spoke as a pleasant retreat for the time when she should leave the stage.

Lazarine Percival was formerly one of the most charming actresses of the Gymnasium. At the time when Saint-Martial still believed in his dramatic career, she had

taken the leading *rôle* in his best play. He had even had for her a platonic tenderness which was still one of the most fragrant memories of his youth. After the war they had lost sight of each other. Lazarine had left Paris to make foreign tours, and the rumor had gone abroad that after amassing a small fortune, she had decided to realize her dream of a country life.

While he was passing along the sloping streets, between old-fashioned houses with carved gable-ends and overgrown by roses, Saint-Martial saw again Lazarine Percival in the supple, comely grace of her twenty-two years, — slender, brunette, with soft color, waving black hair, beautiful coffee-colored eyes, caressing and dreamy, smiling red lips, and an expression of almost credulous candor;—all which made her, at the theater, an exceptional creature. "And now," he

thought, "it would be curious if I should find her again in this village, where an accident compels me to stop. — I must enquire at once."

As soon as he was installed at the inn, he asked if there were in the village a lady named Lazarine. The hostess' reply disappointed him: there was nobody of that name in the town. But he reflected suddenly that in coming to the country Lazarine would probably have dropped her stage name, and he tried again, adding that the person in question was also called "Mme. Percival."

"Mme. Percival!" cried the landlady; "Ah, yes indeed, we know her. Such a charming and excellent woman and so kind to the poor! She lives not far from the church in a pretty house with gardens running down to the river."

Saint-Martial rearranged his toi-

let and a boy pointed out to him Lazarine's house. A dull beating of his heart oppressed him.

"Will she remember me, and will she wish to receive me?" he thought while ringing at the gateway, from which, across the courtyard blooming with chrysanthemums, he could see the house-front covered with flowering vines.

An old servant-woman wearing a high Poitevin cap, came hastily at his ring and asked him in. Mme. Percival was at home. He gave his card and the servant took him into a little parlor. Just in looking at that elegant and orderly room he recognized the correct and refined taste of Lazarine, who had always been an exquisite little housekeeper. Autumn roses were in the vases, and on the walls, which were covered with old-rose silk, there hung rare engravings and two or three good landscapes. A wood fire

burned quietly in the fire-place. Skeins of wool were spread out on a work-table and several books lay on the rosewood desk.

"How shall I find her?" he said to himself; "much changed, doubtless, in twenty-five years."

"What! is it you?" cried a rich and pleasant contralto voice behind him.

He turned and saw before him Lazarine holding out her hands. Ah no, she had scarcely changed. Her hair, it was true, was white and very slightly powdered, and there were fine wrinkles at the corners of her mouth and eyes; but she had kept her slender, supple figure, the grace of her smile, and the clear flame of her deep brown eyes.

He grasped her two outstretched hands cordially and kissed them; then, as Lazarine expressed surprise at his visit, he explained to

her the fortunate accident which had compelled him to stop at Angles.

"What a pleasant surprise and how glad I am," she replied, clapping her hands. "You know you must dine with me. I shall send word to the people at the inn."

She went out for a moment to give directions to the Poitevin servant, then came back happily, made her guest sit down facing her and began to question him again:

"Where were you going, then, when your carriage so kindly came to pieces at my door?"

"To Fontgombault."

"To the Trappist Abbey? — Do you intend becoming a hermit?"

"Upon my word, almost that," he replied.

He confided to her the bitterness left by his parliamentary life, his disgust with politics and with the

mode of life of his contemporaries. He spoke so bitterly that an affectionate compassion softened Lazarine's large eyes. In order to recall him to less sombre thoughts, she changed the subject and talked of old times. Together they called up the years of their youth, past hours of companionship at the theater, the day spent in rehearsal, the evening in the actress' box, — distant hours which, at the time, were exempt neither from troubles nor sadness; but which now, seen through the prism of memory, seemed to them fortunate hours. — She recalled to him friends dead or passed from knowledge, successful plays in which she had created *rôles*. — Then she told him how, tired of her fictitious stage life, she had left it all, one fine day, to come and bury herself in a green corner of Poitou.

"You know," she said, smiling, "I was always, at bottom, a little *bourgeoise*."

The announcement of dinner surprised them in the midst of this retrospective talk. — An excellent dinner, served on a flower-decked table in the dining-room finished in white, with the crackling of a pretty fire of beach knots in the high fireplace. Lapped in comfort and tender attentions, Saint-Martial looked with emotion at that friend of former days, rejuvenated in the firelight; for her powdered white hair vivified her expressive features and cast an aurora of youth into her eyes. He felt himself comforted, calmed, and refreshed. His appetite returned; he did honor to the dinner and at dessert sipped appreciatively a foamy old wine of Vovray of which Lazarine had even poured out a finger for herself.

"I remember," she said, "that you were fond of Touraine wines. You always ordered them when we took supper with comrades at the restaurant during the rehearsals of your play.—To your health! Modesty apart, my Vouvray is good and you will not find its like at the Abbey."

The Abbey! Saint-Martial scarcely thought about it any more. He had forgotten his projects of retreat while looking into Lazarine's eyes. These limpid, coffee-colored irises, so gently caressing, brought back his youth and poured for him a philtre as potent as the wines of Touraine.

"Lazarine," he murmured suddenly, his voice slightly changed, "do you know that at one time I was very much in love with you? I did not dare tell you formerly; but so much the worse, this evening I risk avowing it."

"My dear friend, confidence for confidence — I rather suspected it then, and each moment I was expecting you to tell me. — But you were mute as a fish."

"I was afraid of being blackballed. One evening when you were leaning against a screen, awaiting your entrance upon the stage, your eyes gleamed so brilliantly in the shadow that I almost betrayed myself. But at that time it was said that you were loved by Larrien, and my declaration remained in my throat."

"How stupid you were! — I abhorred Larrien, and if you had said but one word — However, it is old history and there is no use in talking of it."

"Let us talk of it, on the contrary," he cried, rising; "I love you yet, and you are still the entrancing Lazarine of former days!"

At the same time he took her

hands and kissed them with delight. Lazarine herself, touched by this outbreaking of reborn love, enjoyed silently, for a second, the captivating surprise; but she recalled herself quickly and, escaping, she broke into ringing laughter!

"No, no, my friend, you would not wish it.—Be sensible! Remember that I am an old woman—"

"You!" he protested with passion, "you are adorable!"

"No, I am a good *bourgeoise*, and I think that when one is nearly fifty the weaknesses are no longer permissible. At our ages it is unwholesome to put another disillusionment upon the heart. Folly against folly, it is better that you should go to the Abbey!"

She laughed. When he saw that she was turning the affair into a joke, he sighed and sat down again, ashamed of his own intoxication.

They went back to the parlor, but the conversation languished now in spite of Lazarine's efforts to enliven it. Saint-Martial had fallen back into his black mood.

At ten o'clock he took his leave and when she went with him into the antechamber, his hostess murmured:

"Thanks for your welcome visit. — I do not know when we shall see one another again; so let us kiss each other like good old friends."

They kissed and parted sadly.

The next day Saint-Martial was rolling along on the road to Fontgombault. The sunshiny morning was impregnated with a penetrating smell of autumn; the woods were colored red and violet, and through the air, alive with filmy-winged insects, distant bells rang for the *fête* of *la Toussait.* This delicious autumnal adieu made

Saint-Martial think again of Lazarine's adieu, and he sighed.

"After all," he thought, "she was right. These dreams are not for our age, and roses out of season leave behind them a bitter perfume."

He proceeded sadly toward the Abbey, and when the carriage stopped before the hospitable house reserved for strangers, he read with resignation the inscription cut over the porch: "Cella continuata dulcessit."

THE EMERALD RING

By M. Charles Foley

CLOTILDE D'ALVAREY had been separated from her brother during the flight from Lavenay. She and all the Vendéans who, with her, had gone astray, had been tracked, surrounded, crowded together like frightened cattle, then thrown into the nearest prison; — and in such numbers that the jailers did not even take the trouble to search them. Would they not have ample leisure to despoil the captives when, one by one, they should pass through their hands a few moments before going out to death?

In that prison, the old, forest-girt stronghold of Maranges,

which had fallen into the hands of the Blues, in the silence and oppression of thick, dark walls, time seemed retarded, then stopped, in a complete ignorance, — an interminable despair.

There, never guessing that spring was already making green again the surrounding woods, — the prisoners, confined in the long, underground galleries of the fortress, shivering with cold, and pallid in the shadow, dreamed of the past as they lay, fully dressed, on their pallets of damp straw, their eyes wide open in the darkness; or else they gathered, panting, under the heavily barred air-hole, through which there came to them the little air and light by which they still lived.

The gentle Clotilde had, for weeks, suffered this agony with resignation when, one day, in breaking the piece of bread given

her by the jailer, she found a letter, folded and refolded for better hiding.

Profiting by the moment when the prisoners were appeasing their hunger, she went alone to the narrow window, and in the last gleam of greenish light, colored by the bushes growing in the dry foss, she could secretly read this:

"My sister, the turnkey of the dungeons has been heavily bribed and will let me enter the prison tonight. Since I can save only you I shall not speak to you. I shall carry no light, in order not to awaken any of your companions in misfortune, for the least stir would ruin us. But the jailer tells me that your pallet is the first at the right of the door. When you are lying there, if in the darkness you feel fingers seeking your fingers, do not be frightened; give me your hand, rise and let yourself be led

out into the night without speaking a word. We shall not pause until we have come out from the dungeons by secret, roundabout ways; we shall not speak to each other until we have escaped and are far within the forest. I only ask you to slip onto one of your fingers the ring I gave you three years ago. I remember the heart-shaped emerald and when I touch it I shall be sure that it is you whom I am saving. Your brother,

"Frédéric."

Clotilde, excited, thinking herself in a dream, had scarcely hidden the letter in her bosom, close to her heart swelling suddenly with joy and hope, when the door opened. Several new prisoners were thrust brutally in. One of them soon came to the window.

Clotilde, standing there in the twilight to look with ecstasy at the

emerald ring which she still wore on her finger and which was soon to bring her deliverance, raised her eyes and suddenly recognized one of her friends, Huguette de la Moizière.

There were kisses, effusions, tears.

In spite of all Clotilde's caresses and exhortations to have courage, the pretty Huguette, once so gay and vivacious, sobbed on. At last, moved to confidence by the tenderness of the meeting and grief at being a prisoner, she said in a low voice:

"Nothing can console me for the loss of liberty, for I love your brother, dear Clotilde, I adore Frédéric! We were secretly engaged before the expedition across the Loire,—and I have not seen him since! How grief-stricken he would be if he knew that I am here! Ah, Clotilde, my misfor-

tune will bring sorrow to two, my death will make two victims!"

At these confidences, impulsively poured out in the expansiveness of recent misfortune; at this complaint, vibrating with the unconscious selfishness of love, Clotilde first trembled, then grew sad.

After a heavy, thoughtful silence, she made up her mind and replied, very low, in her gentle, resigned voice:

"You will not die, Huguette. Perhaps you will not even stay long in this prison. Listen to this. Sometimes, in the night, a mysterious and charitable protector makes his way into the profound darkness of this dungeon, touches the pallet of a prisoner and gently takes her hand. For those who have risen noiselessly and let themselves be led by the unknown without speaking a single word, he has brought liberty!"

"Ah, what a delightfully romantic escape!" murmured the pretty girl, her imagination already struck with this strange hope, and more quickly reanimated by the improbable story than by the affectionate arguments of her friend. "If this good fortune comes to me, Clotilde, you cannot imagine — oh no! you cannot imagine, for you are not engaged, — what joy I shall have in seeing your brother again! The thought that the unknown may come to bring me liberty, to take me to Frédéric, will keep my eyes wide open all night. It gives me a fever. And to think that I have nothing from my betrothed, — not a keepsake, not a picture, not even an engagement ring — to sweeten for me this anguished waiting!"

It seemed to Clotilde that the will of God was seconding her will, and that these last thoughtless

words of Huguette's were put into her mouth in order to help on her own sacrifice. With heart oppressed, with eyes full of tears, the poor child drew from her finger the ring with the heart-shaped emerald and, putting it on her friend's finger, said quickly, so that sobs might not choke her voice:

"Take this keepsake of my brother, Huguette; it belongs to you by right since Frédéric is engaged to you. Never take off this ring, not even while you sleep."

"Oh, thanks," murmured Huguette, touched and grateful, though not suspecting the full cost of the gift. "Rest assured, this ring shall never leave my finger! In return, dear Clotilde, what can I do for you?"

"Well," said Mlle. d'Alvarey, firm now in her renunciation, "for to-night give me your pallet at the

back of the prison and take mine near the door. The jailors have thrown fresh straw on your bed, while mine is so packed that I haven't been able to sleep for a week. — And I need rest to renew my courage, — the courage that I shall need to-morrow especially."

"Very willingly," exclaimed the other, not noticing the veiled meaning of these last words. "It will scarcely be a privation to me, for I cannot sleep. I shall keep thinking of your brother while pressing this ring to my lips. I feel as if your present were a talisman to bring me good fortune."

"I think so too," Clotilde managed to say, with a pale smile.

She said nothing more, fearing that with any clearer explanation Huguette might guess the truth and, generous in her turn, might block the plan by refusal.

Night had come. The two young girls caught each other in a long, close embrace. Then Clotilde led Huguette to the bed near the door, passed on to the back of the room and lay down on the fresh straw.

Both lay a long while — a very long while — without sleeping. The sister prayed. The betrothed kissed the emerald ring.

But it was Huguette who first closed her eyes.

Far on in the night she was falling asleep, when a light groping, close at hand, roused her. At first she recoiled timidly, then she remembered Clotilde's strange tale and, trembling, filled with wild hope, she held out her hand to the groping hand. Fingers seized her fingers and feverishly touched and felt of the emerald in the ring. At once an arm helped her up, and in

silence, holding her breath, she followed the unknown, who guided and drew her on in the darkness.

Her elbow struck lightly against iron, then her sleeve brushed a nearer wall, and Huguette guessed that they had passed through the open door and had entered a narrow passage.

They walked faster and faster as they went on. After several turns in this dark labyrinth the floor sloped gradually upward and they felt a whiff of warmer air in their faces. Then, by a sort of postern hidden in the entanglement of shrubs, vines, and brambles which had overrun the dry foss, the two fugitives emerged into the darkness of a low wood. Stooping, out of breath from haste and anxiety, slipping from tree to tree under the branches, they were a good while in gaining the great forest.

There, in a sort of clearing, bathed in moonlight, they stood erect, paused, and recognized each other with a double cry of surprise and joy:

"Huguette!"

"You, Frédéric!"

Frédéric asked, with choked breath:

"But Clotilde, then, — my sister Clotilde!"

Wrenching herself quickly from the kisses of her lover, Huguette stammered, suddenly terrified:

"Clotilde? — But I do not know! She was sleeping, no doubt, at the back of the prison. For this one night your sister asked me to give her my bed and to take hers — "

"And the emerald ring? How do you come to wear that?"

"Clotilde gave it to me last evening, — telling me to wear it always, even during my sleep, in remembrance of you!"

Together they understood the sublime sacrifice so simply and silently accomplished. They grew very pale and instinctively withdrew from one another, trembling, as if the joy which they felt were a culpable joy, a stolen joy.

The thought came to them to go back to the postern, to make their way again into the prison. But it was impossible. Frédéric knew that the doors were already closed; the conniving turnkey had finished his round. Already the radiant dawn was showing over the tree-tops; the reveille sounded from afar.

They understood, then, that through Clotilde's innocent deceit and heroic falsehood their happiness was assured.

That time it was regret and grief that brought them together, that threw them into each other's arms. Frédéric mechanically slipped his

arm around Huguette's waist to support her trembling steps. And along that green, violet scented path, where nightingales sang, where the sun rained gold, they passed in a close embrace; but they passed slowly and sadly, without speaking, without even looking at each other, while the emerald of the ring, pressed between their fingers, bit into their flesh like the wound of remorse. And heavy tears fell between their lips, — between their pallid lips which no longer dared to touch one another.

PERRETTE'S LAST BOUQUET

By René Bazin

SHE was rough, nurse Perrette, and thin and dry as a nail. She wore the two-winged fluted cap of the peasant women of the Loire. It did not improve her angular face, her pointed nose, her lips, shaded by a rather heavy moustache. But what did it matter? Nurse Perrette had never been charming excepting for us. We did not think her homely because she loved us. We thought her very old and even supposed that she had always been so; for nurse Perrette did not change. As far back as I remember, I see her of the same age, or, at least, with

the same gray hair, the same black eyes, a little wrinkled at the corners, which thought only of us and which, I believe, could think of nothing else.

She had raised us all. In recompense we said "thou" to her. No one ever knew better how to arrange a closet, fold a child's garments over a chair or oversee a party of *loup caché*.

Her cleanliness was extreme. A stain horrified her,—much more than it did us, alas! and I can hear her sighs when, having slipped in the grass in the excitement of play we returned with green stains on the knees of gray knicker-bockers.

"My little Perrette," we would say, "do not tell it; you would not have us scolded."

And late in the night, while we were sleeping, watching over them like us, Perrette studied the effect of Panama-wood and invented lo-

tions on our compromised trousers, rubbing and stretching them out before a discreet fire.

If we were sick she watched until dawn, without taking an hour's sleep, watchful to replace the covers over our arms, listening to our breathing, — sad at seeing us suffer.

How well I remember her tender, anxious glance when, in the days of fever, I awoke and asked:

"Perrette, have you something to drink? I'm thirsty."

She arose, the old nurse, and went to get a warm drink, in which she had put flowers of the four seasons. We drank, all at once, spring, summer, autumn, and winter; — she believed it, and something like a smile of joy illuminated her face when, overcome again by sleep, our eyelids half closed, and head on the pillow, we said to her:

"That was very good, I'm asleep already."

Perrette's tenderness led her to despotism. In all faith she did not admit that anybody else had any rights over us, nor that anybody knew better than she what was fitting for each of us. She was usually let alone. But from time to time, she ran counter to the principle of authority. My mother would say:

"Perrette, you may put their blue clothes on the children."

"No madame, certainly I shall not put them on. They are too warm. My children would take cold."

"You must, and, Perrette, you will put them on."

"No, madame, I prefer to leave."

"Go then."

Perrette packed her trunk. Oh,

it was not hard to pack, — the poor long trunk of kid-skin! And then at the moment of leaving us, at the last look thrown toward us, she would burst into tears and remain. My mother would forgive her and we would go out in the blue clothes.

Those dear creatures who raised us — I do not know whether there are any such now. How did they come to love, in such fashion, children who were not their own? Where did they get such motherly passion, such complete self-forgetfulness, knowing that some day, they would leave the house, and that they would not have a mother's right to follow through life those whom they had cradled? Perhaps she was thinking of that, nurse Perrette, when in the evening, joining our hands, she had us say without fail: "Saint Perrette, pray for us."

She married, one day, after we

were grown. That news surprised me:

"Perrette is to be married."

He was not handsome either, her husband. I saw him when I took Perrette to the church — a tall old man, who looked like bronze, panted on the pavement; with tiny eyes, projecting cheekbones and a thread of white beard, — straight and long.

I think that he married her for financial reasons and that Perrette accepted from grief, — because we were going away from her. They went to live in the country.

. . . . . .

Anyhow, even if Perrette had come she would not have seen me. I was completing my studies at college and soon after I left for Paris.

But she did not forget. She knew that whether schoolboy or college student, I had an Easter vacation, and each year, early in

the morning of Easter day, somebody came to the house and left a huge bouquet. From the very first I made no mistake. I recognized the favorite flowers of Perrette. If there were three buds on her climbing roses, she plucked all three and brought to me. For my part, I went to thank her.

Perrette looked forward to that annual visit. She rejoiced at it. She announced it to her neighbors.

A strange thing!—when I was there she looked happy, only at the moment when she saw me, when "her" child of other times approached her. Afterward she was troubled about everything: about the orderliness of the house, which she thought compromised by a leaf blown in by the wind; troubled by the dampness of the floor, which she had scrubbed so long that it could not dry in a week; about the whiteness of the cloth which she

had spread upon an old chestnut-wood table; about the quality of the *bouillon au mil*, which she had made according to old traditions; and about the time; and the heat; and the cold. The time was spent in her saying to me:

"It isn't very pleasant, is it? You aren't comfortable here? It is a poor place!"

Does one visit his old nurse to notice such trifles? I should have liked to say to her each time:

"Let us talk of the past, never mind your tablecloth, your bouillon, your flowers, your neighbors, but tell me incidents of my childhood, speak to me of the days when I was too little to see, when my mother was young and you also were not yet old. Oh, Perrette, remember!"

But no, she seemed to remember the past only to offer her useless devotion. Even in walking with

her along the curving path, covered with yellow sand which bordered the vines and favorite carnations, her attention was taken by the rising clouds, or by stray grasses which marred, as she thought, the beauty of the beds of marguerites.

Evidently I was still, for nurse Perrette, the child whom one cares for but does not talk to.

One day, at Easter time, when I came from Paris, I asked:

"Is the bouquet in my room?"

"No, monseiur."

"No one brought a bouquet for me, yesterday?"

"No, monseiur."

"Then Perrette is ill."

I hastened to her. I found her in bed with a high fever and so sad that it affected me like a premonition.

"My house is very disorderly," she said to me in a low voice. "Do

not mind it. I can no longer take care of things. For eight days my husband has done it."

She broke off and, trying to smile:

"Mr. René, you came to get your bouquet? It is picked."

"What, Perrette, sick as you are!"

"I did not go out, you know; that would have been too hard. But I had the flowers brought to me and I waited for a chance.— It is there, under the chair."

Sure enough, under the chair, the ends of the stems in water, was a whole bunch of anemones and carnations, with the air of looking about them, a bit frightened and out of place in the shadow of that room.

"I shall take them with me," I said to Perrette. "I, myself, am the chance. You see I guessed that you couldn't come."

She talked even less than usual, but she looked at me almost constantly, with her eyes, in which the same sole thought, which had been there for more than twenty years, was more clearly expressed than ever:

"I love you; I raised you; you are my child, too."

And that consoled her.

But I saw that another idea was growing in her mind, and soon that idea absorbed her. Perrette became deeply troubled, redder yet about the eyes, more pale about the lips. Then, as I tried to distract her attention by recalling old events:

"Listen, Mr. René," she said with a grave expression and a sort of authority, "I have a request to make of you."

"Anything you like, Perrette."

"I brought away from your

house several things which I should not like to leave behind me here if anything should happen to me. You know I brought them away with your mother's permission, and I think a great deal of them. Take them with the bouquet and keep them. If I get well, I shall come for them."

"But you will get well, Perrette!"

"One never knows. There, in the cupboard."

What were these things of which she was so fond? I did not remember ever having seen in her house anything valuable. I opened the two doors of the cupboard,—a piece of cherry-wood furniture which shone in the back of the room. In it there was white linen, a little coffee pot, a package of blue peas, a package of verbenas, scissors.

"I find nothing," I said.

She made an effort to turn and replied:

"Behind the wicker basket.— The key, — under the fine blankets, — near a sweet apple."

I took the basket. I took the key, near a great green apple, as wrinkled as nurse Perrette and which had been preserved there, intact under its withered skin, since the previous autumn. Then I sat down in the back of the room and opened the box resting on my knees.

Although Perrette was very sick, I at first wanted to laugh. What a fine treasure, in fact! On the blue cotton lining of the basket, rested three objects: a photograph of three young children together; a narrow collar of rabbit's skin with blue satin buttons; and a pasteboard sheep, with one foot lacking.

"You have found it?" asked the

poor, feeble voice near the window. And I stopped smiling. And I understood that she had, shut up there, in these things of such slight value, the inestimable tenderness of a memory; that this wretched sheep represented for her, a witness of past days; that this fur collar, formerly worn by one of "her children," was as a relic in the eyes of the old nurse.

I arose, I placed the box in Perrette's bed. She raised herself slightly, took the bit of fur and said, with emotion:

"You wore it, Mr. René, when you were two years old."

She looked at the broken sheep and added:

"You gave it to me after breaking it. I have always kept it."

She put her lips to the yellow photograph and kissed it.

"It pains me to leave them," she added, "but I must."

She thought for a moment, dried her eyes, and for the first time in her life I saw a flame in them. Her face was transfigured, glorified with all the silent love which was at last breaking out, and while I remained standing, touched, seized with respect for my old dying nurse:

"Mr. René," she said aloud, "I have never been happy, except in your house. Mr. René, poor women like me make a mistake in marrying, because their happiness is in their children."

She broke off and began again, raising her hand — her hand that had wearied itself for us.

"Even in after life I shall not forget you."

I went away, carrying under my arm the little three legged sheep half hidden by my bouquet. An end of the rabbit-skin collar stuck

out of my pocket. And the good people on the street might laugh. As for me, I wept.

It was the last bouquet of nurse Perrette.

THE PARADISE OF ANIMALS

By Jules Lemaître

OLD Séphora dwelt in the village of Bethlehem.

She lived on the income from a flock of goats and a little field of fig trees.

When young she had been a servant in a priest's house, so that she was better instructed in religious matters than is usual for persons of her condition.

Returning to the village she married and was several times a mother, but she lost both husband and children. And from that time, though always helpful to men according to her ability, the best part of her tenderness was given to ani-

mals. She tamed birds and mice; she gathered up stray dogs and homeless cats; and her little house was full of these humble friends.

She cherished animals, not only because they are innocent, because they love devotedly those who love them, and because their fidelity is unequalled, but also because there was within her heart a deep demand for justice.

She did not understand why those should suffer who cannot be wicked nor violate a law which they do not know.

Human suffering she could explain to herself tolerably well. Taught by the priest, she did not believe that all ended with the dead peace of sheol, nor that the Messiah, at his coming, was merely to establish the earthly dominion of Israel. The "kingdom of God" — that, she believed, would be the reign of justice beyond the tomb.

In that unknown world, it would clearly appear that merited pain was as expiation. And as for undeserved and fruitless suffering (like that of little children or of certain unfortunates who have not sinned deeply), it would seem but an evil dream and would be repaid by bliss at least commensurate.

But animals which suffer; those that die slowly—like men—of cruel sickness, looking at you with gentle eyes; and dogs whose devotion is disregarded or who lose an adored master and eat out their hearts in grief; and horses, weary and beaten, whose long workdays are but a panting effort and whose rest, even, is so cheerless in the dusk of narrow stables; and captive wild things devoured in their barred cages by weary restlessness; and all the miserable creatures whose lives are only hopeless suffering and who have not even a

voice to tell what they endure or to solace themselves with curses; — to what end the suffering of such as these? What do they expiate? Or what compensation can await them?

Séphora was a simple-minded old woman, but because she was hungry for justice she turned over these questions often in her heart; and the thought of unexplained evil obscured for her the beauty of the day and the exquisite colors of the Judean hills.

When her neighbors came to tell her:

"The Messiah is born; an angel announced it to us last night; he is with his mother in a stable a quarter of a mile from here; and we have adored him."

Old Séphora replied:

"We shall see."

For she had her idea.

That evening, after caring for her goats, feeding her other animals and caressing them all, she set out for the wonderful stable.

In the blue-lit enchantment of the night, the plain, the rocks, the trees, even the grass blades seemed stilled by happiness. It was as if all things upon the earth were resting in delicious calm. But old Séphora did not forget that at that very hour unjust Nature was performing acts for which there could scarcely be any future reparation; she did not forget that at that very hour, throughout the great world, sick men who were not evil doers, sweated with anguish in their burning beds; that travelers were murdered on the roads; that men were tortured by other men; that mothers wept over little dead children; — and that beasts suffered inexpressibly without knowing why.

She saw before her a light, soft,

yet so vivid that it paled the moonlight. This light came from a stable hollowed out in a rock and supported by natural pillars.

Near the entrance the camels slept on bended knees in the midst of a heap of chiseled or painted vases, of baskets of fruit, of heavy out-spread carpets and of half open caskets in which jewels sparkled brightly.

"What is all that?" asked the old woman.

"The kings have come," replied a little man.

"The kings?" said old Séphora frowning.

She entered the stable, saw the Child in a manger and about him Mary and Joseph, the three Magi kings, the shepherds and husbandmen with their wives, their sons and their daughters and, in a corner, an ass and an ox.

"Wait," she said.

The three kings advanced toward the Child, and the shepherds drew back politely before them. But the Child made a sign to the shepherds to approach.

Old Séphora did not stir.

The Child placed his little hand, first upon the heads of the women and girls, because they are better and suffer more; then upon those of the men and boys.

And Mary said to them:

"Be patient; he loves you and is come to suffer with you."

Then the white king thought it his turn. But the Child, with a gentle gesture, called the black king; then the yellow king.

The black king, his hair cut short and shining with oil, came forward, laughing broadly, and offered the newborn Babe necklaces of fish-scales, pebbles of different colors, dates and cocoanuts.

And Mary said to him:

"Thou art not evil, but thou dost not know. Try to imagine what thy life would be if thou wert not king in thy country. Eat no more men and do not beat thy subjects."

The yellow king, with oblique eyes, offered silks embroidered with fanciful figures, potteries enameled, as it seemed, with prisoned moonbeams, a sphere of curiously carved ivory representing the sky with its planets and all the animals of creation, and sacks of tea gathered in the good season from select bushes.

And Mary said to him:

"No longer hide thyself away from thy people. Do not believe that all wisdom is in thee and in thy race. And take care of those whose only food is spoiled rice."

The white king, in military dress, offered to the Child delicate goldsmith's work, weapons chiseled and engraved, statuettes carved

in the semblance of beautiful women and purple caskets containing the writings of a sage named Plato.

And Mary said to him:

"Make no unjust war. Fear those pleasures which harden the heart. Establish just laws, and believe that it is of moment to all and to thyself that none be mistreated in thy kingdom."

After the shepherds and the husbandmen, the Child blessed the kings in the order in which he had called them.

Old Séphora thought:

"That is the reasonable order. The Child has begun with those who have the most need of his coming. He makes it clearly understood that he cares for justice and that he will establish its reign, whether in this world or in another. His mother, moreover, has spoken well. Yet he does not

think of all. What will he do for the beasts?"

But Mary understood her thought. She turned toward the Child, and the Child turned toward the ass and the ox.

The ass, thin and mangy, the ox, fat enough, but mournful, approached the manger and smelled Jesus.

The Child placed one hand on the nose of the ox and with the other he pressed lightly the ass's ear.

And the ox seemed to smile; and from the eyes of the ass fell two tears which were lost in his coarse hair.

At the same time the camels which were without quietly entered the stable and reached out their heads confidingly toward the Child.